

# Rewi Alley's Educational Philosophy in the Digital Age



Maurice Alley

# Rewi's Educational Background

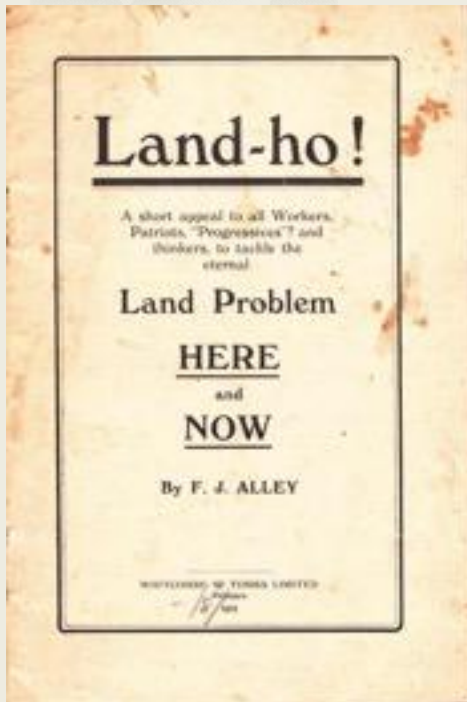


Headmaster - Frederick

- A Family of Educationalists and Social Activists



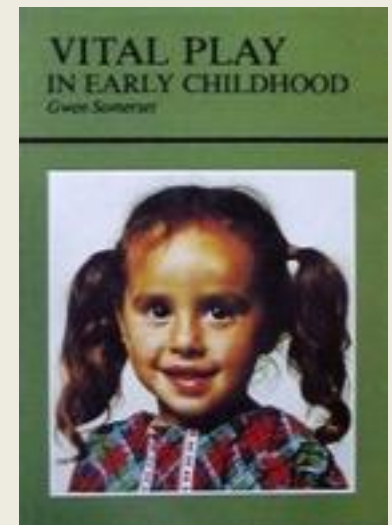
Suffragette - Clara Buckingham



Elder Sister - Gwen Somerset



“Learn by doing”



# Life Experience



Rehab Farmer at Moeawatea



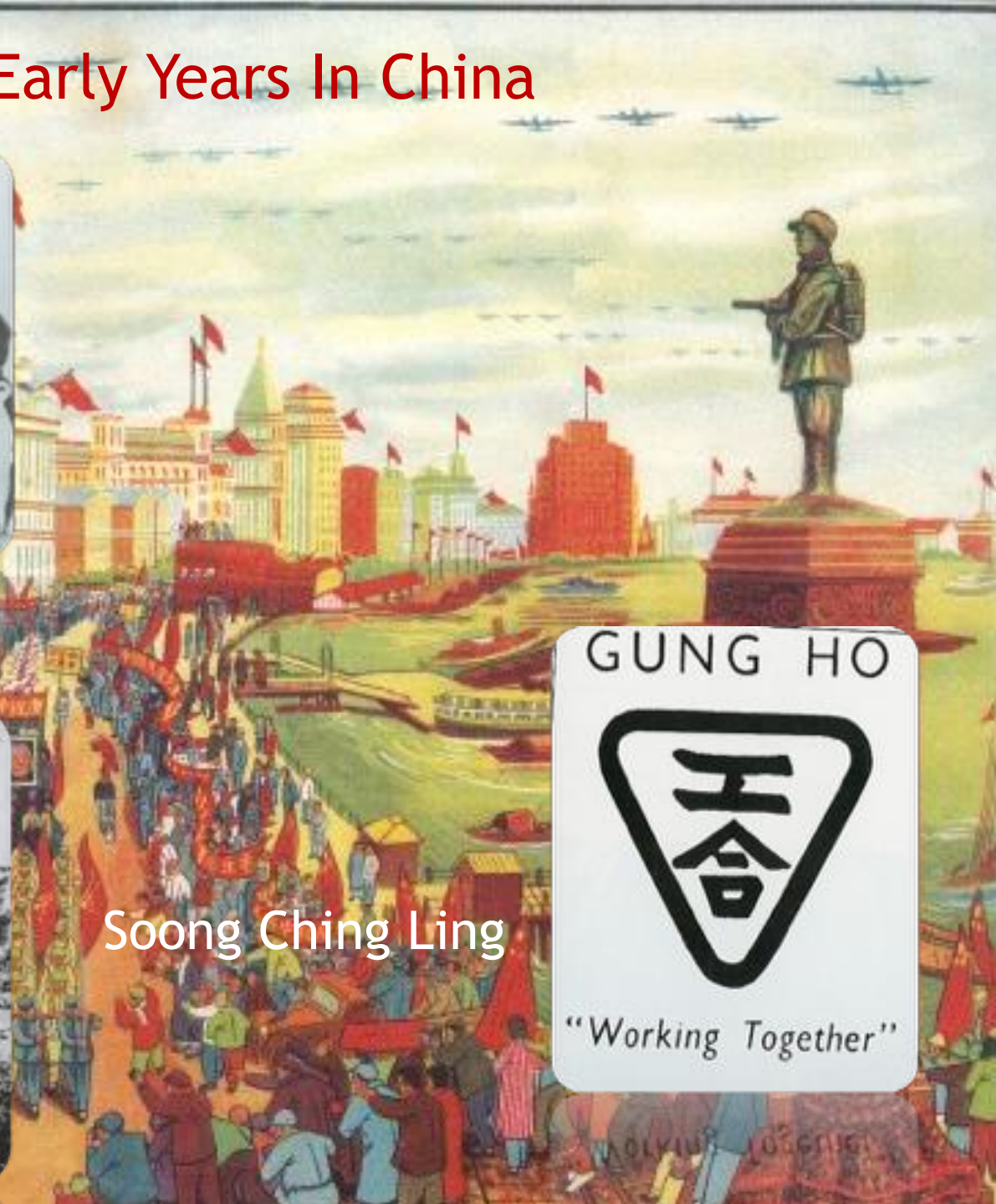
# The Early Years In China



Agnes Smedly,  
Peg and Edgar Snow



Soong Ching Ling

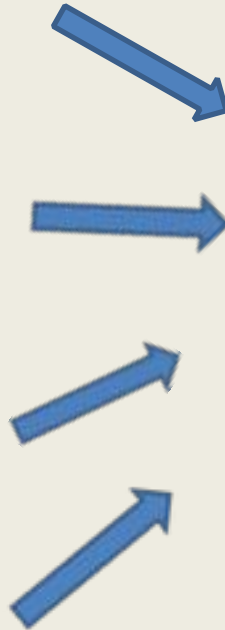


# Major Educational influences

- Family background
- War and farming years
- China in turmoil
- Joseph Baile



Disciple of John Dewey

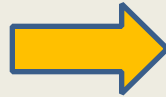
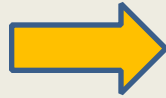


- The Need for Change



Working Together

# Times change - New Technologies



# Information Overload



Early Shandan Textbooks



# How to survive in the digital age?

## Prioritise

- Have a broad understanding of importance
- Understand basic concepts
- Select sources - who can be trusted
- Have sound practical knowledge of field

## Delegate tasks

- Understand your own and others limitations
- Use technical expertise from committed people
- Share knowledge and collaborate

These are all features of Rewi's educational philosophy



# Decentralisation

- Decentralisation an essential component of Gung Ho philosophy 1930-
  - Dispersed industrial targets
  - Allowed use of local resources - more efficient
  - Local administration - increased commitment and participation
- It was ahead of its time - in 1970s -80s
  - Small is beautiful campaign 1970s
  - A key value of the Green Movement 1980s



# Decentralisation and New Technology

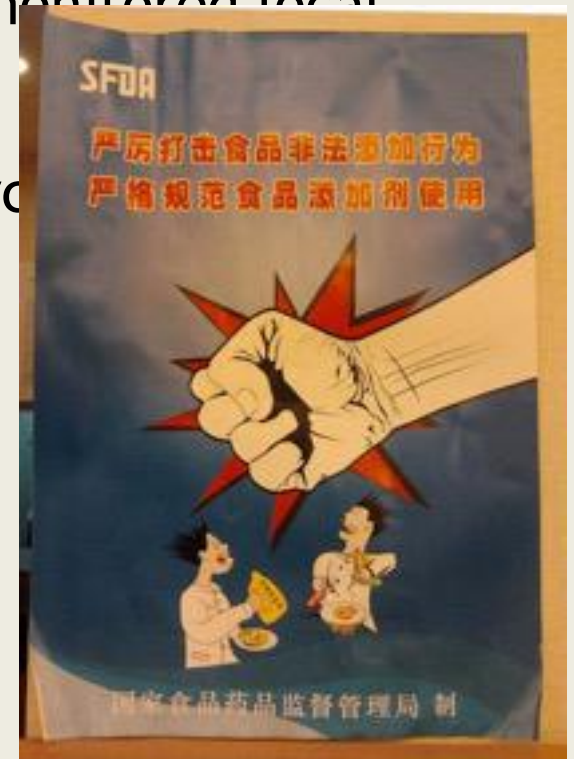
- These days smartphone use allows better communication, organisation and marketing
- Globalisation and the rise of large corporations has led to “economies of scale”  
ie. centralisation
- Decentralisation is not always efficient because of the unequal distribution of resources
- There is a need for a balance to find which policy is most appropriate



# Decentralisation - Not always good

## eg. Chinas Food Safety Issues

- Many examples of food contamination in the last 15 years
- About 10 central government departments shared responsibility
- In addition numerous provincial agencies monitored local production and sales
- The result was complex, overlapping and ambiguous duties that were poorly enforced
- June 2014 - Revised PRC Food Safety Law - Ministry of Agriculture became responsible for tracking food safety problems
- Increased training, increased inspections increased fines and safer food





## New technology - Changing Careers and Professions



- Future careers in technology may only last 3 years
- Women change careers more often than men

# Changing Careers and Organisations

- Rewi Alley wrote “ a specialist in one thing may be called upon to be a specialist in something quite different as one process supplants another”
- A broad practical knowledge and long term view needed on which to base new knowledge and skills
- Organisations are often slow to change eg. In New Zealand both local and central government have only short term goals  
(eg. action on climate change)
- Rapid change may lead to loss of institutional knowledge and skills



# Learning by Problem Solving

ie. “Learn by doing”

- Learning in this way gives students a greater depth of knowledge
  - Motivation (commitment)
  - cognition (understanding)
  - and participation (collaboration)



# Learning by Problem Solving

- To identify problems and find out why they occur:-
  - Begin with a sound knowledge of the normal
  - Need a practical knowledge of the real world
  - Collaborate to find ideas and resources
  - Give students responsibility for finding solutions



# Problem Solving at University

- At Massey University problem solving has become a major component of 4<sup>th</sup> year Veterinary Science teaching
- Students enjoy their classes more
- They see the relevance of their knowledge
- It encourages life long learning



## Difficulties:-

- Students do not know what they don't know
- Requires more and better trained staff
- Requires more resources





# 4D Virtual Farms

Digital teaching resource

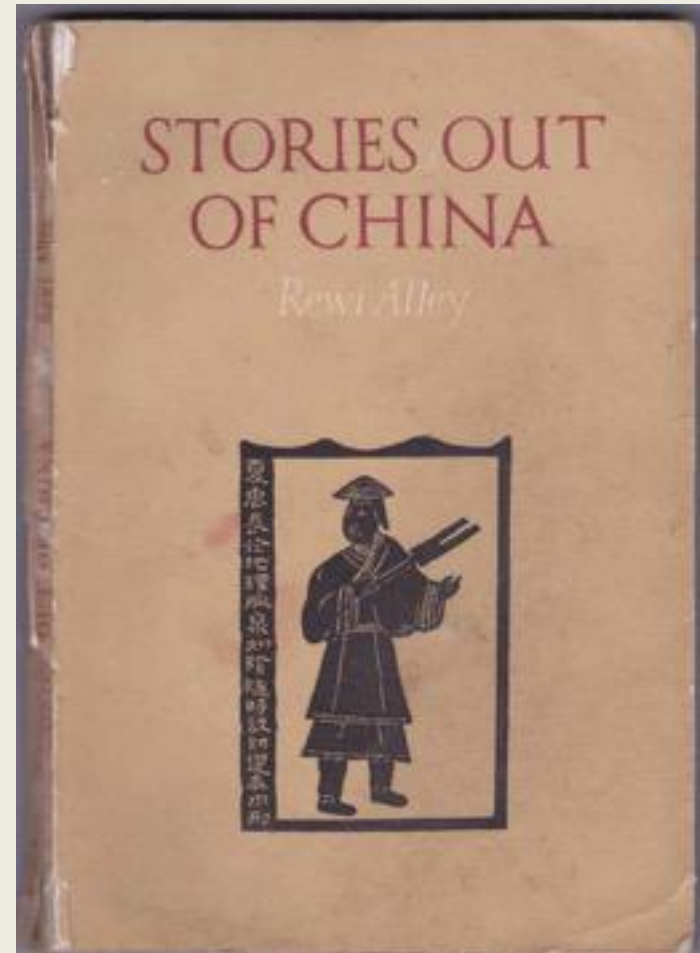


- Gives 360° view of selected farms (with zoom)
- Views from 10 or more different locations
- In four different seasons

Still a need to touch the grass, see the animals  
and talk to the farmer

# Rewi's Love of History

- Rewi had a great interest in history
  - began at Boys' High School
  - clear in writings 1956 onwards
  - when revisiting Gung Ho cooperatives he often mentioned local Chinese history
- He read much and wrote about Chinese history
- Collected many historical artefacts
- Made analyses of society in earlier dynasties



# The New Sinologists

- Rewi was very critical of the western sinologists who had never been to China
- These days the internet makes it possible for anyone to be an “expert” on China without actually going there.

Do we want this?

It s important that we:-

- Learn how to evaluate the information online
- Be able to analyse ‘facts’ in context
- Think critically about history and how it is construc
- Remember that digital materials are less stable than analog materials, because digital content is easily altered, corrupted or even lost. - Librarian for US Congress



# Our Global and Environmental Problems

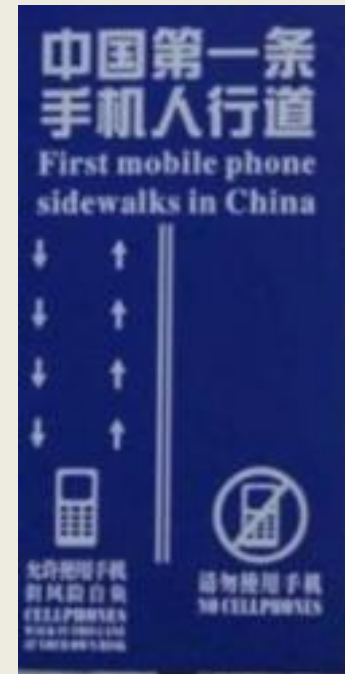
- Extreme weather events
  - Flood, fire, drought
- Rising sea levels
  - More erosion & floods
  - Salt water intrusion
  - Migration of island and lowland peoples
- Loss of biodiversity
- Unequal distribution of decreasing resources



# Global and Enviromental Problems

- Rewi understood the problems of erosion, flooding and deforestation - in China and throughout the world.
- Writing about his time in Moeawatea he said” Better we had tilled the flats and let the hills stay in forest”.
- When at Shandan he strongly encouraged
  - Sustainability
  - Eliminating waste
  - Conserving and recycling resources

# Future Problems



- How can the digital age help solve global problems?
- Online education itself is not sufficient to broaden our knowledge of the world.
- We need real international collaboration, exchange and understanding ie. “An internationalist spirit”

# Conclusions

- The digital age has brought enormous changes in our knowledge and our ability to communicate since the time of Rewi Alley
- Never-the-less, Rewi's core educational and internationalist philosophies remain relevant
- We must use our new digital tools to broaden our understanding of global problems and develop collaborative projects to ensure the world's children have a sustainable future



Thank you