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Youth need critical intelligence

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I have discussed this interesting phenomenon of animal and human behavior with many professional colleagues. One fellow in particular comes to mind quite readily. He told me that he had had a similar experience with faculty behaving like animals, only in his instance the behavior of his faculty was similar to the "mobbing" behavior of certain species of birds. But that is another story.

NOTE

1. A monograph completed in 1445 by Duyvene Dijkgraaf entitled "Untersuchungen ueber Scheckstoffen der Seitenorgane bei Fischen," and thought to explain similarities between human and animal behavior, was found in 1973 in a bombed-out Bavarian church. But inasmuch as this monograph is written entirely in early Celtic pictographs, no one is too certain that it in fact deals with anything.

Review

Youth need critical intelligence

HOW TO BRING UP 2000 TEENAGERS by Ralph Rutenber. Nelson-Hall Inc., Publishers (111 North Canal St., Chicago, Illinois 60606), 1979. 228 pp.

How To Bring Up 2000 Teenagers by Ralph Rutenber is a charming and enlightening source for building-level administrators who are attempting to deal positively with young men and women in a school setting. Essentially, the book is a guide to those concerned with the moral decisions made and actions taken by young adults.

Springing off his experience as a headmaster of an independent school for girls, the New England educator provides his readers with illuminating and practical suggestions for guiding the character development of young people. The book gives many personal examples of how expectations, trust, and affection can help students become giving persons. For adults, who have the "heavy oar" of helping young people make sound moral decisions, this book will make a significant contribution to a greater understanding of the "Janus-like" creature—a teenager.

The book suggests that adult mentors need to listen with a "third ear" to understand what a teenager may be saying in terms of real feelings, motives, and messages. The examination of motives and messages, not openly expressed, can and should be made by attentive adults. The understandings thus derived can help adults to empathize and attend to the nonverbalized needs of teenagers.

The major contribution of the book is embodied in those chapters dealing with the concept of justice in a school community. Dr. Rutenber talks forthrightly about

discipline and punishment. He defines discipline as an ongoing process of recognizing one's obligations to one's communities (home and school) and acting in a manner which promotes the common good. Discipline is teaching, and it should be taught (and learned) in the school. Punishment, on the other hand, is defined not only in terms of a deterrent, but also as a "reenforcement" that acts do have consequences.

To help students confront reality and its demands, Dr. Rutenber suggests the use of the "disciplinary discussion" method, which he terms the most important part of the disciplinary process. The method incorporates eight guides for its use, and according to Dr. Rutenber, the method has produced unusual results. In those cases related to rule infractions by students, the discussion focuses on getting the student to understand and accept the implications of actions in terms of self in relationship to the community.

Punishment, as reenforcement, should follow the disciplinary discussion. It serves as a statement to the community that infractions do have consequences, and to the individual, the punishment serves as a contribution to the restoration of those rules and standards which govern the community. Punishment, according to Dr. Rutenber, always should be given. There should be no exceptions or reduced consequences because of extenuating circumstances.

The final chapters of the book deal with Dr. Rutenber's attempt to destroy the myths that distort the reality (and joy) of working with young people, and the need for a community of affection. The myths about sex, relativism, and imposed beliefs, among others, highlight Dr. Rutenber's position that teenagers need to acquire the tools of critical intelligence. This questioning attitude is necessary to cut through the distortions to "the imprisoned reality that is waiting to be set free." His "community of affection" is grounded in the belief that young people need to exhibit the same qualities expected of adults—affection, concern, and trust—if the community is to be strong and vibrant.

Dr. Rutenber is not a sentimentalist, but an understanding realist. He seemingly is a man of great practical wisdom in the finest Aristotelian sense, and he has made a solid contribution to those who work and live with adolescents in the various communities.

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