

We Need Our Best "Brains" for Survival!

More than ever, in this era of satellites and space travel, America must mine its most precious resource—its gifted young people.

by Evelyn Lauter

LINDA WAS A WRIGGLER. She twisted and turned and sat sideways in her kindergarten chair so she could look out the window. What was happening inside the classroom—a reading-readiness test—didn't interest her. Linda had been reading fluently for more than a year and she was bored.

Though just five, she was moved up to first grade with the six-year-olds; but there was little change in her behavior. The rest of the class was glued to the Look and See primer, but Linda had reached the 12-year reading level. She developed a strange, faraway look, a kind of detachment, and soon she had the reputation of being an "oddball." The first graders went on their merry way after school, leaving Linda strictly alone.

For future Lindas in this country, there's good news in the establishment of the National Council for the Gifted. The organization will sponsor programs of research and advisory work in the education of superior students to prepare them for positions of leadership.

At its central office in West Orange, N.J., the Council will maintain a clearinghouse for col-

lection and distribution of materials and information. It will provide consultant service on the educational needs of the gifted, and as the program develops it plans to arrange regional and national conferences featuring leaders in the field of education of the superior student.

Once the Council's program is well under way, there will be few like Linda who, by the time she reached fourth grade, caused a general strike among her fellow students. They refused to participate in a spell-down because "Linda always wins." Since the children felt as they did, Linda was made monitor of the spell-down. She was to read the words to the class, instead of participating in the contest. Her popularity fell to a new low, for now she was teacher's pet.

Linda went through high school a lonely, frustrated teen—wanting to be liked and accepted, but bearing the scars of her early social failures in grade school. When the other girls went to dances, Linda stayed home writing Latin sonnets.

Her senior year brought Linda rich rewards—academically, of course. She won a state-wide Latin contest and a four-year scholarship to an outstanding Midwest university.

Today, as a college freshman, Linda is still on

top academically, winning substantial victories the only way she knows how. Socially, she still has a long way to go. At 17, part of a more mature group, she is just beginning to know the satisfactions of being accepted.

WHEN George Douglas Hofe, owner of the Carteret School for Boys, conceived the idea of a foundation for the gifted, he sought out Dr. Cyril Woolcock, principal of Hunter College High School and professor of education at Hunter College in New York.

Mr. Hofe, now president of the new Council's board of trustees, studied at Columbia's Teachers College but went into his family's cosmetics business instead of teaching. His interest in education persisted, however, and it was Hofe's endorsement that made the National Council for the Gifted a reality.

Dr. Woolcock had initiated the program for the gifted students at Hunter—all brilliant, all special, and all requiring the individual attention to mold them into well-adjusted people who go on to college to be educated to full capacity.

With an advisory board of top-ranking educators, including Dr. Woolcock, the Council will help schools and other groups to identify outstanding students early and to develop programs for their greatest possible development as individuals and socially responsible persons.

Dr. Woolcock recognized the need to do more for talented and intellectually able young people when he set up the Hunter program.

While the school's entrance requirement is an I.Q. of 120, the average runs between 141 and 147. Every year 3,500 girls compete in a stiff exam and 1,500 are selected as students. The only other requirements are that the student show a strong academic or other type of talent, that she live in New York, and that she be a citizen of the United States.

Of the number selected, 50 percent go on to Hunter College, 25 percent to other colleges in New York state, and the remaining 25 percent to other schools, usually on scholarships. But they all go on to college.

In line with Dr. Woolcock's belief that early detection is important, there is a nursery-school program for three-year-olds whose abilities are brought to light in individual tests given at



Dr. Cyril Woolcock and members of Hunter College High School's student council hope America can develop more fully the abilities of outstanding students. Woolcock and other educators discuss the special problems of the gifted child. Many experts believe our position as a world power will depend on them.



Girls are grouped according to individual needs, never are hurried. Recent stress on science has not obscured importance of the arts. Tomorrow's leaders must know world's languages. New devices aid teaching.

Columbia University and New York University.

The top toddlers are brought to the school for a committee interview and a series of tests. Sixty are selected and put into groups of 20 each. There are 47 national, religious, or racial groups represented in the broad social and physical program which is constantly relating every aspect of balanced living. As Dr. Woolcock put it, "We don't want monsters running around without any social relationships."

IN THE high-school program, the student is carefully watched from all sides. Psychiatry, counseling, and parent education combine to turn out exceptional human beings who otherwise might be overly sensitive and often misunderstood.

Because Dr. Woolcock believes that unless parents are helped to understand the child, the whole plan will collapse, fathers and mothers must attend three study groups yearly. They are advised to discourage too much outside

work; dancing lessons, music lessons, and other pressures are held to a minimum.

The girls are placed in class groups according to their needs, but acceleration or "skipping" is frowned upon. Only one-fourth of the top one percent are generally mature enough to go beyond their age group. Over a seven-year period, only 10 of the students were found to be ready to undertake college work a year or two ahead of their age group.

A girl like Linda would have stayed with her age group, but her program would have been enriched in areas where she showed superiority. She would have been just one "brain" in a community of "brains" and therefore not suspect. She would also have had the warmth and companionship of childhood friends, instead of the years of isolation she experienced.

Working alongside the academic program are the psychologists, whose solution to the problem of Glenna R. illustrates how they function. The girl was admitted to Hunter High School

through a placement service. Her parents were separated and she had lived in a foster home for five years, but her mother wanted Glenna returned to her.

The Department of Welfare supervised a trial period which was nearly disastrous for both the girl and her mother. Glenna was badly neglected—her mother offered no supervision, kept late hours, and refused counseling. The girl could not adjust and asked to be moved. Tests showed her problem in school resulted from anxiety and guilt feelings.

A special family—one that could offer stimulation and a kindly, secure environment—was found for Glenna, who was to remain there until she was 16. Today Hunter feels Glenna is on her way to a happy life. Anxious to become a physical therapist, she was worried about having to go to work at 16. The school is cooperating with a social worker in trying to get a college scholarship for Glenna.

(Continued on page 26)