

General education in 14-19 diplomas: the precedents

Colin Waugh

Between about 1960 and 1970 a layer of (mainly male) young people, who would previously have left school at the minimum age to enter jobs with little or no formal training, were drawn into the apprenticeship system. Then between 1976 and 1984 this trend was more than reversed. As a result, the 16-19 population has ever since contained four broad groupings: a group who leave school at 16 destined for entry to skilled manual jobs; a group who stay at school to do A-levels on their way to selecting universities and professional jobs; a group who are neither in education, employment or training; and a group who do a nominally full time vocational course in FE, most of whom then progress to vocational degrees in recruiting universities. The present article is about the general education available to this last group.

Since the mid 1980s, there have been, successively, three main forms of this general education, and a fourth one is now being introduced in conjunction with 14-19 diplomas. The aim here is to look at these three preceding forms to draw lessons for what might happen in the next few years.

The first form of general education to be introduced for such students was that brought in by BTEC in the mid 1980s. The architect of this arrangement was John Pursaill, who had been the main curriculum officer at the Business Education Council (BEC). (In 1983-84, BEC was merged with the Technician Education Council [TEC] to form BTEC.) The main influence on Pursaill was the arrangement negotiated for BEC courses in the 1970s by a prominent figure in the Association for Liberal Education, Cedric Blackman. Pursaill orchestrated what purported to be a consultation process in such a way that an approach derived from Blackman came to be imposed across all BTEC courses (ie including the former TEC ones in Engineering, Building, Science etc where a completely different approach had hitherto operated).

The system adopted by BTEC initially involved three main elements: Common Skills; Core Themes; and a Programme of Integrative Assignments (PIA), although in practice Core Themes were ignored from the start. Under this system, all the members of a course team were required jointly to devise a series of assignments which brought together content elements from each unit in the course. In addition, each assignment had to be

'mapped' to identify points at which a set of general ('Common') 'Skills' (eg communication, information seeking and analysis, learning and studying etc) could be assessed through it. Each assignment in this 'PIA' had then to be marked by all the lecturers, including those responsible for Common Skills. This process was subject to external moderation, but there was no exam or test in Common Skills.

In the early 1990s, the Government decided to introduce a new type of qualification: General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs), to be provided by all three awarding bodies, and with this was introduced a new form of general education called Core Skills. Like GNVQs themselves, and the part time qualifications from which they were derived (NVQs), this was based on ideas developed by the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) functionary Gilbert Jessup, which were centred on the concept of 'learning outcomes'. It was shaped also by a broader - but inconclusive - debate about 'the Post-16 Core' which followed the 1988 Education Reform Act. A philosophy lecturer from London University Institute of Education, Tim Oates, was employed by the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) to adapt Jessup's approach for use both in NVQs and, synthesised with ideas about a 'Core', for GNVQs.

Core Skills was initially intended to contain six areas: Communication, Application of Number, IT, Problem Solving, Working with Others, and Improving Own Learning and Performance. The Major government decided that only the first three of these should be mandatory. Oates organised these three into levels for progression purposes and, in line with Jessup's thinking, devised criteria for assessing whether the relevant outcomes had been achieved. These were then mapped onto course units, and it was the task of general education staff to teach and assess them, assembling evidence of attainment by reference to assessment grids. As with the BTEC system, this arrangement was internally and externally 'verified', but there was no test or exam. (One of the three non-mandatory Core Skills, Improving Own Learning and Performance, was given a role as one of several 'grading themes' [ie overarching assessment criteria] across each GNVQ programme as a whole.)

In the latter part of the 1990s the Blair government initiated a third set of arrangements, using as

its agent Sir Ron, later Lord, Dearing. Dearing was asked to review full time 16-19 qualifications in general, and his recommendations about vocational ones reflected his ideas about A-levels. His main recommendations were that GNVQs should be replaced by qualifications supposedly equivalent to A-levels (Advanced Vocational Certificates of Education - AVCEs), and that A-levels themselves should be divided into AS-levels and A2s, the ostensible aim being to move towards overcoming the so-called 'academic/vocational divide'. For the present purpose his key decisions were: first, that the three mandatory Core Skills would continue to predominate and the other three would remain marginal; secondly, that the name should be changed to Key Skills (with the implication that that which had previously been central should now become only a means to unlock something else); thirdly, that they should be 'disintegrated' out of mainstream units and made freestanding (ie students no longer had to pass them to achieve their main qualification); fourthly, each Key Skill would be assessed both by an internally and externally verified portfolio of evidence, and also by an externally set and marked test.

Within a few weeks of their introduction, Dearing's ideas for reforming level 3 qualifications in general were shown to be unworkable, mainly because of opposition from the A-level side. One of the few lasting effects, then, of his intervention was to damage general education by forcing it to become more like the Communication Skills and Numeracy Certificates introduced by City and Guilds in the 1970s, and thereby to approximate more than hitherto to basic skills, with all the narrowness and nitpicking that this entailed. This is essentially the situation that has persisted until now.

In the space available here it is not possible to discuss each of these forms in detail, still less to appraise how all of them relate to what occurred in the period before the mid 1980s. However, experience of the forms of general education detailed above does suggest that a viable system needs to have at least the following features:

1. The so-called 'soft' or 'additional' skills need to be given the same status as the three which have been mandatory (ie the Major government's decision, reinforced by Dearing, needs to be reversed).
2. General education needs to be integrated with the main course content, rather than merely being either mapped onto it (as with Common Skills as organised by Pursaill) or bolted onto it (as with Key Skills by Dearing).
3. This can only happen if the students must achieve the general education element in order to get the whole qualification (ie this element must not be freestanding as dictated by Dearing).

4. There must be a clear timetable slot for general education (ie and not as implied by Pursaill's Common Skills model, where the role of general education lecturers could in theory be reduced merely to devising and marking assignments).

5. At the same time there must also be a high level of collaboration between general education teachers and mainstream unit lecturers. In practice this means that the general education element should be shaped and assessed mainly via a project which is like a PIA but manageable - that is, an assignment on which for any given programme the general education lecturer and one of the main vocational course tutors collaborate.)

6. Such an assignment should be framed in such a way as to allow each student to choose for it any content (ie as distinct from manner of execution) that he/she wishes.

7. General education needs to be assessed in parity with all other major course elements. If they are externally examined and/or if they are graded rather than just being passed or failed, so too must it be.

8. The whole specification of what is to be taught and learnt in general education needs to be criterion-referenced, and based on the acquisition of well-defined competences (ie combinations of knowledge, skill and understanding) - as Jessup, despite his many faults, correctly argued.

9. There must be a clear and consistent basis for progression within general education itself, consistent with progression across the whole qualification. Even a flawed arrangement for this, for example that worked out by Tim Oates, is better than none.

10. This progression needs to be organised in equal steps. For example, the sudden very sharp step between levels 2 and level 3 in Dearing's arrangement for Key Skills Communication (in particular the difference between a multi-choice test at level 2 and a written test at level 3) needs to be replaced with a system that includes, as it were, a 'level two and a half'.

11. The arrangements for general education must not be pious - that is, welcomed by everyone but never implemented (like, for example, Pursaill's Core Themes). Nor must they be impossibly intricate and prone to generate bureaucracy (as with Core Skills in GNVQs.)

We need urgently to consider whether - and if so, how far - the arrangements to be introduced for general education in diplomas - ie the combination of functional skills, personal learning and thinking skills (PLTS), and extended projects - may meet (or be made to meet) these requirements.

How academies are failing BME and working class communities

Justin Baidoo-Hackman

'When our school changed, everything did! Most of the teachers were new, and almost all of the old teachers, especially the good ones, were gone! The new, younger teachers couldn't control the class or talk to us like human beings. They all seemed to be frightened of us . . . the deputy head treats us like we're wild animals . . .' (A Year 11 pupil at the Harris Academy at Peckham.)

Business knows best

The experience of alienation or discrimination described by this pupil sadly is not unique. The Harris Academy at Peckham is one example of 'City Academies', a new type of secondary school created by the Government. It was established in 2003, by the Conservative peer Lord Harris of Peckham. By being a multi-millionaire who is well versed in selling carpets (Chairman of CarpetRight), he was deemed qualified by Lib Dem and Tory-controlled Southwark Council to take over the failing Warwick Park School. With his pledge to pay £2m for the capital costs, he was given control of the school's annual budget, and the school was given a £26m make-over.

However, like many academies, the money has not been well spent. Instead of driving up standards, the Harris Academy at Peckham has been criticised by Ofsted after its third year for having 'exceptionally low standards'.

Like most academies, standards and the curriculum are not adhered to and improved, but rather manipulated and narrowed to boost the school's league table position. Rather than assisting black and minority ethnic pupils with English as an additional language or emotional and behaviour difficulties, many academies have drilled test

techniques into children and abruptly expelled those who do not fit with their 'ethos'.

The London Borough of Southwark has the most diverse child population and highest proportion of African children in the UK. It also has taken the unprecedented step of becoming the first local authority which will within 2009 have no comprehensive schools. All schools will either be academies or some form of voluntary aided faith school.

What are academies?

'Ask me my three main priorities for government, and I tell you: education, education, education.' (Tony Blair, 1996)

Academies represent the Labour government's contempt for local democracy and community control; they are state-funded schools that are wholly privatised and independent.

Being privatised means that the school's resources, buildings and land are under the direct ownership of the sponsor. The land is usually owned through a 100 year leasehold. The sponsor can be a faith, business or voluntary/community group. The only conditions are that they have approval from the local (education) authority and have £2m to (pledge to) pay for control of the school.

Being independent means that the sponsor and the academy are not accountable to the local authority, ie your borough council cannot audit their finances, unlike normal state schools. Also, these independent schools are free to choose up to 10 per cent of their intake and expel pupils without the worry of appeals, as they have no legal compulsion to hold exclusion system appeals.

Labour's most controversial education reform has translated into the reversal of comprehensive education and, according to a government commissioned secret report by consultants PriceWaterhouseCoopers, it threatens to create 'a two-tier system'.

Improvement by discrimination

Official figures for 2005-06 showed that academies permanently excluded twice as many pupils as comprehensive schools in England. The Government defended this on the grounds that academies, which are mostly based in inner cities, have 'challenging intakes'. Academies tend to have more pupils on free school meals, from ethnic minorities and who speak English as an additional language than the national average.

What was more disturbing was that children from black Caribbean heritage were the most excluded from academies, and those of mixed Caribbean and white heritage were three times more likely to be excluded than white pupils. The figures for 2006-07 show that, as other schools reduced their permanent exclusions, academies and their Tory predecessors - City Technology Colleges - increased theirs by 50 per cent. Temporary exclusions also rose, from 4,540 pupils to 9,360.

Figures obtained by the Liberal Democrats reveal that there has been a 16 per cent drop in the proportion of children on free school dinners in academies. At the same time in non-selective state schools there has been a drop of less than 2 per cent. It is hardly surprising that the shiny new academies are refusing entry to more disadvantaged children when they do not have transparent or locally accountable admission policies.

Raising standards?

The Blair-Brown government claims that academies 'raise the standard of failing schools' and are located mostly in 'deprived areas'. This translates to towns and boroughs with a high immigrant and/or white working class population.

'The education system for sale' would probably be a more accurate description of New Labour's flagship policy. The few which have been created in more affluent and middle class areas tend to be former (or actual) grammar or high-achieving schools. These middle class academies are mostly composed of children from high-achieving backgrounds and, like all academies, are able to select 10 per cent of their pupil intake, unlike comprehen-

sive maintained schools, with the result that the less impressive pupils - that is, children who are from refugee families, have English as an additional language, are in social care or on free school dinners - are most likely to be picked up by other, less well-resourced, schools. The mere presence of an academy in a local area will cause the under-resourced state schools to struggle with a disproportionate increase in pupils with additional educational needs. This is especially true for schools, such as the non voluntary-aided comprehensive Clapton Girls in Hackney, which haven't received the extra £25m plus that academies get. These disadvantages to comprehensives are due to the government-supported discriminatory practices which create 'a diversity of schools', meaning an unequal education system.

In a future article, I hope to report on forms of resistance which have been created in the fight for a decent education for all.

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.

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News update: December 2008 - February 2009

Week beginning 29/12/08

John Harris, director of Manchester University's Institute for Science, Ethics and Innovation, suggests that the Government should consider making available without prescription drugs such as Ritalin, Provigil and Adderall (ie stimulants said to enhance cognitive performance and to be used as study aids by students in the US).

Figures given in the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) document *Post-16 Education: Learner Participation and Outcomes in England 2007-08*, released in December, include: 27,200 people aged 25 or over, and just over 90,000 19-24 year olds, started apprenticeships during 2007-08; the total number of 16-18 year olds in FE (ie excluding 6th form colleges) rose 2.3 per cent over 2006-07, reaching 1,026,500; the total number of people over 19 in FE, excluding those on HE courses in FE, fell to 3.1m (from 3.9m in 2005-06); the total of all students in FE was down 14 per cent on 2005-06; within this, the total number studying below level 2 fell in the same period by 23 per cent, whereas the numbers doing qualifications at level 2 and level 3 rose by 45 and 14 per cent respectively; ignoring those on basic skills courses, the numbers studying below level two fell by 30

per cent, from 547,000 to 284,000; 127,900 people aged 19 or over achieved a full level 3 qualification; the number of people over 19 studying below level 2 fell from 547,000 in 2005-06 to 340,400 in 2007-08 (ie down 38 per cent); between 2006-07 and 2007-08, the numbers starting Train to Gain courses rose 61 per cent, to reach 331,800.

A local group, Keep Ellesmere Port Schools (KEEPS) is resisting an attempt by Chester University, backed by the Church of England and Cheshire County Council, to turn a specialist performing arts school into an academy.

UK Skills CEO Simon Bartley advocates a UCAS-style clearing house for those seeking apprenticeships.

DIUS announces a £158m allocation to support training and careers advice, including via colleges, for people who have been made redundant or are otherwise at risk of unemployment. The money is to be taken from the Train to Gain budget and European Social Fund.

Week beginning 5/1/09

London Metropolitan University vice chancellor Brian Roper sends an email to all staff saying: 'I have alerted you to the possible need for large-scale compulsory redun-

dancies . . . and I very much regret that this is now no longer a possibility but a very real requirement'. (This relates to a decision by HEFCE to claw back all the excess funding claimed by London Met. management since 2005.)

FE figures granted New Year 'honours' include the two former General Studies lecturers Adam Suddaby, now vice principal of Leicester College, and City and Islington College principal Frank McLoughlin.

The HE Funding Council for England (HEFCE) publishes a series of reviews by individual subject panels of the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). These show that there were cases where universities included 'star' researchers who were not really members of staff (eg people put on short term fractional contracts only for the exercise) and/or excluded staff who were research-active but were not judged to fit the profile desired by management. (Unlike for previous RAEs, the HE Statistics Agency [HESA] will not issue figures showing the proportion of eligible academics excluded from the 2008 one.) Several panels also insist that the Research Excellence Framework (REF), due to replace the RAE, must include peer review and not be based purely on 'bibliometrics'.

A survey of 61 FE principals and senior managers about their attitudes to the LSC's 'Framework for Excellence' scheme for grading colleges, carried out by QDP services during the Association of Colleges (AOC) conference, finds that: 77 per cent think the scheme will not improve standards; 59 per cent think it is not useful as a measure of success; 75 per cent think it will not last. QDP director Rick Phillips comments: 'They [ie the LSC] are not connecting with their audience at all. If this was a college report, they would have shut the college'.

2008 Recruitment and Retention of Staff in Higher Education, a report produced jointly by the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) and Guild HE (ie the equivalent body for some former teacher training colleges), finds that 18 per cent of the 114 institutions surveyed claimed a low annual staff turnover rate hampered innovation. (The average turnover rate for academic staff across all 114 institutions was 6 per cent, as against an estimated rate of 17.3 per cent for all UK employees.) 90 per cent said they had experienced difficulty in recruiting staff.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development predicts that the £158m targeted by the Government on those recently made redundant will be dwarfed by a predicted 600,000 job losses during 2009, on top of about 150,000 lost in the last six months.

It emerges that during December the disciplinary committee of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society threw out charges brought by the Society itself against De Montfort University School of Pharmacy head Professor Larry Goodyer. (The allegation was that Goodyer failed to inform the society quickly enough about the upgrading in 2004 of students' marks on De Montfort's MPharm degree, allegedly done to mask a high failure rate.)

McDonalds announces plans to take on up to 10,000 'apprentices' by 2010, including 6,000 during 2009, and put them through level 2 courses. (In 2008, McDonalds was given awarding body powers, and instituted its own level 3 qualification in shift management. McDonalds employs 72,000 people across its 1,200 fast food outlets.)

Gordon Brown announces a plan to create an extra 35,000 apprenticeships, supported by an extra £140m of funding.

General secretary Sally Hunt writes to vice chancellors to say that UCU will ballot HE members on action over pay by the end of January unless ACAS-brokered negotiations with the UCEA start soon and make 'satisfactory progress'.

Week beginning 12/1/09

Findings of a survey about careers advice conducted by City and Guilds (CGLI) among more than 500 workers at 100 different companies include: 52 per cent had received no careers advice since leaving school; 47 per cent of those without qualifications said they had never had any helpful careers advice. Commenting, CGLI corporate affairs head Andrew Sich says: 'Most people would agree, if you rolled the clock back 20 years or so, we would have a better system. It's been very patchy since then'.

A government White Paper, *New Opportunities: Fair Chances for the Future*, proposes: incorporating apprenticeships in the UCAS framework by 2010; expanding to about 15 or 20 the number of research-intensive universities with compact schemes, thereby catering for about 10,000 students a year; increasing from 15,000 to 45,000 by 2010-11 the number of career development loans; making £1m available to National Challenge schools (ie schools where fewer than 30 per cent achieve five

A-C grade GCSEs including English and maths), to be spent on giving Key Stage 3 pupils 'an HE experience'.

The results of an aggregated ballot for industrial action by UCU members in eleven FE colleges selected from the 90 where management has failed to harmonise pay scales in line with the 2004 agreement are: turnout 496 (said by the *TES* to be 38 per cent); for strike action 337; against strike action 152; for action short of a strike 414; against such action 65. (The eleven colleges are: Nelson and Colne, Croydon, Greenwich Community, NW London, Doncaster, Dearne Valley, Rotherham College of Arts and Technology, Evesham and Malvern Hills, Sandwell, Sussex Downs and Askham Bryan.)

Manchester University professor Tom Whiston has been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Whiston is the most recent of the people who worked in the building where, between 1907 and 1919, Ernest Rutherford carried out experiments on nuclear materials, to be diagnosed with cancer.

Membership of the University of the Third Age (U3A) has risen from 185,000 (in 629 groups) on 1/4/07 to 208,000 (in 709 groups) now.

UCU branches at London Metropolitan University vote to declare a dispute over disciplinary procedures against coordinating committee chairperson Amanda Sackur. (Management claims that a one-day visit by Sackur to Nottingham University in her capacity as a UCU National Executive [NEC] member was not covered by the facilities agreement.)

DIUS is reportedly considering legislation that would require colleges and private training providers everywhere to cooperate in meeting training requirements at a sub-regional level, along the

lines adopted by the London Skills and Employment Board.

UCEA has agreed to accept the involvement of ACAS in attempts to reach agreement with UCU over HE pay.

Following industrial action by staff and a consultation exercise conducted by the (now Lib Dem controlled) local authority, in which 793 out of 883 respondents were against plans to turn Sinfin School in Derby into an academy sponsored by Derby College, the school is now to become a National Challenge Trust.

Liverpool University UCU believes that up to 200 redundancies are planned there, as part of moves by the vice chancellor, former HEFCE CEO Sir Howard Newby, to increase research income. (Newby moved to Liverpool after only 16 months as vice chancellor of the University of the West of England [UWE]. While at UWE he appointed his wife, Sheila Newby, as assistant vice chancellor. Spirit of Creation, a consultancy used by Newby at UWE, is also being used at Liverpool.)

A *TES* article highlights a trend for FE colleges to acquire private training companies, and to do so without publicising the fact, in order to get local employers to go on buying training from these providers, thus enabling to college to receive funding targeted by the Government on such provision. (It is suggested that companies would not buy training from the colleges themselves, because of 'rigidities' arising from staff conditions of service - eg protection against working through the night, holidays etc. Colleges recently acquiring training providers include Lincoln, Wiltshire and City of Bristol.)

Professors in the Leeds University Institute of Communication Studies circulate to all staff emails denying the validity of a survey by Leeds HR managers of 4,000 staff across

the university which identified high levels of stress in the Institute and claimed 'unachievable deadlines and unrealistic time pressures' were prevalent there.

Between 1998-99 and 2006-07, the number of undergraduate level art and design students rose by 23.6 per cent, as against 20.6 per cent for all subjects.

As part of its 'Project Headroom' drive to 'save' £12.5m, Salford University is to stop providing undergraduate degree programmes in acupuncture and complementary medicine, including traditional Chinese medicine, with 150 jobs likely to be lost overall, and 62 in the first phase.

A report by the Commons innovation, universities and skills committee concludes that progress towards the goals set by the Leitch review - on providing Britain with 'world-class skills' - has been too slow, and reskilling to help people out of unemployment is now a higher priority.

Responding to Welsh Assembly consultation on the rewrite of the 'Reaching Higher' HE strategy, UCU says the funding gap between universities in Wales and England is £61m per year in favour of the latter and growing.

For the second year running, not one HE institution features in the Stonewall organisation's top 100 of gay-friendly employers.

Features of the situation at Epping Forest (formerly Loughton) College of FE include: the principal, Peter Sadler, was dismissed by the governors in December; his union, the Association of College Managers (ACM) is defending him; Sadler had in the meantime sacked UCU branch chairperson Hugh Hobson, nominally for 'gross misconduct' but actually for union activity; strike action over this is expected shortly; an Ofsted report is due in February.

Universities UK (UUK) issues its annual HE pay and prices index. This claims that, between July 2007 and July 2008, increased costs to universities included: salaries up 11.7 per cent, National Insurance contributions up 10.1 per cent; spending on energy, water and sewerage up 12.9 per cent; rates, rents and insurance up 6.2 per cent; total rise 8.8 per cent as against an overall retail price index (RPI) rise of 4.6 per cent.

Planners approve a proposal by Rotherham College of Art and Technology for a £70m town centre development, to start in June 2009 and complete in 2013.

Following a dispute about one word in the minutes of the July meeting of the board of Leeds Metropolitan University, Simon Lee resigns as vice chancellor. The dispute is about whether he said fees in 2010-11 'would' or 'could' be raised from £2,000 now. (Apart from Greenwich on £2,835, all other universities charge the maximum of £3,145. Lee wanted to keep the current fee level but a group of governors think they must be raised to £3,000 to help counteract debts arising from a decision to spend £168m on building work.)

National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) director Alan Tuckett cites figures showing that in 2007-08 the number of FE students identifying themselves as 'white British' was down by 611,400 (nearly 22 per cent) from 2.8m in 2005-06.

Week beginning 19/1/09

In the wake of the 2008 RAE, there are fears that, unless HEFCE manipulates the algorithm determining actual funding, the research-intensive 'Russell Group' universities may 'lose' - ie not, as hitherto, be preferentially allocated - £100m or more. Actual allocations are due on 4/3/09. (The RAE

found some 'world-leading' or 'internationally excellent' research in 150 of the 159 participating institutions. At present, 29 universities share 82 per cent of HEFCE research funding.)

The CBI publishes *Reaching Further: Workforce Development through Employer-FE College Partnership*, in which case studies of current practice indicate how colleges might meet private employers' training requirements.

A UCU circular to members at London Met. University suggests that, on top of the 330 full time equivalent redundancies already demanded by management (equating to about 500 actual staff), more may be required because of an additional £38m overpayment by HEFCE between 2005 and 2008.

Points in a *TES* article about funding for FE college building include: on 17/12/08, the LSC national council told seven colleges which were expecting to be allocated money under the Building Colleges for the Future scheme that decisions on this would now be delayed till March 2009; the AOC claims another 15 colleges are affected by this; hence in December 22 colleges had to suspend building plans; 40-60 others are likely to be affected eventually; there was no overall public announcement by the LSC; whereas the first 21 projects completed under the scheme received about £16m each, the average claim now stands at £40m per college; LSC CEO Mark Haysom claims that only 42 colleges have not received recent investment in buildings; principals, including Warwickshire College principal and 157 Group head loan Morgan, are lobbying for a share of the £10bn set aside by the government for sustaining the construction industry.

A survey of 144 universities, carried out by the Ross Group of Development Directors and the

Council for Advancement and Support of Education in Europe, finds that: these institutions now employ over 700 staff to raise funds from former students ('alumni giving'); they are in touch with 6.2m former students; of these, 108,000 gave something in 2006-07; in that year, the 144 institutions between them raised £548m from alumni, up £131m on 2005-06; however, £52.5m of this was raised by institutions not surveyed the year before; of this £548m, Oxford and Cambridge together raised £279m.

The list of 25 FE principals who in 2008 completed the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS, formerly Centre for Excellence in Leadership) 'Principals Qualifying Programme' (PQP) includes Mark Dawe, responsible in 2006 for large-scale cuts and sackings at Oaklands College in Hertfordshire. (The programme was launched in March 2007. It costs just over £6,000 per person, of which DIUS pays £5,000, the individual college £1,000 and LSIS the remainder. 150 people altogether are either on it now or have completed it. Another 140 start this March. There is also an 'Aspiring Principals and Senior Leaders Programme'.)

The data-analysis company Evidence Ltd, which in 2008 was awarded a contract by HEFCE to pilot a data collection arrangement intended for use in the REF, has been bought by Thomson Reuters. Thomson Reuters also owns the Web of Science database, one of two such databases which are contenders for providing data when the REF gets underway.

The *Guardian* claims that when, in July 2008, the Joint Council for Qualifications issued figures on A-level results, it did so in such a way as to mask the fact that there had been an across-the-board improvement in grades achieved, allegedly to evade accusations of 'dumbing down'.

A Commons innovation, universities and skills committee report on the first 18 months of DIUS criticises its workings and 'budget management', focusing on the withdrawal of £100m of funding from students doing equivalent or lower qualifications (ELQs), and the diversion to HE of the Train to Gain underspend. Points on FE funding in the report include: £116m of the Train to Gain underspend was used by DIUS to cover a shortfall in HE student grants; officials now say £49m of this will not be returned to FE; a £115m underspend within the overall FE area was used by DIUS to pay off 'early costs' for, among other things, national skills academies; during 2009, a further £350m is to be moved from FE as such to cover training for small businesses; £223m has to be found for training unemployed people and new apprenticeships; some of the £2.3bn earmarked for rescuing the motor vehicle industry is likely to come from FE, as well as money for career development loans and £500 payments to carers and working mothers.

The committee also issues a report, *Re-skilling for Recovery*, which advocates that the Leitch proposals for upskilling the UK workforce be shelved in favour of the more urgent need to reskill those losing jobs in the recession.

A *Guardian* profile of West Notts College principal Asha Khemka, occasioned by her receipt of an OBE, reveals that her three children all went to private schools, including both sons to Harrow. She plans to replace the college's existing building with a £96m 'super-college'.

DIUS HE director general Ruth Thompson resigns from after less than two years (but 30 in the civil service). (As director of HE strategy, Thompson was responsible for the Government's 2001 manifesto commitment to give 50 per cent of 18-30 year olds HE experience by 2010.)

AQA and CGLI make public the results achieved by the 373 people who were the first to take their extended project qualification (EPQ) in November 2008, 50 of whom achieved an A* grade. (The EPQ is a compulsory part of the AQA baccalaureate and of 14-19 diplomas, as well as a freestanding qualification.)

Former Bexley College lecturer David Evnett becomes Shadow Minister for HE.

It emerges that, when sacked Epping Forest College Peter Sadler was principal of Bicton College in Devon, it was claimed at an industrial tribunal that he had lost the confidence of governors and had turned a small surplus into a deficit of nearly £600,000.

Final UCAS figures for 2008 show that a total of 456,627 were given HE places, as against 413,430 in 2007, up about 10 per cent.

UCU announces that the pay harmonisation strike will take place on 5/2/09 at eleven colleges.

AOC CEO Martin Doel claims that seven of the top ten places for A-level results in comprehensive state-funded institutions would go to 6th form colleges, these colleges being: Cardinal Newman (Preston), Winstanley (Wigan), Greenhead (Huddersfield), Hills Road (Cambridge), Peter Symonds (Winchester), and Farnborough SFC.

An Ofsted report on prison education maintains that the lack of national guidelines is leading, especially with those on long sentences, to a situation where few prisons are providing education which could cut re-offending.

UUK president elect and Exeter University vice chancellor Steve Smith tell a UCAS conference on modernising admissions, held in London, that the media and ministers confuse fair access (eg

to Oxbridge), which relates to about 3,000 high-achieving state school students per year, with widening participation, which relates to 360,000 16 year olds excluded from HE by failing to get five 'good' GCSEs.

Week beginning 26/1/09

A report written for HEFCE by PA Consulting estimates that the cost to universities of complying with regulatory demands (eg health and safety, widening participation, financial 'transparency') fell from about £240m in 2004 to about £190m in 2008.

Tory MP and Commons public accounts committee member Richard Bacon raises again in the Commons the allegations, going back to at least 2002, about the manipulation of registers, especially in the ESOL and computer imaging areas, at the former Manchester College of Arts and Technology (MANCAT), since merged with City College Manchester to form the Manchester College. MANCAT principal Peter Tavernor and deputy principal Barbara Forshaw are in charge of Manchester College. Bacon claims gagging clauses have prevented potential whistleblowers from persisting with their allegations.

In March, following the withdrawal of HEFCE funding from London University's Senate House library, this is likely to be merged with University College London (UCL) library. A voluntary redundancy call was sent earlier in January to University of London Research Library Services (ULRS) staff, and a cut of 17.5 per cent in full time equivalent posts is planned. Unison HE head Jon Richards says: 'Unison is building a cross-public-sector campaign in defence of all the libraries and their staff'. (The Senate House collection is valued at £280m.)

Ministers have agreed to a public accounts committee proposal that in 2010 there should be a repeat of the 2003 Skills for Life survey to gauge the effectiveness of the £5bn spent between 2001 and 2007 on adult literacy and numeracy. (The Government claims that over this period 5.7m adults took 12m courses, of which 7.6m led to recognised qualifications.)

Points in a *THE* feature on the 2009 Government grant letter (ie the document that the Government sends to HEFCE each January detailing HE funding for the current year) include: the total grant is £7,809m (up from £7,123, in 2008); this includes £5,076m for teaching and £1,509m for research; however the total includes £200m 'drawn down' (ie brought forward or borrowed) from the 2010-11 science and research capital budget; the 15,000 extra places planned for 2009-10 will now be cut to 10,000. [It later emerges that the correct figures for total grants are £7.322bn in 2008-09 and £7.59bn in 2009-10.]

Points in a survey of training managers in over 100 large companies (ie firms employing 1,000 or more people), including Xerox, Siemens, NHS, Pitney Bowes, Deutsche Bank, WHSmith, GSK, JPD, AstraZeneca, Barclays and Oracle, carried out between mid-December and mid-January by Business Smart International, apparently for the LSIS in conjunction with the CBI, include: half say their training budgets have been or will be cut during 2009; a third think they will stay the same; 16 per cent expect them to rise; 51 per cent expect to reduce 'off-site' training (ie training, such as release to FE colleges, not done by the company on its own premises); most indicate that training will be focused on a narrower section of employees than hitherto, especially on computer-simulated training in business acumen for sales,

finance or marketing specialists hoping to rise into management.

At a meeting with UCEA on 29/1/09, UCU reps agree to postpone till 6/2/09 a decision about whether to ballot for action on pay.

HEFCE announces that in allocating research funding on the basis of the 2008 RAE, it will use its 'quality-related' funding stream to 'ring-fence the proportion of funding currently flowing to STEM [science, technology, engineering and maths] subjects' (*THE*). The total to be allocated via this stream will be £1.572bn, up from £1.436bn in 2008-09. (Since such research is concentrated in Russell Group institutions, this measure will have the effect of continuing the drive to concentrate research funding there despite the RAE's findings of widespread excellence. No funding will go to research rated as of 'only' 'national significance'.)

John Denham and the LSC jointly appoint Sir Andrew Foster, who in 2004 chaired the report on the future of FE, to investigate the difficulties surrounding the Building Colleges for the Future scheme. (LSC officials are reportedly telling principals who seek money for new buildings to 'explore the possibility' of delays of up to two years, thereby postponing public spending until after the next election.)

Publication by HEFCE of papers relating to board meetings reveal that, following the 2008 grant letter from John Denham, which ordered the HE sector to find £500m of savings (ie £127m by DIUS itself and £363m by HEFCE), the latter has decided to save £236m by 'reprioritisation' (ie cuts, including to ELQs) and a further £127m by 'improved use of resources'.

Redundancies seem likely in colleges in Wales, following a cut of just over 1 per cent in budgets allocated by the Welsh Assembly.

Agreement looks near in the dispute between UCU and Nottingham Trent University over management's attempt to renege on the facilities agreement there.

After talks brokered by ACAS, the UCU branch at Epping Forest College suspends its strike action against the sacking of chairperson Hugh Hobson and disciplinaries against other members.

Plymouth University UCU chairperson Mike Sheaff condemns as insensitive the decision by management there to put £2.5m towards the cost of a city sports centre at the same time as cutting over 220 jobs.

The LSIS awards 'beacon' status to training provision at the Atomic Weapons Establishment in Aldermaston.

The appeal hearing by former Epping Forest College principal Peter Sadler against his sacking takes place.

The AOC releases an analysis of the 2008 National Student Survey indicating that a higher proportion of those doing HE courses in FE say they are happy with assessment and feedback than is the case with students at university (77 and 67 per cent respectively, as against 73 and 57 per cent). However, only 31 per cent of those in FE 'agreed strongly' that they were satisfied with their courses.

Week beginning 2/2/09

Sit-ins by students protesting at the Israeli government's assault on Gaza take place at Bradford, Birmingham, Cambridge, Essex, Leeds, Manchester Met., Newcastle, Nottingham, Oxford, Queen Mary London, Sussex and Warwick Universities, as well as at King's College London, LSE and SOAS.

Leeds Met. University governors email staff to inform them that vice

chancellor Simon Lee has resigned and will leave the institution altogether in summer 2009.

Further details about the background to this include: at the October governors meeting, Lee accused chair of governors Ninian Watt of tampering with a minute of the July meeting about the level of fees; Watt treated this as an attack on his integrity, and on 11/11/09 gave Lee an ultimatum to resign or face suspension; staff and management allegations of bullying by Lee allegedly run to double figures; two weeks before the October board meeting, the governors agreed to give Lee a £20,000 pay increase; the UCU branch says that: 'No staff member should be forced out on these terms'.

The Institute for Learning (IFL) publishes a 5-year plan for itself (209-2014). It claims to have 180,000 'members' (ie FE lecturers forced to join it or lose their jobs). It has so far not held a single 'disciplinary' hearing.

The *Guardian* publishes the findings of an investigation carried out for the paper by market analysts Caci based on a random sample of 1,000 1st year undergraduates' home postcodes supplied by each of 17 universities. These 17,000 postcodes were then compared with a classification of postcodes in relation to social group held by the Acorn demographic classification service, which uses 56 grades from richest to poorest. Findings include: those in Acorn's top category constitute 1.9 per cent of the population but 8.4 per cent of the students at universities where entry requirements are three Bs or above at A-level; the 12 richest categories (for which the average household income is £42,500) account for 23.8 per cent of the population but 54.6 per cent of students at these universities; a further 20 per cent of all students come from the 13th category, where average income is £39,700; the 13 lowest categories, covering 21.8 per cent of the

population, make up less than 6.3 per cent of students in these universities.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) deputy director of academies policy, finance and performance, writes to all sponsors of academies to tell them that, during January, schools minister Jim Knight has decided to place control over the running, but not over the start-up, of academies under the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA). (YPLA is one of the quangos to be brought into existence when the LSC is wound up in 2010, and will mainly be responsible for overseeing local authority control of 16-19 education in both schools and colleges).

The Universities Superannuation Scheme will shortly declare a funding surplus of £707m, but this depends on the assumption that its investments will outperform government bonds by at least 2 per cent. If this does not happen, funding available for staff pensions could fall short by more than £11bn of what is required.

The AOC's 'mixed economy' group (ie FE colleges doing significant amounts of HE work) discusses a proposal, from AOC president David Collins, that his plans for colleges to provide vocational degrees validated by a revived version of the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA, the body which formerly validated degrees in polytechnics) should start in 2012, rather than in 2014 or 2015 as previously suggested.

The Ofsted report on Epping Forest College - based on a full inspection during December - finds that, other than teaching, virtually all aspects of its running, including the governors' activities as well as those of managers, are on the lowest grade. (There were three principals during 2008. Since the sacking of Peter Sadler, interim principal Jeannie Wright is in charge.)

13 MPs have signed an early day motion by Islington North MP Jeremy Corbyn urging London Met University to explore 'all potential non-staff savings'. It emerges also that: a London Met board meeting as long ago as October 2007 discussed a possible clawback of funding by HEFCE; in 2006-07, vice chancellor Brian Roper's pay package was worth £276,000.

HE Statistics Agency (HESA) figures show that between 2006-07 and 2007-08: UK full time 1st year undergraduate enrolments rose 5 per cent, to 459,395; total student enrolments across UK universities remained virtually stable, at 2,306,105 in 2007-08; within this, the numbers starting part-time undergraduate courses in the UK fell by 3 per cent (2 per cent in England alone).

Hertfordshire, Kingston and Portsmouth Universities all allegedly face repayments to HEFCE for 'unreported non-completions' during 2007-08.

Figures for degree results in 2007-08 show that: the total achieving a classified degree was 308,550, up from 291,380 in 2006-07; of these, 13 per cent (41,150 students) achieved a first, and 48 per cent (148,265 students) an upper second; 95,145 achieved a lower second; 23,990 achieved a third or a pass; the percentage of all graduates achieving a good honours degree (ie a first or upper second) was 61, up from 60 in 2006-07.

Manchester University shuts off two rooms in its Rutherford building and relocates the staff working in them.

Following a refusal by the High Court to issue an injunction restraining the university of East London (UEL) from continuing with an investigation into the leadership abilities of suspended vice chancellor Martin Everett, UCU comments: 'It seems that at UEL the board is answerable to no one . . .

UCU believes that the role of governors must be reviewed urgently; the UEL episode reveals how damaging are the methods of the corporate boardroom when applied to an institution of higher education'.

Asked at a conference whether the review of HE fees, scheduled for 2009, would be completed this year, HE minister David Lammy says: 'No'.

Week beginning 9/2/09

UCAS figures show that: applicants from FE colleges (including 6th form colleges) accounted for 27 per cent of all those accepted onto HE courses in 2004, and for 34 per cent in 2008; the number thus accepted in 2004 was 90,240, and in 2008 137,503 (a 52 per cent increase); over the same period, the number accepted from schools rose by 46 per cent, from 159,17 to 231,866.

In a *Guardian* 'Comment' article on the running of universities, Gill Evans, prominent in the CAFAS organisation, concludes; 'In a university, you have to have your infrastructure to support teaching and research. The case for a superstructure of independent governors has not been made. The discredited ideology compressing what used to be the good, thick 'academic-activity' filling of the sandwich to a thin layer of ersatz fish paste now shouts for radical review.'

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills, launched by the Government in 2008, issues its first report, focused on 'employability skills' and 'work etiquette'.

The University of Winchester is to offer a degree in 'the liberal arts', combining elements from the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and fine arts. This will initially run as half of a joint-honours programme, with about 20 students starting in 2010.

DIUS director general of science and innovation Professor Adrian Smith, - ie the second highest official there - uses the annual Tribal education lecture to attack aspects of government education policy, including 14-19 diplomas.

The Association of Graduate Recruiters' winter survey of the job market for people with degrees shows that the number of vacancies has fallen for the first time in six years, and projects a drop of 5 per cent for 2009 as a whole.

As UCU members at Epping Forest College prepare to take strike action and the ACM says members should contact them before applying for jobs there, figures from the minutes of governors' meetings reveal deficits there in 2005-06 of £800,000, in 2006-07 of £480,000, and in 2007-08 of £708,000.

UCU is to appeal against the verdict, announced this week, of an industrial tribunal, originally held in September 2008, at which three members at Edge Hill University in Lancashire unsuccessfully lodged claims of unfair dismissal arising from new contracts imposed by management on 70 staff there after the 2004 framework agreement.

The Government makes public the content of its Apprenticeships, Children, Skills and Learning Bill, including more detail about FE funding after the LSC is wound up.

In her inaugural address as professor of vocational education at London University Institute of Education, former General Studies lecturer Lorna Unwin maintains that the UK has a chaotic approach to vocational education 'as a result of deep-rooted prejudice against and ignorance of many of the occupations that not only make life possible, but are also vital for a sustainable economy'. Of 14-19 diplomas, she says: 'Diplomas are a form of obese cuckoo in the

education nest, stuffed full of academic requirements which will work hard to push out the more expensive and complex vocational component. This cuckoo may well fly . . . But its chances of survival would be far greater if it was allowed to concentrate on developing its vocational identity'.

Following strikes at eight colleges on 5/2/09, UCU announces that 40 colleges of about 90 which have refused to implement the pay scale harmonisation provisions of the 2004 pay agreement have now re-entered talks, leaving 51 that could still be targeted for action.

Figures made public by UCU treasurer Alan Carr show that: the sale of the former NATFHE HQ at Britannia Street in London may bring in £20m; £5.5m has already been realised from the sale of the former AUT's Tavistock Place offices; in 2008, UCU spent £5m more than it received in income; a further deficit of £1m has been budgeted for in 2009; last year, £1.8m was spent on redundancy payments to staff; a loan of £14m has been taken out to finance the move to new offices. (40 staff were made redundant, the average payment having been £47,500.)

The DCSF issues for consultation the proposed content of 14-19 diplomas in languages, science and humanities. Final content is due in July 2009, and the qualifications will run from 2011.

Work and pensions secretary James Purnell suspends bidding for welfare-to-work programme contracts after potential providers object to the arrangement by which only 20 per cent of funding is to be made available up front.

Cumbria University vice chancellor Christopher Carr issues a memo revealing that the 2007-08 trading deficit was £5.5m rather than the £4m predicted, and proposing to cut wage costs by £2.56m in 2009-10.

Mr Justice Forbes dismisses claims for judicial reviews brought against Ed Balls and Camden Council by Gillian Chandler, a Camden parent, on behalf of the group of UCL UCU members and others campaigning against plans by the Council to open an academy school with UCL as a sponsor.

Week beginning 16/2/09

An NUS survey based on replies from student unions at 23 universities reveals that only 14 per cent of the students thus covered think their universities deal fairly with complaints.

According to NIACE, DIUS, having issued in 18/12/08 figures showing that between 2005-06 and 2007-08 the number of adults taking courses below level 2 fell from 547,000 to 340,000 (38 per cent down), then issued on 22/12/08 a correction according to which the 2007-08 figure should be 284,600 (48 per cent down).

The UCU branch at Reading University describes as 'pointless and ill thought out' a proposal by management to close its School of Health and Social Care with effect from 30/9/11. Other likely cuts in HE include moves by Westminster University to close its BA in ceramics course (based at Northwick Park), and plans by the University of the Creative Arts (ie the former Kent and Surrey Institutes of Art and Design) to make 80 staff redundant.

According to the ConstructionSkills sector skills council, nearly 1,500 construction apprentices have been laid off in the recent past, for 30 per cent of whom it has found new places.

UCAS figures for the period to 15/1/09 reveal that the number of applications for undergraduate places by then was 464,167, up from 430,489 over 2008.

Points in a *Guardian* feature on FE funding include: according to AOC president David Collins 'colleges face a financial tsunami that may well sweep into a major crisis'; this is largely due to the fact that, because of the DCSF/DIUS arrangement, unspent adult funding cannot be used to support 16-19 provision; not a single college is thought to have met its target for adult recruitment as agreed with the LSC; Northern College, the adult residential institution in Barnsley, is making eight redundancies, six of them compulsory, because of a £300,000 deficit; Leeds College of Building finance director David Pullein, who chairs the College Finance Directors Group, says that 'redundancies in colleges are inevitable'.

A HEFCE report, *PhD Study: Trends and Profiles 1996-97 to 2004-05*, shows that the numbers of UK-domiciled students starting full time PhD study in that period increased by under 200, to reach 8,501, whereas starters from the EU and elsewhere rose by 50 per cent, reaching 8,418.

Commenting on a report on FE policy published by the City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development and based on interviews with lecturers and training providers, senior policy and practice manager Kate Shoemith says: 'Most of the people we spoke to felt that the Government was hitting the target but missing the point'.

The Sustainability of Learning and Teaching in English Higher Education, a report prepared for HEFCE by a group chaired by Goldsmiths College warden Geoffrey Crossick, maintains that 'without some change, the quality of the student experience and the reputation and contribution of English higher education will suffer', and recommends that funding for teaching move towards the levels in other OECD countries.

The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) plans to open an FE research and development centre through which FE staff on 6 month secondments could produce practice-oriented research.

In a response to John Denham's consultation on the development of HE, Dame Marjorie Scardino, CEO of Pearson Publishing, which owns the Edexcel exam board, says that: 'The overarching purpose of a university is to teach students to be excited by ideas and to develop the skills of observation and critical thinking. . .'

Rugby (private) School has appointed Emma Williams to act as 'philosopher in residence', holding discussions with students to support them with the extended projects which can be done either as a free-standing AS-level or as part of the AQA 'bacc' qualification, and will also be compulsory within 14-19 diplomas.

The group campaigning against Camden Council's plans for a UCL-sponsored academy lodges an appeal against Mr Justice Forbes decision to refuse a judicial review.

DIUS issues a document, *Learning Together to be Safe*, in which it is alleged that groups linked to Al-Qaeda are targeting FE colleges in the hopes of recruiting students as terrorists.

Week beginning 23/2/09

Lord (formerly Sir Ron) Dearing, architect of HE top-up fees, dies of cancer at 78. In 2000, Dearing, who had no background in FE, was also responsible for decreeing that Core Skills should be re-named Key Skills, and for 'disintegrating' this provision from mainstream course elements.

Without warning, BAE Systems announces that it will not exercise an option to continue the £8.4

Network Enabled Capability through Innovative Systems Engineering programme, causing this to close in 2009 rather than 2011. The project, concerned with enhancing military effectiveness, linked researchers in ten universities and was one third funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council. BAE simultaneously announces a pre-tax profit of £2.37bn in 2008, nearly twice the 2007 figure.

The Government's Apprenticeships, Children, Skills and Learning Bill, one clause in which winds up the LSC, has its second reading in the Commons.

The Bill also places a responsibility on local authorities to provide for the education of young offenders. Youth Justice Board figures cited in a *TES* feature on this include: in December 2008, 2,715 people under 18 were in custody; of these, 2,557 were male and 158 female; 574 were on remand; the average age is 17; over 50 per cent have literacy and numeracy levels below those expected for an 11 year old.

In a *THE* interview, in which he also says: 'I am minded to conclude that in the future we do need a significant concentration of research activity' (ie cuts to non-elite institutions), John Denham says, of the situation at London Met.: 'Other universities have run into difficulties before, and ways forward have been found to put them on a sound footing. I think it is really important that ministers don't suggest that we want to assume responsibility for what is done in these individual cases . . .'

A survey to be published in March in the prison newspaper *Inside Time* will show that 41 per cent of the inmates polled consider that frequent moves between jails have led to them failing to complete courses.

The UCU branch at London Met. University estimates that the 550

full time equivalent reductions in staff numbers proposed in a 19/2/09 email by vice chancellor Brian Roper could equate to 700 people (ie one in four of the workforce) losing their employment there.

London Met. management drops its attempt to discipline UCU branch chairperson and NEC member Amanda Sackur for attending a UCU meeting in Nottingham.

A survey conducted in November and December 2008 by Ipsos Mori for Ofqual finds that only 26 per cent of the school teachers polled claim to know a great deal or fair amount about 14-19 diplomas (down from 32 per cent in 2007).

In a *Guardian* interview, Leeds University vice chancellor and newly elected Russell Group chairperson Michael Arthur, asked about 14-19 diplomas, says: 'We'd like to see a lot more of that [ie 'independent learning, critical thinking, project work'] in secondary education, so we're delighted by some of the changes in the 14-19 curriculum'.

At a cabinet meeting held in Southampton, Gordon Brown announces 21,000 new apprenticeships in the public sector - including 7,500 in local government, 5,000 in the NHS and 4,500 in schools and children's services. However, it emerges during Commons questions that many of these will consist of training for existing employees. DIUS also announces an arrangement by which apprentices made redundant before completing their training will have six months 'grace' to continue with it. However, this will not involve any payment of wages.

The Government is preparing to revise, from Summer 2009, Schedule 7A of the 1988 Education Reform Act (ie the Act which removed polytechnics from local authority control and made them

independent corporations which became universities after 1992) in such a way as to allow them to have much smaller governing bodies (eg seven members) and exclude staff and student governors.

The AOC invites nominations for the post of president, vacant on 31/7/09.

Bristol University vice chancellor Eric Thomas has written to all staff to say that, despite a £6.1m surplus, redundancies and other staff savings may shortly be necessary.

Having announced on 31/7/08 its first ever deficit (of £266,000) Hertfordshire University initiates a 30 day consultation, implying an intention to make between 20 and 100 redundancies.

After declaring a £1.8m surplus on 31/7/08 (down from £2.6m the year before), Lincoln University is consulting on proposals to make eight senior academics redundant.

Stockport College principal Peter Roberts is appointed principal of the new Leeds City College, to be formed on 1/4/09 from the merger of Leeds College of Technology, Thomas Danby College and Park Lane College. This institution will have 60,000 students and a turnover of £70m.

More than 100 MPs have signed an early day motion condemning the loss of 1.4m adult education places and welcoming the launch of the Campaigning Alliance for Lifelong Learning, due to lobby Parliament on 25/2/09.

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.

100 years on from the Ruskin strike . . .

Colin Waugh, author of the new PSE pamphlet 'Plebs'. *The Lost Legacy of Independent Working-Class Education (details p2), summarises the events that led to the Ruskin College students' strike of 1909 and the foundation of the Plebs League and Central Labour College.*

In October 1908 industrial workers who were union-sponsored students at Ruskin College in Oxford founded what they called the League of the 'Plebs'. Former students who had returned to their jobs as miners, railwayworkers, textile workers and engineers, supported them. From January 1909 they began to organise socialist classes in South Wales, the North East, Lancashire and other working-class areas. Under the umbrella of the National Council of Labour Colleges (NCLC), there were, by 1926-27, 1,201 classes like this across Britain, with 31,635 students. Many classes that had begun in this way were still running in 1964. In February 1909 the students launched the monthly *'The Plebs' Magazine*, which continued till 1970. Between 26th March and 6th April they conducted the 'Ruskin College strike' (actually a boycott of lectures). And in September 1909, with union and socialist support which they had built, they opened the Central Labour College, which survived until 1929.

Working class political independence demands that workers produce for themselves, from amongst their own ranks, thinkers and organisers who remain answerable to them. The Ruskin students and ex-students understood this and went a long way towards creating the mechanisms necessary for achieving it. What was the background to their actions?

After Chartism collapsed in 1848, ruling class Christian socialists decided that, as well as armed force and the 'dull compulsion of economic relations', an ideological weapon was needed against any future resurgence of working-class self-assertion. The answer, in their view, was to create within the working class a layer of class collaborationists. They saw adult education as a good method for doing this. One product of this approach was the university extension movement.

During the 1870s Cambridge, Oxford and London Universities all developed extension networks. They sent lecturers all over the country to give talks on topics of general interest, often to very large audiences. Some working-class groups – for example Northumberland miners in the 1880s - did attend extension lectures. However, by about 1900 it was clear that working-class people in general, and union activists in particular, were rejecting extension. It was equally clear that socialist ideas were gaining support amongst a growing minority of militants. (This was a period when some workers would go without food to buy a secondhand book, and risk the sack by reading it at work.)

In 1899 two American socialists, Walter Vrooman and Charles Beard, tried to create a movement for working-class adult education in England. They were inspired by the ideas of the former Oxford university professor and art critic, John Ruskin. They set up Ruskin 'halls' in several working class centres, a system of correspondence tuition, and local discussion groups linked to it, plus the residential Ruskin college in Oxford. (The money for this came from Vrooman's wife.) At the start, Ruskin in Oxford was a mixture of utopian colony and labour college. But soon working-class activists sponsored by union branches came to form the overwhelming majority of its students.

In 1902, Vrooman and Beard returned to the US. Now the college had to look for other sources of funding.

In the late 1890s, Albert Mansbridge offered the extension movement a way of recruiting and holding working-class students. Mansbridge was a working-class product of the extension movement itself. He was also an ardent Anglo-Catholic convert. He particularly enjoyed mingling with the bishops and upper-class tutors who ran the Oxford Extension Delegacy. Mansbridge's idea was that, instead of one-off public lectures to large audi-

ences, they should provide classes for small groups, focused on social, political and economic topics. This would provide a route for selected working-class students to progress to Oxford itself, where they should do a special diploma in economics. The result would eventually be a layer of union activists and working-class politicians who believed in harmony between employers and workers. Sir Robert Morant, the chief civil servant at the Board of Education, wrote a clause that empowered local authorities to fund classes of this type into the 1902 Education Act.

In 1903 Mansbridge founded the organisation which eventually became the WEA. The Oxford Extension Delegacy backed this at once. As well as this, a group of young, upper class, Christian socialist Oxford tutors aligned themselves with Mansbridge's approach. They formed a semi-secret group, the 'Catiline Club', which aimed to convince broader sections of the establishment that this was the way forward. The rising tide of strikes in the early 1900s made this solution increasingly attractive.

The WEA/Extension project needed an institution which could function as a halfway house between tutorial classes and Oxford University. Ruskin College was earmarked for this role.

Along with the growth of working class self organisation in this period, new forms of rank and file unionism and socialism from below began to appear. These included movements for industrial (as opposed to craft) unionism, and syndicalism. In 1906 a Liberal government came to power, and gave several union leaders jobs supervising its welfare reforms. This caused the interest in rank and file control to grow stronger. The poor performance of the 37 MPs elected for the first time as the Labour Party added to rank and file dissatisfaction.

In this situation, ideas put forward by the US academic Daniel De Leon became influential. The Socialist Labour Party group in Scotland published *Two Pages from Roman History*, a reprint of two talks given by De Leon in 1902. In the first of these, De Leon drew a parallel as follows. In Rome, after the plebs - the poor and working people - withdrew from the city in 494 BC, the ruling class created 'tribunes of the people'. These functionaries were supposed to represent the plebs, but in fact ended up by selling them out. De Leon argued that the mainstream trade union bureaucrats were doing the same for the working class of his day.

Another factor which affected the growth of socialist ideas amongst workers in England and Wales at this time was the character of the main universities. Because of the 1789, 1830 and 1848 revolutions, universities on the continent produced

a thin layer of educated people who were prepared to throw in their lot with the working-class movement. (Examples include Marx, Plekhanov, Kautsky, Lenin and Luxemburg.) But in England the two main universities - and especially Oxford - reflected the compromise between the bourgeoisie and aristocracy at the end of the Civil War. They were dominated by the need to produce Anglican clergymen, civil servants and colonial administrators. If Oxford graduates became socialists at all, they became Christian socialists like those who backed Mansbridge, not revolutionaries. Working class activists here, then, had to do most of their thinking in isolation from educated people. This forced them to rely on reading the main socialist texts for themselves. On top of this, many texts which we now think of as essential had not yet been translated into English.

In 1907 the TUC leadership gave in to rank and file pressure, and put out an appeal across the whole movement to support Ruskin College. This meant that Ruskin might have for the first time a reasonably secure future as a labour college. The leaders of the WEA/Extension alliance realised that they must seize control before the chance to incorporate Ruskin in their project was lost.

The WEA annual conference in August 1907 was held during the Oxford Extension Delegacy annual meeting. The Portsmouth shipyard worker and Labour councillor J. MacTavish made a speech in favour of tutorial classes. The Delegacy then set up a joint working party with the WEA to report on *Oxford and Working-Class Education*. This report was written by Mansbridge and MacTavish for the WEA, and members of the Catiline Club for the university. It recommended tutorial classes throughout the country. These in turn would select working-class students to enter Oxford. The report also put forward detailed proposals about syllabuses, teaching methods and how extension tutors could handle Marxist ideas. It endorsed the idea that Ruskin should become the main entry point for tutorial students progressing to Oxford.

In January 1908, the WEA opened its first tutorial classes, in Longton in Staffordshire and in Rochdale. The Catiline Club member R.H. Tawney taught both of them, and workers signed up. This was evidence that Mansbridge's approach could work in practice.

The students who were at Ruskin in 1907 had their own ideas about the adult education which workers needed. They called this Independent Working-Class Education (IWCE). It was flatly opposed to the WEA/Extension model as set out in *Oxford and Working-Class Education*. Instead of revering mainstream HE like Mansbridge did, they saw this as 'orthodox' education which reflected the

class interests of the well-off and must therefore necessarily miseducate workers. They thought that the content of adult education for workers should be Marxist economics, industrial history and philosophy, which to them meant the capacity to reason things out for yourself. Like Mansbridge, they favoured a participatory teaching and learning method. Their method, however, was borrowed from the SLP group in Scotland. It involved close reading and small group discussion of classic socialist texts. It aimed to produce activists who could hold their own in arguments, including against ruling class spokespersons. They had already begun to use this approach amongst themselves.

Once an interim version of *Oxford and Working-Class Education* had come out (in mid 1908) Oxford University management began to intervene directly in the running of Ruskin College. A key supporter of the extension project who was already on the staff of Ruskin, H. B. Lees Smith, was moved to a position of increased power, and he then appointed two of his friends as lecturers. The executive committee of the College was restructured so that the authority of the principal appointed by Vrooman and Beard, the socialist Dennis Hird, was undermined. Compulsory exams (called 'Revision Papers') were introduced, to control which students could go on to a second year. The executive tried to ban Hird from teaching sociology. Students were banned from speaking in public. Because students were starting to challenge the newly appointed lecturers about their teaching of economics, and even to stay away from their lectures, all lectures were made compulsory.

During the autumn term of 1908, Ruskin students kept on being invited to tea with Oxford tutors, and prominent figures from the university came to speak to them in the college. The most famous such visit was in October 1908, by the chancellor of Oxford and former viceroy of India, Lord Curzon. He and Dennis Hird clashed in front of the students about whether Ruskin should relate to the university or to the labour movement.

The Extensionists were also lobbying in the House of Lords and putting articles into the press. In one article, the recently-appointed Ruskin vice-principal Charles Sydney Buxton wrote: 'The necessary common bond is education in citizenship, and it is this which Ruskin College tries to give – conscious that it is only a new patch on an old garment, an idealist experiment *in faece Romuli*'. This was a posh way of saying that the Ruskin students were the dregs of British imperial society.

The students and ex-students mobilised against the WEA/Extension attempt to seize control. In October 1908, they formed the League of the 'Plebs'. (This name was a reference to De Leon's

pamphlet but also as a response to Buxton's article.) Later in the term they published a pamphlet, *The Burning Question of Education*. (This title echoes another pamphlet by De Leon, *The Burning Question of Trade Unionism*). In this, they argued that Ruskin should have 'a more satisfactory relation to the Labour Movement'. In January 1909, they began setting up local classes. In February they launched their magazine.

Early in March the Ruskin executive demanded Dennis Hird's resignation, on the grounds that he was failing to maintain discipline. This was a response to his confrontation with Lord Curzon, which had shown that he was determined to stand with the students. On 26th March, Hird told the students that he had resigned. A meeting later that day agreed overwhelmingly to boycott all lectures except Hird's until he was reinstated. The students also agreed to conduct their own classes as part of the action. This action – the Ruskin 'strike' – continued until 6th April, and became national headlines. Nobody could believe that a small group of workers would take on the most prestigious university in the world.

During the strike, the Ruskin governors endorsed the decision to sack Hird. Opinion amongst the strikers now swung in favour of setting up a Central Labour College (CLC) outside, rather than continuing the struggle within Ruskin. When the executive closed Ruskin for two weeks and agreed to pay their fares back to the areas they came from, they called off the strike. Many went home to build on the classes started in January. One, the Bermondsey carpenter George Sims, whose scholarship was withdrawn at the governors' instigation, stayed in Oxford.

Between April and August 1909, 29 of the most resolute strikers, led by Sims and an ex-student, the Mardy miners' agent Noah Ablett, organised for the launch of the CLC, both on the ground in Oxford, and across the union and left-wing movements. At the first 'Plebs' annual 'meet' on 8th August, 200 people from a range of organisations agreed to back Sims' proposals for the CLC. This opened at the beginning of September elsewhere in Oxford, with 20 union-sponsored students and Hird as warden.

The editorial in *'The Plebs' Magazine* issue 1, probably written by Sims, says that the League of the 'Plebs' 'endeavours to permeate the Labour Movement in all its ramifications with the desire for human liberation'. Because the struggle between class collaboration and independent working-class self-organisation in post-compulsory education is still going on now, we need to find out everything we can about the strengths and weaknesses of the IWCE movement which the Ruskin strikers started.

Darwinism

Philippe Harari *suggests an approach that could be used with students*

Possible discussion questions:

1. Should creationism and intelligent design be taught alongside evolution in schools?
2. Are they equivalent theories, or are they objectively inferior in that they are not based on empirical evidence, and evolution is?
3. In modern society, we have no hesitation in using eugenic techniques of selective breeding to create particular characteristics in farm or domestic animals. Are there ways in which we apply this to humans - ie do humans in modern society engage in selective breeding?
4. Does scanning foetuses and terminating them if they have certain genetic conditions constitute eugenics? Can you think of any other examples that might be considered to be eugenics?
5. How do you believe that human beings will evolve in the next few million years (assuming that we do not destroy the planet before we get the chance)? Bear in mind that a characteristic can only evolve if (a) it is hereditary, and (b) it gives the organism a higher chance of reproducing.

2009 sees the 200th anniversary of Charles Darwin's birth, and the 150th anniversary of his book *The Origin of Species*. Recently, the theory of evolution seems to have developed into an ideological battleground. In September 2008, Michael Reiss resigned as Director of Education at the Royal Society after suggesting that science lessons in schools should tackle creationism and intelligent design. Last month a survey carried out by the Theos thinktank suggested that 10 per cent of people in the UK believe in young Earth creationism - that God created the world some time in the last 10,000 years. About 12 per cent believed in intelligent design, the idea that evolution alone is not enough to explain the structures of living organ-

isms. Only 25 per cent of people in the UK believe that Charles Darwin's theory of evolution is 'definitely true'.

The evolution versus creationism/intelligent design debate is only one controversy relating to Darwinism. In the early 20th century, Darwin's theories led directly to eugenicism, first in the UK and later in the USA and Nazi Germany, where it was referred to as 'racial hygiene'. Eugenics involves speeding up and controlling the evolutionary process by selective breeding. In the natural evolutionary process, the characteristics that best help an organism to cope with the environment endure through the process of survival of the fittest; if an antelope is born with a slightly longer neck

than is normal, it may be able to reach higher leaves and survive longer and breed more often, passing on its 'long-necked' genes to its offspring. After a million years it becomes a giraffe. In eugenics, we can decide ourselves which characteristics we wish to encourage and which to eliminate, based on our own prejudices. Eugenics only works if the characteristics chosen as worthy of encouragement or elimination are actually genetically transmitted from parent to child. One of the mistakes the early eugenicists made was to believe that, for example, you can eliminate 'feeble-mindedness' by preventing people with learning difficulties from 'breeding'. This ignores the fact that very few learning difficulties are inherited; most are due to accidental brain damage at birth or in infancy. Even Down Syndrome, which is clearly a genetic condition, is not actually inherited - it is an accidental chromosomal abnormality.

The eugenicists in the UK and the USA tried to create a healthier society by a programme of sterilisation and birth control. In fact, Marie Stopes' work was not inspired by a desire to give people control over their sexuality but to prevent people from the lower classes having too many children and thereby degrading the gene pool. The Nazis did sterilise groups of people and, of course, killed millions in their attempts to populate the world with the Aryan master race. They also encouraged people with 'good' characteristics to breed, and young SS officers were paired off with blonde, blue-eyed healthy women in order to produce a new generation of Aryans.

We can never know what Darwin would have thought of Nazi racial hygiene, but he is quoted as saying: 'With savages, the weak in body or mind are soon eliminated; and those that survive commonly exhibit a vigorous state of health. We civilized men, on the other hand, do our utmost to check the process of elimination; we build asylums for the imbecile, the maimed, and the sick; we institute poor-laws; and our medical men exert their utmost skill to save the life of every one to the last moment. There is reason to believe that vaccination has preserved thousands, who from a weak constitution would formerly have succumbed to smallpox. Thus the weak members of civilized societies propagate their kind. No one who has attended to the breeding of domestic animals will doubt that this must be highly injurious to the race of man. It is surprising how soon a want of care, or care wrongly directed, leads to the degeneration of a domestic race; but excepting in the case of man himself, hardly any one is so ignorant as to allow his worst animals to breed' (Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, pp133-134).

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Trade union education: some thoughts from the past (3.)

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

This is the third article based on an interview, conducted on 24 July 2006, with Geoffrey Stuttard, who spent his working life till 1986 in trade union education. In the first article (PSE 48), Geoffrey explored the distinction between the liberal education of trade unionists and trade union education itself. The second article (PSE 49) described his work in the WEA, presenting a lively picture of the key industries of post-war Britain. In this, the third article, Geoffrey considers the problems of dealing with controversial issues, international aspects of his work and the question of social mobility.

Tackling policy issues:

Incomes policy

We were often required, of course, to tackle controversial issues in our courses. In 1969, as tutors, we were worried about incomes policy. We thought prices and incomes policy was something to be talked about and discussed, whatever form it took, and it wasn't being understood generally around the country. What we needed was lots of industrial tutors to run classes on this, who would be above the battle as it were. We'd got a good reputation actually with both managers and government, and everybody. At one time, in the Labour Government in 1974, there were 50 MPs who'd got an industrial tutor background.

Anyway, it was no use going to the Ministry of Education, because they were difficult for money, but George Brown had a Ministry of Productivity, I think it was called [Department of Economic Affairs], and we got an appointment there. We said, 'Look, wouldn't it be a good idea if you provided the money to appoint 50 or so industrial relations tutors who can run courses all over the country on incomes policy?' Our contact said, 'What a good idea! Who are you?' I said, 'Well, we're just six people from the Society of Industrial Tutors.' He said, 'Well, you've got to get backing from - where do you come from?' I said, 'Well, from extra-mural departments and the WEA and so on.' He said, 'Well, you go back to them and get it through them.' The extra-mural departments and the WEA turned it down. They said you'll unbalance our departments. So that was a missed opportunity.

Was running courses on incomes policy divisive? Well, not really, because it was going to be prices and incomes policy, and we weren't going to say prices and incomes policy was a good thing, we were going

to say only what it was. That's what upset me about the *In Place of Strife* White Paper - people hadn't read it [see note below]. At the docks meeting, when I talked about the document with this group, one man put his hand up and said, 'Useless this! I'm against it.' He was the secretary of the Lightermen's Union. Now, the year before, he'd been fined £1,000 for secondary picketing. I said, 'Brother - Clause 37!' I said, 'You read Clause 37. If Clause 37 of this document were in place, you wouldn't have been fined £1,000 last year.' That was the end of that!

But there were two dodgy clauses in the White Paper, which are now normal, you know, and which the unions agreed to, about strikes and ballots and so on, but it was a very pro-union document. I mean, out of about 30 clauses, I reckon 28 were pro-union.

National Industrial Relations Court

One other anecdote I must tell you! 1971, the Industrial Relations Act, set up a National Industrial Relations Court, and unions were forbidden from having anything to do with it. I had a course of ASLEF [Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Footplatemen] stewards - not called stewards, local reps - and I said, 'I don't think there's anything against a group of trade unionists sitting in to listen to the Court.' They said, 'Oh yes, let's do that!' So I rang the Court up, and the secretary was full of joy, and said, 'Yes, bring them along!' So about 15 of us went along to the National Industrial Relations Court and met the secretary. He said, 'We've very interested in your being here. At the end of sitting through the case, would you like to come back here and have a chat with me?' I asked the group. 'Yes, sure, sure'. So we listened to the case. It was Lord Donovan who was chairing it. It was very interesting, because what the

judge did in the early days was to help the trade unionists to make a case over unfair dismissal, because there were no barristers at that time. He said to the man, 'Look, what you wouldn't know is that there is a case which would help you.' It was quite fascinating, so we were very impressed.

We then went to meet the Court secretary. He said, 'Have you any questions?' Question: 'Yes, what job have you got lined up then?' He said, 'What do you mean?' 'Well, this isn't going to last very long, is it? Have you got another job lined up?' He'd never met people like this before. I got him to talk to one of our seminars, and I got him to a Society of Industrial Tutors conference. He was a specialist on London graves legislation.

There was only one case of employer versus union ever brought. It was a small Croydon firm with 30 people. Neither employers nor unions brought cases. Managements didn't want to go there, and unions - no cases whatsoever. Under the 1971 Industrial Relations Act, the unions had a special sentence put across the top of any agreement. It said, 'This is without any obligations under the Industrial Relations Act 1971', and they got employers to sign this.

International visits:

Israel

In addition to running courses in the UK, we also undertook international visits. Now, in the 1960s, I was invited to go to Israel to look at workers' democracy. That arose out of the London BUIRA seminar [see below]. I got a speaker to talk about Israel, and amongst the group attending was the Labour Secretary of MPs concerned with Israel. Lots of questions came up, and I knew the answer and the chap who was speaking didn't. I mean, I knew the average size of a kibbutz!. At the end of this, the Secretary came up and he said, 'You must have been to Israel a lot.' I said, 'I've never been there.' He said, 'That's ridiculous!' He said, 'If you can get there, we'll look after you for a fortnight, and you can have a look at industrial democracy.'

So I got a grant from the British Council for the journey, and I spent a fortnight on industrial democracy in Israel, which was fascinating, with a view to taking a group over. A week after I left, the Six Day War broke out [June 1967]. I was nearly caught actually, because I was down in the Negev at a study centre, and the head of it was an ex-Army general, who spoke English, French and German, a very well-educated man. He said, 'If you like it so much, why don't you stay on here for a bit?' If I'd stayed on here for bit, I'd have been there during the Six Day War! I said, 'No, I've got to get home. I've got a job to do.' So I didn't. And I couldn't take a group over - the situation wasn't one in which I could guarantee the safety of

the people concerned. So I nearly took a group to Israel.

Of course, we were then in the Cold War period. My colleague, Jim Fyrth actually took a group of engine drivers to Russia. But other countries on the other side of the Iron Curtain were difficult. Jim Fyrth had been a member of the Communist Party, and he got some links and he took this ASLEF group over to Moscow. But he left the Communist Party in 1968 for the usual reasons [the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia].

Sweden

In 1967, I took a group of trade unionists drawn from Ford's and print and the docks over to Sweden, and we met all the Swedish trade unionists. They were stewards who had been on courses. You could only come on these visits if you'd been through a course with us. They were Ford stewards, and from the print - we did a lot of work with print stewards too. Fathers and Mothers of the Chapel, and some of the dock contacts I had before the big scheme got going. In the docks I had arranged a release course - we only did one release course on the docks and that was done at Hay's Wharf. The employers agreed to release, if people would give up as much time as they gave up, so they'd give them an hour themselves as long as they did an hour.

Social mobility:

Then individual students, I was always on the lookout for students who'd been missed. All sorts of students I got through from our courses to university courses of one kind or another, and the most famous one I suppose is John Thomas. He was a West Indian from St Lucia, who was at that time beating out tyres at Firestone Rubber Company. He came along to a course of mine, and I got him off to Oxford. He got a job on the National Economic Development Council, and then a job developing building society work with West Indians, and then I lost touch with him. Next time I met him, he was St Lucia's ambassador to London!

So an interesting question is the effect that higher education had on students from a working class background. For example, Sheffield and Nottingham had a release scheme for miners going back to the late '50s and early '60s, and people went on from those miners' courses to Nuffield at Oxford. The course at Nuffield allowed you to skip one year of a degree course, and then you went on to do a degree. Now, the complaint there was not so much people moving on as no longer being able to talk to their wives, or the wives being able to talk to them. Michael Barratt Brown and a number of people were from the

North, and they thought there ought to be a college there. So through SIT [Society of Industrial Tutors], we held a conference in York, at which we planned how a new college should start in the North, and there should be particular provision for women. That college was eventually formed - Northern College - and Michael Barratt Brown became head of it, and there were special women's courses to help them keep up with their husbands, apart from anything else.

The general question, though, is quite hard to answer. Let me give you one instance. We did some work with printing unions at Watford on the printing firms, and as a result of that course, one of the senior Fathers of the Chapel became the personnel officer. Through him, I was able to arrange all sorts of other print contacts, and we got a course at Odhams for Fathers of the Chapel [shop stewards]. He never forgot his roots, as it were . . .

Then, Jimmy Cochlan, who was a docker and unofficial strike leader, came along to a meeting of mine to try and shout me down, and I shouted him down, so he started coming to courses. I got him off to Balliol College, Oxford, where he became a kind of prize specimen. It was the first time they'd had a docker at Balliol. and he was invited to talk about this, that and the other. Then, out of term time, he went back to the docks to earn a bit of money, and they said, 'What's come over you?' you know, 'You're talking different!' But he eventually became industrial relations tutor at Thurrock Technical College doing courses for dockers, so that was a progression.

Albert Torrison was a tally clerk down at Hay's Wharf [London docks]. I got him off to Oxford. Oxford was easier than Cambridge. It was easier getting adults in than undergraduates actually - they lap them up. He became an industrial relations tutor at Luton, teaching shop stewards - it's now become a university [University of Bedfordshire]. Richard Andrews came along: he got in touch really when he was secretary of a blacksmiths' union branch, and got me to talk there with him. He gave some courses, and I got him off to university, and he came back as a tutor down at Southbank. So there were lots of these experiences, but the problems were raised with me by Albert Torrison, who said, 'Look, if I do this [studying], I shall move, won't I? I said, 'Well yes, you will. It's a question of whether you want to.' And it can affect your home life of course - that was another thing they had to worry about, not just being able to talk to your

wife, but being away and the lack of money and so on. So it was delicate territory. No one I know did it sort of bursting with ambition to become managing director or anything, but they did recognise that there were better things for their minds to be engaged in. Not that being a shop steward didn't engage your mind . . .

John Holland was a T&G [Transport and General Workers Union - TGWU] steward in London Transport; he wrote a letter to the London Transport management saying that all staff ought to be released for these wonderful experiences. He went right through to a summer school. He became a full-time official in the T&G and moved up the scale a bit that way.

We were never encouraging people to 'get on' or anything, except intellectually. The decision really was theirs. I never found that students on our courses who returned to their original workplaces suffered in relation to their work. It didn't come up. There were full-time convenors, of course, of shop stewards, who didn't do a job at all, and they were paid the same wage as if they'd been doing the job, the notional wage, and their job was kept for them there, but they never went back to it really.

Another interesting question is the male/female thing. These were mostly males in our courses, because most shop stewards were males, and most tutors were males. In the Society of Industrial Tutors, out of 200 of us I suppose, there were about ten female tutors.

Notes:

George Brown MP (1914-85) was Deputy Leader of the Labour Party (1960-70) and in charge of the Department of Economic Affairs in the first Wilson government (1964-66).

In Place of Strife was a White Paper published by the Labour government in 1969. It proposed controversial restrictions on the power of trade unions, but was never enacted.

The Industrial Relations Act (1971), passed by the Conservative government of Edward Heath, set limits on unions' ability to call strikes. It established a National Industrial Relations Court which could impose injunctions to prevent certain strikes. The Act was extremely controversial, and was repealed by the Labour government in 1974.

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