

force than it has now, a point the unilateralists are prone to ignore. But in the long run, the security of the European neutrals is just as dependent on America's continued maintenance of the balance of power as is that of the European members of NATO.

The strength of feeling in the Labour Party in favor of disarmament is attested by the fact that only in terms of disarmament are the party's leaders able to make their policy of nuclear defense and alliances attractive to their following. Grouped around Hugh Gaitskell, George Brown, and Denis Healey, the right wing of the party is engaged in a determined counterattack to reverse the unilateralist decision of the last party conference. In this campaign they refer to themselves as "multilateralists": those who prefer internationally agreed disarmament to one-sided gestures. Like the unilateralists themselves, they are in favor of multilateral disarmament. Who isn't? But the policy that differentiates them from the unilateralists is their belief in NATO and nuclear defense; and this they are able to make palatable only by presenting it as an approach to disarmament.

IT WOULD BE WRONG to suppose that the unilateralist movement, colorful as it is, has made a deep impression on British public life or is likely to gain control of British policy. The latter it can never do, as it does not embody any coherent military policy but only vague, negative aims, closer definition of which must produce disagreement within the movement. The aims of the movement are likely to change as the strategic situation changes. If, for example, the United States finds it convenient to withdraw its nuclear bases from British soil, more ground will have been cut from under the unilateralists' feet. Even their grip on the Labour Party has an uncertain future. Labour's internal struggle over nuclear disarmament is difficult to disentangle from two other struggles going on within the movement: one over Mr. Gaitskell's leadership and the other over the party's socialist objectives. The success the unilateralists have had so far arises in part from a fortuitous conjunction of these disputes.

## 'A Little Extra Push'

MAYA PINES

A CITY like New York is full of children for whom school and home are equally bleak; their world is a narrow, overcrowded, and dangerous place, at times confined to a radius of a couple of blocks, with little to nourish the imagination and no one to pay much attention to them. A city like New York is also full of women whose children have grown up or are away at school, of young wives without children, of retired people who still want to be useful. More and more during the past four years, these two groups have been getting together.

Through the School Volunteer program, sponsored by the Public Education Association and the New

York City Board of Education, several hundred adults have gone into the city's elementary and junior high schools to give more than a thousand children the sort of direct and undivided attention for which their teachers rarely have time. Each volunteer gives at least one half-day a week to helping students with personal matters as well as various academic subjects; most important of all, the volunteers also impart their own knowledge that while the world is infinitely varied, each child is unique and infinitely important. To the children involved, this satisfaction of a craving for personal atten-

tion often means the difference between keeping up with their classes and drifting into delinquency; between believing that the adult world is full of enemies and realizing that some people want to help them, that many paths lie open to them if they choose.

Mrs. William B. Nichols, one of twenty-four volunteers at P.S. 158, at York Avenue and Seventy-seventh Street, helps children in primary grades with their reading. On a recent Thursday morning Mrs. Nichols was at her post, a small desk in a large room on the fourth floor. A bushy-haired youngster sat next to her, reading haltingly from a book called *Cowboy Andy*. As he stumbled on some words, Mrs. Nichols gently drilled him from lists she had prepared on index cards. A bell tinkled the warning that their forty-five minutes were nearly up, and the boy quickly turned the page to see how much of the book was left. "It's almost the last page!" he gasped. He hurried on with his reading. Other children at neighboring desks got up and left the room, but when Mrs. Nichols suggested he stop if he wanted to, the youngster said excitedly, "No, I want to finish." He read a few minutes more, and suddenly it was all over. His eyes glowing, he shouted, "I've read the whole book!" Mrs. Nichols congratulated him. "Do you want to take the book home and show your mother?" The boy nodded eagerly.

Only three months ago, Mrs. Nichols explained, the child couldn't get through a single sentence. "He was held back a year in school because of it. But now he can read whole paragraphs. This is more exciting than any other volunteer work I've ever done."

### 'Spread Yourself! Use It All!'

Just as the reading program tries to make children understand that books are an important and enjoyable part of daily life, the volunteers' art program tries to make each child aware of the forms around him and of his own artistic feelings. Two



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painters, a commercial artist, an illustrator of children's books, a fabric designer, a sculptor, and eight non-professionals take part in the program.

Mrs. Mary Sklar is very popular with the students at P.S. 157, an old building at St. Nicholas Avenue and 126th Street in Harlem. Slim, gray-haired, and attractive, she is a painter and writer as well as the mother of two children in private schools. To reach her group, one goes past some smelly washrooms to a large kindergarten room with low desks. In a corner stands a toy crib with two beat-up dolls, one white and one colored, lying side by side.

After wiping some purple paint off the lower lip of an impish-looking boy, one of several children leaning over a table covered with newspapers and helping themselves to large paper cups full of paint, Mrs. Sklar turned to a taller boy who was standing before an easel. She inspected his work: a man with a red eye, smoking a thick cigar. "Is he outside or inside?" she asked. "Outside," he replied. "Well, how can you show me that he is outside?" The boy went to fetch some blue paint for clouds. The blue dripped onto some yellow, forming green, and he played around with that for a while.

"It's wonderful how sometimes, when you've made a mistake, it leads you on to something new and lovely," said Mrs. Sklar appreciatively. "Now you've discovered that greens are unlimited—there are all kinds of greens—and you've got a nice sense of the difference between yellows and greens. See these yellow drops? They're so yellow that your green becomes more positive." The boy said nothing but seemed pleased.

Moving on, Mrs. Sklar looked at a row of flowers painted by a little girl. The flowers formed a narrow frieze across the bottom of her sheet of paper. They were all the same size and the same color.

"Now look, you've got a great, whole piece of paper," she told the child. "You don't need to use just a piece of it, or a corner of it. Spread yourself! Use it all!"

"Last year," said Mrs. Sklar, "I had a child to whom you couldn't talk, who wouldn't talk to you, and who only made frames—she just drew lines around the edges of her paper.



Then I took the whole group on a trip to the Museum of Primitive Art for a show of West Sudan culture. There were beautiful ivories and golds, and heads of antelopes, all different. We examined them to see how many different ways one could express a single subject, and talked about how each way was interesting, each one an invention and the property of a single human being. For weeks afterward the children painted things related to that trip, and the little girl I was telling you about did four pictures about the sculptures she'd seen."

#### 'My Brother Eats Books'

Besides arousing the children's interest in reading and art, volunteers are doing scores of other important jobs in fifteen schools. Some work right in the classroom, helping individual children over hurdles in arithmetic or English while the teacher is busy with the rest of the class. Some do classroom chores, such as sorting filmstrips, to give the overburdened teachers more time with their classes. Those who speak Spanish have proved invaluable in easing the transition for newly arrived Puerto Rican youngsters, answering all their questions and being their special friends. Some do clerical work in the school volunteers' office at 125 West Fifty-fourth Street, where new volunteers are interviewed and given basic training for their work in the schools. Others with special skills teach creative-writing classes, help coach plays, or give concerts. A retired architect works at home to make unusual posters or charts that teachers may need, such as posters with oversize type for children in a sight-conservation class.

One of the most rewarding volunteer jobs is library work. Living in homes devoid of books, magazines, and even newspapers, many of the

city's elementary-school children never hold a book except for the readers from which they are taught in school. And trying to teach children whose reading skills range from second- to sixth-grade levels out of the same book often seems "like trying to make every child in the fifth grade wear the same sized clothes," as one teacher put it. Although every school has library books, the budget does not provide for librarians in each one. So volunteers have set up libraries, cataloguing, indexing, and arranging the books on shelves. They have also contributed books of their own and gathered more books from every possible source to start circulating collections; they also help the children, many of whom have never dared go into a public library, to select what is suitable for them. Encouraged to take a book home, one pigtailed girl sadly shook her head. "My mother won't let me take any books home," she said, "because my little brother eats them." The volunteer in charge of the library persuaded her to take it anyway.

The volunteers always find out a child's own interests first. A story about antique treasures discovered in an attic on Cape Cod, for instance, may be thoroughly boring to underprivileged Negro or Puerto Rican children, since antiques, attics, and Cape Cod are outside their experiences. On the other hand, they find stories about Negro heroes and heroines extremely satisfying. And fantasy is always popular, though sometimes for very sad reasons. One little girl told a volunteer that she wanted only make-believe stories, "because the real is so awful."

"These kids suffer from a total lack of good literature," said a volunteer sorting books at P.S. 158, meaning not the classics, but just good English. "Yet they respond wonderfully to beautiful things. We try to get them early."

#### Of Bugs and Flowers

How do the teachers feel about all this? "Frankly, I was very skeptical at first," a third-grade teacher at P.S. 158 has confessed. "I just felt, how can anybody in one or two hours a week make these children advance much? And yet in two months I have seen a vast improvement. I have twenty-four children in my class. I

can't give them the concentrated individual attention they get from the volunteers. For instance, the volunteers found out that this little fellow in the second row loves bugs. You see, today he came down from his session with this book, *The Insect World*, and for ten minutes between classes he was looking it over. It's his own project, and it makes him realize that books are interesting."

When the New York Reading Growth test was given to thirty-five of the children in the program after six months of work, three children had improved as fast as their classes for the first time in their lives; eleven showed a gain of one year; twelve gained more than a year; seven gained two years; and one child actually gained three and a half years in the six-month period.

Children who show improvement after a year of work with the volunteers are replaced by a new group. "Some of them cry, they're so disappointed to learn they can't continue," said a sixth-grade teacher. "It's their only opportunity to get help on a one-to-one basis." A few children who were extremely shy changed visibly after their reading improved, she went on. "We know something has happened. You see an awakening. And when a youngster does wake up, he opens up like a flower."

This is the compelling force that keeps the volunteers coming regularly twice a week, week after week. One woman drives in from Westchester to work with the children. "There's no committee work here," one volunteer told me; "it's all sheer joy." "This is the most rewarding work I've ever done," added another. For some women it offers the happy discovery that "even an untrained person can be of great help."

According to Miss T. Margaret Jamer, director of the program, "What the volunteers do is similar to the kind of thing being done at the New York Foundling Hospital, where women come to fondle babies and sing to them, to make them thrive again. Obviously schoolchildren are not babies, but they, too, need a little extra push. It's especially important in schools where the parents are not available most of the time because they work. No city is rich enough to pay for this kind of attention."

## VIEWS & REVIEWS

# The Book

GEORGE STEINER

**T**HE LONG, intricate communion between the English language and the Bible continues. It began a thousand years ago. About 950, the priest Aldred wrote an Anglo-Saxon paraphrase, in Northumbrian dialect, between the lines of the Latin text of the great Lindisfarne Gospels—a sumptuous manuscript written about 700. This is the first fragment of English translation to have come down to us. In the late tenth century, there appeared in Wessex the first independent version of the Gospels in English. One hears, in this rough assay, something of the cadence that was to mold the language: "Nu ic asende mine aengel beforan thinne ansyne." By the year 1000, Aelfric,



Archbishop of Canterbury, had translated a considerable part of the Old Testament.

The Norman Conquest brought further progress to a sharp halt. Not until about 1250 does the story take up again, and then only with the Psalter. But in the first half of the fourteenth century, in a prose Psalter attributed to one Richard Rolle, we take a leap forward: "Have mercy of me, God, for man trad me, al day the fyghtygne troublede me . . . In God I schal prevse my wordes, in God I hoped." The language was now at the threshold of the necessary eloquence.

In 1382-1383, John Wycliffe completed his rendering of the Bible into English. The text used was, by modern standards, corrupt, being a late unscholarly version of the Vulgate. Moreover, there were glaring discrepancies in style between the work of Wycliffe and that of his collaborators. But the revised Wycliffe Bible of 1400 is the first of our great English Scriptures. For all its archaicism, we can turn to it with a sense of recognition. Here is a passage from Isaiah (35:5-6): "Thanne the iyen of blynde men schulen be openyd, and the eeris of deaf men schulen be opyn. Thanne a crokid man schal skippe as an hert, and the tunge of doumbe men schal be openyd; for whi watris ben brokun out in desert, and stremes in wildirnesse." The Authorized Version will make one superb improvement: "and the tongue of the dumb *sing*." But when it replaces a crooked man skipping by a lame man leaping, the advantage seems to me to lie with Wycliffe.

**B**ETWEEN Wycliffe and the Bible of 1611 lie the invention of printing and the genius of one man who, more than any other, put his mark on the development of English. Between 1454 and 1500, some 125 editions of the Latin Vulgate were issued from diverse presses. A century after Wycliffe had set down his text, much of it was available in print in Caxton's *Golden Legend* (1483). And in 1516, Erasmus of Rotterdam called for the right of private individuals to read Scripture in their own common language: "I wish that the plowman might sing parts of them at his plow and the weaver at his shuttle, and that the traveler might beguile with their narration the weariness of his way." For those who spoke English, William Tyndale