Radical Education Dossier 9

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RADICAL EDUCATION DOSSIER

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Popular Control of Education

Education is a big industry. Everybody passes through it at some time. Because of this, it is one of the main ways in which capitalism conditions our social relations and how we think about and behave in the world.

That is why it is important to have popular control of education. Schooling cannot by itself produce a democratic social and economic system, but only through struggling to take control of the agencies which condition their lives can ordinary people begin on the road to socialism.

Teachers are expected to keep the present system going to benefit capital at the expense of working-class parents and children, who have little or no say in how schooling determines the course of their existence. But as Robert Wilson suggests in 'Community Involvement: Is Anything Really Happening?' by allying themselves with students and the community, it is possible for teachers to contribute to the fight for education which serves people's needs.

But teachers should have no illusions. The elitist ideology of professional autonomy is an obstacle to community/teacher co-operation in developing community control of schools. In 'Parents vs Teachers?' Randall Albury explores the tendency for some teachers to see the community as a threat rather than an ally. The very word 'community' covers a multitude of ideological mystifications about consensus and common interests.

It is only through a long process of co-operation with progressive elements that genuine links can be made, links which have the potential for enhancing the ability of the people to make a world of their own choosing.

Community involvement means a whole range of problems and possibilities. The task for radicals involved in education is to apply their energy where real gains in popular participation — as distinct from cosmetic changes — can be made.

In the 'Getting Started' section of this issue we have collected some descriptions of activities and projects which we believe are moving in the right direction.

Parents Versus Teachers ?

Randall Albury

The present system of education in Australia makes the classroom the chief point of contact between the Schools and the Community, with teachers representing the Schools and students the Community. But whereas the Community consists mainly of unorganised groups, fragmented along ethnic, geographical and class lines, the Schools in each state form part of a hierarchically structured and bureaucratically administered educational system. And the position of teachers, which is at the base of this hierarchical system and also at its interface with the Community, is one which places them in a highly contradictory situation with regard to the question of Community involvement in the Schools.

The Class Position of Teachers

First of all the teachers' location at the bottom of the educational hierarchy deprives them of any significant degree of control over the policies of their schools or the conditions in which they are required to implement them. The effect of such proletarianised working conditions is described by the NSW Teachers' Federation in the following terms:

> The Federation believes that a major reason for the present discontent within the teaching service . . . is general dissatisfaction with the bureaucratic administration carrying out government policy in public education in New South Wales. Over the years, teachers have been keenly aware of the failure of responsible authorities to consult teachers effectively on such matters as school design, equipment and supplies, curricula, inspection procedures, etc.[1]

In response to this situation the Federation, in its statement on 'Democracy in the Schools', calls for 'the elimination of the present concept of a hierarchical authority structure. Teachers will work together on a basis of professional equality'.[2]

This first tendency toward democratisation within the educational system, arising from a proletarianised work experience, is opposed, however, by a contradictory tendency toward elitism in the teachers' relationship to the Community. The training which teachers receive, involving specialised tertiary study and an ideology of 'professionalism', as well as their objective position as primary representatives of the educational system to the Community, produce a middle class outlook (technically a 'petty bourgeois' outlook) which resists any significant Community involvement in the Schools as a threat to teacher autonomy. In 'Democracy in the Schools', for example, 'the right of parents to participate in the planning of their children's education' is limited to the following two points:

 a Parents should receive full information about their children's progress and the choices available to them.

 b Parents should have opportunity for discussion with teachers about all matters concerning their children's education and future.[3]

This narrow construction of parental rights contrasts sharply with the aims of parents' groups such as the Australian Council of State School Organisations, which has sought to secure a broad range of rights for parents, including:

11 Participation in the formulation of the educational policy of the school.

12 Consultation about proposed changes in curriculum and proposed introduction of new curriculum.

13 Representation either by election by all parents involved or by nomination through the national, state or local school parent organisations to all decision making bodies dealing with matters affecting the education of children.[4]

Fear of Parental Involvement

Parental involvement in the Schools is only one aspect of Community involvement, but even this most obvious form of Community involvement is apt to be regarded with suspicion by teachers. This reaction among teachers is dramatically illustrated by a vignette recently published in the journal of the NSW Teachers' Federation.[5] The scene is parent-teacher night at a South Coast high school, and after the principal concludes his address on 'increased community involvement in education' one of the teachers present is confronted by an inarticulate, bigoted and semi-paranoid mother who accuses her of giving the children in her English class 'filth' to read. The teacher patiently attempts to find out which book in particular the woman objects to, but the woman says 'They all seem to be the same, utter rubbish, nothing else' although she has not read any of them herself: 'I don't need to read them, just a look at them . . .'. The conversation is interrupted by an announcement from the principal that several parents have volunteered to serve on 'a new committee which will assist teachers in the running of our schools'. When it is revealed that the woman to whom she is talking is a member of this committee, the English teacher's expression changes 'from frustrated tolerance and mild amusement to a frozen blankness', and the story ends with one last outburst from the woman.

The fear of parental involvement revealed in this story is not explicable simply on the basis of the 'petty bourgeois' class position of teachers vis-a-vis the Community; it also bears the marks of the present situation which teachers face. They carry out their work under a regime of surveillance and inspection, and thus tend to view other manifestations of outside interest in their work in the same light. (Note that in the story it is the principal who instigates the formation of a parents' committee.)

Contradictions of Community Involvement...

Furthermore, the attacks by right-wing groups on progressive educational methods and curricula have generated something of a siege mentality among teachers, not only because of the content of these attacks but also because they serve as ideological apologetics for the severe budgetary cuts imposed upon education by the current financial crisis of capital.[6] So to the extent that teachers' attitudes about parental involvement arise from a resistance to administrative surveillance and to ideological and financial attacks on progressive schooling, they contain democratic and progressive elements and are not simply reducible to petty bourgeois elitism.

These democratic and progressive elements can be strengthened as the capitalist financial crisis continues. Teachers and administrators will find it necessary to cultivate public support for the Schools as a defence against further cuts in the education budget,[7] and this need can open up opportunities for the development of Community involvement in the Schools on a co-operative rather than a supervisory basis. But here the question arises — What about the Community? Aren't public attitudes toward education, and especially working-class attitudes, fundamentally conservative and aren't the right-wing parent groups strong enough to make a mockery of the notion of co-operative and democratic involvement in the Schools?

Attitudes in the Community

Without minimising the political danger posed by right-wing groups, it is still possible to see associated with them a tendency favouring co-operative and democratic Community involvement in the Schools; for the appeal of these groups is based upon two distinct components.

1 On the one hand they tap the resentment created in individuals by the experience of powerlessness in the face of the bureaucratic apparatuses of welfare capitalism. Specifically, they focus this resentment upon the educational bureaucracy which threatens to replace parents as the principal determinant of the ideological influences upon their children.

2 On the other hand the solution which they offer to the problem of authoritarian bureaucracy is a return to the authoritarian family in which parental values are unquestioningly accepted by the children, and to the authoritarian classroom in which iron discipline prevails over individual development.

These two components express contradictory tendencies, just as we have found in the case of teachers' attitudes toward democratisation of the Schools. But whereas the two contradictory tendencies in the teachers' attitudes toward democratisation were necessarily connected owing to the contradictory structural position of teachers in society, these two contradictory tendencies in the right-wing attitude toward schooling are not connected in the same way because the group which shares this attitude to a greater or lesser extent is not homogeneous in

terms of its class position. Thus not everyone who is attracted by the first component of the right-wing appeal is necessarily attracted by the second component. And some of those who are attracted by both components may accept the second only because they think it is necessitated by the first or because they are aware of no other alternative.

So here again the possibility exists for the strengthening of a democratic and progressive element developing within a generally reactionary context. It would, of course, be a waste of time to attempt to strengthen this element among die-hard conservative ideologues. But among the masses of working class and lower middle class parents — who see daily that their children are ill served by the present educational system, who feel powerless to change it, and who are offered no solution by the media or their own experience other than right-wing populism — there is a real possibility for the development of co-operative involvement in the Schools if an alternative solution is offered by left activists at the local school level.

Conclusion

Both teachers and the great majority of parents have an objective interest in wresting control of the schools from the educational bureaucracy. Tendencies opposing the co-operation of teachers and parents in pursuit of this goal include elitism among teachers (leading parents to identify the interests of teachers with the interests of the bureaucracy) and conservative educational values among parents (leading teachers to identify the interests of parents with the interests of the bureaucracy). The need for public support caused by the financial crisis of capital offers the possibility of breaking down some of the elitist tendencies of teachers, as well as some of the rigidity of the administrative bureaucracy. Organised Community demand for democratisation of the Schools can support teachers' struggles toward this end at a time when teacher militance is threatened by high unemployment. Conversely, initiatives by left activist teachers can help to orient Community demands for effective involvement in the Schools, toward democratic and co-operative participatory structures.

References

1 NSW Teachers' Federation, '79 Working Conditions, 'Democracy in the Schools', p 28.
2 Ibid., p 29.
3 Ibid., p 30.
4 Australian Council of State School Organisations, General Policy Document, 1979, p 25.
5 Pamela Geissler, 'The Teacher', Education, Vol 60, No 6, April 11, 1979, p 132.
6 See Radical Education Dossier, No 8, March 1979, for a collection of articles relating to the right-wing attack on schooling.
7 Cf. Tony McNamara, 'Whatever Happened to Parent Involvement', Sydney Morning Herald, April 17, 1979, p 11. The author was a member of the Schools Commission from 1973 to 1976.

Community Involvement -
is Anything Really Happening?

Robert Wilson

Though it's hard to believe when you see so few teachers really interested in promoting school-community interaction, liberal educators have for a long time had a good rationale for involving the community in the school. Much research has shown that student success in academic study is minimally influenced by the school compared to the overwhelming influence of home background. A major Australian study (Moore, 1973) concluded that when the values of the home and school clashed, students normally resolved the conflict by rejecting the school. The study implied that the appropriate educational response was to integrate the two in some way to minimise this value clash. Other studies such as Schiff (1976) and Stearnes (1973) have discovered that when parents participate in the school, attendance improves, children study better and they acquire basic skills more quickly. The argument can be summarised by saying that children's performance improves with parental encouragement, and that by involving parents in the school teachers can bring about a rise in their encouragement of their children, which in the end benefits the child.

Other liberal arguments for community involvement claim that participation will:
- increase parents' understanding of children's education;
- contribute towards the individualisation of instruction and evaluation of pupils;
- develop parent leadership and education;
- facilitate communication between the school, parents and the community;
- avoid crises in schools;
- create goodwill and mutual esteem between teachers and parents;
- increase the awareness of parent and community problems and expectations of education on the part of the school;
- promote educational accountability to the public

(Henry, 1978)

Almost all of these arguments present problems to radical educationalists for they implicitly assume a state of no change and an unquestioning acceptance of the status quo in education, its policies and practices. They simply are concerned with making the attainment of present organisational goals more efficient by soliciting parent help and diffusing parent critique and demands through 'better communication', 'parent education', 'goodwill and mutual esteem' etc.

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The radical approach to community involvement would see it in terms of helping counter some of the negative effects of the present system, claiming that community participation could:
- help wrest control of education away from the state and reduce the distrust, alienation and apathy that are associated with centralised decision making;
- decentralise decision making to the local level and promote a self-management approach to schooling;
- act as a restraint on the teaching force becoming a remote, professional elite;
- contribute to the curriculum becoming more relevant to working class kids;
- contribute to general community development by empowering people to take control of the institutions that affect their daily lives.

The difference in approaches is reflected in the scope of participation envisaged by the liberal and radical positions. Whereas the liberal position promotes activities that let the community into the school, but keeps the power and control of activities firmly in the hands of the professionals, the radical viewpoint looks towards forms of participation where power is shared or even delegated to the professionals by the community to whom they are then fully accountable.

If we look at the sort of community involvement activities that are happening at present we can grade them on a scale of intentions which reflect the liberal and radical positions:

1. **Window dressing activities:** eg. sausage sizzles; parents covering library books; school controlled newsletters etc.
2. **Soothing or co-opting activities:** eg. 'consulting' the P&C on trivial issues; mothers listening to reading; parents helping on excursions; system and union policies of parent advisory committees etc.
3. **Collaboration activities:** eg. teachers and all parents drawing up school policies; school councils deciding on budget priorities; the community as teacher etc.
4. **Delegation or transfer of control:** eg. councils' employing extra staff; system school going 'alternative' with support and protection of councils; parents in direct teaching etc.

One of the most insidious aspects of capitalism is its ability to incorporate and subvert progressive social changes to ensure its own survival. As part of this process, education bureaucracies, principals and teachers tend to manipulate the avenues of involvement so that they are rendered unthreatening and impotent. Involvement initiatives are therefore often counter-productive to true community participation. As radical educationalists we need to be constantly aware of the dangers that community involvement activities and programs are susceptible to. Among the main dangers are: forms of involvement in which the school gives 'therapy' to participants, where it brainwashes them into an understanding of the school process which is defined on the school's terms; involvement which acts as a means of changing the behaviour of potential protest groups; involvement activities which are a means of getting hostile parents to do the work of principals and teachers; and involvement activities that become means by which community power is absorbed through the familiar process of engaging people in constant meetings and committees so that energy for change is reduced.

At the school level co-option at its worst is done through pacification by rhetoric (eg. principals 'reporting' to the P&C). What is more usually the case is the parading of participation activities by proud principals that on closer inspection are revealed as being lifeless and remote from any real influence on decision making. It is interesting, for example, that even in those schools that boast of the use of parent and community expertise in the curriculum, it is invariably of a very narrow kind — help in arts/craft, sport or other extra curricular activities — the areas considered to be the 'soft options' by school personnel. It says more about the school's perception of community resources and their lack of openness to real participation than the reality of available expertise in any community.

A review of existing programs in Australian schools reveals that in the majority of cases schools are only prepared to entertain the notion of community involvement if the contact is of a strictly limited and tokenistic nature. 'Sausage sizzles' and other social events abound where parents are invited to mix with teachers, but strictly out of school hours. Rarely are parents invited into the inner sanctum of the classroom or exposed first hand to education in action. The Ethnic Food Night is a popular example of this sort of activity in urban schools: a once a year event when kids, parents and teachers sample various ethnic dishes together and the school gives recognition to its multicultural population. Throughout the rest of the year, though, there is no recognition of the ethnic festivals that the local community observes, nor is there much reflection of the multi-cultural nature of the community in school curricula.

Many community involvement activities also reflect and reinforce the sexist values of our society. Mothers are invariably invited into the school to teach children how to cook or sew while fathers are invited to help with the school maintenance or (occasionally) to talk to a class about their jobs in the work-force. At a new community school in a Housing Commission area in New South Wales parents 'participate' in school affairs by being invited to the school to play social tennis on the school's courts. The principal is now keen to extend his community involvement program by having a modelling agency come into the school to teach deportment to the mothers. Apparently this will meet a major social need of this deprived group! Other schools in economically depressed areas have also catered for parents in similar sexist and socially useless ways by putting on fashion parades for the community.

Some schools holding less threatened or territorial attitudes to education have taken the step of utilising the community as a resource in the classroom. Mothers have been acting as extra pairs of helping hands, donating their time hearing pupils read or helping with the after school activities centre, for example.

While getting parents to help in the classroom is a valuable initial step towards breaking down the fortress walls, showing parents what actually happens on the inside and giving them the opportunity to grow more competent to deal with the educational 'experts', such initiatives are usually firmly prescribed and controlled by the school. What it boils down to is that parents are used as unskilled labour and are rarely accorded the status of equal partners in the education process.

A good test of the political potential of any involvement activity is the extent to which the activity leads, or is likely to lead in the future, to a change in the relationship between those who currently have power and those who are relatively powerless. This is not to downgrade lower level activities completely for not all parents feel themselves capable of competently contributing in the actual decision making process and feel more comfortable doing less demanding tasks that contribute to the school's welfare. A dynamic school will involve parents at all levels. What radical teachers and parents must work towards though is the opening up of the higher levels of decision making in the school and education system to genuine grassroots, community participation.

If we look at some of these higher level decision making areas we see that there are a few interesting developments in which opportunities for genuine community participation in the life of schools are being extended:

Involvement in School Governance
In both Victoria and the ACT a strong community interest and pressure were instrumental in bringing in legislation that allowed for community representation on governing boards and councils. As with those in South Australia, the Victorian school councils and the ACT school boards have a number of advisory functions but also have important powers with regard to deciding on budget priorities and the employment of ancillary staff. The ACT boards are more powerful in terms of their legal duty to *determine* the educational policies to be implemented in the school, whereas the Victorian and South Australian councils can only advise on policy and curriculum matters.

Some particular schools also have decision making structures that are accessible to parents and community members as well as students. Huntingdale Technical High School in Victoria has three main decision making bodies in the school. The school meeting is held once a term and is open to students, teachers, parents, council members and community people. It deals with matters that concern the whole community of the school and is responsible, with other bodies, for formulating the school's statement of principles. The School Council has significant legal powers relating to financial matters, the employment of non-teaching staff, the recommendations of appointment of teaching staff and the control of buildings and grounds. It consists of four elected staff, four students, four parents, four members of the school's community involvement group, four other community members, a ministerial nominee and a representative of the local council. The principal is a non-voting member. The third body is the Academic Board which comprises both the teaching and non-teaching staff. The Board makes the decisions that dictate the day to day operation of the school, particularly in terms of how the staff offer themselves in their professional role. The Board meetings are open to students, parents and Council members who all have voting and speaking rights like everyone else.

Involvement in the Curriculum
As already mentioned the ACT school boards have formal responsibility for determining policies and also changes in sections of the curriculum. In reality this means that teachers usually put up courses to the boards for approval, but there are cases reported when the boards have sent back courses for rewriting or initiated changes themselves. At the more informal levels the input of parent and community members in curriculum development is minimal, although there are a few schools that are leading the way with open access policies that allow and encourage parent and community participation in a meaningful way. Kanwal Primary School on the central coast of New South Wales has been developing its own curriculum for the past five years to complement its school policy of aims and objectives that was drawn up by the principal, staff, parents and community. Every week, the staff meet one afternoon after school to develop curriculum. A small group of dedicated parents who have worked in the school in various ways (in the P&C, helping in the canteen, helping with the remedial reading program and in the classroom) are also members of this group.

... WHAT WE NEED IS FOR EVERYONE TO SIT DOWN TOGETHER AND TALK

Involvement in Staffing

While a number of parent organisations have policies on community participation in staff selection, there are only two systems where local influence has some standing. In the ACT the school boards are responsible for writing the job descriptions for teaching positions that become vacant in the school though teachers are still selected and employed by the central authority (CTS). The influence is indirect but it is reported that some schools write job descriptions so detailed that they get the individuals of their choice.

In Victoria through a process of negotiation and co-operation between the Technical Teachers Association and the administration of the Technical Division of the Victorian Education Department, a system has been devised whereby schools have a direct say in the appointment of principals and vice principals. Applications are made to a central authority known as the Committee of Classifiers, which then sends lists of applicants to schools, each of which then establishes an interview committee representative of parents, teachers and other members of the community to interview the applicants and to make a recommendation to the Committee of Classifiers on who should be appointed. The Committee of Classifiers invariably follows the schools' recommendations. Occasionally selection committees have included students. When a candidate has been selected by more than one school, he or she is able to nominate a personal first choice. This system has been acknowledged by those concerned to be very successful and there is now a growing movement to extend this sort of selection procedure to the primary and high school divisions.

Involvement in Financial Administration

Parents have for a long time theoretically had control of the monies they raise for the school, though the reality is very often quite different, with principals specifying needs or simply presenting bills to the P&C without any consultation on priorities. However, in some states, parents, through membership and representation on school boards and councils, are beginning to have some say over the funds passed directly to schools by the system authorities. Victoria, for instance, claims to distribute directly to schools up to 10% of recurrent funds (apart from salaries) for the day to day running of the school where they are disbursed by the school council. Effective management in these circumstances means that principals have to have a good working relationship with the school council (on which elected parents and teachers sit), and budgets have to be either justified or worked out in a collaborative fashion.

Involvement in Evaluation

Evaluation and student assessment are areas still jealously guarded by system authorities. However, there are some interesting individual examples of progressive attempts to include the community in these activities. At Brooks High School in Tasmania for example, a full school evaluation was carried out last year by a team of parents and community members who came into the school, made investigations, wrote reports and made recommendations on all aspects of the curriculum and the school organisation. The school subsequently published the completed reports and embarked on a program of making changes in the school on the basis of the recommendations. At Huntingdale Technical High in Victoria an evaluation carried out in 1978 by the staff and a visitng 'expert' committee chosen by the school was the basis of a residential inservice seminar at which decisions were made on

...AND OUR SCHOOL HAS AN EXCELLENT COMMUNITY INVOLVE- MENT PROGRAM - INFACT THE P&C PAID FOR THIS NEW AIR CONDITIONER

curriculum changes and organisational restructuring. The seminar was made up of all the staff members and an approximately equal number of parents and students who participated fully in making these decisions.

Conclusion

The majority of schools in Australia involve the community in restricted, impotent ways. By reducing forms of participation to a shell or a sham, they manage to preserve intact the democratic mythology of public participation while serving their immediate public relation needs. The long term effect of this is simply to increase the credibility gap between the school and its client public and further alienate parents and the community.

As radical educationalists we must be highly critical of these manipulated forms of participation, and struggle to extend the few existing areas of genuine participation opportunities to their full limit and beyond.

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Capitalism, Culture and Kids

Rachel Sharp

An important new book about working class kids' culture explores ways in which radical teachers can unmask the oppressive role of education and ideology under capitalism. Because of its significance, we publish here a long review of it. RED readers' comments on the book are invited for our next issue, which will concentrate on the topic of action which can usefully be taken by Marxists working in education.

Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs, by Paul Willis. Saxon House, 1978. 204 pp. $9.75.

Academics and teachers in the last few years have been so inundated with catalogues of books on education that if they believed the publishers' blurbs they would have the definitive view on almost every conceivable issue. Very few such books are worth more than five minutes of cursory perusal. Most contain nothing but low-level trivia and ideological mystification. Learning to Labour is one of the few exceptions. It is without doubt the most significant book which has been written on education for many years.

The Birmingham University Cultural Studies Centre where Willis is based has established a world-wide reputation as the source of much creative theoretical work on culture and ideology from within the Marxist tradition. Many radical activists in education are inclined to be suspicious of theoretical debates as nothing but the verbal games of petit bourgeois academics (as frequently they are). Willis' study, however, shows the shortsightedness of such a view. It illustrates the necessity of theoretical work as a starting point for an analysis of schooling, and for any political practice designed to bring about change. Facts do not speak for themselves: they have to be theoretically defined and interpreted.

The phenomenon that Willis sets out to explain is why, in the context of a class society, some working class pupils voluntarily choose to lock themselves into apparently personally unrewarding and low status manual labouring jobs, despite a schooling system which ostensibly provides some opportunities for social mobility, and despite a genuine concern on the part of many of their teachers and youth employment officers to rescue them from that fate. In Marxist terms, the book explores some aspects of the process of social and cultural reproduction.

Using an ethnographic case study of a group of working class youths from an all-male comprehensive school in an English industrial conurbation, he raises important questions about the way in which the themes within their subculture reflect and help to reproduce the lived experience of these pupils both within and outside the school. In short, the kids are anti-school. The 'lads' reject the individualistic, competitive ethos which pervades capitalist schooling. They eschew intellectual work, resisting the official rationales and justifications for the way

things are. Instead they substitute their own meanings, rituals and pastimes which have little to do with what schooling has to offer. If he had stopped there, Willis would have provided few new insights, only additional, often juicy, evidence to support what every sensitive teacher has known since the onset of mass schooling: schools are arenas where a losing battle is being waged for the 'hearts and minds' of the working class. Teachers of the working class confront a class culture which is alien from, and often antagonistic to, everything the school tries to impart. It subverts their aims and undermines their good intentions.

The distinctiveness of Willis' work is that he provides an analysis of how these attitudes towards schooling are essential components of the way in which the class structure is legitimated and kept going. The themes within the subculture, linked as they are with broader aspects of working class experience outside the school, work to sustain the existing patterns of domination and subordination. For example, the 'lads' have contempt for the 'ear-oles', the conformist pupils who work hard and aspire for individual mobility. Similarly, they turn upside down the traditional ranking of mental and manual labour, through their celebration of masculinity and physical prowess. And these values serve precisely to perpetuate and reinforce that very distinction between mental and manual labour which is an important aspect of the legitimation of class inequality under capitalism.

Willis shows how the sexist, racist themes within the anti-school subculture reflect and reproduce the divisions within the working class which Braverman has demonstrated to be an essential aspect of capitalist control over the labour process and the work force. More importantly, he provides a theoretical link between these two insights through his observation that the 'lads' define mental labour, the destiny of most of the 'ear-oles', as cissy, effeminate and inferior. He thus links patriarchy and capitalism in an original way. In brief, the book demonstrates how the lads' resistance to the received wisdom of schooling precisely prepares them for their future insertion into the social and ideological practices of the shop floor — in fact, for an acceptance of manual labour in a social world which at least partially they have learned to reject. They will, for example, have nothing to do with the middle class notion of vocational choice propagated by the school. This emphasises the need to match individual aptitudes and motivations against the variety of vocational satisfactions emanating from a horizontally

and vertically differentiated job market. They perceive, quite rightly, that most jobs are routine, boring, oppressive and alienating — even those entailing mental labour. Nevertheless, their subculture does not enable them to link this insight with the essential nature of capitalist production and the variety of mechanisms which help to maintain it. Instead it locks them into manual labour and the world of appearances.

Theory

I earlier asserted the need for theory. Willis' study is informed by a theoretical analysis of the nature of capitalism as a system and a sophisticated theory of ideology which depends heavily on the work of Gramsci (in particular, the latter's discussion of the contradictory nature of commonsense). Although Willis does not avail himself of the concept of hegemony[1], the two analytical concepts that he uses to interpret the experience of his subjects — penetrations and limitations — derive from a notion of 'hegemonised commonsense'. 'Penetrations' relates to our earlier discussion of the lads' attitude towards vocational choice. Willis is arguing that these lads partially see through the surface of bourgeois society and discern at least some aspects of the structure of inequality, demystifying the institutions which help to reproduce it, like the school. However, their glimpses are limited, so that they do not discern the whole nature of capitalism for what it is, a system of class domination based upon the appropriation of surplus value emanating from their own labour power. In other words, he is showing how common-sense, always a potentially radical force when things are not as they seem to be, is structured by and intersected with dominant or hegemonic meanings and practices which mask the real structure of class domination. Moreover, Willis does not see the operation of ideology as a simple imposition of a ruling class view onto passive subjects. On the contrary, hegemony is actively constructed and reconstituted through the life styles of youths such as the subjects of his study, resulting in an adult life which is precisely what capitalism requires.

Australian Applications

Willis' study needs to be replicated in Australia. All capitalist societies share some common features such as the need to produce for profit and sustain a system of class domination. However, the specific course of capitalist development and the trajectory of class struggles have varied historically over time in different countries. It may well be that there are specific features of capitalism within Australia and the manner of ideological incorporation of the working class here which would substantially modify Willis' analysis. To what extent, for example, has the post-war reliance on migrant labour for manual work affected the way in which hegemony operates among the non-migrant working class population? Willis' analysis also needs to be developed through additional studies of girls, of the 'ear-oles', and of schools experimenting with a radically different mode of pedagogy. One of the problems here is that educational

research funding bodies have not shown themselves very willing to support either basic theoretical work or studies which reject a positivistic methodology in favour of more qualitative, ethnographic, hypothesis-generating approaches. *Learning to Labour* surely provides a perfect example of why such research is worthwhile.

An additional point which needs to be stressed is that Willis' study was completed at a time when the phenomenon of widespread youth unemployment was not figuring prominently. In England now, and even more so in Australia, the typical destiny for unqualified school leavers is not productive labour, but long-term structurally-induced unemployment. What implications will this have for schools and the content of the anti-school subculture, especially given the increased emphasis on vocational guidance and work experience in schools which bodies such as the Williams Committee advocate? More importantly, what attempts will be made by the bourgeois class and the bourgeois state to ideologically contain the working class and the young as the recession proceeds?

It would be unfair to expect one book to resolve all the significant issues. Nevertheless if there is one main weakness in Willis' book it is his neglect of the role of the state in orchestrating and managing the current crisis. If Marxist analysis of education is to develop, it has to explore further the nature of the capitalist state, which becomes especially salient in times of economic recession. The ideological constitution of the crisis by the state, its modes of intervention into schooling, are decisive objects of the theoretical analysis of education which Willis tends to underplay. This is especially critical since behind the state's ideological interventions is a coercive power, which in Australia is increasingly being used not simply against those who voluntarily submit to manual labour, like the 'lads' in *Learning to Labour*, but also against those teachers who are committed in their educational and political practice to subvert the mystifications which pervade capitalist schooling and to offer something of more long lasting value to their pupils.

The Task for Radical Teachers

Is this a pessimistic book? Yes and no. It is pessimistic because the task that radical teachers confront is a daunting one. Given the aim of trying to push the pupils' partial penetrations beyond the limits of bourgeois ideology towards a full appreciation of how capitalism works, the problem arises of how to undermine those tenacious themes within the subculture which life within and outside the school continually reinforces. Willis rejects any simplistic commitment to an aimless progressive child-centred pedagogy. The problem as he sees it is to find a way of using the positive, potentially counterhegemonic elements of the lads' commonsense and of developing a language which can shatter the obstacles, moving them towards a greater awareness. Willis offers a number of suggestions as to possible themes which might usefully be explored to this end. For example, he suggests that teachers could usefully discuss with their pupils the costs

and diversions of sexism. They could also pursue issues about what 'the counter school culture implies about qualifications, the meaning of work, the nature and role of labour power in modern society'. The book is not pessimistic at another level, however, because the evidence is provided that the subculture is not totally hegemonised but characterised by tensions, ambivalences and contradictions which theoretically can be built upon. However, I do. not think that the analysis has yet been done which can guide us very much in the practice of Marxist pegagogy. The goals are clear but radical teachers lack a theory of pedagogy and are forced to rely on little more than hunches or intuitions. This is an urgent theoretical and political task for Marxists and for educators. It entails in particular a Marxist theory of language, since language is one of the significant vehicles through which ideological shifts can be brought about. This is not to eschew the need for radical action; only to emphasise that activism should always be theoretically informed. Willis' work provides a brilliant starting point but has not resolved the problems of pedagogy.

Learning to Labour, then, is a must for every reader of

Radical Education Dossier However, it is not an easy book. Whilst it is written in a clear, concise and dense style, the language he uses is complex and often technical and he has paid insufficient attention to the problems of his audience. Perhaps what is required is the establishment of *Learning to Labour* reading groups where collectively the ideas could be explored and a start could be made to work through the pedagogical implications. The effort involved would be very productive. Perhaps we are now in an era where a period of theoretical reflection is an essential precondition for further advances towards rational and hence radical educational goals.

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1 Hegemony is Gramsci's term for the mode by which the bourgeois class exerts its rule. The basic relation of society is a class relation between capital and labour. By getting labour involved in social practices which do not threaten this relation, the bourgeoisie obtains a voluntary submission to the forms and processes of capitalist production. The concept of hegemony is essential for an understanding of ideology. For a discussion of the concept, see Perry Anderson's article on Gramsci in *New Left Review* 100.
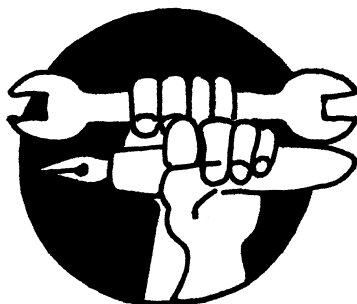
EDUCATION & LABOUR MOVEMENT

Attempts are beginning this year toward understanding what is in store for schooling in Australia in the present crisis of capitalism. The aim is for people involved with education to develop their part in a labour movement counter-strategy.

To approach the task an Education Project Group of the Trans National Co-operative (TNC) has formed in Sydney. The group took part in the TNC National Industries Workshop held in Sydney April 27-29. In the short term the Education Project Group will be working on a popular booklet on education along the lines of *Australia Ripped Off*. The group welcomes new members.

As we go to press (June 1 and 2) a conference is being held in Melbourne with the title 'Education and the Workforce: Towards Post-Williams Labour Movement Strategies'. The sessions include:

- Education and Politics
- Education, Employment and Unemployment
- Elitism in Education and the Workforce
- Teachers, Academics, Unionists and Society

The Conference is organised by the Labour Resource Centre.

Contacts: Labour Resource Centre
             25 Drummond St, Carlton Vic 3053.
             PO Box 62 Carlton South.
             Phone [03] 662 3433 or [03] 662 3828

             Trans National Co-operative Ltd
             GPO Box 161 Sydney 2001
             Phone [02] 26 1702.

KVEAC and the Fight for

Shared Decision Making

Steve Jolley

A Victorian reader contributes an account of a remarkable community/school project in a rural area, and argues that the best defence against right-wing attacks is to involve parents and citizens as much as possible. In this way, parents and teachers realise their common interest of preserving their schools from state cutbacks.

Pressure on education is occurring at a critical time for schools, when the whole 'professional mystique' is being challenged and education is being opened up to the community. It enables employer representatives and the Right generally to gain easy access and a solid propaganda base to effect the changes and implement the docility they are aiming for (see *RED 8*).

Yet the entry of the community into schools also provides the opportunity for a discovery by all involved parties of the power which they actually do possess, and it provides a vehicle to increase expectations about the object and use of this power. I propose to show by example how this has been achieved in a small way in one community.

We must begin by examining the available avenues for involvement which have existed in the past and those which are likely to arise in the future. Most of the options which are discussed below are the traditional ones and have little bearing on the directions which it seems the education system will take in the future. Some traditional openings, however, have increased a great deal in potential, in Victoria at least, and they present something of a challenge to the present mode of operation of teachers. Most notable of these is the school council.

School Councils

These evolved from the old school committees in Victoria which were bodies responsible simply for cleaning up the school and implementing Departmental decisions concerning the school which were not associated with curriculum matters. It is safe to say that they were landed with the shit work — working bees, cleaning up, minor repairs and the like — and had no real decision-making power. Following the advent of the Schools Commission, the powers of the committees were greatly expanded, and they were given the grand new name of school councils. In small schools at least they still do the shit work, but their powers are awesome. They can now hire and fire ancillary staff, have work done on their own initiative and influence the curriculum decisions of schools. They are responsible legally for administration of school finances, and can determine where such finances are spent.

While the Victorian State Government is taking advantage of council power to diffuse responsibility for their decisions and

to cushion the impact of funding cutbacks, school councils have great significance in the access of the community to real decision-making power in schools. It seems that as yet this power has not been fully explored, but it extends, at least in an advisory capacity, to the curriculum content of the school. Councils are taking a major role in the determination of school policy and their increased power has forced sharing of the decisions of curriculum planning between community and school staff.

One of the more significant aspects of council powers is that one does not need to be a parent to be directly involved in school decision-making. The whole community can, theoretically, be involved in the determination of the directions in which local education is headed.

Traditional Community Participatory Roles

In the past, as mentioned earlier, the role of the community has been one of service to schools. Parents have been involved in tuckshops, working bees and school committees. The function of parents has been primarily, of course, as a supplier of the commodity in which the education machine deals, and secondarily as a backstop to the running of the school. In this way the mystique of the educative process has been preserved, and no threat has been posed to the 'professionalism' of teachers. One could label this role 'Parents as Pawns'. Its demise, whilst unlikely even in a future of more effective involvement, would not be mourned, save by the diehard bureaucrats lurking in every school and the compulsive cake-bakers prominent in every community.

Indirect Community Pressure on Individual Schools

Pressure from the community has been, and will continue to be, a continuous undercurrent directing school policies. It has always been a factor in small country schools, but has recently emerged in Victoria as the cause of a major industrial dispute in the technical division. In any situation, but particularly in the country, there is strong pressure on teachers to conform to the ideology of the local community. If such conformity is not apparent, things can be made very difficult for a 'front-line' teacher — one who lives and teaches in the district. This is

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particularly so if the teaching is in a one- or two-teacher school where good community relations are an essential factor in effective teaching.

Many cases are on record of teachers being run out of town owing to unsatisfactory ideology, be it educational or political, but these are usually confined to vulnerable primary teachers. However, the recent Julie Ingleby case, involving a technical teacher's political views in a medium-sized country town, makes it obvious that this can and does occur on a much wider basis.

Such pressure, while it is a genuine community feeling, is tailormade for the Right, and strategies must be devised to avoid confrontations between teachers and parents to the advantage of the Department. In Castlemaine, where the tech. dispute occurred, threats of Klan-like violence were made, and a nasty situation could have resulted. The community must be involved to the extent that the more aware members can see the threat to **themselves** inherent in the political repression of the teachers working for them.

Overt Political Pressure

The Right-wing assault on education has been adequately covered in *RED 8*, at least for the purposes of this article. While it is a threat which will grow with further community access to education, it is one for which separate analysis and a defensive strategy must be made. Such attacks can be effective by their playing on people's fears, but the more enlightened participation that takes place and the more genuine involvement by communities, with **adequate input** by the Left, the less that ignorance can be used as a weapon. Our greatest strength lies in educating the community as it becomes involved.

The Rise of Effective Community Involvement

Involvement by the community in an **effective** way is a recent phenomenon but one that is likely to last. It has been triggered off largely by the Schools Commission and government initiatives in the devolution of power (and responsibility) to 'The People'. However, one wonders whether the governments would have been quite so enthusiastic over the move had they realised the nature of the beast they were unleashing. Certainly it has the potential, as has been mentioned, of turning into a backlash against teachers and a purge the like of which has not been seen since witches were burnt in Salem. But given that teachers on the Left are aware of such possibilities and that people are not such manipulable fools as many make out, there exists a real opportunity to create an awareness among people of their power and their real needs.

Take for an example the history of a small country grouping of two-teacher schools which from the start has had a strong element of community involvement. While it demonstrates no earth-shattering initiatives, it is revealing of the power which a community holds and which, if it has the opportunity, it will use to constructive ends.

KVEAC (King Valley Educational Advancement Committee)

KVEAC dates back some nine years. Originally set up as a means for pooling the resources of small schools, such as disadvantage grants in later years, it has grown into a co-operative which is making headway in breaking down rural isolation. It consists of a grouping of six schools; because of the independent nature of such schools, community participation, originally limited to school committees, was required.

This took the form of instituting a committee made up of teachers and members of the community of each school to administer the funds received in the group pool. These funds were used to stock a central library and to purchase hardware ordinarily unobtainable by individual small schools. The scheme proceeded on this premise for some time, until it was realised that such a grouping had more potential than just financial administration. The community is very isolated and with minimal government help it was realised that the best way to get help was to help themselves. Utilising one of the traditional community functions, fundraising was undertaken and a bus was purchased.

While this had great implications for the improvement of the general educational climate, in particular the first steps towards breakdown of the isolation of each school, the more important aspect, as far as this article is concerned, was the effect of participation by the community in greatly expanding its political expectations. By achieving this much on their own initiative, and with the national political climate strongly favouring action by local communities, the residents of the Valley began to realise their potential. Far wider involvement than a purely school council level became apparent. Through their local member (a Country Party conservative) pressure was applied to secure more staff, and these were forthcoming. Three migrant teachers were appointed, and a central building was set up to accommodate the programs following from the increased staff. This brought staffing and buildings to well above the normal entitlement of small schools, and to almost double the entitlement of a single school with an equivalent enrolment.

It must be stated that much of this was achieved by working through the educational hierarchy, using particularly a local inspector of schools whose commitment to community participation was such that when real participation was evidenced he made every effort to smooth the path. Without such co-operation it is not certain whether the people of the Valley would have had the knowledge of bureaucratic procedures to follow through to the extent they did.

Now, however, with a total enrolment of around 200 the scheme currently boasts 14 teachers (15 until February this year) and four teacher aides. It seems that community power and expectations have increased to the extent where they now wield enough political clout to weather changes in such personnel and the disapproval of succeeding inspectors. The mere suggestion of covert attempts to reduce staffing has resulted in quick and effective action by members of the community to counteract them, with the rationale of protecting the concessions already won and, importantly, protecting teachers staffing the scheme.

In the light of the Ingleby case in Castlemaine, this latter concern of the community is an important one. For, while they are a conservative community, they have made enough political progress to see that the individual dedication of involved teachers is important to them and that the teachers who released 'confidential' information to them concerning the proposed staffing cutbacks were acting in the community's interest. Therefore they acted to protect those teachers from retaliatory action. For primary teachers in Victoria this is crucial. Inspectors of schools have a great deal of power, particularly over rural school teachers. If this power can be cushioned by the community, the way is cleared for much more confident and concerted action by teachers.

The degree of participation in KVEAC, however, is totally dependent on the continuing success of the scheme, and this naturally remains dependent on funding. Disadvantage grants have stopped for five out of the six schools involved, and the scheme has run on a hand-to-mouth basis for the last year,

'. . . all parents, particularly those of critical views, [were invited] to undertake exactly the kind of work done by the kids.'

being supported only by Country Education Project, a limited-objective scheme set up by the state government. This funding is finite, and a bleak future would be in store without community support. This has been forthcoming and moves have been made to institutionalise the scheme as a multi-campus school.

Such a project, when compared with the run-of-the-mill country school isolation, is a major advance. The main variable in the situation compared with others is the role of the community. Very little of the progress so far recorded would have been possible if attempted by teachers alone. It is this fact which convinces me of the ultimate value of community involvement.

Conclusion

It seems obvious that no matter what your opinion of it, involvement by the community in schools is here to stay. To a certain extent it has been forced on to schools, with some bitterness from teachers. Even the unions have responded with suspicion — the recent executive election campaign of the Victorian Teachers' Union was largely fought around just this issue. The basis of this suspicion seems to be the fear that we will lose our 'professionalism', and it is to preserve this that the mystique surrounding teaching, which has already been mentioned, is built up and fed by the image of the so-called expert. It is this image that capitalism feeds on in almost every aspect of life. By demystifying the aspect with which we are concerned — education — we are providing a means of access by the working class, by ordinary people, to some degree of control over their lives.

Teachers should not always expect an overwhelming push by the community to become involved, even though there are strong opinions among parents as to what should be taught in schools. But from the strength of participation in KVEAC (not by all the community, but rather a dedicated part of it) it seems that total participation is not required. The number of people who do wish to become involved will be sufficient to awaken community awareness. There seems also to be merit in the suggestion that involvement will increase when activities are undertaken which are seen to be relevant.

The other side of this coin is of course the tendency of the community to level criticism at the programs undertaken in schools. This is a favourite tactic of the Right, both in petty ways and on a more general, and dangerous, level, such as that of Rona Joyner, as documented in RED 8. As I suggested earlier, the way to combat this is to involve the community even more deeply. KVEAC, like most schools, has had experience of this and the method used to counteract it was to invite all parents, particularly those of critical views, into the central building to undertake exactly the kind of work done by the kids. It took only one day, and resulted in a dramatic change of opinion. Having experience of the work involved, the parents were able to see exactly the demands placed on kids and the value of the program. This strategy is obviously not going to work for the Joyners of this world, or those who have a vested interest in criticism of schools, but it is a means towards gaining and keeping the good faith of the community. It is the community's ignorance that the Right is playing on. Further involvement can only serve to reduce this ignorance.

The importance of the good faith brought about by extensive participation is underscored by the action of the KVEAC community in looking after its own when the heat was on individual teachers. It is doubtful that they could have done anything, had the crunch come, but the mere fact of their support was enough to silence any but the most dire moves. If such community support had been evident in the technical dispute in Castlemaine, the strident voices of the Right would by no means have gained the support that they eventually did.

Finally it must be emphasised that, despite all the arguments so far presented, the sheer fact of the matter is that we can never make social change by ourselves or to benefit ourselves. Our duty, once we become committed to change, is to do it for everyone. By opening up the schools we are making a significant step towards the fight against capitalism. Either we work with the people or we are working against their interests. We must make people aware of the forces actively engaged in an assault on their living conditions, and exposing such forces in the education system is as good a place to start as any.

Establishing Rapport

GOOD MORNING, EDUCANDS. AS YOUR PERSONAL-IZED INSTRUCTIONAL PIVOT, I INTEND TODAY TO FAMILIARIZE YOU WITH THE SYSTEM OF TRADITIONAL GRAMMAR.

AT THE CONCLUSION OF TODAY'S LESSON YOU WILL HAVE REACHED THE DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE OF BEING ABLE TO DEMONSTRATE YOUR MASTERY OF THIS SUBJECT BY SATISFACTORILY PERFORMING CERTAIN SPECIFIC TASKS SET IN ACCORDANCE WITH CLEARLY DEFINED BEHAVIOURAL OBJECTIVES CONTAINED IN A VALID TASK ANALYSIS DESIGNED BY MYSELF.

SO - LET US EMBARK UPON THE INITIAL STAGE OF THIS SIGNIFICANT LEARNING EXPERIENCE.

I SHALL TAKE THIS ERODABLE VISUAL SIGNAL TRANSMITTER HERE, AND UPON THIS ERASABLE SIGNAL RECORDER HERE, I SHALL WRITE THE WORD "NOUN".

NOW — IN KEEPING WITH MY EDUCATIONAL MODUS OPERANDI OF ALLOWING THE FULL TRANSMISSION OF EDUCATIONAL DATA BY DISCOVERY AND FEEDBACK, I WILL ASK THE OPEN-ENDED QUESTION:

CAN ANY OF YOU, BY UTILISATION OF YOUR VOCAL APPARATUS, PROVIDE ME WITH AN EXAMPLE OF A NOUN?

I THANK YOU FOR YOUR RESPONSE, DARREN, THE TECHNICAL CORRECTNESS OF WHICH I OPENLY ACKNOWLEDGE.

HOWEVER, TO BE ENTIRELY FRANK WITH YOU, I MUST QUESTION THE SOCIAL APPROPRIATENESS OF THE WORD "BOLLOCKS" TO THE CLASSROOM SITUATION...

AH, THANK YOU CHERYL. THE WORD "VIDEOTAPE" IS AN EXCELLENT RESPONSE. I AM SURE YOU NEED NO REWARD BUT THE SIMPLE JOY OF TEACHER APPROVAL AND THE CORRESPONDING BOOST TO YOUR SELF-CONCEPT.

NOW, WE SHALL PROCEED ALONG THE LINEAR PROGRAM CONTAINED IN THIS SEQUENTIAL LEARNING CO-ORDINATOR, HERE. PAGE 46 TELLS US THAT THE NEXT CONTENT SUB-CATEGORY IS "VERBS".

BPTHTT!

...DEBORAH, AS ONE HUMAN BEING SPEAKING WITH GENUINE EMPATHY TO ANOTHER, I ASK YOU TO DISCONTINUE THAT INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR. I EARNESTLY SEEK YOUR CO-OPERATION IN THIS, OTHERWISE THE PEER-GROUP AND INSTITUTIONAL PRESSURES OF MY PROFESSIONAL ENVIRONMENT WILL NECESSITATE THAT I UTILISE NEGATIVE REINFORCEMENT IN THE FORM OF A SEVERE AND TRAUMATIC VERBAL REPRIMAND.
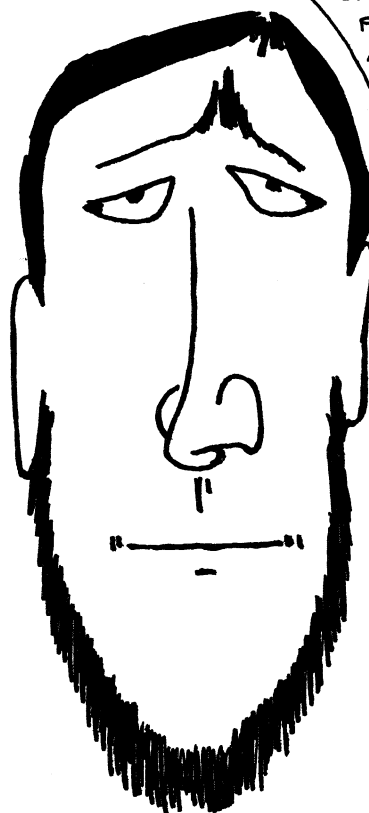
NOW - VERBS CONSIST OF.... BRADLEY, WHILE NOT WISHING TO SUPPRESS THE UNINHIBITED EXPRESSION OF YOUR EMOTIONAL INDIVIDUALITY, I MUST POINT OUT THAT GRIEVOUS BODILY HARM WILL IN ALL PROBABILITY BE CAUSED TO ME IF YOU PROCEED IN YOUR APPARENT INTENTION OF PROJECTING THAT DANGEROUSLY POINTED KITCHEN UTENSIL IN MY DIRECTION AND I ASK YOU TO HAVE SOME CONSIDERATION FOR ME AS A PERSON, AND TO RECONSIDER THAT PROPOSED ACTION...THANK YOU... I AM GENUINELY GRATEFUL... I WONDER IF I WOULD BE OVER EXTENDING OUR MUTUAL RESPECT IF I WERE TO ASK YOU TO DISPOSE APPROPRIATELY OF THE FIREARM ALSO? WOULD IT MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE IF I WERE TO OFFER SOME TANGIBLE CONCRETE REINFORCEMENT OF A FINANCIAL NATURE ? AH... Good..... Please see me after this unit.

NOW ON WITH... JASON - WILL YOU PLEASE REDUCE YOUR CURRENTLY UNACCEPTABLE LEVEL OF NON - APPROVED VERBAL ACTIVITY .... DEBORAH - THE ASPHYXIATION OF JULIE, I MIGHT POINT OUT, WILL UNDOUBTEDLY HAVE SEVERE REPERCUSSIONS... LOOK EDUCANDS... I OPENLY ADMIT TO FINDING SOME DIFFICULTY IN RELATING TO YOU ALL AS INDIVIDUALS ... DARREN WOULD YOU RELEASE THE ENGLISH MASTER AT ONCE!...PLEASE CHRISTOPHER! PUT DOWN THAT AXE! LOOK - IF YOU LITTLE BASTARDS DON'T SHUT UP AND BEHAVE YOURSELVES, I'LL BELT THE CRAP OUT OF YOU!

Text: Stafford Sanders
Artwork: Ali Sanders.

Getting Started. . . .

Setting up a School Committee

To implement any substantial changes in the area of community involvement which have a base in staff decisions (as opposed to being imposed from above or by decision of a small group or an individual such as the community liaison officer) schools need to have a widely based decision-making structure.

Leichhardt High School had a loosely defined group of teachers who used to meet a few times each year to prepare our submission to the Disadvantaged Schools Program for funding. The 'Committee' included subject masters and one representative from each staff. Submissions were prepared on an ad hoc, departmental basis, and there was little attempt to develop an overall submission or program. The Committee did not make decisions on any other areas of school functioning — apart from anything else, it didn't meet all year round. These decisions were left to infrequent staff meetings — in reality the hierarchy made them.

Using the argument that we needed the Committee to take an expanded role so we could prepare better submissions to the DSP, the Committee passed a resolution setting itself up on a more regular, constitutional basis. This was endorsed by the staff. The membership at this stage was principal, deputy, subject master, community liaison officer (all automatically members) and one person elected from each staff. Two community members chosen by the P&C were also on the Committee and two students were

also eligible to attend although they rarely did. The Committee met every fortnight and was empowered to discuss the whole range of school activities, although administration was left to the masters.

In 1979 the staff decided at the regular whole staff meeting (created in 1978 by the Committee) to have a smaller Committee, wholly elected by the staff. A Committee of 9 was decided on. In addition, the principal and deputy are still automatically members, as are the three community liaison officers (with voting rights for only one at any given meeting), plus two parents chosen by the P&C and two students (the school captains) chosen by the whole school. Other members of staff are encouraged to attend and speak, but cannot vote.

The Committee performs many functions, but a few of them are particularly relevant to the area of community involvement:
- it provides a forum for discussion of issues related to this question;
- it provides the parents with an effective voice, and it also informs them of the school's programs;
- the Committee can make recommendations to the whole staff, eg. staff meeting topics, staff development weekend etc, thus slowly developing whole school involvement in the community involvement program.

Greg Smith
Community Liaison Officer

ASCOLTA

Ascolta is a paper committed to its community — not just to offering a service, but to fighting on behalf of its community and giving a lead on a wide range of social issues.

It's a paper, from the Brunswick area of Melbourne, that is produced by students, teachers, parents and friends of a number of schools in that suburb. It is variously titled: *Ascolta, Listen, Prosexte* and *Dinle* and that reflects the multi-lingual nature of the paper.

A few more details about it first. *Ascolta* (its main title) is now in its sixth year of operation. It began at Brunswick Girls (now co-educational and 'East') High School and spread to involve Moreland High, Moreland Primary and Brunswick Technical Schools, as well as the small subschools of Brunswick East High School. The paper appears about six times a year, in tabloid form, from 32 to 56 pages and with a print-run of up to 6000 copies. It is printed in Italian, Greek, English, Turkish and Arabic with occasional articles in other languages. It is funded by the Supplementary Grants Program of the Education Department, and has won *The Age* award for the best school newspaper for the past three years.

The paper aims to do a number of things:
1 To provide an avenue by which the local community — students, parents and others — can have a say about any issue, and particularly education — that is, it hopes to be involved in the development and expression of community values.
2 To provide a two-way linkage between the school and parents, and similarly between the school and the community. Further, it seeks to develop contacts and links between schools in the area.
3 To provide a means for communication for the development of writing skills; and that applies to all members of the community.
4 To build pride and confidence in living in a multi-lingual community and in use of community languages.

To see it as 'just a school newspaper' would be too limiting. A typical issue carries a wide range of community information and views, as well as school-based stories. Copies are sold in milk-bars in the area, and through clubs and associations, as well as going free to all students in the producing schools.

School Community Newspaper

The first issue of 1979 contained: information about protest action being taken over the condition of one of the schools; a report of the conference on Education, Employment and the Economy; a detailed account of a survey of unemployment among school leavers in the area, an introduction to job-creation schemes; warnings on exploitation of job-seekers; student comment on 'what school should be'; description of school activities; views on the slaughter of seals; activities put on by the local guides; comments linking Hiroshima, the Harrisburg accident and anti-uranium mining demonstration; and creative material from students.

The usage of language is particularly important to *Ascolta*. The paper carries articles in all languages where possible, but also believes that all languages must have parity. That is, they should not be seen as translations from English, but rather of equal importance and origin. So an article that is of relevance, for example, only to the Italian-speaking community, will only be carried in Italian. Many articles are submitted bilingually — perhaps reports of meetings, perhaps poems.

The paper is largely written and produced by students. It has few exclusion rules — basically it omits material that is sexist, racist or otherwise offensive or likely to cause legal problems. In practice it has not had to do so, and it remains an 'access' paper. Decisions as to what is included and where are made on the basis of what fits and are made by those doing the layout.

On layout weekend, one of the schools will have half a dozen staff, twenty or thirty students and a handful of parents and community members working for two days to produce the paper. Few people have had any previous experience on newspaper production; most learn as they go along. Because students have now worked on many issues, it is not unusual to see a form 1 or 2 student teaching a newly-arrived teacher or parent techniques of how to balance the layout on a page.

For many people in the area, it is the only paper in which they can read of what is happening in their community. For example, *Ascolta* was the only paper in Brunswick to carry multi-lingual accounts of who candidates were in the council elections. It has consistently taken a stand on such issues as the destruction of Medibank, the dismissal of the Labor Government, and unemployment.

And it is a paper that is appreciated by those reading it. Parents surveyed by one school reported that they learned more about what was happening in the school through *Ascolta* than through any other method.

School-Community Implications

What does a paper like *Ascolta* reveal about the real links which do, or could, exist between schools and their local communities? How can radicals help to build these links? It seems to me that, if a community with an awareness of its own existence and political position does not exist, the school must regard its role as centrifugal rather than centripetal. There is a vital need for the school to accept a role of responsible and probably controversial leadership within the area.

The sorts of concrete implications of such a stance require an enormous amount of definition for each community. I would suggest that there are implications in areas such as:

a production of a school newspaper as a crusading chronicle, rather than a record of activities within the four walls of the school — control to rest in a community-based board;

b offering the school building for community meetings, free of charge, and free of restrictions;

c offering the school as service-provider — information, physical help, facilities — possibly a shop-front annexe staffed by students and teachers if the building is too 'institutional';

d discussion within the school — both in the curriculum and in staff meetings — of issues such as the needs of the local library, the conditions of the streets, the bus services, unemployment services — issues that start as school-linked ones, but are transitional to wider involvement.

Those may appear petty and limiting (which they may be) but they are the sorts of steps that initiate a process. It would be as controlling to begin by defining the issues on which the school is to intervene as it is to define the issues on which the school is to permit the community to become involved within the school.

The immediate question that occurs is whether the school can morally fulfill such a role, without extension of patronisation, unless the issues it tackles are its **own** issues rather than **assumed** issues. The prospect of, say, teachers travelling miles to help workers occupy a factory, then returning to live off the very profits that are exploiting their 'proteges' is a chilling one. If the school were to launch itself immediately, and without building through the stage of involving parents and citizens in decisions about school policy and practice, into the community, that prospect would exist. I think that as the school opens itself to criticism, involvement and sharing of control with the community, it becomes part of that community, and that the pressures and demands upon that community become the pressures and demands upon the school. The school has looked to parent and community involvement then as a stage towards the school being of the community, rather than as an end in itself. It then has the right to ask that the parents and citizens confer on the school some priority in relation to their other concerns.

What I propose is nowhere near a blueprint, but rather a perspective. It is a suggestion of where we should keep our eyes fixed as we move towards community involvement in schools.

by Roger Holdsworth

ASCOLTA
DiNLE
ΠPOΣETE
LISTEN

Community Childcare Links

RED 7 reported on the multi-cultural program at the Deborah Little Childcare Centre ('A Multi-cultural Preschool'). Here a group of the workers at Deborah Little discuss the centre's relation to the community it serves. Their view is not representative of the centre's workers as a whole.

The Deborah Little Childcare Centre is a long day care centre in Dulwich Hill, Sydney, a working class area with a large migrant population. About 60% of the families using the centre do not have English as their first language. The centre was set up with the idea that it should reflect the community that it was going to work with. As well as having workers who are themselves migrants, five of the staff live in the area. One male worker is employed. Single mothers using the centre have welcomed this. For them it means there was a male figure for their children to relate to. One reason for hiring a male assistant was part of a strategy to fight sexism.

This year the centre employed two part-time workers so that they could take up to five children from the Marrickville Women's Refuge at Tempe. The workers accompany the children from the refuge to the centre to provide continuity and an important link. The centre has developed several other important links with the community outside the parents. The local old people's home have made things for the centre — dolls' clothes, shakers, sheets — and have had morning tea with the children. One pensioner has meals regularly at the centre and talks to the children and sometimes plays the mandolin. Another pensioner has done voluntary work at the centre since its beginning and has kept a pictorial record of all activities held at the centre — eg barbeques, international food night, newspaper articles etc. A plan to have the grandparents come and tell the children stories has not got going yet.

Students from the local school's work experience program have spent time at the centre. Children living nearby regularly use the centre after school, helping to put

equipment away and also protecting the centre on weekends. These six and seven year old Lebanese boys and girls also take particular care of the two year olds when they are playing outside.

Most of the migrant mothers are working outside the home for the first time. Their lack of English is a major barrier that usually leads to others. As the centre has workers who speak the major migrant languages, parents have found the staff comparatively accessible and have usually made their first contacts with social service agencies through them. The staff are regularly involved in referring people to services like legal aid. Often they act as interpreters or go-betweens for hospitals, estate agents, social security, women's refuges etc.

Migrant parents have said that social services should reflect the communities they are supposed to serve. If the community is 40% migrant, then schools and social services should employ 40% migrants. They see that at this stage almost everything relating to migrant welfare is controlled by Anglo-Australians. The centre's involvement with these agencies and the parents is itself building

links between the centre and the local community.

All the children do a class each week in Greek, Spanish and Arabic where they learn numbers and colours, songs and games and often cook ethnic food. Music from the different groups is used regularly in ordinary activities. The aim of this is mainly to legitimise the children's own cultures and backgrounds. There are additional classes each week for the Greek, Arabic and Spanish speaking children aimed at improving their use of their own first language. The workers see this as an anti-racist activity. One Australian mother told the workers that she originally intended to send her daughter to a private preschool because she thought that the migrant children would hold her back in a public preschool. Now she thinks it is important that she mix with the migrant groups.

Future parent meetings might look at racism as such. For the migrant parents this can be one way to a critical general view of society. There should be some carry over of changed attitudes into workplace organisations. Racism creates a major division in the Australian working class and the process of overcoming racism requires activity at all levels.

Parent Participation

Parent involvement in the centre has been fairly high although only about one third of the parents attend the regular meetings. Latin-American parents whose children were at the centre last year and who have gone on to school this year say that the centre was much more open to them. They say that the school teachers are too

busy to talk to them and that the school structures don't include ways for parents to learn about what's happening to their children. At the centre they found it easier to talk with the staff. Migrant parents said this was true of all the staff, not just the ones who spoke their language. Many women feel guilty about leaving their children in the centre or at the school kindergarten, and they are especially anxious to know about their child's welfare and activities in detail.

Last year parent meetings were mainly social occasions. This year the staff decided after some debate to form a Parent and Staff Committee which is a monthly general meeting open to all staff and parents. The meeting has, in theory, whatever legal or defacto power the director of the centre has. In practice the parents have not raised or pushed any issues that have gone against what the staff wanted. However, this could develop. If the parents don't want them to do an activity that they think is important, they will argue for it, but if it comes to a vote they will do what the parents want. Water play is a good example; many parents are worried about their children getting wet and becoming sick so the staff have compromised and they only provide it in the very hot weather.

During the fourteen months of operation of the centre, one staff member left and parents helped choose the replacement.

After the experience of being able to and expected to question the activities of the centre, it is hoped that parents will begin to ask why they can't do as much in the schools. Chilean and Argentinian parents have told the staff that they think the schools should also hold monthly meetings so that parents can communicate with their child's teacher.

Parents at the centre have expressed the need for discussions on subjects not directly related to their children such as the working of the social security system for instance.

Another side of the parents' meetings is the direct democracy structure itself. As the parents get involved in the real running of the centre they will come up against the limits of what can be done here and now, eg. federal funding of children's services, local and state government involvement. As with racism, understanding the political forces that shape and limit areas of everyday life can lead to seeing the need for conscious political action.

At this stage the centre is really run by the staff and less equality has been

Reading and Story Telling in Migrant Languages

The involvement of migrant parents in the school has posed problems for many well-meaning schools. The greatest barrier is usually language. Recognising this as the major problem, schools need not stop there. The fact that migrant parents speak other languages besides English should be seen as an asset for making all students aware that we live in a multicultural society and should be utilised by the school. One way of doing this and involving parents in the primary school would be through the establishment of a lending library of books in other languages. This part of the project would probably require funding from Innovations, Disadvantaged Schools or a state funding program.

After determining which languages are spoken by the parents, the school would purchase a large selection of children's books in those languages. Parents could process and cover the books and run the lending library. Parents and pupils would be able to borrow books.

Once this lending library is functioning a second stage could begin. This would involve migrant parents and community members coming to school on a regular basis and reading or telling stories in their own language. This could be programmed by teachers as a regular time in the school week. Only those children interested would listen to the stories, but merely having the stories read in the class would reinforce the idea that there are books in other languages. It would also place the children who speak that language in the position of being able to tell the others about the story.

A parent reading in Spanish could be in the class one week, Turkish the next, etc. It would be best to provide the readers with support initially, running a session with translators explaining the program, its aims, and hints for telling and reading the stories. Organisational meetings and further support might be needed later as well.

Hopefully, parents involved in the program would talk to other community members about their observations and experiences at the school, generating further involvement from other migrant parents.

Lynn Berberich

achieved than they would like. A total changeover of staff would probably mean the loss of the present programs. Any threat to the employment of the ethnic workers would be the effective end of the ethnic program. It is impossible to have genuine multi-cultural education in a monolingual environment. Without the ethnic workers the staff would be separated from real contact with the community.

Some of the staff want a situation where the parent and migrant communities' involvement in the programs will be so strong that they could defeat any moves by future staff to drop them.

To date some of the workers feel they haven't really begun to develop active links with the local migrant organisations. Working relationships with the local school also have to be developed. When parents have used them as interpreters at the school, the school has seen this as interference. Changing their relationship with the community organisations will hopefully promote an environment where parent control of the centre is more likely

to develop.

Because the centre is in a working class area, as far as it is linked with the 'community' it becomes part of working class experience and activity. As a result of involvement with the centre, workers may raise issues of sexism, racism and rank and file control within their own union organisations.

In an immediately pre-revolutionary period an activity like running a childcare centre would hold a different potential for working class people than it does in the present period. In the present situation the centre's role can only be one of propaganda, of changing consciousness. Isolated pockets of self-management have no value as an end in themselves. The centre's value is in its growing links with the surrounding migrant and working class communities. It has the chance to increase and develop working-class self-confidence and awareness through involving working class people in practical activities that change their ideas of what is possible and necessary.

Adult Listening Scheme

Footscray Technical School, Footscray, Victoria.

Objectives

The program is designed to give individual students who lack ability and confidence in reading the opportunity to read to a sympathetic adult from the local community.

Details

The Adult Listening Scheme has been operating for some time. It started as part of the school's remedial program, but soon spread and became an integral part of the school's literacy program. Basically the program involves local people coming into the school for two to three hours each week and listening to individual students reading. They spend about thirty minutes with each student. Altogether the program would involve about ninety to one hundred students each year. Most of the children involved are very weak readers. Every endeavour is made to match the students with the same listener every week. Books used in the program have been very carefully selected so that they are of high quality and interest, and are used exclusively in the Adult Listening Scheme, so that the students in the program have reading material that is new to them.

The adult listeners in the scheme were recruited by placing small articles in the local newspapers and by notices displayed in the local library. In the early stages only a few listeners were involved, but gradually the numbers have grown to twenty. Many listeners have now been with the program for over two years. All the listeners, apart from two, are over forty years of age, the oldest being a retired man of seventy-seven. Four of the listeners are parents of students at the school, the other sixteen are interested community people.

The only costs involved are the purchase of books over three years and the co-ordinator's salary.

The listeners contribute much more to the program than just listening to pupils read; they are willing to share much of their knowledge, experience and expertise gained throughout their life. It should be noted that many are in their sixties, and have lived in the local area for many years, if not for their whole life. Thus they are an abundant source of local history. Many people in the past have been very apprehensive about involving people from the local community in the educational programs of a school, but our experience has been that local community involvement in the literacy program of the school has been a most positive advantage.

For further information contact Ms Merle Garnett and Ms Astrid Reynolds, Footscray Technical School.

(from the Disadvantaged Schools Project Descriptions)

The School/Community as Resource

Marialta High School in South Australia has an active program that aims to exploit the rich resources of its community and organise the school program so that the community can be gainfully explored in school hours. A 60 seater bus purchased by the School Council helps! Major aspects of the program:

- **Community awareness:** an integral part of the Humanities course examines major social problems. Kids visit courts, mental asylums, drug centres and remand homes and report back to their class.
- **Entertainment group:** 35-40 students present concerts regularly to the several thousand aged people living in homes and institutions close to the school.
- **Community service:** kids visit elderly school neighbours, do their gardening, odd jobs and shopping.
- **Work experience:** about 25% of the junior school are involved in work experience in standard trades, as well as in shops, national parks, gardens, knitting mills, wineries and the local pickle factory!
- **Use of facilities:** upwards of 1000 people use the school regularly each week for recreation and classes.

Radio Station

Following a technical survey to assess the feasibility and means of providing such a service, it was decided to set up a radio network to serve the areas surrounding Bourke, Brewarrina, Cobar and Nyngan in western New South Wales. The purposes of the project are:

- to provide a practical training facility for students in many aspects of modern communications and media techniques;
- to broadcast educational information, as well as a range of programs which are entertaining and of social value in enlarging listeners' understanding of aspects of contemporary national culture from which they may be isolated;
- to provide a valuable information service in times of local emergency, to isolated residents and travellers in the area;
- to provide a community service which is sensitive and responsive to changing needs and conditions.

The participation of local school communities in its operation is an important feature of the educational radio station based at Bourke. A manager has been employed to set up the station, with the additional task of moving around the Bourke area to discuss the operation of the station with teachers, students, parents and members of various community groups, give instruction in methods of preparing programs and promote involvement in the venture.

A series of four in-service courses has been arranged to prepare teachers and community representatives for their role in the operation of the educational radio network. Courses are conducted by personnel of the educational radio station operated by the Mitchell College, Bathurst.

(from the Disadvantaged Schools Project Descriptions)

A   School   Community   Centre

The Marrickville School Community Centre was set up after more than two years of discussion amongst the staff about how to make the school more accessible to the parents and general community. A year ago funding came through from the Disadvantaged Schools Program, and a full time community liaison teacher and a part time ethnic aide started work. The staff involved in the centre have been vital to it's success: the community liaison teacher has spent five years teaching at Marrickville and knows the school and community well, and the aide speaks five languages (all the main ones of the surrounding community) and has spent three years at the school. Another factor which has been vital to the centre's development has been the wholehearted support of the headmaster, who is determined to increase the involvement of the community in the school.

The liaison teacher has worked this year by helping organise activities which the parents have asked for, and sees any involvement as worthwhile. There is not a definite structure for running the centre as there seems to be a reluctance amongst the parents to get involved in a committee; decisions are usually reached by consensus amongst the parents using the centre. Activities carried out at the centre range from housey and weight watchers to a playgroup, and Greek language classes.

The centre has helped organise buses for parents so they can visit their children at the school camp (this has led to greater migrant participation in the camping program), talks on medibank, taxation etc, selling of uniform kits (much cheaper than previous arrangements), and a staff committee to look at ways of increasing community and parent involvement in the school and to coordinate a study of work places in the community.

At the moment it is hoped that at least one parent will become particularly involved with each class. Teacher's initial suspicion of having parents in the classroom is breaking down, as parents, far from being critical of the teachers, have found their introduction to the classroom very intimidating, and as their experience has increased they have become supportive of the teachers. Childcare is provided by the centre for parents working in the school, and the liaison teacher takes classes for teachers while they are involved at the centre or with groups of parents.

Communication between school and community is by way of a weekly bulletin and a monthly community bulletin, having class days at the centre (where work is displayed and parents can visit), staff and parent morning teas at the centre, and demonstration lessons for the parents followed by discussion between the teacher and parents. Photographs are

taken of as many events at the centre and visits to homes and factories as possible, and copies of the photos are sent to the people involved.

At the moment a parent committee is being set up so that if further funding is not available for staffing the centre, or if there is a change in head teacher at the school, the parents who see the benefits of the centre will be sufficiently organised to try and maintain it.

Children from Marrickville School visiting a nearby home.

Turning Kids on to Community Action and Research

In 1978 the Innovations Program of the Schools Commission funded a social worker from an inner city primary school in Sydney to mount a program that took children out of the school and attached them to community agencies where they could learn about the local community, its problems and resources through active participation in their activities. The project aimed to show students:
• How community welfare organisations functioned through their involvement and participation in a wide range of the activities of functioning community organisations.
• The basic structures of community groups through their active involvement in the activities of these groups and provision of assistance to them.
• The range of resources and facilities which are available to every member of the community, but which remain

largely unknown, through their contact with these resources and facilities and use of them.
• The processes by which people in the community can exercise power to change their own lives, to affect their environment, to change and affect the structures which regulate the community by their participation in organisations which promote these processes and by active involvement in them.

The sort of organisations that the children worked in gives you an idea of the potential of a program of this sort to raise the political consciousness of kids to the problems of the communities they live in: AMWSU, Non-Sexist Resource Centre, Women's Advisory Council, NCOSS, Health Commission, Consumer Affairs and the Department of Planning and Environment.

Generating Parent Involvement

A program at Duffy Primary School in the ACT attempted to gauge parent opinion of existing school policy, curriculum and environment and to increase involvement of parents in the school. Steps involved:

1 weekly newsletter dealing with educational matters; P&C meetings became more educational; parents invited to assemblies, parent-teacher nights and other school functions;

2 parents became involved as resource people for electives and hearing kids read;

3 25 teachers and 25 parents hold planning conference to set in motion development of policy goals and aims;

4 school issues informative prospectus on above;

5 parent members on board decide there was need to tap grass root parental opinion for true evaluation and in order to get people more interested in school;

6 area divided into 25 areas or cells. A parent appointed to act as facilitator in each one. They approach 12 neighbourhood families by letter and personal visit to attend a meeting in their home. 3/4 of the staff attended the meetings. Discussions centred on the curriculum, school organisation, open plan, excursions, discipline, evaluation and parent role;

7 Outcome: specific questions raised by parents answered in subsequent newsletters. School Board took up issues where school policy needed clarification. A school planning day was held to develop program requested by parents. Staff development sessions held on reporting more effectively to parents.

8 Problems: only half the families turned up despite the effort (probably child minding problems etc.); a sizeable minority of staff not interested; some of the facilitators lost interest.

Making the Curriculum Relevant

One day, with pollution from the brewery next door at an intolerable level, staff and students bombarded the administration office of Fort Street High School, Sydney, with demands for action. The school administration then contacted the company, which assured them that they would 'try to find the source of the problem'.

Members of staff did not feel this verbal assurance to be sufficient, and they directed the Federation Representative to contact others about the problem. The Fed Rep contacted the State Pollution Control Commission, Council Health Inspector, P&C, Education Department, Teachers' Federation and the media. At recess a Federation meeting was called to decide on a course of action and all staff attended. A motion was passed that a

Three days later pollution was again noticeable, so the media were contacted and wide publicity was given to the problem. A letter went to as many community members as was possible. Positive results followed. The combination of staff, student, parent and government bodies, and the media was important to the social action which led to the solution of the problem.
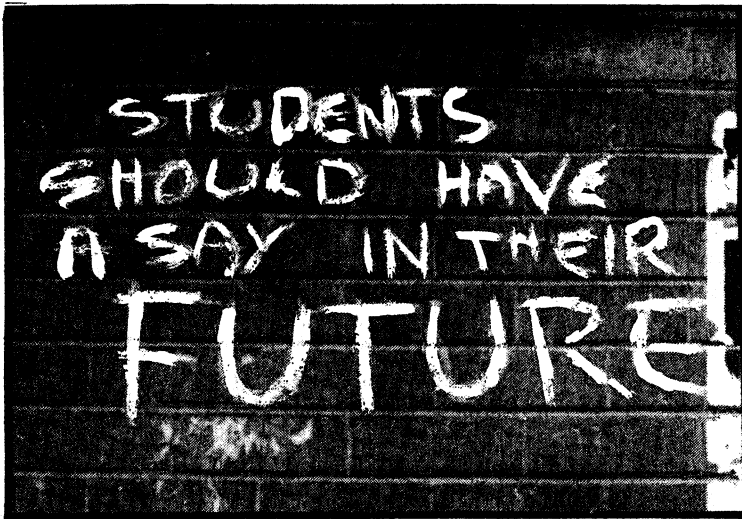
Student-Teacher Follow-up Questions and Activities

1 What is the purpose of the factory?
2 Is it necessary research? (The research involved the conversion of yeast into protein, and was funded by a $500 000 grant from the Commonwealth Government.)
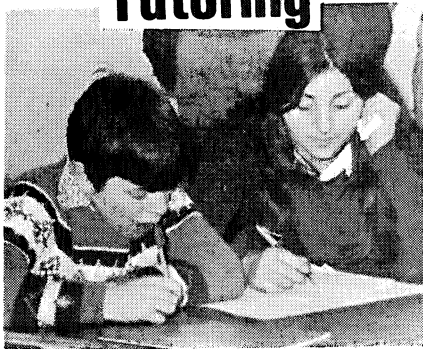

deputation go immediately to the Company to demand an immediate end to the pollution. In addition was the proviso that if the deputation returned with an unsatisfactory response and the pollution did not stop, the staff would immediately stop work.

The deputation pressured the company to investigate the plant with them immediately to locate the source of the pollution. The source turned out to be that suggested by the deputation but denied initially by the company management, and the deputation demanded the immediate closing of the factory to stop this pollution. Within an hour all pollution had stopped, and Fort Street staff and students were satisfied.

3 Is there a contradiction between researching this solution to feeding the 'starving millions of the world' and the quota system in Australian agricultural production? The market system for determining production, where profitability rather than community needs, are paramount?
4 Examination of the biological and chemical nature of pollutants, with discussion around the properties of yeast, bacteria, etc, to fit the senior science program.
5 How does the government allocate research grants? Could this research be primarily a tax dodge for a brewery?
6 Should students have a representative council in their schools?

7 What forms of unnecessary production occur in the community? Is there any planning of production, is it a free-for-all situation with moderate controls?
8 How polluted are our beaches? Carry out tests.
9 In nuclear plants where there was a leakage it would not be a directly noticeable pollutant as in the case of the smell from the yeast product. Should the public have its own monitoring system? Who can be trusted to do the monitoring? Is the reactor necessary to the community? Should the community around the reactor engage in action similar to the Fort Street High School's?
10 Are issues such as pollution, ecology, etc, more important to study for school students than, eg the anatomy of an earthworm? Who should decide curriculum?

There are many ways a local issue such as pollution could be used as a stimulus item for many school subject areas, eg economics, science, general studies, history, geography, psychology, etc. Education needs to be placed in a social context with action and involvement of the community around issues that affect their lives, thus raising social consciousness.

John Poulos
Federation Representative

Cross-Age Tutoring

Richmond Technical School, Richmond, Victoria

Objectives

To develop in the students self esteem and concern for others; to enable the students to demonstrate a competence which would not normally be able to be shown; to increase the sense of community in the schools; to reduce cross cultural, cross generation and authority barriers to communication; to provide a link between primary and secondary schools in the area; to offer leadership training; and to allow individualised instruction.

Details

The program is based on the maxim, 'The one who teaches, learns'. It is offered to students as an elective entitled 'Teaching Studies'. Work has been arranged in three sections.

1 **Year 8 to Primary**
   Tutor teams of five students each work in three primary schools in the suburb of Richmond. Tutors work under the guidance of the grade teacher with one or two primary children. Advantage is taken of the bilingual facility of many of the Year 8 students.

2 **Year 10 to Year 7**
   A group of Year 10 girls from Richmond Girls' High School tutor Year 7 boys in maths. As in 1 above, language development of migrant children is of prime importance.

3 **Year 11 to Year 7**
   Senior boys tutor under-achieving boys in mathematics. This allows intensive teaching without the necessity for streaming.

For further information contact the teacher in charge of Cross Age Tutoring, Mr Les Mayes, Richmond Technical School.

(from the Disadvantaged Schools Project Descriptions)

Resource Access

Two conferences held last year in Sydney have helped to produce a useful resource for teachers in the inner city. At the 1978 Senior Students Conference at Leichhardt High, students from seven surrounding high schools were introduced to staff members of local community agencies and visited a number of these agencies. Teachers attending the 1978 Central Metropolitan Inservice course on 'Community Resources and Their Use' visited both local factories and community agencies. The information generated by both of these conferences has been collected and made into a useful booklet called *Inner City Community Resources for Schools*. Produced at the Inner City Education Centre, the book has a page describing each of the local agencies. As well as providing basic information on them the booklet is geared towards school visits and has other curriculum ideas and ideas for getting parents to help in the classroom.

Entries in the guide are arranged under the headings:

Aboriginal People	Community Health
Media	Migrants
Old and Young	Single Parents
Unemployed People	Women

Enquiries and copies: [02] 516 3550 or [02] 51 5648.

Inner City Readers

Supplementary readers for children in Sydney's inner city schools have been produced by a project funded with Disadvantaged Schools funds. Four books have been offset printed with photo illustrations: *What a Sunday, Meet the Meat* (bilingual Serbo-Croation/English), *Lunchtime* (bilingual Spanish/English) and *The King Street Shops* (bilingual Greek/English).

The readers were produced by community members, teachers and pupils (from Catholic and government schools) with the aims of motivating children to read, developing community identity and extending oral and written language. Books and information: Inner City Education Centre, 37 Cavendish Street, Stanmore NSW 2048. Phone [02] 51 5648. (Similar projects have produced readers in country areas also.)
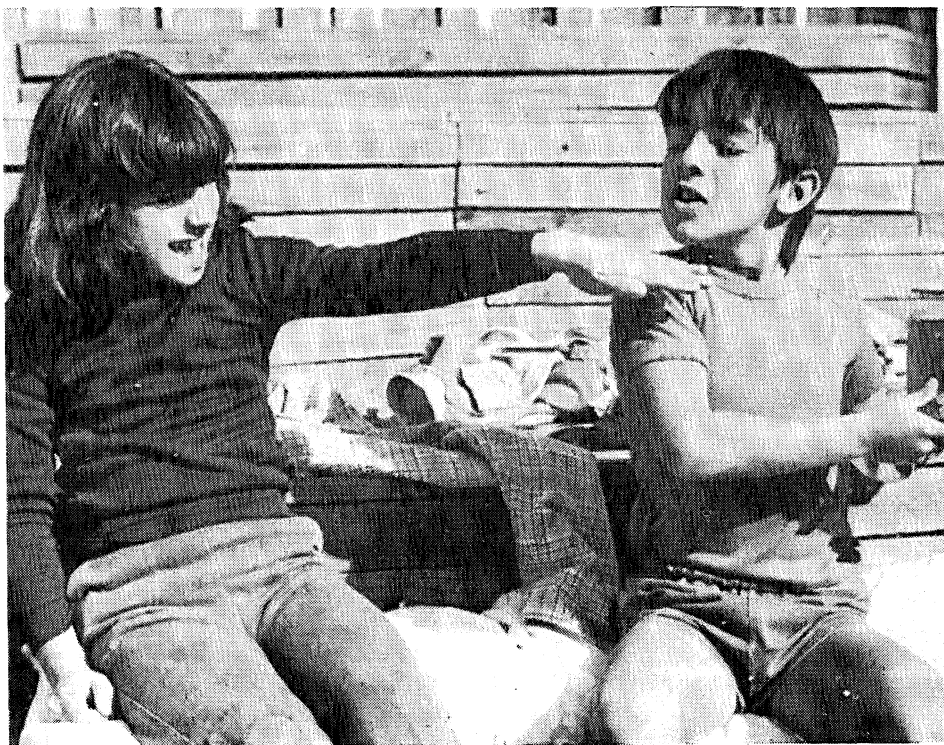

Illustration from **What a Sunday.**

Red Notes

What follows is a list of the most recent and readily available publications on community involvement in Australian schools.

- **The School and the Community: A Bibliography**
  Part 2, 1978. Schools Commission. The most up-to-date bibliography on everything from community involvement in school based decision making to work experience programs.
  Available: Australian Government Publishing Service
  (Capital Cities) and
  Schools Commission
  MLC Tower, Woden ACT 2606.

- **School and Community News**
  A free quarterly publication that highlights interesting articles on community involvement, case studies of schools throughout Australia with extensive community involvement programs, and resource contacts.
  Available: School and Community Project
  School of Teacher Education
  Canberra CAE,
  PO Box 1, Belconnen ACT 2616 (free).

- **Schools & The Community: A Growing Relationship**
  by Ron Fitzgerald & David Pettit. Burwood State College, Schools Commission Special Project, 1978. A book on why schools need parents with four case studies.
  Available: School and Community Project (free).

- **Home-School Liaison and Minority Groups**
  Three books containing four case studies each of schools with interesting school-community interaction programs.
  Available: School and Community Project (free).

- **Techniques for Participation in Decision Making for Previously Uninvolved Groups**
  by Ruth Hoadley and Jenny Beachum. Home-School Interaction Project, Victoria, 1979. A basic manual of ideas on how to involve community people in the school.
  Available: Jenny Beachum
  Glenbervie Teachers Centre
  Glenbervie Road, Toorak, Victoria 3142.

- **Parent Participation in Education**
  Contemporary Issues No 18, 1978, NSW Department of Education. A review of research findings on advantages and disadvantages of parent involvement.
  Available: Public Relations Section
  Department of Education
  GPO Box 33, Sydney NSW 2001 (free).

- **Community Involvement and Decision Making in Schools**
  by David Pettit. Burwood State College, 1979. A discussion paper highlighting the common characteristics and problems of community involvement programs in 30 schools that have been the subject of in-depth case studies.
  Available: David Pettit
  Burwood State College
  Burwood, Victoria 3125 (cost $1.50).

- **Educational Innovations: Parent Participation**
  Innovations News Exchange, 1979, Volume 5, No 1. The latest issue of a regular Victorian newsletter on current innovations. Lots of articles and ideas.
  Available: Innovations News Exchange
  123 Church Street
  Richmond, Victoria 3121 (free).

- **The Case for School Based Decision Sharing**
  by Greg Andrews. NSW School Based Decision Sharing Project, 1978. A discussion paper arguing the case for further devolution of decision-making responsibilities to the school level and full participation by teachers, parents and students.
  Available: NSW School Based Decision Sharing Project
  c/o Schools Commission
  PO Box 596, Haymarket NSW 2000 (free).

- **School and Community**
  Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, OECD, 1975. Major paper from an international conference on school-community interaction. Topics include the school as a base for community development; use of community resources by the school; implications of alternative schools for the system; relations between school and workplace; and the consequences of participation.

- **Community Liaison**
  NSW Department of Youth and Community Services. A regular 130-page newsletter full of information on government and community service agencies in New South Wales.
  Available: Newsletter
  Community Liaison Bureau
  PO Box K718
  Haymarket NSW 2000 (free to organisations).

- **School Based Decision Making, Part 1.**
  Schools Commission, 1978. A conference report giving an overview of the major changes in government and non-government systems involved in devolving decision making responsibility for curriculum, finance, staffing etc, to the school level.
  Available: Schools Commission
  PO Box 596
  Haymarket NSW 2000 (free).

- **Decision Making in the Education Process**
  Australian Frontier, 1975. A report of a consultation seminar held in Adelaide in 1975 looking at the avenues for teacher, student and parent participation in education.
  Available: Australian Frontier
  422 Brunswick Street
  Fitzroy, Victoria 3065 ($3.00).

- **Community Education Newsletter**
  Australian Association of Community Education. A monthly Victorian newsletter full of tit bits of information of interest to community education officers in particular.
  Available: AACE, 14th Floor
  Nauru House, 80 Collins Street,
  Melbourne, Vic 3000 (free with membership)

RED REVIEWS

Unemployment: A social and political analysis of the economic crisis in Australia by Keith Windschuttle Pelican, $3.95.

The merit of *Unemployment* lies not just in the simple and easily read Marxist analysis that relates the continued increases in unemployment to the structural and technological changes that are being forced upon the working class in Australia, but also in Windschuttle's ability to relate the social consequences of unemployment to the inability of capitalism to provide for the needs or the well-being of the majority of the Australian people.

Windschuttle more than adequately supports his argument that 'the development of the aimless, anti-social, anti-self culture among modern youth' (p. 211) results from long periods of unemployment. However, he goes to great pains in proving that the blame for the plight of the unemployed lies not with the individual, but with the social system itself. He is able to relate indices of social decline with fluctuations in the level of employment. For example, historically the number of marriages has declined in times of unemployment, and the number of divorces has increased. Economic slumps correlate with a decline in the birth rate. Unemployment places a tremendous strain on relationships within the family and it can be seen that a greater rate of wife bashing and child abuse comes from families affected by unemployment. Quite often teenagers are kicked out of home when parents believe they are not trying to get a job. The number of deaths from stress related causes — heart disease, suicide, cancer, motor vehicle accidents and diabetes — is higher among those who are unemployed.

Around the discussion of the demise of the family I believe that the author makes a very valid point. The nuclear family is the basic unit of capitalism. It is patriarchal, and its inward-looking nature turns workers' attentions away from wider class concerns. However it is the institution of the family that offers, at present, the basis for the support and protection of most of the people within this society. Hence, the author argues the family should not be dispensed with in Left programs, but should be seen as the

minimum basis from which to develop more supportive and protective aspects of community.

The dole-bludger myth and the media campaign associated with it are analysed in detail. Many of the prejudiced, uninformed statements made by both Liberal and Labor ministers that helped perpetrate the myth are quoted. The changes introduced in the social security and welfare systems are discussed and illustrate one more area of attack on the rights of workers and the unemployed. The extent of Fraser's attacks on the unions through changes in industrial legislation are pointed out, as are the attacks by employers and the government in their attempts to put the blame on educational institutions for the number of unemployed youth.

The book reveals the degree to which the rights and living standards of the working class of Australia are being eroded to ensure that the interests of capital are maintained and increased during this stage in the crisis of capitalism. However, the usefulness of the research and the analysis will be restricted if the information the book provides does not go beyond the people who are motivated to read it. It is imperative that this information gets to as wide an audience as possible. It is time the school system began to make the youth of Australia aware of the nature of work and unemployment under capitalism. *Unemployment* is essential reading for all teachers, especially those involved in 'career' education. The book is relevant to many topics within existing syllabi.

The information on workers' health problems due to differing work environments, and the effect of unemployment on health could be easily included in sections of the science, social studies and health education courses. Analyses such as this one should be incorporated into economics programs in place of the useless, theoretical neo-classical economic models which are unrelated to any real world situation, either past or present. Most schools cover the topic of media. However, to what extent do they actually incorporate specific examples of the political ramifications of the concentration of ownership of the Australian media? Windschuttle's book, in its excellent outline of the handling of the dole bludger myth by the media provides a real world example that is relevant to the lives of the potential unemployed in schools.

Windschuttle has provided a long needed, basic tool. It is now up to us.

Peter Wilson

The Sociology of Education: Beyond Equality by Philip Wexler. Bobbs-Merrill, Indianapolis, 1976. $4.15.

Philip Wexler attempts to place research done in American Sociology of Education within the 'more general intellectual and sociohistorical framework' of American culture. Wexler's aim is to show that changing ideas within the sociology of education are related specifically to challenges offered to the basic cultural assumptions of American society. It is Wexler's contention that until recently research within the sociology of education has been implicitly guided by the three ideals of liberal-progressivism; belief in equality of opportunity (meritocracy); faith in efficient bureaucratic forms of social organisation; and faith in science as a mode of knowing and a rationale for future change.

Research within the sociology of education has concentrated on three areas: the relationship between social class background and educational achievement; schools as efficient social organisations; and knowledge within the educational process. It is not difficult to see how these three dominant research areas parallel the central notions of liberal-progressivism. Wexler, risking the wrath of causal purists, attempts to show how the sociology of education initially embraced progressive philosophy and then continued implicitly to accept these values under the guise of scientific neutrality. Further, he attempts to relate the development of alternative research paradigms during the sixties and seventies to the social challenges offered during that period by the new left and black power groups.

Wexler has admirably fulfilled both the tasks he set himself. He argues his case in a most succinct and cogent fashion; the book is very well written and very well organised.

Why does Wexler attempt to show these causal links? He argues that by 'becoming aware of the historical roots of current research paradigms' sociologists will be better able to guard against ethnocentrism and 'the scientific legitimation of the ideologies of the powerful' (p 44). Wexler, the reflexive sociologist, accepts that the task of the sociologist is not only to describe the social world but to help change it.

To the arguments of the book then; Chapters 2, 3 and 4, as indicated by their titles 'Equality and Education', 'The Social Organisation of Schools' and 'Knowledge', deal with the three current major research areas within the sociology of education. The attempt is also made, rather successfully, to relate the values underpinning this research to the 'taken-for-granted' liberal-progressive values. The alternative approaches within each of these three research areas are also elaborated and their relationship to an alternative set of social values is explored.

Wexler, in the 'Equality of Education' chapter, shows how sociological research dealing with equality of educational opportunity accepts that inequality of reward is acceptable as long as the competition for reward is just. The deluge of sociological research in this area documents obstacles to fair competition, and within the dominant paradigm explains the 'underachievement' of working-class and ethnic minority pupils in terms of 'cultural deprivation'. Such research implicitly accepts the notion that an egalitarian society is one in which there is little or no inheritance of social status rather than little or no inequality. Such research also accepts that American society is held together by a consensus of values. Both of these are aspects of the liberal-progressive philosophy.

During the tumultuous sixties, vocal minorities began to question the ideal of educational opportunity and the consensual/co-operative view of society of which that ideal is part. It is from this questioning within the broader culture, that Wexler suggests alternative paradigms developed within the sociology of education. Black consciousness groups rejected the individual opportunity model — they had been oppressed as a group, not as individuals — and replaced it with a group conflict mode. Alienated middle class university students challenged the supposed political neutrality of educational bureaucracies. The writings of the Third World critics — Illich, Freire, Reimer — confirmed for many the decline of faith in education and the individual mobility model.

From this new conflict perspective, 'scientifically neutral' explanations of the underachievement of working class and ethnic minority pupils in terms of 'cultural deprivation', were seen as being themselves cultural expressions of existing social inequalities. The values and concepts of dominant groups were being presented as if they were universal. Educational institutions were then seen to function so as to legitimate social inequalities.

In looking at the alternative paradigm within 'equality' research, Wexler discusses *Inequality*, edited by Christopher Jencks, which seems to trivialise socialism by simply equating it with income redistribution; the work of the radical economists who see the relationship between academic success and life success not in terms of skills possessed but in terms of value conformity; and the work of the revisionist historians of education who argue that American schooling functions more in terms of social control than social mobility.

I SHARE DECISION MAKING WITH STAFF! DIDN'T I GIVE HARRY A FREE HAND WITH LOCKERS?

Wexler does not seem to give much emphasis to the apparent 'failure' of compensatory education programs in the genesis of an alternative research paradigm on equality. It seems that such failure did point the way for a reconsideration of terms such as 'cultural deprivation' and so on.

Most research on the social organisation of schooling, Wexler argues, rests on the liberal-progressive assumptions of efficiency, professionalism and co-operation. The production image still prevails within research on schools as organisations; attitude outputs are compared with attitude inputs and so on. The current cry for accountability in education in the United States, Wexler argues, is indicative of a resurgence of the efficiency ideal.

Wexler believes that the writings of social critics such as Paul Goodman, Jules Henry, Edgar Friedenberg, which pointed to the paradox of democratic social education being taught in bureaucratic, undemocratic institutions, were a possible factor in the development of an alternative research paradigm on school organisation. The social movements of the sixties pushed forward the notion that individuals should not be regarded as passive participants, to be acted upon and processed through educational institutions. Work within the alternative paradigm looked at the culture, the way of life of educational institutions. The world views of all the participants in the school — especially the pupils — were considered. Ethnographic, participant observative, ethnomethodological and phenomenological approaches to the study of school life as an on-going encounter developed within the alternative paradigm.

The third main area of sociological research within education has been concerned with knowledge. Wexler points out how the progressive notion that education would help solve social problems by training experts and by creating a moral consensus, was reflected in early work done by sociologists of education. Much of the research on school knowledge has been concerned with the question of how a society inculcates its values in children. Such research assumes a consensus on values within the society and indeed only one set of values. The curriculum taught in schools has been taken as a given; that curricula are social inventions has not been considered.

Within American sociology of education an alternative approach to the study of school knowledge is emerging. (This has also been the central emphasis of the 'new' sociology of education in Britain). Wexler attempts to relate this emergence to social changes of the sixties and seventies, admitting in so doing the fairly tenuous nature of the linkage. He suggests that student and black movements questioned the longstanding liberal-progressive commitment to the homogeneity of educational knowledge. Further challenges were offered by linguists such as Labov who suggested, quite rightly, that black English was different from, rather than inferior to, standard English.

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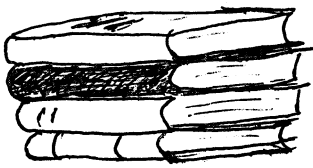
The demand for Black Studies and for Women's Studies was also a factor. Interestingly the neutrality of school knowledge was also challenged by the political right; religious fundamentalists attacked the teaching of Darwinian evolution in the schools. The political nature of the curriculum became more readily apparent to many. Curricula are chosen from all the knowledge available; such a choice is a political act. Within this alternative research paradigm, 'the conduct of schooling is being understood as the outcome of social processes rather than as the natural emanation of objective truth' (p 55).

Wexler, then, sees the views of social minorities during the sixties, whereby the three central assumptions of liberal-progression were challenged, as being the impetus for the emergence of a new paradigm within the sociology of education. However, the social criticisms so offered did not alter the basic structural arrangements of American society. Hence the three central concerns of sociology of education research with their implicit acceptance of liberal-progressive philosophy still predominate within American sociology of education.

Beyond Equality is an excellent book; very well worth reading (indeed essential reading for anyone concerned with the genesis and historical development of American sociology of education). Wexler has successfully pulled the mat from under the feet of the 'value free' school within the sociology of education.

Bob Lingard

Studies in Socialist Pedagogy edited by Theodore Mills Norton and Bertell Ollman. Monthly Review Press, 1978. 405 pp.

Radical teachers should find this a provocative anthology concerned with the who, what and how of teaching. It contains a number of studies of the political and ideological faces of capitalism, by people working in the field. As Mao writes in his article in the collection, 'to formulate the problem (ie capitalism) you must first make a general study of the two main aspects of the problem or contradiction so that you can understand the contradiction'. This anthology might be seen, in one sense, as a radical response to 'progressive' education.

Although the collection deals with higher education in the US, much of the work is relevant to Australian schooling at lower levels, especially since university requirements tend to dominate some aspects of primary and secondary schooling.

It is left to the reader of this anthology to pursue controversies between contributors. Thus, both the introduction (which reads a little like the *Peking Review*) and the articles themselves repay careful study.

Some writers see the problem for teachers as one 'of the entire social complex which they express' (p. 54). They view 'progressive' education as an ideology based squarely within the middle class. Several articles offer helpful insights on the continuing contradictions of trying to be a radical teacher in a capitalist education system.

A number of contributors attack 'progressive' education as being a more subtle means of social control than 'traditional' schooling. Deeper consideration of these articles might help overcome a problem many teachers face:

how to cope within the classroom without being either tyrannical or a pushover. The Introduction to the book suggests that one way to do this may be for teachers '. . . to help people see that the contradictions and rationalisations they confront in everyday life are not natural and boundless but historically generated by a system which exists to be superseded' (p. 21).

It is on the use of everyday experiences in the classroom that some of this book's interest centres. Some teachers 'assume that it is their duty to replace the students' actual culture with an alien culture' (p. 103). Concomitant with this is a tendency to see the 'failure' of working class
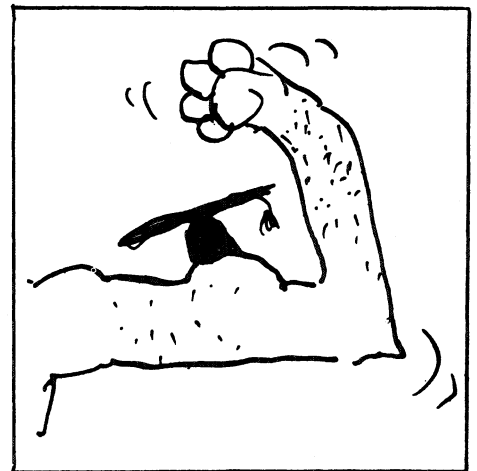
students as a function of their individual pathology. Landers, and Elshtain, in particular with regard to women's studies, criticise a tendency of some radical teaching. to go too far towards a dominating and undialectical subjectivity, focusing too much on the psychological.

Ira Shor is particularly interesting in discussing the hollowness of the American (educational) Dream. Despite workers' attempts to 'grow' through college, increased access to tertiary education has not been an entirely liberating experience. It is clear that the rest of society must be transformed. People go back to work as exploited labour for Capital & Co., having only been temporarily removed from the labour force by education.

A provocative debate within the collection concerns the apparent reification of Marxism by some teachers of it, making it an object in itself rather than using it as a tool of analysis. 'It is time', writes Martin Sklar, 'we let Marx (and Marxism) rejoin the human world . . .' (p. 263). Obviously this debate is partly a product of the absence of recognition in American academia of Marx's contribution to understanding our society.
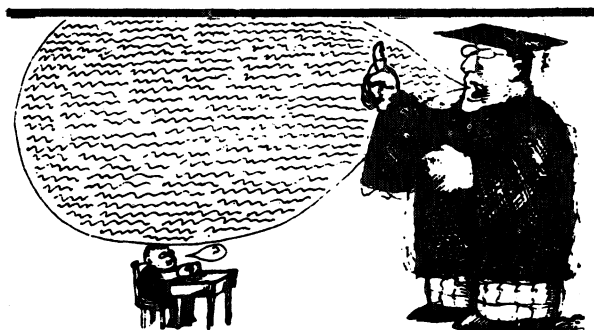
An important contribution of this book is a refocusing on content, after the concentration of many 'progressive' teachers on 'method'.

What else?

Rudich insists 'on the historicity of literature and of all cultural production' (p. 175). 'The Great Money Trick' by Tressel is a graphic and hilarious way of dramatising capitalism. The whole collection contributes to a praxis of teachers listening to and understanding students, and being able to respond appropriately.

Several writers demonstrate how the financial strictures under which US public education has operated for several years can be expected to manifest themselves in Australian conditions.

There is a long and detailed bibliography, which radical teachers will find useful (*RED* gets a mention).

Unfortunately, much of the collection makes education and society more difficult to understand. Especially within ideology, all is not cut and dried; much work needs to be done.

Partly the style of the book contributes to this apparent muddiness, in that for me, anyway, writers do not always state explicitly or clarify critical questions. But then neither can I.

Some contributors seem to underestimate the activeness (as opposed to passivity) of students and of what they will do to/for/in/with educational strategies.

What the book does make clear is that only dialectical thinking can provide a way for radical teachers to determine what decisions are the most appropriate in their present situation. Your move.

Mark Carey

ABOUT RED

RADICAL EDUCATION DOSSIER is produced and published three times a year by Radical Education Publications.

RADICAL EDUCATION DOSSIER examines the conflicts within schooling and education. It identifies the opposing interests involved in the struggle and works to develop strategies and tactics for change.

Our long term aim is to work towards further development of a socialist theory of education. Our immediate aim is to analyse the current process of education and to examine and explore the role of education in society.

The task is large and is open to all. We invite teachers at every level, students, parents and others interested in education to join the debate. Contributions should be concise, jargon-free and comprehensible to the non-specialist. RADICAL EDUCATION DOSSIER has a policy of using non-sexist language and requests that all contributors submit with this in mind.

Articles should not exceed 5000 words and those with a practical emphasis are especially sought. We also seek commentaries and information items up to 1000 words, as well as book reviews, letters, notices, contacts, news, photographs and cartoons. Please submit articles typed and double spaced.
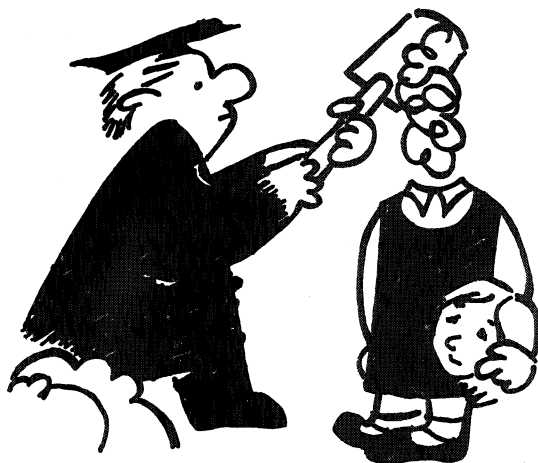
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