
One Nation Labour and Vocational Education and Training

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In this article I examine a number of themes arising from the Labour Party's review of its policies, and in particular its stance towards vocational education and training. The starting point for the discussion lies with the party's electoral defeat in 2010 and its concern to refashion itself for current conditions. Importantly, this reflects a discursive positioning in which it seeks to distinguish itself not only from the Conservative led coalition but also Blair and Brown's New Labour. In the case of the latter the electoral defeat is attributed to the failings of New Labour – its technicism, its over-reliance on centralism as well as the state and the market. Allied to this critique is that of New Labour's metropolitanism, perhaps best embodied in the figure of Blair, which led to the marginalisation of long-standing Labour traditions of mutualism, community, collectivism and localism. There are a number of tensions in this account, not least questions of localism that came to the fore towards the end of New Labour's period of office. However these notions should be viewed as rhetorical seeking to mark out a new terrain that is distinctive from the party's immediate past and that seeks to resonate with its roots in the labour movement. In much the same way it construes the Tory led Coalition as being socially divisive and elitist, being on the side of the rich and powerful and validating the pursuit of greed and avarice. The Coalition is thus construed as the party of capital seeking to secure the interests of the rich as opposed to 'ordinary' hard working people and the 'squeezed middle'. But again caution is required for not all capital is viewed as problematic merely those

sectors that seek excessive profits. Thus we confront a responsible capitalism that is to be encouraged and welcomed set against a casino capitalism characterised by the speculative practices of the financial sector.

The Coalition shares with New Labour a number of negative features, the tendency towards centralism which is best illustrated by Gove's Academies programme. Whilst this celebrates school autonomy it locates these schools within the centralising structures of the state. The consequence is that the relationship between schools and their locality in relation to democratic accountability is undermined. As with New Labour there is an over-reliance on markets to deliver socially beneficial outcomes. But in addition society is characterised by increasing polarisation of income and wealth and an embattled working/middle class facing a declining standard of living. The nostrum that increasing the wealth of the rich leads to a trickle-down effect throughout society, thereby benefiting the poor, has been shown to be illusory. Thus British society is construed as one of two nations marked by extremes of wealth and poverty.

One Nation Labour

The recent history of the Labour Party could be seen as a search for a politics or slogan that could lead to electoral success – the trying out of ideas. The 'British promise' was one such theme, the notion that the next generation would do better than its

predecessor and have a higher standard of living – a promise that has been broken. ‘Predistribution’ is another such idea; rather than redistribution the concern is to embed greater levels of fairness and access into wider society so as to minimise the need for redistribution. One Nation Labour seeks to forge a new consensus, a new settlement or indeed a new common sense. It seeks to construct a new sense of national purpose, of the common good. It appropriates the language of one nation from Disraeli and in some respects Cameron’s progressive Conservatism and erstwhile concern with wellbeing (see Blond, 2010).

In some respects Labour’s One Nation project seeks to construct a social democratic politics suited to ‘tough’ times. It consistently draws attention to the fiscal crisis, the deficit and thus the necessity to manage expectations in ‘tough’ times. In times of austerity we should ‘think smart’ and place people and their communities in charge of finding solutions which will be ‘smarter’ and more cost efficient than those derived from the central state (Cruddas, 2013). In order to attain this goal it will be necessary to reform public services facilitating a shift in power away from the central state to the locality/community, thereby enabling the community to shape the public services it requires - in Mulgan’s (2012) terms a move away from a delivery to a relational state that is more concerned with social relations than with the delivery of services which are devolved to empowered communities.

Whilst the tenets of capitalism are set in place, it is construed as not all of a piece. One Nation Labour calls for a responsible capitalism, one that features relational and democratic practices in which productive capital is central. The John Lewis partnership is seen as an exemplar of this preferred form of capital. This is allied to a call for a ‘social’ economy of mutual give-and-take, characterised by a sense of justice and one in which ‘no one takes too much or gives back too little’. There is a desire to reconstitute an imaginary of the common good marked by community, localism, solidarity and tradition (ie the blue labour current and see Glasman, et al, 2011). Paradoxically there is a resonance with Cameron’s broken/big society and his turn to mutualism. It should be noted that the discourses of social recession and the broken society mirror one another, with the former emphasising the significance of social structure and relations of power creating the conditions in which marginalisation and poverty are generated, with the latter mobilising notions of cultural pathology.

A number of ideas coalesce around One Nation Labour with Wood pointing towards five core ideas. Firstly, the current economy is construed as being

marked by a race to the bottom and thus there is a need for a different economic model – a social economy. There is an echo here of earlier debates that examined post-fordism and that aligned this with an economy characterised by high skills, high trust and high wages. This sits alongside a fairer, more responsible capitalism. Hunt writes, illustrating the notion of predistribution: ‘We need to ensure that economic power and the proceeds of growth are more evenly spread throughout the economy *before* redistribution, reforming the underlying structure of the economy rather than just ameliorating its inherent inequality.’ (2013, 11). The other core ideas Wood (2013) refers to are: the determination to tackle inequality; the salience of notions of responsibility, reciprocity, mutual obligation; the need to protect elements of the common life; the need for a new consensus on the norms and ethics underpinning the political economy.

Yet many of the policy proposals of One Nation Labour echo those of the Coalition, key amongst which is the need for economic competitiveness and growth. This could be supported through the development of an industrial strategy (Cable, 2012) with a re-balancing of the economy towards ‘productive’ capital. This again rests with a reform of the banking system to support small and medium enterprises and to facilitate long term investment. In terms of vocational education and training there are also continuities between the Coalition and the policy proposals of One Nation Labour. In what follows I point to a number of significant similarities. Clearly policies will be marked by differing nuances but there are a number of overlapping themes. The need to re-balance the economy and to reinvigorate the ‘productive’ economy has resulted in a call to reform vocational qualifications allied to the need to enhance their standing – in this instance Wolf’s (2011) report has been important. One of the ways in which vocational qualifications can acquire increased status is if they have been endorsed or accredited by employers or have been developed in partnership with local employers. In these cases the qualifications should have greater purchase in the labour market and in this way address Wolf’s concern that a number of so called vocational qualifications have no purchase in the labour market and are effectively of no value. These policy developments draw on the rhetoric of ‘parity of esteem’ between the vocational and the academic, seeking to overcome the low status attributed to the former. The attempt to enhance the value of vocational qualifications is reflected in a number of other policy concerns such as the need to reform, develop and enhance apprenticeships as well as calls for the development of a technical baccalaureate. These initiatives sit with a far greater

emphasis being placed upon Maths and English thereby aiming to enhance the rigour of vocational qualifications. The point is that across the political divide there are common elements that call for the reform of vocational education and training and that putatively seek to enhance its standing.

Towards a conclusion

It is as well to recall Hall's description of the Labour Party, as 'the second party of capital' (Hall and Massey, 2010:59), and this would serve as a salutary warning if the party were to have electoral success in 2015. Such a stance would offer a corrective to the euphoria surrounding such an event and would serve to modify the belief that 'this is our government'. It would suggest that the best we can do is to work on the 'good side' of Labour's policies, and that this would require an exploration of the limits and possibilities surrounding these.

In some respects One Nation Labour could be seen as attempting to refashion social democracy to fit austere times and, as with New Labour before it, is attempting to validate a 'softer' form of capitalism. In the case of the former there is a concern to manage expectations, to think smart and to devolve power whereby greater responsibility, and by default blame, can be placed on the community. Its call for a social economy is set within a terrain in which this is thought to facilitate a more effective form of capitalism. However, it is inevitably constrained by this orientation which itself is limited by the wider global socio-economic context in which the economy is set. This raises questions about the ability of the British economy to generate high skilled and waged employment, to ensure moves towards full employment and to reinstate the 'British promise' of raising living standards. All of this is deeply problematic within the context of a social democratic politics that remains wedded to capitalism and is tied to a conceptualisation of the good life that is linked to productivism. That is to say, the notion that it is necessary to engage in waged labour in order to live a fulfilled life. Perhaps we should engage in a 'revolutionary reformism' whereby we seek to push the policies of One Nation Labour as far as we can in progressive directions which are committed to the tenets of social justice and anti-capitalism.

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A manifesto for a democratic education system in England

We print here a document circulated in October 2013 by Frank Coffield and Bill Williamson

A national system of education belongs to us all – to students, parents, teachers, employers and all citizens – and we demand a greater say in it. It is not the personal possession of whoever happens to be the Secretary of State for Education.

We make this demand because the present system is deaf, divisive and dysfunctional. Neither students nor teachers are listened to. The system is becoming ever more class-based, deeply unequal and socially segregated. It creates too many casualties, most obviously those who leave school with little if anything to show for 11 years of schooling and who feel they have been written off as 'failures'. The 'successes' of the system meanwhile have become better at passing exams but poorer at learning; too many do not possess the creativity and independence of mind that a vibrant democratic society and modern economy require.

The scale, number and constantly changing nature of the reforms that have been introduced since 1988 by all the political parties have created an oppressive, dispiriting system which is driven by fear; fear of punitive inspection, high-stakes testing and league tables. Stress cascades down the system and smothers innovation and risk-taking by teachers, who sum up the current atmosphere in their workplaces as '*toxic*'. That is the same atmosphere in which our children and grandchildren are expected to learn and to grow up to be responsible citizens.

The system is being deliberately fragmented which prevents local planning but which increases centralisation. It makes no sense for a Secretary of State for Education to run 23,000 schools. Such a model of governance is dangerously undemocratic.

What do we want? We don't want to reform the present system; we want to replace its current governing ideas with a different set of principles and values. First, the system must become more democratic by involving students, parents, employers, professionals, unions and local communities in deciding what is to be taught, how and by whom. Through democratic dialogue learners and educators will work creatively together to build a more successful and sustainable society.

We want to instigate a public debate about the purposes of education in order to forge a new consensus on the guiding principles and aims of a new system. Schools and colleges will respect the human rights of young people and enact the principles of fairness and social justice in all that they do.

We want to change the language with which education is discussed *from* that of management, measurement and accountability to trust, dialogue and local decision-making. Such a move will cost nothing but will enable us to think and act differently.

Schools, colleges and universities are now run like competitive businesses, but they should be learning communities where collaboration, collegiality and partnership encourage teachers to grow professionally.

We must replace exams and inspections that each year write off as failures half the candidates and adopt a unified and inclusive approach which publicly recognises the talents of all students, the wider achievements of all schools and their contribution to the life of the communities they serve.

We will build on the great strengths we have – the unswerving commitment of teachers to their students, the great achievements of many state schools and colleges, informal learning in workplaces, and the warm, informal and productive relationships which exist between our best teachers and their students.

All local schools should be good schools, should cater for all the young people in their area, each with a comprehensive mix of abilities, and collaborate with dynamic centres of adult and community education, properly funded to provide lifelong learning as a right of citizenship.

Education is being reduced to the skills needed to win the global economic race. Our children require much more because they will soon become parents, citizens and consumers as well as workers. They will also need an international outlook to cope with the global problems that threaten us all. They will need an education revitalised by democracy.

Graham Usher

Martin Francis commemorates the work of the journalist and former FE lecturer

The death of journalist Graham Usher from Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease at the young age of 54 in Summer 2013 shocked the many individuals and groups who had worked with him on anti-racist and anti-fascist campaigns in the 70s and 80s. Not least of these were members of the All London Teachers Against Racism and Fascism (ALTARF) collective. Formed in 1978 when 2,500 London teachers rallied at Central Hall, Westminster to declare their opposition to racism and fascism in education and the wider society, ALTARF produced a regular Newsletter covering a wide variety of issues including the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa.

Graham, then a further education teacher committed to teaching on the side of the working class, immigrant and refugee students in his inner city college, came to us in 1989 to talk about the struggle in Palestine and presented an interview that he and Matthew Carr had carried out with a Palestinian teacher and writer.

As our work on the curriculum and campaigning had developed we had become increasingly committed to an educational approach that was embedded in community campaigns but sought to connect up with wider international issues as well as developing a curriculum and teaching method based on a recognition of the need to challenge racist and class oppression.

Ironically, in the light of the recent 'sainthood' conferred on Nelson Mandela, our February 1989 Newsletter covered the controversy at Highbury Quadrant Primary School which had attracted national headlines over an assembly honouring Mandela. There was an official investigation by ILEA which stated: 'It is understandable that Nelson Mandela would have been portrayed as a brave man,

one prepared to accept life in prison for his principles, totally opposed to the philosophy and practice of apartheid but omission of those factors which make him controversial, such as his refusal to abjure violence in the struggle against apartheid, allowed him to be presented as a hero when, in reality, he is a controversial figure, albeit one for whom there is much sympathy in this country.' Following the negative press publicity there was an HMI visit, removal of some staff, a parent petition in support of the teachers and a crisis in the Labour ILEA leadership.

A recognition of the political dimension of education, and particularly the politics of curriculum content and teaching method, had informed Graham's work, and it was in this context, after the Highbury Quadrant controversy, that he submitted his article for our November 1989 Newsletter (co-written with Matthew Carr) entitled 'Education Denied!'

Popular Education

Underpinning the article was Graham's advocacy of 'Popular Education'. This movement had begun in Latin America and in a nutshell advocates education on the side of the oppressed through a 'dialogical' relationship between the educators and students. It rejects education as 'transmission' (Michael Gove take note) and argues that to do otherwise is to become part of the oppressive system. Some of the educational work carried out during the Grenadian revolution by Chris Searle can be seen in this tradition.

Introducing his interview Graham wrote: 'Since the Intifada began in December 1987, the Israeli

military authorities have instituted measures aimed at crushing all forms of Palestinian resistance, culture and identity. One such measure is the attack on Palestinian education.' (All West Bank schools were closed for nine months in 1988 and the first seven months of 1989. In Gaza, where he was to go to teach in the early 1990s, 50 per cent of all school days were lost through curfews and individual closures. Of the 644 deaths during the Intifada it was estimated that nearly 200 were students.)

Active

Graham's interviewee was active in the popular education movement, and described the authorities' action as an attack on the Palestinian people's ambitions and a form of collective punishment: '(During the closure) we gave the students self-learning material which they could use in their own homes. But we received an order from the Israeli military governors, which stated that such materials were illegal because they would 'reduce the parents' suffering'. He said, 'We don't want you to reduce this suffering. We want the people to suffer more.'

In April 1988 the Palestinian General Federation of Teachers discussed popular education, backed by papers and a summary of 'the techniques, guidelines and philosophy of popular education'. This was followed up by a pamphlet distributed to thousands of Palestinians. The aims of this popular education were to: '... sustain a link between our pupils and the educational process: particularly for the elementary stages - we wanted to ensure that the young children did not forget what they had already learned. Secondly, we had a political aim: we wanted to show that Palestinian teachers could apply the United Leadership's national directives on teaching and learning in the same way as the merchants had applied the national directives on opening and closing the shops.'

In response to Graham's question about the involvement and organisation of popular education, he was told that the activists made the first attempts: 'These were drawn from teachers, students and ordinary workers. There was a big role played by the teachers' unions and students' councils. Then the parents became more involved because they wanted to do something for their children. Without education, they saw that their children were beginning to suffer psychologically, socially and even economically. So the parents began to co-operate with the teachers and students ... The popular education classes are organised locally ... The organisation is particularly strong in the camps and villages but it is done secretly in

rooms, mosques, under trees, anywhere and everywhere.'

Graham asked if a specifically Palestinian curriculum had been developed in the light of Palestinian teachers' criticism of the Israeli, Jordanian and Egyptian curricula: 'Sure ... several attempts were made to improve the curriculum. For example, we had developed a curriculum for Arabic and Palestinian history, geography and social sciences. New teaching and learning methods are being developed and used by Palestinian educationalists. For the elementary grades, we encouraged parents to use new, popular teaching methods to teach their children; and for the older pupils we have developed a range of self-study packages in their main subjects.'

Graham's article was instrumental in persuading many London teachers of the importance of the Palestinian issue both in terms of social justice but also in demonstrating in stark terms the political function of education. It inspired many to commit themselves to the cause of Palestine Solidarity.

What we did not realise at the time was that, in giving Graham a platform in our small circulation but influential Newsletter, we had played a small role in his transformation from FE teacher to influential journalist.

Graham went on to become the Palestinian correspondent of the *Economist* and write for *al-Ahram Weekly*, *The Nation*, *Race and Class* and *Middle East Research and Information Project*.

Criticism

In his book *Palestine in Crisis* (1995), Graham's clear-sightedness and honesty shone through and he made no secret of his criticism of the US-sponsored peace process and the Palestinian Authority. In his foreword, in a phrase that seem to echo back to his interest in popular education translated into journalism: 'The people we are fighting for should be the people we are writing for'.

Graham Usher certainly did that to the utmost of his ability.

Learning to be a model citizen

Former Newcastle College Citizenship and Politics lecturer Stephen Lambert, noting that civic engagement amongst the UK's population is at its lowest since the 1960s, argues that we must teach Citizenship Studies for post-16 and adult students.

Over 3,000 learners are following AS/A-level Citizenship Studies courses across the country as part of their overall A-level programme, including at Newcastle Sixth Form College in the North-East. This is to be welcomed by all those who want to see a 'politically educated electorate' in the early stages of the 21st century.

Numeracy, literacy and information technology – commonly known as 'functional skills' in the further and adult education sector – are all taught in our school sixth forms and further and adult education colleges. Yet post-16 courses in Citizenship Studies remain neglected with the exception of about 250 innovative post-16 and adult education providers across the UK.

Like fixing a plug or mending a fuse, citizenship education is a 'life and social skill' that we all need, irrespective of age, class, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and ability or attainment.

One crucial aspect of citizenship education is a grasp of political, legal and social processes. For instance, politics is concerned with power in our society. It affects nearly every feature of our lives. Decisions not only have to be taken in national, local

and European settings, but also need to be taken within day-to-day social relationships. In essence, this is what politics is all about.

To participate effectively within the various decision-making processes, it's essential that people are suitably equipped with the relevant civic or political knowledge, skills and confidence.

Centralised

The last thirty years has seen the rapid development of society with the consequences of more centralised political decision-making, despite devolution to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Centralised power has reduced the ability of citizens to actively influence decision-making, let alone understand it. More disturbingly, in the last decade a huge chunk of the population feel 'alienated' from the democratic process, especially youngsters, adults with learning disabilities or mental health issues, some minority ethnic groups and a section of the white working class. About four out of ten of those registered to vote in the 2010 general election didn't bother. Turnout in the 2013

council elections was even lower and, staggeringly, only 16 per cent of the country's electors turned out to vote in the controversial election of police and crime commissioners in November last year.

If this is bad, consider voting among young people. According to lead experts Angela Ellam and Peter McBride in their important book *A Councillor's View of Modern Local Government*, only 20 per cent of 18-21 year olds voted in the 2005 general election, and a derisory one in ten put a cross on a ballot paper in the last European elections!

Such a degree of 'apathy', it's argued by some, stems from a lack of confidence in elected representatives' ability to tackle the problems that affect everyday lives – an issue that's become more acute in the light of the revelations concerning the expenses scandal amongst some members of parliament including both MPs and members of the House of Lords.

Ignorance

Yet ignorance about the issues at stake and of people's own role in implementing change is a major factor in accounting for this 'disillusionment'. Citizenship education in our school sixth forms, FE colleges and adult education centres can help to create an active and informed electorate. The maintenance of a successful mature democracy is dependent on people exercising a choice between political parties and policies. Civic education can provide an awareness and deeper understanding of the rights and responsibilities of citizens. It's essential that people know how to keep and exercise these rights, something which can't be achieved without an understanding of the democratic and political process.

It's in post-16 schooling and at college that young adults need to acquire the skills and attitudes which make them better informed about politics, the law and social issues and their participation in public life. Youngsters need to be able to appreciate and grasp the points of view of others, to present arguments based on empirical evidence and to recognise and evaluate bias.

It's crucial that young people by the age of 19 understand how their local council works,

what the various political parties stand for, what a local councillor, MP, MEP or magistrate does and how the British legal and political system operates. Furthermore, they need to know how to get involved in a local charity, campaigning bodies such as Oxfam or pressure groups such as MIND or Cancer Research. Lessons in citizenship can help combat voter apathy and low levels of civic participation and create a politically aware, literate adult community.

Some policy makers and politicians are sceptical about the role of citizenship or politics in the post-16 curriculum as there's the danger of dogmatism or bias. Yet history, which is widely taught across state and independent schools across the North-East and the country as a whole can't possibly avoid value judgements. Bias can't be eliminated, but it can be recognised. It's the responsibility of the teacher or college lecturer to maintain professional integrity, and to acknowledge and encourage an awareness of a diversity of viewpoints on important civic, political and legal issues.

Open, honest bias is often employed in universities to stimulate learners into a reaction, though in secondary or further education it ought to be rejected as some students are not 'mature' enough to challenge the views of their tutors and may even accept them as gospel.

Nevertheless academic reports and Ofsted inspection feedbacks have shown that few problems have arisen from allegations of indoctrination or bias in the teaching of citizenship studies.

Rapid

In an era of rapid change and declining participation in public affairs together with the Government's commitment to the Big Society and Labour's renewed commitment to the 'rights and responsibilities' agenda, the need for citizenship education in the post-16 curriculum could not be greater.

A logical approach to discussion of social class

Patrick Ainley offers a lesson outline with key concepts in bold

Introduction

Whether class exists is an open question widely discussed – no generally accepted right or wrong answers, although plenty of evidence for some views against others. For example: in the 1990s prime minister John Major announced Britain was a ‘classless society’ and then Tony Blair told us ‘the class war is over’ but didn’t tell us who had won!

Sociology, the study of contemporary society, makes a useful distinction between **class and caste**: unlike caste, which is fixed for your present lifetime, you can move out of the class you were born into (**‘class of origin’**) into another class (**‘class of destination’**), though statistically most people remain in their class of origin, even if classes are defined quite narrowly. Therefore, in a class society there is **social mobility**. This can be **absolute upward social mobility** (more people move up than move down the class hierarchy/order, as in the UK for around 30 years after 1945). Or **absolute downward social mobility** (more people move down than move up, as Ken Roberts, former professor of sociology at Liverpool University, argues is the case today, when: ‘The new situation is that the majority of young people who succeed in education today have started life in positions from which ascent is difficult to achieve. For them, any mobility is likely to be downwards’). There can also be **relative social mobility** (some people move up and some people move down). This is what government today wants to achieve through education – to equalise starting points by making all schools as good as each other so as to give everyone equal chances to be unequal. Britain would then be a meritocracy. (Other means of social mobility are by career progression or – even more rarely than winning the lottery – marriage.)

One other thing: just because we talk about social class, we are not making moral judgements or saying some people are superior or inferior to others. Religious believers in souls often do not like to categorise individuals into classes because they believe all souls are equal in the sight of God etc. To a certain extent, modern democracies share this view because all 18+ citizens are held to be equal to each other with ‘one man one vote’ (including women since 1921). The idea of individuality is also important in a capitalist consumer society where anyone can do or buy anything they want if they have the money, eg sleep in the Ritz Hotel or own a newspaper. But just because we might agree classes exist, this does not deny individualism; as Mao Tse-Tung said in his study of the peasant class in China, if we look at a tree we will not find any two leaves that are exactly identical but they are still all leaves!

So how many classes are there? Logical possibilities: 0, 1 or 63,000,000 (total population of UK). That does not mean all these individuals are equal. Inequality obviously exists and is growing in this country and globally. For example, life expectancy at birth of someone who becomes a male unskilled manual worker is 71.1 years, by comparison with male professionals who can expect to live for 78.5 years. But it might be possible to list all individuals in terms of their total assets and string them out in a long line from richest to poorest, though if you attempt to do this you will find individuals ‘clumping’ into groups whose wealth or lack of it is similar and with relatively few in the boundaries between groups. (The sliding scale used by Cambridge University sociologists attempts to do this.)

Next logical possibility: two classes. In a capitalist society ‘those who work for their money and those whose money works for them’ (employed

and employers). In this view, since the emergence of states from classless tribal societies in which the divisions of labour and knowledge are by age and gender, the main division is by class so that a minority ruling class rules over and lives off a majority ruled class and there is a constant **class struggle** between them: slave-owners over slaves, feudal aristocracy over peasants, bourgeoisie over proletariat. This does not mean other classes do not exist but these are the two main classes between which there is 'a more or less veiled civil war, raging within existing society, up to the point where the war breaks out into open revolution'. Marx and Engels 1848 *Communist Manifesto* saw in the evidence of past history and predicted for the time they were writing the emergence of a new society in which for the first time a majority would rule over the minority of former-exploiters (socialism). This would lead in turn to the restoration of a classless society (communism) but at a higher level of development than in the original classless 'primitive communism'. The other possibility was what the *Manifesto* described as 'the mutual ruin of the contending classes'.

Three classes in a conventional '**social pyramid**' of 'upper', 'middle' and 'lower'. This view has an attraction for those in 'the middle', which is always a comfortable place to be – neither on one side nor the other, so that you can blame those 'above' and look down on those 'beneath'. Since it is a pyramid, this way of thinking about social class tends to exaggerate the numbers at the very bottom because, if the situation were represented as a graph, it would be more of an onion shape than a pyramid. In addition, especially in the last 40 years, a process of **social polarisation** has increased the social distance between top and bottom, making the pyramid much sharper and narrower, or graphically turning the onion into a teardrop. If, as Roberts suggests, the only absolute social mobility is now downward then the class structure has gone pear-shaped. As Ainley and Allen have suggested, this leaves many in the middle running up a down-escalator of inflating qualifications.

This might go so far as to change the class structure itself. Although the 'upper' or 'ruling' class remains the same, perhaps just internationalising itself somewhat, the division between 'middle' and 'working' or 'lower' (which for two-class Marxists was an illusory class division anyway because both middle and working classes were employed / had to work for their money, even though those with professional and managerial middle-class careers earned more) has been elided by new technology, doing away with much formerly manual labour so that many more people work non-manually in shops and offices, while a 'rough' and 'unrespectable'

unskilled section of the traditional working class has been relegated to so-called 'underclass' status. Ainley and Allen suggest this transformation has been encouraged by education with worthless vocational qualifications at the bottom while widening participation to higher education has been presented as a professionalisation of the proletariat. This disguises an actual proletarianisation of the professions. This still leaves three classes: 'ruling' / 'upper'; 'middle-working' or 'working-middle' / respectable; new rough 'underclass'. We are encouraged to think in this way by many politicians who talk about 'hard working families' as opposed to unemployed 'scroungers' unrespectably claiming welfare benefits. The crystallisation of this new social formation could be argued to have been marked by the 2011 English urban riots. This is perhaps a popular US view of social class, which also tends to be racialised if not also regionalised. Owen Jones in his 2011 book *Chavs* presents a similar model in which the working class has been 'chavised' or 'chavified', while Ken Roberts (2001, *Class in Modern Britain*) describes an emergent 'underclass' as 'a demographic entity with characteristic life chances' – ie a class.

The two three-class possibilities can be combined to make four classes: 'upper'/'ruling'; 'middle'; 'working' and 'under'. In either view – three or four classes, as suggested above – the ruling class remains the same; as Ken Roberts describes it 'the smallest [less than one percent of the total population], best organised and most class conscious class'. This should not be confused with a land-owning aristocracy which has not existed in England since the mid 19th century when it merged with the industrial capitalists, although with hereditary left-overs like the monarchy.

Five is the next possibility but no one seems to follow it, although advertising agencies commonly use an A, B, C, D, E scheme but divide their Cs into C1s and C2s, making six. This division works for them to target particular commodities at particular customers and it is also used by opinion pollsters, predicting election results and tending to emphasise the importance of winning the C1 and C2 votes in the 'lower middle' / 'upper working'. You can also get six or more classes by dividing classes into two or three – for example 'upper middle', 'middle' and 'lower middle' middle or working classes but this seems rather arbitrary and outdated.

Mike Savage, professor of sociology at the London School of Economics last year produced a new seven class scheme following a large on-line survey with the BBC that added measures for social and cultural capital drawing on Bourdieu as well as the usual allocations by occupation and wealth (income and assets).

Guy Standing's 2011 *The Precariat* presents the rise of a new globalised class of the 'precariat' in which young people are a major element. The precariat becomes a class 'for itself', a new agent of change. Riots and student protests are a reflection of this but the precariat does not subscribe to the old labour movement politics. It is a new and 'dangerous class'.

That brings us to the eight Registrar General official class scheme used for censuses since 1911 but emended to nine in the 2010 Standard Occupational Classification:

- 1.1 Large employers and senior managers;
- 1.2 Higher professionals;
- 2 Lower managerial and professional;
- 3 Intermediate;
- 4 Small employers;
- 5 Supervisors and craft work;
- 6 Semi-routine workers;
- 7 Routine workers;
- 8 Long-term unemployed.

- 1 Managers, directors and senior officials;
- 2 Higher professional occupations;
- 3 Associate professionals and technical;
- 4 Admin and secretarial;
- 5 Skilled trades;
- 6 Caring and other service occupations;
- 7 Sales and customer service occupations;
- 8 Process, plant and machine operatives;
- 9 Elementary occupations.

These divide people according to estimations of occupational status and so leave out those without any very definite occupation, eg many of the ruling class, who are also often hard for the census takers to find! Also, because it ignores gender, these divisions can result in situations where within families the husband is in one class and the wife in another. Self-employed and pensioners are also hard to place.

Unless anyone can come up with any increase on nine, you can conclude this introductory session by taking a vote on how many people present think 0/1/63m, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 or more classes exist! You can be sure your results will not be conclusive however, especially if the class structure is changing so that individuals operate with two schemas simultaneously, sometimes switching from one to another; leave alone the complications introduced by class of origin and destination which are further confused if the class structure has changed since they were born into it!

It might be good to illustrate this but I can't draw onions, tear-drops or pears!

General Studies Project

■ The project was set up in July 2013 by *PSE* readers and contributors.

■ It is based on the belief that the Liberal Studies, General Studies and General & Communication Studies components that existed within vocational FHE courses in the UK from the 1950s through to the 1980s, involving thousands of lecturers and hundreds of thousands of industrial-release and full-time students, are potentially a source of unique insights into how post-compulsory curricula everywhere should be developed now and in future.

■ On this assumption, the project aims to recapture the experience of these curricular areas, starting with the experience of lecturers in General Studies (GS).

■ This is being done through recorded interviews with former GS lecturers, which are then transcribed. As well as this, a literature search is underway, aimed at developing a deeper knowledge of the context in which this unique experiment took place.

■ If you were such a lecturer, and/or are in touch with others who were, and would like to be interviewed, to assist in any other way, or just to know more about the workings of the project, please contact us at: post16educator@runbox.com

Towards an IWCE Network manifesto

The Independent Working-Class Education Network aims to produce collectively over the next few months a manifesto that could be published in pamphlet form and used to build the Network. Possible section headings as provisionally agreed at the London meeting on 21 September are printed below, plus written contributions so far received. Discussion has also taken place as part of the agenda at our meetings in Swansea on 12th October and Wallsend on 30th November, and will continue at our next meeting, in London on 1st February. The headings are not set in stone so please let us have your comments on this framework and on the contributions so far, as well as for the other sections below. (Please send to iwceducation@yahoo.co.uk)

1. Why do we need IWCE?

-

2. What have we done?

-

3. What does the history of IWCE tell us?

-

4. How ought we to relate to the Labour Movement?

Contribution below by Edd Mustill:

The IWCE Network aims to be open and inclusive of a variety of labour movement political traditions.

We want a democratic working-class movement which promotes free education and open debate, exchanging ideas and perspectives from a diversity of standpoints and traditions.

We believe that all activists are potential educators – everyone has knowledge which is useful to their comrades, whether this is knowledge of working-class history, general knowledge or of organising in the present, and we intend to develop ways for this knowledge to be shared and extended.

We will reach out to union branches, trades councils, socialist parties and working-class political organisations and community groups, and single issue campaigns, to broaden and renew

independent working-class education in all its forms. This will include, as a first step, seeking to hold joint events with any of these organisations and groups who share our views, or who want to learn more about independent working-class education.

5. How should we relate to TU Education?

-

6. What stance should we take towards the WEA?

-

7. The mainstream education system: what do we think?/how should we respond?

Contribution below by Dave Berry:

[How does the IWCE relate to the formal education system?]

Historically the relationship between working-class education and the formal education system has been at best one of tolerance and co-existence with liberal educationalists to the majority of time one of

hostility by Government and designers and administrators of our education system. In “The German Ideology” Marx and Engels considered that “the ruling ideas of any age are the ideas of the ruling class” and increasingly our education system reflects the control of a capitalist system and its economic needs to the exclusion of all others. As challengers to religious education in the Middle Ages were viewed and condemned as heretics, so working class alternatives to the formal education system have been viewed as dissent or even revolutionary. Even the inclusion of alternative social political ideas in the curriculum has become difficult as our education system becomes increasingly centralised and marketised with a National Curriculum, academies, student loans and private universities.

A style of teaching and learning based on elitism, competition with your peers, continual testing, ‘education for earning rather than learning’ and individual achievement leaves many working-class children and students alienated from their class and communities, even when achieving success. For those not achieving that success, [lack of?] opportunities to rejoin education or to find alternatives leaves them unable to play a full part in society and stuck in low-pay / low-respect employment or unemployment, and ignorant of their heritage and cultural roots.

Yet ideas of egalitarianism, collectivism and working-class culture remain, very often promoted by teachers, lecturers and students within the system itself, guided by their own experience or historical models of working-class education. The choice for organisations such as the IWCE Network is whether to develop practice and structures independent of the formal education system or to work with practitioners, students and supporters within the existing school and higher education system, upholding our tradition of dissent. This may be done by providing materials and resources alongside our own meetings and structures for introduction into a formal education system. It will also be important to lobby and campaign for change within the existing system to incorporate working-class history and culture, alternative economic and philosophical discourse into the existing system.

As collectivists we welcome co-operation with the existing formal system and seek to
 Develop accessible resources on working-class education, history and economics
 Welcome individual and collective membership from members of the existing formal education system
 Promote new materials on working-class education
 Promote a collectivist approach to education and teaching and learning within the existing system

Use our website and electronic media to promote the IWCE to members of the existing formal education system.

8. Do we need a theory of IWCE?

(a) Contribution below by Joyce Canaan:

[How do popular education insights guide the work of the IWCE?]

1. What is popular education?

- ‘Popular education’ is a translation of the Portuguese concept of ‘educacao popular’ – education created by and for working-class people (employed, underemployed, unemployed and no longer employed).
- For popular education, the way the world is currently organised serves the interests of the powerful and wealthy. It is not the case that, as we have been told since Thatcher, ‘There Is No Alternative’ (TINA) to the current world order.
- As popular educators know from Marx, we can make history differently, working within and against the circumstances into which we have been born.
- Making history differently requires that working-class people work collectively to do so; the elite won’t give up their power and influence easily. Building a better world for all that rests on radically different assumptions is an enormous task. Popular educators believe that education can play a central role in this process, but not if it continues to be organised as it is at present.
- Popular educators question the idea that learning requires that teachers deposit their knowledge into the heads of students who passively receive it. Freire called this the ‘banking model of education’. For popular education, in contrast, learning requires active engagement by and of all. Freire suggested that education should entail ‘problem-posing’, helping students articulate their concerns and explore how these concerns are caused not by personal failings, as our neo-liberal system encourages us to believe, but by structural inequalities built into this system.
- Dialogue, collective exploration of the underlying causes of issues that matter, is at the core of popular education.

- This dialogue should serve not just to understand the causes of current injustices, oppressions and exploitations; dialogue should move to practice, to working to lessen and eliminate inequalities in order to help build a better world for us all.
- Thus thinking and doing, theory and practice – praxis, as Marx and Freire both called it – is at the core of popular education. Popular education has the revolutionary aim of building a more just and sustainable world for all by helping workers become conscientised as Freire (1996:90) put it, deepening their understandings through engaging in struggle and using insights gained from struggle to theorise the world and its underpinning power dynamics more fully for more effective future struggles.

2. How does the IWCE use popular education to organise its meetings and educational processes – its thinking and doing?

- All of our work – our meetings, pamphlets, books and educational practices can help you move towards this better world.
- There is a long history of working-class self-education – education by and for working-class people – that demonstrates workers' capacity to engage in radically different educational practices than those taught in state-controlled schools, colleges and universities. Or, to paraphrase E. P. Thompson, just as the working class was present and participated in its own making, so do we recognise the importance of developing educational practices with which working-class people can help unmake present conditions and remake them for the benefit of all.
- We want to synthesise popular education insights with those of working-class self-education traditions to help working-class people develop more effective strategies for resisting the challenging and increasingly unequal circumstances in which we now live.
- All of our thinking and doing is part of a wider transformative process; like the Zapatistas we ask questions as we walk ('*caminamos, preguntado*'); we see all that we do as taking steps in a process of more fully realising revolutionary action.

(b) Contribution below by Hilda Kean:

[Social construction of knowledge]

Recent debates on the Government's proposals for a new history curriculum in schools have concentrated

on content or 'facts'. Even those opposing the Government's curriculum have tended to focus on the inclusion of radical events or the lives of black activists rather than disagreeing with the framework.

Rather than see knowledge as 'facts' we see knowledge as socially constructed. As the late socialist historian Raphael Samuel described it, the social production of knowledge includes the 'work of a thousand different hands'. What is experienced in our everyday lives is as likely to be significant in our understanding and creation of knowledge as the reading of books or archives.

If history, for example, was understood to be a lived experience and hence 'within' all of us, then we would perceive of it as something over which we have some ownership and definition of meaning. We would then see ourselves as descended from such experience, rather than – as Gove and company would have our children believe – seeing history as an anonymously authored body of pre-ordained and transmitted incontestable 'facts'.

Conventionally, a historian is thought to know about things 'because you have been there' – 'there' being an archive. But people also 'know about things' through having lived through the past in our own lives. We can therefore choose for ourselves what is important to know, drawing on personal and public events. This may include our own understanding of the impact of previous wars in which a relative fought or died, or our perception of the nature of work or the stories we were told by grandparents or older people in the workplace. We can also draw understanding from the built environment, thinking about who made the buildings, who decided which people should be commemorated etc.

What happened is important: but it is also the questions that we ask of the past that bring the past alive in the present.

9. How should we operate?

-

The IWCE Network welcomes contributions to this draft manifesto from all readers of PSE. Please send to iwceducation@yahoo.co.uk

Sheila Cohen on TGWU Branch 1/1107: an inspiring story

Colin Waugh

Sheila Cohen, *Notoriously Militant. The Story of a Union Branch* (Merlin Press, 2013) 225pp £15.95

Sheila Cohen is a lecturer in trade union studies at the University of Hertfordshire. This book is a study of branch 1/1107 of the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU), which was the largest single union branch at the Ford plant in Dagenham, and was based in the paint, trim and assembly (PTA) plant there. The study follows this remarkable branch from its creation in the 1940s through to its merger into a larger one in 2012 following closure of the PTA plant itself.

Although Sheila provides enough contextual information about the history of the Ford Motor Company both in the US and in Britain, about how the Dagenham plant came into existence, and about changes in the world over the whole period to enable readers to understand how the branch grew, her main focus is overwhelmingly - and rightly - on the actions of the workers who built it, and so far as possible she has organised the book in such a way as to allow a large number of these workers to tell the story themselves, mainly through the very substantial body of interviews she has conducted with them, but also through quotes from their own writings.

This story is of direct relevance to every union activist, including in workplaces like colleges and universities, and it would be well worth every UCU branch investing in one or more copies. Its main lesson is that workers can, should and must organise themselves from the grassroots up, that such self-organisation, if done properly, can be sustained through very harsh circumstances and over a long time, and that it can perfectly well encompass a wider range of values and struggles, as for example over racism and sexism. A further implication is that union officials must either make positive efforts to stand with their rank and file activists or rapidly become their opponents.

Sheila's book is entirely compatible with - and a valuable complement to - Hugh Beynon's famous

1975 study, *Working for Ford*, but her intention to ensure that it is primarily a vehicle through which activists themselves speak requires that it be a different kind of book.

However, this in no way means that the importance of ideas is denied. On p66, for example, one activist describes how he attended classes on Marxist economics run by a toolmaker in the factory and 'the excitement of being a young bloke in a plant listening to Marxist economics being explained and marvelling at how suddenly I've found a philosophy that can explain all this . . .' or again (p78) we read how in 1963-4, a contemporary observer judged that 'all the years of struggle . . . [had] produced an extraordinary amount of political and ideological militancy at Ford', such that '[m]en who are far from being members of the Communist Party will produce a tattered Karl Marx from glass-fronted cabinets'. In the context of the famous struggle by the Sewing Machinists a contemporary account is cited explaining that militants at Dagenham had 'built up a rank and file organisation with a level of political consciousness which, at that time, was second to none . . .', and Sheila also explains how, during the struggle against the Heath government's Industrial Relations Act, stewards and convenors recognised that with their 'spontaneous militant action . . . the men have been educating us'. Again, as evidence both of the level of consciousness and of how democratic the Branch was, we learn how in 1977 Dagenham Body Plant convenor Danny Connors wrote in an Institute for Workers' Control pamphlet that 'Our lads give up half of their dinner time in order to be able to take part in some sort of discussion'.

A key element in the attempt to rebuild the tradition of independent working-class education is the need to make available to present-day shop stewards and branch activists and potential activists what workers said and thought in the period covered by this book, and as such it is a very valuable resource.

Government by traffic wardens

Cliff Jones *reviews a book that continues to be of interest*

Lawrence D. Brown and Lawrence R. Jacobs, *The Private Abuse of the Public Interest. Market Myths and Policy Muddles*

I recently read a masters essay by a headteacher who was trying to make sense of the policies of Michael Gove. Among the strong questions that he asked was one about cohesion. If we break up the certainties: the curriculum, the pay structures, professional qualifications, public examinations and even the academic year while detaching schools from local democracy and giving them to people working to a variety of motives what can possibly hold things together? His conclusion was that cohesion will come from inspection because our current educational culture demands that we hold schools and teachers to account and, so that parents can exercise choice, make public statements that School A is outstanding while School B is failing. Further education also lives in that culture.

Brown and Jacobs write mostly about the USA but they would have a field day writing about the Coalition. For David Cameron and George Osborne and certain Liberal Democrats it is very straightforward: big society and small state go together. We must reduce government to release the energies of individuals. Regulations and benefits are holding us back. Freeing up the market is what we need.

Brown and Jacobs mercilessly dismantle that argument in a book that is not new and is not on sale here but is now very pertinent for us. Their basic message is that not only do free markets get out of hand requiring more regulations, inspections and sanctions but that establishing competitive markets, especially for public services, requires management of the competition. The state does not wither. Democracy, however, does.

As witnesses to support their argument they call upon Adam Smith (1723-1790) and David Hume (1711-1776). Smith is sometimes deployed to justify free markets and Hume conservatism. Brown and Jacobs make it clear that free marketeers and neo-cons are unwise to attempt to build an ideology upon the writings of people who would recoil from an unrestrained and simplistic approach to the economy and to government. The Scottish Enlightenment, the authors remind us, offers no support for the likes of Alan Greenspan.

George W. Bush wanted small government but the authors show that he ended up having more of it than his predecessor. Health, education and transportation saw more government intervention during his time in office. Initiatives such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), for example, simultaneously increased the number of private schools while driving schools and teachers to hit publicly proclaimed targets. The expanded school choices NCLB encouraged also placed pressure upon

transportation. If a system begins to fracture because of the ideology of choice while the targets become tougher it takes more regulation and more regulators to keep the show on the road.

The book takes us through the development and ratification of what the authors call market utopianism. They contrast it with reality and market dystopia. They argue for pragmatic economics and a mixed economy and point out that the growth of government is accompanied by what they refer to as a democratic disconnect.

I would like to have seen more on this. Yes we can, as they seem to, think of democracy as an untidy process of exerting pressure upon politicians, making them run around to fix unexpected problems with a regulation here and a forced policy change there, so growing government irrespective of their belief in small government. This is not, however, the same as democratic engagement leading to a reasonably consensual arrival at public values prior to policy making.

When politicians in this country that are publicly committed to less government find themselves with fewer civil servants they hire Capita or Atos or G4S or their like to do the job because the policy must get through. Governmental activity does not lessen because jobs are outsourced. It can, though, become less efficient and the traffic wardens have to be sent in. What is squeezed out, however, is democracy. We have plenty of on-line petitions, focus groups and carefully constructed consultations but less democratic engagement. Governmental traffic wardens may check to see if commercial contracts are working as intended but this is no longer a public activity. No Local Education Authority could have claimed commercial confidentiality. The public was once entitled to attend committee meetings to witness decision making about schools, further education and, in the form of polytechnics, higher education; that access is now limited and being gradually closed off.

This book is one of many that politicians will choose to ignore or misinterpret. The list of books they avoid reading is long but includes Wilkinson and Pickett's *The Spirit Level*, Stephen Lansley's *The Cost of Inequality* and King and Crewe's *The Blunders of Our Governments*. More to the liking of politicians is Michael Barber's *Instruction to Deliver*. Barber's deliverology stands the old idea of governmental accountability on its head in order to performance manage the people.

The days when Lawrence Stenhouse could contemplate her Majesty's Inspectors encouraging and supporting the professional research of educators are fast receding into legend. Inspectors today are part of an accountability model. Unless we

develop and deploy effective arguments against this approach the future will be in the hands of the educational traffic wardens.

To adapt W. H. Auden's model of literary criticism: this is a good book and I like it but I doubt its influence upon policy makers. On its own it will not get through their force field of ideologically chosen ignorance. We could, however, usefully add it to the sources that could help us build a Campaign for Real Democracy. Let me finish with the words of the authors: 'When politics is premised upon a principled denial of the obvious, government grows without vision, purpose or a due concern for its capacities to serve the public.'

The University of Chicago Press published the book in 2008 as part of its *Chicago Studies in American Politics* series.

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Bourne's side of the story

Colin Waugh

Eric Bourne, *A European Life* (Bank House Books, 2012), 121pp

From 1968 till his retirement at 61 in 1984, Eric Bourne was an inspector in the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) FE service. People who want to understand FE should read this, his autobiography.

From the 1950s to the mid 1970s, the dominant view amongst the powers-that-be in FE, which was focused on technical education for industrial release students, was that an element of liberal education should run through most courses. However, in the ILEA - the authority with the largest number of colleges - there emerged in the early 1970s a movement that aimed to abolish this consensus. Its adherents sought to colonise the curricular spaces and timetable slots allocated to General Studies (GS), the main form in which liberal education was provided, and replace it with training in Communication Skills. Bourne led this movement, using his position as an inspector with responsibility for GS to build a group of advisory teachers, line managers and practitioners who supported him.

From 1979 Thatcher set about destroying much of the UK's industrial base. By 1990 her government had broken the influence of unionised workers over key sectors of production and excluded large numbers of working-class young people from the mainstream labour market. The system by which apprentices were released part time to FE colleges, and hence to do either GS or Communication Skills, had also been largely dismantled. This would have posed a big challenge to the liberal education

tradition in FE even if Bourne and his followers had never existed. Nevertheless they paved the way for curricular models centred on narrow 'basic' skills to dominate general education across vocational FE till now.

Bourne came to England from Germany in 1933. Under the Weimar Republic, his father, Robert Breuer, was deputy chief of President Ebert's press office, and also a prominent publicist for Ebert's party, the nominally Marxist SPD. Although Bourne was brought up within the SPD ethos, his childhood in Germany was, as he puts it, 'unexceptionably middle class' (p1). His mother was from 'a wealthy Jewish family', although this wealth was 'wiped out by Germany's hyper-inflation of 1923'. When the Nazis took power, Breuer escaped to France and eventually died in a Vichy internment camp in Martinique, whereas Bourne and his mother came to England, where his schooling continued at a boarding school for German refugees. On leaving this he avoided internment as an enemy alien by working on a farm, and in 1943 became an officer in the British army, serving, without seeing action, in India and Burma.

On demobilisation, Bourne worked in an office in London while studying part time for the qualifications he needed to enter Queen Mary College, from which he eventually graduated in history. While there, he was active in student politics, first in the Labour Society and as SU president, then in the National Association of Labour Student Organisations, where he was involved in countering Communist Party recruitment. He characterises this and his subsequent employment by the International Union

of Socialist Youth as possibly his 'busiest and most turbulent years' (p54). (A 1950 photo shows him with Clement Attlee.)

With a wife and shortly afterwards a young family, Bourne then got a job as a youth worker in Haverhill, where he also became a Labour councillor, and in 1959 he progressed to be warden of Clarence House, a residential youth centre in Thaxted. He says that 'This appointment was a turning-point for me as it brought me back into the educational world with teaching commitments for groups of apprentices who were regular users of Clarence House and for whom an intensive programme of general as well as physical studies had to be devised.' Later (p75) he characterises this programme as 'not wholly dissimilar to what was now [ie in the late 1960s and early 1970s CW] being offered in the [ILEA] colleges'. These two years at Thaxted constitute the whole of his experience as a worker in anything akin to FE or GS.

In 1960, Bourne became County Youth Officer for Derbyshire, staying until he joined the ILEA inspectorate, where he was given responsibility for youth work, non-vocational adult education and 'General or Liberal Studies in some of the Colleges for Further Education' (p74). (Later he was promoted to staff inspector, meaning that he sat on interview panels.)

Regarding the adult education side of his job, Bourne says (p74) that: 'It quickly became obvious to me that inspecting this medley of disparate classes had absolutely nothing to do with any knowledge of the topics involved but was entirely a matter of observing the quality of the teaching', while as regards youth work he says that: 'In London [ie in contrast to Derbyshire CW] youth provisions were largely in the hands of voluntary agencies which . . . were . . . highly resistant to any interference by the Education Authority and who saw inspection as an infringement of their autonomy'. With 'General or, as some would have it, Liberal Studies in FE colleges', in contrast, he felt himself to be 'on much stronger ground' (p75), essentially because his experience at Thaxted had led him to believe that: 'On the whole the General Studies component was resented by the apprentices who saw it as an unnecessary intrusion into their skills training. . .'

Recognising as 'an educational challenge' both this, and the 'rowdy' behaviour that he judged sometimes to result, he was came under the influence of Pat Haikin, 'a lecturer at one of the Wandsworth FE colleges', who thought that the 'ability [of apprentices CW] to communicate, verbally or in writing, was so limited that both in their trades and in their personal lives they were always likely to be handicapped by this inadequacy'. He set about persuading 'College principals and . . . the

powers-that-be in County Hall' that 'the one hour General Studies period might more profitably be devoted to improving the apprentices' communication skills' (p75).

At first, Bourne liaised mainly with Haikin, Anita Jackson ('a lecturer of General Studies at Woolwich College for FE') and 'the incomparable Margaret Rogers', a lecturer at City College who was 'really a specialist in the teaching of 'English as a Second Language', having worked extensively in Africa'. However, in 1971 there began within the ILEA FE service a consultation which culminated in 1973 in the Briault report and the decision to merge colleges in such a way as to reduce the total from 37 to 15. Appendix 2 of this report advocated that more attention be paid to 'General (Non Vocational) Education', and this offered Bourne and his supporters a chance to extend their influence beyond GS servicing. Bourne was now empowered to appoint advisory teachers to promote his approach, starting with Haikin herself, Inder Gera (see PSE 73, pp13-16) and Paul Clarke. By 1978 there were eight of these, including Rogers, and Haikin's husband, Jack (p81).

Using his powers as a staff inspector, Bourne arranged for lecturers who wanted to implement his approach to be released from teaching to attend half-day staff development events at a teachers' centre, first in Islington and then in Finsbury Park) where, led mainly by Rogers, they developed communication skills assignments, and could make themselves known to Bourne himself. Residential conferences were also arranged. Eventually at least 150 lecturers were involved in this initiative (p87).

Later in the 1970s Bourne also entered into negotiations with the RSA exam board and, more importantly, City and Guilds (CGLI), which monopolised technical exams at craft and non-advanced technician level across London and the southeast. The outcome was 'free-standing' qualifications in communication and numeracy that students were required to pursue alongside their technical certificates, using the slot hitherto timetabled for GS. Eventually, regional awarding bodies made a deal with CGLI (the 'Ferryside agreement') by which these qualifications replaced GS in many colleges across the UK, thereby extending more widely the influence of Bourne's movement, which was now called the ILEA Further and Higher Education Curriculum Development Project. And as unemployment grew this also became involved with both Manpower Services Commission (MSC) and Access provision.

The blurb on the back of Bourne's autobiography says that: 'Faced by the fact that hundreds of young people attending Colleges on apprenticeship and other low-level courses were effectively semi-literate

and semi-numerate, [Bourne] determined that the quality of their lives could be significantly improved if only they were presented with learning opportunities that encapsulated the practical demands of everyday life and work. . . . he gathered around himself a team of advisory teachers which developed learning materials which engaged the interests and motivations of this cohort of young people . . . ' We can assume that this is how Bourne perceives what he did. However, it is not the whole story.

First, as Bourne himself explains, there was at the centre of his project a specific teaching and learning device - the communication workshop - and a method that went with it, in which, rather than being taught as groups in traditional classrooms, students worked individually on assignments. Bourne (p76) recounts that he and 'a group of us', including [Pat] Haikin, visited the Army School of Preliminary Education and saw how individualised literacy teaching and military training were combined there, with the result that: 'Thus was born the idea of Communication Workshops which, in the fullness of time, would exist in almost every ILEA College for FE'. However, in the second half of the 1970s, when GS lecturers were campaigning against Bourne, sources within ILEA told us that the communication workshop method had in fact been originated by a group of twelve ILEA lecturers before Bourne intervened, and also that some of these twelve opposed CGLI certification.

Secondly, Bourne says (p81) that: ' . . . both the City & Guilds of London Institute and the Royal Society of Arts Examinations Board were eventually persuaded to dip their toes into this unfamiliar pond . . . ' whereas it seemed to us at the time that CGLI at least was actively promoting the Communication Skills Certificate.

Thirdly, the assumption on which Bourne's movement was based - that the 'survival' of apprentices was jeopardised by their lack of communication skills - was misleading. Nobody who knew them could imagine that the majority of apprentices were the vulnerable simpletons portrayed by Haikin, and in any case this assumption failed to distinguish between people who are unable to read and write in an officially approved manner and people who choose not to do so. In short, the whole thing was based on a myth concocted to justify the seizure of GS time.

Fourthly, even if this were not the case, there are strong arguments for thinking that, when it comes to helping people to enhance their capacity to use written and spoken language, approaches developed by and from Lev Vygotsky and co-workers of his such as Luria, Leontiev and Voloshinov are valid where basic skills ones are not.

Fifth, although apprentices were sometimes 'rowdy' in GS, they could be 'rowdy' in other lessons as well - sometimes even with technical course tutors who stood in a direct relation both to their trade and to their employers. Not all 'rowdy' behaviour in GS was resistance to it specifically rather than to college attendance generally. And where GS was done by teachers who were committed to it, with reasonable facilities, timetabling and so on, many industrial release students entered into it happily, and some claimed to prefer it to the other parts of their curriculum.

Sixth, Bourne assumes that the technical curriculum itself, along with the whole field of industrial release, on- and off-the-job training etc, was unproblematic - but he is wrong to do so. This was a period of working-class militancy, and, as in all such periods back to the industrial revolution, this included struggles over work processes, definitions of skill, apprenticeships, training, technical knowledge and publicly-provided vocational education.

Seventh, Bourne implies that once his movement got going its inherent rightness allowed it to triumph in every field into which its adherents tried to extend it - but this too is incorrect. In the mid 1970s, when technician level courses were being reorganised under the Technician Education Council (TEC), which required that each college devise its own General and Communication Studies (G&CS) units for TEC validation, Bourne's adherents devised and circulated around ILEA colleges a model G&CS submission. However, this was met and, as far as I know, defeated by a grassroots movement led by Paul Connett and Drew Burns, then GS lecturers at Paddington (now City of Westminster) College. There is no evidence that colleges anywhere embraced Bourne's approach in their G&CS submissions.

Eighth, Bourne's account of his movement (as for example when he refers to the Briault Report) abstracts unjustifiably from the historical circumstances which enabled it to grow.

There were in the ILEA at that time three distinct types of FE institution. First, there were 'monotechnics', for example the London College of Printing, the London College of Furniture and the London College of Fashion, each of which provided both non-advanced courses and higher level work which had the potential to be absorbed into HE. Secondly, there were technical colleges (for example Wandsworth or Paddington) which provided vocational courses across a range of fields (for example engineering, building crafts, building services, science, accountancy and nursery nursing). And thirdly, there were purpose-built 'FE'

colleges (for example Brixton, Putney and North London) which had been set up in the 1960s to provide, mainly for 16-18 year olds, a range of general education courses - for example GCE resits - but which usually provided some vocational courses as well.

The existence of these three different types of college had a direct bearing on the organisation of Liberal and General Studies. In the monotronics and the technical colleges, people employed to teach and line-manage GS normally specialised in that. In the purpose-built FE colleges, on the other hand, it was quite common for General Studies with vocational students to be serviced by staff who did other things as well, for example teach GCE English - in short, people who could expect to have a career outside GS in which they would teach and/or line manage their own specialist subjects.

Some of the LS/GS teachers in the monotronics would have been focused on trying to maximise their work with higher level students. For example, those who had been there longest would have tended to accumulate such work, whereas new entrants, especially hourly paid staff, would usually have been given work with craft and lower-level technician students. So established GS and Liberal Studies staff and managers in these institutions would often have felt secure against - and hence disinclined to resist - Bourne's activities .

The Briault mergers affected the situation of those teaching GS with lower level students in the monotronics, of those doing so in the technical colleges, and above all of those making up their timetables with GS servicing in the FE colleges. Where the proposal was to merge an FE college with a technical college, this last group now faced the prospect of having to teach more GS in the merged institution, and of doing so under the specialist GS managers from the techs. In contrast, Bourne's movement offered them the possibility of teaching apprentices on a one-to-one basis in communication workshops, on structured programmes leading to qualifications, and hence of escaping from the open-ended and uncertificated LS/GS provision that could lead to 'rowdiness', to students demanding to know why they had to do this, and so on. It also offered them the chance of getting the GS managers' jobs.

Further, GS could be tough. For example, an assistant lecturer doing this work in a technical college in the 1960s and 1970s might well teach 24 one-hour classes of craft apprentices per week. He or she would characteristically do this without having been trained for it. Assuming that there were about 15 students in each class, he or she would have to try and learn about 360 names each year, without

the print-outs of ID cards available in every college now. Therefore some practitioners of GS, for example in the technical colleges, who were committed to it would nevertheless have welcomed aspects of the communication workshop method while rejecting its ideological framework.

There are a few points that can be made in conclusion.

For a start, the ILEA did not have to give Bourne responsibility for inspecting GS. In 1968 there must have been within ILEA colleges several hundred - and nationally several thousand - people more qualified than Bourne to inspect, which in those days usually meant support, GS .

Again, instead of backing Haikin etc, Bourne could have chosen to support and develop the approaches to enlarging and enhancing students' capacity to read and write that had already been developed within GS. (In 1971 Bourne published in the journal *Education & Training* an article titled 'Liberal Studies: the state of play', in which he raised several interesting issues about this field. However, there is in this article no overall structuring argument about how Liberal Studies should develop. At this stage, then, he had not adopted the virulently anti-GS view which he later held, so it may be that he was pushed into that view by Haikin and others in the lead-up to the Briault report.)

Moreover, although the Bourne movement came near to destroying GS with craft students across much of ILEA, and although it may have given aspiring managers amongst English teachers in some colleges elsewhere a pretext for asset-stripping GS sections, GS nationally was destroyed by other factors. One such factor was Thatcher's destruction of apprenticeships (which Bourne rightly denounces - p75 and p82). Another was that, for reasons too complex to set out here, GS practitioners did not succeed in elaborating and gaining widespread acceptance of a sufficiently coherent conceptual basis for their work.

The struggle around Bourne's attempts to destroy GS shows that, although valid general education in post-compulsory education must incorporate theory and practice aimed at making it more and more possible for working-class people to enlarge and enhance their control over formal language, the attempt to do this by a patronising and mechanistic approach centred on so-called basic skills, whether in the version pushed by Bourne or in the current form of Functional Skills English, was - and will remain - a blind alley. In contrast, the experience of GS, if we learn its lessons properly, can offer us a model of how general education should be organised across the globalised system of vocational FHE that is now coming into being.

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