

tion and teacher training which exist at present, and to that extent the committee has fought shy of radical proposals. Its strongest set of recommendations is for the institutionalization of in-service training. In the past few years, local authorities and the Department of Education and Science have done a good deal to improve facilities for in-service training, mainly by the setting up of teachers' centres and by the provision of courses for those who want to go on them—a sub-population of the British teaching profession which tends to be over-representative of those who like attending courses and those who are already so skilled that they are less in need of in-service training than most others. Whether in practice the government will provide the resources, people as well as money, to allow for regular bouts of in-service training for all professional people is another matter.

In at least three respects, however, the James committee has fudged important issues. In the past few years, it has become apparent that the teacher training establishments, colleges of education as they are called, are often not educationally viable. The best among them have for several years been complaining of the difficulty of providing a broad and challenging curriculum for young men and women of 18 who think they might at some later stage become teachers but who cannot, in the nature of things, be sure. In circumstances like these, would it not be prudent to pay more serious attention than the James committee has done to the forging of such powerful links between the colleges of education and other establishments of higher education, polytechnics or universities, that students would be able to move freely from one institution to another and in such a way that it is no shame for a student to decide that he is not a teacher after all? The loose association of universities, polytechnics and colleges of education as members of the regional councils will not do.

The second defect of the report is its casual acceptance of the hypothesis that the supply of teachers for British schools is in principle unlimited. It is true, of course, that the remarkable expansion of British education in the years since 1945 has been predicated on the assumption that it is necessary merely to make teaching a more attractive profession to recruit the men and women needed to educate still larger numbers of children. Unhappily, however, the past few years have shown quite clearly that even if all teachers are, in terms approved of by the National Union of Teachers, equal, some are more equal than others. One unhappy consequence is the emergence of a more recognizable pecking order among schools, especially secondary schools, than is good for the future of the educational system and for the young people with whom it deals. In circumstances like these, is it wise to divorce the planning of facilities for teacher training from a consideration of how teaching should be carried out as completely as the James committee appears to have done? And is it not conceivable that Britain and many other countries similarly placed may be running into the kind of trouble which Mr Ivan Illyich has been describing in the context of developing societies? It is possible that with present techniques, countries such as Britain may find themselves unable to recruit the kinds of teachers on whom continued expansion of the educational system as it is at present must be based?

The third serious gap in the James committee's arguments is, in this sense, especially damaging. Over the years, the National Union of Teachers has been campaign-

ing for equality among teachers in all kinds of schools and for the recognition that a course of teacher training is a necessary qualification for the profession. Mr Edward Short, Secretary of State for Education and Science in the previous government, was the first to accept this argument, and the present government has, without saying as much, endorsed that decision. The result, of course, is that it is exceedingly difficult to exploit the contributions to British school education that might be made by men and women trained originally in quite different professions. Although the institutional framework which the James committee now puts forward will still allow people with first degrees in, say, physics to take up teaching as a career, the chances are smaller than in the past that people with advanced degrees in science and technology will find their way into the schools. Moreover, the recognition of teaching training as a necessary qualification for the schools will increase the difficulty of using part-timers from other professions, and the results are likely to be most damaging of all in those fields such as science and mathematics where the normal supply of teachers is inadequate.

100 Years Ago



WAITING FOR THE ECLIPSE

From *Nature*, 5, 266, February 1, 1872