
Silver surfer or grand old Duke?

The launch of CALL

Peter Murry reports on the inaugural meeting of the Campaigning Alliance for Lifelong Learning, held at UCU HQ on 30/9/08

As a recently retired FE lecturer and an ex-NATFHE activist, who hasn't had much involvement with the union for a couple of years, returning to the conference hall at the union's HQ in Britannia Street on 30th September was like going down to the beach again, except that there was no sea, sand, seagulls or ice creams. Seeing ex-NATFHE leader Paul Mackney and UCU FE officer Barry Lovejoy getting up on stage in front of a near capacity audience was like watching veteran surfers who have ridden some powerful waves (the NATFHE/AUT merger, the Stop the War campaign) find another one which is gathering momentum and get up on their surfboards again. To stretch this analogy a little further, the 'wave' in question, the launch of CALL (the Campaigning Alliance for Lifelong Learning), carried all sorts of things with it, and it is not yet clear which might be compared to beautiful sea creatures and which to non-biodegradable rubbish.

CALL, as Mackney repeatedly stressed, is set up as a coalition. In its founding documents it lists some 39 organisations that had joined (as at 28/9/08) and more, it is announced, are in the process of joining. These organisations range from the National Union of Students, Unison and UCU to the Bassingbourne Village Centre. Several major national trade unions and educational organisations have pledged support, and NIACE (National Institute of Adult Continuing Education), one of the founder organisations, which is now Paul Mackney's employer and had its director, Alan Tuckett, on the platform, would seem to be very prominent amongst these, but Mackney was concerned to assert that CALL was in no way merely an extension of or front for NIACE.

There were few apparent expressions of disagreement during the meeting. It was said that

NIACE had discouraged the offering of concessionary fees for older learners on its website. Alan Tuckett, NIACE director, responded that what was posted was a factual account of what NIACE believed the situation to be, not a policy recommendation. A college lecturer said the way forward must entail strike action for improved lecturers' pay, since lecturers, like other public sector workers, were currently being offered pay settlements below the rate of inflation, and, whilst only one person explicitly disagreed with this, there was no great rush to add this to CALL's core demands. Some Adult Ed. practitioners noted that an emphasis on workplace learning might sometimes compete with funding for learning in other contexts. A vast majority of those who spoke decried the way in which bureaucrats attempted to prescribe the content of adult education without reference to what learners and practitioners wanted and needed. Indeed, a lecturer from one of the three London dedicated Adult Ed. colleges pointed out that they at least were still able to maintain full cost provision in some areas where students could pay for what they wanted rather than put up with what they were told to want.

Although there could be potential differences inside adult education between the 'purely' educational and the vocational, to suggest that these were apparent at this meeting would be like trying to prise open cracks in a wave, since many speakers and contributors from the floor advocated education for its own sake as well as as a means of re-skilling. Indeed, those who worked with older learners pointed out that their participation in education had an economic pay-off for society, even if not a vocational one, as participants in adult education often had markedly better health than non-participants.

So CALL looks set to roll on with a crusade-style pressure group coalition, in what Paul Mackney ended the meeting by calling the century of adult education. It seems a little mean-minded to carp at this remarkable drawing together of disparate organisations and individuals as it rolls off, gathering momentum, into the future, or at least towards a lobby of parliament early next year.

However, nearly everyone on the platform and in the hall (with the exception of the rep of the NUS executive) was probably a veteran of twenty years of struggle to defend and extend post-16 education, during which time, as many admitted, it had become legally and financially constricted, vocationalised and bureaucratised in spite of all their efforts, or even, some might argue, with the collusion, in some instances, of educational unions and other organisations. So perhaps Paul Mackney is not the Silver Surfer on the crest of a new wave but the Grand Old Duke of York marching us all up the hill again.

CALL's founding principles

CALL believes our education system should provide:

1. Equality of access to high quality education for all learners (regardless of class, gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, asylum status or employment status), including a statutory right to learning in the workplace
2. Universal access to basic skills, ESOL and ICT courses and a first level three qualification regardless of age
3. Learner, teacher and community involvement in all levels of decision-making about their learning wherever it takes place
4. Learning for personal wellbeing and development and the maintenance of local authority adult education
5. A path out of poverty and disadvantage including widening participation in higher education and the provision of a second chance later in life
6. A stable, motivated and rewarded workforce of professional practitioners.

From Dave Gibson (Barnsley College UCU Branch Secretary)

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing on behalf of Barnsley College branch of UCU to thank you for the fantastic solidarity you gave us during our campaign to get victimised UCU activist Bob Willerton his job back. The solidarity you showed us played a big part in keeping up the branch's and Bob's spirits and those of you who emailed our outgoing principal Paula Whittle played a big part in wrecking her last few weeks at our college. The triumphant leaving party with all staff invited was cancelled for instance! (They knew we were planning a demonstration, a boycott and an alternative GET BOB HIS JOB BACK PARTY!) The number of messages we got from individual members at Bishop Auckland, Park Lane and Wakefield Colleges was uplifting. Other branches used the online petition similarly and it was great to see the clumps of names appearing from different colleges at given times - obviously corresponding to when the branch officers had a push!

I would particularly like to thank those branches and individuals who contributed to our hardship fund (I'll send final accounts later) Barnsley GMB, Wakefield College UCU, Northern Region UCU and the branch chair of Newcastle College UCU. The money you donated went on refreshments when we were on strike and for a leaving 'do' for Bob.

Also those branches who visited our picket lines - Bradford, Chesterfield, Nottingham Trent, Sheffield and Wakefield. And to Sasha Callaghan who joined the picket line too and spoke at our strike rally.

I would like to pay particular tribute to Justine Stephens and Russ Escritt, two UCU officials who worked tirelessly to support us.

The result was not all we wanted. The college was forced to remove the dismissal for gross misconduct but did not reinstate him. Bob is now looking for work elsewhere. But the reality is that if we had not taken action Bob would have been sacked and with little prospect of getting new college work. So we did make clear gains.

The branch itself is in much better shape now than before. We gained new members, we had our most effective strike in a generation, we got new activists and we gained confidence in how to campaign - from wearing BRING BACK BOB red T-shirts to online petitions. Everything we did got a brilliant response from our membership and the management was in no doubt that if they had not sought compromise then we were ready for a tougher fight.

I would be grateful if you could pass on our appreciation of your solidarity to our members.

Thanks.

News update: September - October 2008

Week beginning 1/9/08

[Previous week] A ballot for industrial action by UCU members begins at Coventry University over the attempt by vice chancellor Madeleine Atkins to impose performance-related pay.

An Ofsted report based on visits to 16 local LEAs between April 2007 and March 2008 finds one in four behind with 14-19 curriculum changes.

Delays in processing EMA applications mean 'up to' 150,000 students are still waiting to know if they are eligible. The LSC claims to have brought in 300 extra staff to clear the backlog.

Ofqual has approved 14-19 diplomas in business, land-based studies, hair and beauty, hospitality and manufacturing to start in September 2009.

Points in a *Guardian* feature on 'widening participation' at Oxbridge include: in 2007-08, Cambridge University spent £3m and Oxford £1.8m on this; however, the proportion of entrants from state schools fell in the same period - from 57.9 per cent to 57.7 per cent at Cambridge and from 53.7 per cent to 53 per cent at Oxford.

A YouGov survey of 2,800 adults carried out for the TUC in preparation for its response to government consultation on the proposed right to ask for time off to train finds that 3 out of 5 of those with no formal qualifications would take up this right.

A survey by the financial advisors Grant Thornton of 28 vice chancellors finds that the majority think deregulation of tuition fees would

be the best way to improve the HE situation, while one says: 'After the bumper pay rises of 2008 [ie for lecturers. Ed.], the total pay and pension settlements in 2009-10 and 2010-11 need to be very modest if job losses are to be minimised'.

Details of responses to consultation (ending in July) on the Government's *Raising Expectations, Enabling the System to Deliver* proposals (ie to return £7m out of £11m LSC funding to LEAs) include: 433 organisations responded; 30 of the 95 6th form colleges in England responded - 12 being in favour, 3 against and 15 uncertain; 61 of the remaining 268 FE institutions (ie the general FE colleges) responded, 13 being in favour, 28 against and 20 unsure.

At Keele University, Baroness Ashton of Upholland, the 'visitor' (ie the independent arbitrator who deals with quasi-judicial disputes), finds that vice chancellor Janet Finch breached the University's charter and statutes by trying to force through without putting it to the senate her plan to replace the School of Economics and Management Studies with a business school.

A Royal Society report on science education between 1997 and 2007 says that the Government's new science diploma, due to start in 2011, 'might be cited as another example of a process with an unclear and unstable rationale'.

Action by UCU members at Bishop Auckland College looks likely, as principal Joanna Tait, formerly prominent in the Labour Party-affiliated Socialist Education Association (SEA), tries to impose a worsened contract on all 305 teaching and support staff.

In north Wales, UCU members at Coleg Menai have voted for industrial action over class sizes and contact hours.

NUS issues a report, *Broke and Broken: A Critique of the Higher Education Funding System*, explaining the likely ill effects if the Government allows fees to rise. Commenting on whether H.E. should be free, NUS president Wes Streeting says: 'I believe it should be - but I know the debate has moved on'.

UCU members at the University of Wales, Lampeter are likely to ballot on action over two redundancies. A ballot for strike action is also likely at Nottingham Trent University over management moves to derecognise UCU.

Week beginning 8/9/08

In advance of the Universities UK (UUK - ie the vice chancellors) conference, Westminster University finance director and chairperson of the British Universities Finance Directors Group (BUFDG) Philip Harding claims that to honour the existing pay award would involve universities in selling off buildings, delaying planned refurbishment, freezing vacancies and maybe cutting jobs.

Further details of the EMA shambles include: the contractor responsible, the US-owned Liberata, employs 3,000 people at 20 locations round the UK; the 5-year contract is worth £75m; the LSC awarded it to Liberata on the basis that the latter would build the necessary software (ie did not already possess it); Liberata is also responsible for

the Adult Learning Grant; in April, the Financial Services Authority (FSA) fined Liberata £525,000 for failing to issue insurance and pension documents to 30,000 private policyholders; 150,000 out of 425,000 applications for EMAs have still not been processed, and a further 150,000 only partially processed; the LSC has made an arrangement to help colleges provide interim payments; LSC official Rob Wye claims the Government decided to move the contract from the previous contractor Capita.

At Salford University: management aims to 'save' £7.5m next year and a further £5m in the two years following that; it intends to invest £300m in university estate and £40m in relocating its arts/media faculty to a site to be shared with the BBC; compulsory redundancies are likely, especially in the Schools of Nursing, Community Health Sciences and Social Care; some hourly paid lecturers have been sacked; student accommodation has been sold to the Australian company Campus Living Villages.

The Government announces that NVQs are to be phased out by 2010, to be replaced by 'more flexible' qualifications that fit into the new Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). The AOC welcomes this, but construction industry sector skills council training head Nick Gooderson asks: 'What message does this give to employers or those who are working towards the [NVQ. Ed.] qualifications?'.

UNISON is challenging on gender equality grounds an arrangement to be introduced by Warwick University, under which, as part of the move to a single pay spine resulting from the 2004 national framework agreement, academic staff would have more annual leave than support staff.

Developing Entrepreneurial Graduates, a joint Council for

Industry and H.E. (CIHE) and the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) report, calls on universities to embed entrepreneurial training in all courses because at the moment 'it rarely enjoys the same status as research or the pursuit of academic excellence'.

The LSC is giving Stoke-upon-Trent College £88m towards the cost of new 'eco-buildings' at its Cauldon and Burslem sites.

Review of the Implementation of the Framework Agreement, a study by the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) based on surveying 112 universities, claims that the agreement is meeting its objectives. Nevertheless, some managers complained about the fact that 'the concept of academic freedom has permeated all academic jobs to the extent that individuals should decide their roles rather than the institution'. UCU general Secretary Sally Hunt points out that more than 25 institutions have still not fully implemented the agreement.

North Yorkshire police are investigating a 'racially motivated incident' during a recent NUS training seminar at York University.

A device for tracking the movements of individual students, called Collaborative Learning Manager and devised by software developer Perspective, is already being used in 14-19 partnerships in Leicester, Stafford, Bromley, Isle of Wight, Nottingham, Birmingham, Islington, Rotherham and Oldham, and is being recommended by Edexcel for use on 14-19 diplomas in Birmingham, Bolton, Barnsley, Islington, Coventry, Lincolnshire and Hull.

University of East London (UEL) chair of governors Jim McKenna sends a memo to all staff about the suspension of vice chancellor, Martin Everett, who was sent on 'indefinite leave' at least as far

back as 8/7/08. (This is the first 'public' confirmation of Everett's suspension, and attributes it to problems of 'leadership'.) UCU branch chairperson Phil Marfleet comments that this 'paltry statement . . . tells us nothing new'.

Rumours of discussion at a UCEA meeting held privately during the UUK annual conference (in Cambridge) suggest that vice chancellors aim to pay the 2008 increase on time and then table a 0 per cent increase in the 2009-10 negotiations. Commenting, UCU general secretary Sally Hunt says: ' . . . attempts to immediately claw back next year the deal that UCU members fought so hard to get in 2006 will be met with a robust response'.

A planning inspector turns down the appeal by Oxford University against a decision by the local authority not to give permission for a £29m book depository in Osney Mead.

Week beginning 15/9/08

An H.E. Policy Institute (HEPI) report, *Financial Support in English Universities*, advocates a national system of bursaries for undergraduates, with money paid from a central pool on the basis of students' household income. The NUS and Million+ Group (speaking on behalf of post 1992 institutions) support this, while the Russell Group and 1994 Group (respectively large and smaller research-intensive universities) oppose it.

The National Student Survey, conducted by Ipsos Mori for the HE Funding Council for England (HEFCE), to which 220,000 university students and 6,000 HE students in FE (the latter polled for the first time) responded, reveals that 71 per cent of the former, as against 58 per cent of the latter, think their course is well organised and managed.

Former AOC CEO David Gibson has since February 2008 been acting principal of City College, Birmingham, having previously had the same position at Penwith College in Cornwall and the former People's (now Castle) College in Nottingham.

The British Academy issues a report, *Punching Our Weight: The Humanities and Social Sciences in Public Policy Making*, in which it rejects the main finding of a report it commissioned from a team at the London School of Economics (LSE). The latter, titled *Maximising the Social, Policy and Economic Impacts of Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences*, had argued for a quantitative approach to funding research. The main report says: 'There is a risk that pressure to develop simplistic measures will eventually lead to harmful distortions in the quality of the research that is funded by the research councils'.

Figures in an OECD report for 2006-07, covering 30 countries, indicate that: '... there is no close relationship between the end of compulsory education and the decline in enrolment rates' - in other words, a low age for ending compulsory schooling (as eg 14 in Greece or 15 in the Czech Republic) does not necessarily lead to low rates of staying on. For example Greece had 93 per cent of 15-19 year olds staying on and the Czech Republic had 90 per cent. (This puts in question the rationale of the UK Government's scheme for forcing everyone to stay on till 18.)

HEFCE announces an intention to shift £30m of funding from measures aimed at cutting student dropout rates to universities' schemes for widening access by working with local schools.

Sheffield University whistleblower Aubrey Blumsohn says of a proposal by the UK Research Integrity Office about a new procedure for investigating

research misconduct: 'It remains the case that one or more powerful individuals are doing the investigating and the balance of power remains heavily tilted towards those who wish to maintain institutional decorum at all costs. It seems to be an attempt to put something in place to placate critics but is more like a Band-Aid on a cancer'.

University of Wales, Lampeter vice chancellor Robert Pearce, on sick leave since June, when a HEFCW report strongly criticised senior management there, retires.

The CBI sets up a 19-member H.E. task force, chaired by Centrica (ie British Gas) CEO Sam Laidlaw. Only 3 members are from HE. At a launch meeting, CBI figures are cited suggesting that in Britain 10.1 million graduates are competing for 9 million graduate-level jobs.

CBI director general Richard Lambert tells a CBI 'education summit' that 'the Government has much work to do if it's to convince businesses that they [ie 14-19 diplomas Ed.] will add anything to what's already available'.

Week beginning 22/9/08

Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) figures for 2001-07 show that: recruitment of 16 year olds by all major categories of institution rose 12 per cent between these two dates; recruitment by general FE colleges (ie excluding sixth form colleges) rose 18 per cent - two and a half times the rise in the numbers going to maintained 6th forms; in 2006, for the first time, more 16 year olds enrolled in general FE colleges than stayed on in maintained schools (201,800 as against 201,700); in 2007, this gap widened (208,300 and 203,300 respectively); this trend has produced unfunded students in some colleges.

80 members present at a UEL UCU branch meeting pass a vote of no confidence in chair of governors Jim McKenna over the suspension of vice chancellor Martin Everett.

At a conference held at Nottingham University, HEPI director Bahram Bekhradnia cites figures showing the increasing dependence of some UK universities on non-EU students. For example, 17.7 per cent of the Bedfordshire University's £51,246,000 total income for 2004 came from such students. Arguing that competition from overseas providers charging lower fees could put such institutions in jeopardy, Bekhradnia says there could be a case for a public subsidy in the form of scholarships for these students.

Nottingham University Institute for Science and Society director Robert Dingwall tells the same conference: 'My graduate students tell me that, back in their own country, the attractions of the UK are beginning to decline because of the cost of getting visas, the bureaucracy that is involved and the petty harassment and humiliation they feel when they actually encounter the British immigration service'.

Commenting on the case of Annociate Nimpagaritse, an asylum seeker from Burundi who is a student at the Sheffield College, where staff, including the principal, plus local MP Nick Clegg are supporting her fight against deportation, a spokesperson for the UK Border Agency says: 'Our asylum decisions are humane and compassionate . . . Last year we removed one person every eight minutes'.

UCU blames financial mismanagement for a University of Plymouth management decision to make 340 staff, including 100 academics, redundant in order to save £10m.

There are signs that some FE principals may refuse to comply with LSC demands for information about fee income from courses for adults not subsidised by the LSC.

There is uncertainty about how far the Government has got with its plan to raise £6bn by selling student loans. (The Sale of Student Loans Bill gained Royal Assent on 21/7/08, and Deutsche Bank was appointed to help 'prepare for student loan sales in 2008-09' but a DIUS spokesperson is evasive about whether sales will begin in 2008 or not.)

Research by Paul Bivand, of the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion, indicates that the main reason for the employment rate for disabled men with no qualification being just over 20 per cent is not the lack of a qualification but rather 'the [discriminatory Ed.] way society relates to disability'. A similar situation applies to unqualified women with young children.

At a Labour Party conference fringe meeting, UCU general secretary Sally Hunt presents results of a survey showing that 55 per cent of those polled agree or strongly agree that university education should be provided at no cost to students or their families. Hunt says Labour's approach to HE is failing badly and pushing people towards the Tories.

Sheffield College UCU and UNISON members are to strike on 30/9/08 over management's refusal to implement agreed rises.

Coventry University has entered into a 'content partnership' with YouTube, through which the former hopes to promote itself online.

Following a National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) report showing that only 4 per cent of FE college employees have a disability, DIUS says this constitutes 'systemic failure' and says it will require colleges to raise this to 20 per cent in five years.

Launching a new dairy centre for the study of cattle health and welfare, Liverpool University announces a deal with Tesco to set up a 'national resource centre for farmers'.

The UCU FE special salaries conference on 20/9/08 votes by 61 to 56 to recommend acceptance of the AOC's 'final' 3.2 per cent offer.

Barclays Bank and Edge Hill University sign a deal by which the former will fund half of a £60m building scheme to be carried out over five years at the latter's Ormskirk site.

43 NASUWT members at Sinfin community School in Derby are threatening strike action, including two days in October, over management plans to hand the school's £20m new building to an academy controlled by Derby College (of FE).

Week beginning 29/9/08

Suspended UEL vice chancellor Martin Everett intends to take out a grievance against chair of governors Jim McKenna about the handling of his suspension.

Mid Kent College has been awarded a £680m, 30 year contract to provide engineering and construction training for service personnel at Brompton barracks in Chatham. This is part of a £3bn public-private partnership in which the College is a subcontractor.

There is increasing pressure, including from UCU, for an independent inquiry into radiation in the Rutherford Building of Manchester University. (Four staff who worked in this building, include one 25-year old, have now died of cancers.)

About 80 FE principals and senior managers attending an NCFE awarding body event, held in London, about how colleges could award their own qualifications hear

from DIUS that only two trade associations and four employers have so far exercised the option to become awarding bodies.

Coventry University managers claim a majority of the 600 lecturers have accepted a performance-related pay deal offered to them directly, after negotiations with UCU broke down.

Queen Margaret University in Edinburgh is to make 35 staff redundant.

LSC figures, publicised by NIACE as part of its Campaigning Alliance for Lifelong Learning (CALL) initiative, launched at UCU HQ on 30/9/08, reportedly show that within the 1.5m adult learning places lost as a result of government funding priorities, the biggest single number - 477,000 - were lost in health, public services and care, while 394,000 were lost in computing, and 248,000 in 'preparation for life and work' (ie basic skills) courses.

DIUS announces a scheme by which nine Russell Group universities - Birmingham, Bristol, Exeter, King's College London, Leeds, Leicester, Newcastle, Southampton and Warwick - are considering a common approach to widening participation.

Asylum seeker and Sheffield College student Annocite Nimpagarit is released from the detention centre where she was being held prior to deportation to Burundi.

HEFCE claims universities collectively spent £285m on gas and electricity in 2006.

Preparing for the Future, a New Engineering Foundation report based on a survey of heads of science departments in 84 FE colleges in England, calls for a multi-agency group to coordinate 'science skills development' after 2010, when the LSC, at present nominally responsible for this, is

succeeded by the Young People's Learning Agency, reporting to the DCSF, and the Skills Funding Agency, reporting to DIUS.

A UCU press release describes as 'a faltering start' and 'lack[ing] credibility' a meeting of the Joint National Committee for H.E. Staff (JNCHES) held on 29/9/08 to consider H.E. pay.

Shadow DIUS secretary David Willetts tells the Tory conference, held in Birmingham, that a Tory government would spend £20m a year on bursaries allowing 1,200 Science, technology and engineering apprentices a year to progress to H.E. (Each apprentice would get £6,000. The money would be part of £100m diverted from Train to Gain.) Willetts also claims the Tories would fund 100,000 more apprenticeship places and give small businesses £2,000 per apprentice taken on.

Evidence, presented to a Nuffield Review of 14-19 Education conference, from the £1.9m, 9,000 student Sutton Trust trial of US-style scholastic aptitude tests, as well as from the BMAT entry tests used by Oxbridge and other prestige medical schools, suggests that young men do better than young women at such tests.

A research paper presented to the Nuffield conference by UCAS research officer Harriet Dunbar-Goddet, based on checking university websites for entry requirements, shows that about 81 per cent give information on vocational a-levels, 55 per cent on BTEC national diplomas, and only 21 per cent on OCR national diplomas, indicating some qualifications are 'invisible' to admissions tutors. (This implies that working class school students often make choices at 14 which disbar them from entry to high status H.E. courses.)

Oxford University chancellor and former Tory minister Chris Patten tells the Headmasters' and

Headmistresses' Conference (ie the body representing the poshest private schools) that there is no chance of Oxbridge hitting widening participation targets while the proportion of state school students getting A grades at A-level remains the same as now. Patten describes the current £3,154 HE fees cap as 'intolerably low'.

A HEPI report, *The Higher Education Experience and Outcomes of Students with Vocational Level Three Qualifications*, suggests that a student with academic A-levels is: twice as likely as one with vocational a-levels to apply to a Russell Group university; three times more likely to attend one; less likely to drop out of H.E. after one year; more likely to complete a degree in four years or less; more likely to get a first or 2.1; and more likely to get a 'graduate job'.

Week beginning 6/10/08

Interviewed about the intention to go ahead in ten days time with the launch of Directions, a set-up aimed at attracting young people into the financial services 'industry', Financial Services Sector Skills Council (FSSC) CEO Teresa Sayers says: 'It's true to say that if you look at our website there's no coverage about the current economic turmoil' and, regarding job losses in that sector: 'We don't have those figures . . . I'm not sure that anyone has those figures'.

The effects on DIUS of Brown's reshuffle include: David Lammy replaces Bill Rammell as FHE minister; *Spectator* associate editor and former *News of the World*, *Daily Telegraph* and *Daily Express* columnist Sion Simon replaces Lammy as junior skills minister; former TUC president Lord Tony Young becomes Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State.

Findings of an Ofsted report on English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), based on evidence from 114 colleges and 30

other providers, and covering the period from 2005, include: 50 per cent of the ESOL teaching in colleges was graded either 1 or 2; 20 per cent of provision outside FE was thus graded; since 2005, only one college has had its ESOL provision rated below satisfactory.

Having started at Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College on 30/9/08, principal Paula Whittle, invited by the *TES* to comment on the Ofsted ESOL report, says: 'Due to the effects of the new LSC ESOL funding structure, we are finding it increasingly difficult to meet the needs of our learners'. (Whittle was appointed from Barnsley College, where her policy of 'zero tolerance' led to unprecedented numbers of disciplinaries against staff and the attempted sacking of a UCU management spine rep. - see letter p4)

Following a decision by HEFCE to claw back £15m from its grant to London Metropolitan University after the latter was shown to have submitted inaccurate student dropout data, vice chancellor Brian Roper emails staff to say that the pay rise due on 1/10/08 may not be paid in full, and that: 'Regrettably, some job losses now appear inevitable'. Roper has published a draft strategic plan for 2009-18 in which he proposes that London Met become a 'research-intensive' university.

The Government announces four 'national academies' - in the power industry, IT, social care and enterprise, each of which will receive a start-up grant of £8m. The enterprise academy, with an HQ 'somewhere in the South East' (*TES*), will reportedly also be supported by £32m funding from businesses, and will train 11,000 students to level 2 or 3 in its first three years, thereby, in the words of *Dragons' Den* star Peter Jones: 'unlock[ing] the talent of Britain's young people and realis[ing] the potential of the UK to lead the world in entrepreneurship'.

Announcing a plan to 'save' £13m over the next four years by restructuring admin and support provision, as part of a broader restructure aimed at 'saving' £26m over five years, Bournemouth University vice chancellor David Willey says he hopes to avoid - but does not rule out - redundancies.

A *TES* update on the situation with EMAs reveals that: the AOC believes the backlog of students trying to claim has increased; LSC CEO Mark Haysom and AOC president David Collins met last week to discuss the issue; on 6/10/08 principals met DCSF officials; a joint DCSF/LSC/AOC task force has been set up; the LSC and contractor Liberata refuse to comment publicly; Liberata faces a penalty of up to £3m; NUS vice president Beth Walker calls for this money to be reinvested in support for this year's students.

Essex University management announces plans to: increase student numbers by 1,100 and raise £5m from philanthropic gifts in the coming five years; raise to 85 per cent, from 79 per cent now, the proportion of academics who are 'research-active'; increase the proportion of its income from research to 30 per cent from 24 per cent now; accumulate by 2010-11 a £5.5m surplus for new student facilities and tutors in new areas. To help with this, it invites all 2,000 or so employees to request early retirement or voluntary redundancy.

A Commons Public Accounts Committee report, *Preparing to Deliver the 14-19 Education Reforms in England*, warns that 'there is still much work to be done to convince parents, employers and universities that diplomas are a credible alternative to existing qualifications'.

Nottingham Trent University UCU members vote to strike on 21/10/08 over derecognition.

Essex University announces that, following discussions with outsourcing contractor INTO University Partnerships, it has decided to provide all English for academic purposes programmes in-house.

At a HEPI conference on admissions, private and public sector school heads, along with HE admissions tutors, dismiss as no more than a 'sop' (ie to those advocating a post qualification applications system) the approach, to be piloted by UCAS in summer 1909, of allowing a five-day window in which those who achieve better than expected A-level results can 'trade up' to courses other than those originally selected. Sir Mike Tomlinson tells the same conference that A-levels are 'strangling scholarship'.

Week beginning 13/10/08

Both former NATFHE HE official Roger Kline and former AUT official Malcolm Keight (now UCU head of HE) are leaving their jobs at UCU.

There are further moves by the UCEA to suggest that, because the 2006-09 HE pay deal included an element tied to the retail price index, inflation has resulted in academics getting unexpectedly high salary rises, hence increases in the next round will have to be minimal. UCU general secretary Sally Hunt says: 'Any attempts to claw back the value of the current deal will be seen by staff as yet another kick in the teeth and resisted by the union'.

HEFCE says that universities in England stand to lose a total of £77m invested in Icelandic banks.

Following the decision by the 20/9/08 UCU FE sector conference to recommend acceptance of the current AOC pay offer, the outcome of the ballot on FE pay among UCU members is as follows: turnout 35 per cent; voting

to accept 9,261 (88.7 per cent of those voting); voting to reject 1,179 (11.3 per cent of those voting). FE official Barry Lovejoy announces plans for strikes at some colleges which have still not honoured the 2004-05 deal on the harmonisation of pay spines.

At a Commons select committee on children, schools and families hearing on apprenticeships, it emerges that British Gas only offers 400 apprenticeships a year, for which 6,000 people apply, while the building industry offers about 9,000 and has about 50,000 applicants. (This compares with 2008 figures for university applications, in which 571,000 people applied for 423,000 places.)

A *THE* feature reveals that the User Consultation Group on HE set up by John Denham in September includes KPMG senior partner John Griffith-Jones (Eton and Cambridge), Sir John Chisholm who in 1991 helped create the MoD's Defence Evaluation and Research Agency, which later became QinetiQ (Cambridge), and Dame Marjorie Scardino (CEO of Pearsons Publishing, owners of Edexcel).

The same feature reveals that the CBI's HE Task Force, set up a week after Denham's 'user group', includes, as well as Centrica CEO Sam Laidlaw (Eton and Cambridge): AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals chairperson Chris Brinsmead; Imes Group (defence contractors) CEO Melfort Campbell, RBS global markets chairperson Johnny Cameron (Oxford); Kingfisher CEO, Bradford and Bingley non executive director and former B&Q CEO Ian Cheshire (Cambridge), Network Rail CEO Iain Coucher (Imperial College); McDonald's CEO/president Steve Esterbrook, Microsoft UK managing director Gordon Frazer, QinetiQ CEO Graham Love who was formerly at the MoD Defence Evaluation and Research Agency (Cambridge), Nissan senior vice president Trevor Mann, Innocent managing

director Jamie Mitchell (Oxford and Harvard Business School); Rio Tinto chairperson Paul Skinner (Cambridge); Susan Taylor-Martin UK/Ireland managing director of Thomson Reuters (Cambridge and Harvard Business School), and Balfour Beatty CEO Ian Tyler.

In *Towards Expansive Apprenticeships: A Commentary by the Teaching and Learning Research Programme*, a report funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, Southampton University professor Alison Fuller and London University Institute of Education professor Lorna Unwin argue that successive governments have turned apprenticeships into a policy instrument for achieving staying-on targets. They advocate: a legally underpinned apprenticeship 'blueprint'; more investment in vocational education; apprenticeship qualifications to be subsumed within the UCAS system; better training for careers staff; an obligation on employers to treat apprentices as both workers and learners.

Without naming specific institutions, HEFCE releases details of the take-up of the Government's £200m, three-year matched funding scheme for universities and colleges. 129 institutions have applied to participate. About 40 have asked to be in the top tier (in which they get £1 of state funding for every £3 they raise themselves, up to a ceiling of £2.75m). 56 universities have asked to join the middle tier (in which they get £1 for every £2 they raise, up to a cap of £1.35m). About 33 universities and 29 FE colleges have asked to be in the bottom tier (where they get £1 for every £1 they raise, up to a ceiling of £200,000).

It emerges that 25 per cent of NIACE's financial reserves - £1.9m - are frozen in the Icelandic bank Kaupthing Singer & Friedlander (KSF).

There are now in Britain 14 universities and colleges founded

by and maintaining links with religious denominations.

LSC CEO Mark Haysom rejects Tory education spokesperson Michael Gove's call for an inquiry into the EMA fiasco, claiming that Liberata is now processing 60,000 applications per week.

Under threat of a libel action from INTO University Partnerships, UCU replaces with one that 'largely uses the company's own words' a briefing paper, posted on its website in July, about this contractor.

The 18-month Nuffield Review of 14 to 19 Education and Rathbone charity *Engaging Youth Enquiry* concludes that making continuing education compulsory for 16-18 year olds is likely to add to the NEET (not in employment, education or training) problem by causing employers to sack young people in order to avoid training them. It further maintains that diplomas will fail because of their lack of practical content, urging instead a work-based qualification route below level 2.

Universities UK (UUK) figures about foundation degrees show that: only one FE college has so far applied for awarding powers; 60,000 students are currently studying for foundation degrees, 54 per cent of them in FE and 46 per cent in HE; 80 universities either deliver or validate such degrees; 2,152 are on offer across the UK; in 2004-05, 54 per cent of those obtaining foundation degrees progressed to honours programmes.

Research conducted for the Royal Society by Sussex University's Jo Boaler and Geoff Kent reveals that A-levels in maths, physics and chemistry are mainly taken by male students, with the result that women are heavily under-represented on science degree courses and in the jobs to which these give access.

David Lammy tells a UUK conference that mergers between universities are increasingly likely.

The Commons children, schools and families select committee recommends that the apprenticeships bill, currently in draft, should be amended to include provision for an independent body to advise students about their next steps after GCSEs - on the grounds that neither schools nor the Connexions service give impartial advice about apprenticeships.

DCSF secretary Ed Balls tells the Commons that the number of students on diploma courses is 12,000 (as distinct from the 40,000 originally proposed by the Government for this stage, and the 20,264 predicted in summer 2008).

Week beginning 20/10/08

In a *Guardian* 'Comment' article, former Portsmouth University vice-chancellor Roger Brown cites the statistic that a third of those who started at university since fees started in 1998 have still not made any repayments, because they have not reached the earnings threshold for doing so.

In a paper produced for Universities secretary John Denham as part of his series reviewing the development of HE to 2020, HEFCE says it is 'not impossible' that the employability of a university's graduates could be used as a criterion for allocating funding, and that 'it may be time for us to revise our position' (ie to drop their opposition to this).

In a *Guardian* interview, John Denham responds to the launch of CALL by announcing that: 'What we're going to do is to write to every single organisation that has sponsored CALL and offer people the chance to come in and talk with ministers or senior officials about what we've got in mind'.

Research by the Sutton Trust indicates that 54 per cent of leading journalists, 42 per cent of front-bench politicians and 70 per cent of barristers have been privately educated, and that there is a growing trend for prestige professions to recruit new entrants via unpaid internships, thereby excluding most graduates, and especially, given the London-centred nature of such employment, those whose parents live outside the South East.

It emerges that, although Liberata's contract with the LSC to process EMAs, worth £80m over six years, provides for the possibility of a £3m fine for a failure like the present one, no such fine has been imposed. Meanwhile, the AOC estimates that up to 250,000 people still await payments.

Manchester University has asked Professor David Coggon, a Southampton University occupational medicine expert, to investigate radioactive contamination in its Rutherford Building. Managers confirm that they did not consult unions about this.

Points in a *TES* article about non-EU students in FE include: from spring 2009, people outside the EU will be barred from applying to study in the UK on courses below level 3; this results from Home Office visa rule changes; the average number of such students in UK FE is about 84,000 per year; a further 40,000 or so attend private colleges here.

The National Student Forum, set up by the Government in February and chaired by former rightwing NUS president Maeve Sherlock, issues its first 'annual report'.

107 FE colleges are said to be currently involved in 14-19 diploma consortia.

Two universities, Bolton and Swansea, announce that they will not pay the full 5 per cent salary rise due on 1/10/08. (Bolton will

pay only 2 per cent extra, while Swansea will pay 2.5 per cent.) Paul Foley, Unison officer for the region that includes Bolton, claims it has £11m in reserve funds.

The average UCAS tariff of a student starting a full-time degree course last year was 330.3, whereas in 2002 it was 314.4.

18 HE institutions, including Manchester University and UCL, will from next year pilot the HE Achievement Report (ie the document containing details of graduating students' module results and other data as well as their overall degree classification, recommended by the Burgess review as a possible replacement for the latter).

UCAS figures for students accepted onto undergraduate courses in 2008 show that: the total accepted was 451,871, up 9.7 per cent on 2007; the number of applications in 2008 was 582,657, up 9.5 per cent. (The increase in applications is partly due to nursing and midwifery courses being included in 2008.)

UCU members at Nottingham Trent University strike on 20/10/8 over the derecognition issue.

DIUS science and research director general Adrian Smith tells an Engineering Professors' Council and National Conference of University Professors seminar on university finances; 'It might be a good idea to stop whingeing . . . Because if you were in government and you thought you had invested heavily and people are still very unhappy [wouldn't you say] to hell with them?'

John Denham (for DIUS) and Peter Mandelson (as secretary of state for business, enterprise and regulatory reform) jointly endorse proposals in the document *Simplification of Skills in England*, put forward by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) (ie the body set up by the govern-

ment in the wake of the Leitch report, and headed by former CGLI secretary general Chris Humphries). These proposals include: all publicly funded advice on training and skills for business should come under Train to Gain and be accessed through the Business Link advice service; and colleges that have Training Quality Standards status should themselves be allowed to function as Train to Gain brokers (ie approach companies directly).

Schools minister Jim Knight claims that 'nearly' 390,000 of the 600,000 applicants for EMAs have now received entitlement notices, and, of these, 240,000 are actually being paid. The head of Liberata has left, to be replaced by acting CEO Richard Webster.

UCU's HE Committee rejects a motion by which the 2009 pay demand would be 2 per cent above the Retail Price Index (RPI) for July 2009, adopting instead a claim based on that RPI plus whatever (by implication, higher) percentage a special HE sector conference on 7/11/08 agrees.

Week beginning 27/10/08

Tory HE spokesperson David Willetts gives currency to a rumour that DIUS may be facing a shortfall of up to £200m in its £17bn annual budget, which in turn could mean that an intended £100m expansion in student grants will not be available.

Newly appointed HE minister and Blairite MP David Lammy tells a *THE* interviewer: 'I sometimes think if I wasn't in politics I might quite like to be a lecturer . . .'

Commenting on the technology aspect of the EMA fiasco, Liberata acting CEO Richard Webster, whose house in Clapham is said to be worth £1.1m, says: 'It's like getting a new iPhone. The first day you get it, it takes time to get familiar with it'.

Points in a *THE* update on the UEL situation include: three staff governors have written to the governing body alleging that chairperson Jim McKenna falsely told them in July that vice-chancellor Martin Everett was on leave, when in fact he had been suspended, and that another governor, Professor Gillian Slater, had resigned because she her tenure had ended (when in fact she had resigned in protest at Everett's suspension); a memo sent by acting vice chancellor Susan Price to staff on 10/10/08 claims that UEL has exceeded its recruitment target, is on course for a 2007-08 surplus of over £6m, and has cash reserves of about £40m.

John Denham, Ed Balls and civil service head Sir Gus O'Donnell hold a briefing for journalists to announce that Whitehall ministries and departments have now exceeded their target of having 500 people on a pilot apprenticeship scheme. (All 1,300 applicants for these apprenticeships were existing civil service employees.)

Following guidance from HEFCE, material to be released by the HE Statistics Agency in December about universities' participation in the current Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) (ie the arrangement by which funding for research is allocated to institutions) will omit data about how many academics each university has excluded from its submission. (This will make the Russell Group - ie larger, research-intensive institutions - appear to surpass smaller ones by a bigger margin than they do in reality.)

HEFCE board papers reveal that Middlesex University has asked HEFCE for a £8m and 1,046 extra student places to 'widen the institutional focus from individual learners to learners and employers'. Hefce has recommended its board members to approve this, while also describing it as carrying 'a high level of risk'.

HEFCE has given Thames Valley University (TVU) £8m for its 'FutureSkills' project, which will involve additional centres at Heathrow, in Park Royal Industrial Park and Slough. A TVU spokesperson says the scheme will result in a situation in which 'every student will know that if they study at TVU they will benefit from a curriculum that has been designed with and, in part, delivered by employers'.

Commenting on the Middlesex and TVU initiatives, a UCU spokesperson says: 'We are concerned that the "business facing" agenda seeks to turn universities into the teaching and research arms of employers'.

An Employers' Pension Forum survey of 93 HE institutions finds

that 95 per cent would prefer to continue with final salary pension schemes for the majority of staff, and would raise the retirement age to 67 to allow this.

Industrial action is likely at London University School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), which is trying to eliminate by 2010 a £800,000 deficit in its International Foundation Courses and English Language Studies Department by reducing the contracts of fractional staff.

Unite members at Sussex University have taken two days of strike action over moves by management to exclude new support staff on grade 6 or below from the final salary pension scheme, in a bid to reduce a £23m deficit in the institution's overall scheme.

CAFAS Council for Academic Freedom and Academic Standards

- ◆ **campaigns against the decline in standards**
- ◆ **defends individuals against victimisation**
- ◆ **gives moral support and legal advice**
- ◆ **investigates malpractice and publishes findings**
- ◆ **seeks to develop a support network with unions and other organisations.**

**For further information, contact the Secretary:
Dr John Hewitt, 33 Hillyfields, DUNSTABLE, Beds
LU6 3NS; john.hewitt22@virgin.net**

CAFAS website: www.cafas.org.uk

Knife crime, moral panics and social solidarity

J.J. Caspell comments on the AQA awarding body's recent decision to remove Carol Anne Duffy's poem 'Education for Leisure' from its GCSE English syllabus

If there is one place where knife crime and the systemic, material causes behind it needs to be discussed, it's in schools and colleges. News that a poem is to be removed from the GCSE English syllabus because it provides a vignette of somebody who carries a bread knife is the latest overreaction stemming from the moral panic that is clouding a discussion of the real causes of knife crime.

I am not sure what comrades in the NUT or UCU think about this decision, but this 'See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil' approach is surely the wrong one in attempting to deal with an issue which is causing the needless deaths of an increasing number of young people.

Knife related crime is without doubt a serious problem. The shock value of working class teenagers stabbing each other for apparently 'no reason' is without doubt a difficult issue for the collective consciousness of British society to digest.

However, the mass media are fuelling collective hysteria by amplifying the extent of the problem and, as a result, demonising all young people in the eyes of society as potential 'killers'. The reality is that a young person is still more likely to die crossing the road, driving a car, or indeed committing suicide, than to be stabbed to death by a 'gang of youths'. Yet we do not see daily hysteria demonising reckless drivers in the way that we do 'hooded' youths.

When interviewed, young people who do carry knives nearly always concede to carrying a blade through 'fear' rather than as an 'aggressive' act, and yet there is no forum or indeed discussion as to where this fear originates from. Given the fact that violence generally is rife in the mass media without discussion, and that material insecurity and inequality is fuelling an emergent generation of alienated

teenagers, it is essential that the political and social causes and consequences of all forms of violence are discussed at every opportunity, rather than brushed under the carpet.

We live in a society where the only people (including young people) attributed with 'value' are those with wealth and power, or those that can at least represent such traits. Under capitalism, our self-worth is commodified and measured against the manufactured social identities of MTV Cribs, Big Brother and celebrity culture. At the same time, the nature of racial and class cleavages in our society denies many from being able to realise such socially constructed goals, and, as children become teenagers, such tensions begin to emerge socially with young people denied a collective political voice and agency.

As a result, opportunities should not be understood as something that individuals benefit from in a 'fairer' or 'more progressive' society, but rather as a result of collective resistance to the economic system we live in; a measure of the strength of working class solidarity. In short, opportunities must be taken, not given.

In a capitalist society, it is simply short-termist, pie-eyed reformism to suggest that schemes aimed at a certain demographic to improve their 'life chances' (which ludicrously implies that society is organised by 'luck') are the silver-bullet solution to social problems, and the same applies to young people. The argument that we just need more youth clubs or apprenticeships when in the age of 24-hour mass media the very measure of our self-worth is placed out of the material reach of the vast majority is an example of piecemeal reforms which only scratch the surface of youth alienation. As long as 'opportunities' only apply to some, or even only a majority of individuals (though this is far from the

case currently), then exploitation, material insecurity and alienation will continue to fuel violence and social insecurity. It was particularly telling to note that certain parts of the mass media only really took the knife crime issue seriously (and perpetuated the hysteria) once a white teenager had been slain. There is unnerving sociological evidence to suggest that the oppression and suffering inflicted on many black brothers and sisters across the world has led to a desensitisation to issues afflicting black people even within our own city. But such an explanation is superficial. The real underlying issue is one of class.

For example, some argue that violence in South Africa has got worse since apartheid was overthrown. Whether or not this is true, what is true is that violence existed under apartheid, not only by the white population in oppressing blacks, but also within the townships, where hopelessness and despair saw oppressed groups turn on each other. When such violence amongst an underprivileged working class begins to erupt and puncture bourgeois conceptions of hierarchical material security, the ideological state apparatus begins to sit up and take notice - and fights back.

There is always a tension between moralism, used as a fig-leaf to justify class oppression, and materialism, where one can identify the inherent, underlying economic factors which fuel social problems. As a result, media amplification results in moral panics where anything but the underlying issues will be blamed for such violence. We see this in Palestine, Georgia and indeed all over the world.

The reality for the majority of the British population, as with the world as a whole, is to have virtually no control over one's material security. Capitalist globalisation weakens this position further, particularly in a time of economic crisis. The resultant alienation and deprivation will continue to fuel the tragic and needless consequences of knife crime and violence generally as young people feel increasingly alienated.

The alternative can only be solidarity, organisation and activism to eventually overthrow the system which underpins violence, material insecurity and the gross inequality that blights our planet, and is indeed killing it. An alternative, and I believe the only one that guarantees security and respect for all, is eco-socialism.

Whatever the means of ridding the world of capitalism and hierarchy and replacing it with equality, solidarity and sustainability and peace, schools and colleges remain a vital forum for teenagers to potentially discuss the issues which affect them on a daily basis. Long may that continue.

Advertisement

VIDEO CLIPS OF RECENT POLITICAL MEETINGS

1) <http://greenleftblog.blogspot.com/> 'Greening Latin America'

Green Left meeting Thursday 4th September 2008, Bolivar Hall: Embassy of Venezuela Chair: Joseph Healy, Green Party of England and Wales International Secretary Speakers: Roberto Perez, Cuban permaculturalist who launches his British tour. Dr Diana Raby, Lecturer at the Institute of Latin American Studies (University of Liverpool) Oscar Herman Blanco Dr Derek Wall, Green Party Principal Speaker 'This meeting will show case the progress being made in Latin America with an emphasis on Cuba and Venezuela in dealing with climate change, biodiversity and range of environmental issues. It examined the lessons in terms of politics and environmental policy that both the Green Movement and the wider left in Britain can learn from the Latin American experience.'

2) [Http://gptublog.blogspot.com/](http://gptublog.blogspot.com/) MIGRANT WORKERS "No one is illegal" GPTU Fringe 6/8/2008 at GREEN PARTY CONFERENCE September 2008

Speakers: Theresa Hayter and Bob Hughes

Theresa Hayter is an activist and writer and a long-standing anti-racist campaigner. She has been active since 1993 in the campaign to close Campsfield immigration detention centre, is one of the authors of the No One is Illegal Manifesto and a member of the National Union of Journalists. She has written seven books including *Aid as Imperialism* and *Open Borders: The Case Against Immigration Controls*.

Bob Hughes is an activist, writer and teacher, currently researching the relationships between the global high-technology industries, insecure and migrant labour, wealth inequalities, and their human and environmental impacts. He is a member of the Campaign to Close Campsfield and a co-author of the *No One Is Illegal Manifesto*. He also teaches part-time at Oxford Brookes University. Web site: <http://www.dustormagic.net><<http://www.dustormagic.net/>>

The boycott: letter from Ramallah

We print here a letter sent by Bir Zeit University lecturer Emilia Rappocciolo to a PSE editorial board member. Emilia is married to a Palestinian and lives in Ramallah. The editorial board contains people who are for the proposed academic boycott of academics and universities in Israel and also people who are against it. Within the terms of our 'Where We Stand statement' (p24), the editors welcome contributions from all sides of this question.

I haven't forgotten the request of writing the reasons why we think that the academic boycott of Israeli universities should be kept in place.

Now, most of the arguments against the boycott seem to centre on the concept of promoting academic freedom and contact and by doing so creating more open minded people rather than more conflict.

Yes, this all seems quite nice, but the reality on the ground is quite different and I am afraid the nice gesture of keeping ties to make better people is just an excuse for the Israeli academics not to take responsibility.

First of all, the wall. Now I think you know enough about the separation wall that is not only stopping Mohammed and Ghassan (because he is older than 16) to visit Jerusalem and any other part of Israel (and with them every other Palestinian of the West Bank that does not have a special permission), but that is also eating away more Palestine and more contiguous territory. If the Israeli academics were so keen on exchanging and helping the Palestinians, why don't they ask their government to issue all Palestinian academics [with] a card that allows them to visit their so nice and well funded universities? Are they scared of us? Do they think that the Palestinian academics pose a security threat?

The truth is that this boycott harms Israel and when Israel is harmed they don't like it.

Another example of how keen is Israel for academic development in Palestine: my former lab assistant, a young woman with a very good academic record and a sister in London doing a masters in film direction, last year won a DAAD scholarship to go and start a postgrad masters program in microbiology and immunology. When she presented herself at the border with Jordan to go and start last September, she was told that she was not allowed to leave because she poses a 'security threat' (a bit of a counter-intuition here - why do they want to keep her if she is a threat? Because the West Bank is a secure prison from

which people can leave only on their permission). She was shocked and since last September she has been trying to find out what security threat she poses, but nobody has yet told her anything. She spent a lot of money in lawyers and court cases to hear that now if she wants to leave she can leave, but if she does so she won't be allowed to come back for the next three years.

Academic freedom? Who are they kidding?

Do you know that members of the IDF, Shin Bet and Israeli security services get their degrees in shortened periods? 'The twisted thought process according to which members of the security forces have the right to special academic conditions has become deeply entrenched in the Israeli academic world. Today there is hardly a university that does not offer special courses for officers, pilots and secret agents. As such, all it takes for students of the National Security College to receive a master's degree in political science from Haifa University is two classes a week for one semester. Pilots receive a bachelor's degree at Ben-Gurion University in the Negev after one year's study, while Shin Bet operatives receive a BA from Bar-Ilan University after a mere 16 months. Bar-Ilan deserves the title of the most militaristic university of them all - it offers a plethora of programs for the security forces only: there is the Jericho program for the Shin Bet and a whole host of programs for officers in the Israel Defense Forces, officers about to enter the IDF and officers who have already reached the rank of battalion commander. The entire nation is an army and Bar-Ilan is all security. The difference between this reality and outstanding academia is immense, whereas the difference between such practice and receiving a fictitious degree from the University of Latvia is minute.' (From the Haaretz newspaper <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1018912.html>.)

All of this well known to the Israeli academics who do not complain, or try to do anything to change the situation.

Academic freedom? Give me a break!

Desperate diplomacy

Patrick Ainley and Martin Allen introduce their new publication *

A new 'educational and campaigning pamphlet' sponsored by the NUT's Ealing Teachers' Association and supported by the University of Greenwich University and College Union represents a unique collaboration between the two teaching unions. In it, we argue that, despite predictably being a flop, the new vocational diplomas are key to future developments in schools, FE and HE.

The new academic year has seen the first 14-19 specialist diplomas piloted in a number of schools and colleges. They are an experiment doomed for success as, even though initially available in five areas - Construction, Engineering, Health, IT and Creative and Media - government has already conceded that student registrations will be less than half of the 45,000 originally proposed. In all, about 20,000 youngsters will be embarking on a diploma this term with the media option proving the most popular.

Government has emphasised the importance of securing employer involvement in both the development and delivery of the new qualifications and has been keen to involve Sector Skills Councils. A few top UK companies have come forward as diploma champions but support is less certain amongst the many smaller local employers.

Besides, government now refers to the diplomas as 'applied' rather than directly vocational - with the DCSF *Strategy* document published earlier this year announcing a revamped apprenticeship/workbased pathway alongside the academic and the applied. As unemployment and the leaving age from compulsory education rise, this development may come to resemble the Youth Training Schemes of the 1980s.

The fundamental contradiction lies in making extravagant claims for the Diplomas at the same time as persisting with A-levels as 'the gold standard'. Some top universities may have made statements 'welcoming' applications from diploma students but many also welcomed the GNVQ over a decade ago and then continued to recruit almost exclusively from those with A-levels.

Anyway, many admissions tutors at selecting universities no longer trust A-levels because too many of their applicants take and pass them. They and many private schools are turning instead to the International Baccalaureate (IB) or the unashamedly elitist new Cambridge Pre-U exam.

Meanwhile, those who support the Diplomas hope for a gradual 'diplomatisation' of A-levels - but the Conservatives, the CBI and representatives of some

awarding bodies have been less than forthcoming in their support, wanting diplomas to remain 'distinct' qualifications alongside GCSEs and A-levels. Delivered mainly in FE colleges, diplomas may then feed into apprenticeships and foundation 'degrees' rather than providing real opportunities for HE entry.

If this becomes the case then divisions within but also between schools and colleges will remain more significant than any new learning opportunities the new diploma courses might offer as the 50 per cent of young people who aspire to higher education continue to see academic qualifications as the safest bet. For many of the others, rather than providing a dynamic new pathway, the diplomas could end up being another dead end.

For secondary schools, Diplomas signal the end of what is left of comprehensive schooling with a new 14-plus that reinstates the post-war secondary tripartism at 11-plus by a new tertiary tripartism. In HE this is represented by the Russell Group of research universities selecting students internationally through the IB and Pre-U. They are followed by the mainly teaching and nationally recruiting 94Group of campus universities for which A-levels may still suffice. Lastly, the Million-plus group of universities have most students if least research, many of them entering through clearing and continuing to live at home while working locally. These divisions will be consolidated if fees rise in 2010 following their review next year.

The diplomas are the latest in a line of failed initiatives that have sought to provide vocational 'alternatives' for those young people staying in full-time education and not considered 'academic'. Rather than developing any useful employment skills, their introduction reflects the changing significance of education in the social control of learners that now extends from school to college and on to university.

The pamphlet urges teacher trades unions to join the NUT in opposing Diplomas on pedagogic grounds. Those who are opposed to the current post-14 agenda must not only put forward radical alternatives to the current curriculum but also address issues of democracy and accountability. To do this, teacher trade unionists must make new types of alliances with local communities and also with their students.

***A New 14+: Vocational Diplomas and the Future of Schools, Colleges and Universities by Martin Allen and Patrick Ainley is available through www.radicaled.wordpress.com.**

‘Renewing’ England’s FE colleges: building for the future or victims of fashion?

Robin Simmons

Since FE colleges were removed from local education authority (LEA) control and recast as ‘FE corporations’ over fifteen years ago, the sector has undergone profound change. Much of this has been and continues to be deeply problematic. The ongoing debacle at Harlow College is perhaps emblematic of much of what is wrong about FE today. Unfortunately, this is not an isolated case; performativity and managerialism, diktat and discipline are now commonplace in colleges.

Whilst it is not difficult to criticise much of what goes on in FE now, it is important not to romanticise the past: the days when LEAs controlled FE colleges were far from perfect. Some LEAs were not particularly open to change - whether this was in response to national or local trends. Traditionally, FE tended to be dominated by certain relatively privileged sections of the working class; normally staff and students were men drawn predominantly from technical and craft employment backgrounds. Many colleges did not actively engage with those outside this ‘aristocracy of the working class’ (FEU 1979). Although different authorities varied significantly in their approach, some colleges were dominated by ‘closed networks’ of college managers, LEA officials and local councillors rather than the democratic process; sometimes policy was as likely to be formulated in the pub or on the golf course as at county hall. At its worst, it has been argued that this rather parochial culture was almost ‘Masonic’ in nature (Gravatt and Silver 2000, 116-7).

Such instances can perhaps be seen as illustrative of the broader conception that part of the problem with local authority-run public services more generally was that of ‘producer capture’. This was most clearly articulated in the discourse of the

‘New Right’ in the 1980s and 1990s which argued that overly powerful professionals, trade unions and other ‘vested interests’ had come to dominate education at the expense of students, parents and especially business and industry. Having said this, one would not need to be particularly imbued with neo-liberal ideology to object to some of the traditions and practices that characterised the years of LEA control.

Imposing

Another problem was the physical state of many colleges. The imposing facades of many colleges often concealed a maze of poorly integrated accommodation (Ainley and Bailey 1997, 2). Many buildings were inaccessible to people with disabilities and were inefficient to run. Arguably, one reason for this was FE’s history of ‘benign neglect’.. Although many of today’s colleges can trace their roots to the mechanics’ institutes of the 19th century, central government only began to give any coherent consideration to FE when the 1944 Education Act required each LEA to make ‘adequate’ provision for FE in its locality. However, this remit was open to more than a little interpretation and consequently significant differences in the scale and character of FE continued to develop across the country. Cantor and Roberts (1969, 3) famously described the resultant pattern of provision as resembling a ‘patchwork quilt’ - not only due to its varied and eclectic nature but also because of the rather ‘make do and mend’ approach of many LEAs towards FE.

As the long economic boom of the post-war era came to an end the physical inadequacies of many

colleges became clear. As Britain's traditional industrial base withered following the oil crisis of the early 1970s the workshops, laboratories and lecture theatres that had served generations of technicians and artisans increasingly became obsolete. Whilst engineering and construction areas typically became almost redundant, many students found themselves squeezed into inadequate accommodation and there was often a mismatch of old-fashioned and temporary accommodation (Edwards 2000, 103-104). Perhaps LEAs were ill-equipped or unwilling to adapt to the demands of social and economic change or the needs of new constituencies of students. However, given the restraints placed upon public spending from the mid 1970s onwards, it is unlikely that local authorities would have been able to address this matter satisfactorily whatever their outlook. Furthermore, given their imminent loss of control, it was perhaps understandable that many LEAs showed a minimal interest in FE estates in the run-up to incorporation.

Either way, by the early 1990s, it was argued that many college buildings were unfit-for-purpose. Much of the physical infrastructure was in poor condition and many buildings required urgent repairs when colleges took over ownership of their own estates. Consequently, the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) - the quango set up to govern FE upon incorporation - initially set aside £67m in 1993-94 to help colleges resolve some of their most pressing accommodation problems. Another £100m was allocated for each of the next two years. Buildings which were deemed uneconomic to repair were demolished and many colleges decided to dispose of 'excess space' by selling off unwanted buildings and land (Edwards 2000).

Encouraged

In more recent years, far greater sums of money have been spent. Since the FEFC was replaced by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), colleges have been actively encouraged to 'renew' their physical infrastructure and significant funding has been made available: since 2001, FE colleges have received more than £1.7bn in grants for this purpose. In addition, colleges have also invested great amounts of their own money and many have taken out large loans to help pay for building projects. Between April 2001 and March 2008 a total of £4.2bn has been spent and, since 2001, around half the sector's estate has been renewed. The aim is that by 2016 all FE colleges will have undergone a transformation of their premises (NAO 2008, 5-6).

In some ways, this can be welcomed: after decades of financial deprivation it is good to see capital expenditure on FE and, if new facilities create a better learning environment, this is positive.

Despite all this, it is also necessary to think about developments critically. There are a number of issues that are potentially problematic. First of all, the form that college 'renewal' normally takes needs to be considered. In the vast majority of cases the chosen option is to demolish existing buildings and to go for a 'new build'; far fewer colleges are choosing to refurbish or renovate premises. Although these new college buildings often look impressive the wisdom of such a policy can be questioned on a number of bases. One issue is space: new premises are normally much smaller than the ones they replace. Upon incorporation colleges inherited 9 million square metres of space; by 2006 this figure stood at 7.4 million square metres. The LSC (2008) now estimates that the FE sector requires only 6.6 million square metres of space. But, despite their gloss, many new college buildings are frankly too small for comfort. In particular, teaching staff tend to be squeezed; many are deprived of their own work and storage space and the meaningful company of colleagues is limited as colleges adopt 'hot-desking' policies, at least for teachers. Only recently, a colleague told me how relieved he was to be leaving the new York College - which he described as simply too small, too hot, and too noisy.

Impetus

I acknowledge that sometimes making a fresh start is the right option. Sometimes buildings are genuinely past saving. However, it appears that the impetus for a new build is often that many colleges are using new premises as a marketing tool. At least superficially, this can offer individual institutions some gains. Student recruitment tends to increase slightly after the completion of such projects. However, the overall number of learners in FE has remained unchanged over recent years. Thus, rather than encouraging higher levels of participation, new colleges tend merely to displace learners from other institutions. This is a problem for a number of reasons but, on a practical level, a large and increasing number of colleges are now in serious debt. Almost a quarter of all colleges are now classified as 'financially weak'; between 2005-06 and 2006-07, this number grew from 68 to 89. By the end of 2006-07 the FE sector was £731m in debt and interest payable on loans stood at £58m (NAO 2008, 30-31).

Whilst colleges spend more and more money on looking good, the danger is that, in a competitive market, they get sucked into a 'beauty contest' against their rivals - and nothing is as fickle as fashion. Just as the concrete constructions of the 1960s and 1970s were once regarded as 'cutting edge', it is quite likely that contemporary 'state of the art' buildings will soon, in turn, quickly look tired. What then, another 'new build'? As well as placing colleges under increasing financial strain, environmentally such an approach is questionable. The National Audit Office (2008, 27) has already highlighted that many new buildings do not perform well when judged against environmental sustainability criteria. Moreover, only time will tell how contemporary materials and construction methods stand the rigours of daily use.

Elite

Finally, whilst old FE colleges are often derided as 'out-of-date' and unsuitable for learning, isn't it strange that such things tend not to be said about institutions attended by the elite? When did you last hear Oxford or Cambridge or any of our other prestigious universities criticised for having old buildings? Come to think of it, the ruling class often inhabits old buildings - whether these are legal chambers or stately homes, government offices or company head offices. Nobody talks about pulling them down.

References:

Ainley, P. and B. Bailey, 1997, *The Business of Learning: staff and student experiences of further education in the 1990s*, London, Cassell
 Cantor, L. and I. Roberts, 1969, *Further Education in England and Wales*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul
 Edwards, G., 2000, 'The changing campus' in A. Smithers and P. Robinson (eds), *Further Education Re-formed*, London, Falmer
 Further Education Unit (FEU), 1979, *A Basis for Choice*, London, FEU
 Gravatt, J. and R. Silver, 2000, 'Partnerships with the community' in A. Smithers and P. Robinson (eds) *Further Education Re-formed*, London, Falmer
 Learning and Skills Council (LSC), *Building Colleges for the Future: the LSC's National Capital Strategy for 2008*, Coventry, LSC
 National Audit Office (NAO), 2008, *Renewing the Physical Infrastructure of English Further Education Colleges*, Norwich, The Stationery Office

**Post-16 Educator:
 annual subscription rates (6 issues)**

1. Individuals:

- 1.1 Unwaged - £3.00
- 1.2 Students / Part time teachers/lecturers / Retired - £6.50
- 1.3 First time subscription as full time teacher/lecturer - £9.50
- 1.4 Regular individual - £12.50
- 1.5 Supporting - £30.00

(All the above please use form below, personal cheque or bankers order only. Or for alternative payment methods such as Internet Bank Transfer, email us on post16educator@runbox.com)

2. Institutions (eg libraries, union branches):

- 2.1 New subscriptions - £18.50
 - 2.2 Regular institutional - £25.00
- (Official orders to address below.)

 To: *Post-16 Educator*, 221 Firth Park Road,
 SHEFFIELD S5 6WW (Phone 0114 243 1999)

Name: -----

Address: -----

I wish to subscribe and enclose cheque payable to 'Post-16 Educator' for 1.1 £3.00 1.2 £6.50 1.3 £9.50 1.4 £12.50 1.5 £30.00 (Tick as appropriate)

Bankers Order:

To (name of your bank): -----

Address of your bank: -----

Your account number: -----

Your bank sort code: -----

Signature: -----

Please pay *Post-16 Educator* the sum of :
 every year, starting on (date):

Trade union education: some thoughts from the past

Geoffrey Stuttard, *interviewed by Linda Clarke and Michael Gold*

This article is taken from an edited transcript of an interview, conducted on 24/7/06, with Geoffrey Stuttard, who spent his working life, from the Second World War till 1986, in trade union education. He began by working for the Workers' Educational Association, and then, in 1954, he joined the Extra-Mural Department of London University, and finished his career as Senior Staff Tutor for Industrial Relations. Over this period he published a stream of articles and books, and was a prolific contributor to radio. Our interview took place in July 2006 when we invited Geoffrey to reflect on the nature of trade union education and discuss personal reminiscences and experiences. In this article, the first of a series of three, he explores the distinction between the liberal education of trade unionists and trade union education itself.

Divisions between trade union and vocational education

The first general thing is that, with trade union education, I would make a distinction between the liberal education of trade unionists and trade union education itself. This division, and it IS a division, occurred quite early on. Trade union education, either one way or the other, starts, as far as I'm concerned, at the beginning of the last century, around the 1900s. Before that, there was little formal work of any kind. I mean, we didn't have an Education Act till 1870, or mass circulation newspapers. There were simply working men's clubs and meetings and so on. Samuel Smiles' book, *Self-Help*, was one of three books on many trade unionists' shelves. The others were Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and the *Bible*.

Anyway, in 1903, Albert Mansbridge founded the Workers' Education Association, the WEA. Mansbridge was a remarkable man. He was a co-operative clerk. He went to St Paul's Cathedral and heard Dean Inge speaking, and he thought, 'Why can't we talk like this about these sorts of things? Why can't we be educated?' So he got in touch with him, and made the arrangement that if Mansbridge got working people together, Inge and others would provide tutors. So that was the start, and then it really took off with Professor R. H. Tawney in 1907, at Longton in Staffordshire, when he started the first three-year tutorial class, which meant you met for 24 meetings over three years and did written work and reading and so on. So that was the WEA.

Incidentally, Mansbridge also started the Workers' Travel Association, known as the Galleon Travel Association, which existed until it was taken over

after the 1945 War, and he founded the National Central Library in 1916. He thought working people ought to travel, so let's have a travel agency; he thought working people ought to be able to get to books more easily, and so it led to the National Central Library. For one man to form three major organisations in a lifetime, from a comparatively poor background, is quite remarkable.

Now in contrast to the Workers' Education Association, which makes this contrast between trade union education and liberal education for trade unionists, was the foundation of the National Council of Labour Colleges (NCLC). This was an idea for setting up groups of Labour and Socialist thinkers who could meet occasionally. It gradually developed, on a very small scale. The key person in this was James Millar who, in the 1920s, up in Scotland, got it going with what was its big thing, correspondence courses. There were never any Labour Colleges as such, but lots of Labour people, including Labour MPs, you'll find got a lot of their education through these correspondence courses, which had quite a strong Marxist background, as a matter of fact.

The WEA then branched out even wider with, in the 1920s, the formation of the university extra-mural departments. Oxford and Cambridge had what's called extension work for a long time, but from the 1920s, other universities developed these too - well, the best description I can think of is the 'off-licence department' of the universities. I thought that was always a good description. They provided the more serious courses for the WEA members. The WEA itself appointed tutors to do the shorter courses, and the university extra-mural departments did the longer ones.

Unions then had to decide what they did about these two organisations, the WEA and the NCLC. This

culminated in a major discussion at the Transport and General Workers Union (T&G) conference early in the 1920s, when it had just been formed in fact, at which there was a motion to affiliate to just the National Council of Labour Colleges and not the WEA. This was overturned, and it was quite clear that the big choice from then on for a union like the T&G, and for lots of other unions, was linking up with the WEA. One thing with the WEA, in the 1920s, to advance the work of trade unionists, they set up the Workers' Education Trade Union Committees called WETUCS, and each WEA district had a WETUC.

Now this division between the two is quite fascinating. Going through my old reports for 1971, I find I had a meeting with Mr Winnard and Mr Greaves of the Trades Union Congress (TUC), and my report says: 'Right at the beginning of the meeting, Mr Winnard and Mr Greaves of the TUC made it clear that they took the view there was a difference in policies between bodies offering liberal adult education, such as the Extra-Mural Department of the WEA, and the requirements of the TUC.' That was 1971, still going on in those days. It becomes quite interesting in the 1950s and 1960s with the shop stewards.

Trade union education

So how did trade unionists become educated? They became educated from home and school work and so on, but also through political work with the Labour Party from 1905 onwards, and of course union work in their meetings at branch, regional and national level. But there was no national scheme run by the TUC until the late 1960s and 1970s in fact. What happened was that unions used to hold day schools and weekend schools and summer schools. These varied depending on the way in which unions looked at education. The T&G was the outstanding one on this. It had a big variety of programmes running right through from the 1920s. A major change was with its summer school at Cirencester in the 1960s, which was a combination of union teaching and this liberal education teaching within the same summer school. Ellen McCulloch and Tony Corfield were important in developing all this. This contrasted with the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU); the AEU didn't like liberal education at all and would have nothing to do with it. The train drivers' union (ASLEF) had one weekend school a year for each region. The National Association of Local Government Officers (NALGO), London, used to hold a six-monthly meeting down at Tunbridge Wells, all sorts of little bits of pieces.

There were no union colleges at all. Compare it with West Germany after the Second World War: the German unions, because of the co-determination policy, needed to train people to sit on the supervisory boards and to chair and sit on the workers' councils,

and so every German union - I mean the industrial unions, there were 18 then I think - set up their own residential college, and the German TUC, the DGB, had two colleges. We had no colleges at all until the electrical trade unions set one up in the 1960s. There was no TUC College until the 1970s.

WEA extra-mural and residential colleges

So we had then this development of WEA extra-mural courses. These were based on WEA branches all over the country, hundreds of them, in districts, with district secretaries. There was a possibility for workers, trade unionists, whoever it might be, coming to these courses and going on from the courses to other places. By this time - we're talking about post-War - we had a number of residential colleges. Ruskin had been there for some time. We had Fircroft and Avoncroft set up by the Cadburys in Birmingham - well, Fircroft was in Birmingham and Avoncroft was in Bromsgrove - and Coleg Harlech in Wales, and a Scottish one, Holly Royde in Scotland, and eventually, much later, the Northern College, near Barnsley. There were one or two university developments. The LSE started a course for trade unionists in the 1960s which went on for about 15 years.

Now, the major change to a lot of this was the development of courses directly for trade unionists in their workplaces or near their workplaces. In the 1950s and 1960s, this grew out of the extensive development and power of shop stewards. From the 1950s onwards, WEA and extra-mural tutors were bargaining for day release for these shop stewards all over the country, and they built up a national pattern which had nothing to do with the TUC or with anything other than the unions in their workplaces.

Society of Industrial Tutors

This networking was so extensive that the tutors concerned came together, and in 1968, they founded the Society of Industrial Tutors (SIT) to get some sort of pattern to everything that was going on, and that held conferences with tutors all over the place. Very many of the industrial tutors had gained their . . . spurs, I suppose you could call it, at the T&G summer school at Cirencester from 1950 onwards. All sorts of well-known people came along, such as Vic Allen, Fred Bayliss, Arthur Marsh, Bob Holden, Ozzy O'Brien . . . What was very interesting was how, in the Society of Industrial Tutors at one point, there was a saying 'Join the Society and become head of a college', because Michael Barrett-Brown, who was chairman of the Society, became chairman of the Northern College, the Cooperative College was headed by Bob Holden, and Ozzy O'Brien was

offered the head of Fircroft College but turned it down, quite usefully I think - it was a bad time at Fircroft. So it was really quite a force.

The TUC then got rather worried, because there was a sort of national trade union scheme being run by this group of tutors, and that's when we started having these meetings, at the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s. A sort of mild TUC scheme was started in about 1967/68, but it was nowhere near as extensive as the work which the Industrial Tutors were doing.

Other developments in education for trade unionists

In 1967, the TUC and the then Federation of British Industries (FBI), as it then was, came to some agreement about the possible release of people for industrial relations courses. This was mostly as a result of what we'd been doing as Industrial Tutors. So that was quite helpful.

Another big boost was the Health and Safety at Work Act in 1974. This allowed for the release of health and safety reps in the workplaces to go on courses. It was looked after by the TUC, but a terrific amount of the work was done by the Industrial Tutors again, who were the people on the ground who knew a lot about what was going on. The Employment Protection Act, in 1975, then brought in a clause giving a legal right to paid educational leave for trade unionists - not full-time officials, but rank and file trade unionists - to study industrial relations. Six of us sat down with Michael Foot and actually wrote that clause and put it in the Act, coming out of the work we'd been doing.

Then the national TUC scheme gradually developed in the 1970s. There were all sorts of funny little rivalries. Michael Barrett-Brown had been teaching in Sheffield for a long time, and there was a move to stop him from teaching liberal studies - it was not the sort of thing which trade unionists should have anything to do with - and he knew so many people on the TUC Council that that was squashed.

Now, from the 1980s, all this work of the WEA, extra-mural departments and tutors declined with the decline of shop stewards, with the result of legislation, unemployment, and hardening employer attitudes. So I sort of bow out at that point on the official line.

The future of trade union education

With respect to the future of trade union education, one major thing is that the TUC started from the 1970s onwards to take education more seriously. They've set up a college, and they've set up this scheme and the other scheme. So that side of

things is in better hands. What is not there is a system with thousands and thousands of shop stewards. It is still, under the legislation, possible for shop stewards and others to be released for courses in industrial relations, but there's a disinclination to take it up, with unemployment, and also, if you're away, what's going to happen to your job, you know, you're out of touch, so that there's a disincentive. I would like to get some system like EDAP for the whole of industry, where people could automatically, with pay, have time off work to do something they want to do. That would be an interesting scheme. But we're nowhere near it. It would be regarded as dangerous to the economy I suppose, and employers would be against it. I think it would help the economy actually, in the long run.

Concluding remarks

The controversy about liberal studies and trade union education keeps going - there have always been differences in policy between the bodies offering liberal studies and the requirements of the TUC. Well, there's room for both. You see, the T&G was very good at, the T&G at Cirencester, half of the course was trade union studies, taken by T&G officers. Jack Jones would come down, and all sorts of people would come down. The other half of the course was taken by extra-mural and WEA tutors, and we were doing whatever, you know - incomes policy, economics, whatever it might be. And so we had these two together, and that was very good for both of us, as a matter of fact. It was good for the union officials, it was good for us, and it was good for the students.

About the future, the TUC is rightly concentrating on trade union education, that's okay, but there is room for encouraging more and more people from working class movements to go into liberal education or experience it in some sort of way. Although there are many new opportunities now for anyone to move on in education - the Open University, distance learning, use of the internet - what would be useful would be for someone to do research on how many working class trade union members are taking part in these sort of courses.

Notes:

Bunyan, John (1628-1688): author of *Pilgrim's Progress* (two parts: 1678, 1684)

EDAP: educational development programme inaugurated in Ford America

Foot, Michael (b. 1913-): Secretary of State for Employment (1974-76 and Leader of the Labour Party (1980-83)

Inge, William Ralph (1860-1954): Dean Inge, Dean of St Paul's Cathedral

Mansbridge, Albert (1876-1952): founder in 1903 of the WEA

Millar, J. P. M.: Secretary of the N.C.L.C.

Smiles, Samuel (1812-1904): author of *Self Help* (1859)

Tawney, R. H. (1880-1962): Professor of Economic History at the London School of Economics, and Christian Socialist.

PSE announcements:

1. Plebs League pamphlet

A 24-page PSE pamphlet, *'Plebs' The Lost Legacy of Independent Working-Class Education* by Colin Waugh will be out on 1st January 1909.

Marking the 100th anniversary of the ferment amongst mineworkers, railwayworkers, textile workers and engineering workers who were students at Ruskin College in 1909, this pamphlet, centred on new research into Plebs Magazine, underlines the present-day relevance of the creation of the Plebs League in October 1908, the March 1909 'strike' and the August 1909 decision to set up the Central Labour College.

Aspects covered include: the bloc between the University Extension movement and the WEA, the intentions of Ruskin College's founders, the influence of Daniel De Leon and the Socialist Labour Party, and the strikers' conception of Independent Working-Class Education (IWCE).

To order copies and/or book Colin as a speaker, please email us on post16educator@runbox.com or ring 0208 903 4940. Copies cost £3.00 (Please send cheques payable to 'Post-16 Educator' or orders to PSE, 39 Scarle Road, WEMBLEY, Middx HA0 4SR).

2. Leaflets on current issues

In a move aimed at overcoming the two month gap between issues of PSE, we have this term started producing one-page, A4 leaflets which take up issues in the news. Leaflets produced so far are: "The right to choose" (23/9/08), on why 16 year olds should be free to choose whether to study or not; "What is 'involvement'?" (28/9/08), on CALL; "The IFL" (7/10/08), criticising the standpoint of IFL CEO Toni Fazaeli; and "Why being anti-vocational is not good enough" (14/10/08), on a motion put to London Region of UCU.

These leaflets are available as PDF files that can be printed out from our website: www.post16educator.org.uk. However, if you would like these or future leaflets to be emailed direct to you, please send your email address plus request to: post16educator@runbox.com. Comments - and especially criticisms - also welcome!

3. PSE poster

Please display the enclosed PSE poster in a prominent place

Where we stand:

Post-16 Educator seeks to defend and extend good practice in post compulsory education and training. Good practice includes teachers working with students to increase their power to look critically at the world around them and act effectively within it. This entails challenging racism, sexism, heterosexism, inequality based on disability and other discriminatory beliefs and practices.

For the mass of people, access to valid post compulsory education and training is more necessary now than ever. It should be theirs by right! All provision should be organised and taught by staff who are trained for and committed to it. Publicly funded provision of valid post compulsory education and training for all who require it should be a fundamental demand of the trade union movement.

Post-16 Educator seeks to persuade the labour movement as a whole of the importance of this demand. In mobilising to do so it bases itself first and foremost upon practitioners - those who are in direct, daily contact with students. It seeks the support of every practitioner, in any area of post-16 education and training, and in particular that of women, of part timers and of people outside London and the Southeast.

Post-16 Educator works to organise readers/contributors into a national network that is democratic, that is politically and financially independent of all other organisations, that develops their practice and their thinking, and that equips them to take action over issues rather than always having to react to changes imposed from above.

