

Adult education and whose common good?

Sharon Clancy and Cilla Ross

Abstract

In this article the authors explore the notion of ‘common good’ in relation to adult education. They do this by drawing upon the experiences of working-class family members who were both social learners and autodidacts, and who engaged in learning for their own sake and for what they believed to be the common good. The authors use diaries, letters and interviews to reflect on how these learners used the lens of class to do this and ask whether in a less binary world, which appears fragmented, individualistic and focused on identity, an adult education for the common good is either relevant or possible.

Keywords: adult education; common good; life histories; class

Introduction

Whilst agreeing wholeheartedly with the premise that a ‘comprehensive system of lifelong learning must encompass “generous and humane” provision of adult education for all’ (see editorial), in this article we unpick the notion of ‘common good’, which this description implies in relation to the reconstruction of adult education.

We acknowledge the long and nuanced history of efforts to understand and define the common good in contradistinction to ‘public good’, with the former suggestive of operating to the advantage of everyone in society, and particularly in relation to political life.¹ We seek to continue this discussion by teasing out understandings of common good as they relate to adult education and ask if this has changed since the publication of the Ministry of Reconstruction’s *Adult Education Report* of 1919.²

When the report was produced, society was starkly divided along crude social class lines which seemed unambiguous. The intersections between different (and multiple) oppressions were not accounted for and this meant that the common good tended to be seen as a binary with ideas about adult education colonised and applied ‘top down’, hierarchically, by the dominant (if usually well-meaning) ‘educated’ class. Notions of agency and association were broadly absent, but this oversimplification offered clarity.

By contrast, what does the common good mean in the current epoch, in a society in which individualistic and identity politics have become dominant narratives and modes of belonging? In the world of ecosystems, assemblages and networking, where does adult education for the common good find its resonance and roots?

Western society has experienced a dramatic rise in the individualisation of the human experience and a growing emphasis on smaller-scale life narratives. Bauwens described this as an outcome of post-modernity, allowing for a critique of political and social structures, but which can leave us fragmented, clinging to an individual identity without any sense of a common experience, and ‘forever deconstructing realities but rarely reconstructing them with much success’.³

Goodson chose to emphasise the importance of society and our situated context – socially, culturally, economically – over celebration of individuals’ idiosyncrasies. He distinguished between life history and life story, with the researcher and the ‘storyteller’ working ‘collaboratively to produce the inter-textual and inter-contextual account’ through life history. ‘In studying learning,’ he argued, ‘like any social practice, we need to build in an understanding of the context, historical and social, in which that learning takes place’.⁴ We agree with Goodson and Sikes: ‘Life story individualises and personalises, the life history contextualises and politicizes’.⁵

Hearing others’ stories is essential to the process of self-reflection, humility and curiosity necessary to our collective flourishing. If we recognise the common good as ‘the shared resources which people manage by negotiating their own rules through social or customary traditions, norms and practices’, reflection and criticality are part of this process.⁶ This offers a space for thinking which is a nonlinear spiral of ‘constant interpretation and reinterpretation’, allowing us to unearth hidden memories, kinships and connections.⁷

This process requires us to go far beyond commonsense notions of public good, civility and civil society. As Steele suggested, civil society is not a reified, fixed ideal, nor a form of ‘idealised unity out of the actual diversity and real contradictions of English social life’.⁸ It is a complex, shifting and uncompromising space in which we continuously question our understandings of community, citizenship, public and common good, and, particularly, how these are expressed in our education systems. ‘Public good’, for us among many others, has become heavily tainted (and captured) by the neoliberal project.⁹

Our examination of the common good in adult education is undertaken auto/biographically as well as through the literature. We reflect on how the notion of common-good adult education has been understood in our own recent educational experiences, and in that of our families and communities. The use of an auto/biographical lens helps us to examine how individuals construct, represent and document their identities and life experiences through their own narratives. We use letters and interview material to understand the importance of personal documents and life stories in social phenomena such as education.

We intend this to be a ‘think piece’, to problematise and reflect on adult education as a common good, which will allow us to explore some key themes we will develop in

our forthcoming book. In the short term, we are concerned to test assumptions and concepts which can be problematic, slippery and elusive for adult education. We also seek to offer a critical analysis of adult education and what defines it as a common good in a world beyond the confines of standard histories of education, through the lens of lived experience.

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In any era, efforts to define the common good are deeply problematic. A nebulous concept rife with ambiguities, often intersecting and colliding with notions of public and private, the common good can be simultaneously subjective and the dominant narrative of elites.¹⁰

Nor does adult education, framed within and by multiple, largely liberal traditions, as Jarvis notes, offer any concrete guarantee of a healthy and inclusive democracy or critical thinking.¹¹ However, if we accept Boyadjieva and Ilieva-Trichkova's view that adult education, whilst 'complex and with a plurality of roles', favours a common good linked to concepts such as justice, rights, solidarity and equality, we might agree that adult education as a common good is: 'An inclusive process shared by, and beneficial to, all or most members of a given community/society ... [and that] it unfolds in mutual social relationships, in and through which human beings enhance their well-being; it is therefore a kind of collective endeavour in which are involved different and diverse social institutions'.¹²

Currently, we might more easily arrive at a consensus on common good if we consider how to respond to a crisis such as climate justice. We could draw upon, for example, UNESCO's position that proposes 'the intersections of sustainable development, the global common good and humanistic pedagogy'.¹³ Or Bhaskar's proposition that the common good presupposes that the flourishing of one human, relates to the flourishing of all.¹⁴

In 1919 my father's parents, who had not yet met, were independently embarking on forms of adult education that they believed would transform their lives and the lives of others, for the common good.

Their view of adult education and the common good reflected their own class-based world view. It was complex, but seemed straightforward to them. Adult education primarily meant social purpose political education and the common good was a rational position. The common good meant an economic, cultural and political transformation which would emancipate the working class, the majority, who would become equals in a future society and finally gain the fruits of their labour. My grandparents believed in agency and in restoring agency to others, and as both autodidacts and social learners, adult education was the enabler of that transformation because, drawing on labour and

19th-century social movement values, beliefs and educational practices, *really useful knowledge* was power.¹⁵

My grandfather, Tom, a Liverpool cowman, joined the Independent Labour Party (ILP) in 1918 and became a lifelong activist, organising meetings, summer schools and reading groups until he died in the 1960s. An ILP book box sat permanently in the hall of his house, which became both an ILP weekly meeting space and overnight accommodation for visiting speakers. For my grandmother Ellen, working as a hospital ward servant, it was literature that stimulated new ideas. By 1919 the hospital was overflowing with wounded soldiers and reading helped her to articulate feelings about war and, in her words, its futility. Ellen's early political education came from reading Russell, Morris and Shelley, but in the early 1920s she joined the ILP and then the Peace Pledge Union. Throughout her life, the Co-operative Women's Guild inspired her to commit to a cooperative commonwealth and alternative models of society and ownership.

Tom and Ellen had little formal education; their parents were domestic servants and an itinerant painter and decorator respectively. Both came from large families who lived precariously and who were part of the 19th-century exodus from country to city in search of work. Yet the learning they did from 1919 onwards (and before), along with their belief in independent working-class education as an emancipatory force, shaped their political lives and remained undimmed.

As a teenager, I lacked the elicitive powers of the oral historian, but they told me that their socialism came from the destitution they saw around them in Liverpool and the Lancashire mill towns. Likewise, they yearned for adult education because they were excluded from it, were curious, and wanted to learn how to understand and fix the world about them. I will never really know what stimulated them to become political beings when so many of their childhood friends who shared similar experiences did not. What were the first ideas that mobilised them? How did they value and understand their experiential and informal learning? And how did Ellen discover Shelley whose book of poems she owned at 20, and which now sits on my bookshelf?

Ellen and Tom were literate and numerate when they left school at 13, but they remained in working-class occupations until they died. Throughout his life my grandfather would say, 'What's good enough for the ruling class is good enough for the workers'. He was referring to both systems change and education because access to an education only available to 'the ruling class', was fundamental to liberation. Common-good adult education, they believed, would erode 'false consciousness', or 'the deference nonsense' as Ellen called it, and enable the working class simultaneously to become cognisant of their power as wealth creators and acquire the knowledge they needed to forge a new type of society.

As these two young lives took shape, the Ministry of Reconstruction convened a

committee to report on adult education.¹⁶ Tom and Ellen would have approved of the focus and ethos of the report and appreciated the call for more adult education to challenge class-based inequalities.¹⁷ They would also have applauded the idea that adult education was for the common good, despite the somewhat ambiguous and enhanced role of the state in future adult education provision.¹⁸ Informal social movement education and peer-to-peer learning had after all characterised much of the radical end of 19th-century adult education, and Jarvis rightly reflects on how the assumption that the state would inevitably act for the common good was questioned by some radical educators.

Chase goes further by expressing concern not only about the overprofessionalisation of adult education (particularly in ‘extramural empires’ from this time), and the ensuing diminishing of the value of informal, emancipatory and community adult education, but also about the commitment to be found in both the historiography of adult education and the 1919 report to adult education as a ‘civilising process’. For Chase, this ‘raises difficult and uncomfortable questions about the definition of civilisation and citizenship, and about the relationship of those promoting them to the state.’¹⁹

The notion of the ‘common good’ as an explicit rationale for driving forward adult education was referenced only once in the 1919 report (p 307). Similarly, ideas of adult education being for the social good, the common benefit or of having a public or social purpose were used sparingly. However, the assumption that a humane, non-technical adult education for both individual advancement and informed civic engagement would be of benefit to everyone, ‘in common’, and for the democratic spirit, illuminates every page.²⁰

In *Keywords*, Raymond Williams interrogates the word ‘common’, both in its negative usage and the more progressive meaning which describes the radical value of working for, holding or perceiving something, ‘in common’, for a common purpose and the common good.²¹ The notion of commons also underpins the praxis of the great social movements which, from Digger to Leveller to cooperative, believed in the notion of commonwealth – a political community for the common good. ‘commoning’ – a verb for activism towards social justice, is now in widespread use.²²

The progressive notion of ‘common’ was the bread and butter of ILP and Marxist imaginations and will have been very familiar to the professional political educators on the 1919 committee, as well as to its trade union and cooperative working-class members. Likewise, the committee’s thinking will have been powerfully informed by the ideological positions of the previous century, from self-help to *really useful knowledge*. With their commitment to social progress and to the role of liberal adult education in providing holistic lived experiences beyond the technical, its members will have felt comfortable with a common-good lens. However other factors, for example, existential threats such as revolution and postwar global trauma, as well

as technical, social and economic disruption, were in play. Writ large in the thinking of the members will have been the need for education for citizenship to ensure the legitimacy and consolidation of democracy as a political system for the common good. Likewise, although they were asked not to comment on technical education, a 'more educated' industrial working class was critical to dealing with emerging international competition.²³ For example, arts education (and appreciation) was essential for labourers and middle managers working in the textile industries.²⁴ It is also likely that notions of 'rational leisure', to be achieved through the 'civilising influence' of arts and humanities education, were widespread.²⁵

The committee was fortunate to have much adult education evidence to draw upon – it noted the proliferation of social movement education as well as voluntary and informal adult education practices. Some existing adult education was already rooted in social movements and the committee was particularly supportive of the 'tutorial class' as a 'democratic organism'.²⁶ The value of association was also acknowledged – particularly in relation to the cooperative movement. Indeed, the associative spirit of common educational endeavour, labour's own capital, as Yeo framed it,²⁷ resulted in 'the growth of collective awareness and social action'.²⁸

For the 1919 committee, it was the time of 'rebirth' for adult education. It reported on a movement 'animated by a common faith in the possibilities of adult education, and by a common ideal of the part which it should play in democratic society'.²⁹

Yet while its survey revealed a rich and diverse pattern of participation in adult education, the report's recommendations, which focused on future provision by what Clarke called the 'charmed circle' of universities, organisations like the WEA and the state, prescribed and championed a certain type of liberal adult education which sat some distance from how many working-class adults had acquired and perceived their social purpose, 'really useful knowledge' for an alternative society.³⁰ Was liberal adult education of the kind promoted by the 1919 committee more about equipping the working class with skills to be rational participants in democratic structures and processes, rather than empowering them to reshape them?

The understanding of 'adult education for the common good' along class lines held firm through the interwar years. Local authorities set up adult education classes delivered in evening institutes while trade unions, the WEA and others, such as university extramural departments, opened their doors or delivered adult learning within communities.³¹ New media, such as BBC wireless listening groups-organised adult learners, were exploited.³² Although the government cut expenditure on education through much of the interwar period, liberal adult education expanded, even though in the words of Murphy and Todd, as more of a 'slow burning fuse'.³³ It was not until after the Second World War that working-class students started to access further and higher education in any great numbers.

During the Second World War, my grandparents continued their political education, and they now had a son, my father Tom, also a socialist, who became involved in army education. Summerfield describes the nature of this extraordinary adult education and, in particular, the tensions between the War Office and soldiers as each struggled to determine the purpose of citizenship adult education.³⁴ For the War Office, this 'related to responsible participation in democracy, but for many others, like my father, it was learning for remaking capitalist society. In the diaries and letters I have from Ellen and my father, it is clear that they remained committed to a common-good political adult education. My father wrote to Ellen from France in January 1945:

I tell you what I want you to get for me if you can is a book by Aneurin Bevan MP. It's just come out and it's in that yellow book cover class. Bevan should have some interesting points to make. We've been talking about it here a lot because I think we are getting near the end of the war. I'd like to get the full text of Churchill's speech which he is making this afternoon. He's a menace to the proletariats and it's about time people realised who and what they're up against.

In a letter to Ellen in May 1945, he wrote: 'Tell Eva I received the first batch of Common Wealth propaganda. I certainly admire their policy and we are all reading it and think it's splendid'. Just prior to the 1945 General Election, he wrote saying:

I've written to Mr Voss [the prospective MP] just a brief note wishing him luck signed by a BEF [British Expeditionary Force] soldier. I know it's a little melodramatic, but I've become very politically minded during this election and I know I've done good work for Labour in this section. A lot of us have. We all say we can't go on with what we had before, and we must have a big change.

Finally, to two diary entries. On 7 May 1945, Tom writes: 'It's Victory Day. Had good sleep in and then talked to some of the lads. We are wondering what will happen next after the surrender. Will be all change, we want that. Listened to Churchill's and King's Speech, normal tripe. Got drunk. The Armistice was signed at 24.00'.

On Thursday 26 July, his diary entry read: 'AT LAST WE HAVE WON. Labour Party gains great victory in election. Let's see what we can do now, but there is so much to be done we are all going to have to turn our hands to it'.

Meanwhile, in Liverpool, Ellen wrote in her diary (mid-May 1945):

A very nice day, stand an hour for spuds. Eva & I go to Common Wealth garden party & have nice time. We all have a discussion after the tea, and it got very heated. Everyone had different views. On Saturday we'll go to the ILP and Friends for Russia. We all know we are going to have to carry on convincing people, but we won't go back to the Depression.

Finally, now working as a cleaner, Ellen writes in her diary, the week before the 1945 election: ‘We have spent the week writing envelopes for the election ... and talking about the future. Then we got the hall ready where people go to vote. Gave everywhere a good polish and brush up and hope we have luck with the result, varnished some of the chairs ... We are all hoping for change now’.

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Beyond 1945, following the landslide Labour victory, and until the apparent triumph of neoliberalism, liberal adult education thrived, presaging an explosion of creative forms of education aimed at reaching and stimulating a wide audience, finding expression in rural outreach work, residential education, community centres and village colleges. The creation of residential colleges and community-based centres reflected the fervent drive during this period for social reform and a revitalised sense of citizenship. Education was vital to this, in the establishment of universal secondary school education by the 1944 Education Act, as were the wider support structures of the welfare state.

But even here notions of education as a common good accessible to all are problematic. As early as the 1950s it had become clear that, despite the important changes brought about by the 1944 Act and whilst there were by then more educational opportunities for the working class than there had been in 1945, many talented individuals were still branded second-rate, and left behind. Escaping one’s field, and experiencing ‘social flying’, remained stubbornly out of reach for many people. In 1953, Ernest Green, in *Adult Education: why this apathy?*, concluded that for manual and unskilled workers in particular, early school life had a profound effect on whether they chose to go on to further or adult education.³⁵

This was particularly true for those who had left school at 14. Many had found elementary school stultifying and had similar experiences at secondary or grammar school, where they had felt little interest in instilling enthusiasm for a subject or making it relevant to real-life experience. This had led to narrowly defined subjects of a utilitarian nature, with the emphasis on passing exams. It left many feeling inferior or ill-equipped to discuss issues confidently.

Many adult education tutors, such as Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart, were also, by the early 1960s, becoming disillusioned by an adult education bound by such class contingencies. What they had perceived immediately postwar in adult education – a radical space and challenge to the orthodox educational system which focused on the individual – was beginning to seem inadequate to the task of social change and was becoming part of a wider orthodoxy. In *The Long Revolution*, Williams gave voice to some of these frustrations, arguing that insufficient attention was being paid to the

needs of members of 'an educated and participating democracy'.³⁶

My parents were both born during or immediately before the Second World War, my late father John Brian Clancy in 1937 and my mother Pauline Clancy, née Hawson, in 1942. Both were at school after the watershed 1944 Education Act, which created a free education system and raised the school leaving age to 15. Despite this, both left school at 14. Neither was endowed with economic or social resources which might have enabled them to secure advantages, such as passing the '11 plus' and entering grammar school. Their circumstances were not auspicious. Both, as the children of miners, grew up in poor social housing.

My grandfather on my father's side, John Harold Pierce Landers Clancy, was a self-taught, intellectually gifted Welsh miner from the Rhondda Valley who had come to North East Derbyshire for work. He left school at 11. He engaged in learning through a deep love of literature, through reading groups in South Wales and engagement with political activism through the Left Book Club and methodism. Consequently, my father was encouraged to read widely, and my grandfather had a diverse library, which included Thomas De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, from 1821, and several Jack London works, including his 1903 novel *The People of the Abyss*.

My father was clear on the influence of his autodidact father, telling me in an interview with him:

He'd got all of his works all over the house – he'd write on the back of a piece of board and write a love poem to your grandma – he was a romantic and he'd write poems like 'the Sword of Damocles' – he wrote many, he got so keen on it. Well look at all the Dickens - he won the complete set in hardback and being a coal miner'. (Interview John Clancy, 27 June 2011.)

For my father, this atmosphere of learning outside a school system which did little for him, and which reflected a utilitarian secondary education of the nature described by Green, was a defining influence on his educational drive and understanding of what learning might be. My grandfather's poetry – he was awarded the Dickens prize for success in a poetry competition – were powerful counters to his instinctive sense of inferiority.

My father followed my grandfather down the pit, Markham Colliery, at 15, as the only route open to him. In this period, however, the North East Midlands coalfields was an area where the trade unions were strong and day release provision offered by the National Union of Mineworkers, in conjunction with the University of Sheffield (and Nottingham and Leeds), enabled engaged and intelligent men to further their education.

My father's 'second chance' – from this union-funded adult education – came in his early 30s. He engaged in the day release scheme, which required attendance a day a week over three years at Hurst House in Chesterfield. From 1967, this became a popular

adult/community education centre: it is now derelict, having closed as a community venue in 2014, as so many other sites of adult education have.

My father learnt alongside 10 to 15 other students, all, according to my father, working class, and mainly miners and electricians. From the start the learning was a source of imaginative emancipation for him, offering insights into philosophy – the works of John Stuart Mill, for instance, and discussions about human experience such as hedonism, ‘things that sounded magic in my mind’, as my father described it.

This insight from my father made me think of the work of Jonathan Rose. He describes a process whereby 19th and 20th century working-class readers, encountering Shakespeare for the first time, or the works of Thomas Paine or *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, used this as a means of self-development. The official intention may have been to promote ‘good’ or improving literature to counter more ‘ignorant’ tastes, but the result was a drive for changing both the self and society: ‘Liberal education proved more effective than straight indoctrination in making radicals because, frankly, it was more thrilling, more likely to generate the enthusiasm that motivated students to change the world’.³⁷

Raymond Williams echoed this point: ‘Some of those arguing that the poor must be able to read the Bible as a means to their moral improvement, overlooked the fact that there is no way of teaching a man to read the Bible which does not enable him to read the radical press’.³⁸

My father also commented that his education was an act of minor rebellion against the establishment: ‘the right wing didn’t like us to improve ourselves’.

After a huge internal tussle, he finally applied to Ruskin College, Oxford, after the deadline had passed. A fellow student had been whispering ‘Ruskin’ in his ear for weeks, encouraging him to apply. He submitted his application essay entitled ‘What aspects of contemporary social life need more studies by the social services?’ and hitchhiked down to Oxford for his interview. Two days later he found out that he had gained a scholarship to study for a Certificate of Qualification in Social Work. He studied at Ruskin between 1973 and 1975.

Williams argued consistently for ongoing human learning in every life as the most valuable resource available to us. The value of my father’s learning experience at Ruskin was something he carried throughout his life: ‘I was mixing with these people. Not in any inferior way – because I’m from the shop floor, you know’. He attended Ruskin during a period when reclaiming history ‘from below’, giving voice to the non-elite and the marginalised, was at the forefront of educational thinking, with the growth of the oral history movement and community history groups. He was taught by the Marxist historian Raphael Samuel who led the History Workshops, as well as by Michael Barratt-Brown, the British economist and political activist, one of the founders in 1960 of the *New Left Review*, and a contributor to the *May Day Manifesto*.³⁹

Conclusion

In recent decades, notions of lifelong learning have focused on skills acquisition and employability and seek to enforce a ruthless ‘learning to labour’ agenda in schools and colleges – despite the future of work being unknowable.⁴⁰ Faced with multiple pressures, many social movements have buckled. Many university extramural departments, colleges, adult education and community centres have closed their doors. The radical, alternative, disciplinary-spanning and politically emancipatory types of education which so benefited our grandparents and parents are increasingly splintered and identity-focused. Goodson attributed the loss of collective identity, the atomisation of interests and groups, to the passing of the postwar ‘egalitarian project’, which he argued provided an ‘over-arching social movement’ where those committed to the common good worked collectively to reconstruct a world in which they wanted to live.⁴¹

Yet despite this, more reductionist notions of lifelong learning are being challenged and there are brilliant examples of informal, community and adult learning taking place which reflect many of the impulses of social-purpose/common-good education.⁴² When we revisited the 1919 report as members of the Centenary Commission on Adult Education in 2019, we were concerned to ensure that this social purpose learning was properly acknowledged.⁴³ Such examples of adult education often took place in less conventional educational settings and with aims which were not immediately recognisable in terms of more conventional notions of ‘common good’, but they were focused on agency and emancipation.

This takes us to one of the great challenges ahead for any adult education focused on building a post-capitalist world. The clear-sightedness with which our parents and grandparents understood adult education for ‘their’ common good, based on class, seems as if from a different country. In reality, it was never unambiguous or unproblematic, but in the current period identifying the common good is even more challenging. If everyone’s common good is different, can a common-good adult education still be relevant? Where, can we find shared imperatives of learning, social meaning, agency and activism? Alternatively, perhaps while environments appear different, universal values are aligned and a consensus – giving ‘allyship’ an important role – remains on what constitutes the common good.⁴⁴

We argue, echoing Goodson, that whilst people associated with the ‘egalitarian project’ of the postwar years are still alive, or represented through their children, the ‘collective memory of that struggle still provides resources for hope’ and that we have a duty to share and debate it. We also seek to reclaim the best of liberal adult education.⁴⁵

Of course, we have heard anxieties about liberal adult education as a means of ‘gentling the masses’, with an overemphasis, for some, on the arts and the metaphysical and spiritual at the cost of political and vocational concerns: ‘A distinct word of warning

to those who are having so much to say about spiritual value in adult education. The Metaphysical Interpretation of Adult Education may be a song that echoes sweetly in the cloister, but it will sound very different in the steel mills, down the pit, in the factories and on the docks'.⁴⁶

Yet perhaps these distinctions are no longer helpful. We have also seen evidence of the experience of vocationally oriented liberal education full of the richness of an interdisciplinary approach to learning, bringing together history, art and literature, and the social sciences. This has long been a feature of a teaching approach to adults, exploring the breadth of human lived experience across the normal divisions of academic disciplines. For John Clancy, the education he received transcended metaphysical/political and vocational/non-vocational divisions. It was music, ideas and poetry which were the radical tools of his emancipation. 'Thank God we had the Picketers Arms – I did start to drink more though – because people would buy me drinks for singing – I became an alcoholic [laughs] – to keep me singing. "Come on Clancy get your guitar!". Music's so important – it's a great way of talking to people' (interview with John Clancy, 27 June 2011).

And for Tom Dugdale, attending WEA and Clarion classes in the 1960s: 'I did all the classes and the technical classes because for the best future, you need the labour of the hand and the brain. They are equal and that's what people forget'.

Perhaps it is human society itself that is the common good. As Raymond Williams said, 'society is itself an educative process ... a method of association and co-operation'.⁴⁷ Perhaps we avoid fragmentation and a focus on individual identity at the cost of a collective understanding through a critical consciousness which enables us to face systemic social, political and ecological crises. We do this through engaging in a critical pedagogy geared towards contestation and mobilisation as a means of pulling the brake on capital and reclaiming common good and the 'egalitarian project'.

Sharon Clancy is Associate Professor in education at the University of Nottingham. Her research focus is emancipatory adult education, historical and contemporary. She is Chair of the Raymond Williams Foundation, co-chair of SCUTREA (Standing Committee on University Teaching and Research in the Education of Adults) and co-editor of *Studies in the Education of Adults*.

sharon.clancy@nottingham.ac.uk

Cilla Ross is an academic, adult educator, researcher and writer. She currently works as a tutor for UK labour unions and is honorary professor of Co-operative Education at the University of Nottingham.

Cilla.ross@nottingham.ac.uk

Notes

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