**The Price of Life-Long Education.**

**Cuernavaca.**

CIDOC Doc. I/V 74/70

Twenty-five persons from fourteen countries met at CIDOC, Cuernavaca (Mexico), in August 1974, to discuss present trends towards life-long education. This statement grew out of their discussions.

All those who agree with it may make it theirs.

Introduction

In this manifesto we oppose the trend towards compulsory life-long education, compulsory by law or by social pressure. We do not need more school systems. In societies where a few people who "know more" give orders and the great mass of people who "know less" carry them out, formal adult education will only give those few greater power over the many.

People shall not be denied the means they feel they need to deal successfully with their problems and to join with others in doing so.

1. During the past forty years compulsory schooling has been growing in most countries and still is.

By compulsory schooling we mean that

- people are required to attend

- people are grouped by age

- the schools decide what is to be learned

- only certified teachers may teach

- the work people do in school is graded and certified

- education is separated from living and working

We oppose all these.

2. More and more people accept or demand prolonged schooling, believing it will bring them the way of life and the level of consumption of the more successful and rich.

3. This hope is more and more disappointed. As more people get diplomas they tend to be worth less. More money spent on education brings smaller and smaller results. More and more graduates are unemployed or underemployed, while the amount of schooling required for most jobs is growing.

4. Though it may have some value on the labour market, what people learn in school is not, as a rule, useful in their lives, nor does it help them become more self-reliant and creative.

5. Schooling, however, fulfills social functions:

a) By treating alike people of different cultural backgrounds, it translates social inequality into school success and failure.

It takes credit for the learners' success, but denies responsibility for their failure, and so conceals the way in which it reproduces class differences.

b) It says that persons are inadequate unless and until they have had a certain amount of schooling; it leaves room for personal interests only when they fit into what the school wants people to learn; it convinces people that they must be taught, in school, how to deal successfully with their environment; it makes the right to do things depend on credentials which can only be had from schools, and so discourages self-reliance in learning and doing.

c) By making learners compete against each other it teaches them they can only have success at the expense of others; it assumes that people do not want to learn by themselves but must be forced to, and so teaches that learning must be painful.

6. These socializing functions constitute the hidden curriculum of schooling. The effectiveness of these socializing functions is breaking down in industrialized societies. Schools are increasingly questioned both by minors and adults.

Students grow more and more rebellious and apathetic;

employers complain that the schools no longer provide them with an efficient and obedient work force; parents and pupils begin to doubt that schools do offer equal chances or a sure way to wealth and success.

7. The promotors of life-long education believe that this crisis of the schools can be overcome by extending education beyond the school years, in particular by different forms of adult education.

They claim it will

a) offset mass unemployment by retraining the unemployed

b) enable adults to keep up with technological changes which might make their skille obsolete, and to do different kinds of work

c) enable underpriviledged groups (old people, women, minorities, people in underdeveloped regions etc.) to find their proper place in society

d) convince people that they have always a chance to rise in society through learning and that their failure to win favourite positions may made up for at any time.

8. We maintain, however, that:

a) the main cause of unemployment is that there are more workers than jobs. Retraining cannot create jobs that do not exist;

b) continued retraining helps to make skills obsolete, and so threatens job security and seniority rights;

c) all educational programmes help the priviledged more than the poor and so increase the advantage of the priviledged over the poor;

d) continued education can only improve the position of adults to the extent that unskilled and frustrating jobs are abolished. Unless the working process is made very different, continued education can only be a way for a few to escape at the expense of others.

9. Adult education calls for formal changes in schedules, institutions, media and financing of learning. However, since it has the same hidden curriculum as all school systems it cannot but maintain the prevailing social, political and economic conditions.

10. We believe that all persons, of whatever age, have the right to decide what they want to learn, how, when and where. Knowledge shall be permanently accessible to all. No institutions shall monopolize or certify its distribution. Learning, living and working shall be permanently interconnected.

11. When we live we learn. Learning is a function of living; people are learning all the time, all their lives. No one's "learning" is superior to anyone's else's, just different.

But some people have more "knowledge" than others, which means that they have had the power to win greater access to other individuals, informations and tools. In order to abolish that power, everyone must have access to all kinds of knowledge, i.e. equal time, money and freedom for their learning as well as free and unmediated access to all individuals, informations and tools which they may need for their learning.

12. People are the best judges of what they have learned. Using professional educators to evaluate other people's learning is unnecessary and creates a relationship of superior to inferior.

13. We therefore propose:

a) it is more important to make existing knowledge available to all than to accumulate expert knowledge;

b) experts, such as teachers, doctors, lawyers, engeneers, scientists, architects etc. have the obligation to share their skills, expertise and knowledge and thereby to give up their professional monopoly;

c) time shall be made available at work in which workers may begin work-related research and learning, to enable them to continually reshape the working process and environment to meet their self-defined needs;

d) grades, certificates and examinations shall be abolished. It shall be against the law to require scholastic credentials or any kind of personality tests as a condition of having any job. A person's ability to perform a job shall be evaluated by the co-workers or the clients;

e) individuals and groups should be encouraged to create community workshops and convivial centers which will be open to all, controlled by their users and which will promote self-reliance and critical analysis through learning by doing;

f) free access to and control over mass media shall be ensured by reducing the complexity and increasing the number of available facilities;

g) anyone, regardless of training or credentials, shall have the right, to share his experience, knowledge or skills.

We oppose the professionalization of adult educators.