

What is the attitude to music and musicians in the educational departments of the country; are they strange alien beings from another planet? or are they non-productive sexless persons? (In this day and age we are not allowed to discriminate between the sexes. Men and women are equal only some are more equal than others.) In this materialist age, everybody is being given a number and is being placed in some category that suits the social planners and pen pushers of the state.

The state has monopoly of thought; we are to tie ourselves in red tape and in education we are to follow the self-appointed tin gods of educational theory. To question these experts is considered blasphemy. The phrase, "LET THEM EXPRESS THEMSELVES" used by some teachers as a reason for totally negating any form of discipline, is the product of Piaget and Gagne, misinterpreted, misunderstood, and forced down the throats of us who have to work on the floor at grass roots level. Everything else must be abolished, say the free thinking! enlightened! socialists.

A school is as good as the staff that are in it. How can a factory full of thousands of children be conducive to good relationships between staff and pupils, surely the most important factor in education. We live in the age where the pursuit of excellence is considered to be a crime in some circles. The pursuit of mediocrity is elevated to a high plane where nobody must excel for fear of offending someone of less ability.

What has this to do with music? you might say. We are living in an intellectually dangerous age; the arts are under attack, they are misunderstood and in some areas ignored. Music provides a means of self-expression, for awakening and developing the imagination and for emotional and spiritual development; the fact that the aesthetic subjects begin to make a special appeal to children during their adolescent years makes it all the more deplorable that music should so often cease to be represented on the time-table after the second or third form. It is less generally recognised that music can hold its own with any other subject in the curriculum as an intellectual discipline as well as an aesthetic one; it has been stated that all arguments for the inclusion of language and literature in our ordinary scheme of education may be used with equal force in the case of music. In fact some Head teachers underestimate the value of music as an intellectual discipline; indeed, some of them mistakenly believe that music makes a stronger appeal to the academically less able child. Frequently this is disproved by the members of the school orchestras/choirs, etc. being called away for games fixtures or chess competitions and other activities requiring a sharp mind and physical fitness.

The social value of music is immense. It is a constructive and unifying force; it goes beyond the spoken language of any one nation. This can be seen in the final chorus of Bach's St Matthew Passion: "In tears of grief" - the power of the gospel story, the love of God for mankind expressed in the mighty act of sacrifice at Calvary. The awe and wonder of the people present at the crucifixion watching Jesus being put to death. Is it nothing to you, the power of the cross, the redemption it promises, the eternal life it gives? Music stirs the soul and leads people to be spiritually born again. From the power of choral music to the painting of impressionist musicians - the subtle satire of Erik Satie. The mischievous humour of Joseph Haydn, poking fun at the nobility with their airs and graces.

The Arts Council grants are being cut and audiences are dropping in our cities. All of it indicative of the materialist age we live in. What is the view from young people about going to concerts in Plymouth? They are the audiences of the future. What do the young know about the fun of performing in concerts, listening to concerts, or taking part in choral work? Words are inadequate to describe the depth of experience that can be felt when taking part.

In backward parts of Britain music is considered to be a pastime of the upper class - what prejudice!! If music is not considered seriously by the planners of our day and not systematically supported throughout our educational system, one of our most important heritages will be lost forever and our civilization? will be robbed and left devoid of culture.