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EPREUVE ORALE D'ANGLAIS

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6. Learning to Live Together

If we are to create a stable and democratic society for the 21st century, we need to remind governments and communities that our public schools are the primary location in which people can meet and learn to live together. Learning to live together in harmony will be one of the biggest challenges of this century.

But how can you learn tolerance if you never meet the people towards whom you are supposed to be tolerant? I grew up in Australia and never met or worked with aboriginal people until I was 30 years old. Until you actually mix with and learn to relate to other migrant and indigenous populations, all stereotypes and prejudices which you carry from your childhood remain with you, and can be exploited.

Within each country, there is potential for the exploitation of ethnic, religious and economic differences. I firmly agree with the Delors Report, which stressed that such exploitation is the biggest threat facing us in the 21st century. [...].

We therefore have to bring various groups together in a common, public location. Schools are the only common place that we have at our disposal for learning about each other through direct practical experience. This cannot be done if, for example, you separate children by religion as in Northern Ireland or the Balkans by ethnicity and language. If you separate people and keep them apart, they will become suspicious of each other and will ultimately enter into conflict with each other. [...].

If we do not learn to care about each other, to understand each other, to share our experiences of life, we will be forced to allocate ever greater levels of resources to prisons, as conflict within society grows. This can be avoided if a common meeting place can be established, a location where we can learn to live together. The school is that place, that location.

Colin N. Power, Deputy Director General for Education – UNESCO,
Education International Magazine, January 2000, p.7.
