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Business information: correspondence relating to subscriptions etc:
Lesley Yorke, FORUM, 60 Elms Road, Leicester LE2 3JB. Tel: 0533-700429.

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The next FORUM

The next issue of FORUM continues our analysis of the implications of the 1988 Education Act, while at the same time making clear our concern to support and publicize the best examples of primary and secondary practice.

Caroline Benn discusses some of the unseen aspects of the privatization of education. Brian Simon writes about recent developments in the promotion of City Technology Colleges and Grant-Maintained Schools. David Tombs, a young teacher in Hounslow, continues our discussion of the future of religious education. There will be articles on magnet schools, community languages, equal opportunities, teacher appraisal, the licenced teacher scheme and the effects of Thatcherite policies on higher education.

Conjuring with chaos

Evidence of educational shambles has been mounting throughout John MacGregor's first six months in office. He was left a vast amount of unfinished business in schemes and measures for implementing the 1988 Education Reform Act whose inconsistencies and flaws become ever more apparent. The shambles will be exacerbated by the impact of other Departments' legislation, such as the Poll Tax and compuslory competitive tendering for certain school services, and by the Treasury's denial of the public expenditure necessary for implementing such key features of the Act as the National Curriculum and Local Management of Schools (LMS). Small wonder that Kenneth Baker was happy to abandon the problems of implementing his half-baked Act and a service already heading for serious trouble of the government's own making.

The National Curriculum promises to be exposed as a glossy mirage as schools are unable to recruit the teachers needed for the core and other foundation subjects. Previously disguised shortages can no longer be ignored when curriculum coverage is prescribed, the overall teacher shortage extends to most subjects and rapidly approaches crisis point. Recent surveys by the six teachers' unions and by the **TES** have shown that official DES figures dramatically underestimate the shortfall. Holding down grants and inflicting top-up loans on students will further cut the number choosing to train as teachers.

Such gross mismanagement by two successive Secretaries of State, who failed to heed warnings from the profession they so plainly despised, is perpetuated by the new incumbent's direction to the Interim Advisory Committee on School Teachers' Pay to keep within an arbitrary £600m cost ceiling.

Assessment, imaged as assuring higher standards, is getting bogged in a monstrous complexity that spells chaos and a workload impossible for teachers to carry. As was feared, the Schools Examination and Assessment Council seems set to abandon the recommended moderation procedures and to downgrade teachers' assessments of the pupils they teach in favour of Standard Attainment Tests (SATs), thereby further undermining teachers' morale, narrowing what counts to what is most measurable and giving final assessment at each key stage the appearance of a lottery. The promise of a broadly based national curriculum properly assessed is rapidly losing any credibility it may have had.

Given these doubts, Angela Rumbold's move to abandon the government's one progressive initiative, Records of Achievement, was a misjudgement reflecting ignorance or prejudice which has sown confusion. How widely these records are used, their co-ordination in practice and format, will now rest with LEAs, teachers, schools and governors. They could counterbalance the damage of SAT labelling.

Governing Bodies will begin taking on Local Management of Schools this April with their delegated budgets cut to match the further £800m or so underfunding imposed by the Treasury in the new revenue settlement with LEAs and by the fierce impact of the Poll Tax on local revenue. They will begin to understand the resource implications of the National Curriculum at school level. They will increasingly face the critical problem of recruiting the teachers their schools need. Governors' Reports on the realities of the situation could transform Annual Parents' Meetings into lively and instructive events.

So far, LEA Officers, grappling with delegation schemes, are the most aware of the minefield laid by formula funding for LMS. To fund average but charge each school actual costs for its teachers creates a lottery and invites Governors to employ only the youngest, least experienced but cheapest on short-term or irregular 'supply' contracts and to go for rapid turnover — a recipe for instability that would make nonsense of a national curriculum or higher standards.

Angela Rumbold glimpsed enough of this shambles to concede extension of the transitional period when some flexibility in applying the formula is allowed. But unless it is disapplied LMS will result in deteriorating standards, artificial bankruptcy and haphazard closure for many good schools. Eight LEAs, including the staunchly Tory, are threatening defiance.

To what extent the 18 Grant Maintained Schools are partially protected by disguised subsidies that over-compensate for loss of LEA services is deliberately obscure. An ironic tribute to their value is the disgraceful attempt to force LEAs to contract back whatever an opted-out school wants. A DES Circular has spelt out a range of services with which LEAs must anyway continue to provide a GMS: significantly, these include Special Education Needs and home to school transport. A GMS is a hybrid grafted on LEA strength and protected from the storms of market forces.

LEAs were set up by the 1906 Act to enable local school systems to be planned as a whole. The 1988 Act requires them to exercise a strategic planning function for schools and across schools and further education for 16-19. Yet local management of schools and colleges, open enrolment, opted-out GMS and those irrelevant but centrally subsidised and competing City Technology Colleges all make planning impossible. The latest Act actually thereby promotes a growing and expensive shambles.

John MacGregor cannot conjure an education system for the nation and its children from that set of contradictions. Nor can conjuring with phoney figures, whether for teacher supply or funding, change the realities. The steadily worsening tangle of pupil assessment might begin to unravel if he tried to earn from teachers the reputation he apparently once had among farmers — that of the minister who listens. His first six months inspire no confidence that he even understands that there are problems in his legacy, still less that he is willing to question even the most serious flaws in an Act drawn to his Leader's conviction specifications.

Making sense of the National Curriculum

David Halpin
Previously a Deputy Head at a secondary comprehensive school in the North East, David Halpin has been a lecturer in education policy studies at Bristol Polytechnic since 1987. His PhD was about the need for a common secondary curriculum and he is now investigating implementation of the National Curriculum in four comprehensive schools in Avon. Here he argues that there is still scope for progressive teachers' initiatives and innovation.

The Government moved very quickly to establish its case, in the course of which it faced down an enormous avalanche of criticism of its plans. Its speed of action caught most teachers, educationists, LEA officers and advisers, not to mention HM Opposition, by surprise. By determining a fast pace, calling most of the shots, and appealing to populist concerns about the quality of the school service, Mr Baker quickly established a kind of superiority over the liberal education establishment, and in such a way that it now largely uses his vocabulary and not its own to account for its work and concerns. (Witness the extent to which concepts derived from business and industry such as 'market forces', 'delivery', 'performance indicators', and 'competitiveness' predominate in current education discourse.) To that extent, and in other much more serious ways, the Reform Act and its National Curriculum specification have radically altered the education landscape, and in the shortest time imaginable.

Common schooling and common curriculum

I'm still amazed at the extent to which most of us were caught out of position by the government, when we should have seen it all coming and done something of our own a long time ago. Why has it required the most reactionary government in years to remind us that the full implementation of secondary comprehensive education requires some form of national curriculum? What is the point of common schooling without a common curriculum? Once we admit the principle of universal schooling, it seems impossible to resist the suggestion that there should be a common core curriculum, however minimal, at the level of the school. A national core curriculum is required both to provide approximately equal opportunities for all and to maintain high standards throughout the education service. A core curriculum common to all parts of the country would also permit pupils to move from school to school, both within and between LEAs, without fear of their education being disrupted as a result of inconsistencies in basic curriculum content.

It is said by people who agree with these arguments that we already have a national curriculum, and that it doesn't require legislation (any legislation, not just the present government's) to establish one. I take issue with such a claim, and I have a strong ally in HMI on this. Its surveys of secondary education in 1979 and 1988, for example, showed that, while comprehensive schools in this country have developed core curricula, their subject matter and extent, and sometimes underlying philosopy, vary considerably. Indeed, HMI commented that even the use of the same subject or course names in the core curricula it investigated in 1979 proved no guarantee either of common or overlapping schemes of work, or comparable learning experience. As HMI put it then: 'It is important ... to emphasise the fact that subject or course labels often tell us little about the objectives to be pursued or the activities to be introduced, still less about the likely or expected levels of achievement.'

Thus, while we may justifiably take issue with the form, content and style of the government's national curriculum, including its dismissive attitude towards teachers and their professionalism, it is difficult to defend convincingly the incoherence in curriculum provision that prevails within parts of the secondary phase of schooling.

Teacher control of curriculum

Nor is it reasonable for teachers to use their professional status as a basis for justifying teacher control of the curriculum. Quite apart from the fact that teachers have never been free to teach what they want, to the extent that there have always been limits on what is permissible, it needs to be said that they do not, in any event, possess, *qua* professionals, unique insight on what should be taught, opinions about which vary considerably. True, teachers are best placed to determine emphases in the curriculum which correspond to and meet the distinctive needs and characteristics of the particular populations of pupils they teach. They also are best placed as professional educators to judge the most appropriate methods of teaching. But the democratic accountability of teachers and of the schools within which they teach surely requires that there be national norms and criteria to which they work and in terms of which they can be called to account for their actions. There is nothing to be alarmed at in such an idea inasmuch as secondary teachers draw heavily on external criteria already, such as the requirements of the exam boards and the expectations of parents, when determining their curricula and commending and reporting their work.

There is, then, no contradiction between school and teacher freedom and the acceptance of external policy, even legislation, on the curriculum. What is important is the nature of that policy and the means (which, I

concede, might not entail legislation) by which it is implemented. The teacher unions, most of which have been outspoken in their opposition to government curriculum policy of any kind, rightly do not hesitate to seek national criteria in such key areas as the teacher-pupil ratio, capitation, buildings and equipment. I don't understand how it is possible to gauge what is required in these areas without first having a clear idea of the curriculum ends they are designed to help bring about. I believe in curriculum-led resourcing. Let's hope the government does too, given that the school system is about to face a crisis in the supply of teachers that will need to be overcome if this version of a national curriculum is to be implemented in full.

Collectivism versus individualism

It's curious that we didn't appreciate better that the writing was well and truly on the wall, and that the government was bound to act sooner or later on the curriculum. For right in front of our eyes there has taken place a major ideological shift in opinion about the role of the teacher and the purpose of schooling which the government partly created but mostly anticipated. The idealism of the 60s and 70s, and its then fashionable commitment to the collective virtues of welfare and state provision, has been replaced by a radical conservativism which stresses an individualistic, 'enterprise' culture. There were a number of factors which contributed to this process, some of which some of us were so closely caught up in that we couldn't foresee their outcomes and effects.

New Right

The rise and fall of the curriculum development movement of the 60s and 70s is a case in point. Somewhere along the line, and it's difficult to assess where and when precisely, our programmes got too far ahead of the game and opened the door for a strenuous popular reaction. This was partly manufactured by populist critiques of schools such as those promulgated by the Black Paper authors and the members of Right Wing education pressure groups such as the Campaign for Real Education and the National Grammar School Association. It was also genuinely felt, if frequently unsubstantiated, by a lot of parents who began to express concern about the quality of their children's education. We can look back and, no doubt, remind ourselves of how well we countered their criticisms. But the truth remains that teachers failed to convince parents of the merit of their arguments. The teachers' industrial action in the '80s further heightened public anxiety about their work.

Teachers as scapegoats

The growing unpopularity of teachers coincided with a decade of rocketing oil prices, galloping inflation and poor industrial output. The teaching profession was an easy scapegoat, and the government wasted little time in putting much of the blame for the nation's economic difficulties on teachers who, it was alleged, not only didn't know how to teach but, worse, were teaching the wrong things. No small wonder that this same period witnessed the emergence of a strong 'Department View' at the DES on the school curriculum, which it popularised in a series of position papers. At the time, these were not seen as a threat either by or to the education establishment. How wrong it was. For most of the material they contained eventually found its way into Mr Baker's Act; and now it's about to reach into every classroom, not to mention every teacher education curriculum. The teachers' organisations badly misjudged the mood of the times, so much so that the government no longer sees it as necessary to seek consensus with a teaching profession which has been successfully marginalised and must now make the best of things.

Positive not defeatist

But 'making the best of things' need not mean the abandonment of every progressive idea which teachers have struggled for over the years. On the contrary, it's important to look positively at the challenges ahead and not to be defeatist about them. It's important also to develop a strategy for implementing the national curriculum that makes both professional and practical sense. In particular, we have to find specific ways to avoid becoming either the victim of circumstance or the tool of the state. Two 'resources of hope' (an expression I have lifted from the writings of the late Raymond Williams) are worth considering and taking heart from. The first derives from curriculum theory; the other, ironically, from the Education Reform Act itself.

Curriculum adaptation

All the evidence of teachers' commonsense, quite apart from that derived from curriculum research, tells us that no curriculum idea, even when it is embodied in legislation, is ever implemented exactly in the way envisaged by its originators. Too many critics have interpreted the national curriculum legislation as a curriculum straight-jacket that prescribes for every eventuality. As I shall demonstrate shortly, such criticism entails a misreading of the Act as well as a misleading analysis of its implications. Worse, it reflects a total misunderstanding of the way schools operate and teachers develop curricula. Curricula are not, to use modish jargon, 'delivered' by teachers; rather curricula are interpreted and adapted by teachers in the light of local circumstances and needs. Curriculum development is thus not an event, but a process, in the course of which teachers work through the implications of new ideas for themselves, their schools, their departments and, of course, for the children they teach. The room for manoeuvre in this process will not be as great as before, but that is not to say that teacher-initiative has been, or even could be, removed altogether. Curriculum legislation, however it is worded, cannot prevent teachers from being innovative. Certainly, legislation can make this more difficult. But, looked at another way, the very fact of its existence could create a new site for curriculum development in which teachers are not less but more imaginative. (Just think of the lengths some people go to interpret some of our tax laws and you will see what I mean.)

Limits of the law

There are within the law itself a number of important measures which may allow teachers to extend and

consolidate existing priorities without falling down on their commitment to the government's version of the national curriculum. In this connection, it is important to know what the law actually says rather than what some critics and many pessimists imagine it says.

I will focus, first, on the actual design of a school's curriculum in the light of the legislation. Now, while the Act sets out the national curriculum in terms of subjects, schools are under no obligation to organise teaching within prescribed subject boundaries. That most do already has escaped the attention of some commentators who argue that the advent of the national curriculum will result in the dismembering of all forms of integrated enquiry and the end of cross-curricular action. TVEI and CDT excepted, not much of this goes on anyway. The likely outcome is that secondary schools will carry on much as they have in the past; that is, teaching discrete chunks of established subjects through a conventional subject timetable, despite Mr Baker's stress on the need for schools to develop 'cross-curricular themes'. Those schools that have developed innovative curricular designs will still be able to maintain them in the years ahead. My concern is that those which haven't will now have every excuse not to try.

In the same way that the Act does not rule out interesting designs for the curriculum, it is also clear that schools are not required to abandon the teaching of subject areas (eg health education, personal and social education, environmental education, even Peace Studies and Anti-racism) that are not in the national curriculum. Of course, the absence of specific guidelines on 'reasonable time' for the national curriculum will make it difficult for schools to judge what else they can afford to include; but the key word here is 'difficult', not 'impossible'.

Relatedly, nothing in the Act suggests that the programmes of study, as and when they appear, exhaust all that should be taught in any one subject. The national curriculum and the programmes of study determine the *minimum requirements*, so that what is taught may (should, in my opinion) go much further. This is an important point that far too many critics have chosen to ignore. They foresee also that Section 16 of the Act empowers the Secretary of State to 'modify or lift temporarily some or all (yes, 'all') of the requirements of the national curriculum in a particular school, so that curriculum development work can be carried out'. Under this section there is also a reference to 'lifting the statutory requirements' for a group of schools so that they can 'jointly take part' in such work — something which some more innovative LEAs will put to the test. Finally, the 'doom and gloomers' among the Act's critics overlook the fact that the Education Secretary is not permitted to prescribe either teaching methods and approaches or text books and other teaching materials. All these are positive omissions in, and features of, the legislation which could be exploited with some imagination.

Some, and I fear many, secondary schools will choose to interpret the national curriculum as set out in the Reform Act in conventional and narrow ways. The responsibility of progressive teachers (ie teachers who want to provide an education that includes elements that go beyond the minimum requirements) must, therefore, be to encourage frightened and intimidated curriculum coordinators to think imaginatively and constructively about the national curriculum by adapting it in such a way that it incorporates rather than excludes innovative, even radical, ideas and practices. Of course, that will not be easy; but, in my experience, it never has been.

Learning to do as they are told?

Tony Jeavons
Deputy Head of Holyrood School at Chard in Somerset, Tony Jeavons' involvement in evaluation of the Somerset TVEI Project led him to examine how teachers adapt externally imposed innovation and relates this to the National Curriculum.

> 'Diffusion is a special type of communication (and) communication is a process in which participants create and share information with one another in order to reach a mutual understanding.'[1]

During the 1970s the concept of the diffusion of educational innovation went rather out of fashion. Writing about the Humanities Curriculum project Jean Ruddick recalled:

> 'We confirmed that we meant business by hauling down the modest pennant of diffusion and marching under new colours — the bold banner of dissemination.'[2]

Diffusion, she says, seemed too unplanned and casual for the 'hyperactive' members of the curriculum development teams. Dissemination had come to dominate by 1972 largely because of the issue of accountability. The large scale curriculum projects of the period had been judged essentially by take up. Yet when Peter Kelly undertook a study of the uptake of Nuffield and Schools Council Projects in the mid 1970s he reported that in reality:

> 'Only a minority (possibly 10-20%) were committed sufficiently to consider themselves as fully adopting the innovation and not all of these implemented it faithfully . . . the degree of change tended to be an extension of previous practice rather than to differ from it or to be a reorientation of it.'

Such discoveries led Kelly to challenge the simplistic dissemination theory that had emerged from the major development projects of the period. Conventional evaluations designed to test the impact of a project against a universal pre-determined set of objectives were to be increasingly discarded.

During the 1970s most studies of change had assumed that once the decision to adopt an innovation had been made, implementation would inevitably take place.

By 1980 such assumptions were under attack as diffusion studies increasingly demonstrated the complexity of the processes involved in changing anything. Simple models and theories were clearly too limited and too piecemeal with their emphasis on merely conveying information to people. Innovations in education cannot simply be regarded as 'reified entities having an objective existence independent of the adopters' perceptions'.[5] Even when implementing centrally produced curriculum projects teachers utilize an extremely wide variety of approaches and tend to superimpose their own very different interpretations and philosophies.

Until the mid 1980s little attention had been devoted to the meaning of change in the educational context. Yet without a genuine shared understanding of the purpose of intended change (shared, that is, by all participants) you tend to get 'the innocent deception of innovation without change'.[2]

Examining curriculum innovation in two Scottish schools had led David Hamilton to much the same conclusion:

> 'the teacher functions, not as a mere agent or curriculum technician, but as an active yet selective amplifier and transmitter of knowledge. The teacher is a critical mediator between the pupil on the one hand, and the institutional context and the instructional system on the other. As a result all are modified extensively in the classroom setting'.[4]

In taking an essentially product orientated stance dissemination theory was bound to remain something of a blunt instrument for probing the complexities and subtleties of the change process.

It was surely also elitist in judging curriculum development solely from the viewpoint of those responsible for constructing the product. Such a view belittled not only the teacher but also the innovation because the innovation became, in Reid's and Walker's splendid phrase:

> 'perfect only in the mind of the original designer, descending thence to a kind of neoplatonist sequence of ever more imperfect simulacra until it arrives, in ultimate imperfection, in the classroom'.[4]

By the mid 1980s researchers were realising that by abandoning the more profound concept of diffusion they had discarded far more than they had realised at the time.

Increasingly researchers were pointing out the inadequacy of the concept of implementation to account for the subtle and diverse processes they saw taking place. At last it was accepted that new curriculum programmes are rarely implemented according to the spirit and intention of the original researcher or developer. Instead of 'implementation' the concept of *'adaption'* needs to be emphasized. This is not just a play on words since implementation implies adherence to the thing implemented but adaption implies accommodation to an environment.

It seems ironic that in the face of such overwhelming criticism we should now be busily resurrecting discredited systems for evaluating the implementation of externally inspired innovation. Issues of accountability once again dominate, but is the hard sell any more likely to led to successful adoption this time around? Recent evaluations of the Technical and Vocational Initiative, including my own analysis of the Somerset Project, have only served to confirm the overwhelming importance of the role of teachers in translating curriculum innovation into reality. Describing the 5-13 Health Education Project, Wilcox and Gallies argued that:

> *'adaption* of innovation is inevitable, and given the professionalism of teachers and the reality of the classroom situation oftentimes essential'.[5]

Writing in 1983 Rogers isolated four factors likely to render innovation particularly vulnerable to teacher adaption or 're-invention'. They were:

(1) innovations that are relatively more complex and difficult to understand;
(2) situations producing a lack of detailed knowledge about the innovation;
(3) 'loose-bundle' innovations, consisting of elements that are not highly related enabling individual elements to be adapted without altering the rest;
(4) innovations introduced in an attempt to solve a wider range of user problems.[1]

Judged in this light the impositions of the national curriculum appear particularly vulnerable.

In the 1990s the demand for accountability may well result in evaluation exercises designed simply to measure the extent of adoption taking place. Such evaluations will at best be seen as an irrelevance.

The real issue will centre around teachers' attempts to reach a genuine shared understanding of the underlying 'meaning' of the intended changes. Only in this way will schools be able to avoid the 'innocent deception of innovation without change' that plagued earlier projects.

The latest crop of curricular proposals are certainly vulnerable to teacher adaption and this is a matter, surely, for some rejoicing. But such adaptation will be in grave danger of remaining idiosyncratic and incoherent unless positive efforts are made quickly by both individual schools and by LEAs to reach agreement not just about what they are doing but about why they are doing it. Such efforts are not yet much in evidence.

Notes

1. Rogers E M (1983) **Diffusion of Innovations** 3rd Edition Free Press New York.
2. Ruddick J (1986) 'Curriculum Change: Management or Meaning?' in **School Organisation** Vol 6 No 1, Jan-April 1986 pp 107-114.
3. Kelly P (1980) 'From Inovation to adaptability: The Changing Perspective of Curriculum Development' in **Curriculum Change: The Lessons of a Decade**, Galton M (Ed) Leicester University Press
4. Hamilton D (1975) 'Handling Innovation in the classroom: Two Scottish Examples' in Reid W A and Walker D **Case Studies in Curriculum Change**, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
5. Wilcox B and Gallies P (1982) 'The Reality of Implementation: A Case Study of the Schools Council '5-13 Health Education Project' in **Curriculum** Vol3 No2 pp 32-37.

A National Curriculum for Primary Teacher Education

Robert Young
Previously a primary school teacher in north east London, Robert Young is a Principal Lecturer in Primary Education and Course Director of the primary BEd at the Avery Hill Campus of Thames Polytechnic. He exposes the extensive and increasing central control over the content of primary teacher education.

The spotlight in the national press has been firmly focused in recent months on the National Curriculum and its impact on schools. Less attention has been given to the increasing centralisation of control over initial teacher education. Critical in this shift towards a national curriculum for teacher training courses is the Consultative Document on Future Arrangements for the Accreditation of Initial Teacher Training published by the DES in May of this year. This 40 page document prescribes course content to a degree that would have been considered unthinkable as recently as the early 80s. Yet it is now perceived as part of the ever tightening national framework which the government is committed to impose on the education system as part of its strategy for raising standards in general. The precursor of the Consultation Document was the publication in Circular 3/84 of the CATE (Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education) Criteria in 1984. All initial teacher training courses had to satisfy the criteria laid down by the Council if they were to gain accreditation from the Department of Education and Science. The principle of central accountability in relation to course content and, indeed, other aspects of teacher training such as staffing and student selection was therefore established five years ago and almost all the institutions involved in teacher training have now been through the CATE 'review' process and have had to modify their courses accordingly. The key recommendations in the present document are seen as building on this system of accreditation introduced in 1984:

(i) There should be a close working partnership with schools and LEAs, with experienced teachers involved in the planning and evaluation of initial courses, the selection of students, the supervision and assessment of students' practical work and the teaching itself through lecture and seminar contributions.
(ii) By the start of the Academic Year 1992-93, institutions must ensure that all tutors gain school teaching experience for the equivalent of not less than one term in every five years.
(iii) There should be at least 75 days of school experience built into the post-graduate certificate of education course, and 100 days built into the four year B.Ed.
(iv) Primary courses should incorporate age phasing, so that students can specialise in the early or later years.
(v) At least two years or its equivalent of a 4 year B.Ed course must be allocated to specialist subject study with 25% of its time utilised for the professional application of subject study.
(vi) On the wider curriculum front, at least 100 hours each should be devoted to the teaching of mathematics, of English and of science, design and technology, and all students must be prepared so that they can teach to the level required by the National Curriculum across all its components.
(vii) Under the broad heading of educational and professional studies, a detailed breakdown of professional skills is offered, including an understanding of different ways in which pupils develop and learn, capacity to use a range of teaching methods, skills in evaluation, recording and the identification of children with special needs, and skills in the effective management of pupil behaviour.

In essence the new criteria proposed in the Consultation Document do not depart in principle from those outlined in 1984. There is, however a significant shift in terms of the level of specificity with which the guidelines are articulated and thereby the freedom of manoeuvre in course design is correspondingly reduced. The parallels between the teacher in the classroom and the tutor on campus are obvious: both are caught up in a prevailing philosophy that circumscribes the range of options open for better or for worse. One recognises that teacher education in general would go along with many of the sentiments expressed in the Document, inasmuch as they would accord with sound practice in teacher training. The emphasis on classroom management and on co-operation with colleagues in school, the value of professional renewal in the classroom, the centrality of school experience, and the significance of a developing specialism in a subject area and within a particular age phase — these are all principles which would achieve a large measure of consensus. And yet there are many aspects of the Consultation Document that give considerable cause for concern:

(1) At a time when the government is opening up school-based alternative routes into the profession (eg the 'licensed' and 'articled' routes), it is surprising that initial teacher training is considered in this Document in isolation from the induction year. As we move into a new era of teaching dominated by the expanding and complex demands of the National Curriculum and the effects of local management structure, how much more imaginative it might have been to have conceived and planned initial teacher education and the induction year as a continuum. Indeed, the multi-faceted nature of the primary teacher's role as specified in the

Document itself cries out for a longer-term vision of entry into the profession.

(2) While the principle of greater co-operation between institutions, local authorities and schools is to be welcomed, the resource implications should be identified. One cannot expect ever greater involvement of teachers in the planning of courses and their evaluation, the selecton of students and supervision in school, unless this is resourced on a realistic basis and teacher contracts incorporate some recognition of the responsibilities incurred in teacher training. For too long we have relied on teacher goodwill alone, of which there has been a vast fund, but as we move into an increasingly commercial market with schools becoming more autonomous in financial decision making, the principle of collaboration is in serious danger of being undermined. Moreover, the teacher shortage crisis now affecting most local education authorities in the south-east and especially in London, is already having an effect on the capacity of schools to make a worthwhile contribution to teacher education. It is not a case of not wanting to play their part in providing school placements etc — it is just that when heads are faced with grave uncertainties about staffing in the forthcoming academic year and have become increasingly dependent on supply and probationary teachers, they are not in a position to commit the school to taking on board the additional burden of students in training. The growing impact of preparation for the National Curriculum is also taking its toll on the ability of schools to meet teacher-training needs, insofar as the amount of time that teachers have for discussion, planning and evaluation alongside students is seriously curtailed.

(3) The insistence on professional renewal in the classroom for no less than one term in every five years makes sound educational sense, but is likely to create major resource problems for the teacher training institutions, unless there is a substantial injection of central funding to support it. Many establishments have already experienced these difficulties, and as teacher education faculties compete within their respective institutions for a share of a cake which itself is becoming smaller, these difficulties are likely to become intensified. Teacher-tutor exchange schemes, which have already played their part in professional renewal programmes in most institutions, may go some way to minimise the financial problems, but create other problems in terms of continuity of staffing for both partners in the exchange. In particular, the stability of the primary classroom which is enmeshed within a framework of shared expectations, values and understanding is in danger of being undermined by the arrival of a new 'teacher', however well-intentioned, well-briefed, or well qualified.

(4) Of critical significance in terms of course design is the insistence on two years worth of subject specialism, including a half year or its equivalent of 'subject application'. It is this criterion, more than any other, that has incurred the wrath of teacher educators since 1984 (Alexander R. 1983, Young R 1985, **Times Educ. Supplement,** 1985, UPTEC 1985, Hagedorn 1986, Select Committee, 1986). The Undergraduate Primary Teacher Education Conference (UPTEC), the Standing Committee for the Education and Training of Teachers in the Public Sector (SCETT) and the Polytechnic Council for the Education of Teachers (PCET) have all voiced their concerns through official channels. They have highlighted the way in which the overall balance of a BEd can be undermined by the inclusion of two years of subject-study because it radically reduces the amount of time available for preparation for the generalist role in primary teaching. The requirements introduced in 1984 are now supplemented by the addition of a further hundred hours for science, design and technology, the other 'core' subject in the National Curriculum. Inevitably the wider concerns of teacher education are squeezed out by a set of parameters that leave approximately a sixth of the degree for 'everything else', including curriculum studies outside the area for subject specialism and the 'core' subjects, classroom management, child development, assessment, information technology etc. On the one hand the government has refrained from allocating time weightings to the various subjects in the National Curriculum for schools, while on the other hand it has specified time allocation for initial teacher education. Why this inconsistency, one may ask? Given the demands of the National Curriculum and the importance of primary teachers being well-equipped not only in terms of curriculum coverage but also in terms of their mastery of cross-curricular issues and the inter-relationships between subject areas and assessment in general, one might have expected a more flexible set of criteria to have been adopted.

(5) The need for more space is underlined in the section on Educational and Professional Studies, which sets out in detail key professional skills ranging from the 'skills in the evaluation and recording of pupil performance including in particular the testing and assessment requirements related to the National Curriculum' . . . to making 'confident personal use of a range of software packages and IT devices appropriate to their subject specialism and age range'. Courses are also expected to cover a wide range of topics, including for example 'the legal and administrative responsibilities of teachers' and 'the structure and legal framework of the education service'.

One can accept that each element is deserving of attention, but when you add them up together, you are confronted with a formidable course of study that cannot be incorporated into initial teacher education, except at a relatively superficial level. Moreover, there are other professional qualities to do with the critical, reflective and imaginative dimensions of teaching that are almost entirely missing from the Document, and which most teacher educators would want to preserve as essential elements in initial teacher education. In its response (1989) to the Consultative Document the National Primary Teacher Education Conference asserts:

LMS in the Junior School

Gordon Kirkpatrick
A primary and middle school head for twenty-one years, Gordon Kirkpatrick is now a lecturer in education at Birmingham University and consultant on Local Management of Schools for the National Association of Head Teachers. His last school, Dorridge Junior School in Solihull, was one of the first in the country to receive financial delegation with full budgetary control. This article takes the form of an interview with him by his colleague, Clyde Chitty.

Could you begin by saying why you decided to participate in the original scheme?
I think that is a very sensible place to begin. Like most schools, our staffing was based on teacher ratios, largely based on norms at LEA level. Staffing was the major element of expenditure. We also had a capitation allowance. This was spent mainly on consumables. In fact, it had to buy everything from a drawing pin to a computer and because it was eaten up in consumables, there was very little chance for curriculum development in the school. The other items in the budget — that is heating, buildings and maintenance — were handled by the LEA and sometimes there were long delays.

You had little influence on all this as a headteacher, although you tried very hard.

When given the opportunity to consider having financial delegation for my school, part of me as headteacher was concerned because I'd learned to live with educational cuts and was wary of the motives of politicians at national level and of the elected members at LEA level. Also I wondered whether, if I did decide to get involved in the pilot scheme, I could take with me the teachers, the parents, the governors and the children. Without their support, it would be a waste of time.

Two things were on my mind. One was the pressure that I felt all the teachers were experiencing. The other consideration, which is the most important one of all, was that any change we agreed to must result in a change for better *pupil opportunity* — and that is surely the acid test of it all. Any changes which don't have this underlying rationale are misdirected.

On the positive side, having more localized control over our objectives, our planning, our resources and our spending *might* enable us to offer a better quality of education to our pupils. Therefore, with 'pupil opportunity' as the watchword, we decided to accept the Director's invitation to become a pilot school.

Under that scheme, over a period of three or four years, we were able to improve the basic school curriculum. We did a complete reappraisal of the maths scheme, the English scheme and the science scheme.

'We do want teachers who are reflective practitioners, who will be able to recognise and initiate the changes which the twenty-first century will call for. This is a foundation best laid during initial training, and it takes time to develop and mature, and is not likely to be achieved on a rushed overcrowded course'.

All of this highlights the desperate need noted earlier for conceptualising pre-service and in-service teacher education as a continuum rather than isolated entities. It also cries out for a relaxation of the two years subject-study criterion in BEd courses so that more time can be found to do justice to the complexities in the role of the primary teacher.

Of course teacher educators will continue to use their ingenuity to overcome the difficulties outlined above and one appreciates that problems of balance inhere in course design, irrespective of any criteria for accreditation established by the DES. But those problems of balance have been accentuated by the government in a way that closes down on the range of options open in initial teacher education and potentially distorts the allocation of time. The underlying principles articulated in the Document may have much to commend them, but if they are to be translated into action, they need a less prescriptive framework. HM Inspectors in their latest report on **'The New Teacher in School'** (October 1988) concluded that:

'In the primary BEd there would be difficulty in reconciling the desirability of professional courses of some depth with the requirement of Circular 3/84 or at least two full years' course time to be devoted to subject studies'.

It would appear that this warning, however understated, is still to be heeded.

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These were in-depth studies of what we felt was needed in the curriculum. Plans were discussed with staff, governors and parents. Over a period of three or four years, we renewed all the materials to go alongside our new ideas. So for the first time, really, the new localized powers gave me much greater possibility for more coherent planning for the present, the near future and the longer-term future. Without doubt, we were also able to make the place warmer, cleaner and more conducive to learning. The books were less dog-eared, and the new powers we had for using our resources according to our perceived needs enabled the school to operate on a generally higher level.

But it is very important to understand that this experience I've described was very different from the experience which will be felt when formula-funding begins.

How are the new arrangements under the 1988 Act going to be different from the financial autonomy that you had?

Underlying the Act is a reconstitution of who governs education and where the power lies. One move has been to strengthen central government's role, while, at the same time, transferring much of the LEA's power to school governors in co-operation with the head and the teaching staff.

Underneath this power shift through to the individual school — that is the delegation aspect — there is the idea of making schools more responsible on the one hand to pupil needs and on the other hand to the demands of parents. Underneath this is another idea which is that the whole process of education shall be more 'public' and more open for people to apply various accountability tests. And underpinning all of this, of course, we have the idea that if you bring the ethics of the market-place into education, then people will be able to choose what they consider to be the best for their children. The theory is that this competition *must* improve the system — because schools that are providing what is required will survive and those schools that are not will be forced to close.

We need to think of *financial delegation* as the first of five factors that will now operate on the education system. Financial delegation is really giving the schools the power to *vire* money, move items between different budget headings under the school's control. When you add four other factors to it, it creates a very different sort of education world — for the pupils, the teachers, the school governors and the LEA.

The five factors are:

— financial delegation
— formula-funding
— open enrolment
— staffing delegation
— performance indicators

The second of these factors, *formula-funding,* is an attempt to get rid of the historic patterns for funding our schools. Under the new system, there will be explicit rules, public rules, for dividing the money up and allocating it to the schools. A large part of this funding will be dependent on the number of pupils in the school through a device called 'age-weighted pupil units'. A second aspect of this formula funding is that the teacher costs from the LEA will be based on average teacher costs across an LEA, and not the *actual cost* within the school. These two things taken together will produce some schools which find they are in a winning position and others which find themselves in a losing position.

The third part of the new system is *open enrolment.* So far this applies to secondary schools where each school will be given a *standard number*, the number of pupils that the school could admit in 1979. Primary schools will eventually have a standard number in the same way. The effect is to make public the possibility of admission to any school; and the choice of 1979 means that many schools will be committed to opening up space in their school, if parents so wish.

The fourth element is the legal shifts in the staffing arrangements for schools, where the governing body will now be responsible for the appointment, suspension and dismissal of the teaching and non-teaching staff. The governors will set the level of teaching and non-teaching staff at any school. This is significantly different from any of the pilot schemes of financial delegation. For although the LEA remains the employer (apart, that is, from aided schools), the governors are actually acting as co-employers, and will have the legal responsibilities for securing and dismissing staff.

The fifth element is *performance indicators*. These are developing rapidly at the present time and could be linked, perhaps, with teacher appraisal in the long run. Typical performance indicators are those associated with the National Curriculum with published information on the performance of children at 11, 14 and 16 years of age and also at 7 years of age if schools wish.

However, there are paradoxes within the legislation. On the one hand, it is supposedly giving more powers to head-teachers and governors. At the same time, because the National Curriculum is being put in place and there are to be strict rules for formula-funding, there is a centralizing of control as well. These two are clearly in conflict.

One view of the new legislation might be that it will result in parents getting better value for money, so that, in the end, we will secure better education from the same budget. Whether that is true or not remains to be seen. It is not known whether a million decisions in a thousand schools will turn out to be better than a thousand decisions in a hundred LEAs.

Another aspect is that it may not be value for money but *accountability* that is the key thrust of the legislation. That is: to make more open the purposes which headteachers and teachers have for running their schools; to place the responsibility for running the school in the hands of the governors and the head and the teaching staff and for everybody to understand what the aims and objectives are.

How do you see the new arrangements making a difference to the way junior school heads are able to run their schools?

The legislation poses a number of questions: chiefly, how should decisions be made on the distribution of resources? And this should lead us to look at both the internal management of the school and the external

relationships with both the local community and the LEA.

If we think of the internal management of the school, we have to identify the various types of work and then try to relate them to the people in the school who are best able to carry them out. It is very important to identify the key areas requiring policy decision.

There will be some schools where the governors hand over responsibilities to the head as a 'line manager'. There will be schools where the head makes all the important decisions. There will be no single model. Many models will evolve over the years. Perhaps the most successful schools will be those which try to create the kind of style, attitudes and relationships that allow them to manage all the new changes as a team.

How do you see these new arrangements affecting the school's relationship with outside bodies?

These changes are connected with those parts of the 1988 Act which emphasize the consumer approach to education, the marketing of the school and greater emphasis on parents as consumers. This will bring to schools pressure for a greater definition of the product of education — if it can be called a product — and schools will need to consider whether they should market that product or not.

The role of parents will increase over the next decade as educational information becomes more plentiful. Again this raises questions about the level of parental participation and involvement in the decision-making processes of the school. If schools are now to be cost-centred as individual places that need to attract pupils, questions arise as to how responsible they should be to parental wishes.

Another aspect of this *external* relationship is the judgement of the school process by external agencies, HMI and the LEA's agents who will be required to act as quality controllers of the educational process.

You talk, Gordon, about some of the challenges and opportunities. What are the pitfalls that primary heads are going to have to avoid if they are not going to make a mess of things in the 1990s?

One of the chief problems is the question of resourcing the education service. These measures are revolutionary and, alongside the National Curriculum, will put a very great strain on the teaching staff to try to understand and deliver what the legislation requires. There is a specific difference between the resourcing of primary schools and the resourcing of secondary schools. In at least one sense the primary school is at an advantage because it is a smaller unit: it can transmit its purposes faster and can often interpret and innovate change more quickly than can the secondary school. But there are basic things that secondary schools have that primary schools lack and without them the primary school cannot begin to deliver what is required of it. The 1988 Act puts a lot of strain on people who are already incredibly busy. A major issue for primary schools must concern the ability of governing bodies to understand their new responsibilities and take on the role which is expected of them. The second area is the ability of the head to understand what is required, to have time to understand what is required and to have the training to actually manage the resources in the ways that are required. The third area is the handling of the new work which will now arrive in school.

In my view, all schools must enjoy the benefits of information technology. There must be hardware and software systems brought into the primary school.

Primary schools experience both the advantages and the disadvantages of their smaller scale. A small primary school is being expected to shoulder many new resposibilities. And this bearing in mind that the teaching loads in most primary schools for the teachers up to and including deputy head are one hundred per cent and that many heads are also classroom teachers for at least part of the week.

Finally, how do you see financial delegation affecting the role and purpose of the primary school head into the 1990s?

It must surely raise the question of whether the head is a teacher who manages or a manager who teachers. When one looks at the agenda the head now has to consider alongside the governors, it really is formidable:

— delivering the National Curriculum
— managing assessment
— managing pupil continuity between schools
— reporting performance to parents in the community
— managing external relations in a more competitive environment
— acting alongside the governors as a co-employer of the teaching and non-teaching staff
— managing appraisal
— managing financial delegation and the control of resources
— coping with greater responsibility for the school building
— preparing for the future responsibilities of competitive tendering.

Within that list the head must take the lead — even in schools where the decision-making process is a democratic one. Whether or not the quality of education improves remains to be seen. The challenge for all parties is to at least try to use the provisions of the 1988 Act to secure enhanced opportunities for *all* pupils.

Letter from Scotland

Aileen Fisher
Now Headteacher of Castle Kennedy Primary School at Stranraer in Wigtownshire in Dumfries and Galloway Region, Aileen Fisher reports again on developments in Scotland. Her earlier reports for **Forum** were in vol 30 no 3 and vol 31 no 2.

1989 has been an eventful year in Scottish education for many reasons: it seems, in fact, that hardly a week goes by without some unhappy situation, new or ongoing, being aired in the press. Among these have been the threatened closures of Newbattle Abbey College (Scotland's only adult residential college), the Edinburgh Dental School, and the Glasgow Veterinary School. The Edinburgh Dental School will close, despite fierce opposition. Newbattle has been 'mothballed' for six months to a year, the staff dismissed with average redundancy payments of £900. They will gradually be re-employed *if* they are needed and *if* finances allow. The fate of Glasgow's Veterinary School has not yet been decided, but there is hope that its position as world leader in certain fields of research, notably parasitology, will militate in its favour.

Most weeks see angry student demonstrations against the proposal to freeze and eventually phase out grants and introduce student loans.

These are all matters of considerable moment, and combine with many other factors to produce generally low morale, and an atmosphere where anxiety, both focussed and generalised, can take root and thrive. Such an atmosphere is exacerbated by situations less educationally significant perhaps, but impinging very much on the daily lives and well-being of those in certain regions where cleaning services, which have gone to private contractor, are in a state — according to one education chairman — of 'crisis'. Hundreds of cleaning jobs have been lost and hours cut. Inspectors of cleaning services, called to a primary school in Dundee, found conditions 'intolerable'.

There have been many significant educational developments in the past year, such as proposals for teacher appraisal, the new appointments of Senior Teachers, College mergers, the new Standard Grade Exams, and so on; but the most important have undoubtedly been the Self-Governing Schools, etc (Scotland) Bill and the elections of the first School Boards.

The Self-Governing Schools Bill confirmed the suspicions voiced (and strenuously denied by the Secretary of State for Scotland) over 'opting-out', when School Boards were first mooted. It was almost universally condemned for the undue haste with which it was introduced, and for its potential as a destructive force. Its proposals are broadly similar to those of the English legislation, and it is perceived as being part of the wider plan to remove power from local authorities. Debate has been bitter, and the drafting-in of six English Tory MPs to the Scottish Standing Committee to examine the Bill, deeply resented, particularly in view of their youth, and their right-wing orientation. A Labour MP on the Committee described it as 'the most poisonous I have ever sat on'. The Bill has been strongly criticised by some of the Government's own back-benchers, and in the House of Lords.

The Bill became law on November 16, having passed through the final stages among scenes of angry protest from MPs of Opposition parties. There was anger at the tight timetable imposed by the Government, with only 15 minutes to debate 40 amendments. There was anger at the contribution made to the debate by 'ignorant and arrogant English Tory MPs.' But mainly there was anger as expressed by Tony Worthington, Labour Front-Bench spokesman on education in Scotland, against a Bill whose proposals were 'forged in dishonesty', opt-out purposes having been denied at the last General Election. Mr Worthington pledged that Labour would repeal the legislation at the first available opportunity declaring

> 'This Bill, which does not have even the flimsiest of Scottish mandates, is about to become law because the Prime Minister imposed it on a half-hearted Secretary of State.'

Labour has also pledged to change the function of School Boards, and would seek to involve parents in the ways that they *wished*, jettisoning the Government's emphasis on management responsibilities which they resoundingly do *not*.

School Boards are now a fact in Scotland, but not by any means to the extent that the Government had anticipated. As election results came in from the regions during October, it became quickly apparent that Scottish parents were not exactly scrambling for places. The first result to come in was from Dumfries and Galloway.

The School Board situation in this region is a particularly interesting one, Dumfries and Galloway — a 'pioneering' authority in other initiatives besides this one — having instituted 'Pilot' School Boards in selected schools in session 1988/9. These have naturally been watched with considerable interest, notably by the Scottish Council for Research in Education, whose report at the half-way stage last February revealed that, although the majority of the serving parents were long-term residents of the region, almost half were not educated in Scotland, and almost a quarter had been educated outwith the State system.

Disquiet has been expressed by the pilot Board members about the workload for themselves but particularly for Headteachers; a general feeling that they were 'going nowhere' and concern about the lack of interest from the rest of the parent body.

In view of these misgivings, perhaps it should not have been quite so astonishing that, when nominations closed for Dumfries and Galloway, it was revealed that

only 54% of schools would have Boards. Of these, about half had only the required number of nominations (four in the majority of cases), so that elections would not be necessary. One large secondary school which would be 'Boardless' had been one of the pilot Board schools.

As other results came in, the same picture was revealed. Fife had 52%, Grampian 56%, Highland 45% and Central 46%. (This last region includes Stirling, the constituency of Michal Forsyth, the architect of School Boards. Stirling had one of the lowest uptakes in Scotland, with 42.5%.) Most other results are nearly as poor. The highest results were in the Western Isles (75%) and Orkney (77%), both regions with traditionally high parental involvement. Strathclyde (71%), and Lothian (64%) were higher than most because of strong campaigns by local authorities, teaching organisations and the churches, anxious that parents should use their votes to preclude the establishment of unrepresentative Boards. As with Dumfries and Galloway, roughly half the School Boards in most regions were returned without the necessity of an election.

It is scarcely suprising that a certain hint of — dare one suggest — glee has characterised much post-election comment. Perhaps we should have been more ready to foresee this 'horse-to-the-water' scenario. Parents had, after all, right from the beginning affirmed their interest in their children's schools, and their desire for more partnership and more information, but had declared themselves very firmly against being given the powers School Boards would offer them.

However, as Ted Cornforth, President of the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) cautioned, there is no room for complacency. He reminded the membership of Scotland's largest teaching union that although 'most parents have never sought the kind of powers the School Boards will bring . . . we all have a responsibility to ensure that those elected on to School Boards are properly accountable to their electorate'. He further cautioned teachers and parents in schools with no Boards that 'Even if there is to be no Board this autumn, there will be by-elections over the next few months'.

The term 'by-election' is something of a misnomer, as they will be filling places never previously held! Nominees from the orignal election will be 'deemed elected'. School Boards, to date, have cost somewhere in the region of £14,000,000. (This includes the large packs of expensive training materials, including several videos, which are languishing unopened in cupboards of 'Boardless' Schools!)

In the light of these results, perhaps we are all expending unnecessary energy in worrying about the consequences of the Self-Governing Schools Act. There does seem, in any case, to be a safer wind blowing in Scottish education. Michael Forsyth has moved on to be the Scottish Tory Chairman, handpicked for the job by Mrs Thatcher, and is busily surrounding himself with right-wing cohorts at a time when Conservative support in Scotland stands at 21% and is apparently dropping. This, and the situation I have described, is scarcely an indication that the 'even stronger dose of Thatcherism' prescribed for the Scots to bring them into line at the time of Michael Forsyth's appointment as Education Minister had had the desired effect.

He has been replaced in that office by Ian Lang, perceived as not being in the aggressive, abrasive Forsyth mould. Ian Lang has already reopened dialogue with the EIS, which had been systematically snubbed, derided, or ignored by his predecessor. He has an unenviable task in taking on what the **Glasgow Herald**, a quality paper not given to vituperation, described as 'Forsyth's tattered legacy.' In an editorial of September 28 the following appeared:

> 'If ever a politican made the great escape, then that politician is Michael Forsyth. He shed his ministerial responsibilities for Scottish education in July this year. . . . Mr Forsyth's legacy, it can now be seen, is a shambles. His two most significant innovations, School Boards and opting-out, look like being almighty flops. He has left a considerable mess for his successor, the hapless Mr Lang. But at least Ian Lang is a courteous man who will seek to work with, rather than against, his civil servants. We wish him well in the gargantuan task he has of cleaning up Scottish education.'

Ian Lang has put a brave face on the School Boards outcome, declaring it 'encouraging'. But whatever kind of face any Government spokesman puts on, he will find it difficult to conceal the unmistakeable traces of egg. A survey of 3,351 Scottish parents, costing £150,000, conducted by MVA Consultancy in conjunction with Jordanhill College at the request of the Government itself, and designed to reinforce the reasoning behind its radical reforms, revealed that 93% of Scottish parents were happy with their child's school, believed teachers had a difficult job, and believe that the purpose of testing is to identify the needs of the individual pupil. There was no evidence at all of any basis of support for 'opting-out'.

At about the same time, the amazing news hit the headlines that Jordanhill School, Scotland's first self-governing maintained school, was in chaos over its finances. Jordanhill School, a combined primary and secondary comprehensive, prestigious for its links with Jordanhill College of Education, chose to opt-out rather than face closure two years ago. It was not long until it was constantly in the news because of a running battle between the Board of Governors and the Headmaster, who eventually was forced to resign. (I report this without reference to the rights or wrongs of the case, which never became clear.) This new revelation was accompanied by the resignation of two former office-bearers of the School Board. One of them, the former convenor, in her letter of resignation, questioned

> '. . . whether a disparate group of local volunteers with widely differing abilities, backgrounds and perceptions can realistically take the place of a local education authority. My experiences have led me to conclude that they can not.'

She concluded that the problems they had encountered

> '. . . are symptomatic of a flawed and inappropriate medium for the management of a school.'

Symposium: RE and Collective Worship

State schools in England and Wales were and are odd among public education systems for their compulsory provision of collective worship and religious education. The case for a secular system, though argued from the start of state provision, never successfully influenced legislation. Individual parents, pupils and teachers must resort to the conscience clauses for exemption from a school's statutory provision of religion.

The religious question in some form has bedevilled legislation on state schooling for over a hundred years and the controversy has focussed on compromise solutions reached in the political arena of parliament. The debate in the House of Lords on amendments to the Education Reform Bill was no exception, though the context and detail were distinctive. As the Bill allowed more flexible arrangements for collective worship and otherwise left the relevant clauses of the 1944 Act undisturbed, teachers were unprepared for the furore and were consequently dismayed by media reports, some of which were inaccurate and misleading.

Eight new clauses and a consequential sub clause were added, significantly amending the 1944 Act in this area. An assumption about the role of schools and the nature of society in this country, incorporated in educational law, was refined to affirm that Christianity prevails and to sanction other religions. Neither Schedule 5 of the 1944 Act on arrangments for an agreed syllabus nor Sections 11-12 of the 1988 Act on the composition and powers of the now statutory Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs) explicity recognise humanist, agnostic or atheist perspectives as these are not, by definition, religions. There is, however, no explicit exclusion.

It is not surprising that anxiety has persisted when there are still many disturbing uncertainties about the eventual implication of other crucial features of the new Act.

In this symposium **Forum** seeks to clarify the changes and open up discussion of the way forward. Our contributors write from a variety of personal standpoints and professional experience. The context is the application of the 1988 Act to today's state schools and the practices which they have carefully developed within a comprehensive educational system serving a modern pluralist society. This discussion does not include the question of whether state schools should now be secular, but a final article juxtaposes the question of voluntary aided status for Muslim schools in our still dual system.

Forum has not hitherto tangled with any of the issues raised here. Our criteria must be the implications for comprehensive principles and practice in a multicultural, pluralist society and the right of everyone to an education which fosters an enquiring mind. *Ed.*

RE into the nineties

Owen Cole
The symposium is opened by Dr Owen Cole, a freelance lecturer, writer and consultant on religious education who now teaches part-time at the West Sussex Institute of Higher Education where he was head of religious studies. He is a founder member and past chairperson of the Shap Working Party on World Religions in Education.

The genisis of the 1988 Education Act was the need to create issues in a general election rather than educational necessity. As the brief discussions and debates about it progressed it was also seen to have to do with a certain concept of nationhood. That view is being endorsed by the present arguments about the content of the national curriculum. However, after this initial moan and establishment of my own position as one who does not like the new ERA, I have to say that this Act is likely to have a life of forty years and that teachers have to address themselves to the task of making it work without sacrificing their professionalism and judgement.

RE fared much better than some of us feared when the supporters and advisers of Baronness Cox began to manipulate the debate in the House of Lords. People, who were often not the products of the maintained system of education and whose knowledge of the reality of teaching young people was nil, came forward to legislate what kind of RE they should receive, being influenced by the Crisis in Religious Education lobby and those who wished to use schools to rebuild the nation's morality, if not revive church attendance, through reinforcing Christian education. It is to the credit of the churches, especially the Church of England in the person of the Bishop of London and his advisers, that they managed to effect a compromise which, in my view, as I hope to demonstrate, permits the best practices developed over the past decade or so to continue.

Something they could do little about, and would have had obvious difficulties in opposing, was the inclusion of the word 'Christian'. The 1944 Act worked very well without it. As time went by those involved in RE professionally came to welcome, more and more, the Act's lack of precision. It made curriculum development possible. In one respect at least, the present insistence upon the word 'Christian' is strongly to be regretted; it is likely to convey to those who are not Christians, men and women of other faiths or no faith, the message that RE is about Christian education and that Humanists, Muslims, Jews, and the many others who have been participants in its development since 1970 no longer have a part to play. They would be wrong to draw this conclusion, but it is perfectly understandable that they should do so. (**What Can Muslims Do?**, published by the Muslim Educational Trust is probably the most obvious example of this response).

Those of us who have welcomed the part that they have played and have worked with them through the Shap Working Party on World Religions in Education,

or the World Congress of Faiths, and the Christian Education Movement, look to the partnership continuing and being strengthened. We hope they will not take umbridge at seeming to be included only on sufferance and by invitation. To anyone who is not white, anglo-saxon, and preferably protestant, the Act must seem an act of paternalism. It is not part of my philosophy to marginalise minorities recently settled in Britain. I can only apologise for this, (as a WASP), deny that it represents my wishes or views, and ask my friends to be prudently charitable. They and I must make the most of it.

Making the best of it

In trying to make the most of it I begin by noting the sentence, 'Any agreed syllabus which after this section comes into force . . . shall reflect the fact that religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking into account the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain' (ch 40 part 1, section 8(3) p 6)'. For the first time an education act recognised that Britain is a multifaith society and requires every school to be multifaith in its RE, (though the Act, of course, only applies to England and Wales). To anyone who shows me a syllabus which is exclusively Christian I can say, 'This is illegal. Where is your response to the 'teachings and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain'? The evidence is that inspectors are already asking that question.

The situation, in reality, is that already enshrined in the Hampshire Agreed Syllabus of 1978, which over the years has been adopted by some twenty other LEAs and has been regarded as a model by many of those which chose to produce their own. I have never heard a teacher who has used it complain of being restricted from teaching RE in a broad and open manner.

The Act itself enables members of the 'other principal religions' to have a role in developing RE, first by including them among 'the other religious denominations' which form the fourth committee of an agreed syllabus conference, (or third in Wales where there is no established church), and secondly by including them among the 'denominations' which may be represented on SACREs. Of course, this is by appointment of the LEA, but so is the representation of Quakers, Baptists, members of the United Reformed Church, Methodists, and all other nonconformists, including, in Wales, the Church in Wales. One could wish that the right to be included was more definitely affirmed, but that is not the British way. Minority groups have to seize opportunities. That has always included nonconformists, it now includes Muslims. The task now is to persuade Chief Education Officers to invite them. This has already been done on many SACREs.

One innovation not to be passed over lightly, is the recognition which 'other religious denominations', by which is meant other religions, are given, even if the wording is nonsensical. It has been known even in the very recent past for LEAs to exclude representatives of religious traditions other than Christian from agreed syllabus conferences and for nonconformists to object when they found such men or women alongside them if they were included. Their membership was of a 'grace and favour' kind. I would argue that it is now statutory. If Surrey or Hampshire were to decide to exclude them, in my opinion they would have to justify their decision, whereas hitherto, it was those who wished to permit other faith representation who might find themselves having to make a case for their inclusion. What I am saying is that the rights are there; it is up to educationalists and members of the faith communities to make sure that they are exercised. Generally speaking, those actively concerned with RE are eager to do so, and among them I include Anglican, Roman Catholic, and other Christian denominational representatives. If there is opposition it comes from those outside, as it did in parliamaent. This is a time when I look to my friends in the various faith communities for their support, not for demands to withdraw from RE, and when they have a right to look to me for support as well.

School Worship

The school worship requirement is something else! As the justification for RE has become increasingly educational, (something which this government fails to accept), so school worship becomes more of an embarrassment. The wording of the Act, that collective worship 'shall be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character', has proved too much for some headteachers to stomach and at almost every gathering of them and of other teacher associations motions opposing school worship are carried by acclamation. Surprisingly it is not worship itself which seems to upset most people. Multifaith worship would seem to be acceptable. To the RE specialist, however, school worship is the antithesis of everthing he/she endeavours to do day by day. In the classroom analysis, questioning, enquiry, carried out with sensitivity, characterise the approach. Worship is an act of affirmation, however broad it may be. Also, even 'broadly Christian worship' would seem to require an element of faith and commitment, however slight, something which most pupils cannot be presumed to possess. They should not be encouraged to presume that they do, in such a way that it cheapens the idea of commitment for them. (Has anyone suggested that the oft claimed lack of commitment in our society may be the result of being encouraged to take it so lightly day by day in the act of school worship?)

Once again, I have to say that the Act is with us; we have the task of making it work. Before suggesting a way forward I must comment on the suggestion of passing responsibility to someone else, an outsider. Headteachers can do this by applying to SACREs but they, and RE teachers tempted to wash their hands of the whole business, should carefully consider the consequences. Do they really want a stranger preaching to the children they must then educate? Visitors are fine, but they should always be thoroughly briefed and carefully supervised. Were I still a comprehensive school head of RE I'd want to be a member of a committee which would include pupils and teachers of all faiths and none, tackling the school worship issue. (I don't think the Act allows me to separate RE and

school worship any more, hence the inclusion of worship in this article).

I'd invite the planning group to reflect upon the following points. 'Broadly Christian'. The diverse nature of Christianity should be obvious to anyone. Worship reflecting 'the broad traditions of Christian belief' (7:2) can easily span the range of Sidney Carter, Donald Swan, Black Gospel, the Bishop of Durham, and Billy Graham.

'Collective worship'. 'Collective' and the democratic nature of British society and education lead me to conclude that a certain individuality of response is expected and encouraged. My acts of worship would cater for this. Can the requirement to make corporate affirmations by singing hymns of faith, or even saying together the Lord's Prayer, be considered acceptable? Reflection, thought for the day, would be more appropriate.

'Without being distinctive of any particular Christian denomination'. This means we are not trying to ape in some diluted form the worship of the Christian communities of faith to which some of us or our children may belong. It is recognised that school worship should be *sui generis*.

'Circumstances relating to family backgrounds' and 'ages and aptitudes' of pupils must be taken into consideration. This places the emphasis firmly upon the 'school', the educational nature of the activity. Just as we would not introduce major and minor keys into the musical education of seven year olds, or relativity into the scientific education of the primary school child of any age, and we might leave subjunctives to well up the secondary school when teaching languages, so we must acknowledge that full-blown Christian worship is inappropriate for (a) younger children, perhaps under fifteen, (b) those who come from homes which cannot be considered observantly religious. There are some things which I can invite children to do if I know that they are part of their regular family experiences, but not when I am fully aware that they are not. Asking or expecting children to pray is one of them. Sensible church youth leaders would not do such things in their clubs, taking into account the age, aptitude and family background of members.

'In the Secretary of State's view, an act of worship which is 'broadly Christian' need not contain only Christian material provided that, taken as a whole, it reflects the traditions of Christian belief' . . . 'It is not necessary for every act of worship to be of this character, but within each term, the majority of acts must be so'. (DES circular 3/89 para 34 p11). Here is permission if not encouragement to use Humanist, Buddhist or other faith material, for if Christianity does not concern itself with every aspect of the human condition and experience it is defective. It shares with the Humanist and Buddhist these interests. Many Christians today are grateful to people of other commitments for the insights they bring to bear on life and its purpose. I would not want my friends to think that I was using passages from their writings for the light they throw on Christianity. I hope they and my pupils would see that I was using them because of their intrinsic worth. However, the fact is I may use them, lawfully. By stating that the majority of acts of worship must meet the requirements of the sentences quoted above, it permits the rest to be of an even broader nature. We can still celebrate Diwali in schools where there are no Hindus or Sikhs, or welcome the rabbi to talk about the Day of Atonement.

Finally, school worship is more than the sum of these parts. It is a distinctive form of 'worship', one might say unique! In a court of law, if it ever got that far, I would want to say that it can only be compared with itself, and go further by arguing that the Act does not allow me to turn 'school worship' into something which imitates or replicates the worship of Christian faith communities. How convincing I might be I don't know — and I hope I shall never have cause to find out.

RE Teaching and Assembly

Ralph Gower
From a background in the Christian Ministry, Ralph Gower qualified as an RE teacher and was successively a head of department, a lecturer in primary teacher education and an education administrator. He is now Staff Inspector for RE with the Inner London Education Authority and an author and broadcaster. He provides an analytical overview of the 1988 Act's implications for schools.

When the religious clauses contained in the Education Reform Act became known there was wide dismay and negative reaction from large numbers of teachers. From knowledge of the content of the debate which went on in the Lords and in the Commons, teachers assumed that Government had put the clock back by some 30 years and that they would be involved in assemblies which were a pale copy of the worship in the local Christian church, and in a form of RE which reverted to introduction into Christianity through Bible stories. Reaction was so strong that many Muslim parents began to request that their children should be withdrawn from RE and many teachers began to file letters invoking the conscience clause which released them from the necessity of teaching RE.

A careful reading of the Act, however, has largely allayed these fears and at least in the schools in Inner London many teachers are carefully planning for the time when, 12 months later than the rest of the country, they will be putting the RE clauses into operation. After all, it was not all bad news! No longer does the assembly have to start the school day and in future children can have assemblies in teacher or age groups instead of all being in the one place at the same time. And more than that: although Assembly is linked with what takes place in curriculum RE in the classroom by virtue of the 'RE' headings within the Act, as intended and revealed by Parliamentary debate, it will still reflect those things of greatest worth to the school community.

This needs careful explanation. What the Act requires of Religious Education is that when the future Agreed Syllabuses are drawn up, they should 'reflect the fact that religious traditions in Great Britain are in

the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions in Great Britain'. The principal religions are defined in the GCSE regulations and include Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism. In short a multifaith syllabus is required. No problem there for those who accept the need for multifaith RE! Neither is there any real problem over Assembly. The law requires that in County Schools most acts of collective worship in any school term (7[3]) must be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character (7[1]), which means that they reflect the broad traditions of Christian belief (7[1]). A later note issued by Government indicated that even 'Christian assemblies' need not confine themselves to exclusively Christian material. Two points of very great importance emerged.

(1) The collective worship of assembly is *not* to be a mirror image of the worship held in the local Christian Church,
   (a) because it is collective worship appropriate to a group of different people rather than corporate worship appropriate to a body of believers,
   (b) because it is educational rather than devotional,
   (c) because it reflects the broad traditions of Christian belief (about what is true and how to behave) from Quaker to Orthodox, Roman to Free Church, and cannot be denominational.

   What is actually done in assembly may not look to religious believers as though it is worship, because they tend to look at worship as a corporate act, but it *is* collective worship.

(2) The Christian approach to collective worship must take at least 51% of the time over a school term. This is because in law, 'most' means 51%. Of course some Headteachers will wish to do more thn 51% 'Christian assemblies'; but even if they wish to do less than 51% this is not impossible if they can make out a case for a 'determination' to alter the proportions on the part of the local SACRE. In many schools there will be a 50:50 proportion of 'Christian' 'Non-Christian' assemblies.

Realisation that this is actually what the law says has been a great relief to many teachers. They have not generally had to worry about the RE in the classroom, and now they can think positively about what can be done in the time 'for collective worship'.

Bearing in mind that Christian assemblies are not the same as local Christian worship by believers, what can be done? Basically, there are times when the whole school community meets together with a focus upon an aspect of Christianity. The focus might be:

— on an issue which Christians share with other people of faith and goodwill, such as care for the world or care for each other;
— on an expression of Christianity in festival (All Saints Day, Christmas, Easter) or in service (Mother Theresa, Carie Ten Boom, Billy Graham);
— on a story from Christianity (from the Bible or from Contemporary Christianity);
— on a Christian ritual. This will normally be demonstrated by Christian teachers or children or by a visitor and will be primarily educational rather than participatory. Children will learn about things that Christians do (the Lords Prayer?) and how Christians use music in worship for example;
— on those elements such as praise, fellowship, mutual concern, being sorry for what has gone wrong, which together constitutes Christian worship, but dealt with one at a time give opportunity for implicit RE and what is sometimes called 'threshold worship'.

Very similar assemblies may be introduced in that part of the term which is for 'Non-Christian acts of collective worship'. Assemblies can focus upon those things which all faiths share (avoiding any form of syncretism) upon people, festival, story and activities. They can introduce children to peak experiences which 'turn people onto religion' so that they may begin to understand why many religious people have become people of faith. They can introduce children to those experiences noted by James Flower ('Stages of Faith') which by challenging their current perceptions makes it possible for them to move to another Stage of Faith in growth of the human spirit. What is needed within these positive suggestions is a balance, and it is necessary that an assembly diary be produced, both as a planning document and as a means of record for assessment to show how far balance has been achieved.

This becomes that much easier if it is seen as a non curriculum aspect of RE which has a very important end in view. What *is* RE for? Basically, RE is to make children 'religiously literate' in the same way that we seek to make them 'computer literate', 'mathematically literate' and so on. This means that by the time a pupil reaches the age of about 14 he/she will be able to listen or watch a programme about religion, read references to religion, respond to news items on religion and listen to a believer with interest and with understanding; and will be able to communicate so as to bring about understanding their own belief system. Beyond this pupils will deepen and broaden their knowledge and understanding, relate what they understand about religion and religions to other areas of understanding such as politics, social science, the performing and expressive arts, see religions through the perception of other religions and life stances and through such study find personal answers for their individual quest for meaning and purpose in life. It will be noted that there is little reference to skills. This is because although RE uses skills, those skills are not unique to RE. Observation in recording of religion, formulating classifying and sequencing observations, and communicating about religion are skills shared with other subject areas but which are, in RE, specifically directed toward religion. Skills such as learning to pray or exercise faith are within the scope of the believing community and are not part of a county school programme. Attitudes are important: as we put it in ILEA — children should respect the rights of others to hold beliefs which are different from their own, and beyond this is the need to develop interests in the subject area. Such a summary is not without its point. In my opinion too much RE is hidden in health education, social science, and environmental studies under such topics as drug abuse, the family and care for the planet. Of course religious people are concerned about these things but such a direction can lead away

RE and Collective Worship in Primary School

Anthony Page
A class teacher at Linden County Junior School in Countesthorpe, Leicestershire, Anthony Page is also seconded part-time to the RE Centre in Leicester. He explores the implications for RE and collective worship in primary schools.

What does RE stand for? A young child once asked me this, and after being told to think about it, she returned with the answer. 'Rod Essex' was her reply. What a happy association for our headteacher who happens to be concerned for RE in our school!

My intention in this article is to examine how far RE and collective worship in primary schools need to change as a result of the Education Reform Act of 1988. Although it can be seen that this Act includes both changes to and restatements of the 1944 act, in many ways the new law largely confirms what has already become existing good practice in primary schools. I would suggest that, although there will be the need for some changes, most primary schools will be able to continue what may have become accepted practice.

Probably the most fundamental change in the law is the term religious education, rather than instruction. The 1988 Act has made a legal confirmation of what most teachers have recognised for some years. State county primary schools are pluralistic in their beliefs, and religious teaching in practice has long since changed from the devotional and confessional approach to the informative and exploratory.

The second issue is the key statement that all new agreed syllabuses shall reflect the fact that the religious traditions of Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain. Again, the new Act only confirms the balance within most recent agreed syllabuses, which in turn have influenced primary classroom practice. However, for some schools, the message may be one of change, either because RE has been totally Christian, or because there has been equal emphasis on all the major faiths.

Away from the legal situation, there is another aspect which requires balance, namely 'explicit' and 'implicit' RE. Until now, schools in Leicestershire have looked to the aims taken from the Bedfordshire Agreed Syllabus (1985), which refers to 'fostering a reflective approach to life, in the context of a growing understanding of the experiences, attitudes, beliefs and religious practices of mankind'. Within that aim are the two aspects of RE including both the broadly spiritual as well as the directly religious. Essentially, much primary practice across the curriculum is closely linked with 'implicit' RE, since both are concerned with from what is the hard core of RE and what religion is all about.

The Education Reform Act has certainly challenged thinking and perception about assembly in religious education. This can only be for the good, provided that teachers take it as an opportunity and not merely another initiative to which they have to conform!

greater self-awareness, relationships with others and encounters with the natural world.

As a result, despite the many varied approaches to primary RE, the most natural begin with children and their experiences. Sensitive relationships between teachers and children enable informal questions and conversation to take place, leading to discussion about news from home or incidents in school. There may be concerns such as the birth of a baby, the marriage of a relative or the death of a grandparent which begin to raise important issues. Similarly in school, incidents may arise over stealing, bullying and friendships which lead into deeper and wider considerations. One class in a multicultural school in Leicester were able to develop a project about Caring, which included the death of relatives and pets, as well as looking after the youngest and oldest in the community. Last year, being disturbed by two cases of victimisation in my class, the issues of bullying and friendship were explored and revealed more fully, in an attempt to resolve some of the problems and tensions. Questions of retaliation and forgiveness were raised and later shared in assembly.

Even if such specific aspects of human experience do not arise naturally in class, and often they do not, other human themes such as Myself, Homes, Food or Clothes offer ways in which to develop RE. But before considering another theme, it is interesting to note that both the above examples could either have been initiated or supported by certain children's books. There are a number on the theme of death, sadness and comfort, such as **Why Did Grandma Die** by Trudy Madler, which could be used to introduce or develop such issues. Other suggestions can be found in **Many Faces, Many Friends** by Richard Brown and Maurice Stevens available from Leicestershire County Council. At a later stage, if appropriate, more explicit religious aspects could be considered such as the life and death of religious leaders including Guru Nanak, Jesus Christ and Martin Luther King. Similarly, with the theme of bullying and persecution, there is also fiction, such as **The Present Takers** by Aidan Chambers, which imaginatively recreates this issue. The stories of Joseph and his brothers, the trial of Jesus, Gandhi and Judah the Maccabee illustrate the same theme in varous religious traditions.

A theme such as New Life or Beginnings could be started from a number of points, such as the birth of a baby, the story of **The Magician's Nephew** by C S Lewis, the season of Spring or the religious festivals of Baisakhi, Easter or Passover. Schools which have children from different faiths will often begin with a festival, since such a celebration will be a natural part of school life. This would probably be developed in class RE as well as in collective worship for the whole school and possibly for parents too. However, in the monocultural school, which might often be 'white' and

largely secular, the celebration of festivals from other faiths is rather artificial. Therefore it is often preferable to enjoy these occasions with less personal participation and more general understanding. It is important then for schools to ensure that the festivals which lie outside their own culture are firmly rooted in a thematic approach in the attempt to avoid any artificiality of introduction. In the 'all-white' school, this might mean approaching Baisakhi, Passover, Ramadan and Eid ul Fitr in themes of New Life or Food, while Diwali, Hanukkah and Holi could be part of projects on Light or Colour.

It appears that RE can either begin with religious traditions, such as festivals or other customs and ceremonies in homes and places of worship, or else begin with human experiences at home or in school, in literature or from life in general. Either way it is essential that a variety of methods are used, involving activity and interest in order to develop the child's religious understanding.

From RE we now turn to collective worship. It is rumoured that one school secretary, being unable to interpret correctly the headteacher's writing, typed out a piece referring to 'daily corrective workshop'. This amusingly, but sadly, reflects much of what occurs during this time in the school-day! The direct link between primary RE and collective worship has already been indicated, since on occasions classroom projects are shared with the school, and at times thoughts from assembly are developed later in the classroom. In the 1988 Act collective worship is described under the heading of RE and, because of this the two should not only be linked practically, but also be in harmony with each other. Therefore, the interpretation of 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian charater' should reflect the balance of Christianity and other faiths in the RE curriculum. In addition, not every act of worship need be so, and family backgrounds must be taken into account. If, after this wide interpretation, a primary school is still unsure about appropriate worship then it should apply to the SACRE to determine whether the normal requirements need apply. Again, for many primary schools such an approach to worship will largely confirm existing practice, since a wide range is possible, stretching from acts which are wholly, to those which are not even mainly of a broadly Christian character. In addition, much ethical material is broadly common to most of the major religious traditions.

There are other ways in which the requirements for collective worship merely confirm accepted practice. First, it is no longer necessary to begin the school day with worship, but as many primary schools have already done, arrangements may be made at other times during the morning or afternoon. Secondly, the new arrangements allow for flexible groupings. Already many primary schools meet in different age groups, but this could be extended to other school groups such as class and house or even music and sports! Thirdly, as worship is part of RE, it should be educational rather than instructional. It may contain a sense of community and significance, displaying a recognition of worth for the children and their achievements, as well as the worth of an Ultimate Being. There might be celebration, with thankfulness, for all the delights of everyday life and the world around. Sympathetic concern and action might arise for a variety of social issues, and with all this may come reflection and a time of quietness and thought for the joy and sadness of life. The emphasis will be on exploration rather than devotion, the collective not the corporate, the implicit not the explicit. This is surely a confirmation of what most primary schools already provide in the variety of worship which takes place.

However, with the requirement for 'daily' worship, the 1988 Act has confirmed the one of 1944, rather than existing practice. Many primary schools will be concerned about this aspect, particularly if they are used to providing, for example, three well developed acts of worship each week. It may be that teachers will need to concentrate on arranging shorter gatherings, which contain just one vital, special element, rather than longer occasions. There are many possibilities but suggestions might include listening to music, a guided imaginary journey, story-telling rather than reading, simple spontaneous drama, eating food, arm dancing, linking hands, candle lighting or even silence! For example, small pieces of paper could be used either to make chains of unity or else for writing things down. Prayers, or just wishes, could be briefly written and pinned up on a map or the outline of a tree. Confessed wrongs could be written down, handed in and either torn up or some even burnt! These examples may sound more risky, but such things need to be tried occasionally, but increasingly. I well remember the time I led the school in a guided fantasy meditation: I was nervous and a couple of children (behind me and in my class!) did take advantage of the situation, but I hope there were benefits for the majority. One memorable act of worship took place when a visiting group of Christians managed to have the whole school, including teachers, dancing to a song of worship! Puzzled office staff emerged to witness an unusual event!

Admittedly, worship is a difficult and controversial activity in school and the 1988 restatement of the 1944 Act has caused some worries. Personally, I feel that it is not the 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character' which is the toughest problem, but rather the requirement to engage in collective worship itself in school. There appears to be an implied inconsistency in the new Act, for whereas in the curriclum, instruction has given way to education, the requirement for collective worship has not changed. In my opinion it should have been altered, and worship could have moved out into the community from where it first came. But it hasn't and we have to make the best of it. Yes, Your Worship.

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School Assemblies and Anti-Racist Education

Malcolm Horne
Now head of humanities at Willesden High School, Malcolm Horne has spent his teaching career in Brent apart from some years in Kenya. He is immediate Past President of the National Union of Teachers and chairs its Anti-Racist Working Party, but the views expressed here are his own and not to be attributed to Union. He focusses on multiculturalism and collective worship.

'Local education authorities (LEAs), schools and governing bodies have duties under Sections 17, 18 and 19(1) of the Race Relations Act 1976 not to discriminate in the provision of education or in the exercise of any of their functions under the Education Acts ... LEAs are also subject to the general duty imposed on local authorities by section 71 of the Race Relations Act to ensure that their various functions are carried out with due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups.' **The Response to Racial Attacks and Harassment: guidance for the statutory agencies**, (Report of the Inter-Departmental Racial Attacks Group. Home Office 1989).

'All pupils in attendance at a maintained school shall on each school day take part in an act of collective worship . . . In the case of a county school the collective worship required in the school shall be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character . . . Collective worship is of a broadly Christian character if it reflects the broad traditions of Christian belief without being distinctive of any particular Christian denomination.' (**Education Reform Act** 1988.)

Governing bodies, headteachers and classroom teachers now have to square that circle: how to hold daily acts of Christian worship in a multi-faith school (and there cannot be many schools which have for parents only committed Christians never mind their pupils) without discriminating against some and harming good relations between cultural groups. But it is not just the laws of logic they have to cope with: under ERA there is a complaints procedure, some vigilant bodies are already threatening legal action and, perhaps above all, with open enrolment there is the dreadful nemesis of market forces if the product offends parents in any way.

Fortunately the Act and Circular 3/89 (**The Education Reform Act 1988: Religious Education and Collective Worship**) provide plenty of scope for the determined and resourceful multiculturalist/antiracist to operate. Their only complaint will be the energy unnecessarily spent on circumventing the intentions of those who framed this part of the Act; the focus has to be on what we are permitted to do rather than what we ought to be doing. The greatest damage of course will be in those schools where management takes, either because of educational exhaustion or timidity, the easy path of conformity; providing a fare of unmixed Christianity for their white pupils and opting out for the 'heathen'.

The first safeguard for the multiculturalist is the possibility under the Act of an application to the local SACRE for a determination that the requirement should not apply. Even here there are shoals to be navigated. If the application is not for the whole school, the result could be very divisive: how soon would it be before we were hearing garbled accounts of what goes on in the 'Pakki assembly'? If the application is successful, what can safely be substituted? There would still have to be collective worship but it would not have to be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character'. It still would not have to be 'distinctive of any particular Christian or other religious denomination' but could be distinctive of another faith or even 'multifaith'. If it were distinctive of another faith, Islam for instance, it would lay itself open to the same objection as if it were Christian and a school would have to be very careful that it did not lean towards a particular Islamic sect — or turmoil could ensue. On the other hand many would question the possibility of 'multifaith' worship; and to that we must return.

Even if application is not made to the local SACRE or if they turn down the application, there is plenty of room for manoeuvre. The Act lays down that collective worship has to be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character' and the Circular clarifies 'most acts of worship in a term must be broadly Christian; and those that are must reflect broad traditions of Christian belief to an extent and in a way which gives them a Christian character, but is also appropriate having regard to the family background, ages and aptitudes of the pupils involved'. So schools only have to see that over half their assemblies (at least 96 in any year) are of 'a broadly Christian character' (a phrase open to much interpretation) and that even those are appropriate to the family background of their pupils, some of whom might well come from Moslem, Hindu, agnostic or militantly atheistic homes. They can be encouragd by paragraph 8 of the Circular: 'The Government believes that all those concerned with religious education should seek to ensure that it promotes respect, understanding and tolerance for those who adhere to different faiths.' But how do they do it?

The difficulty, of course, lies deeper than the 1988 Act. The 1944 Act, with which we coped for years, itself laid down that 'the school day shall begin with collective worship on the part of all pupils in attendance at the school.' Pupils are intended to be not interested observers of but active participants in worship, 'an act of revering a god'. Both Acts made clear that it is not enough for pupils to learn about religion but they must be given opportunity to practise it; a good educational principle but not to be applied to sex education or the adherents of most religions and many of none would be offended! For some, of course, worship of their god is a vital and vibrant element in their life and culture which others whatever their religious or irreligious views must respect. But we also have to respect the

personalities of each of our students some of whom might feel liberated by the religion of their parents, some stifled and others fairly indifferent. It is clearly no duty of the public education system to proselytize for religion or any particular religion. The Act does lay upon us a duty to provide the opportunity for our students to engage in worship. It can be no more than that; even if we insist on external conformity, worship to be real must spring from adoration which we can seek to awaken but hardly demand. And what do we seek to awaken in those who have no belief in a god? The answer must be a spiritual dimension.

The act demands a curriculum in each maintained school which 'promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society'. In this it is in line with Muslim demands: 'Education should aim at the balanced growth of the total personality of Man through the training of Man's spirit, intellect, the rational self, feelings and bodily senses.' (Statement from the Muslim Educational Conference, Mecca 1977). Unless schools provide that spiritual dimension they are not fulfilling the Act and more importantly, they are not being truly multicultural or fully educational. Schools for years have had ostensibly Christian assemblies without noticeably increasing the flock of committed Christians or even preventing the shrinking of church congregations. More importantly they have clearly failed to counteract what Bishop Thompson of Stephney has described in a recent **Guardian** article as 'the incessant propaganda of the advertisers, the Murdochs and the gutter press, which fill empty spaces with worthless spirits.' The question remains whether that awakening of a spiritual dimension which is not solely identified with a particular religious or non-religious set of beliefs and which sees the need to transcend the purely selfish materialism of our society can be done through 'multifaith' assemblies.

There are, I believe, two approaches which can be attempted. The first is to provide a common stimulus which can lead to wonder, praise and request (or prayer) and then to encourage pupils to respond as they wish, perhaps providing a variety of responses for them to choose from. The second is to provide within the assembly a dialogue both with and between religions and with life-styles not involving the supernatural, such as humanism and Marxism. In Schools Council **Working Paper 36** RE is described as being 'both a dialogue with living religions and a dialogue with experience, each one re-interpreting and reinforcing the other.' Christians should be confident enough in their beliefs not on the one hand to demand a Constantine Christianity which seeks to enforce them on others or on the other to feel those beliefs threatened by coming in contact with the beliefs of others. At the same time all pupils should be made aware of what choices are open to them and learn to respect the freedom of others also to make those choices. No believer in any faith will see awareness of a spiritual dimension as enough in itself; it may be necessary but it will not be sufficient for salvation. But it is the school's task to open their eyes, not to determine their field of vision, and assemblies can still be constructed to do this without seeking to take over the task of the church, the mosque, the temple, the synagogue, etc.

I have concentrated in this article on religious worship rather than religious education because the latter under the Act provides far fewer problems for multicultural education. To begin with it is officially entitled Religious Education now and not Religious Instruction. While it must still be provided for all pupils it is not now the only subject in this category; it is part of the basic curriculum but not of the National Curriculum and so not subject to nationally prescribed attainment targets, programmes of study and assessment arrangements. It is true that for the first time the law lays down that syllabuses 'shall reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian' but also for the first time it is law that they must take 'account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain.' There are still major questions to be faced (How can we avoid teaching other faiths in a monocultural way? How can we ensure in multicultural teaching that young people are seriously faced with those ultimate concerns at the root of all faiths?); but they are the same questions which we had to face before the 1988 Act. The provisions for worship gives schools new work to do which they could well do without and can only nurture suspicion in the minds of non-Christian parents which schools will have to work hard and openly to dispel.

Educating Religiously

Usha Sahni
Now Senior Inspector responsible for Professional and Institutional Development in the borough of Camden, Usha Sahni taught mainly in primary schools for nineteen years. She was head of a multifaith primary school in Brent until last summer and explains how it decided to apply for exemption from broadly Christian worship.

It was towards the end of July last year that I drafted a submission for the consideraton of SACRE on behalf of school's parents, children, governors and the staff. The school as a community had finally arrived at a decision to seek an exemption from Section 8 of the Education Reform Act 1988 provided for by the Act. The decision came at the end of thorough and serious considerations given to the issues involved. There were three particular contexts which influenced the process. These interactive and mutually supportive contexts were:

a) the structures and processes developed by the school for policy making;
b) the framework provided by the LEA Inspectorate and the SACRE and
c) my personal views about the place of religion and collective worship and the position best suited to meet the needs of our school.

The particular dynamics generated by each of these contexts needed to be managed by everyone involved with the ultimate aim of delivering a high quality 'educational' experience for each one of the 600+ pupils in our multiracial, multifaith school.

The Circular 3/89 was published at the time when our parents' working party was holding a series of meetings to present an Equal Opportunities Policy for the school to the staff, the parents and the Governors. The policy established a clear set of principles as a basis for the teaching and learning environment expected in the school. It also made explicit a range of subject-specific strategies that the school needed to adopt in order to promote equality and excellence. I remember clearly the very lively debate surrounding the teaching of RE! During the debates two things were emerging clearly: the parents wished to preserve the multifaith ethos of the school and wanted the children's spiritual development to be considered as a priority. They believed firmly that it was most important for each child to 'feel' valued. The working party's presentation of the policy and the subsequent discussions at this stage had set the scene and given a positive lead in policy direction. On a more general level the school was making a serious attempt at operating as an 'open' institution where parents, the children and the local communities felt an 'ownership' of the school and all that it stood for.

The school's response to the circular was also guided by the local SACRE, the publication of the agreed RE syllabus and the INSET support offered by the Inspectorate. The agreed syllabus was already in the process of implementation and provided a stable basis for practice within the school when the 'panic' and 'emotion' hit the school and the local communities in the wake of a controversial piece of legislation.

SACRE at this time suggested that schools carry out a survey of their faith communities to ascertain the composition of a school's population. That over 85% responded to the questionnaire at our school was perhaps an indication of the strength of interest in the subject. The returns confirmed the rich and diverse faith representation amongst the pupil population. The majority of the local schools wished to apply to SACRE for the lifting of the requirements to organise collective worship of 'wholly or broadly of Christian Character' (para 34 Circular 3/89). These were considered to be almost irrelevant to the needs of our children and contrary to the principles of 'equality' and child-centred education. SACRE offered advice and guidance on the criteria that the schools needed to address in their submissions. Parental wishes were stressed as the key feature of the process. There was also a paper produced by the SACRE suggesting 'A Recommended Approach to Collective Worship' to schools who sought exemption from the broadly Christian nature of the Act. This listed the general principles, the aims and features of the Collective Worship which may serve the needs of multifaith communities constructively. The approach developed the concept of spiritual development and considered it central to the role of worship. The Governors agreed to adopt the SACRE's recommended approach.

On reflection, my 'personal views' played a significant role in influencing the final decision to seek exemption. Partly because the Act places the day to day responsibility for the delivery of curriculum upon the Headteacher, I find myself in agreement with the broader aims of the legislation that requires the schools to promote spiritual, cultural and moral development of pupils. I believe that 'collective worship' can contribute to a sense of cohesion and shared values 'when the school takes account of circumstances relating to the family background of the pupils concerned when determining the character of that collective worship' (Brent SACRE '89).

It is the broadly christian nature of the Act that I found almost irrelevant to the needs of a multifaith, multidenominational society. This is not because I am anti-Christian but because I am not a person of fixed ideas — I am not fanatical, I am a Hindu and I believe that no one religion contains the final, absolute and the whole truth. I may believe that my faith gives me a deeper personal insight into reality but I look upon others as fellow seekers of truth. My faith helps me towards personal growth and learning, an inner transformation, a spiritual change. It helps me to grow from the world of intellect, the world of divided consciousness to a life of harmony. In the school situation, I aimed at providing for spiritual growth and realisation amongst the children. The aim in the teaching of RE and Collective Worship was not to advocate an undifferentiated universalism nor to work towards an endless homogeneity. It was to enable children to recognise the differences, to develop an openess, a mutual respect and sympathetic understanding and appreciation of each others' as well as their own faiths and beliefs. The religious and spiritual reflection can be stimulated greatly by the knowledge and friendship of others of different religions. The school aimed to create an ethos where the children accepted the differences and were able to develop a spirit of organic unity.

I did not see it as our role in the school to teach 'religion' by timetabling it. It is not a fractional thing that can be doled out. One's religion is the truth of one's complete being, the consciousness of one's personal relationships with the Infinite. It is the true centre of gravity of our life. It is not about acquiring truth, but realising truth and finding very personal means of doing so.

At the very best, we can promote spiritual development as part of children's educational experience and aim at developing the children's spiritual powers to help them build harmonius, self-confident personalities. We can only help them to recognise the many approaches that people take in the search for truth and to the mystery of God, but each child's life is essentially a road to himself — to self realisation. Schools can only *help* the process. I am convinced that ERA, in amending the Sections 26-29 of the 1944 Act, misunderstood the role and place of school in the total education process. At Oakington we tried to address the misunderstanding so that we could promote better understanding amongst our community.

If you don't, you break the law

Mary Jane Drummond

During the autumn term a group of primary teachers, studying for an Advanced Diploma in Educational Studies at the Norwich outpost of the Cambridge Institute of Education, were invited to canvass their pupils' views on RE and school assembles. They used various methods such as small group discussion, informal conversation at dinner and written comments from the older children. At first glance, the pupils' responses fall into familiar categories with well-worn epithets ('boring', 'fun', 'quite good', 'boring' 'better than writing things up', 'boring') on every page of notes. But some of the pupils' perceptions, particularly those expressed in extended discussion in small groups, raise doubts about the power of an Act of Parliament to affect the quality of pupils' experiences in schools.

There are pages still to be written, and many more still to be read, on the practical implications of the words in the 1988 Act that refer to religious education and the school assembly. But the intentions of those words are clear, if not explicit: as a result of certain practices that will follow from the Act, pupils will learn; their knowledge will be increased and desirable attitudes will be fostered. Their learning will be in that broad field we label moral and spiritual. Values and beliefs will be affected. Concepts of morality, divinity, worship and spirituality will be explored. These aspirations, being vague and imprecise, could easily be expressed in a form that would win support from a huge majority of teachers; but they remain the property of the educators, not of those who are to be educated; the pupils' perspective is different.

The evidence for this claim is in an untidy folder in front of me, which holds a collection of papers — children's writing, teachers' notes on discussion sessions, classroom jottings. The children's individual voices are distinct and their opinions various, but there are points on which they all agree. For one thing, they make it very clear that, for them, the spectators, an assembly is a stage, and all the teachers on it merely players. There is a standard format for an assembly, which varies from school to school, but the meat of the thing is the solo performance by Mr or Mrs X. A ten year old's only comments were: 'I like Mr X's assemblies. I do not like Mr Y's assemblies.' Another in the same class: 'I hate the assemblies Mr Z does because he drags on about History and things like that.' In another school, the vicar's assemblies get a mixed press: 'I like the ones the vicars do.' 'The vicar does assemblies that I hate.' These are not, obviously, carefully argued evaluations, though they come from the heart: other assessments offer more in the way of justification. 'I think Mr A's assembly was good because he did some raps with our class and the 4th class. And it tells you how to make the raps rhyme and how to use the instrument.' It is the ownership that is not in doubt, never mind the quality. Some assemblies are owned by whole classes; and the youngest children in the school get some good reviews. 'I think Class One is sweet, and they always get their words wrong.' It is clear that other people, out at the front 'do' assemblies; the massed audience is there to be done to — and, incidentally, many pupils refer to the physical discomfort involved ('no carpet or anything', 'It's OK for the teachers, they have chairs').

The concern with procedure, with the surface features of how-it's-done, permeates pupils' accounts of their experiences of religious education inside the classroom. Some middle school children's accounts of RE periods: '.... just write Bible stories, Miss B tells them and we have to write them down.' 'We have to write about the story we heard in assembly.' 'We copy some of the story from the blackboard, then we have to finish it. Mrs C tells it to us first. It will have to be done again if it's not neat.' 'RE is when you write about the Bible.' 'I like RE 'cos I'm good at drawing and I get good marks.' Not all pupils respond so passively. Matthew, ten years old, in a different school, is sounding off at the dinner table: 'We had RE today. Mr D (a supply teacher) told us about the good shepherd, we've had it about 50 times before. Everyone tells us about the good shepherd. Miss E comes in every time for RE and says 'I'm going to tell you a bit more about the good shepherd.' At the same table is Adam, who knows the inside story: 'Every morning now, we haven't got assembly, we have a corporate act of worship, which is now law . . . if you don't, you break the law.' Matthew is still unconvinced: 'What do you mean law, it's a load of rubbish . . . (later) unless you want to be a bishop or a preacher, there's no point.'

There is evidence that not all children take quite such a strong line: individual nuggets of content are remembered, sometimes with approbation. Mrs F, in a middle school, has a number of fans: 'I think Mrs F's assembly was good about life saving, it teached you what to do if there was an emergency at a swimming pool or a river or an open pond which was deep. She showed us how to do the recovery position and the kiss of life.' 'I liked one assembly from the 5th year with Mrs F, the one we done the kiss of life.' Fund-raising was popular with some: 'I like assemblies when people come in to talk to you because normally they tell you stories, and you normally end up raising money for the people who you've been told about in the story.' On the other hand: 'I hate Mr G's assemblies because he usually tells you about the letters we were given the other day or he wants some money.'

The children also revealed a disturbingly acute knowledge of their own behaviour in assemblies. A group of 12 year olds (with seven years' experience of assemblies under their belts) described their part in the ritual in these terms: talking to friends without getting caught, pretending to pray when you're not really, letting your mind wander, listening to your breakfast go down, fiddling with your shoes for something to do, being watched by the teachers. The words 'broadly Christian' hardly seem to apply to this catalogue of indifference.

Overall, the extent of their religious education, as recorded by these children, seems limited: Bible stories, Harvest, Autumn, Christmas, God and Jesus. The responses are unpredictable: 'I like the story of Cain and Abel. They fight.' 'I het luning about Joesef God and Adum and ever.' A more forgiving note: 'They talk about Jesus to me that is boring but some people enjoy it.' Perhaps, but this group of teachers found few willing to testify. More representative are this 6 year old: 'I hate it. I really mean it. I'd rather have a longer playtime', and a 10 year old who is more diplomatic: 'I hate having to sing the hymns, it wastes working time. I would rather do English or maths.' This utilitarian viewpoint is echoed in notes made of a discussion with a group of 12 year olds on the theme of learning about religion. 'Something you won't need in the future', 'useless', 'another book to write in'. The sceptics found a voice in this discussion: 'Boring if you don't believe in god.' 'Untrue.' 'Good for believers.'

The fourteen teachers who collected this material are none of them setting out to corrupt their pupils' moral and religious development. Their intentions are honourable, not subversive. But their aspirations seem remote from these accounts, which simply do not tell of moral or spiritual experience. In this collection the only evidence of any awareness of the higher purposes of religious education is sadly antagonistic. 'RE is a waste of time because it tells us unnecessary things like what other countries do. And we don't want to know.' (The next comment on this sheet of paper, which was being passed around a group of 11 year olds, is 'I agree!') A more moderate, but still hardly encouraging, comment from the same school: 'The RE lessons have been quite good though after a while I got a bit tired of the gods of different religions, but some of them were quite funny.' Again and again, the evidence suggests a dissonance between the curriculum as it is conceived and planned by teachers, and the curriculum as it is received by their pupils. The teachers' curriculum is informed by knowledge of the subject and of their pupils, supported by the agreed syllabus and the school policy/guidelines, inspired by ideals and values; but the pupils' curriculum is made up of actual classroom events. And, as reported here, these real-life experiences have little enough connection with what was meant to happen.

For the teachers who collected this evidence, warning bells are now ringing: there is clearly work to be done in reducing the gap between what is being taught (according to them) and what is being learned (according to their pupils) in these particular schools and classrooms. Any teacher who deliberately sets out to explore his or her practice in this way, by asking questions about classroom events, rather than by writing descriptions (lesson plans, weekly forecasts) of what should happen, is likely to receive a few short sharp shocks of this kind. It is a courageous decision to turn at least some part of regular curriculum evaluation over to the thirty or so critical evaluators who share classroom life with the teacher, and setbacks are only to be expected. But this small-scale investigation, which is inevitably partial, incomplete, and subjective, does have wider implications. The message that review is a more powerful tool for curriculum evaluation and development than the most careful planning deserves a wider audience than fourteen teachers on a diploma course.

At the heart of the recent legislation seems to lie a belief that if only we can describe the desirable fully enough, it will certainly come to pass. This belief is not, of course, new. It explains much of the recent enthusiasm for writing guidelines; it lurks behind the apparent openness of the aims/objectives model; it infects the writing of school booklets, whole school policies and school development plans. But faith in the power of pieces of paper to affect classroom events, when taken to its present extremes, seem dangerously close to witchcraft.

(Grateful thanks to teachers on the part-time Advanced Diploma in Education Studies, based in Norwich 1988-90, and to their pupils — MJD.)

Can RE be Redeemed for 14-16 Year Olds?

Andrew Bolton
A horticulturist and at one time a biology teacher who has taught English in Japan, Andrew Bolton studied religion for an MA in the USA and is now head of RE at Beauchamp College in Leicestershire. He discusses RE with 14-16 year olds.

Students aged 14-16 are generally the most challenging of young people to teach. They are big, frequently bold in saying what they like and do not like, often old enough to leave school and yet still have to be there. RE for all is especially a challenge at this age.

Problem or Opportunity?

There are two views of RE. One sees it as an unwelcome problem, the other as a curriculum opportunity of major importance. It is clear that the first view is the common experience of many teachers, students and parents.

Seen as a problem, RE is an irrelevant relic from a previous religious age. It is out of place in the secular age we now live in. It is difficult to get good RE specialists. It is often taught badly and is usually resented by students and those pressed into teaching it. In many ways it was a curriculum disaster. In recent years most head teachers were happy, I suspect, to see RE quietly slide off the timetable, despite its being the only core subject according the 1944 Education Act. So just when the RE problem was solved by having it quietly disappear, along came the 1988 ERA reaffirming RE for all students from 5 to 18. RE is back as an unwelcome problem.

In the other view RE, taught by enthusiastic specialists, is about helping students deal with major decisions, explore values, consider ultimate questions about life and death, relationships, meaning and purpose. Such a view sees RE, not at the periphery of the curriculum about to drop off the timetable, but at the heart of the whole curriculum.

The Beauchamp College Experience

RE is a core subject for all 14-16 year olds in this Leicestershire 14-18 upper school. Each student has two 50 minute periods a week amounting to about 6.6% of their timetable. This is just enough contact to allow quality relationships to develop and just enough time to squeeze in a GCSE course and give RE academic credibility.

Two periods alone, even when taught by specialist teachers, are not enough to redeem RE. Four years ago when I began teaching RE, students followed a Christian Responsibility syllabus at O-level and CSE. Although the syllabuses were about quality human relationships, sadly these were often lacking in the classroom. Many students resented doing just a Christian perspective RE course. RE was a low status subject.

Four years later, things are very different. Exam entries are up from an average of 66% to 86% of the whole year group. Exam results are excellent. Four years ago three students were doing A-level Religious Studies, now there are nearly 40 students. Two have gained places at Oxford and Cambridge. Classroom relationships are now very good. Parents are very pleasantly surprised that their son or daughter enjoys RE. The Principal, who has been sceptical about the place of RE in the curriculum, now writes:

> '. . . there is the intangible effect, the instinctive feeling that the RE course and what it teaches has been a major contributing factor to the past very successful year for the college . . .'

RE has changed in four years from being a problem to being a curriculum asset.

Beauchamp College is a comprehensive and community college that welcomes everybody as a learner of whatever age, ability, class, race, gender or religion. Cultural and religious pluralism is celebrated and is the base line from which RE in the college begins for 14-16 year old students. Every student's inherited world view, whether religious or secular, is welcomed, affirmed and seen as a resource for learning.

Three years ago we discovered student-centred learning. I was introduced to two books by an enthusiastic vice-principal, Mike Vybiral. Carl Rogers' **Freedom to Learn in the Eighties** gave me the theory backed by thorough research and Donna Brandes and Paul Ginnis **A Guide to Student-Centred Learning** gave me practical strategies for a student-centred approach. At about the same time I participated in a residential course on human relations skills at Nottingham School of Education led by Eric Hall and Arthur Wooster. This increased my personal confidence and enabled me to risk embarking on a new style of teaching, that of trying to become more student-centred.

Next, we discovered the Leicestershire Modular Framework (LMF), a mode 3 GCSE pilot scheme. About 18 Beliefs and Values GCSE modules have been written by David Sharpe, a Leicestershire RE teacher. The LMF Beliefs and Values modules are designed to be student-centred, emphasising process skills and giving quite a lot of flexibility on content compared with mode 1 Religious Studies Syllabuses. LMF modules have enabled us to:

1. Choose modules which deal with topics that are felt to be important concerns to teenagers, eg. 'Marriage and Divorce', 'Conflict, War and Peace', 'Work and Leisure', etc;

2. welcome every student's home world view whether religious or secular and allow him/her to work from that perspective in course work assignments, and to encourage students to study an issue or topic from another tradition so they begin walking the road of empathy and tolerance;

3. be student-centred by giving students lots of choice about what questions they tackle for coursework assignments;

4. concentrate on the learning process, allowing students to choose the content and come to their own conclusions on their significant questions.

5. move to mixed ability teaching because work can be individualised. We can now better nurture every student's self-esteem and have pluralism of ability in the classroom.

Finally, three full-time specialist RE teachers with 2 part-timers working closely together as a team have worked at being very organised and well prepared. Student-centred learning requires, I believe, more teacher planning, preparation, and organisation in terms of resources and programming. It is worth the effort because the response from students is so satisfying and meaningful.

What about the emphasis on Christianity?

The 1988 ERA emphasis on Christianity is only an emphasis. The Act states that the teaching of other principal religions represented in Britain should be taken into account in an agreed syllabus. The Act recognises the pluralism of modern Britain. A student-centred approach enables students with a Christian cultural heritage to work mainly from a Christian point of view — if they want to. Students from other backgrounds can work mainly from that religious perspective.

In short, I believe a student-centred approach to RE does not violate the Act and it overcomes the moral problem of imposing Christianity in a multi-ethnic RE class. Pluralism can be embraced, celebrated and be highly creative through a student-centred approach. It may even be contributing to a more tolerant society.

Threats to Success

Successful RE in my experience has been (1) student-centred, (2) exploring meaning, values and ultimate questions about life, (3) emphasising the learning process rather than a tightly specified content, (4) welcoming to every child's inherited world view, whether religious or secular.

I see the following as threats:

(1) If a local Agreed Syllabus Conference and the resulting Agreed Syllabus emphasises a content approach to RE then this would push RE back into becoming a boring, irrelevant imposition on students. If RE is seen as a personal exploration into significant moral and spiritual questions and issues, then RE will be exciting and relevant.

(2) If the Secretary of State abolishes 100% coursework assessed GCSEs in 1994 that will be a significant blow to the present Beliefs and Values LMF modular GCSE course. Content will then, I suspect, have to be more emphasised. It will mean going back to cramming for an exam. The Government is worried about standards and suspects 100% coursework as a soft option. A PhD in this country is based on 100% coursework — and is not a soft option. What is good enough for a PhD is surely good enough for a GCSE with careful moderation techniques!

(3) RE is outside the National Curriculum but is part of the basic curriculum for all students. If Statutory Agreed Syllabus Conferences recommend to their LEAs the inclusion of Attainment Targets, Programmes of Study and Assessment Arrangements in an Agreed Syllabus to maintain parity with National Curriculum subjects, I would argue that it is crucial that Attainment Targets emphasise process skills rather than content. This will enable RE to be an exploration of the spiritual and moral in a student-centred way.

(4) At present Beliefs and Values LMF modules are outside the Religious Studies GCSE National Criteria but come under General GCSE National Criteria. This has given LMF modules the important freedom to affirm every student's inherited world view *and* work from it in assignments. Under the present Religious Studies National Criteria it is not really possible for every student's inherited world view to be welcomed, affirmed and a resource to work from as only the 6 major world religions are considered for study; other world views are only nodded at. The Religious Studies National Criteria are not student-centred enough. Unless a child's inherited world view, religious or secular, is affirmed they are discriminated against and in a sense violated. Furthermore, they are not freed by affirmation to explore and examine their own views sympathetically and critically. Much less are they empowered to explore someone else's because they are, in effect, under siege.

In summary, Religious Studies GCSE Criteria need to:

a) become person-centred, welcoming each student's world view and permitting it to be a resource for learning;

b) encourage students to explore at least one other world view, of their own choosing, so that empathy, understanding and tolerance are fostered;

c) assess process skills so that RE is a student-centred, personal, existential yet disciplined scholarly exploration of the moral and spiritual rather than a religion/subject centred endeavour.

Final Thoughts

RE can be a significant curriculum opportunity and at the heart of a young person's education. RE has become successful for 14-16 year olds through a student-centred approach using LMF modules at Beauchamp College. Whether this tender, sensitive and effective approach survives depends on whether government ministers, civil servants, SACRE and Agreed Syllabus Conference members and educational managers can see the value of student-centred RE. In my experience the consumers — students and their parents — are well satisfied. And didn't a Jewish Rabbi say 2000 years ago that children were at the heart of God's Kingdom?

References

1. Education Reform Act, Part 1, section 8-(3).
2. Luke 18: 15-17.

(Acknowledgements are unreservedly due to my RE colleagues at Beauchamp College, Catherine Davis, Jenny Segree, Carolyn Robson, Anglea Jagger and Gail King — and former Head of RE Glyn Haines — we have merely built on his foundations).

(Full details of the Beauchamp approach to RE for 14-16 year olds are available in the booklet: **Is it Possible to Redeem RE?** Write to A.Bolton, Beauchamp College, Oadby, Leicester, LE2 5TP, cost £2.00 including p&p, cheques payable to Leicestershire County Council.)

Muslim Schools: some unanswered questions

Peter Cumper
Educated in Northern Ireland, Peter Cumper teaches Law at Hull University and is a member of the Hull Council for Racial Equality. He assesses the pressures for voluntary aided Muslim schools.

The majority of Muslim parents in Britain are in favour of separate Muslim schools for their children. This was one of the findings of a recent survey conducted by 2 academics at Manchester University. It corroborates a figure I obtained from the Muslim Educational Trust, that 75 per cent of Muslims support the establishment of Muslim schools.

Experience also shows that advocates of Muslim schools are 'voting with their feet'. Most of the 15 privately funded Muslim schools in this country have long waiting lists. The Islamia Primary School in Brent, which teaches 90 pupils, has a waiting list of 650, while The Zakaria Muslim Girls' High School in Batley, has a pupil population of 127, and a waiting list of 300 girls.

At a time when 'parent power' is the touchstone of the Government's educational policy, one might have expected the state to have payed lip-service to these parents' wishes, by funding at least some Muslim schools. This has not been the case. Apart from 20 Jewish schools, all of this country's 4500 voluntary aided religious schools are controlled by Roman Catholics and Anglicans.

The advantages of voluntary aided status are obvious. Under this scheme, the state is responsible for a school's running costs and 85 per cent of capital expenses. School Governors excercise control over the curriculum, and may appoint teachers without being responsible for their salaries. As a result of these benefits, a campaign for state funded Muslim schools is rapidly gathering momentum. In the North of England, demonstrations and school boycotts were recently organized by the Muslim community. They were in response to Kirklees Education Committee's rejection of an application by The Zakaria Girl's High School for Voluntary Aided status. Muslim leaders have even threatened to put forward candidates at parliamentary and local government elections, to remedy their educational grievances. This Muslim campaign seems likely to intensify, if the Secretary of State rejects the formal request submitted to him recently by The Islamia Primary School in Brent for voluntary aided status.

Irrespective of how he reacts to the application submitted by the Muslims in Brent, one thing seems clear. With the leadership of the Labour Party throwing their weight behind the campaign for voluntary aided Muslim schools, and many on the political right insistent that Muslim parents should have real power, it seems only a matter of time before the Government grant Voluntary Aided Status to a Muslim School.

When this happens is it to be welcomed? On the one hand, Muslim parents have rights. After all, it seems incongruous that in a multi-faith society, Anglicans and Catholics should control 99 per cent of state assisted religious schools. However, it is also vital to remember that the establishment of Voluntary Aided Muslim Schools will inevitably create problems. The day permission is granted for the setting up of a Voluntary Aided Muslim School, many Muslims may be euphoric. But what will be the reaction of the general public?

Six years ago, Bradford County Council rejected an application for five Voluntary Aided Schools, from The Muslim Parent's Association. In its report, the Council noted that 'Muslim Schools would risk becoming black schools and of encouraging racial prejudice.'

Claims that Muslims schools are ethnically and racially homogeneous are rejected by Muslims. They point out that the Islamia Primary School in Brent caters for children of 24 nationalities, out of a total school population of less than one hundred. Nevertheless, the Islamia School enjoys a greater degree of racial diversity than most of the privately funded Muslim schools in the North of England. It is also significant that the largest European body of Muslims in Britain, the Turkish Cypriot community, have consistently distanced themselves from calls for Muslim Schools.

Allegations that state funded Muslim schools could lead to an educational inversion of apartheid, have been described as 'quite ridiculous', by Rizwan Ahmad, a spokesman for the UK Islamic Mission. Yet even if Muslim voluntary aided schools attract white or non-Muslim pupils, they will, in all likelihood, still be *seen* as black schools. After all in 1983, Bradford Council concluded that: 'a Muslim school, no matter how great its religious content . . . will be identified as a black school . . . and will be popularly referred to as such.'

Yet race will not be the only public reservation about Muslim voluntary aided schools. When I spoke to Ghulam Sarwar, the Director of the Muslim Educational Trust, *before* the Salman Rushdie affair, he asserted that the basis of opposition to Muslim schools was 'an apprehension that some sort of fundamentalism will grow through these schools.' In post Rushdie Britain, the public will inevitably be susceptible to such fears. Particularly emotive will be the question, would teachers at a Muslim Voluntary Aided School encourage children to believe that Rushdie is guilty of a capital offence? Should the state finance these schools if such a message could be preached?

With the tabloid press exploiting the situation by portraying Muslim Voluntary Aided Schools as Asian ghettos, breeding mini-Ayatollahs, Muslim leaders will have an unenviable task of 'selling' the idea of Muslim schools to this nation. By obtaining their own state

funded schools, British Muslim schoolchidren may be made more aware of their Islamic heritage. Yet surely an inevitable byproduct of this will be a deterioration in relations between Muslims and a general public, paradoxically indifferent to religion, yet wary of Islamic fundamentalism?

Relations between Muslims and other faiths may suffer if Muslim schools obtain volundary aided status and the claims of other faiths fall on deaf ears. In Britain, there have been attempts by Hindus, Sikhs, the Hare Krishna Movement, Orthodox Jews, the Seventh Day Adventists, Rastafarians and Evangelical Christian groups, to establish their own religious schools. Once Muslim schools obtain funding, the Secretary of State will probably find many of these groups knocking on his door. Their demands for parity with the Muslims would place the Education Secretary in a dilemma. He would be clearly eager to accommodate the wishes of as many faiths as possible. Afterall, any unreasonable exercise of his powers, could lead to judicial review of his actions in the Courts. Yet in all likelihood, financial considerations and 'flood gate' fears would curb the number of schools obtaining Voluntary Aided status.

Is it possible that our educational system, already seriously underfunded, could cope with large sums of money being diverted to maintain new voluntary religious schools? And even if voluntary aided status was confined to a number of Muslim schools, would Muslims be satisfied? Ibrahim Hewitt, the Secretary of the Islamia Schools Trust, has said that after setting up their own schools, British Muslims will endeavour to establish Muslim teacher training colleges, Polytechnics, and Universities. Will Muslims in future also expect the state to subsidize their colleges of higher education? Problems such as these perhaps lie behind the recent recommendation of the Education Committee of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities that in future no more voluntary aided schools of any kind should be set up.

It is not only the Secretary of State for Education who will face problems, when Muslim voluntary aided schools are established. In view of the national shortage of teachers in some areas, Muslim schools may find it difficult to recruit well qualified, experienced staff. This may be particularly so, if the Governors of Muslim schools insist that only practising Muslims are employed as teachers. And even if non-Muslims are permitted to teach in Muslim voluntary aided schools, it appears that problems of recruitment will still exist. In 1983, in the Bradford schools where Muslim take-overs were proposed, 109 out of a total staff of 120 teachers, said that they would seek re-employment. Even the dinner ladies voiced their determination never to be employed in a Muslim school!

As well as staffing problems, controversy may surround the conditions of employment, offered to teachers in voluntary aided Muslim schools. In schools in France and Ireland, teachers have been dismissed on the ground that their lifestyles were morally unacceptable. It seems inconceivable that homosexuals or unmarried mothers will ever be allowed to teach in Muslim schools. Such a requirement may be acceptable for privately funded Islamic schools. But should a state funded Muslim school be permitted to lay down such rigid guidelines? And by funding such schools, could the Government find itself liable for the actions of Muslim schools, which dismiss teachers on grounds of private morality?

These are difficult questions. Yet they are not hypothetical. Sooner rather than later, answers must be forthcoming. The time has surely come for Muslims, Hindus and other minority faiths petitioning for voluntary aided schools to have their claims taken seriously. Nothing less is acceptable in a pluralist society. In the long run, there is no reason why Muslim voluntary aided schools should operate any less successfully than existing Anglican, Catholic or Jewish schools. The problem seems to be what will happen in the short term?

Reviews

Making RE Sense

Reforming Religious Education: The Religious Clauses of the 1988 Education Reform Act, Edwin Cox and Josephine M.Cairns. Kogan Page/University of London Institute of Education, Bedford Way Series (1989). pp 102. £8.99.

This is not a book to buy if you want practical help with planning school assemblies or religious education lessons which comply with the 1988 Act. It is, however, a prerequisite for such planning as it provides a stimulus for the essential and fundamental thinking which must precede it.

Its two authors take on different — and complementary — roles: Josephine Cairns concerns herself with the background to the Act, both legal (the 1944 Act) and social and cultural; while Edwin Cox examines in some detail its provisions and points out some of the ambiguities and problems which they contain and raise. A final chapter provides a forum for five writers from different life-stances to give their views.

In the first three chapters, the authors examine the main provisions of the 1944 Act and developments in the years between 1944 and 1988 and note that, while there have been profound changes to the nature of British society during that period, some things have remained the same, including the British people's ambiguous attitude to religion; 'religious clauses in the 1988 Act which beg so many questions are the direct result.'

In chapters four to eight, the authors examine these clauses. In his chapter on Collective Worship, Edwin Cox reviews the problems this has always presented and suggests, with delightful understatement, that 'to teachers who have struggled with the problems of providing in present-day schools some form of worship which is not an empty formality but has some meaning or significance for the collection of children of various faiths and doubts who are required to attend, the clauses in the 1988 Act may well seem blandly optimistic.' He presents a useful analysis of the nature of worship: one wonders whether the writers of the Act ever undertook such an analysis.

In his next chapter, Edwin Cox considers what is meant by 'broad traditional Christianity', noting that the 1988 Act is rather more specific than its 1944 predecessor in this respect. His last paragraph includes, significantly, four questions and ends by suggesting that the Act has 'left all the problems that beset school worship in the past, and added to them the new one of how to be broadly Christian.'

Further chapters examine the position of the Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education, teachers, sixth forms, grant-maintained schools and City Technology Colleges.

Josephine Cairns asks whether religious education can seize the opportunities offered by the new Act. She suggests that 'at the very

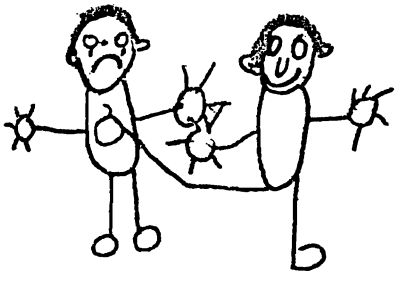
least the Act invites teachers to discuss openly . . . what explicit guidance should be offered to young people about moral and religious ideas and practices in a country which refuses to nominate any one moral code or any one religious philosophy as that to which it is prepared to be committed.'

Edwin Cox asks 'Why religion?' and offers some possible answers — to promote religious belief? — to teach morality? — to promote social consensus? — to provide for transcendental experience? Once again, it seems clear that the legislators have given little thought to the matter, leaving 'a degree of uncertainty as to what precise form of religious education is being legislated for.'

The book concludes with an Appendix in which a Christian, a Hindu, a Humanist, a Jew and a Muslim comment from personal viewpoints.

Teachers have, it seems to me, to work within the provisions of the 1988 Act, and to create out of them (or despite them) a philosophy and framework for education which is right for our children. The thrust of this book is the necessity for all those involved in education to think, and to think deeply. It is not a book which provides answers; rather, it asks questions and, in so doing, contributes invaluably to that thinking process. I commend it strongly to all those who, like myself, are struggling to make sense of religious education today.

DEREK GILLARD,
Marston Middle School, Oxford



A kick *by a top infant*

Pre-packed at Four

A Good Start? Four year olds in infant schools, by Neville Bennett and Joy Kell, Blackwell Education, pp 149, pb £6.95.

What is a four year old? According to one of the observations in this account of a research project, it's a small person who is prone to do things like wander round a classroom with his PE bag arranged unsuitably around his head and ears, asking other children if he looks funny. Every now and again in this study there are glimpses of the sort of spontaneous behaviour that is instantly recognisable as that of four year olds. But the message of this book does not seem to be that the first thing teachers should do is to observe or reflect upon the nature of such behaviour or even the characteristics of four year olds in general and how one might best capitalize on it to educational advantage. For example, the authors rightly point out that 'attention is all' but the significance seems to be overlooked that on the occasions when children are described in the book as being 'totally absorbed' they are predominantly engaged in self-chosen activities. It should hardly be surprising that children seize upon such opportunities with alacrity: one of the telling statistics to emerge from this study is that 'play', admittedly defined rather loosely, accounted for only 6% of the children's time in the schools that took part in the research project.

The aims of the project were and are, laudable and timely. What exactly goes on in those infant classes which have recently admitted four year olds, and is it of benefit? The benighted tandem of expediency and political inertia has put them there: how are schools coping? LEAs with differing admission policies were selected and schools of different sizes were then chosen for the project; teachers, heads of the schools and children being subsequently observed and interviewed about their aims and education practices with regard to their four year olds. Certain factual details were elicited, amongs the most significant being that 75% of all those responsible for early-year teaching had no training for the age group and very few had experience or personal preference for such work. This seems only too evident from the observational data, though curiously the authors make very little of the connection between this and the woefully inappropriate practice they so often saw.

With reservations, there is much that is useful to the practising teacher in the book: it shapes and sharpens certain questions that should be asked of any planned educational interventions with young children. It also clarifies the important distinction between assessment and diagnosis and explains the significance of each.

Nonetheless the book is fundamentally less helpful than it could have been. The limitation is that the accent throughout is on the *teacher*-directed, *teacher*-chosen 'activity' in which consciously or otherwise, content comes uppermost. A telling example: the authors make the comment that: 'A golden opportunity (to learn his colours) was lost', ie an adult helper gave up the attempt to help a child recognise his colours, who was evidently learning a great deal more about the process of painting at the time recorded and was simply ignoring the attempted intervention anyway. This very characteristic four-year-old behaviour is neither considered nor developed.

Vygotsky, Ausubel, Bruner and the importance of provision of high quality play experiences are all rightly acknowledged, but somehow their significance in actual classroom practice is not emphasised as the central issue for classroom teachers. It would mean understanding what learning looks like to young children, recognising it and planning appropriately. This could and does mean a radical re-appraisal of much that is offered in the way of educational experience to young children. The way to it is unlikely to be through simply clarifying the aims and objectives of such 'activities' that are described as present practice in the book. It is no good changing the colour of the buttons if the coat doesn's fit properly in the first place. The organisation of such learning has to be thoughtful, thorough but infinitely flexible, to allow children the time and opportunity to erect their *own* intellectual 'scaffolding' to which Bennett refers. The impression of the book, intended or otherwise, is of a dispiriting lack of belief that children can and do learn successfully without each instance being a guided 'activity' or 'task' in which the content and outcome are antiseptically pre-packaged by the teacher — and this for four year olds?

ANNABELLE DIXON
Holdbrook JMI School, Herts.

Educational Politics

Towards a New Education System: The Victory of the New Right?, by Clyde Chitty, The Falmer Press (1989), pp 257. £20.00; £9.95.

Historians and educationalists alike seem to be drawn, like moths to the flame, towards the massive changes currently taking place within the British educational system. Brian Simon, Richard Johnson, Max Morris and Clive Griggs, Salter and Tapper have all recently addressed aspects of the rise of the Radical Right as a force in English education. The reasons are not hard to seek, for what is going on at this time is surely a sea-change in the conduct of our school system. This new book by Clyde Chitty makes an eloquent, well-informed and important contribution to this developing debate.

Here the central focus is on the politics of education, particularly the two governmental attempts in 1976-7 and 1988-9 to redirect the education system. In offering an account of the processes by which a new political ideology came to have practical effect on the schools, Clyde Chitty naturally enough concentrates particularly on the curriculum of the secondary schools, the arena which has proved most susceptible to these new forces.

A thought-provoking introductory chapter sets out the theoretical framework within which the book is conceived, suggesting that tensions between groupings close to the centre of political power (namely the Inspectorate, the DES bureaucracy and the New Right 'think tanks' which began to appear in the 1970s and 80s) offer a key to understanding the nature of the changes taking place. Here the central thesis of the book is developed: that the new concensus created under Jim Callaghan during 1976 and 1977, which replaced the old Keynesian social-democratic model favoured by all previous post-war governments, has itself been superceded by a new concensus, formulated by the ruling conservative group since the 1987 election and underpinning the educational legislation of 1988. According to Clyde Chitty, the mid-seventies concensus was one which took account of, and was to some extent moulded by DES and HMI influences: the 1988 initiative is one which appeals directly to a perceived public over the heads of these professional experts and which originates within Conservative Party research centres. It is a challenging argument which establishes the distinctiveness of what is happening at the present time while emphasizing the importance of the changes which occurred while Callaghan was at Number 10.

The argument is developed through two chapters which outline the introduction of comprehensive schooling down to 1976 and the growing criticisms made of the comprehensive schools during the early

seventies. Interestingly, it is argued that the first Black Paper critiques of educational expansion were largely defensive documents, and that the real catalyst to a reconsideration of comprehensive schooling was the economic crisis of the mid-seventies, which forced the newly returned Labour administration to take on board the concept of accountability. It was a political situation which gave a new power to industrialist critics of the education system and to the press, and Callaghan was forced into the Great Debate by the combined weight of the two.

There then follows a fascinating and detailed account of the genesis of the famous Yellow Book of 1976 and of the Ruskin Speech. Chitty makes clear that Callaghan drew on a range of influences, notably Bernard Donoghue, HMIs and DES officials, and that the new policy which began to be identified at this time, placing emphasis on the responsiveness of the education system to the needs of the economy, was not simply the brainchild of the DES as some have suggested.

The book examines the tensions between DES models of a core curriculum and HMI demands for something more rounded in the emergent debate on a National Curriculum. The steadily increasing incursions into the autonomy of the schools, the continuing discussions of differentiation and vocationalization and the attempts at privatisation during the early eighties are all described. Finally, the book goes on to examine the New Right educational offensive which followed the 1987 election, culminating in the 1988 legislation.

Clyde Chitty is to be congratulated for showing so clearly the extent to which developments since 1979 derived from and were anticipated by the sea-change in thinking which occurred during the mid-seventies. His analysis leaves us in no doubt that Jim Callaghan will be a popular target for historians of education for generations to come and this analysis of the pressures to which he was responding may well stand the test of time. The lucid distinctions made in this book between the 'statism' of the seventies and the strange blend of neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism which informs the 1988 Education Act gives us a more secure basis for our understanding of the nature of the changes taking place in education at the present time.

A minor criticism is that the author neglects completely the 1986 Education Act (Part Two): it would be interesting to see how far he sees this as anticipating what has happened since. But the book is, as with so many recent Falmer publications, very neatly presented, well referenced and indexed, and should be of wide interest. It places a question mark against recent New Right initiatives in education and offers a clear challenge to those committed to the principles of comprehensive schooling to reformulate their own position: the arguments and insights offered here by Clyde Chitty will be an important part of the literature which informs that rethinking.

ROY LOWE
University of Birmingham

A Way Forward

Right Turn: The Conservative Revolution in Education, by Ken Jones (Hutchinson Radius, 1989), pp 207. £7.95.

I have read this book with great interest, having been working for a number of years on very much the area that the book covers. It is an excellent and thought-provoking study, and has many important things to say about the origins and implications of present government policy on education.

Ken Jones argues that it is a mistake to think of Conservative education policy as a mere regression, a return to the values of the past. There is, admittedly, a strong element of nostalgia in much of what the Government is trying to achieve, but to emphasize the archaic and the traditional is to miss the innovative nature of Conservative policy. For Ken Jones, the essential purpose of current legislation is to eliminate the major tendencies that have dominated education policy since 1944 and to replace them with a very different set of priorities.

Yet it is certainly true that there are conflicting strands *within* Conservative education policy and this book illuminates these with great clarity.

Prominent among the 'modernizing' features of government policy from 1979 to 1987 was an emphasis on the relationship between education and the economy. Building on the analysis propounded by James Callaghan in his 1976 Ruskin College Speech, Keith Joseph and David Young argued that it was essential for schools to train pupils to meet the needs of wealth-producing industry. They rejected the idea that it was either necessary or desirable to embark on a universal expansion of educational opportunity. What they favoured was a high degree of targeting and selection — a system of educational provision which encouraged greater differentiation both *within* and *between* schools.

With the passing of the 1988 Education Act, the Conservative 'modernizers' have to a large extent been upstaged by the ideolgues of the New Right. The new emphasis is on market values and parental choice, and we hear very little about a vocationally-orientated curriculum.

The MSC of the early 1980s, and to a lesser extent the DES, wished to see the school curriculum radically altered in order to prepare pupils for work in an enterprise economy. The modernizing tendency has never shared the cultural right's obsession with the grammar-school tradition which is considered to be part of the problem, not the solution. As for the new National Curriculum, this is seen by the 'modernizers' as offering students an education which is book-bound and irrelevant.

Ken Jones is extremely good at analysing the New Right influences on the 1988 Act and he points out that the rejection of some of the 'modernizing' features of the early 1980s does not make it a coherent measure. For, in his words, Conservatism in education is actually 'three-headed' rather than 'double-faced'.

Alongside the new emphasis on market values and accountability goes a set of attitudes which are essentially archaic in their hostility towards multi-ethnicity, sexual diversity and liberal pluralism in general. What this book highlights is what other authors, notably Andrew Gamble, have seen as *the* essential conflict within Thatcherism: namely the tension between its neo-liberal and its neo-conservative elements. New Right philosophy is a heady mix of free market ideas for restructuring society and a concern for family life, national identity and traditional moral values.

Ken Jones pays particular attention to the New Right attitudes towards race, showing clearly how this brings together a number of related issues:

> Race has provided a vocabulary in which right-wing intellectuals and politicians can speak to the 'nation' about what it is, and what is happening to it; and through the medium of race, they can interpret some of the central experiences of the times.

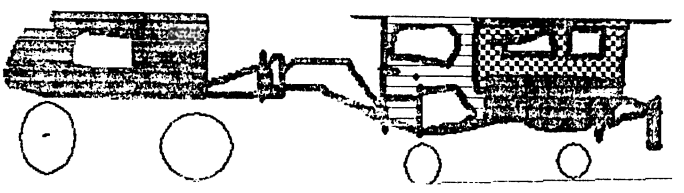
The writings of cultural rightists like Roger Scruton and Ray Honeyford are effectively analysed — evoking, as they do, a powerful vision of an Englishness threatened by a variety of hostile immigrant cultures: the so-called 'internal enemy'. This is a vision that Kenneth Baker himself was unscrupulous and unprincipled enough to pander to in his view of essential areas of the curriculum as being about a defence of 'the Englishness of England'. All this, of course, has evinced an enthusiastic response in the pages of **The Times** and **The Daily Mail**. As Jones shrewdly observes, one of the great strengths of the New Right is that 'it can combine in breath-taking ways a gutter invective with the claim to the all-but-lost traditions of high culture'.

This book does not argue for a return to the post-war consensus and is fully aware of the barren nature of alternative Labour thinking. It ends by outlining a programme for a truly democratic education that will raise the levels of achievement of the vast majority of the school population and create the basis for a different attitude to learning.

One rather infuriating feature of the book is that it is not always easy to identify the sources of the various quotations. The Bibliography has many helpful suggestions for further reading, but it is not clear how these relate to the main body of the text.

But this is a minor quibble. This is a timely and well-researched study and one which makes a major contribution to our understanding of the strengths and limitations of modern Conservatism.

CLYDE CHITTY
University of Birmingham



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