Two Views from the *FORUM* archive

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Abstract:

The following two articles are taken from the *FORUM* archive. First published in the autumn of 1981, they offer a restatement of comprehensive principles in the context of the educational policies of the incoming Conservative government from 1979. The first thing Margaret Thatcher's education secretary, Mark Carlisle, did was to repeal Labour legislation that required non-selective planning. Bolton, Essex, Kent and Kingston upon Thames withdrew proposals to go comprehensive immediately.

For reasons of ideology – the 1977 green paper *Education in Schools* made it clear that there was no evidence that education standards had fallen and that more children were better educated than before comprehensive education became national policy – the 1980 Education Act reflected right-wing desires to return to selective education, to support private education, to introduce market forces into education, via parental choice. It also removed the obligation on local authorities to provide free school milk and meals for children, except for those from families on supplementary benefit, in order to save money.

In the face of present realities, the *FORUM* editorial board felt clarity was needed to provide direction and purpose. This was the backdrop against which Clyde Chitty and Roger Seckington wrote and their words reflect the language of the time. Unequal opportunities and the underachievement of children from racial and ethnic minorities had become a serious policy issue, partly due to race riots, or urban disorders as they were termed, in various parts of Britain, notably Brixton in London and Toxteth in Liverpool in April 1981.

Keywords: Anthony Crosland; Labour Party; Newson Report; Black Paper 1969

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Why comprehensive schools?

Clyde Chitty

> My plan of instruction is extremely simple and limited. They learn, on week-days, such coarse works as may fit them for servants. I allow of no writing for the poor. My object is not to make fanatics, but to train up the lower classes in habits of industry and piety.
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> R. Brimley Johnson (ed.), *The Letters of Hannah More.* The Bodley Head, 1925, p183.
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> Far too many boys and girls ... are still being allowed to write themselves off well below their true potential.
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> Lord Boyle of Handsworth in an Afterword to the School of Barbiana's *Letter to a Teacher.* Penguin,1970, p135.

One of the guiding principles of my sixteen years in teaching has been that one must never underestimate what children can achieve. For me, that is largely what the comprehensive reform is all about: a belief in the educability of *all* children and in the futility of forcing them into outworn categories. To the cynics, this might seem impossibly naive, but surely no other rationale makes sense in terms of educational progress and development.

That this needs stating so precisely in an article in *FORUM* in 1981 is, to me, indicative of the confusion which surrounds the case for comprehensive reorganisation. What now seems obvious, looking back over the past twenty-five years, is that the wide social appeal of the comprehensive ideal, attracting converts right across the class structure, has been a source both of strength and of weakness. On the one hand, it has helped to ensure strong local support for a vast number of first-class genuine comprehensive schools. At the same time, and perhaps more significantly, it has helped to foster a bewildering and ultimately harmful diversity of aims and aspirations which has prevented the comprehensive movement from establishing its own clearly-defined criteria of success.

It is easy to demonstrate that the campaign for comprehensive education in Britain has not been the work of a single class or social grouping. The movement which gathered momentum in the sixties – based on the pioneering work of certain progressive local authorities in the previous decade and supported by some middle-class pressure groups – can be viewed as the successor to an earlier, essentially working-class, movement to establish the common secondary school which had its origins in the first half of the nineteenth century. The idea that education should be given in a series of common schools organised in ascending stages was put forward by the London Working Men's Association, precursors of the Chartists, as long ago as 1837. Grassroots support for this

standpoint continued down to the First World War and beyond, and contrasted strongly with the campaign of Fabian reformers led by SidneyWebb to maintain fundamental divisions in education beyond the elementary stage.

The original demands for a unified system of education attacked the principle of differentiation on *educational* grounds. In his evidence given in 1887 to the Cross Commission appointed to consider the development of elementary education, Thomas Smythe, described as 'a representative of the working class', argued that separate schools for different social classes should be replaced by one school 'common to all', as the best means of raising the whole level of schooling. Then again, the Bradford Charter, a comprehensive programme for educational advance unanimously adopted by the Bradford Trades Council at a conference in October 1916, and later by the Labour Party, reiterated the demand for a common secondary school within the framework of a unified national system of education. 'No longer ought education to be administered on the assumption that only a minority are fit to be educated, or that education is for the few'. This would make an excellent campaign slogan for a pressure group of the eighties; it was, in fact, said in support of the Bradford Charter over sixty years ago! [1]

The movement to establish the common secondary school went down a blind alley when the Labour Party, or, to be more precise, Fabian elements within the Party, took up the cause in a big way in the late fifties and early sixties. The early Fabians had actually *supported* differentiation beyond the elementary stage in the interests of preserving an efficient 'meritocratic' society. Webb wrote in 1903 of the need for a 'capacity catching' scholarship system to benefit all whose brains made it profitable for the community to equip them with more advanced instruction. The Fabians of the sixties rejected this idea; and a new dimension was added to the ideological battle against selection. Far from merely having educational objectives, the comprehensive school was now seen as a powerful agent of peaceful social change, helping to bring about a more cohesive and harmonious society.

The main thesis of Anthony Crosland's *The Future of Socialism*, published in 1956, was that class had replaced capitalism as the principal dragon to be slain, and that class hatred was buttressed by Britain's elitist educational system. In this and a later book *The Conservative Enemy*, published in1962, he spelt out the theory that the comprehensive reform could be a critical tool in the process of improving British society without recourse to violent change.

Not only would comprehensive schools enable children from different backgrounds to meet and respect one another; they would actually play a leading role in the task of creating a more stable society. According to Crosland: 'The object of having comprehensive schools is ... to avoid the extreme social division caused by physical segregation into schools of widely divergent status, and the extreme social resentment caused by failure to win a grammar school place, when this is thought to be the only

avenue to a "middle-class" occupation'.[2]

This so-called 'egalitarian' concept of the 'social mix', while completely ignoring the basic realities of British capitalist society, gained a tremendous hold on the Labour Party's imagination. It possessed obvious appeal for 'radicals' more committed to social engineering than to revolutionary change. It found expression in Circular 10/65, which laid down the intended pattern of comprehensive reorganisation after the Labour victory in the 1964 election. In the words of the Circular:

> A comprehensive school aims to establish a school community in which pupils over the whole ability range and with differing interests and backgrounds can be encouraged to mix with each other, gaining stimulus from the contacts and learning tolerance and understanding in the process ... The Secretary of State therefore urges authorities to ensure, when determining catchment areas, that schools are as socially and intellectually comprehensive as is practicable.[3]

One of the definitions of a comprehensive school, used as a basis for the research sponsored by the Department of Education and Science and initiated by the National Foundation for Educational Research in 1966, was that of a school which collects pupils 'representing a cross-section of society in one school, so that good academic and social standards, an integrated school society and a gradual contribution to an integrated community beyond the school may be developed out of this amalgam of varying abilities and social environments'.[4] As Brian Simon has pointed out, 'those who approach the matter in these terms do not necessarily stress new opportunities for intellectual development, particularly for hitherto deprived working-class children ... Rather the leading idea is to promote social cohesion in a class-divided society – modern Fabianism. This might, perhaps, be described as "egalitarianism", though the description doesn't seem very precise, nor very helpful'.[5]

All this has had the undesirable effect of setting up useful targets for the enemies of reform to aim at. It has been easy to claim, as did R.R. Pedley in the first BlackPaper, *Fight for Education*, that supporters of reorganisation were using schools 'directly as tools to achieve political objectives'. It has been easy to ridicule the concept of the 'social mix', where 'the Duke lies down with the docker and the Marquis and the milkman are as one'.[6] And when Julienne Ford's researches in the late sixties led her to the conclusion that comprehensive schools do not necessarily promote social unity,[7] this was hailed as a major condemnation of the whole system, while in reality, of course, it was nothing of the sort. It really does not matter whether or not a school is 'socially comprehensive'; nor can it be expected to solve all the contradictions inherent in capitalist society. In the words of *Half Way There*, first published in 1970: 'a comprehensive school is not a social experiment; it is an educational reform'.[8]

So much, then, for the 'blind alley' which diverted our energies in the sixties and

early seventies. Sadly, it has had important consequences for the development of the comprehensive school. Owing to the confusion over objectives, there has been a marked failure both to demolish the old myths surrounding intelligence and learning and to grasp the opportunities afforded by the abolition of selection. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the curriculum structure of many comprehensives. Two years before the publication of Circular 10/65, a report appeared which was to have a profound impact on the internal organisation of many of our schools.

The Newsom Report of 1963 lent itself to being interpreted as an argument in favour of non-academic, 'life-adjustment' courses for children in the bottom streams of the fourth and fifth years: those who would once have left at fifteen. The fact that so many schools simply opted for 'Newsom Courses' for non-academic 'Newsom' children was, in itself, indicative of staffroom attitudes towards the seemingly 'less able'. And these courses persist today under various guises, especially in the larger schools, selling kids short and perpetuating the myth of innate stupidity. After all, or so the arguments goes, isn't it a waste of time trying to *educate* the lower orders? The answer, then, has been to provide special courses built around 'education for citizenship' or 'preparation for life' – courses which, even in the hands of honest, well-meaning teachers, amount to little more than indoctrination, manipulation and containment.

The HMI report *Aspects of Secondary Education in England*, published in December, 1979, shows that in the vast majority of comprehensives, curricular differentiation actually begins in the third year. Pupils in the higher bands are often given the opportunity to start one or more additional foreign languages – additional, that is, to French; while their less able contemporaries are encouraged to drop French altogether. Similarly, a select group of pupils might be studying separate physics, chemistry and biology; while the 'science' on offer to the bottom streams is restricted to rural science or incorporated into 'environmental studies'. Only the less able are thought to profit from extended contact with the creative/aesthetic area of the curriculum.[9]

Whatever form the differentiated curriculum takes in the fourth and fifth years – whether organised around completely segregated courses or a bewildering variety of option schemes – it seems quite obvious that the rejects of the system are pretty disenchanted with their schooling. *Tell Them From Me,* a recently-published anthology of comments made by Scottish pupils about a year after they left school, contains numerous criticisms of the treatment meted out to non-examination classes in comprehensive schools. In a section of the book entitled 'No time for dunces: rejection is mutual', one girl writes: 'I diden't attend school reguarly because in my last year the school dident give us any thing of intrest. I was in one of the lower classes and we dident get O level work. I myself think that all classes should be made the same because if you are in the lower classes you lose all intrest in school'. And in the words of another girl who was in a 'non-certificate' class:

> I did not like my last year at school at all. Those who were doing a non-certificate course were asked to sit in a class with a book opened at any page at all and pretend to be reading in case the head-master or someone like that would come into the room. If you were not interested in O-levels, then the teachers couldn't be bothered with you'.[10]

It would clearly be wrong to depict all teachers of 'bottom-stream' children as lazy or uncaring, but the differentiated curriculum lends itself to a neglect of those academic skills which are the birthright of all youngsters. Even where the teaching of so-called 'less able' children is honest and well-intentioned, the approach is too often undemanding and downright patronising. Teachers might be kind and sympathetic, concerned, where possible, to compensate for the effects of deprivation and hardship, but their concern and sympathy still leave these children as losers in a harsh, competitive world. This has been shown to be particularly true in the case of disadvantaged black children in our inner-city comprehensives. In her book *The Education of the Black Child in Britain*, published earlier this year, Dr Maureen Stone urges a radical review of the way West Indian children are educated in British schools. Drawing on recent research, she claims that present teaching methods 'have resulted in low attainment by West Indian pupils and concentration of black children in lower streams of the comprehensive school, remedial classes and special schools for the educationally subnormal'.[11]

And much of this has come about through a sentimental attachment to misguided notions of cultural deprivation. Black children today are given Black Studies, steel band practice, reggae music and basketball, because that seems 'relevant' to well-meaning teachers and is supposed to boost black self-concept and self-esteem. But just as a diet of diluted social studies confirmed the low attainment of the 'Newsom' child, so a diluted curriculum for immigrants will simply confirm the black child as 'non-academic'. As a consequence, black parents consider themselves short-changed; and we have the ridiculous situation where schools cut the time given to basic subjects in order to introduce 'soft options' that will appeal to black children, while their parents organise 'Saturday Schools' to cover the basic skills not being learned at school. Dr Stone urges the need for all comprehensives to embrace a commitment to teaching methods associated with the mastery of skills and knowledge – and the development of abilities. This is a 'blueprint for education' that must apply not only to urban blacks but to working-class children as a whole. These are the youngsters who for too long have been regarded as 'second-class citizens' in our schools.

Even within the comprehensive system, there has been a failure in many areas to raise the attainment level of *all* children, though the comprehensive school is clearly the only form of organisation which can facilitate advance.In his chapter 'The Limits of Positive Discrimination' in the recently-published *Education for the Inner City*, Marten

Shipman attacks the pessimistic environmental determinism of those teachers who accept low standards from their pupils on the grounds of poor homebackgrounds – a situation which leads, inevitably, to 'a downward spiral of expectations'.[12]

All parents clearly have a right to expect that their children will receive 'good schooling'. The older secondary-school child, who suddenly realises that he will leave school unqualified, has, in effect, been double-crossed. Recent evidence shows that among many teachers in inner-city areas 'relating to the kids' is valued above sheer teaching ability.[13] Teachers who stress the academic and pedagogic aspects of their work are in danger of being criticised by colleagues for imposing burdens on 'average' and 'below-average' children which they simply cannot bear. Yet such defeatist attitudes inevitably widen the gap between rich and poor. As Professor Shipman points out: 'the former will get the necessary information and support from the home, and will follow examination syllabuses that will qualify them for jobs. The latter are liable to be penalised by sentimentality. Not everyone can succeed, but the dice should be loaded in favour of, not against, the poor'.[14]

Muddled objectives, together with a sentimental and ultimately harmful attitude towards children from impoverished backgrounds, have ensured the failure of our secondary school system, even after reorganisation, to improve the relative position of the semi- and un-skilled working class. Educational change must not be relied upon to produce a more equitable society, but it seems only just that *all* children should have access to a programme of study that is demanding and worthwhile – and geared to future success. This, then, is the major task to which all our comprehensive schools must apply themselves in the last two decades of this century. If they fail – if too many schools continue to be 'comprehensive' by name and 'multilateral' by nature; if too many teachers continue to hold a pessimistic view of human potential – reorganisation will have been in vain.

Notes

1. Brian Simon, *Education and the Labour Movement 1870-1920.* Lawrence and Wishart, 1965, pp122-6, 346-50.

2. C.A.R. Crosland, *The Future of Socialism.* Jonathan Cape, 1956, p272.

3. Circular 10/65, 12 July, 1965, p8.

4. T.G. Monks, *Comprehensive Education in England and Wales. A survey of schools and their organisation*. National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales. Research reports: second series, No.6, 1968, pxi.

5. Brian Simon, Egalitarianism Versus Education, in *Comprehensive Education,* London. Bulletin of the Comprehensive Schools Committee, No. 14, Spring 1970, p7.

6. R.R. Pedley, 'Comprehensive Disaster', in C.B. Cox and A.E. Dyson (eds) *Fight for*

Education: A Black Paper. London: The Critical Quarterly Society, 1969, pp45-8.

7. Julienne Ford, *Social Class and the Comprehensive School.* Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969.

8. Caroline Benn and Brian Simon, *Half Way There.* McGraw-Hill, 1970, p64.

9. *Aspects of Secondary Education in England: A Survey by HM Inspectors of Schools.* DES, December, 1979, pp14-21.

10. Lesley Gow and Andrew McPherson (eds), *Tell Them From Me.* Aberdeen University Press, 1980, pp29, 42.

11. Maureen Stone, *The Education of the Black Child in Britain: The Myth of Multiracial Education.* Fontana, 1981, p242.

12. Marten Shipman, The Limits of Positive Discrimination, in Michael Marland (ed.) *Education for the Inner City.* Heinemann, 1980, pp69-92.

13. G. Grace, *Teachers, Ideology and Control: Study in Urban Education.* Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978; R. Giles, *The West Indian Experience in British Schools: Multiracial Education and Social Disadvantage in London.* Heinemann, 1977.

14. Marten Shipman, *op.cit.,* p80.

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The comprehensive movement

Roger Seckington

A few weeks back I met Andrew Hunt, principal of Rawlins College, Quorn in the forecourt of Leicestershire's splendid centre for in-service training as we made our way to the same meeting. Immediately he began a gentle tease about his confusion over the seemingly endless number of organisations associated with the comprehensive movement. Amongst these are *FORUM* and CCE, the Campaign for Comprehensive Education, two organisations that have often joined together over key issues, the parents' groups of ACE and CASE, and the more recently formed PRISE. On this occasion, however, Andrew Hunt had two new groups in mind. He has been seconded to help establish the Centre for the Study of Comprehensive Schools in the University of York and I am associated with RiCE, The Right to Comprehensive Education. Both these organisations began their work in January 1981.

Meeting Andrew Hunt in this way reminded me of some of these people who are associated with the comprehensive movement. He is in his fourth headship. His first school was a grammar school, but his last two headships have been of highly successful upper-tier comprehensive schools, first in Hull and now in Leicestershire. My own teaching career barely spans his period of headship, but also began in a grammar school. How significant, I wonder, is a professional pre-comprehensive schools experience? Our chairman of the *FORUM* editorial board is an octogenarian. A true pioneer of the comprehensive movement in London, in particular Wandsworth School, Raymond King is still applying his vigorous mind and passionate concern to the development of comprehensive ideals both nationally and internationally. Dame Margaret Miles, President of the CCE, also ran one of London's most successful comprehensive schools, Mayfield. She is frequently drawn out from Wales to write, speak, appear on TV or share her experience with others at conferences or meetings. They were at the helm when the comprehensive movement got started, stood four-square in the Black Papers period and still share fully with those whose concern is the development and prosperity of comprehensives.

I can still remember the horror expressed by my fellow grammar schoolteachers when I decided to join a new comprehensive school. Their concern was genuine and kindly meant towards a young colleague they saw throwing away a safe career for work in uncharted and dangerous waters. Rather like the parish priest giving up a comfortable living for missionary work amongst 'heathen savages' in some distant corner of the world. There was only one colleague in the grammar school who shared my growing disquiet. We had both joined a grammar school fairly unthinkingly because it was the 'right' thing to do. My PGCE course had prepared me for nothing else. There was a token

visit to a very new comp, and, token again, a short teaching practice in a sec mod. Once in the grammar school there came a gradual awakening to some of the issues that are central to the thinking on comprehensives. First was the growing awareness of how wasteful this system was. It is quite appalling to reflect that although all the students in that boys' grammar school had 'passed' the 11+, indeed all had an IQ higher than 115, yet only about one-third were successful in the terms of those establishments, namely in passing exams. A system of fine streaming existed from A to F. Only students in the A and B streams obtained a reasonable number of 'O' levels. Streams E and F were, right from the start, convinced that they were 'failures'. They were often openly described as such and the system even frustrated the teachers who attempted a 'normal' grammar education because these groups were usually allocated non-specialist rooms, the older textbooks, the least experienced teachers and eventually a curriculum modified along sec mod lines.

Contact with teachers in non-selective schools showed both what could be done with the 'more able' – those who had just 'failed' the 11+ and yet depressed one with the knowledge of the colossal problems they faced.

These schools, dealing with between 70 and 80 per cent of the secondary school population, were a post-war creation based on the belief that an education appropriate to the pre-determined needs of particular ability ranges was only possible in separate schools. The system was and is divisive. First and second class provision existed in the educational system. Success was built on failure – 'success breeds success, and failure breeds failure'.[1] The selection process was in question as indeed was the whole nature of intelligence. Doors were firmly slammed in children's faces and the route-ways were established too early. There had to be a better system.

The 1950s and 60s were an active period in the move towards a comprehensive system. Selection at eleven had been challenged. A concept of equality in educational opportunity and provision was growing. 'The concept of equality in education, therefore, is in fact entirely opposite to the notion of sameness and uniformity, of turning out all children to one pattern. It is rather the concept of equal *worth,* that is, all equally deserving and needing such aids to personal growth as we can give'.[2]

Grouping for education was a matter of great concern – in particular the social and academic effects of streaming. New comprehensive schools were being built and areas were reorganised along comprehensive lines. Much of this rapid development matched the mood of the times. A huge post-war building programme was needed to accommodate the massive increase in the numbers of school children. In areas of particularly rapid growth such as Coventry new all-through comprehensives could be built. At the same time a visionary director of education, Stewart Mason, was, in 1957, able to establish a plan that ensured a wholly comprehensive system within two decades in Leicestershire and which used the existing school buildings to great purpose. It was

a mixture of pragmatism and philosophy.

I joined my first comprehensive school in 1962 in Conservative-dominated West Dorset. A decision had been made to build a bi-lateral school, largely because one building made economic sense, to replace the ageing buildings of an ancient foundation grammar school and merge with it some five scattered all-age schools. The first head of Beaminster School was Jack Walton, a founder member of *FORUM* and, until recently, a member of its editorial board. He was hugely energetic, totally committed to comprehensive principles and his proselytising approach was completely necessary in that traditional and conservative area. Not too long after its opening *Where* was to describe Beaminster School as one of the best rural comprehensives in the country.

In *Half Way There* (1970), Benn and Simon were able to indicate that 'comprehensive education is now securely established in Britain – and none too soon in view of the urgent requirements of social, scientific and technological advance that make the raising of educational standards and the widening of opportunities for all so imperative'.[3] Already the original Black Paper (February 1969) had been published and in some areas a desperate stand was being made to retain selective schools. In response some comprehensive schools tried to out-do the grammar schools just as secondary modern schools had a generation earlier. This often involved extensive internal selection such as streaming, banding or differentiated courses producing an infrastructure rendering true comprehensive development impossible. It is necessary to work with conditions as they are, for example, we have to put up with the absurdity of a double examination system at sixteen. But working with a situation for the sake of our pupils does not mean acceptance of that situation, and we can and should work vigorously for a change.

The development of comprehensive schools had been hedged about with difficulties. The 1970s saw an altogether different mood emerge. Through the decade and into the early 1980s the national commitment to comprehensive education has lessened, and in many respects become actively hostile, financial support has been substantially reduced and we have a dramatic falling rolls situation. During this period of decline and increasing difficulties, came the 'Great Debate' with its associated series of DES and HMI documents. Most recently we have from the DES, *The School Curriculum* and from the Schools Council, *The Practical Curriculum*. Both assume a subject-based curriculum. The DES is making a *statement* about the curriculum and the Schools Council is attempting to help schools *construct* a curriculum. Neither move us on that much but of the former it might be said that what matters most is who is saying it rather than what is being said. In the latter there is a sensitive approach to the educational needs of children and how best resources can be matched to meet those needs.

Over the years the issues do seem to remain much the same. In 1970, *Half Way There* made thirty-one recommendations. There is not the space here to record all thirty-one but they include a national commitment to a comprehensive system available to all *up*

to eighteen years, the ending of any form of social or academic selection for entry to school, adequate staffing ratios, parental choice, the ending of the double examination at sixteen, an end to any discrimination on grounds of sex in the selection of options, an encouragement to all schools to abolish streaming and the establishment of an entirely open sixth year. Another study of that depth and quality – Nearly There or Three Quarters There – would be necessary to judge how far those recommendations have been achieved or fulfilled.

Great care must be taken not to underestimate the positive gains that have already been made within comprehensive schools. All children are going through the same door in most of our communities. The trauma of selection has been lessened or has disappeared. A system entirely based on competitiveness is being replaced by one which uses a more co-operative or collaborative approach. What should be included in the curriculum is under constant review and a rich and varied programme is available in most schools. Attention is being given to what might be described as an essential curriculum to which all students have a right of access. Ways in which we assess and monitor an individual pupil's progress is being studied, perhaps most important new insights are being gained on how children learn.

On the other hand, we cannot pretend that all is well. The bogus comprehensive is a fact, either because where an authority does not provide the right conditions it prevents the development of a viable school; or because the school itself has no intention of moving beyond bilateralism or multilateralism. Post-sixteen provision is in an absolute muddle. Present government policy seems to be aimed at reducing rather than enhancing provision, at slowing down if not stopping the movement to comprehensive education and this, combined with drastic cuts in expenditure on education, should prompt a new initiative and a more aggressive campaign for a common system of education.

Earlier I wrote of the debt we owe to the early pioneers of the comprehensive movement. I even asked as to whether or not some pre-comprehensive experience was an asset. In no way do I mean to imply that those coming into the profession now have no role. Indeed they are the campaigners of today and tomorrow. But I would ask whether or not coming through the system oneself makes any difference to the attitude taken to the comprehensive movement. Recently the *Times Educational Supplement* reported the appointment of the first head who was himself entirely the product of the comprehensive system – at primary and secondary level anyway. In an as-yet unpublished statement presented to a RiCE conference Margaret Miles wrote:

> We made some small advances on limited fronts, often dependent on the vision and skill of individual teachers, but the slowness of the comprehensive reform, the lack of support from the educational establishment, the innate conservatism of the educational process and the strength of the counter revolution inhibited change

> and forced the comprehensive schools back to a defensive position from which they sought to justify themselves not by being different from the grammar schools but by showing that anything they could do we could do too, and possibly better. Happily with a new generation of teachers and parents who knew not the grammar schools things are getting better.[4]

Also I wonder if colleagues like myself who are lucky enough to serve in an enlightened authority will take more for granted. In Leicestershire we have had comprehensive schools for well over two decades, more often than not also linked to a wider community role. Great care and consultation is taken over the buildings, staffing and resources. In the recent years of cutbacks the Director of Education, Andrew Fairbairn, has consistently pressed for the highest standards of provision and even if there is a deliberate avoidance of central dicta on policy the vibes are clear enough and the way well signposted. In such an atmosphere one could be complacent. It is noticeable, and no doubt totally understandable, that it is in areas like Richmond where there is local dissatisfaction over possible reorganisation that action is taken.

If teachers were the early driving force in the comprehensive movement it is now the parents who have taken up the banner. They want good comprehensive schools in their area. RiCE is campaigning for the RIGHT to a genuine comprehensive education for everyone. It does not set out to duplicate or replace organisations with a long-standing commitment to comprehensive principles, but will liaise with them. It unites parents and teachers. It starts with the clear understanding that comprehensive schools work and work well, and that each neighbourhood deserves its own adequately resourced school. The Centre for the Study of Comprehensive Schools has as its aim the study and dissemination of good practice in comprehensive secondary schools. Both organisations will take new initiatives, return to the familiar issues and revitalise the campaign working for the development of a fully comprehensive system.

Once again we need people who can bang the drum, give us a lead, and point us towards the highest goals. The issues are clear enough. Each neighbourhood should have its own common school adequately resourced to enable a genuine comprehensive structure and curriculum. A comprehensive curriculum has yet to be devised. So far we have just been tinkering with the traditional pattern. We must be able to unshackle ourselves from the monster of a dual examination at sixteen; much more attention being given to the potential of the profile system. Post-sixteen education needs an urgent review to sort out the muddle and to establish a system, within a comprehensive framework, that enables all sixteen to nineteen-year-olds to continue their education whether full- or part-time. Falling rolls should not be seen as an opportunity to strip away educational resources that represent an investment for the future. Rather we should be saying that more resources are required. The opportunity exists to improve

pupil-teacher ratios and if we keep the plant and the teachers, we shall be able to respond quickly to the inevitable growth in demand for a wide range of educational needs.

Notes

1. Pedley, Robin, *The Comprehensive School,* Penguin 1963.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Benn and Simon, *Half Way There.* McGraw Hill 1970, 2nd Edition, Penguin Books 1972.
4. Dame Margaret Miles. Statement to RiCE conference. 6 June 1981.

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