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Book Reviews

The Great City Academy Fraud
FRANCIS BECKETT, 2007
London: Continuum
207 pages, £16.99 (hardback), ISBN 978-0826495136

Francis Beckett has produced a detailed analysis of the City Academy Programme dealing with its origins, development, sponsors, performance and funding. The constant changes to the early declared intentions are described: the replacement of failing inner-city schools expanded to include fee-paying schools; the change from sponsors having to donate £2 million to lesser sums of money and a smaller percentage of the total costs – all this as expenditure on construction rapidly increased until only notional donations were made based upon consultancy and management advice from the sponsor's business. The methods by which the Government 'persuaded' authorities in certain instances to accept an academy even when it was rejected by parents and the local authority are described and bring little credit to democratic processes. An appendix provides details of academy names and locations. The successes of some academies replacing decaying schools are recognised and the genuine philanthropy of some sponsors committed to helping socially disadvantaged children acknowledged. However, grave doubts are expressed at the central idea behind the Programme. Beckett quotes Fiona Millar, 'There are 3,500 secondary schools in this country ... How will putting £5 billion into 200 of them over the next five years help the rest?'

The origins of the Programme can be seen in Kenneth Baker's City Technology Colleges (CTCs) launched in 1986 in which sponsors would provide 'a substantial amount of the cost of building a new school' which would be free from local authority control. In reality the sums of money envisaged never arrived and the taxpayer ended up footing most of the bill but the sponsors were still given the school to run. Beckett reminds the reader of the response of Labour politicians when in opposition. Jack Straw, shadow education minister, said 'No programme has been such a comprehensive and expensive failure' whilst Margaret Hodge stated that 'the next Labour Government should return all CTCs to LEA control.' Instead David Blunkett introduced the City Academy in a speech to the Social Market Foundation, with many of the features of the CTCs. Calls were made for sponsors from private

organisations to donate £2 million towards the cost of an Academy whilst the taxpayer would provide the rest – a sum estimated at around £20 million and which has risen to over £45 million whilst the private donators' contribution has remained the same. Some have never given the full amount. 'The control of the sponsor is absolute. The sponsor appoints a majority of the governors. Academies are only required to have one parent governor and only one staff governor ….Sponsors, though they are to dictate the buildings and control the teaching, are not required to have any educational expertise and experience'.

Beckett lists some of the sponsors and their backgrounds: property developer, stockbroker, venture capitalist, – all favoured by 'New Labour', some donators to the Labour Party, some recipients of Honours. Just as with the CTCs the big companies have spurned the Programme as they prefer to support a wide range of schools and not just give large sums of money to a few. In seeking support for the venture the Government has targeted churches, fee-paying schools and local authorities but finding out the details of the agreements made between the sponsor and the government quango, the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, run by Sir Cyril Taylor (who also ran the Conservatives' CTC Programme), is difficult because of claims of 'commercial confidence'!

All governments use the granting or denying of financial support to force through their policies; Baker did this with the CTC and Grant Maintained Schools policy whilst New Labour has used the same tactics to force through its Academy scheme. Beckett shows the pressure Government applied where parents did not want academies in Merton, Islington and Willesden. In one case, a questionnaire sent out by the local Labour MP asked parents to indicate their preference by indicating their response to two alternatives offered: 'Yes, I am in favour of raising standards at Mitcham Vale and Tamworth High School by getting Academy status' or 'No, I am against these changes…designed to improve examination results.' In spite of this ploy 'when the Council did send out 1,500 letters with a tear-off slip to ask whether parents approved of the idea of the academies the vote was four to one against'. The schools were closed on 31 August and the academies opened the next day.

Beckett points to the growing religious influence on the Academy Programme. 'Of the 46 academies open, just under one third of the total will be entirely in the control of Christian organisations or evangelical Christians.' One outcome of this in some organisations is that practising Christians will be given priority for teaching posts and entry for their children to the school. This is a return in practice to the 19th century. Yet 'In August 2005 a *Guardian/ICM* poll found that almost two thirds of the public oppose ministers' plans to increase the number of religious schools.'

One central question Beckett poses is do academies work? Lord Adonis, unelected Education Minister, believes they do and points to some improvements in examination results. The true answer is that some have improved results and some have not. As always with statistics they need to be put into perspective. Many academies have changed their intakes from the

schools they replaced with fewer children on free school meals, far more children excluded, an increase in numbers taking GNVQs deemed to be equivalent to 4 GCSEs. The Government claims they are popular with parents. This is generally true but most parents will opt for a school such as Bexley Business Academy 'which has so far absorbed an estimated £58 million of public money' compared to a poorly resourced school nearby. How can one compare the results of pupils in academies which cost £21,000 per place with those in a new secondary school at just under £1,400?'

Beckett refers to the conclusions of the Select Committee of the House of Commons in 2005. 'Despite the Government's proclaimed attachment to evidence-based policy, expensive schemes seem to be rolled out before being adequately tested and evaluated compared to other less expensive alternatives.' This might suggest that dogma, both political and religious, has more to do with the Academy Programme than has proven educational practice, a question which might have been answered objectively if a pilot scheme of a dozen academies had been tried and then evaluated before so much tax-payers money had been handed over to a variety of sponsors to take over schools in the community. One might also ask why all of the professional organisations involved in schools have consistently opposed the Academy Programme. The 'passionate belief' of academy supporters is no substitute for serious research into the full effects of this expensive controversial programme. In reading Beckett's study one is left wondering whether there are other motives behind some of those involved, other than improving the educational opportunities for a minority of schools paid for by the public but completely out of their control. As a bonus for the reader Beckett writes in a flowing style refreshingly free from jargon.

Clive Griggs, *University of Brighton*

The Rise and Rise of Meritocracy
GEOFF DENCH (Ed.), 2006
Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, in association with *The Political Quarterly*
284 pages, £17.99 (paperback), ISBN 978-1405147194

In his Leader's Speech to last year's Labour Party Conference, delivered on 24 September 2007, Gordon Brown proudly proclaimed that 'this is the century where our country cannot afford to waste the talents of anyone'. He promised to work for 'a genuinely meritocratic Britain, a Britain of all the talents' and went on:

> Whenever we see talent under-developed; wherever there are aspirations unfulfilled; wherever there is potential wasted and obstacles to be removed – this is where we, Labour, will be.

If you know people who are in danger of being enthused or carried away by Brown's fatuous rhetoric, tell them to dip into Geoff Dench's sober collection of

essays arising out of a conference held at the Institute of Community Studies on 7 May 2004. The Institute has recently been re-launched as The Young Foundation; and it was, of course, Michael Young who christened the oligarchy of the future 'meritocracy' in his marvellous satire *The Rise of the Meritocracy, 1870-2033*, first published in 1958 and now recognised as one of the most influential texts of the last century. Far from *promoting* the cause of 'meritocracy' (a misapprehension shared by Tony Blair and his New Labour disciples), Michael Young's sociological fantasy actually portrayed a sinister, highly stratified society organised around intelligence testing and educational selection. The book set out to show that establishing a meritocrary involved the creation of a new all-powerful social class whose members believed that their privileges and superior status were thoroughly deserved on account of their undisputed merit – and that this was amply demonstrated by their above-average IQ scores and excellent educational qualifications. While the noble intentions of Young's imaginary Government involved separating and distinguishing individual merit from considerations of birth, inherited wealth, nepotism, bribery, patronage or purchase, the rise of the new class of ambitious meritocrats created a whole new set of social tensions and anomalies.

This new collection of essays includes the transcript of a short interview with Michael Young conducted by the editor Geoff Dench in March 1994. In this interview, Michael draws attention to the fact that his 1958 book has been widely misunderstood. In his words: 'I wrote the book as an attack on the 'meritocracy' : it would be a more wounding, stratified system perhaps then had been known since the days of slavery. But people have taken it that I was lauding this kind of society and wanting it to push ahead and arrive as quickly as possible.' He also emphasises that the concept of 'equality of opportunity' is not as liberating as some might have us believe. 'I know I didn't understand what I meant by the 'equality' that I was so much in favour of. But I could also see that 'equality of opportunity', which had so much more of a following than 'equality', was itself going to produce greater inequality, and that this was one of the basic contradictions I guess of the whole society'.

There are interesting contributions in this collection from all points on the political spectrum, from David Willetts and Peregrine Worsthorne to Jon Cruddas and Andrew Gamble, but the book will be of interest to *Forum* readers largely because of a very fine and thought-provoking chapter by Peter Wilby, a version of which appeared in *The Guardian* on 26 February 2007.

In this chapter, entitled 'A Delay on the Road to Meritocracy', Peter Wilby points out that, according to recent research, New Labour has failed to address effectively the gap between rich and poor and has done nothing to cope with a situation where true social mobility has all but ground to a halt. Of course, New Labour's failure is now being used by many on the Right as a convenient justification for singing the praises of the selective education model of the 1940s and 1950s. The grammar school is now seen as having been a significant engine of social mobility, enabling large numbers of disadvantaged

working-class children to 'escape from their backgrounds, go on to one form or another of higher education and enter the middle class.

Peter Wilby sees things very differently. Since only a small percentage of working-class children were ever able to benefit from a grammar-school education, a more plausible explanation for the perceived decline in social mobility must be sought in an appreciation of the gradual phasing-out of the enormous post-war expansion of middle-class jobs and in a clearer understanding of what post-war social mobility actually entailed. The point to emphasis is that the social mobility of the 1960s was essentially in a one-way direction: 'able' children found it possible to move away from their working-class backgrounds because of a huge expansion in white collar jobs. They were not taking places hitherto occupied by the children of the middle class, but were able to occupy *additional* posts alongside them. Put another way, true social mobility, in which the 'dull' and 'mediocre' move down to make way for the 'able' and 'talented', did not really take place; what happened was simply that the middle class expanded while the working class shrank.

In addition to this interesting historical perspective, there is another factor that Peter Wilby is keen to highlight in his chapter, and this concerns a fatal contradiction and dilemma at the very heart of New Labour education policy. Despite all the fine talk about promoting and sustaining a 'meritocratic' society, Tony Blair and his ministers were actually horrified of alienating the middle class. It hardly seemed to matter that the parental choice policy ran directly counter to the goal of creating a new society where, in the words of former Education Secretary Ruth Kelly, 'ability flows to the top, irrespective of an individual's background'. Ministers were well aware that the overriding ambition to find the 'best school' for their children and the knowledge to make the 'right' judgement in all cases were more likely to be found among affluent middle-class families. Moreover, where schools were popular and over subscribed, it was the schools that exercised choice between families, *not the other way round.* It is the thesis of this chapter that you cannot have meritocracy in a society where the middle class always wins.

Peter Wilby makes many valuable points in the space of just seven pages – the book is worth getting hold of for this chapter alone.

Clyde Chitty, *Goldsmiths College*

Education by Numbers: the tyranny of testing
WARWICK MANSELL, 2007
London: Politico's Publishing
224 pages, £19.99 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-84275-199-2

Warwick Mansell argues that England no longer has a state education system worthy of the name. Instead, 'England's education system is now an exams system.' (p. 3), and the energies of those involved in it are misdirected towards

maximising results rather than nurturing the minds, hearts and spirits of those who learn and teach:

> I believe that teaching to the test, so far from being discouraged, is now the guiding philosophy behind England's approach to education… [T]his approach is a disaster, since education… is not about following rules. It is about engagement with a subject, seeing connections and… thinking critically. (pp. 228-9)

Mansell has certainly engaged with his subject, spending three years anatomising England's testing-regime. he links school testing to the wider governmental obsession with public sector 'performance' or 'output' numerically rendered, and with the commodification of knowledge. And he is unstintingly critical of the government's testing-policy, challenging even as his book goes to press the so-called 'test-when-ready' proposals, which:

> …in reality… stand to exacerbate yet further the damaging trends catalogued in this book. This is because ministers are not addressing the central conceptual difficulty of attempting to use test-results to judge the performance both of pupils and their schools. (p. xii)

Elsewhere he indicts ministers and civil servants for '... putting their own interests, in defending this regime, above those of pupils' (p. 52).

Mansell's main focus is the cost to students of the remorseless reduction of Primary and Secondary education to test-preparation in the name of higher standards. Motivated in part by his own declared love of school and joy in learning, he is driven by 'exasperation' and 'frustration' at the government's 'unthinking insistence that results are to be pursued as ends in themselves' (p. 229). He brings before a non-specialist audience a wide array of evidence and argument in support of his contention that 'testing children has been the government's defining education policy' (p. xiv) and that this policy has indeed been disastrous for students and for the quality and nature of the education offered in England's state schools.

Malign

A reporter for *The Times Educational Supplement*, Mansell began to concern himself particularly with matters of testing in 2003, prompted perhaps by the NUT's failed attempt that year to organise a boycott of the KS2 tests. He offers a brief historical account of the drive towards '… the current position, where the government is the dominant arbiter of what gets taught, how it gets taught and, crucially, how the fruits of that teaching are judged' (p. 16). Oddly he omits to mention the mass resistance by all main teacher-unions in 1993 which saw the original KS3 tests stillborn and the Education Secretary of the day bankrupted politically. Dearing's Review rescued many Secondary school subjects from the reach of National Curriculum testing, but NC tests were retained in English and Welsh schools to be taken by 7, 11 and 14 year olds in

English, Maths and Science, with tests for ICT added later. Under Jane Davidson Wales subsequently reconsidered its national assessment regime and departed from the English trajectory, delivering what Mansell terms 'a huge vote of no confidence in the English system' (p. 243). In the UK only state school students (and their teachers) in England remain burdened by a testing-regime among the most relentless and far-reaching in the world.

Mansell believes that some forms of testing can assess students' capabilities and future learning needs, and he would retain such tests in schools. However he is clear that the use of public tests as the unit of accounting for the measurement of school-performance must lead to the corruption of the indicator, and to a host of other malign consequences. Schools find themselves required to maximise the scores their students attain in NC tests (and exams at 16+), the results of which are used to compile OFSTED judgements and the highly influential League Tables of schools. Headline percentages of student-attainment, at the NC test 'benchmark levels' and the all-important A*-C GCSE grade figure, have been made the proxy for school standards. The higher the scores the better the school. The lower the scores, the more pressure to raise them, and the more costly to a school its failure to do so. Consistently 'poor' test-scores will mean loss of funding, removal of self-management opportunities, and ultimately closure. Mansell calls this regulatory framework, which operates to constrain not only the actions but also the thoughts and utterances of school-staff, 'hyper-accountability'.

Mansell regards hyper-accountability as so pernicious he labels it:

> … a form of institutional corruption, in which the school's requirement for good results is put ahead of teachers' need to take objective decisions about the best way to educate their pupils. (p. 80)

He quotes teachers who testify to the prioritising of their students' test-success over an educational experience characterised by the depth and breadth of the understandings it generates. Drilling and skilling, rote-learning, syllabus-content governed by exam-questions, and teaching which focuses on exam-technique characterise the process, and lead Mansell in his concern at the quality of learning to argue that:

> Results produced under hyper-accountability, then, would represent a measure of how well pupils had been prepared for the demands of the particular exam, rather than their overall understanding of the subject. (p. 106)

Furthermore he suggests:

> … the possibility of corruption is never far from the surface of the testing game. And when so much hangs on exam scores, those who have power over what counts as good performance… wield immense influence. This can be very valuable to them… (p. 95)

Mansell details how well-placed examiners may cash in by writing textbooks 'geared very closely to the requirements of a particular test' (p. 103) or by running costly staff-training seminars with a similar focus. He points out how private firms profit from the anxiety generated by high-stakes testing: commercially-produced test-related 'revision' or 'support' materials are very widely sold. He recalls 'the GNVQ scam' (p. 124) invented by Thomas Telford school to secure League Table success and make money in the process. Mansell claims other similar 'scams' are still operating (pp. 130-131).

Asphyxiation

Teachers tell Mansell how teaching-the-test occupies a term and more of Year 6 and Year 9, while for students in other years 'optional' SATs and associated test-preparation and revision steal swathes of lessons which might have been spent learning something new. The testing-mandate, linked to a prescriptive National Curriculum, further removes from teachers control over fundamental aspects of their labour. The specifics of lesson-content are determined by the tests, the scope of pedagogical decision-making is consequently narrowed and, for students, what will be regarded as relevant learning becomes drastically limited. So does their room to shape the direction of the educational experience.

One particularly shocking example of the asphyxiation by hyper-accountability of educational experience takes place in an after-hours Year 6 booster-class whose students are presented with an extract from 'Private Peaceful', Michael Morpurgo's novel set in the First World War. The chosen passage vividly describes a poison-gas attack, but Mansell observes that over the course of the thirty minutes devoted to studying it 'there is not one mention of the novel's subject-matter, as pupils focus on question-answering techniques.' (p. 54).

Mansell adumbrates other adverse consequences of the testing-regime, well-known to many students and parents. Besides a narrower and duller curriculum-offer for a sizeable part of the school year, NC testing means teacher-demotivation and demoralisation, student resistance and disaffection, and increased student-anxiety (physically manifest as sleep-loss, bed-wetting or skin-disorders) at a level to worry children's charities. Most unfortunately for a government which believes that testing raises standards, NC tests work to widen the gap between higher and lower attaining students. Hyper-accountability atomises knowledge and fosters a view of learning as merely instrumental in pursuit of the requisite test-score. As courses become more and more tightly-defined to ensure 'coverage' of what is on the test or exam, creative and critical thinking is exiled and holistic approaches to learning banished. Mansell records views from the tertiary sector suggesting that the instrumentalism and 'spoon-feeding' now widely prevalent at secondary level hamper students as they move to further and higher education.

Hyper-accountability is also responsible, in Mansell's eyes, for the rise in questionable practices surrounding GCSE coursework. Mansell terms these

cheating, and lists in particular the abuse of 'writing-frames', multiple re-drafting of work by candidates and the condoning of overly-flexible deadlines. He charges that hyper-accountability raises expectations of teachers (they will ensure increasing rates of higher attainment) but lowers expectations of students (teachers will do more of the work for them, to minimise the risk of 'under-performance').

Mansell airs concerns over the marking of tests and GCSEs. He repeats the argument made on purely statistical grounds in some academic research that perhaps one in three NC test-papers is likely to be mis-classified, and points out that it is not possible to make comparison of educational standards over time if such comparison only uses the yearly exam-scores as an indicator. He presents data from several multi-national testing programmes to render problematic government claims for large rises in standards over recent times in maths, science and reading.

Counterbalance

For all the ministerial talk of bringing schools to account, Mansell observes that:

> There is no mechanism… to highlight and criticise schools which are so obsessive in their focus on results that they neglect other aspects of pupils' education. (p. 222)

In a footnote he argues that the scope for questioning government policy is very limited. This wider political claim, which touches on the role of MPs, of constitutional checks and balances, and the power of government to misrepresent criticism however well founded, leads Mansell to look to 'an unpredictable and sensation-seeking media' as a counterbalance to governmental power (p. 225). This orientation may be unsurprising for a journalist, but a more adequate political response is likely to be based on teacher-unions, parental organisations and school-student bodies. It urgently requires organising.

Mansell ends with a glance at alternative assessment-regimes in other countries, and offers a remedy for England. We should scrap NC testing and use the Welsh system of moderated teacher-assessment and representative sampling or group-testing as our model. OFSTED should become a service for parents, supplying a rounded portrait of the school's provision and grounding its judgements on lesson-observation not test-score data. There should be annually-published parental surveys and an enhanced complaints procedure for parents and students. We should retain the current KS2 and KS3 Strategies along with the National Curriculum.

A review by Professor Colin Richards in the *TES* urged Mansell's book, shorn of its more repetitive passages, be quickly re-published as a paperback. Whatever issue might be taken with Mansell's view of coursework for example, or his unconsidered use of the language of 'fixed ability' (language which plays into the hands of those upholding the current testing-regime for its efficiency at

dealing students into their 'proper' or 'necessary' sets), or with his failure adequately to differentiate 'testing' from 'assessment', or with the emancipatory limits of the liberal approach to education he appears to want to set against the current system, it seems crucial Mansell's account reaches the widest audience. He secures his claim that testing tyrannises over our schools, and demonstrates that education by numbers is no education at all.

Patrick Yarker, *Dereham*

Eugenics, Race and Intelligence in Education
CLYDE CHITTY, 2007
London: Continuum
165 pages, £70.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-0826489807

I got nine A grades and one C grade at GCSE. I recall one of my primary school teachers telephoning to congratulate me. Grammar school selection remains in Kent and her daughter and I, who were in the same school year, had been separated at the age of 11.

'Katherine has done well too, she's got a couple of A grades, and a string of Bs and Cs…But you've done *so well*…' I had failed my 11 plus. It was her daughter, not I, who had gone off to the grammar school. My former teacher seemed amazed by my results. If I am being generous I would say this was because they were good, and not because she was utterly overcome that *I* had achieved them at a *secondary* school.

There are those who would say my misgivings about intelligence testing and ability setting is sour grapes, stemming from the fact I have a chip on my shoulder because I didn't get into grammar school. But it isn't.

However, it is true that my experience of the 'Kent Test' has helped to inform my position on the issues, as it does rather point to the fact that this approach is, at best, flawed. Because having been written off at the age of ten I seem to have done okay. (When I sat the test it was completed by pupils in the year *before* their final year of primary education; the equivalent of Year 5.)

As a teacher I was never a fan of 'streaming' or 'setting' pupils according to their ability. This labelling of children from a young age worries me. It doesn't matter what the class teacher decides to call their groups; the 'Bumblebees' or 'Butterflies' will quickly cotton onto whether they are in the 'dunces' corner or on the 'whiz kid's' table, or somewhere in between. As Clyde Chitty notes in his new book on, 'Eugenics, Race and Intelligence in Education', this is something that the late Caroline Benn was more than aware of:

> She well understood that even though terms like 'intelligent', 'backward', 'more able', 'average' and 'less able' were not often spoken in their hearing, young people soon appreciated the nature of the category to which they had been allocated by teachers and

> others and where they and their friends fitted into the pernicious hierarchy of ability. (p.122)

And I do wonder how that realization impacts on children's learning.

In recent years I have heard a number of teachers and student teachers argue in favour of setting, and in England the New Labour Government has endorsed and encouraged it.

Clyde Chitty's book is a fascinating read, which should be read by everyone who is interested in education. It examines the issue of selection within the context of genetic determinism and human educability; the 'Nature versus Nurture' debate. He does not contend that all those who *do* believe in the efficacy of intelligence testing or fixed innate intelligence are either eugenicists or racists, but he clearly demonstrates that the origins of the mental measurement movement lie in the ruling classes' concerns about mental degeneracy and racial purity.

Along the way there are some enlightening anecdotes. For instance, the popular understanding of Marie Stopes is as a campaigner for women's rights and a pioneer in the field of family planning. But Clyde Chitty points out that she – like a number of other leading British intellectuals and campaigners – was a eugenicist whose concern over the issue of family planning was not women's liberation but the changing *nature* of the population in the early decades of the twentieth century:

> …it was a major concern of eugenicists that it seemed to be the upper and middle classes, rather than the fertile lower orders, who were regularly practising birth control in the early decades of the century; and Marie Stopes shared this concern…[She believed] that too many children were being born to various classes of immigrants such as Irish Roman Catholics and Polish, Russian and German Jews, along with casual labourers, the thriftless poor and the feeble-minded – a trend which must result in national deterioration. She often took things to quite extraordinary extremes, having a marked distaste for all forms of physical defect and virtually cutting off relations with her only child when he married a bespectacled woman; she called the marriage 'a eugenic crime'. (pp. 59-60)

As Clyde Chitty points out, Marie Stopes work certainly angered the Roman Catholic Church, which opposed the use of all forms of artificial birth control. As a Catholic, there are occasions in the history of the Church which I cannot claim to be proud of. But in this instance the Catholics (along with the Labour Movement) emerge as the heroes, finding as they did (and still do) all eugenic principles unacceptable. The Catholic Church helped to defeat plans for a voluntary sterilization programme in Britain.

And this is another interesting point. Uncertain about my aims and objectives, I struggled to teach the Holocaust in school history. My PhD study examined the teaching of this topic at secondary level. In the process I often

encountered a perception in the classroom (among teachers and students) of the Nazis as 'monsters'. While I would obviously agree that the cruel and murderous policies pursued by the National Socialists were monstrous, I think it important to be clear that they were carried out by normal people and that these ideas were not confined to Nazi Germany, although it was here that they reached their apex. Support for at least some of Hitler's policies was not uncommon among people in Britain, as Clyde Chitty points out in a footnote to his Chapter on 'Eugenics and the Intellectuals'. Here he quotes from the published diary of housewife and mother Nella Last, who is surprised in her entry for 19 January 1941 that she finds herself in agreement with Hitler's policies on compulsory 'euthanasia'. This chapter also includes an extraordinary passage from a letter written by D H Lawrence (who, the author notes, believed that the masses should not be taught to read and write and who rejected the concept of universal education) to his friend Blanche Jennings, revealing 'how he would deal with society's 'outcasts'':

> If I had my way, I would build a lethal chamber as big as the Crystal Palace, with a military band playing softly, and a Cinematograph working brightly; then I'd go out into the back streets and main streets and bring them in, all the sick, the halt and the maimed; and I would lead them gently, and they would smile me a weary thanks; and the band would softly bubble out 'the Hallelujah Chorus'. (p. 53).

It would be reassuring to think that the views about eugenics and fixed innate intelligence discussed in this book had receded in favour of a broader understanding of human educability. But these ideas are not confined to history any more than the eugenic movement was confined to Nazi Germany. Last October the Science Museum cancelled a talk by Dr James Watson after the geneticist told *The Sunday Times* that he was 'inherently gloomy about the prospect of Africa' because 'all our social policies are based on the fact that their intelligence is the same as ours – whereas all the testing says not really'. *The Independent* quoted this on its front page on 17 October, running the full story on page 2 along with a piece on 'The Controversy of intelligence theories'. Clyde Chitty sets out in detail 'The New Preoccupation with Intelligence and 'Race' (Chapter 6) and 'The Durability of Eugenic Theories' (chapter 7). In the latter chapter he discusses the legacy of *The Bell Curve.*

Published in 1994 by Hernstein & Murray, *The Bell Curve* argued that intelligence (rather than the parent's socio-economic status or level of education) is the dominant factor and predictor of career prospects, financial income, unwanted pregnancy and propensity to criminal activity. It also made claims, like those of James Watson's, about race and intelligence.

Although, as Clyde Chitty concludes, the Government is unbending in its pursuit of ability-focussed teaching (something which the Conservative opposition lead by David Cameron is also rigid in its support of), there *are* many classroom teachers who do *not* believe that ability is either fixed or innate.

I was quietly cheered this week when several of the teaching students who attended a tutorial with me were questioning the Government's accepted wisdom and conducting research assignments looking at what 'mixed ability' group work has to offer primary school pupils. There is hope.

Clyde Chitty uses the conclusion to his book to endorse *Learning without Limits*:

> If only education ministers could find the time to read *Learning without Limits*, and texts with a similar message, they might view their task differently. (p.131).

I would urge they also add this book to their reading list.

Lucy Russell
Goldsmiths College, University of London