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The Next Forum

The main feature of this number is a symposium on 'Improving Secondary Schools', the Hargreaves Report for the ILEA. Among contributors are Peter Mitchell, John Harrington, Dr F.D. Rushworth, Clyde Chitty and other teachers from London and elsewhere. Although very pressed, David Hargreaves may contribute himself.

In addition, Liz Thomson writes on the vexed question of specialist teaching in primary schools and Diane Pickover on negotiating the curriculum — also in the primary field.

The Democratic Control of Education

Relations between the major 'partners' in the field of education have never been worse than they are today. The government's determination to hand over to the Manpower Services Commission a substantial proportion of moneys due to the Rate Support Grant so that the former can directly control what goes on in further education has resulted in a sharp confrontation with both of the main local authority associations (AMA and CCA), now reinforced by the Council of Local Education Authorities (CLEA). At their conference late in July the White Paper, **Training for Jobs**, was thoroughly condemned as 'an unwarranted and misconceived attack on local authorities and their colleges'. By Ministerial edict earlier the Schools Council was summarily abolished. The result is the boycott by the leading teachers' union of Keith Joseph's nominated quangos — the Curriculum and Examinations Councils. So both the main local authority and teacher organisations express their alienation and disgust with the style and actions favoured by the present government. The 'partnership', lauded by the Secretary of State at his Sheffield speech early this year lies in tatters, destroyed by the unremitting thrust towards central, and therefore arbitrary and undemocratic control by the centre — the DES and now the MSC. As Mr John Pearmain, deputy chairman of the AMA's education committee, put it at the CLEA conference, the 'constitutional crisis' over who runs the education service has seriously worsened over the last year.

This special number on The Democratic Control of Education comes, therefore, at an apposite time. Its object is not only to alert people to what is going on, as in the article entitled 'To Whom Do Schools Belong?', but to open up broader questions relating to alternative strategies and forms of action. These concern the possibilities of mass community action in defence of local comprehensive systems, as at Solihull, vividly reported by Michael Richer whose children attend local schools; as well as the local battle at Croxteth to preserve, and perhaps transform as a resource for the whole community, an individual comprehensive school, reported and analysed by Phil Carspecken and Henry Miller. These events raise to a new level the whole discussion about community-school relations, analysed in the article by John Rennie on Coventry. In the democratic control of education local communities clearly have an important part to play. Developments at Solihull and elsewhere, and at Croxteth both, in their different ways, indicate that at moments of crisis, community action can be decisive. The problem is how to harness this fund of goodwill towards individual schools and systems so that participation and involvement become the norm rather than the exception. This will certainly not be achieved by the measures advocated in the Green Paper, **Parental Influence at School**, as Richard Pring argues clearly in his article 'The New Governing Bodies'. Community involvement requires community representation, alongside teachers, parents and the local authority, as the Taylor report argued some years ago.

But the issue of democratic control goes deeper than this, as argued by Ned Newitt, John Bull and our two student contributors. How can our schools be transformed into democratic institutions — and what is or should be the role of teachers and students in this respect? Governing bodies are, of course, important, particularly in mediating the school's relations with the external world, but what goes on within the school relates specifically to the interaction between teachers and students. There is, therefore, a strong argument for consciously developing the tradition of teacher participation in school policy making and control which, as Newitt argues, emerged in several areas with the transition to comprehensive education almost as a necessity, due both to the complex nature and larger size of comprehensive schools. Although Ministerial pronouncements now appear deliberately to give enhanced emphasis to the autocratic role of the head, democratic and participatory practices are well grounded and considerable experience has been gained.

If the school system is to release the energies and especially the creative qualities of teachers and other staff, as it must do if it is to function effectively, the opportunity for collective discussion and leadership must be broadly spread among all those involved — including, and perhaps particularly, the young. Autocratic leadership — by the State, the local authority, the head, and as John Bull argues in his article, by the individual class teacher, can inhibit the exercise of individual initiative and run the danger (as present government actions show only too clearly) of alienating precisely those forces on whom creative development depends. That is why all such tendencies need to be vigorously opposed by those genuinely involved in the process of **education**, which seeks to develop precisely such qualities as initiative, creativity, reflection and autonomy.

To Whom do Schools Belong?

Brian Simon

There is no doubt whatever that the present government, aided and abetted (and probably spurred on) by Ministry officials at the DES, is launching a powerful series of initiatives aimed to enhance centralised control over what goes on in schools (and colleges, it might be added). That this has been a primary objective of Ministry officials for some years has been clear enough, but now the pace is hotting up, the objectives being clearer, and beginning to be publicly stated with a frankness that could never have been politically acceptable in the past. The climate of the times - especially the Thatcher government's clear emphasis on the need for a strong state (even if elected on the promise to 'roll back its frontiers') - provides the opportunity.

'Our focus' a 'high Ministry official' is reported as saying,[1] referring to plans for the 16-19 age group,

> must be on the strategic questions of the content, shape and purposes of the whole educational system and absolutely central to that is the curriculum. We would like legislative powers over the curriculum and the powers to control the exam system by ending all those independent charters of the exam bodies.

If that is not a clear statement of the intentions of the bureaucracy, what about this?[2]

> I see a return to centralisation of a different kind with the centre seeking to determine what goes on in institutions; this is a more fundamental centralisation than we have seen before.

It certainly is. Further quotations indicate that what the DES officials are concerned with is the age-old question of social control. There appears to be a growing fear of the consequences of over-education in conditions of mass unemployment and de-industrialisation. 'There has to be selection', another official is quoted as saying, 'because we are beginning to create aspirations which increasingly society cannot match. **In some ways this points to the success of education in contrast to the public mythology which has been created'** (an interesting admission, my emphasis, BS). There is a danger of frustration when young people 'cannot find work at all, or work which meets their abilities and expectations'. This can lead to 'disturbing social consequences'. Or, as another says, considerable social change, as at present, can lead to 'social unrest, but', he adds, 'we can cope with the Toxteth's', but 'if we have a highly educated and idle population we may possibly anticipate more serious social conflict'. And the conclusion is baldly stated: **'People must be educated once more to know their place'** (my emphasis, BS).

These quotations, from a research project on central-local relations, illuminate the motivation behind a series of recent measures intended to restructure schooling and ensure a tight, even detailed, centralised control over the entire process. One of the objectives appears to be effectively to dampen students' expectations and aspirations in the light of conditions in the (sharply contracting) labour market. To achieve this on a national basis, centralised controls are now seen as necessary. Once arrogated by 'the centre', however, such controls will be very difficult to unravel; they will be there for future governments to use, and enhance, as they see fit. Education, to use Lord Eustace Percy's phrase of long ago, 'is at the crossroads'.

What are the chief recent indications of this centralising policy as far as the schools are concerned? I will focus only on three recent measures.

First, the Technical and Vocational Educational Initiative (TVEI), and, related to that the Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education (CPVE — the 17-plus). These are both clear attempts by the government to 'break the mould' of existing practice by hammer blows from outside. With generous resources provided, not through the education structure but directly from the Manpower Services Commission, an alternative, very specific, technical/vocational curriculum is being developed in the schools for named groups of students aged 14 to 18. This initiative, and the techniques used, militates, and is intended to militate, against the declared objectives of comprehensive education — to provide, *for all,* a broad general education which includes access to scientific and technical knowledge and skills. TVEI is bound to impose new systems of differentiation within secondary schools, and that is its objective. This is a key aspect of the 'restructuring' of secondary education the present government seems determined to carry through.

Second, Keith Joseph's decisions about the 'single' exam at 16 plus — the proposed new GCSE. The original announcement late in June was welcomed both by Giles Radice for Labour in the House of Commons and by Fred Jarvis for the NUT — prematurely in my view. Both expressed support for the proposals on the grounds that the fusion of GCE and CSE into a single exam for all students had long been a primary objective

both of teachers in comprehensive schools and many others — the existing system, said Radice, was 'divisive and wasteful', and this, of course, has been widely accepted.

But what are the chief features of the proposed exam as announced by Joseph? First, it is totally clear that this will **not** be a single exam for all, nor anything near it; instead it will be a system embodying differentiation and grading of Byzantine complexity. As Joseph put it when making the original announcement, the GCSE **'will be a system of examinations,** not a single examination' (my emphasis, BS). There will be 'differentiated papers or questions in every subject'. (*The Times,* 21 June 1984). The present GCE exam boards are to be retained and responsible for examining grades A to C — these 'will be clearly distinguished from grades D to G'. These lower grades will be the responsibility of the present CSE boards. What is happening is that a new, more precisely rationalised system of differentiation covering **all** students is to take the place of the old.

Further, the measure proposed embodies a clear bid for centralised control not only over the curriculum in general, but over each of its differentiated levels. This is achieved by the definition of 'national criteria' covering every subject (**Forum** carried an article on Joseph's arbitrary decisions on science criteria in the last issue).[4] These 'criteria' are clearly designed as 'instruments' by which control is shifted to the centre, since the Secretary of State must approve them. Nor is it only a question of **general** criteria governing overall examining and therefore teaching objectives — in addition there are to be 'grade-related criteria' which, Joseph announced, 'will specify the knowledge, understanding and skill expected for the award of particular grades'.

This implies that for each and every subject, seven sets of 'grade-related criteria' are to be established, in the attempt to define precisely what should be taught (or rather, learned) at **each** level. This surely implies the imposition of a differentiated system *par excellence.* As the official quoted earlier put it: **People must be educated once more to know their place'** — and the DES is given the job of ensuring it.

Third, the Green Paper on school governors published in May. What is the intention — or likely objective outcome, of this proposal, as I write having the status only of a consultative document?

If it is implemented (and there is strong opposition) this proposal would establish representatives of local elites as majorities on all school governing bodies — and on a mass scale. The great majority of these, in the present circumstances, are likely to be of middle-class provenance. However such a system would operate, one thing is clear — the measure is one more slap in the face for local authorities. Admittedly their statutory responsibilities are recognised in the scheme in terms of a somewhat confused attempt to define relevant responsibilities. But the proposal aims to diminish the direct influence of local authorities over their own schools in favour of local parental elites. This is, in fact, openly stated at the start; the object is to 'increase the functions' of governing bodies 'in relation to local education authorities'. This further diminution of local authority powers and influence will, of course, enhance those of the centre. This, then, appears as simply another strand in the complex web of measures through which DES officials and the present government plan to fetter the schools in as tight a set of bonds as can be applied in present circumstances.

Some 80 years ago, a distinguished German educationist, Professor Rein of Jena, asked the question 'To whom do schools belong?' in a lecture at Cambridge University. This, he said, was the central point in dispute; do they belong 'to the family, to the community, to the church or to the State?' To Rein, the answer was straightforward. Since compulsory education 'is closely connected with military service and manhood suffrage . . . the State which embraces politically the social whole, is and must be master of the school'. This solution seemed self-evident.

It was not, however, at all self-evident to W.O. Lester Smith, Manchester's distinguished Director of Education in the '30s and '40s (and later), who went on to hold a chair at the London Institute. In his book of this title[5] he argued strongly for the then English tradition of a partnership between local authorities, the voluntary bodies and the state. His book, written and published during World War II, was intended to alert people even then against what he saw as unwarranted centralising tendencies. It was his view that what he called the 'Triple Alliance' in England (and Wales) had stood the test of time — since 1870 it had been 'as a bulwark against the winds and waves of controversy'.[6]

By the mid-20th century the place of the churches in this 'alliance' had been superceded by the teachers — largely as a result of the massive growth in secondary education in which the churches had few footholds. But, over the last ten to twenty years, both local authorities and teachers have lost power, influence and organisation. The dissolution of the Association of Education Committees and later the summary abolition of the Schools Council are symptomatic. Into the vacuum has stepped the State — in the person of the DES and, in particular, of the MSC — its way being eased, or even promoted, by contemporary politicians whose ideology and political outlook this development reflects.

This number of **Forum** is devoted to the 'Democratic Control of Education'. That is not the way things are going if these measures are implemented unless radically modified. But the events at Solihull (and elsewhere) and at Croxteth in Liverpool (both recorded in this number) show that resistance is not only possible, but, at certain levels and on certain issues, has every possibility of success. These issues were fought by local populations and communities not prepared to bow down to arbitrary edicts from above.

A similar degree of resistance is necessary now, but this time on a national level. The DES fear is of over education relative to *existing* opportunities, as is made clear in the quotations at the start of this article. It is the very *success* of education which, it is argued, may lead to 'serious social conflict'; hence the Draconian counter-measures proposed, both to cut education itself down to size, and to ensure detailed and precise control over the curriculum, and hence what goes on in schools. **'People must be educated once more to know their place'** — enhanced central control is to be the means by which this is enforced. As I write Keith Joseph promises a new curriculum policy statement he himself expects to 'provoke fierce disagreements'[7] and this no doubt will take the centralising measures one step further. Those

Parent Power and Selection in Solihull

Michael Richer
Actively involved in Solihull Parents for Educational Equality, Dr Michael Richer has lived and worked (in industry) in Solihull for 17 years. He has one daughter in the fifth year of a comprehensive school, and one in the third year of a junior school.

Solihull has a huge media image as a solidly Conservative, upper middle-class area. The first description is true; in 1983 when it proposed the re-introduction of selective education, exactly two-thirds of its councillors were Conservative, and unlike any other West Midlands borough, there is no likelihood of the Council changing hands. The second is only true of limited areas. Solihull has three parts, thrown together as a matter of convenience in 1974 for reasons which had more to do with the geography and politics of the West Midlands than with the creation of a logical unit. The first part, known as the South, is basically the old County Borough, centred on Solihull village and including the suburban sprawl between it and Birmingham. Much of it is indistinguishable from the neighbouring suburbs of Birmingham, and is predominantly lower middle-class. The second part, known as the North, also borders Birmingham, and consists almost entirely of a 1960's Birmingham overspill council estate. This is geographcally remote from the South, being connected only by a narrow strip containing Birmingham Airport, the National Exhibition Centre, and a motorway interchange. The third part, referred to here as the East, is a country area. It has a number of villages which are smart commuter areas for Birmingham and Coventry, and comes closest to the media image of Solihull. Surprisingly, it was from this part that the strongest opposition to 11+ selection came.

With local government re-organisation, the new authority inherited a selective system from Solihull and a comprehensive system from Warwickshire (covering the North and the East). A working party which examined the different systems at that time recommended, on educational grounds, the adoption of the comprehensive system. This was accepted by all parties and without significant dissent from the public; and was implemented progressively from September 1974. (By 1983 only five cohorts had passed through to 'O'-level, and three to 'A'-level). The system is basically five-year Comprehensives with a central Sixth Form College, but some out-lying areas retained their seven-year Comprehensives.

The new system appeared to be accepted and effective. Why consider changing it? There had of course always been some parents who resented the loss of the grammar schools. Some chose independent schools; others moved to the catchment area of Tudor Grange, the former Solihull grammar school; others applied for Tudor Grange from other areas. This situation was workable until 1983, when falling rolls forced the Council to announce the progressive closure from 1984 of two schools in the North and two in the South. This meant the complete re-drawing of catchment areas. Because of its location in relation to these schools and to a large nearby housing development, and because its existing catchment was based more on social patterns than on geography, Tudor Grange was particularly affected. The Council received nearly fifty objections, mainly concerning the threat to property values in those areas transferred to other schools! Whilst the Education Committee could not accept property values as a reason for revising the proposed catchment areas, it clearly did not wish to antagonise these parents.

Around this time, the Secretary of State for Education and his Schools Minister had been actively reminding local authorities of their right to re-introduce selective education. Their attitude was very close to that of Cllr. Meacham, the previous Chairman of the Education Committee, who had recently displaced a 'middle of the road' man as Council Leader. It is likely that Solihull was given particular encouragement to spearhead a national movement back to selection; and it would both serve the new philosophy and overcome the catchment area problem! Confident of general support, the Leader and Cllr. Ellis, Chairman of Education, decided to go for selection.

(Continued from page 5)

who stand by the principle of democratic control of education must, I suggest, use every opportunity tenaciously to contest these and like measures and strengthen by every means *democratic* in place of dirigiste control.

References

1. Quoted in Stewart Ranson, 'Towards a Tertiary Tripartism', in Patricia Broadfoot, ed., **Selection, Certification and Control** (The Falmer Press, 1984), 224. This and later quotations are derived from interview notes by the author carried through during an SSRC research project into Central-Local Relations, 1979-82.
2. **Ibid.**, 238.
3. **Ibid.**, 241.
4. Angela Dixon, 'Keith Joseph and the Science Criteria', **Forum**, Vol.25, No.3.
5. W.O. Lester Smith, **To Whom Do Schools Belong?** (1942).
6. **Ibid.**, 115.
7. **Times Educational Supplement**, 8 June 1984.

The decision first surfaced in the national press. There was immediate uproar. Conservative councillors resented the lack of consultation, and some made known the objections from opposition parties and from teachers' unions. But the Council instructed the Director of Education to submit a report.

The Director's first hastily-produced report referred to strong parental preferences for certain schools, and noted a wide disparity between schools in the proportion of pupils attaining the equivalent of five 'O'-levels. It underlined the disparity between the North and the South, and concluded from IQ figures that it published that there was no case for a selective school in the North. This immediately alienated parents there, who took little further part in the debate. The report suggested that in the South, Tudor Grange, and in the East, Arden School, might be selective, these being the two schools with the best 'O'-level results. This may have caused some satisfaction in the South, but the Council was to learn that in the East a major mistake had been made. The Education Committee accepted the report on 21 September, but rebel Conservative councillors forced an amendment so that it was only accepted 'in principle'.

The first report was strongly criticised by teachers and parents. Teachers' objections were summed up in a letter to the local press signed by all the borough's secondary heads (except for Tudor Grange). The same week, Councillor Meacham told the press 'We need to get rid of inadequate head teachers'. 'The schools where teachers walk round in casual clothes and encourage the pupils to call them by their christian names are not the sort we want here — it encourages a sloppy attitude'. 'Frankly I think we should be much more selective about our teaching staff, particularly head teachers'. The two items shared the front page with a third, announcing the formation of a parents' action group called 'Solihull Parents for Educational Equality' (SPEE). And the row began to attract the attention of the national press.

SPEE was created when Arden PTA voted by 193 to 1 to oppose selection, and some of these parents decided to form a borough-wide action group, so as to overcome any constitutional constraints imposed on PTAs. These parents were not in the main politically involved, but middle-class people who did not wish to see their children's education disrupted for dogmatic reasons. Many were grammar school educated, but had come to appreciate the benefits of comprehensive education through the experience of their children. They knew little about organising public meetings, but decided to risk their own money to arrange a meeting in the centre of Solihull, for parents from all over the Borough. They began to establish links with the local and national press, with the Campaign for the Advancement of State Education (CASE) and through them with academic experts who might help with an appraisal of the proposals. On the other hand, they avoided links with political or union organisations, to make it clear that they represented only the interests of parents.

The SPEE public meeting on 10 October attracted around 350 parents. (Public meetings arranged by the NUT, and the opposition parties, even with nationally known politicians, were not as well attended). This was a turning point. Apart from establishing the strong concern which existed, and allowing an exchange of ideas, it provided SPEE with working funds, an extensive list of contacts, and volunteers to act as co-ordinators in each secondary catchment area. Through these SPEE could contact local PTA's, which had no central organisation. One significant contact was with the other school in the East, Heart of England, where the community-wide objection to the likely creaming of the school was so strong that the governors issued a public condemnation, and their chairman became a significant figure in the campaign. Ironically, this was in Cllr Meacham's ward, and part of the Arden School catchment area was in the ward of Cllr Ellis. Seldom can politicians have been so out of touch with those they represented!

Solihull was now in a ferment which was to last for six months. One local paper headlined **'Meetings all over Solihull protest their ANGER OVER SCHOOLS'**, and reported eight meetings of PTA's, teachers' unions, and political groups which had recorded 'overwhelming objections' that week. Both papers increased their letters from one to three or four pages for weeks on end; at least two-thirds of the letters published were against selection. Encouraged by SPEE, PTA's throughout the Borough debated the proposals. Invariably they voted by around 9 to 1 against.

The next Council Meeting, the day after the SPEE meeting, had been expected to make the final decision. But senior Conservative councillors made it clear that they would not support the re-introduction of grammar schools (the former leader saying 'I will do my damnedest to get it thrown out'). The leader of the Labour group condemned the plans as ill-conceived, appallingly executed, unpopular and unworkable. The Council called for a further report. Cllr Meacham remained adamant that the plans would go through, unless a majority of the Borough's electorate decided otherwise. He was not however interested in a referendum.

SPEE now began preparing for the second report, which was due to be discussed by the Education Committee on 29 February 1984. One lesson had been learned, and the Council had made the unusual decision to release the report to the public six weeks beforehand. SPEE arranged for the report to be reviewed by its academic contacts, and for some of their own members to compile a detailed reply. They also planned a further public meeting, to be addressed by Mrs Joan Sallis of CASE and Mr David Reynolds of University College, Cardiff, and by Cllr Meacham.

The Director of Education's second report was much longer, but no better received. Given the longer time available, it was expected to make a much stronger case than before. However, it drew universal criticism for its inadequacies. Tactically, it tried to meet the objections from the East by recommending Tudor Grange as the only selective school, thus reprieving Arden and reducing the creaming of Heart of England (and also now of Arden). Fewer than ten per cent of the borough's children would now be selected. But by then it was too late to buy anyone off! Amazingly, the report attempted to justify selection by pointing to the controversial Marks and Cox report on 'Standards in English Schools'; to a national Gallup Poll on the public's (not parents') subjective views on the effectiveness of different types of school; to further evidence on the disparity in academic achievement

between Solihull schools; and to the fact that a certain number of bright children were going from borough primary schools to independent secondary schools.

Each of these arguments could be heavily criticised; but the comparative statistics were particularly vulnerable. Using admittedly rough data, the report introduced the concept of a 'value-added' factor for measuring schools' performance. This was calculated by dividing the percentage of children in each school obtaining at least five 'O'-level equivalents, by the percentage of that cohort having NFER scores of more than 115 at entry. However, it was clear from the data that the differences in achievement were less than might be expected from the differences in intake; and that the schools with the 'best' results had achieved considerably less improvement with their intake than many apparently worse schools. Tudor Grange clearly only did well because of its catchment area, and its relatively low 'value-added' suggested it was not very effective educationally!

Convinced that the situation was unchanged, SPEE circularised all its members. It encouraged them to write to councillors, to attend the planned public meeting, and to get their PTAs to run a poll. Learning that the Secretary of State was bound to consider parents' wishes before approving any re-organisation, SPEE challenged the Council to allow a binding ballot of all parents. Cllr. Meacham refused, but was now prepared to take note of polls organised by individuals PTAs. Rebel and wavering Conservative councillors were lobbied. The press debate was also pursued, and a half-page advertisement inserted. The formation of a second committee, based in the South, to handle the increasing activity was announced.

SPEE's second meeting, televised like the first, was attended by nearly 500 parents who heard the two visiting speakers assess the report. Cllr Meacham then answered a barrage of questions. He refused to abandon his commitment, but appeared to be making some contingency plans to avoid going down with the ship if it sank!

And so the debate and activity raged on. SPEE issued to every councillor a section by section criticism of the Director's report, together with an academic's analysis of its statistics. These must have confirmed what many councillors were already thinking, as two days before the crucial Education Committee meeting on 28 February, the Conservative councillors met and decided to abandon selective education. It was, said one of them, 'a victory for middle-class parent power'. (And wasn't this supposedly the main source of grammar school support?)

The main issue is settled. But the arguments are not yet over. The Director's second report included various recommendations for 'improving standards'. The Council agreed to set up a working party to examine these, and took immediate steps to implement some. Gluttons for punishment, they also ordered a report on standards in primary education! SPEE has resolved to continue, as an affiliate of CASE, to monitor further developments. The issue has thus generated a continuing public involvement in education, which would have been unthinkable before in hitherto complacent Solihull.

A footnote was written in the May elections. During the debate, SPEE had announced its support for a local Residents' Association candidate who was to stand against Cllr Ellis. The latter decided not to stand, and was replaced by Mr Peter Tebbit, brother of the cabinet minister, and an ardent supporter of grammar schools. He lost. And perhaps he has passed back to the government, the message that selection is a non-starter in Solihull; which probably means it is unacceptable anywhere. That would be a fitting reward for the efforts of Mr Peter Thompson, chairman of SPEE, and his committee.

Community Education in Croxteth

Phil Carspecken and Henry Miller
Both Phil Carspecken and Henry Miller have taught at Croxteth Community Comprehensive School; Phil Carspecken taught maths in the USA and has taught maths at Croxteth since 1982. Henry Miller taught history at Croxteth for most of 1983. He is currently researching at Aston, where Phil Carspecken is studying for a Ph.D. The authors here discuss community action at Croxteth.

The question of community is complex and contentious. The concept of community is itself ancient, ambiguous, and its political use various (Bell and Newby 1971). Community education has been espoused by conservatives, liberals and progressives (eg: Bantock 1971, Midwinter 1972 and Fletcher 1980) attempting to relate schooling to the perceived needs of local working-class communities. But it has also been criticised for its assumption of 'coherent communities' with needs somehow different from mainstream culture (Merson and Campbell 1974). Certainly the experience of William Tyndale and Risinghill suggests that well intentioned teachers attempting liberal, child-centred curricula in working-class areas can be isolated and crushed by politicians and bureaucrats who seem more in tune with the traditional aspirations of parents (Frith and Corrigan 1977).

While most of the debate over community education has been about curricula and pedagogy, in the case of Croxteth Comprehensive these issues play a subordinate role to those of provisions, politics, power and control. It is a tribute to the organisational competence of the

Croxteth Community Action Committee that many readers will have heard about the long campaign to save Croxteth Comprehensive School from closure and the eventual occupation and running of the school during 1982/83. While it is usually middle-class pressure groups that display such expertise in public relations, the efforts of Philip Knibb and Cyril D'Arcy in particular, the chairman and secretary of the action committee, ensured regular accounts in newspaper articles and television programmes.

Detailed accounts of the campaign and occupation have already appeared (Carspecken and Miller 1983, 1984, and Carspecken 1984 — forthcoming). In this article we shall pay particular attention to some aspects of the relationship of Croxteth School to its community during the year of its occupation.

Croxteth more than most areas can be conceived of as a community. It is a large council estate built on the north-eastern edge of Liverpool during the 1950s and '60s. Its 24,000 people reside within fairly distinct boundaries. The East Lancashire Road, Croxteth Park and open country lie on three of its sides and a double carriage highway runs between it and the rest of Liverpool. A very few people own their own houses on the estate. Most people have been rehoused from the dock areas of central Liverpool into council accommodations. Within the estate there is a mixture of tower blocks, terrace housing, three-storey walk-ups and recently a few bungalows.

It is a fairly homogeneous, white working-class housing estate (96.6 per cent of the residents were born in the UK). Nevertheless, when it comes to the question of community identity there are important divisions. Distinctions between smaller areas within the estate like the 'Gems' area and the 'Triangle', between Catholic and Protestant, between the employed and unemployed, and age and gender constitute their own basis for community.

Since the 1950s local employment has steadily declined. In 1961 22,000 people worked in the industrial estates on the East Lancashire Road (Napiers, English Electric, Plesseys, etc). This dropped to 14,000 by 1971 and to 2,000 by 1981 with the redundancies continuing to this day. Unemployment in the surrounding area was 27 per cent in 1981 and the Croxteth Area Working Party Report of 1983 states that unemployment on the estate is over 50 per cent for the active adult population. Post-16 youth unemployment rates have been calculated as high as 90 per cent, and the rates continue to climb.

Housing conditions in Croxteth are atrocious, though improvements have recently begun. Poor initial construction and design, overcrowding, poor maintenance and vandalism have all taken their toll. There is extensive damp because of the low absorbance capacity of interior walls. Black and green mould, rats, and resulting poor health and insecurity are prevalent.

There are few facilities on the estate. It has no shopping centre, no baths, no job centre. Its health clinic would probably have been cut if Labour hadn't won an overall council majority in May 1983. Its shops are few in number with high prices, its library small and open only three days a week.

The deprivation on the Croxteth estate has lessened somewhat recently with the housing improvements and the building of a new sports/youth centre. The campaign to save the school was the most striking example of growing community activity to improve conditions and there is reason to hope for a brighter future. But on 10 November 1980, the day the *Liverpool Echo* brought out the first announcement of the plan to close Croxteth Comprehensive, life on the estate looked bleak indeed. The school was one of the very few resources, both materially and symbolically, that people had. Many were determined to hold it.

The *Echo* article was the first the residents had heard of any plan to close their school. It was part of the Liberal's most recent attempt to reorganise secondary provision in the city and called for the amalgamation of Croxteth Comprehensive with Ellergreen Comprehensive two miles away. Its chief architect was Michael Storey, the Liberal chairman of the Education Committee who also happened to be councillor for the ward containing Ellergreen. The announcement upset a lot of people in Croxteth. Pat Rigby, secretary of the Croxteth Federation, describes the response that day in her office:

> That same day there was a steady stream of people coming in asking what we knew about the closure of the school. They were all condemning it. I think it was the first time the whole community had really reacted to something, and they all reacted in the same way — with total disbelief and shock.

A few days later, 650 parents and concerned adults came to a protest meeting held inside the school. An action committee was formed and a campaign of intensive lobbying begun. The school staff and governors also began a campaign of their own. George Smith, the head teacher, immediately wrote the Education Committee in protest over the lack of consultation and created a staff committee to formulate alternative plans for their consideration.

However, despite an intensive campaign waged by both teachers and parents (Carspecken and Miller 1983) the city council voted in favour of the amalgamation on 28 January 1981. Sir Keith Joseph approved the closure on 30 November, and it seemed to many that 1981/82 would be the last school year for Croxteth Comprehensive.

The Action Committee wasn't admitting defeat, however. It reorganised itself and began a campaign of civil disobedience, which included the blockage of traffic on the East Lancs Road and in the town centre. Offices of the *Liverpool Echo* and the LEA were occupied. The Conservative Party, which had initially supported the Liberals on the closure plan, changed their minds after a visit to the estate on 1 March 1982, with the result that the city council voted on 3 March with a majority of 31 to re-establish a school on the estate. Sir Keith Joseph, however, rejected the council's change of heart in May, so that the Action Committee was still faced with a legal order to end their school at the finish of its summer term.

The school was occupied on 13 July as the last expedient to keep it open. The occupation was to be used as a political lever on behalf of the local community to get the local Education Authority and the DES to retain it as an ordinary county comprehensive serving the estate. It was not specifically to be a 'community school' — that concept developed much later and even now vies with the notion of a 'proper school'.

In August a pilot summer programme for children and parents was run while word went out that volunteer

teachers would be needed to help open the school in the autumn. The school was drawing a fair amount of public sympathy through its frequent coverage in the media. Its frequent mention on news broadcasts and in the newspapers and the showing of the thirty-minute 'Who's Killing Croxteth' on BBC Open Door attracted enough volunteers to begin classes in the basics on 20 September, the first day of the autumn term.

Volunteers continued to come throughout the next ten months so that over seventy taught in the school at one time or another. Some only stayed for a few days or weeks, others stayed for months or the whole year. Commitments varied from teaching one day out of five to teaching five days a week with extra work on weekends, after school, and weekly overnight picket duty.

About 30 per cent of the teachers had previous experience and qualifications, 40 per cent were recent graduates with no educational qualifications or experience, and roughly another 30 per cent, coming mainly from Croxteth itself, had no academic qualifications or previous teaching experience. Most of the volunteers in the last category taught for small periods of time only and took non-academic subjects like needlework, games, woodwork and outings. However, a few were long-term and full time, like Mick Chechland and Joey Jacobs who were the PE and games teachers for the whole year. Both had grown up on the estate, began as laboratory technicians but ended up teaching a significant number of classes in the sciences. There were parents too, like Pat Brennen and Margarate Gaskell who worked in the office and corridors every day and taught the occasional class when a teacher wasn't available.

Parents and other helpers from the estate saw to all the 'non-educational' aspects of running the school. They ran the kitchen, which supplied free meals throughout the year, located and transported equipment, tended the boilers, cleaned the rooms and corridors every night and maintained a twenty-four hour picket. They were a permanent presence in the school buildings no teacher or child could ignore.

The unusual co-operation between parent and teacher, and the high degree of involvement of the former in the school led some of the volunteer teachers to hope in the beginning for an alternative approach to education. Conditions seemed ripe for the breakdown of traditional barriers between parent, teacher and pupil. The almost daily staff meetings during the first few weeks confirmed that the school organisation, at any rate, would be unique. There was no 'head teacher', only a teacher and co-ordinator. Teachers and parents sat together, democratically discussing the many problems of running the school and the various aspects of the political campaign to save it.

But for a number of reasons no real alternative approach emerged when it came to classroom practice (Carspecken — forthcoming). In particular, the attitudes of the parents were rather traditional towards education. Many of the teachers felt something like an air of deference emanating from parent to teacher when they first arrived at the school. The action committee made it clear at the beginning that it didn't consider itself competent to have anything to do with the actual schooling of the children — that aspect of the occupation would have to be left to those with the training and experience. Yet at the same time, the action committee took ultimate responsibility for the education of the children attending the school and assured parents that the school would be closed immediately if a 'proper education' couldn't be provided. Many of the teachers had come with political and educational ideals which had to be subordinated to the wishes of the action committee. As Chris Hawes, the first teacher co-ordinator, put it: 'Politically we the teachers were at the service of the action committee . . . we were serving the needs and wants of the community'. And the wants of the community were certainly not for any sort of alternative education in the beginning. The action committee was engaged in running Croxteth Comprehensive not as a free school or an alternative school or even as a 'communuity school' in terms of a school curriculum relating to the local environment, but simply as a holding operation until the state would agree to maintain it again with pretty much the same sort of traditional educational practice that it had always provided.

Parents were not always in agreement, particularly over matters of discipline. Caning had been used in Croxteth before the occupation and some parents thought it should continue. Other parents and the teachers as a whole were opposed to corporal punishment and pupils were in the end not caned. Most teachers didn't mind pupils addressing them by their first names but many parents believed this reduced respect for teachers and encouraged bad behaviour. The teachers had much to say about the political campaign for saving the school but the real decisions in this area were made at separate action committee meetings. Three teachers were co-opted onto the committee with voting power to give the staff as a whole some say in the overall campaign.

During the course of the year many things changed. Parents and helpers soon learned that they were often more effective at controlling the children than many of the teachers. The distinction between parent and teacher became blurred as several parents gained experience teaching a variety of subjects by taking over classes for absent teachers. Friendships formed between the two groups and as teachers became more familiar with the community, many of their idealistic enthusiasms became modified. Pat Brennan explained the change for her: 'I never used to talk to teachers, now we can have a laugh and a joke together'. 'Now we really know what goes on in schools' said Margarate Gaskell.

While the basis of the occupation was the mobilisation of a section of the local community and the volunteer teachers were a necessary part of its continuation, its success was, and is, dependent on broader political factors. The leaders of the action committee were trade union activists who developed extensive links with the labour movement during the campaign for the school. They were able to raise large sums to meet the costs of running the school from local trade union branches and their relationship with the Labour Party, which had always voted against the Liberals' efforts to close Croxteth Comprehensive, helped to ensure an election campaign promise to re-open the school.

The somewhat unexpected success of the Labour Party in winning an overall council majority in the May 1983 local elections gave Croxteth Community School

at least one more year of safety. By then the campaign strategy of the action committee had shifted from local community involvement to building party-political and trade union support. At the same time the involvement of members of the community in the school changed all involved by building confidence, power and skill in political and educational matters which they had not expressed before. That remains a permanent benefit to the community and education in Croxteth.

After the elections, discussions began between teachers and community volunteers over what an appropriate curriculum and teaching practice might be in Croxteth in the future. One day a meeting of teachers, cooks and cleaners and office administrators took place to examine possible models of community education. What was clear to all in the meeting was that continued involvement of local members of the community in the school was highly desirable and that the action committee should have as much influence on the school as possible.

Croxteth Community Comprehensive, as it is now called, was given independent status and provided with 50 per cent funding from the local council for the 1983/84 school year. It was hoped that the local Labour Party's reorganisation plan would have been approved by May of 1984 which would have reabsorbed Croxteth School as one of its proposed seventeen new county comprehensives. Sir Keith Joseph has recently declared his intention to prolong negotiations over the plan so that reorganisation will be postponed for another year. This leaves the immediate fate of Croxteth Community School undecided.

During the past school year several parents and teachers who played prominent roles in the school's occupation have continued to work in the school. Margarate Gaskell and Pat Brennen come in every day to work in the office, tutor some of the slower pupils and take over classes for absent teachers. Keith Leatherbarrow and one of the former fifth form pupils, David Edwards, are employed as laboratory technicians. Jackie Crowley, administrator during the occupation, has continued in the same role this year and serves as an important link between action committee and staff. Many community residents work as cooks, cleaners and caretakers. The curriculum has continued to be fairly traditional this year, but the action committee retains ultimate control over the school and its leaders hope to see more 'community relevant' forms of education evolve over the years. They realistically see such change as necessarily taking place gradually, not as the product of an imposed and ready-made educational blueprint, but as the result of local involvement ensured by local control.

It is significant that the Liverpool Labour Party's plans to reorganise education in the city is based on establishing seventeen **community** comprehensive schools. It is vague and unclear what this will mean in practice. Perhaps one of the lessons from Croxteth is that real political control and presence in a school by parents and others from its community can have a profound effect on the relations of power between teachers, pupils and parents in a liberating way. It is perhaps only after the establishment of such local power and involvement that questions about community curricula and pedagogy can meanfully be answered.

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Community Involvement: the Last Chance for Partnership

John Rennie
John Rennie taught in secondary schools in inner-city Manchester from 1959 to 1968. He then moved to Nottingham University, leading the Schools Council Social Education Project and teaching in the School of Education. From 1971 he was Community Education Adviser in Coventry, becoming Senior Adviser in 1978. Since 1980 he has been Director of the Community Education Development Centre, the national agency based in Coventry.

Have you tried explaining the British education system to visitors from overseas lately? It becomes no easier as time goes on — especially with peculiarities like the assisted place scheme and the continuing anomalies of the remaining grammar schools. One of the best ways to provoke a slack-jawed response from educational tourists, however, is to throw them some of the choicer titbits from the stew of our regulations concerning the governance of our schools. It's all because of our decentralised system, we hear ourselves saying, knowingly how simplistic this response is and just how much — and increasingly — we are being dictated to by central government.

It remains a fact, though, that the vast majority of our schools stay in the hands of local political parties through the antiquated system of governors and managers which, in our plodding, conservative way, we not so much cling to as yawn through. Despite the mild prods from the Taylor Report and the slightly more strident barracking from CASE, ACE, the Home School Council and the wider community education movement, successive governments have shown scant commitment to any kind of constructive change. Party hacks, vicars' wives and retired teachers rule OK.

The surprising thing is that none of the advocates of community involvement has ever demanded *community control* of *schools*. In the United States, such notions enjoyed a brief popularity some years ago and then were recognised for what they are — replacement of one kind of non-participative benign dictatorship with another. In this country, the call has been mainly for *partnership,* a very different kettle of fish. Pressure groups have sought to include parents, teachers, children and the wider community in running the schools.

Early Efforts

Of course, there have been noble examples of genuine attempts to democratise the process in one or two enlightened local authorities — mainly those with some kind of commitment to community education, as might be expected. In such places, we see, perhaps, a parent on each governing body, even a teacher, but rarely anything which could be truly described as broadly representational. In Coventry, as long ago as 1974, the LEA took the courageous step of having parents, teachers, pupils — two of each — represented on governing bodies of the city's community colleges, along with representatives of the non-teaching staff, 'user-groups', and the local community association. When everybody turns up, this group can still be outvoted 14-12 by the Education Committee nominees, but has nevertheless been seen as powerful enough to scare off more than one potential candidate for headship prior to the interview. The system has had its problems, inevitably. There are always those who do not relish the process of relinquishing power. It was, however, a bold experiment which, broadly speaking, has withstood the test of time and may now be ready to move forward into a further stage of refinement now that other authorities are catching up.

In such *ad hoc* unco-ordinated ways does the English system move forwards — or it does until a radical government sweeps the pieces off the board and demands a fresh start. Sir Keith Joseph's latest proposals, putting the parents firmly in the driving seat as they seem to do, could hardly be more radical. Joan Sallis, the indefatigable champion of parent partnership in school management, must not have known whether to laugh or cry when the announcement was made. She contented herself, no doubt for the time being, with a letter to **The Guardian** bemoaning the lost opportunity for true partnership. It can only be a matter of time, surely, before she gets her wish.

A Better Way Forward

It may be helpful then, to rehearse once again, the reasons why we really should be moving towards genuine participation by the community and why that participation should best come in the form of partnership. There are six or seven good reasons for it, and ironically, most of them are equally valid as reasons for *not* devolving all the power to parents.

Paradoxically, the first reason is that parents are unquestionably the best educators. Not only are they called upon to carry out the most difficult and vital early learning stages, but they continue to exert the most profound influence on the child until adolescence. Politicians, for once, agree with psychologists and sociologists on that score. Any education which excludes or ignores the role of parents is essentially unprofessional in that it denies the overwhelming evidence which has emerged, particularly over the last few years, showing the crucial effects that parental support can have on the attainments of children. More of this later. But parents are not the *only* educators. Teachers, like any other workers, will perform best

when they feel secure and appreciated. That cannot happen when they are performing behind locked doors, so to speak, but neither can it happen when they feel their professionalism challenged. For too long, they have been excluded from representation on governing bodies. Perhaps the toothlessness of the proceedings suited them and they wished to rock no boats. If so, they may be about to receive their come-uppance. Far better to bring teachers in from the cold now and allow them to play their full part in the due processes of running our schools.

Participation of parents and teachers would surely be a sound lesson for youngsters in school. The once-a-year-day tradition of parents' evenings could then be seen for the tired joke it has become. Is it really sensible to present youngsters with an example of institutionalised indifference or an apparent conspiracy of non-communication as we seem to do now? When so many politicians publicly deplore the increasing reluctance of the British public to exercise their hard-won voting rights, would it not be better to encourage partnership in matters close to people's hearts like the education of their children and to present youngsters with an early view of what community involvement can achieve?

Those of us who feel that partnership is, in any case, the most effective administrative style, are likely to be in a minority. The whole tradition of English education is against such a notion. Attempts to do the opposite, of course, are never so described. Maybe now is the time to try a method which has had some success in limited experiments, on a wider basis.

Of course, and Sir Keith may not have seen the potential for this, the involvement of parents is likely to politicise them. What is proposed is nothing less than a major shift of power in one of our most basic institutions. Such an aphrodisiac may well turn people on to more ambitious aims than the sometimes mundane aspects of life in primary schools. Whether this is good or bad is worthy of a debate in itself, but it is surely an argument for widening the power base by bringing in other groups with valid interests. Education as a 'political ping-pong', especially at local level, has been one of the less edifying sights of recent years. Proposals to develop community participation will not remove the political element in this process but it will at least make the political debate relevant to the local circumstances.

The final two reasons have the additional virtue of being topical. The first is that schools are paid for not by teachers or parents — though they pay their share — but by the community as a whole. In these days, when the interests of the taxpayer and the ratepayer are so often held up as worthy of particular concern, how odd that they can be ignored in an aspect of life which not only costs so much but where they are so clearly far from being disinterested.

The second is that genuine community participation is so palpapably *democratic*. Politicians from all sides constantly remind us how important this notion is to the British. Clearly, democratic processes on the large scale which would be required to provide sufficient, and representative, nominations from all the interested parties would be a major undertaking. Instead of a daunting task, this should be regarded as precisely the kind of process which could result in genuine participation — provided it is not approached in the bureaucratic and sterile manner which characterises so much of British public life.

A Process for the People

Control without knowledge is arguably as dangerous as power without responsibility. In the early days of the Coventry experiment, it was often said that people who were being given power had no experience of accepting such responsibility — and this was true. Happily, the city fathers decreed that the only way they would learn how to handle such responsibility was by handling it. This is not, however, an argument for keeping people unappraised of the ever-more esoteric mysteries of the educational process. On the contrary, it is an argument for the deliberate cultivation of a knowledgeable and participating educative community from which will flow naturally the future leaders of all the groups concerned.

This is, then, a community education response. Not a one-dimensional argument, though, for participation in order to produce more participation. Instead, a call for full participation in *all* aspects of education — in the classroom, in the school, in the committee room — where participation in school governance is simply one of many desirable outcomes in terms of work with parents. This process has not only begun, it has been flourishing in various parts of the nation for some years — in Glasgow, Rochdale, Haringey, Coventry, Newham, Southampton, Leicester, Liverpool and other places.

It has been a quiet revolution with teachers gradually devising the appropriate strategies to match a more easily attained intellectual commitment to the principles. Despite negligible support from central government and relative indifference from the education establishment, these pockets of progress are increasing in number very rapidly now. Home-school collaboration seems to be at the confluence of ideas about the nature of learning and of intelligence; the need for accountability; the need for learning opportunities throughout life; the sensible use of resources; not least, the changing nature of the family.

Results have been dramatic. A recent appraisal of the effects of parental involvement on the reading attainments of some 1,000 children in disadvantaged areas of Coventry showed them matching the reading scores of middle-class children — an unheard of achievement. This was not the result of a small-scale 'Hawthorne-affected' experiment but of a long term gradual process as part of the mainstream education in about 70 primary schools.

Such results have been achieved in Coventry and elsewhere against a background tradition of nearly 100 years of parental exclusion from our schools. Not surprisingly, then, confidence-building has been the key to this success — the confidence of teachers for so long isolated from the communities they serve being at least as important as the confidence of parents, so many of whom have come to regard school as a place of failure. This work reaches no targets overnight but requires a patient process of trust-building through social events, information exchange and gradual involvement based on trial and error and a willingness to share. It is a process well-documented by Eric Midwinter elsewhere and it is on his seminal thinking and action in Liverpool

Democracy in Schools

Ned Newitt

Teacher participation in the control of schools is more advanced in some areas than others. Ned Newitt, an experienced teacher at one of Leicestershire's leading community colleges, discusses this issue in the light of his own experiences.

When the NUT's working party on teacher participation produced a study outline in July 1971, it argued that there was a process of change already taking place in the internal organisation of schools.[1] It was claimed that: 'We are already a long way from the situation where the relationships and organisation are based on the Head's role as that of the "captain of the ship" with his colleagues ever-ready to carry out his orders'. Yet is is quite clear that in 1984 there are still a good many schools which have all the command structure of a naval dreadnought. There is undoubtedly a sense of powerlessness and frustration amongst scale one and two teachers which has proved to be a major factor in the ground swell of support given to the unions in the recent pay dispute. These teachers are not rookies or novices, but, in many instances, experienced teachers who in 1971 would have had the expectation of major management or curricular responsibility. in Leicestershire, the local authority has calculated that a secondary teacher entering the profession in 1982, would have to wait, on average, ten years before being promoted to scale two.

However, the purpose of this article is not to examine the dismal promotion prospects within the profession, but rather to look at the vexed question of teacher participation and the democratisation of the management and running out of schools. In particular, I want to look at the handful of schools that have actually enabled their members of staff, and in some cases students too, to play their part in the decision making and organisation of the individual school. When the whole issue of teacher participation seems to have sunk without trace, why is it that democratic practices in these schools have persisted and even taken fresh root? It is not an easy question to answer, except to say that for teachers committed to progressive education the logic of increasing participation can be established on the grounds of educational practice. In both primary and secondary schools many teaching methods call for collective effort, for sharing responsibility between colleagues. Where schools have introduced team teaching, broken down academic dividing lines and encouraged individualised learning and integrated studies, where teachers work together on curriculum developments and teaching resources, the need for a collective approach is emphasised. From this it follows that there is also a need for the planning and discussion of policy on the basis of a sharing of responsibility between fellow professionals.

With the development of larger school units, with complex internal organisation, it is more difficult for the Head to retain his role as 'captain' without finding himself aboard SS *Titanic*. The degree of specialisation and the sheer size of many schools has meant, inevitably, that Head Teachers have had to delegate responsibility.

The thinking behind the comprehensive school was to find a common institution which would do away with restricted or privileged access. Whilst the establishment of equal educational opportunity for all is still not fully achieved, just to democratise access to education can only be one part of the need to have a democratic education system. Education for democracy can't be confined to lessons about the Chartists or Suffragettes. The hidden curriculum, implicit in the running of any school, must also have a bearing. Education for democracy also comes in the way teachers teach, and from the way in which the school student has a voice within the school.

Democratic practices are not unknown in other

(Continued from page 13)

in the early '70s that much of the recent progress has been based, however indirectly.

The step from genuine parental participation to a wider community involvement should be less demanding. A school which parents respect and are involved in soon acquires a status within a community which makes such progress easier. Community colleges, owing much to the pioneering work in Cambridgeshire before the war, have flourished in places like Leicestershire, Walsall, Coventry and Nottinghamshire. In one such school, a sixth form of 180 includes 120 adults — and integration cannot go much further than that.

For community educators, then, the answer lies not in the stars but in grass-roots, pragmatic practice requiring in-service training, the right facilities and the goodwill and support of local and central government, if these successes are to be replicated nationally. Community involvement in the control of education might then be seen *not only* as a political issue but also as the social, educational and indeed, economic issue it undoubtedly is.

countries. In Finland, the Head Teacher has been elected by members of staff every five years since 1872. By law, he or she must still teach, though generally the teaching load is lighter than that of other teachers. In the early 1970s, the Finnish School Council law established further measures of democratic control within schools. An elected council of an equal number of teachers and pupils (over the age of 15) plus a non-voting group of pupils under 15, were given disciplinary powers, the right to choose text books, the right to be consulted about the timetable and the right to be present at department meetings to discuss the syllabus. More interestingly, the pupil candidates were given the right to stand on a political ticket if they wished.

In Britain under the existing articles of government and rules of management every Head Teacher: 'shall control the internal organisation, management and discipline of the school, shall exercise supervision over the teaching and non-teaching staff, and shall have the power of suspending pupils from attendance for any case which he considers adequate . . .'[2] The model articles by the DES do not provide for any sharing of these responsibilities by the Head Teacher with his staff and the references to consultation are to consultation with the Chairman of Governors and the Chief Education Officer. However, they do say that 'suitable arrangements shall be made for enabling the teaching staff to submit their views or proposals to the Governors through the Headmaster' so that it could be argued there is some recognition of the need to provide an opportunity for staff representation, if not consultation.

But those who seek participation argue that consultation, in itself, is not enough and to establish a basis for participation requires a much more fundamental change. Following a successful resolution at the NUT Conference in 1971 calling for a revision in the articles and instruments of government of schools to facilitate the establishment of an elected Staff Council in every school a working party was set up to examine the whole issue. A final report was never produced as the NUT Executive decided that 'consultation' rather than 'participation' should be favoured. To many teachers' lasting regret, this about turn was heavily influenced by precisely those senior figures in the Union who had fought hardest for non-selection in education. However, a number of schools and colleges had already developed their own machinery of participation. In Leicestershire, it was in some of the new community colleges that a democratic experiment began. Despite the storms of the 'Great Debate' a re-emphasis on 'traditional educational values' and moves to centralise control over the curriculum, broadly speaking the democratic practices in these schools has continued.

In contrast to the elected Staff Council, favoured initially by the NUT, the general model in some Leicestershire colleges has been to give full staff participation by means of meetings in which every member takes part and expresses his view by a vote. In some instances the staff act as a kind of 'legislature', laying down the major policy lines, but leaving it to an executive of the Head and Deputy Heads to implement them and to take day-to-day administrative decisions. In some instances all staff members, including caretakers, ancillary workers and student representatives are entitled to attend and vote. As a fairly new teacher I remember only too well being blasted for the white footprints radiating from my workshop after a plaster carving session. Too often these large meetings can serve to intimidate any students attending and whilst staff participation has been given much thought, in my own college pupil participation has been neglected.

The key figures in the establishment of internal democracy has, ironically, been the Head Teacher. Without the Head's agreement to vest power in the staff meeting, then these seemingly radical departures could not have taken place. As the educational climate began to deteriorate as the 1970s more mention was made of the Head's right of veto of any decision which either might threaten the unity of the staff or the reputation of the school. In my own college a chair of the staff meeting is elected every term and various sub-committees, generally elected and open to all members of staff, are responsible for finance, curriculum, staffing and various other matters. Heads of Department have their own meetings as do Departments and Pastoral staff.

The fact that this structure is now into its second decade of existence proves that it is workable. The doubts expressed about this kind of model in the NUT's study outline in 1971, may still retain some validity for a school where staff commitment is at a different level: 'members will have to consider to what extent it is desirable to have democracy at the expense of efficiency, and on the other hand to consider realistically whether individual members of staff are likely to spend time in meetings dealing with policy matters . . . members of staff would have to be prepared to give up a good deal of their time in attendance at meetings . . .' However the validity of meetings where educational issues can be thrashed out, serves as a useful arena to argue the case for educational innovation, as well as a way in which the ordinary member of staff can have a say in the running of the college. It's interesting to note that in one Leicestershire community college, forged out of two smaller schools, the governing voice of the staff meeting was used by the Head as a means of achieving consensus, among the staff, on curriculum innovation.

The present salary structures should, in theory, embody a recognition that different levels of responsibility are carried by individual members of staff. Whilst the present log jam in the promotion stakes has thrown this structure into disrepute, the implication of greater collective decision-making is for a narrowing of salary differentials. It is argued that differentials would not be incompatible with collective decision-making, since the extra salary payments would be for responsibilities assumed in carrying out those decisions. This side issue has already proved to be a sticking point in Sheffield, where a move to introduce greater participation was blocked by the NAS entering into a collective dispute with the LEA.

So far, it has only been in those schools with enthusiastic and hard-working staff, where the Head was concerned to innovate that democratic management has succeeded. But that is not surprising considering the lack of enthusiasm of the DES, LEA and teacher associations. What is surprising is that participation in these schools has continued despite the lengthy period of retrenchment that education has gone through. In my

own college the initial zest that accompanied the school's establishment diminished when the Governors of the school exercised their rarely used powers to regulate the 'general direction of the conduct and curriculum of the school'. This forced the college to break up its Integrated Humanities Department and establish a separate English Department and was imposed in a way that was totally foreign to any previous discussion on policy. There are very real and very tangible limits to democracy under the existing regulations.

There are other limitations too. The more free periods, or rather the higher up the career structure you are, the easier it becomes to present and prepare papers for the staff meeting. The more marking you've got, the less time you've got for serving on committees. Except where a Head has really antagonised the staff, the staff meeting will treat his views or proposals with a certain deference. It's also easy to notice those individuals who regularly attend staff meetings, for it's a good thing to be noticed, yet fear to voice their opinions because they believe they might jeopardise their promotion prospects. There is another school of thought which suggests that participation has not lessened the power of the Head and as a consequence treats the process of participation as phoney. Yet such adherents are the first to turn up at staff meetings when their particular interest is threatened by some new twist of policy.

The days when a Head could claim to know better that his staff and give them instructions accordingly, are past. Though under Sir Keith Joseph's eagle eyes, many progressive teachers have had to put their fond hopes on ice, a new strategy for education must be developed, because what happens inside an institution is more important than the name on its gates. There has been a loss of support for a state-provided service which is all too frequently seen by its clients as uncaring and imposed. If schools are to regain a sense of single-minded purpose and commitment, then all those involved must be given every chance to say how they want things to be done. Self-management in co-operation with the parents, pupils and LEA is one strand of a larger strategy for the future.

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The New Governing Bodies

Richard Pring
Professor of Education at the University of Exeter, Richard Pring is Secretary of the Exeter branch of the Campaign for the Advancement of State Education (CASE). Here he assesses the recent Green Paper on school governors in the light of an investigation carried through by this group.

The 1980 Education Act changed the constitution of governing bodies, giving legal expression to the idea of 'partnership in schools'. Before the act had been fully implemented however, yet further changes to their constitution were proposed. What were 'new' governing bodies only a month or two ago are now looking decidedly old fashioned. The recent Green Paper, **Parental Influence at School**[1] proposes that parents should form a majority of the governors.

On the surface this seems to be a radical shift towards a system of local responsibility, which is surprising at a time of increased central control and influence over the organisation and content of schooling. Are these changes, therefore, to be seen as a radical extension of the partnership embodied in the 1980 Education Act[2] and Circular 6/81[3] and envisaged in the Taylor Report?[4] Or are they, paradoxically, one further element in that increased central influence?

The function of governing bodies is not clearly defined legally. The 1944 Education Act does, in Section 23, place the statutory responsibility for the control of secular instruction firmly with the local education authority. Governors retain oversight of curricular and financial matters by a process of consultation, advice, and encouragement. There is no suggestion that they have the ultimate responsibility for *deciding* upon what should be taught or the general shape of the curriculum or how money should be spent.

In this legal respect, the 1980 Education Act did not extend the role of the governors. But it did seek, through changing the constitution of governing bodies, to give them more influence — to ensure that there is a real and influential process of consultation, advice and encouragement. It was an attempt to move some way (though not very far) towards the 'new partnership for our schools' that the Taylor Report in 1977 argued for.

The Taylor Report distingusihed between legal responsibility and sphere of influence. The ultimate responsibility for the running of schools was the LEA. The governing body, however, was 'in direct line of formal responsibility' between LEA and head teacher — the same vagueness in the account of legal duties and rights of governing bodies which is entrenched within the 1944 Education Act. Nonetheless, whatever the legal position of governing bodies, the Taylor Report had no doubt about their proper sphere of influence and the duties arising out of being 'in direct line of responsibility'. According to the Taylor Report, the

responsibilities of the governing bodies with regard to finance and to the curriculum had been largely ignored. It recommended that there should be:

> no area of the school's activity in respect of which the governing body should have no responsibiliity, nor one on which the head and staff should be accountable only to themselves or to the LEA.

These recommended responsibilities are spelt out in some detail:

Curriculum

i. to assist with the establishment of the school's aims;
ii. to assist with the translation of these aims into objectives;
iii. to keep under constant review the education provided to meet these aims and objectives;
iv. to decide upon the action required to facilitate this.

To enable the governors to fulfill these aims, it would be the duty of the head and the staff to prepare papers, to explain matters such as the timetable, and indeed to educate the governors in educational and curriculum matters.

Finance

To consider each year the financial needs of the school.

Appointments

To be responsible for the appointments of head and staff.

Suspensions

To be consulted on and to participate in decisions over suspension of staff.

To fulfil these responsibilities the governing bodies would need to be a partnership of the main groups who had an interest in the welfare of the school — *viz* parents, teachers, the LEA, and the community at large. Membership would be shared equally between the groups, and ideally there would be an infrastructure of of parents' associations and teaching staff that would enable the parent and teacher members to represent their points of view on the governing body.

The 1980 Education Act went *some way* to implementing the recommendations of the Taylor Report on the composition of the governing bodies. At least two parent representatives must be elected by secret ballot conducted in accordance with procedures laid down by the LEA; there must be two teacher representatives on each body where the school has over 300 pupils; the agenda and the minutes of each meeting need to be made available. But the role of the governors received no further clarification until Circular 6/81.

This circular was to be read in conjunction with the DES publication *The School Curriculum*[5] which set out the views of the Secretaries of State 'on a range of matters relating to the school curriculum'. It is an important document because it represents a significant shift towards central influences, if not control, of what children are taught in schools. Although the responsibility for what happens within the schools was (and was clearly seen to be) that of the LEA, the circular implied that it was the responsibility of central government to identify what those responsibilities are and to ensure that they are carried out. And the 'new' governing bodies were seen to have a major role in helping government meets its responsibilities. It stated that:

> . . . governing bodies have a valuable role to play in this field (*viz* in securing the provision for efficient education with the implied concern for the content and quality of that education) in bringing together the views of teachers, parents and the local community . . . all these partners should work towards the common end of securing a planned and coherent curriculum . . .

Again

> The Secretary of State looks to governors to encourage their schools, within the resources available, to develop their curricular in the light of what is said in 'The School Curriculum'; and to co-operate with the local education authorities in the action they take . . .

We may conclude therefore that the function and responsibilities of governing bodies, though not legally different from those established in the 1944 Education Act, have received clearer definition and interpretation, with particular emphasis upon consultation, encouragement, and advice in formulating clear and balanced curriculum policies. Furthermore, to achieve these ends the constitution of governing bodies has changed to ensure a greater sense of partnership between interested parties. To that limited extent, the Taylor Report has been implemented.

In one attempt to monitor how 'the new partnership' was being implemented, a small sample of 15 governing bodies was chosen for investigation by a local group of CASE members (Campaign for the Advancement of State Education). The sample, drawn from primary, middle and comprehensive schools, was not necessarily representative — it depended on the accident of there being a CASE member on each of the governing bodies. Nonetheless, it did indicate confusion over procedures and idiosyncratic interpretation of 'partnership'. Small though the sample was, it indicated that much more needs to be done if genuine partnership is to be achieved.[6]

The following quotations capture the flavour of governors' experiences:

> At our first meeting we were told that the minutes must remain strictly confidential until confirmed at the next meeting one term later. That meant I was not able to talk about what we discussed with other parents.
>
> I came one minute late for our first meeting, by which time the chairman and vice-chairman had been elected. It was very efficiently engineered.
>
> When I was appointed I received a letter from the headmaster inviting me to the school. He showed me around. We have two meetings a term. At one of the meetings the headmaster tells us about some part of the curriculum.
>
> When I asked why the headmaster's report contained no reference to the curriculum or to inservice, but only to brief statements on changes in teaching staff, on excusions, and on the state of the toilets, the other governors looked surprised and I was told that there was nothing new to report.
>
> We have evening meetings and the staff stay behind to talk to us. The headmaster likes us each to be attached to a year group and get to know that bit of the school very well.
>
> We were discussing the governor representative on the panel to appoint a new teacher. The chairperson said I couldn't ever be on an appointments panel because I am a teacher. Is that true?
>
> When the head resigned the other parent governor heard about it in Tesco's. The chairman chose the other two governors who would be on the appointments panel. Whatever they say about the

importance of the new governors, we were forgotten completely on the most important event that could happen in a school.

We agreed that we should write to the Chief Education Officer about the cut in the teaching staff. The Chairman said that that was forbidden and that we could only write to the Area Education Officer. There was no paid officer at the meeting to advise us. I later found that the Chairman was wrong.

What then were the main points to emerge? First, there was a considerable use of political nominees, especially in secondary schools, to ensure LEA control over the proceedings. One governing body of a secondary school in a predominantly working class area had nineteen members, ten being Conservative nominees, the others being two Labour, two representatives of other institutions, parents, teachers, and the head. At another secondary school, the one Labour nominee of the LEA was excluded even though she had for many years served actively on the governing body of that school. The legal requirements of the 1980 Education Act were met, but too often the spirit of partnership was not.

Secondly, the chairman (elected, be it noted, on each occasion within seconds of the start of the first meeting, as a result of an apparently well orchestrated operation across the LEA) often exercised authority in a quite arbitrary manner — excluding certain items as too political, adding substantive items not on the agenda, not allowing minutes to be available to non-members for several months, or inhibiting proper discussion of curriculum. There were, of course, many instances of good chairmanship. But the point is that the spirit of partnership and the function of encouragement, advice, and consultation over curriculum and other matters (set out in Circular 6/81) depended rather arbitrarily upon a political nominee who had received no training for the job.

Thirdly, there were difficulties over the interpretation of representation of the different groups within the partnership. Some parent governors were told, for instance, that, having been elected by parents, they now lost their identity on governing bodies as parents. Certainly there were few cases of the establishment of an infrastructure through which parent representatives could sound out parental views. The difficulties were even more acute in one instance of teacher representation. It was decided, wrongly, that the teacher governor could not sit on the interviewing panel for a new appointment. The same teacher was reprimanded by his head teacher for consulting beforehand his colleagues on issues being raised at the meeting of the governing body. Such an attempt to muzzle a representative was of course quite wrong. There were indeed just as many examples of co-operation and proper representation of the different constituent bodies. But these points simply demonstrate how damaging the ignorance amongst some heads and chairmen can be concerning the functions and responsibilities of new governing bodies.

Fourthly, the role of the governing bodies in meeting the requirements of Circular 6/81 varied widely and depended on the initiative and support of the head and chairman. The three areas in which governors are asked in varying degrees to fulfil responsibilities are staffing, curriculum, and environment. In staffing, certainly governors influenced decisions over redeployment and sometimes, by championing the school *viz-a-viz* the authority, helped the head to achieve his aims. But too often governors in general were not consulted beforehand — only informed after the event. In curriculum, practice was mixed with some heads treating the governors with disdain and with others leading seminars on LEA and HMI curriculum reports. Indeed, the heads sometimes took on a heavy inservice load of educating the governors in order to ensure that there could be a genuine partnership within the spirit of the Taylor Report.

The conclusions we drew from this study were as follows:

a. there should be more training sessions for governors. These should provide the opportunity for governors to seek answers to difficulties that have arisen;
b. chairmen and heads should be strongly encouraged to attend such training programmes since too often apathy or defensiveness or hostility on their part had prevented the governors from discharging their responsibilities;
c. standing orders for the proper conduct of meetings should be circulated to all governors. These should be drawn up as a result of what we now know about difficult cases;
d. meetings should not be held at times when it is regularly impossible for governors to attend because of other responsibilities;
e. guidance should be circulated by the Authority about the practical ways in which the governing bodies might work towards the common end of 'securing a planned and coherent curriculum within the schools';
f. advice should be given by the Authority to heads and governors about the shape and content of the headteacher's report since this often is the main route for the governors into the curriculum;
g. attention should be given to how parent and teacher governors might relate to and represent their electoral base.

How would the proposals in **Parental Influence at School** meet the difficulties we encountered? Obviously, there would be the advantages of a membership drawn mainly from a group that had a personal stake in the well-being of the school. No longer would the governing bodies be dominated by political nominees, many of whom have little interest in the kinds of activities that the Taylor Report and Circular 6/81 proposed for them. They would no doubt be often vigorous in asking the head and the teaching staff to give an account of the various curriculum activities within the school. furthermore, they would be more adamant than hitherto in championing the cause of the school when resources are inadequate for curriculum needs. The proposals therefore seem on the surface to be an extension of local responsibility — an assurance that the spirit of partnership will not be jeopardised by political manipulation.

Such an interpretation would, however, be mistaken. First, what might be seen generously as an exaltation of parental influence could be seen less charitably as an attempt to diminish responsibilities of the LEA. It is the LEA which remains the chief buffer against control and influence by central government over the conduct and content of schooling. The 1980 legislation allows the LEA nominees to exercise undue influence. The Green Paper proposes in effect that they should exercise too

little.

Secondly, the proposals attenuate the influence of the teaching profession in determining curriculum aims, content, method, and resources. This will be welcomed by many, especially the parents who see little point in the aesthetic, social and other activities that are part of the educational tradition. The Secretary of State may be able to achieve indirectly what the voucher system would have achieved directly — namely, a response of schools to market forces as these are determined by the consumer.

The Taylor Report, however, had spoken about partnership between groups who represented different but equally legitimate interests. There is 'an educational tradition' in the arts, in the humanities, in the science, and in the very process of learning, to which it is the responsibility of schools to introduce pupils. Such a tradition may not measure up to the criteria set by the often pragmatic and utilitarian interests of the articulate consumer. It is that tradition, guarded by the teaching profession, that needs to be represented adequately in the governing bodies.

Similarly, there are wider social and community needs — in relation to the economy of the country or to standards of behaviour — that may go unrecognised by parents' aspirations for the welfare of their children. The relation of school to the adult world — the world of work and the world of the local community — is such that these needs, too, require equal representation on the governing bodies.

Finally, if local responsibility and control is not to be further eroded, then the legitimate interests of the LEA must also be represented, for the LEA alone has the power and the knowledge to resist.

Partnership is attainable as things stand if two conditions are met *viz* (1) the curtailment of the overwhelming political presence on the governing bodies that present legislation permits, and (2) a more systematic and compulsory inservice programme for governors so that they can carry out their duties in the spirit of the partnership.

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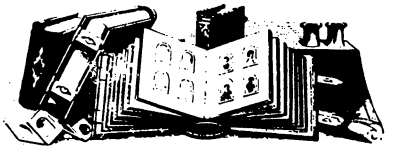


Students into Governors: When and How?

John Bull

Head of the Frecheville Campus School in Sheffield since 1980, John Bull ended his own school days at fourteen. He worked for some sixteen years as a civilian and RAF carpenter before taking his first degree, in social science, as a mature student at Leicester in 1961. His subsequent teaching career has been in secondary schools. Here he discusses the whole issue of student involvement in school management in the light of his experience of the Sheffield scheme for student governors.

Almost a generation ago, a disputing fellow teacher remarked hotly: 'You misunderstand me! I am always prepared to meet any student halfway — but it must be on my terms!' We were discussing the idea of secondary school students playing a more active and assertive role in the decision-making processes of their schools. My collegue's curous give-away comment captures the cautiousness with which student emancipation has proceeded to this day. But not only amongst teachers. Many parents, too, seem to be unsure how far the emergent generation should be entrusted with a franchise to question the wisdoms of well-established institutional practices, whether in schools, shops, offices or on the factory floor. There remains a persistent, and currently revived notion that the skills and attitudes of democratic give-and-take will somehow almost naturally visit themselves on the young, without any conscious concessions from an older generation whose own record of success in self-emancipation stares back at them miserably from the faces of the young employed.

It is fairly well-known that Sheffield took a significant political step towards filling the gap between the rhetoric and reality of student emancipation as long ago as 1973, when its Education Committee formally instituted student membership on its Secondary School Governing Bodies. Two students over the age of 15 are still required to be elected by their peers annually for this purpose in every Secondary School in the City. These Student Governors attend Governors Meetings, are nominally free to participate in discussion there, and receive all the routine correspondence and papers relevant to the office from the LEA and School. They cannot, however, remain in meetings where certain types of business are tabled. Staff disciplinary matters, or the exclusion, suspension and expulsion of fellow students (pupils) are examples of such business. Neither on cases of pupil-suspensions by the School, nor on parental appeals against such suspensions, are Student Governors empowered to take part and/or defend their peers.

Sheffield's example has since been emulated by a number of other LEAs. It is interesting that in Sheffield, the size of Secondary School Governing Bodies is unusually large, reflecting a faithful tradition for involving a wide range of community interests in the

twin processes of influencing educational policy-making from the periphery, and policy implementation from the centre of, the local educational system. Such is the ideal, and undoubtedly the case for it is emphasised by the wide differences between one school community and the other across the City. It does, however, as a political intention, have one or two anomalies. Of my own thirty-five Governor places, four teachers (if one includes the head) represent the professional views of some forty-six colleagues. Slightly more than the number of other site workers are represented by only two non-teacher staff Governors. The constituency of the two Student Governors numbers 700, and is a problematic one to represent in terms of effective democratic communications. Like many other schools, we do have a School Council which, by tradition, works through a system of Form, Year Group and Central Council representation, and in theory it is deemed feasible for the Student Governors to communicate formally with the student body through that system. To an extent that does happen. But in practice the organisation of the school into Year Groups makes the important informal interaction of democratic communication difficult to operate, and when elections for Student Governors are held it is often apparent that younger children do not know the candidates and they, in turn, do not know that many other students outside their own historical year group. The real opportunities for the successfully elected Student Governors to catch up with that ignorance during their one year of office (usually a year in which public examinations figure) is limited. Moreover, it is most unlikely that there will be any more than three occasions during his or her year of office when a Student Governor can expect to practice the formal skills of office at Governors' Meetings. These simple factors at once question the practical effectiveness of the students' nominal power-base as Governors.

The question of how adults, presently in school governorship, would have coped with the responsibilities of student governorship in a comprehensive school at fifteen, is worth asking. The question asserts itself whenever one observes the faces of Student Governors at meetings, and later discusses with them their impressions of their roles. However potentially benevolent the other 33 adults present, the experience of sitting in committee for the first, second and final occasion of a Student Governor's term is a daunting one. How is this problem to be resolved through prior training? Apart from the difficulty of simulating the quite unique dynamics of a mixed-interests group of this nature, with all its subtleties of dialogue and intention, there are aspects of traditional student experience in schools, to which I shall return shortly, which I believe provide a strongly negative training factor for realising the political dream embodied in Student Governorship. The sharpness of the critique to this point is not intended to be either hostile to that dream or negative to its enactment. What I believe we need is a shift of focus from the external political initiatives for student emancipation, to the internal political implications of our own professional practice. It is in the context of the curriculum of the school, and the operation of authority within its organisation, that the reality of student democracy will ultimately be developed, or held at its present general level of half measures.

In order to rescue our students from the lingering remains of 19th century attitudes to the young, so nicely captured in my opening quotation, it is a mistake, I believe, for us wait upon, or to be satisfied with, political initiatives from outside schools that, at the level of ideas alone, bode to leapfrog the real problems of putting political skills or experience into the hands of our charges. As teachers, we have been at risk of losing our nerve on that prospect from the day we made our first professional entry into a classroom and discovered what can happen when the freedom to dispute the fond habitual opinions of adults is extended to thirty compulsory clients. That training problem — four ourselves and the students — has more than rarely defeated us.

That, I suspect, is our first and necessary acknowledgement on the prospect of student emancipation: we are on the whole frightened of the short-term implications of student experimentation that are bound to follow novel opportunities for political self-expression. Crudely put, there are more of them than of us and by and large, we carry from our childhood no experience of alternative models of social control in schools save variants of basically autocratic systems. For this reason, I think, it is a nonsense to assume that our inbuilt professional traditions can be effectively penetrated and changed in this connection by external statutes which basically require no more than the appearance of two young people elected from the student body to appear in Governors' seats on three occasions in the school year.

The curriculum, I have argued, is the focal point for the emancipation of school students. It is in the network of curriculum relationships — with teachers and with each other — that political models will become exemplified for them. The skills of disputation and real life will be generated, or conversely die, in the extent to which young people are not merely allowed, but encouraged, to challenge the authority of knowledge — whether this be enclosed between covers, exposed by exploration, or lodged in the heads of teachers and fellow students. Locked into the traditional practice of Secondary Schools is the convention of awarding high status to certain modes of public knowledge, and low status to the private knowledge smuggled silently into classrooms in students' minds almost as surreptitiously as the chewing gum under their tongues.

The constant selection and re-selection of students on the basis of examination worthiness tends to progressively wither away the political freshness with which Primary children may be heard so frequently to ask 'Why?' when their contemporary states of understanding are placed under challenge from some new confrontation with knowledge. The question: 'Do we *have* to?' or the assertion 'Boring!' is still most frequently interpreted at Secondary level as an indication of social rebellion rather than as a plea for greater control over the relevance of formal curriculum life. Teachers have learned to become so adept at batting that question into the safe explanatory net of student perversity without appreciating what it means in terms of pleas for changed practice, that in doing so they unwittingly habitualise a subtle form of political education which positively trains young people for adult political naïvete and negatively trains them against the

acceptance of responsibility for their own learning.

Some time in the early 1970s, in a paper entitled 'Pupils into Students', Lawrence Stenhouse argued the case for classroom strategies in humanities teaching which faced, on teachers' behalfs, the implications of elevating student-learning out of its instruction-bound strait-jacket and into a classroom social structure in which the teacher's authority switched focus from the warranting of prescribed forms of knowledge to supporting certain procedures for the critical examination of knowledge by the students themselves. Teachers involved in the Humanities Curriculum Project discovered the immense difficulty of shifting roles in this way, for themselves, their students, and sometimes for the schools in which they taught. But perhaps for the first time in the careers of many, there occurred a glimmer of insight into the feasibility of putting both new political freedoms and new political responsibilities into the hands of school students through the operations of the curriculum. Firmly embedded in HCP was a model of practice for developing responsible emancipatory attitudes not only for the students, but perhaps — in terms of strategic priority — more importantly for the teachers who trained themselves alongside them.

I am claiming through this anecdote that teachers, systematically trained and institutionalised for life in autocratic schools, may themselves need to consider better ways for securing their own professional emancipation before they may be realistically expected to understand and facilitate appropriate emancipatory experiences for the young. Just as Student Governors may in vain seek for adaptable adult models of democratic behaviour around their schools, so might teachers most frequently despair of looking to their own mentors for exemplary practice. Somehow, we have to create for ourselves as teachers, styles of inter-professional relationships that challenge the safe but passive and personally-demeaning assumptions that have in the past set the ground rules by which we operationalise not only the learning of our students, but also our own learning and development as older, but still growing people.

I am far from certain how in every detail this may be achieved. Clearly it is not enough to merely adopt negative attitudes to our inherited professional values and make no further moves to reform them. Certainly the present climate of political control over education nurtures negativism and tends to rob the democratic teacher of energy and purpose. There are powerful forces at work favouring a return to a less experimental and more instrumental pattern of curriculum relationships than the promises of the curriculum reform of the 1960s and 1970s might have led us to expect.

We fall far short of our ambitions for emancipating our students if we remain satisfied that the Student Governor convention in itself represents a revolutionary milestone on that journey. We have first to exemplify active democratic processes in classroom and staff room life. Leaving others to provide the exemplars of feasible political life may not only be a professional abrogation — it could be seen as putting our students at undesirable educational risk by leaving yet another large slice of essential life-knowledge out of the Secondary curriculum.

Making Student Councils Work

David Herd
A fifth year student at Earl Shilton Community College in Leicestershire, David Herd evaluates the achievements of the student council at his college.

In making any school council work, each individual council must set down its own criteria determining what it considers possible, and then, in its own situation, necessary. With issues and problems differing so greatly from school to school, it is very difficult to describe exactly what a successful students' council should be. At Earl Shilton Community College our students' council had to originally decide what features we felt were important and necessary in our council and we have had to be prepared to revise these ideas as problems have arisen. The three main criteria were: that we should be totally representative of student opinion; that we should be completely independent of staff interference; that we should be interested in improving the school, not merely criticising it.

With these three features, we had to realise the immediate limitations on our influence in the school. Any students' body has to accept that on fundamental academic issues, it cannot be a decision-making body, but should be able to reach the status of a credible advisory body. However, on more organisational issues in the school, a council can be very much more effective, with decisions on extra-curricular activities being perhaps completely under student control. With the good climate of teacher-student relations at Earl Shilton, this student control of extra-curricular activities would always have been possible, had it not been for the previous inability of students to organise themselves.

Within its own criteria, then, how successful has the Earl Shilton Students' Council been? As a recently formed body our immediate success was to achieve our independence and our ability to run and organise ourselves. We do, of course, acknowledge that no council could survive without staff co-operation. Nevertheless we have managed to create an organised, efficient council more or less free from staff involvement. In doing this we have gained credibility in the school, to the extent that our ideas and suggestions are given consideration, and that we have been consulted and certainly informed of forthcoming changes in the school.

One impending change is to be the re-structuring of tutor periods as the present situation has proved unsatisfactory. This had been an area of discussion for some considerable time in staff meetings, and staff had been investigating new possibilities as a solution to this problem. Without realising this, the students' council, unhappy themselves with the present situation, began to discuss the same issue. Discussions took place at tutor

group level and at school council level, with student opinion gauged and three proposals formulated accordingly. Clearly this helped the staff as they could consider the students' ideas in deciding the final changes to be made. The council was consulted and the final proposal was in line with one of our own. Clearly we cannot claim this to be solely due to council pressure as changes were already planned. However, it is a good example of how a council, acting as a mouthpiece for student opinion, can help and influence a decision-making process within a school.

The major concrete success of the school has been achieved in the controversial area of smoking in school. In our particular case, smoking in the toilets has been a consistent and increasing problem over the last two or three years. Staff, a minority of whom make use of separate toilets, whilst realising there has been a problem, have been unaware of the magnitude of that problem; this has meant a ridiculous situation in which a very small number of students were making it difficult and unpleasant for the rest of the school to use the toilets at certain times of the day. The students' council decided that the inconvenience and mess caused by these smokers had reached the stage where some solution had to be found. Tutor groups were urged to discuss the situation with the hope that firm proposals would emerge. The council itself invited along Roger Seckington the Principal and Clyde Chitty the Vice-Principal of the college, and a smoking member of staff, to its meetings to discuss the issue, urging that something had to be done. Our proposals were minuted and the staff made fully aware of our grievances. Finally, our requests for effective action were met with a proposed sequence of punishments along the lines of our suggestions, and a pledge that the problem would be eradicated by the end of the year.

This is a good example of how an organised, persistent campaign on behalf of the students can influence staff thinking and eventually spur them into action. This particular issue would have been left unresolved had the students' council not taken up the problem and made an important issue of it.

Of course, even within our own criteria, we cannot claim to have been totally successful. There is, and probably always will be, great room for improvement. The area in which we have been weakest has, disappointingly, been in that of fair representation and democratic decision-making. Whilst our meetings have been organised and consistently free of problems, we have found it difficult to then create equally profitable discussion in tutor groups. Tutor group representatives have felt a certain lack of staff interest and commitment in tutor groups, thus making it very difficult for representatives to gain suggestions from the students. Consequently agendas for meetings have tended to be formed by a select group of students rather than by the majority of students the council is meant to represent. Were the council to achieve this essential democracy it would, I feel, gain greater respect and credibility amongst the students making it a more effective body. The need for this type of system and the organisation was considered when changes to tutor periods were discussed, and this hopefully indicates a realisation on the part of the staff of how an effective student council can give a real and invaluable insight into student opinion.

Certainly at Earl Shilton the students' council can be a great asset to the school, if allowed to develop to its full potential. On fundamental educational issues this sort of barometer for student opinion should be regarded as an important consideration in decision-making. On issues concerning the organisation and running of a school, a students' council can give the consumer's point of view, and should be working towards the same ends as partent/teacher associations, governors, management committees and other interested bodies.

If school councils realise their own limitations, and teachers realise the worth of such bodies, they can be an effective and advantageous part of any school.

Setting up a Student Council

Marcus Collins
A second year student (aged 13) at a Leicester secondary school, Marcus Collins comments on his attempt to establish a school council at his school.

I go to a comprehensive school insofar as it takes in people from a catchment area. It is also single sex and has no sixth form. After we had a discussion in an English lesson about possible improvements in the school a couple of us decided to ask the head teacher of our year (second year) about the possibility of a student council. He was enthusiastic about the idea and stated that a sizeable minority of teachers had been campaigning for the idea. He advised us to organise a petition amongst the pupils asking for a student council.

Taking his advice, we prepared six petitions (one for each registration group) and got friends to collect signatures during registration. After one day over half the people in our year had signed, and by a week the figure was nearer 80 per cent. It soon became the norm to sign and anybody who had not signed felt a bit left out.

After this resounding (or so it seemed at the time) success, a pilot scheme was set up for our year only. Candidates stood and elections were called. Surprisingly enough, people in the highest ability groups were usually elected. Twelve candidates (eleven in the cleverer part of the year) went to the first meeting along with two teachers. A secretary was chosen (not many of the representatives were at all interested in the job) and we spent half-an-hour listening to our year head who talked about the methods we should use and what our objectives were. To me, his speech seemed to undermine the purpose of the council as before I had assumed that *we* were meant to decide what was important and what was not, but the other members did not seem to be perturbed.

As I was the secretary it was my duty to compile the agenda for the next meeting. After numerous

suggestions by enthusiastic pupils including two that requested that the school should be blown up I decided (quite predictably) to include in the agenda that we should have lockers, that more cricket, athletics and tennis should be included in the sports timetable and that a 'Staff Only' entrance should be opened to pupils. Less people turned up at the meeting (most of those absent had feeble excuses) and we worked on a system of pure discussion with the teachers who presented the staff's point of view and looking objectively at our case. We did not vote. After the meeting (three points out of four were agreed upon) I was expected to write up the minutes of the meeting (I now realised why people had avoided becoming secretary). The minutes were then handed to the headmaster who could do whatever he wanted with them (my guess is that he throws them away).

Support among the pupils was waning. When asked if the council was effective I had to resort to asking them, "What have we got to lose?" Less ideas were now coming in and when I had to report to the registration group what had happened in meetings instead of people shouting "Hurrah! Hurrah! Three cheers for the student council!" (not that this was ever said), people just paid little attention to what was said.

Then the teachers' strike hit us. One of the teachers who actually bothered to come to the meetings was called upon by his union to stop taking part in extra-curricular activities. Dutifully (he couldn't possibly be gleeful at missing such a joyful activity) he obeyed.

However, despite failure after failure the council is taking its toll. According to our year head the teachers are split about whether to have a student council or not. Most teachers try to evade the subject. He also said that we will probably get a student council for the whole of the school in about three years time. Inspired by this optimistic statement, I can dream about overthrowing the oppressive regime and its tyrannical ruler . . . after all it is 1984.

Pupil Observers in one London Primary School

Ray Pinder

With long experience as head of a north London primary school, Ray Pinder writes here on her school's experience of pupil representatives as observers at governors' meetings.

In the autumn of 1977, the governors of this north London primary school decided to invite observers from the parents, teaching and non-teaching staff, to attend governors' meetings. They also elected to invite two or three pupils from the most senior classes in the school, the eleven-year-olds, to attend the next meeting as an experiment. The suggestion was discussed by the teachers at a staff meeting and was given support.

The first of the pupil observers were formally welcomed at the first governors' meeting of 1978. It has since become the accepted practice for representatives of the older pupils to attend governors' meetings. Agendas are so arranged that items of chief interest to the children are discussed early in the evening. The observers usually leave between 8.00 and 8.30pm (meetings begin at 6.30pm) and any confidential items are taken after they have gone.

There were many reasons for the invitation. The governors had been discussing ways of involving more of those concerned with the school in the actual management; they wanted to make governors' meetings more accessible to all sections of the school community. We agreed that schools should be democratic and it seemed to us that the children, as working partners in the processes of the school, should also have some recognition in the processes of government. We had recently been involved in a very full consultation with all staff, parents and children, in order to introduce new playground equipment. The children had been fully involved, every class in the school had taken part in planning and in deciding on schemes of decoration. The scheme that had received the highest number of votes had been designed by the five-year-old class. The attitude of the staff to the children was not authoritarian. Everyone agreed that children ought to be consulted about school events, that they should take part in making decisions and understand the reasons for any rules. Thus the invitation to them to observe at governors' meetings seemed a natural step.

There was no abrogation of responsibility by the teachers, no 'Kids' Power' was envisaged, but more an agreement that there were many areas in which adults and children worked together. It was recognised that while the adults, aware of the legal requirements of their position and experienced in education, had to make appropriate decisions, the perceptions of pupils were important and needed to be communicated by them before the adults could make properly informed decisions. Then those decisions would be more likely to be in the best interests of the entire school community. There was also the agreement that children should become autonomous learners and that this could only come about if chldren were given opportunities to participate in areas of decision making and to learn the constraints which operate upon all decision making. Children could practise their ability to make political decisions by using opoortunities appropriate to their age and experience.

There were a number of practical questions to be decided. How were the pupil observers to be selected? How would they be able to communicate their impressions and relay decisions to the rest of the school? At first, elections for class representatives were held in the classes concerned. Over the years this process has become more one of of self-selection than of formal election. Those children who indicate an interest to their class teacher, during a class discussion about the meetings, are usually offered the opportunity. Not every child wants the responsibility; some live too far from the school for a return visit to be convenient. Parents' permission must be given and the children have to be collected by an adult after the meeting.

In the early days, a conscious effort was necessary by teachers to persuade girls to volunteer or stand for election. For a long time girls were obviously reluctant

Stewart C. Mason: a Tribute

Andrew Fairbairn
Director of Education at Leicestershire from 1970 to 1984, Andrew Fairbairn previously served as Stewart Mason's Deputy. In this tribute, delivered at a Memorial Service earlier this year, he commemorates the life and contribution of a pioneer Director of Education, who successfully piloted the Leicestershire Plan for comprehensive education from 1957. In 1970 Leicestershire became the first English county to complete reorganisation throughout its entire area.

I first met Stewart Mason (and Elizabeth) in 1960 when he invited me for a preliminary interview for the job of his Deputy. Indeed, this took the form of a visit to the new Longslade Upper School at Birstall, dinner and overnight stay at Vicary House. Later, from when I took up the appointment in the county in 1961, I saw that Stewart's meticulous preparation applied to all senior appointments in the Education Office, and of Heads and Principals — certainly the most important task any Director of Education has to perform. His attention to detail was, of course, secondary to those precious gifts of flair, imagination, insight and far-sightedness which he possessed in supreme measure and which contributed so significantly to making him probably the most seminally important Director of Education of the post-war years.

Stewart was essentially a schools man: his teaching experience and particularly his experience as one of HM Inspectors directed his attention to visiting schools, getting into classrooms, talking to teachers and thus keeping his finger on the pulse of curriculum and teacher opinion at first hand. Of course, he didn't do the work of his Education Officers and Advisers for them — he relied on their judgement and ideas and

(Continued from page 23)

to come forward. Gradually this has improved, perhaps because there is increased awareness of the effects of sexism.

At no stage has there been 'vetting' of pupils. If someone was keen to be an observer, they had their chance, however difficult their teacher expected them to find note-taking, or however shaky had been their commitment to school life previously. Some of the most memorable reporting back has come from our least conformist pupils.

Before the observers make their reports to the school assembly, they discuss the main points to be raised, with the Head or a Teacher Governor. This provides the observers with the opportunity to consolidate their memories, clarify their notes and make a selection which they consider to be of greatest interest to the assembly. It can also provide the basis for a class lesson on note-taking if the class teacher wishes. Reporting back to a full school assembly might seem daunting to some, but the children are already used to talking about their own work at such assemblies, and almost every child will have taken part in class presentations at some time or other. Reports are given and received with seriousness although there have been those times when a natural comic has lightened the report with welcome humour and set us all laughing.

The presence of pupil observers has become an accepted part of our school. Has there been any practical value to pupils and/or governors in this? One example of direct and practical significance must be reported: at the time when the nursery block was being built, the pupil observers played a key role in conveying information about the proposed changes to the rest of the school. Everyone was deeply interested in the progress of the work and many looked forward to seeing their own young brothers and sisters in the new class. At a governors meeting at which the plans for fencing off an area of the playground for the use of the nursery children were being discussed, one pupil observer who was eyeing the plans keenly, asked if he could speak. He pointed out that the fencing on the side adjacent to the main playground (used for ball games) ought to be much higher than that of the other sides of the playground, to stop balls flying over and hitting small children. This had not occurred to the architect nor to the other adults examining the plans. His suggestion was welcomed and incorporated into the plans and he was able to report this back proudly the next day.

Several governors, on being asked their opinions, found the presence of the children a welcome reminder of those to whom they are truly accountable. They felt that many matters are more speedily resolved because the pupils' opinions are available to questioners. Their views on school meals are constantly canvassed by governors! It was generally felt that the presence of the children added balance to the meetings.

What of the pupils? Those questioned were uniformly enthusiastic and felt other schools should copy the idea. Several had found it valuable in helping them to understand how the school was organised and managed and how different people were involved in this. Although some observers had found some items difficult to follow, they felt they had learned from the experience. Other children had questioned them, both inside and outside the assembly. One observer said, in retrospect, 'It's better for the others to hear things from a kid like themselves and not always from grown-ups, because it makes things more real.'

relished the face-to-face discussion and argument. But he refused to be desk-bound and became the better informed, and as a result able to develop practical policies for the Education committee to consider. Stewart assiduously attended and took personally the three major sub-committees of the Leicestershire Education Committee — his Committee expected this of him and, of course, it enabled him to keep abreast of developments in Further and Higher Education as well as in the schools. These meetings were interesting and informative because he took great pains to explain the very detailed written reports on all manner of subjects which poured forth in the great period of the expansion of the education service in this country from the 1950s to the early 1970s.

His contribution towards the development of comprehensive secondary education in the two-tier system known as the Leicestershire Plan was original and outstanding. In a county where the Grammar and Secondary Modern Schools were relatively small in size, but where the school populaton doubled between 1951 and 1971, his inspiration was to use most of the Secondary Modern Schools as lower Secondary Schools for 11-14 year-old children and the Grammar Schools, and some of the Secondary Modern Schools, as Upper Schools for 14-18 year-old children. Thus, the selection examination at 11+ was abolished in two areas of the county in 1957 and all children proceeded from their Primary Schools to their High School at eleven without examination and thence onward to the Upper School at 14 if that was their choice. This essentially pragmatic approach to school organisation translated into practice, in what was still a largely rural county, as the abolition of the 11+ and offered much wider opportunities to all children to take public examinations — to an extent denied to them in the Secondary Modern Schools.

The Leicestershire Plan was a flash of genius and Stewart had that quick perception to see how a horizontal form of organisation could neatly fit the, at that time, fairly small secondary schools of the county. His ability to carry the Education Committee, the teachers, the teachers' unions and the general public with him in this extraordinary new initiative was illustrated most graphically when, in 1961 at a Boundary Commission inquiry, the De Montfort Hall was filled to overflowing by people from the suburbs protesting at the attempt by the City to take over several of the suburbs. The fact that the Leicestershire Plan today has weathered all the pressures of rising population in the County, the financial cutbacks, now the falling rolls in schools and new curriculum developments, not least in the technical and vocational area, is illustrative of its basic strength.

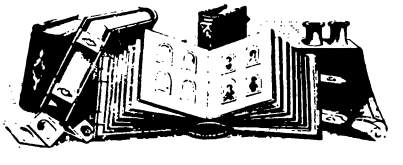
In Art and Design education the fact that the design centres in all Leicestershire secondary schools now lead the way in new approaches to design and technological education is borne witness to by the fact that the Manpower Services Commission decided very early on that Leicestershire should be one of the pilot areas for the new Technical and Vocational Education Initiative.

Stewart Mason was much influenced as an HMI in Cambridgeshire by Henry Morris, the idiosyncratic County Education Officer. It was from many talks and walks with Morris that Stewart introduced the Community College concept to Leicestershire and the first one was opened at the Ivanhoe School, Ashby-de-la-Zouch in 1954.

Stewart's approach to Leicestershire's Principals, Heads and Advisers was Socratic. We met for a day in small groups of Heads of Primary, High and Upper Schools in the Winter and Spring terms to discuss matters of moment, seek views, try out new ideas on school organisation and staffing and curriculum development which then formed the basis of recommendations to the Education Committee. Once the lengthy and painstaking appointment procedure for Heads had taken place, he expected the same trouble to be taken by Heads in appointing their assistant staff. Above all, he encouraged schools to think for themselves in a climate of responsible autonomy. The delegation of responsibility for developing the county's educational system to Governors and Heads was fundamental and this in turn put a premium on the development of mutual trust and respect between Committee, officers and the schools — and, my word, how the schools responded! I always say that an ounce of encouragement is worth a pound of direction, a maxim which is even more important in 1984, but alas largely disregarded, than in the 1950s, '60s and '70s.

Stewart's interest in the visual and performing arts was marked and important. Alec Clifton Taylor will speak about the initiation of the County Collection of Works of Art and the extraordinary embellishment and aesthetic treatment of school buildings in the county. I suppose, outside public galleries and collections, there is no more important and certainly larger collection of Works of Art by contemporary British painters, sculptors and designers in this country or anywhere else in the world. His encouragement of the foundation of the County School of Music is well-known. The School operated for the benefit of many hundreds of children of all ages on Saturdays in term, performing regularly in this country and abroad in the most famous concert halls of Europe and conducted by many of the best known British conductors and, of course, presided over by Sir Michael Tippet. Today, despite the buffets of outrageous fortune, many thousands of young people in the county learn instruments either at the Leicestershire School of Music or at Area Centres — the work so well founded by Stewart's encouragement develops apace.

Stewart believed in working with and for teachers, he did not like Inspectors and reckoned that his schools would respond much better if advice from experienced Advisers was on offer. He believed in delegation of powers to Heads and Governing Bodies and he was backed up in this by the County Education Committee. His motto was to trust people in the expectation that they would respond — and they certainly did throughout the Leicestershire Education Service!



Talking on . . .

Maureen Hardy
Maureen Hardy is in charge of Language Development in a multi-ethnic school — Sandfield Close Primary School in Leicester. This article continues the report on her approach to developing oracy in the classroom, introduced in 'Talking in School' (Vol 22, No 2, Spring 1980) and further developed in 'Talking it Through' (Vol 24, No 2, Spring 1982).

'Speaking' and 'hearing' are but the raw materials of conversation. Such superficial speech acts have their uses, eg in small-talk, but are insufficient for the purpose of fully expressing a meaningful message. In a learning situation, the message transmitted is intended to be both understood and applied. Accordingly, the participants should be actively engaged in 'listening', 'talking' and 'saying'. H.G. Widdowson (1978) provides useful insights into the nature of these important aspects of dialogue. 'Listening' is the activity of endeavouring to interpret correctly with the intention of framing a relevant response. 'Saying' is the act of taking the initiative and making a valid contribution. 'Talking' refers to other supportive and sustaining speech acts of a meaningful nature.

In Schools, too much 'speaking' and 'hearing' tend to take place and too little 'saying' and 'listening'. The Bullock Report states that:

> 'There is research evidence to suggest that on average the teacher talks for three-quarters of the time in the usual teacher-class situation.' (para. 10.4)

Douglas Barnes (1975) points out that often so called interaction is little more than the pupils filling in predictable slots. Despite the efforts of the Schools Council to improve oral communication in the Primary School, Leicester University's ORACLE study (Galton *et al*, 1980) reported that few children appear to enter into work related dialogue with either their teachers or fellow pupils.

More attention to the development of oral/aural abilities would probably improve the quality of school learning. As the Bullock Report points out 'a priority objective for all schools' should be —

> 'a commitment to the speech needs of their pupils and a serious study of the role of language in learning.' (para. 10.30)

Learning is efficient and transferable only when its logical basis is understood. As Stones (1966) points out —

> 'a child with a low level of linguistic ability will have poor conceptual ability and will be unable to understand the system of logical relationships which constitute a cognitive schema.'

Joan Tough (1977) suggests that children's experience in using language not only influences their development in relation to 'school achievement', but also 'human relationships' and further 'the extent to which they find fulfilment in the world.' Andrew Wilkinson, who introduced the concept of oracy in 1965, has suggested that an important task of the teacher should be:-

> 'to encourage the verbalisation of experience and the experience of verbalisation.' (Wade, B. (ed.) 1982).

Nevertheless, the development of oracy remains neglected in many schools, or takes second place to literacy.

The writer is concerned to develop oracy and has devised a programme of teacher intervention (see **FORUM**, Vol. 24, No. 2., 1982). The approach aims to foster curiosity and the willingness to participate in investigations, especially exploratory discussions. It attempts to assist children to learn how to operate in language in the two functions which M.A.K. Halliday (1973) suggests may be crucial to success in school, ie the personal (Here I come) function and the heuristic (tell me why?) function.

The approach provides a framework in which a teacher may operate flexibly in order to meet the particular needs of each group encountered. Relevant skills have been identified, eg the ability to listen, observe, reason, question and communicate adequately. Appropriate objectives have been defined and evaluation procedures devised which provide sufficient feedback to identify group and individual needs. Both 'willingness to participate' and 'quality of response' may be evaluated.

Experience indicates that the selected skills may best be fostered within the social setting of a group of 10/12 children. Creating a conducive atmosphere is essential. Accordingly, spontaneous conversation is encouraged and the topics are related to the children's interests and current studies. Also, the children are given the satisfaction of listening to themselves on tape. The teacher participates positively, but refrains from dominating the discussion. Provision is made to assist teachers to develop suitable conversational and organisational strategies.

This article describes the progress of a group of 6/8 year-olds over a period of twenty-five half-hour sessions, ie 12½ hours of teacher intervention. Five of the children were indigenous and five second-language learners. The general ability was from average downwards. Two were confident and relatively verbally fluent, but used mainly 'speaking/hearing' strategies. The others had poorly developed communication skills, either because of shy, nervous dispositions or limited English. One child was anti-social and unco-operative initially and two others were hyperactive and disruptive.

Collectively, they represented an interesting challenge. Despite the difficulties, much was achieved as the following excerpts show.

In the early sessions, few children participated willingly, some hardly at all. Many responses were hesitant and stilted. The teacher's part was heavy and laboured. Most lines of communication were between her and individual pupils, few of whom attempted to communicate with each other. Many responses were monosyllables or short phrases. The few longer utterances ventured were often clumsily constructed, ambiguous or irrelevant. There was little use of recall, imagination or reasoning; labelling being the predominant activity. The few questions asked by the children related either to establishing labels or requesting permission. Session 5, which took place on Harvest Festival day, represented a slight improvement on previous attempts, but was still superficial and disjointed:-

B. An apple . . . you've got an apple.
Te. Yes I picked it off my tree last night. I will cut it in half and then we can see inside. Let's have a look inside . . . Who can tell me where the seed is in an apple?
A. The pips Miss . . . pips.
D. Can I have some apple? . . . Can we have some to eat?
Te. Well, let's look at it first . . . look this apple has a grub in it . . . can you see the grub?
A. A know what middle bit is called Miss, it's called a core.
Te. That's right . . . Do you remember me telling you a story about apple cores?
B. Yes.
D. A is going to eat the apple.
Te. Give it to me A. . . . thank you.
E. Is that the core?
Te. Yes . . . that is the core. Who can remember the story of Johnny Appleseed?
A. Me.
Te. Can you tell us the story?
A. Johnny had an apple and he had a wigglish tooth.
Te. Well that was another story — good.
Te. E. can you remember the story?
E. No.
Te. You drew me a lovely picture of it.
E. I can't remember because it was ages ago.

Next the teacher endeavoured to get them to describe an orchard. The best responses obtained came again from A. and B.

A. Well its all apple trees.
B. Well it has got all trees and they have got fruit on or something.

By contrast an excerpt from one of the final sessions presents a very different picture. By this stage, the collection of difficult individuals had become welded into a viable group. They were fascinated by the detail in a picture of the seaside at the turn of the century. Eagerly they were observing and 'talking', 'saying' and 'listening' to each other. All were participating willingly, if to varying degrees. Questions abounded, indicating a wish to know and understand. Many answers were supplied by the children and most responses were appropriate. Many more longer utterances were employed, some well constructed. Language was used for a greater range of functions than previously. Imaginative responses, tentative suggestions, reasoning strategies and use of recall were evident. Even where English was still limited, it was being used more effectively. All involved were relaxed, stimulated and learning from each other, as the following excerpt illustrates:—

F. Miss H. . . . What's that? (pointing).
Te. Who can tell F. what she is looking at?
C. They are big clouds because in other books they are not real clouds, but these are.
D. Miss H., did the man paint the clouds softly with thick paint?
A. I think it is water paint.

(An interruption disturbs the flow of conversation).

A. Go away, we are busy!
H. Miss H., why have they got all the sand there?
A. Because they are making a sandcastle.
G. The children are using buckets and spades to make a sandcastle and to carry water.
F. Why is the horse and carriage in the water?
Te. Can anyone tell F. why the horse and carriage are in the water?
C. Because it's a sort of boat pulled by the horse.
Te. Good idea, but no, think again.
C. I know, it's where they get changed.
B. And it takes them to the deep end.

(a babble of voices)

Te. We cannot hear anyone when you all talk together . . . F. speaks first, then A.
F. You know if the horse gets too far out . . . and the horse can swim . . . but the carriage will sink, you know . . . all the people inside . . . well, the water will come in and they'll get flushed out.
A. Then they will drown.
Te. That would be sad . . . what were you going to say A.?
A. It don't look very deep where they are now.
Te. No, because they are coming back into the shallow water.
B. In olden days, they didn't like changing in front of other people, so they changed in there.
G. In olden days, they used carriages instead of cars.
Te. Yes they did, but these are in the water, not going along the roads. B. has just told you what they were used for . . . What do you think happened next?
E. Well, it would be somewhere to hide and if anyone looked into the carriage, the people would be screaming.
F. And they might scream when they are out in the deep water.
E. And if nobody heard them, they might get seasick.

It is interesting to consider the factors which may have contributed to the desired development. First it is necessary to state that the children were unaware of special treatment. Group work for many purposes was a

norm in the school, so making a tape was as natural an activity as making a group model.

As circumstances spread the sessions over several months, the maturation factor cannot be disregarded. However, the Infants emerged more confident and fluent than most of the Juniors had begun. Lawton (1968) provides a clue as to what may have occurred. In reporting the work of Luria, he comments that:-

> 'The child develops intellectually, not simply by a process of maturation, but by reacting to problems presented by the environment.'

Given suitable stimulus, children develop more complex forms of behaviour — 'new forms of attention, memory, imagination, thought and action.' Possibly this is what had happened here.

The clearly defined objectives and careful monitoring of progress proved to be an effective teaching strategy in relation to fostering the skills involved. Evaluation highlighted particular weaknesses for attention. However, the social setting was of equal importance. G. Wells (1977) suggests that the sharing of interests is a vital factor. He comments that an atmosphere of 'genuine reciprocity and collaboration' appears to encourage the development of communication skills in pre-school children. The small group situation in school provided a similar environment in which the 'negotiated construction of shared meaning' could be experienced in much the same manner as it is provided by 'enabling parents.'

Group work is not easy to organise in school, but there are indications that the benefits may justify the effort involved. Practical suggestions relating to organisation aspects are given in **FORUM**, Vol. 24, No. 2. (further information may be obtained — see below). The writer would be interested to hear the results of attempts to replicate the approach in other school situations. Hopefully they may prove a rewarding experience for all concerned.

(For further details, please forward large s.a.e. to the writer at the School, postal code LE4 7RE).

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National Association for Primary Education

Julia Hagedorn

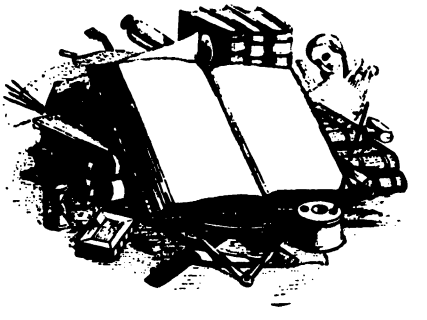
The National Association for Primary Education (NAPE) was formed as a non-political body embracing all those — teachers, parents, administrators, lecturers — who are engaged in supporting, developing, researching or working in the education of children from the ages of three to 13. (At present, there is a strongly supported move to change this age range to 0-13 at the next Annual General Meeting.)

NAPE was formed in 1980 with the intention of bringing together individuals, groups and organisations at both national and local levels. It does not wish to supersede existing groups but to bring them together to facilitate a professional dialogue between all those interested in children's education.

NAPE has grown from eight local associations to its present level of 52 and looks set to expand at grass roots level while becoming a national voice through its elected Council. NAPE Chairman, John Coe, Senior Primary Adviser for Oxfordshire, is concerned that members should campaign to influence public and government opinion on primary education as a long-term aim. At the local level, members hold meetings to discuss local issues in education, national issues, or simply to drink a glass of wine together.

NAPE produces a journal three times a year. It has recently begun a policy of regionalisation to ensure that as NAPE grows, a single voice should continue to be heard. It has been asked to present evidence to the Select Committee on Education, Science and the Arts which is looking into levels of achievement in primary schools.

Annual membership of NAPE is £5 from Mike Brogden, Wokingham Teachers Centre, Reading Road, Wokingham, Berks RG11 1RF.



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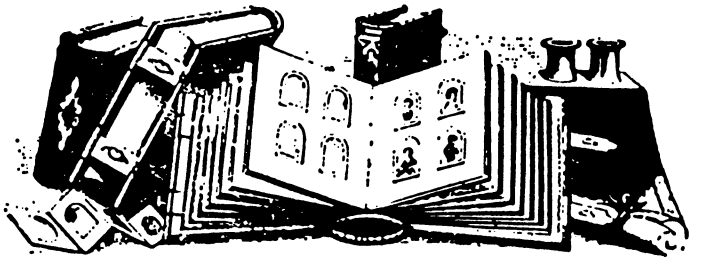

A Radical Critique

Beyond Progressive Education Ken Jones, Macmillan (1983), pp.178, £12.50.

In 1983 Mrs Thatcher made a triumphant return to the Commons for a second term of Government. She was borne in on a tide of votes cast by all age groups, not least those just turned eighteen, many of whom had been through our comprehensive schools. Whatever clarity of vision the comprehensives gave them did not survive the blasts of the election campaign.

This dismal outcome will not have surprised Ken Jones. His interesting book, which could almost be subtitled an intellectual history of the radical left and its defeats in English education since the 1900s, seeks to analyse the shortcomings of two dominant strands of post-war Labour party thinking on schools: equal opportunity and progressive education. He argues that their influence, while up to a point helpful, was finally inadequate for the mighty task of achieving radical change in schools. Equal opportunity and progressive education, for Jones, do not have the required intellectual consistency (they 'modulate their emphases'), and are far too often silent when it comes to scrutiny of the social and economic context in which schools function. He says 'Equal opportunity encourages a concern with individual educational outcomes which is divisive . . . it fosters a positive hostility between individual educational betterment and collective advance'.

An intense awareness of these problems permeated the debates of the 1920s but such organisations as the Teachers Labour League, with a consciousness of these ideas, had dwindled to nothing by the time of Butler's Education Act in 1944. Ken Jones sees little sign of awareness returning until 1967/8 with the formation of Rank and File. It is useful to have a study of the last 15 or so years: the author argues persuasively that the Left has produced a mass of initiatives (a 'warren') which, though valuable in particular contexts (eg: TLK), have not amounted to anything like 'central confrontation' — nor indeed have they come from a 'global perspective'.

Jones puts together what he sees as these organisational and intellectual weaknesses in the radical left with the (already diagnosed) failings of the mainstream's twin currents, progressivism and equal opportunity, and sees a movement wide open to the counter-attack by non-concensus Toryism. Black Papers supplied the robust pamphleteering for the counter-attack and in due course 'the cuts', anti-comprehensive law-making and the startling expansion of MSC schemes dealing in ever more basic education completed it.

The book concludes with a look ahead at some of the steps that might allow a radical transformation of schools. Perhaps the key to it all is shown by the stance Ken Jones requires of a Labour government . . . 'the development of a *popular* programme of reform is dependent on Labour being willing to tackle questions of the purpose and content of education, from a perspective that challenges the indistinctly related priorities that now influence the play of structure and curriculum. This also implies, of course, a policy towards the ownership and control of capital radically different from that of previous Labour governments.'

So Ken Jones is hoping for a truly socialist government in Britain.

We then look at his suggestions for ways ahead in the schools:

1. Involve the people more in patterns of policy development in education.
2. Further 'trade unionisation' of the National Union of Teachers.
3. The weaning of the content of education to beyond the point where it is restricted by today's idea of occupational destiny.
4. The refinement and development of mixed ability teaching.

These ways ahead are useful and thoughtful pointers to the future. But they do seem an inadequate response to the really astonishing marginalisation of education debate (particularly school age education) over the past few years. They feel in-house — and a little parochial. This is in many ways a problem of the whole book which is very much about English school education, and, despite its quotes from Gramsci and Dahro, feels as if it sees the millenium growing from a revolution in the consciousness of NUT members in East London. You have of course to start somewhere.

But Jones is talking of nothing less than an overturning of the traditional relationship between the school and its controllers, whether LEA or government. The measures he suggests have invariably, whether in England or in Nicaragua, followed the seizing of the political power base by the Left rather than being preceded by it.

It was this rather than intellectual defeats or failure to attempt central confrontation that created the real problems for the Left over the past two decades. Many progressives read and understood Gramsci as well as Freire and Kozol; they saw the weaknesses of hippie, politically naïve education. Many equal opportunists never saw their task as finished when schools went comprehensive. They sought to achieve what was possible in the clear understanding that those who would follow would build on (and need to knock chunks off while building on) their work. If today the left in the LEAs and NUT is in fact stronger than it was in 1968 (and I believe it is) this is as a result of that 'warren' that occurred throughout the period.

Given that such ideas as Ken Jones provides will be possible with sympathetic LEAs, we need to think what can be done in those which are less than sympathetic. Here I could have done with more analysis of the role of the media in forming people's ideas of what schooling is all about. The triumph of the Black Papers, as Jones points out, was not in what they were but in how they were used. There is an unfortunate tradition of joyous incompetence when handling the media on the educational Left, but broadcasts, publications, press releases and articles are necessary bulwarks against the flood of reactionary attacks against new ideas. If people are prepared to use those means to protect the work they are doing even against an unsympathetic backcloth their work stands a real chance of surviving.

Finally, I was concerned that Ken Jones omitted any consideration of the powerful libertarian tradition in progressivism. This not only included the fight against corporal punishment in schools (only mentioned as part of a NUT vote in 1982) but also battles on a whole range of rights issues involving young people. The silence from any part of the NUT during the struggles of the National Union of School Students belied some of its more radical members' claims to sympathise with the oppressed. Throughout Ken Jones' book one gets the (probably unjustified) impression that in the schools of the future he envisages young people could still be treated in an authoritarian way; somehow the school students don't seem to exist, rather as women for so long were invisible in socialist thinking.

But generally this is a thoughtful and well-researched book and should be required reading for anyone interested in the various currents of thought of radical educationalists over the last twenty years.

NICK PEACEY
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Schools and the Community

Community Schools: Claims and Performance, John Wallis and Graham Mee, Department of Adult Education, University of Nottingham, (1983), pp.81. Price £4.00.

Months after publication, this important little book has received little or no attention from either school or adult education journals. It has, however, certainly not escaped attention in the Leicestershire Community Colleges.

Two adult educators look beyond the youth and adult appendages of the community school to the community curriculum and the school's relationship with the community.

Wallis and Mee begin by looking once

again at the reasons for the restricted and restricting forms of youth and adult work that have become associated with the secondary community school. (This book is not concerned with primary community schools.) There is the problem of participation in decision making. The school governing body is a powerful and sensitive instrument of community influence — on work with school students. It was not designed with adult education or youth work in mind and thus becomes a barrier between the community and the Local Education Authority. There is the problem of the inequality between the school on the one hand and the adult and youth appendage on the other. This manifests itself in many ways from payment of staff to restricted availability of daytime facilities. There is the problem of access. The typical green field site community school has been concerned to maximise the utilisation of plant. This is in contrast to the Further Education and Higher Education establishments which have tended to respond by developing outposts. Adult access to school classes has proved to be sporadic and limited. The school time-table is not designed with adults in mind (neither are the course requirements of 'O' and 'A' level exams from which so many adults derive a poor image of adult learning possibilities).

The challenge to the claim that the community school is the natural base for continuing education is well understood and widely known. What is interesting about this book is the startling new evidence of failure in rather unexpected areas. Wallis and Mee find that community schools have made comparatively little progress in the development of:

i. The use of the community as a resource for learning and as a subject of study.
ii. The promotion of independent learning skills.
iii. The relationship of the school to other educational providers.

In close consultation with the field, a 154 item check list was compiled and 32 community secondary schools were matched with 32 non-designated secondary schools in order to compare areas of continuing education practice relevant to the school curriculum. The differences tended only to cluster around areas of activity in adult or youth provision where community schools have an identified responsibility. Both groups of institutions recorded low levels of achievement on the majority of items.

Of even greater interest to the community education worker is the analysis of the diaries of 20 adult/community educators based in community schools. These boundary workers are certainly a key link between the school and the community but most of their time is spent on administration. There is very little evidence of outreach activity.

John Wallis knows the Leicestershire Community Colleges almost as well as Edward Hutchinson whose reports of the 1970s drew attention to the schools' inherent weakness in capacity for outreach. However, in concentrating on the senior community education workers, Wallis and Mee tend to ignore the outreach workers in the team — though of course the 20 Leicestershire Community Tutor posts were terminated in the last round of cuts.

Wallis and Mee's call for further research and an arrest of further community school development is very relevant to Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire where this school movement is now taking place. In Leicestershire the task is not to arrest the development of further community secondary schools. There has been none for some years. The task is to move the community education worker forward to a position beyond the confines of the school.

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Even an Actress . . .

Dyxlexia or Illiteracy? — Realising the Right to Read by Peter Young and Colin Tyre. The Open University Press (Children with Special Needs Series 1983), 179pp, Paperback, £4.95.

The term 'dyslexia' is now out of favour on two counts. Firstly, in the post-Warnock era, it is recognised that children who experience learning difficulties should not be categorised by their problems, but rather identified according to their needs. This reflects the general transference of special needs from the medical to the educational domain. Despite its sensational successes in what might be called 'crisis intervention' medicine, the modern health service is notorious for its tendency to treat the disease rather than the patient. Now that special education is shifting out of the ambience of the NHS, it is inevitable that a term which mimics medical diagnosis should be distrusted by the educationalists.

I use the word 'mimic' advisedly. The other reason why serious educationalists frown upon the term is because even if the medical model is pursued in any attempt to solve reading problems it will, like the legendary Dead Sea fruit, disintegrate in a firm grasp, despite its initial attractiveness. Young and Tyre compare it with the term 'dyspepsia'. Once the pseudo-authority of the Greek has been stripped away, 'dyslexia' means no more than 'having difficulty with reading and spelling', just as 'dyspepsia' means no more than 'having difficulty with digestion'. The latter may have a variety of causes from cucumbers to ulcers. In the same way, reading difficulties may have a wide variety of disparate causes.

Just as dyspepsia has been called 'the remorse of a guilty stomach', so dyslexia has been called 'middle-class illiteracy'. Herein lies the clue to the persistence of this apparently useless term. Whether we like it or not, illiteracy is still associated with, if not equated with, stupidity. If you are the parent of a child who is patently not stupid, and the educational system does not appear to be teaching your child to read, a term like 'dyslexia', redolent of the caring technology, is a useful tool in bringing the needs of your offspring to the attention of an apparently apathetic and ineffective professional. If you happen to be also a middle-class parent, who realises full well the connection between literacy and social status, to encapsulate the 'problem' in a single term and detach it from the social aspects of the syndrome provides a soothing palliative to the torment of second-generation educational regression. Even an actress can declare herself to be 'dyslexic' and thereby evoke sympathy. To confess illiteracy would be to invite disabling patronisation. Nor should the term's attraction to the professional at some distance removed from the mire and complexity of the classroom be discounted. A term that removes the 'glamour' from 'grammar' at least reduces it to the manageable proportions of an entry in a diagnostic dictionary.

Hence the title of the book under review. It is an authoritative and readable survey of the issues involved in reading difficulty, and includes a full analysis of the reading process, a run-down of unanswered questions, and an outline of possible strategies towards remediation. The overall impression left by the book is that, firstly, reading is an extraordinary complex mental and physical activity and it is little short of miraculous that so few things go wrong with so many people. Secondly, because it is an activity which engages so much of all that it means to be human, a 'holistic' approach is essential. In other words, instead of dealing with a 'problem' called dyslexia, we should be tackling the needs of complex individuals on an individual basis in an approach which is informed by a thorough understanding of the reading process.

But if this is to become more than a pious platitude, and everyone is to realise their right to read, generalisations must be translated into precise programmes which are costly in time, effort and resources. Reading and digesting a book of this quality is the first step, and it deserves to become a Bible to the converted. The problem remains: how to spread the gospel?

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Management Styles

The Management of Educational Institutions: Theory, Research and Consultancy, Edited by H.L. Gray, The Falmer Press Curriculum Series, pp.294, £6.95 paper: £11.95 cloth.

This book sets out to provide readers with an insight into some of the major theoretical considerations in managing educational institutions. The mixture of well-established theories, speculative ideas and empirical observations within schools provides an interesting contrast in styles and results in a fair balance of views on the subjects chosen by the editor. The book does not, however, seek to provide any answers or develop theories in detail but raises a series of pertinent questions for those involved in LEA policy making, management training and in schools. It attempts to stimulate the discussion of an appropriate rationale and philosophy and so relate theory to practice, at a time when increasing resources are being devoted to education management in the UK.

The essays in the book, by a range of international authors, frequently highlight the lack of any conscious management in education — which 'has not been managed so much as roughly guided.' If schools are organisations which have not considered strategic planning as important, in practice, then, as Webb and Lyons show, this may not be surprising given the proportion of time that senior managers in schools spend on trivial matters and in a system where apparently similar schools provide three times as much non-teaching time to the Head and deputies as others, all of which may be

based on no more that custom and precedent. Ultimately, what we need to know is the effect that different management resources and approaches have on the effectiveness of teaching, a question touched on by Fullan in an essay concentrating on the implementation of curriculum innovation through changed materials, approaches and beliefs.

Heller's essay raises fundamental issues suggesting that initiatives for change need to focus on the individual teacher or institution with implications for INSET organisation. But management training has not yet learned to apply its skills to those who do not choose willingly to be counselled and trained which poses the greatest problem at Headship level. HMI have made clear that successful schools depend on the leadership of Heads with 'imagination and vision' and Organisation Development (OD) suggests that 'commitment to change by leadership is a necessary but not sufficient condition for innovation'. So we have a classic 'Catch 22' situation.

A number of essays on OD, principally from a phenomenological perspective, are included and provide a straightforward summary of the present state of the art. The development of the school organisation is thus clearly placed in context within its social and cultural environment.

The Management of Educational Institutions contains stimulating, well-presented papers, and the variety of perspectives adds significantly to its value, but the editor has, perhaps, tried to cover too broad a field with a consequent lack of depth. Whilst an interesting complement to a shelf of works on management, it does not quite stand alone.

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Examinations and Social Control

Selection, Certification and Control ed. Patricia Broadfoot, The Falmer Press, 1984, pp.275, Cloth £12.95, Paperback £7.50.

This collection of papers contains a number of profoundly important analyses of contemporary educational issues, and the editor is to be congratulated on her initiative in bringing these together and master-minding (if that is the correct word) the collection as a whole. The book is divided into two parts; the first, on 'Perspectives' contains a number of interesting papers, but it is the second, on 'Contemporary Policy Issues' that is most likely to interest **Forum** readers.

Three of the five articles here are outstanding, one is good, only one (oddly enough on the APU by Brian Hextall) fails to make the grade. In 'Towards a Tertiary Tripartism: New Codes of Social Control and the 17+', Stewart Ranson draws on some fascinating (and highly revealing) research material to develop a sharp and penetrating analysis of the current attempt by the DES and central government to restructure educational provision for the 16 to 19s along sharply differentiated lines. Using Bernstein's work, Ranson also offers an explanation of current developments in terms of social control. His arguments are convincing. This is an extremely effective analytical study of educational change and of the role of the state.

Equally relevant, and again sharply critical, is Desmond Nuttall's paper on 'The prospects for a Common System of Examining at 16 Plus', entitled 'Doomsday of a New Dawn?'. This traces the movement for the single examination from its inception in the mid-60s; the slow and cautious reaction of the DES and succeeding Secretaries of State, and the policy followed by Mark Carlisle in the early 80s. Nuttall refers to 'the incredibly slow pace of the reform', and the fact that 'Those with the greatest vested interests' — the exam boards themselves — 'have been given the task of doing all the drafting', so making it unlikely, he says, that the new system 'will adequately meet today's curricula needs'; the common system now being created 'will be divisive, bureaucratic, retrogressive and obsolescent' — almost exactly the opposite of the common system as desired by its proponents in the late 60s and early 1970s. In the light of Joseph's announcement in June on the GCSE, I believe this to be a correct assessment, though it must have been written over a year ago. Nuttall also draws attention to 'the seizure back of control by the DES', and the dangers embodied in the insistence on Ministerial approval of 'national criteria'. The common system of examinations, he concludes — that is, 'a comprehensive examination for the comprehensive school' — will be bought 'at a very heavy price, if indeed it can be bought at all'.

The third outstanding, and highly relevant paper, is that by the editor herself. Here she uses her close knowledge of new developments in France to look critically at similar measures in England, focusing particularly on the deliberate move in France towards the abolition of formal external examinations and their replacement by school records. In view of the move towards profiling here, this is important and relevant. Broadfoot finds that, in France, teacher-based assessment, though 'apparently benign', has in practice provided a 'more irresistible and pervasive basis for the allocation of differential opportunity'. In practice, selection is becoming more subtle and covert in the new dispensation.

In England, Broadfoot thinks, 'profile' assessment — now rapidly developing in schools and more particularly within the Manpower Services Commission's empire — may not become vulnerable to similar criticisms. She holds that the characteristics of the new 'profile' initiatives 'are not likely to be determined by central government policy' here, as in France, so that 'more radical initiatives' may be developed. This, the future alone will show, though the contemporary thrust towards central control across the whole field of curriculum and examinations might seem to render this a somewhat optimistic prediction.

There is space only to draw attention also to the paper by Richard Bowe and Geoff Whitty on 'The Attack on School-Based Assessment in English Public Examinations at 16+'. This also gives much food for thought. Altogether this is a very worthwhile collection.

BRIAN SIMON

Close Observation

The Enquiring Classroom, by Stephen Rowland, The Falmer Press, 1984, pp.162, Paperback £6.25.

Stephen Rowland has written several articles for this journal and will be well known to **Forum** readers. However it is worth recalling that it was in his classroom, in a Leicestershire primary school, that Michael Armstrong carried out his pioneering research which later appeared as **Closely Observed Children, the diary of a primary classroom** (1980). This book is a follow-up of Michael's in that, in his turn, Stephen Rowland was seconded to do a similar research inquiry in another primary classroom in another Leicestershire school.

Unfortunately there isn't space here to do more than draw attention to Rowland's book, and to recommend it very warmly to **Forum** readers. Whereas Michael Armstrong focused largely on children's literary, linguistic and artistic activities, Stephen concentrates on explorations of the material environment and the development of abstract thinking and hypothesising on the part of the primary school children he worked with.

Some of the material is remarkable, indicating that young children are capable of much more penetrating thinking as well as more intensive endeavour than is normally accepted or, indeed, allowed for in the organisation of the school day. Of primary importance, Rowland argues, is control by the children over their own learning activity. This point is argued with some tenacity, together with the presentation of supporting evidence.

The movement towards secondment and shared classroom observation, pioneered by Armstrong and Rowland and having support from Andrew Fairbairn, Leicestershire's CEO, has spread widely in the county. This is one of the more hopeful developments to take root in a period when the dominant note has been one of a gloomy philistinism.

B.S.

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