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Radical Education Dossier 14

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WORKER EDUCATION

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RADICAL EDUCATION DOSSIER

Contents

March 1981

RED 14 has been compiled and produced by Clift Barnard, Chris Baxter, John Freeland, Ken Johnston, Janet Kossy, Carol O'Donnell, Sue Rosen, Linley Samuels and Kay Schofield.

Radical Education Dossier is produced by a group of teachers, students and university staff working to bring about democratic and socially progressive change in Australian schooling, as part of a broad political movement toward a socialist revolution in Australia. The magazine aims to present a socialist analysis of a wide range of theoretical and practical issues in education and is not affiliated with any political party.

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GENTLING THE MASSES OR ROUSING THE RABBLE

With despondency settling over the schools, and higher education in retreat before the federal onslaught, those looking for progressive initiatives in education face a gloomy prospect. But in one area there is some advance. Trade Unions and other organisations and working people are developing programs and structures for their members which offer relevant, constructive, democratic learning opportunities which should also be of interest to people in the mainstream education industry.

The seventies saw remarkable growth in workers' education. In this issue, and in *RED 15*, we look at the achievements and difficulties. We have concentrated more on describing some of the things which are happening than on their political implications. There are two reasons: first, because we think the developments discussed in *RED 14* will be unfamiliar to many of our readers; secondly, because we do not believe that a 'right line' has yet appeared clearly enough in the field of workers' education for anyone to be dogmatic. A few pitfalls are obvious – for instance, the dangers of co-opting the unemployed into 'education for leisure' which neutralises their revolutionary potential and negates their right to socially useful employment; or the possibility that courses for workers will adopt a tame-cat co-operative attitude to management, such as the Trade Union Training Authority has been pushed into doing since Fraser seized power.

Mike Gallagher's background piece looks at some of the strategic political issues for education in the eighties, and suggests that new alliances between workers, unions, teachers and local activist groups offer more hope for progress than the reactive defence of the indefensible which has characterised much left practice in education during the economic crisis.

Ross Shanahan recounts the introduction of a Labour Studies course at Adelaide College of the Arts and Education, showing that in the correct context, it is possible to offer a course which meets the requirements of workers and unions within a traditional higher education institution. The experiment is a fascinating amalgam of substantial worker input and formal academic study, and could provide a valuable model for college and university teachers who have doubts about the political worth of what they are doing now.

Max Ogden and Bob Richardson of the Amalgamated Metal Workers' and Shipwrights' Union describe, in companion pieces, that union's educational efforts, which have given it a leading position among Australian unions as far as education is concerned. The AMWSU's educational practice is notable for borrowing very little from traditional teaching institutions and for being determined by the expressed needs of its members attending courses. Ogden places these characteristics in the context of working class culture and suggests some directions which the labour movement might take in the eighties.

Mary Owen contributes an account of the development of the Working Women's Centre in Melbourne, a national resource and education unit now under the aegis of the ACTU. It is one of the brightest success stories of the women's and labour movements in the seventies.

Jozefa Sobski's analysis of the direction and funding priorities of adult education for women in NSW is less complimentary. She exposes the trivial, time-filling nature of much of what passes as "self-development" for women and argues for a re-ordering of needs to put socially-critical courses, childcare and proper allowances for women on the agenda. A contribution from Grace Machin highlights the controversy currently raging inside the NSW branch of the Workers' Educational Association.

REPOSSESSING EDUCATION

Mike Gallagher

Gallagher suggests that attempts to protect education from right-wing attacks in the late seventies failed partly because they were defending the indefensible. He proposes a broad alliance of teachers with other unionists and working class people to push education in a democratising direction.

'The multiplication of types of vocational school tends to perpetuate social differences; but since, within these differences, it tends to encourage internal diversification, it gives the impression of being democratic in tendency. The labourer can become a skilled worker, for instance, the peasant a surveyor or petty agronomist. But democracy, by definition, cannot merely mean that an unskilled worker can become skilled. It must mean that every 'citizen' can 'govern' and that society places that citizen, even if only abstractly, in a general condition to achieve this.'

– Antonio Gramsci, 'On Education'[1]

The decade of the seventies was marked by social and political-economic upheaval in Australia. There is little prospect of the turbulence settling down in the eighties. Rather, the current hasty course of economic growth based on capital-and-energy-intensive resource development for export threatens more widespread dislocation of people from their places of living and employment, further inequality in the distribution of wealth and power, and increasing social tension.

The education system has hardly begun to experience the buffeting that is in store for it. To be sure it is in drastic need of change. There are few who would seriously defend most of what happens to people in the name of education in Australia. Those who expect continued popular support for expanded funding of the **current** provision of education must have their heads in the sand. But not only do we face the likelihood of further expenditure cutbacks and intensified forms of technocratic control. We also face the possibility of a dismantling and restructuring of those areas of the public provision of education which have the potential to help people cope more effectively with the thrust and impact of major structural change, and to attract support for expanded funding.

The concept that education should help people cope with change has been hotly debated at various historical stages. At the turn of the century, when the 'efficiency' advocates were attempting to displace the dominance of the 'cultural' curriculum and succeeded in demonstrating that their measurement assumptions were too restrictive for building educational programs, a synthesis known as the 'social utility movement' was formed[2]. The commitment to cultural studies could be saved, it was argued, by making them 'socially useful', with the measurement movement providing the means for determining utility. But a key question was bypassed – whether what was learned would be socially useful to the society as then constituted or socially useful in reconstructing society. Eventually that question was met and 'education for social reconstruction' became an educational textbook fad while the classrooms barely changed.

Cynicism

A similar debate is set to take place in Australia this decade. Indeed, it has already begun, in a cynical tone, perhaps – what's the use of education? So far the contributions to that debate have also been cynical. The present chairman of the Tertiary Education Commission (Peter Karmel), who not long ago propagated a belief in the value of education as human capital investment and as a contributing mechanism to social levelling, has recently recanted:

> '. . . education was oversold, both in terms of its profitability as an investment in human capital and in its capacity to produce a more equal society. Today politicians, press and the public all express reservations on the value of education.

Too many people remember too well their own bitter schooling experiences. Many are still prepared to encourage their children to stick it out so that employment prospects may be broader. At the same time a lot of kids know that's hogwash – getting a piece of paper is not the same as getting a job.

They are disappointed with the results of large investment in education in the 1960s and the early 1970s. They comment that what is done in the schools is increasingly irrelevant to the world of work and that the young have negative attitudes to work and society.'[3]

His comments represent only part of the reality and form the basis of a new mythology about the processes of schooling and public attitudes towards it, though they are not without some foundation.

Too many people remember too well their own bitter schooling experiences. Many are still prepared to encourage their children to stick it out so that their employment prospects may be broader. At the same time, a lot of the kids know that's hogwash – getting a piece of paper is not the same as getting a job. Teachers don't create jobs. And there is no system of employment guarantees on graduation operating in Australia.

And the politicians don't see much electoral payoff from expenditure on education, to the extent that it is quite possible that the Federal Government will withdraw from a range of its current education responsibilities and shunt them onto the states, which are unequally placed in the resource-based economy to handle them. After all, the unprecedented expansion of education expenditure under Whitlam was based on a 1946 amendment (placitum XXIIIA) to Section 51 of the Commonwealth Constitution. That amendment followed the intervention of the Federal Government in economic and social affairs under its defence power in wartime and preceded the post-war reconstruction era which was premised on the expansion of domestic manufacturing activity. All that is rapidly changing. And the ability and willingness of the Federal Government to regulate the course of mineral extraction and processing is constrained by the fact that mineral rights are vested in the states. The shift to resource-based economic growth is drastically altering the nature of federal politics in Australia and with it the politics of education.

The impact of resource development is also affecting in profound ways the regional distribution of the population, the nature of work processes and the character of social service provision. One aspect of the current processes of restructuring that has grabbed considerable media attention is the impact of sophisticated technology in the working and non-working lives of people. Increasingly, the education system at various levels will be called on to respond to these changes which are making the longstanding irrelevance of much curriculum content more apparent. But those responses will be made in a relatively politicised context, and in that regard such questions as vocational relevance, core curriculum and accountability can be shown to be capable of a variety of answers.

To date, however, the revisionists in educational theory – Peter Karmel, the Williams Committee and the OECD among others – are leading the debate. Karmel, for instance, has derived two major implications from his assessment of the current situation. The first is consistent with an uncontested assumption of continuing reductions in public spending on education – 'little credence remains for the naive belief that more resources will automatically improve the quality of education'. The second is consistent with a scenario of persistent high levels of unemployment – 'education services are bound to increase not only as a source of employment but as a use of time'.

Adapting The Workers

The OECD[4] has endorsed the assumptions of fiscal restraint and persistent unemployment, and encapsulated the new role of education in the prescription that it should 'contribute both to technical development and structural adaptation in the economy'. Education's contribution to 'technological development' occurs (mostly at the post-compulsory stage) in two basic ways – through investment in research and development with industrial application and through the reproduction of specialisation of labour.

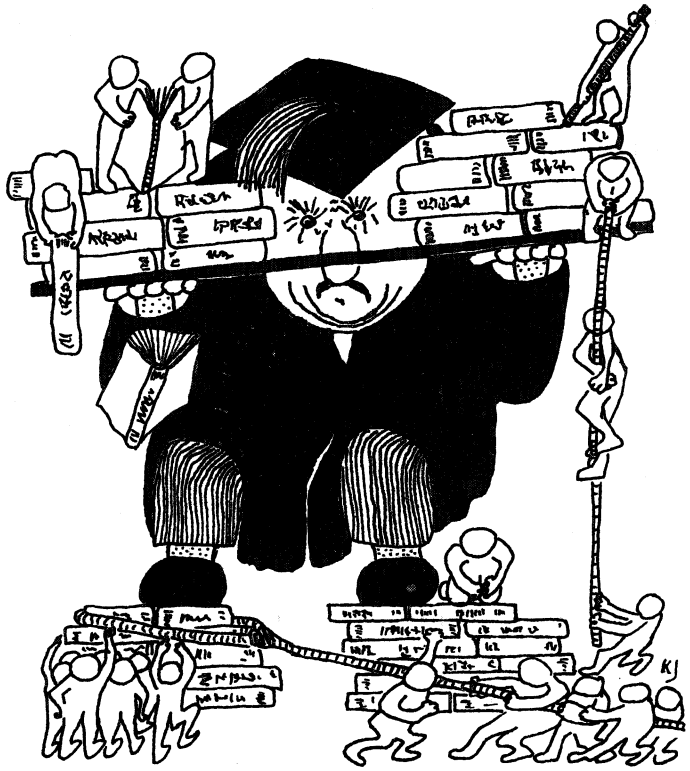
The term 'structural adaptation' covers a multitude of sins. In general, it means removing obstructions to the mobility of capital and labour in order to facilitate the growth of corporate capital. In industry, it means dismantling tariff barriers and restructuring forms of assistance to 'efficient' industries. In the financial market, it means deregulating constraints on the availability of investment funds, including transfers from 'non-productive' to 'productive' activities. In the labour market, it means suppressing wage-based barriers to the supply of labour, providing relocation assistance, and, more broadly, encouraging changes in the behaviour and expectations of people in order to accommodate the changed structural conditions brought on by shifts in patterns of investment.

In the area of education it means intensifying the situation where the costs of provision are paid publicly and the benefits are privately appropriated – a characteristic of most forms of publicly funded physical and social infrastructure provision. More precisely the OECD view, though not conclusively formulated, is that education should be 'socially useful' in helping people cope with changes made in the society as constituted by corporate capital. Specifically, expenditure on education should provide higher returns to employers. Increased government monitoring of expenditure should be made by means of tighter screening mechanisms to restrict access in high-cost courses which produce technically skilled personnel. Short-cycle courses should be provided to maintain a supply of suitably skilled labour. Surplus labour should be absorbed in low-cost courses, and the overall costs redistributed, directly or indirectly, onto the users.

Broadening The Debate

That is an ugly prescription. But it is one we have to deal with realistically. To do that involves injecting broader concepts into the debate (and actually creating a debate) about the purposes

A campaign which integrates the industrial and educational aspects has the potential to trigger a widespread debate about curriculum relevance, access to information, job security and, ultimately, decision making responsibilities in all fields.



and processes of education. It involves developing concrete forms of alternative practice in the education system and in the areas of its likely future extension – for instance, new curricula, new programs both formal and non-formal, new learning materials, and, especially, alternative models of organisation.

Already there are signs that the largely defensive 'reaction response' that characterised the position of most teachers' unions and other education interest groups to the conservative offensive against public education in the second half of the seventies is being transcended into a more constructive 'action response'. There is still a long way to go. Some teachers' unions have come to a position where their advances on industrial concerns have been at the expense of their ability to credibly politicise questions about the nature of the education service. Some have adopted what must be pragmatically regarded as untenable, a policy of outright opposition to needs-based funding of non-government schools, without intervening in the debate about the criteria of need, and without raising questions of accountability for the use of public funds in relation to non-government schools. Potential allies in defence of **really** socially useful education may have been lost in the process[5].

While some of the alliances formed in the sixties and early seventies in support of extending the provision of public education may have been breaking down recently, new alliances are now being formed, notably within the union movement and between unions and various community organisations. These new alliances, themselves not without tension, are based on a shared concern for the effects of spending cutbacks as part of a restriction of the 'social wage', and are consolidated by the belated discussion of the relationship between education and employment. A new potential exists at a critical time for employing the power of these various organised groups to get things done in their respective areas and to alter the course of the conditioned public debate.

We could envisage the impact of a set of curriculum materials relating to, say, 'coping with technological change', cooperatively produced by teachers through their union, other unionists, parents and consultants. Or the openings in tertiary institutions with declining enrolments for labour studies courses, programs for literacy in the use of public data (how to read year books, company reports, budget papers, etc). Or a range of other formal and non-formal courses designed to help people understand and effectively cope with changes which affect them where they work or where they live. Some beginnings are being made, as reported in this issue of *RED* by Shanahan in relation to labour studies, and by Ogden and Richardson in relation to broadening the practices of trade union education. The experience of the ACTU's Working Women's Centre, described by Mary Owen, is a valuable contribution to women's interests in this sphere.

Humble Beginnings

Those experienced in these areas have identified starting points in 'worker education' (which could be extended to areas of 'community education') that are much more humble than we might assume. And they are developing methods of learning that contest many institutional assumptions. As it is likely that post-school education provision will be expanded in the coming years these current experiences are incredibly useful. If Ogden's proposal for a campaign around paid educational leave is to be seriously taken up in Australia, as it should be, the matter of the organisation and control of courses cannot be subordinated to the industrial demand for leave. A campaign which integrates the industrial and educational aspects has the potential to trigger a widespread debate about curriculum relevance, access to information, job security and, ultimately, decision-making responsibilities in all fields.

We should not lose sight of the fact, however, that there is a shrinking supply of jobs, in spite of the growing need for socially useful work in our society. The population is ageing and an increasing proportion is entering part-time employment or unemployment, while an even greater number is being classified as 'not in the labourforce'; many of these are permanent recipients of welfare payments. Nor should we forget that while there were 2 986 931 school students in Australia in 1979 there were 1 018 100 post-school students and a further 919 500 adults undertaking non-formal courses at an educational institution[6]. In 1979, 42% of the Australian population aged between 6 and 64 years undertook some form of study at an educational institution. At the very least, that is a large number of people who have a direct involvement in the provision of education. Powerful support for expanded funding and improved conditions could be gained if the clients are convinced of the value of the investment for themselves and those close to them.

To gain that support it will be necessary to promote new concepts about the role of education, especially as the existing provision is premised on assumptions which are no longer valid:

> 'The State in fact, calls on employers to discard a little cheap labour for a time, and on parents to renounce quick profits; but it holds out to the employer the prospect of an eventual supply of steady and instructed workers, and to the parent increased value for his own labour, and increased wage-rate hereafter for his children.'[7]

Now the State is promoting a masquerade of education-for-idleness for the growing number of marginalised workers, with the overall intention of securing social harmony. The emerging question is whether the structure, curriculum content and processes of organisation will be changed in a direction which increases ordinary people's capacity to govern or which renders them more governable. There is also a set of premises underlying the provision of education in Australia as 'a matter of police':[8]

'An educated community is on the whole more moral, more law-abiding, and more capable of work than an uneducated; and therefore the State is justified in enforcing education that it may economise its revenue and develop its resources.'[9]

Democratic Control – Dangers and Potential

One implication from Gramsci's writing is that the social provision of education should serve to empower a broadly-defined working class – the majority of people whose livelihood is dependent on wages or welfare payments – to govern in a democracy. That is, to increase the ability of people to influence the nature of decisions and the course of events which affect their lives. If the process of education is seen as one of learning from experience in such a way as to be capable of altering subsequent experience then the concept has much political potential. But it is also very vague and borders on utopia. It refers to goals rather than to strategies and needs to be related to concrete forms and processes to be useful. And it is in danger of being misinterpreted as either pluralist 'citizen-power', social-democratic 'participation' or dogmatic 'workerism'. But it contains the seeds of a challenge to the OECD line that political-economic decisions are uncontestable and education should make people prepared to accept that. And, implicitly, it raises questions of the social ownership and control of education. Gramsci's specific meaning – 'our aim is to produce a new stratum of intellectuals' – is sufficiently ambiguous for us to explore a number of possibilities and to realise that the current institutional provision of schooling with its committed adherents is at the one time a means for and an obstacle to their achievement. Such a position implies a political strategy geared towards what Gorz[10] has called 'revolutionary reforms' – improvements which can be seen to be sensible and achievable, and therefore capable of attracting popular support, while not being able to be contained within the logic of the system and thereby creating pressures for broader social change.

Gramsci highlighted the way the structure of the educational provision acts against the objective of producing a citizenry capable of governing itself:

'. . . in such a way as to restrict recruitment to the technically qualified governing stratum, in a social and political context which makes it increasingly difficult for 'personal-initiative' to acquire such skills and technical-political preparation.'[11]

That structural rigidity also imposes inflexibility for those whose claims on education are related to securing a supply of trained labour. Other critiques have focused on the selection and organisation of learning content and the processes of schooling which have reduced the potential of education to functions of social control. And it can be argued that the rise of institutional education in Australia has not only acted to displace vital forms of working class self-education but also managed to co-opt working class traditions and devalue the kinds of knowledge and skills working people have.

While such critiques contain elements of truth they can be too easily exaggerated to the point of distortion. It would be a mistake to portray the education system as a mechanistic and monolithic agent of social control, or to encourage reverence for the mythology of an undifferentiated 'working class culture' in Australia. It would also be a mistake to forego the opportunities at this time to revitalise many of the counter-traditions of educational thought and practice in Australia, both within and outside the established system, and seek to repossess education as a range of opportunities for extending the capacity of ordinary people to understand their world and change it.

References

1 Antonio Gramsci, 'On Education', *Selections From The Prison Notebooks*, International Publishers, New York, p 40.

2 An outline of the 'efficiency movement' ideas can be found in *RED* 11. The account of the rise of the 'social utility movement' is derived from Seguel, M L. *The Curriculum Field – Its Formative Years*, Teachers College Press, Columbia University, New York, 1966.

3 P Karmel, 'Education and Working Life', *Education News*, vol 17, no 1, 1980.

4 OECD, unpublished discussion paper on higher education, June 1980.

5 The concept of '*really* socially useful knowledge' was developed as a working class response to the cultural studies push for 'socially useful knowledge'. There would seem to be some benefit in mounting critical courses in, say, the Catholic schools (some beginnings in the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace) rather than writing them off. If the non-government schools buy IBM materials that will eventually put undesirable pressures on the state schools.

6 Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Education Experience and Intentions Survey', 1979, Catalogue no 4211.0.

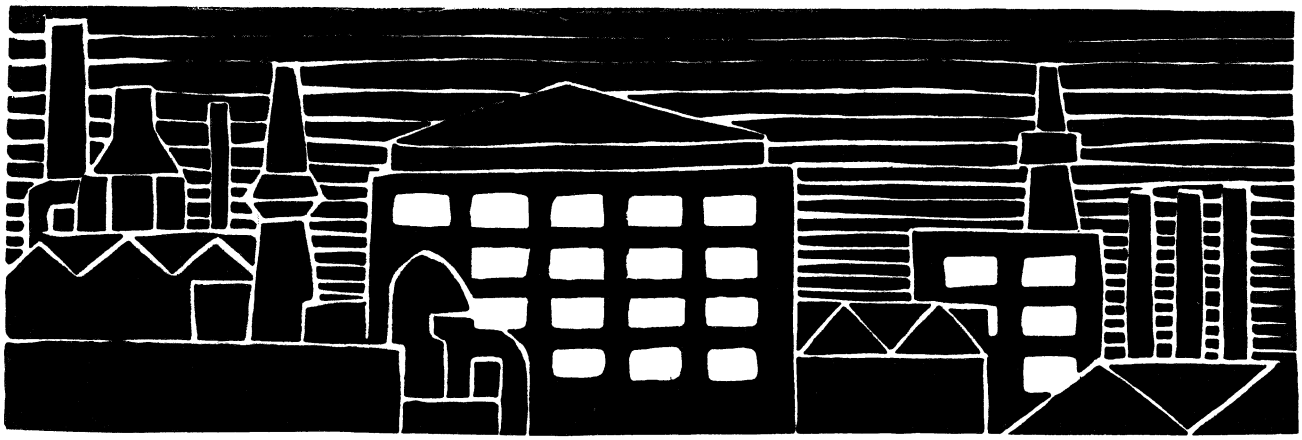
7 C H Pearson, 'Report on the State of Public Education in Victoria', 1877-8, in Manning Clark, *Select Documents in Australian History 1851-1900*, vol 2, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, p 716.

8 Mr Fellows, speech on Education Bill, September 12, 1872 in Clark, *op cit*, p 718.

9 C H Pearson *op cit*.

10 A Gorz, *Strategy for Labor – a radical proposal*, 1967, Beacon Press, Boston.

11 Gramsci, *op cit*.



WORKER EDUCATION IN THE SEVENTIES AND EIGHTIES

Max Ogden

One of the fastest expanding areas of labor movement activity over the last 10 years has been that of worker education. Starting with a few odd short courses conducted by the Australian Council of Salaried and Professional Associations (ACSPA), and the metal unions in the late sixties, we now have a movement that involves about 10 000 unionists in courses each year.

We have seen the Trade Union Training Authority flourish and serve the unions fairly well with the training of shop stewards and officials. The AMWSU now has fulltime education officers in each of the mainland states. Others such as the Insurance Union, Vehicle Builders, Municipal Officers, Teachers Federation, Public Service Union, now also employ fulltime officers. As well as that, the AMWSU has two fulltime people producing video and audio material for use in courses and in the workshops.

Right through this period there has been constant discussion as to the major role of worker and union education. Is it to lift political awareness; improve skills to make the person a more efficient steward or official; and/or to assist in the development of job organisation and campaigns?

It has been all of these things, depending upon the stamp of the particular union, branch of TUTA, or individual approach of the trainers.

One of the first lessons all union trainers learnt was the fundamental tenet of 'moving from the known to the unknown'. Despite our lofty ideals, in the early days in the metal unions, for a high level political education, we quickly learned that shop stewards came along to courses first of all to get the basic skills to solve job problems.

There was little interest in economics, politics, history, etc, but there was a keeness to learn negotiation skills, how to handle workers' compensation, how to chair a meeting, how to speak in public, how the arbitration system works, and so on. Once we learned that lesson, and developed courses to suit, we were on our way.

The fundamental courses in the various unions and TUTA are these skills courses. In these areas we have developed syllabi that rely heavily on such techniques as role play, problem solving, visual aids, small group work, and especially the students' own experiences. Generally speaking, it is fair to say that this aspect of the education program is adequate and, from surveys and empirical evidence they appear to achieve results.

Skills Are Basis For Wider Issues

It is clear that once having begun to master these skills, which very often is simply a process of demystification and gaining self confidence, people are much more prepared to embark on the wider issues. This means moving into such areas as economics, strategy and tactics, occupational health, technological change, government policies, researching companies, etc.

Our most fruitful courses are those based on industries and dealing with the specific economics, structure, technology, health of the industry. A major problem in dealing with econ-

omics, the operation of the transnational companies, technological change and government policies in the broad sense, is relating them to the job problems that the shop steward has to return to.

People go away with a basic understanding of how the system works, but if they can't relate that to their workplace, or if they can't do anything concrete, it appears irrelevant and they turn off. For example sometimes it can be counter productive to show a film like *Controlling Interest*, good and all as it is. While one can get a broad knowledge of the transnational companies, it can be quite overpowering, and there has been a tendency to throw up one's hands in despair and say, 'How can you beat the bastards?'.

New Techniques

When we conduct a course for stewards in the auto, brewery, oil, rail, steel industries, etc, we can relate the macro-economics to the specifics of their industry and even further, to the particular work group and technology. From this basic understanding, we can discuss realistic strategies that they can begin to develop in practice. As these experiences have unfolded we have had to develop suitable educative techniques. As much as it is possible, it is important that people discover problems and answers for themselves, rather than having other people tell them. To assist this process we try to get self-directed project groups researching their industry and beginning to suggest problem areas and strategies. We have had varying success with these projects, but where they have been pursued thoroughly and over a period, the approach has been shown to be an excellent learning process. Nevertheless it takes an enormous effort to keep such a project going beyond the particular course and outside working hours.

Whenever we open up discussion on work, alienation, boredom, lack of power, etc, it is always a rich experience for all concerned, with keen animated debate. It appears certain that in 1981 we will be able to develop extensive research projects conducted by the workers themselves, into the work organisation in their own work places.

The wide interest in technological change is enabling us to focus far more on the all-important labour process and general work organisation: the fundamental point of alienation, and exploitation. Whenever we open up discussion on work, alienation, boredom, lack of power, etc, it is always a rich experience for all concerned, with keen, animated debate. It appears certain that in 1981 we will be able to develop extensive research projects conducted by the workers themselves, into the work organisation in their own work places.

Other courses often result from requests by shop stewards facing particular, often new problems for which they need solutions. These include occupational health, superannuation, company takeovers, job organisation, work study, and so on.

Problems

One of the major problems is that the education program is still limited mainly to stewards and officials. Due to lack of resources and time we have not been able to develop an organised program for the general members. However, some possibilities are opening up, as outlined in the last section of this article.

There is a great need to finalise the campaign for paid leave. Currently, shop stewards have paid study leave in about 30% of industry, for example 10 days a year in auto, agriculture implements, commonwealth government and a few others, and five days in airlines, dairy, state government and various others, with the odd company granting it at whim.

It is noticeable, in those industries where paid study leave is now well established, that the stewards take it as a right and now expect and look forward to proper training. By contrast, where it isn't paid and the steward relies on the union to make up lost time, it is not seen as a right and therefore some are reluctant to participate. Sometimes bosses pressure stewards to stop them attending, although with union training well established this is rare nowadays. Nevertheless, it is clear that these subtle pressures and other factors affect women and they are under-represented in courses.

. . . there are still far too many unions . . . which are not developing their own education programs or are loath to participate in others. This indicates that there are strong streaks of anti-intellectualism and pragmatism, which have characterised the Australian labour movement.

A further problem is that despite the fairly impressive record of the last 10 years, there are still far too many unions, including some on the left, which are not developing their own education programs or are loath to participate in others. This indicates that there are still strong streaks of anti-intellectualism and pragmatism, which have characterised the Australian labour movement.

Where To In The Eighties

Working class education has a long tradition arising out of the British legacy. The Mechanics Institutes were a very important source of radical education and many of the working class leaders got their grounding there. It is interesting to note the attention given to learning by people like Tom Mann, who constantly pressured workers to study.

Having laid a firm base for shop steward education, now it behoves us to widen the whole scope to include all those workers who wish to learn. Late last year at the naval dockyards in Melbourne an education committee was established on the job. It did some survey work and found that a number of the workers wanted to improve their English. The union, not having the resources for such studies, approached the Footscray Technical College, TAFE section, and asked for assistance.

This was given with considerable enthusiasm and a teacher was immediately despatched to meet with the dockyards shop committee. The end result was a course in middle level English, conducted after work (4.30–6.30 pm) at a convenient place near the dockyard.

Of the twelve who started, some dropped out and four opted to sit for the exam, although it wasn't necessary. They all passed very well and are now keenly planning what they will do in '81. An important lesson was that the course was of too high a level (this caused most of the dropouts), and now the College is designing a special course to suit the workers' requirements.

Based on this experience our union has had some discussions with a few TAFE colleges to examine the ways in which we may expand their activities in co-operation with us. As well, shop stewards were brought together in the western and south eastern suburbs of Melbourne, to see what courses might interest our members.

The end result is that we are to experiment with Footscray and Dandenong technical schools, offer six different courses, of ten-week duration, two hours a week after work at a convenient place. These are to begin in March, thousands of leaflets seeking participants have been distributed, and now we are waiting to see the response. The courses will be on the following topics: practical skills for living; communications – writing; communications – speaking; migrant English; technological change; and occupational health.

Trying To Develop Study Circles

While all this has been developing we have been providing some of our members with skills to organise and conduct study circles. Working on the Swedish concept, we would like to develop a network of such circles throughout industry and the suburbs. We hope that these people will be a key in the work with the TAFE colleges, as well as developing study circles in their own areas.

Of considerable importance in this whole development has been the community education movement, which in Victoria has gone further than in other states. The two community education officers in Williamstown were very helpful in setting up the dockyards course, and a number of these officers have been involved in the shop steward and TAFE discussions. All the community education officers in the two regions where we are trying to conduct the six courses in '81 have been asked to assist us.

150 Hours Paid Leave

The question of worker education is on the agenda in a way that it hasn't been for many years. The recent ACTU conference on education was the first of its kind, and while discussing broader education issues it focussed especially on worker education. It called for far better education for working class children, greater involvement of workers and their unions in local schools and curriculum development, and for 150 hours a year paid leave for workers for study of their own choice.

This last point opens up a serious debate about new kinds of courses directly suited to workers, and the leave available. Unquestionably, paid study leave will only be won by industrial action and it is not yet a mass issue. However as more and more people get drawn into new forms of education they themselves will be demanding time off. Already the dockyard workers are raising the issue. Ten years ago when shop steward education was only in its infancy, no one had paid study leave: now some thirty to forty per cent of stewards have it. The experience of the Italian metal workers' '150 hours', which can now be up to 500 hours, is instructive. It took some time to take off, but now unions have had to work with education authorities to design new kinds of courses.

Education For Social Change

Why this concern for workers education?

It is our view that socialist change must be an all-round concept. It must be economic, political, cultural, environmental, ideological, and so on. A major weakness in the Australian labour movement has been its lack of concern for theory and ideology: a weakness which leads to a very pragmatic movement.

We need to develop within the labour movement a much stronger intellectual tradition which has firm links with the very fine working class tradition in this country. The best, if perhaps the hardest, way to achieve this in the long term, is by working to develop a working class that has a deep knowledge of our society, that questions and thinks for itself, develops new and challenging theories and ideology, and which has confidence in itself.

Therefore worker education is an important component of a counter-hegemonic strategy that also includes worker-initiated action, the development of working-class policies on work and the economy, intervention in management prerogatives, new ideas and culture, etc. Worker education must also be about a flowering of human creative talent, all of which will contribute to socialist change based on the widest democracy. The last ten years have provided us with sufficient experience to suggest that we are on the right track. Nevertheless it will be necessary to constantly take stock of where we are heading.

DISCOURSE

A new journal is a significant event on the Australian educational scene, and particularly in the present economic climate. We therefore welcome the appearance of *Discourse*, the Australian Journal of Educational Studies, published under the sponsorship of the Department of Education, University of Queensland. A review of this journal will appear in *RED* following the publication of the second issue.

"Education in the 80's"

ACTU Conference

Recommendations from the Workshops:

Low Income Families

The workshop considered that the overriding principle expressed in policy was that of 'equal opportunity and access to all aspects of education and training' which required deliberate policies of positive discrimination.

- We urge the ACTU to ensure that all people have the right to the equivalent of 5 years post-compulsory formal schooling – a right to be taken up at any time and in any form by the individual learner and paid for from government funds.
- We urge the ACTU to encourage tertiary education authorities to develop entrance policies which will result in working class low income children having access to all tertiary education courses in numbers reflecting their proportions within the community.
- Financial support for low income students in the form of secondary allowances should be the responsibility of the Federal government. Allowances should be paid from the beginning of secondary school and payments should be increased.

However, the problems facing the working class in gaining access to the benefits of schooling are not simply a matter of positive discrimination in resource allocation but, more importantly, they stem from the present structures, organisation and processes of schooling.

The workshop suggested that, to further ACTU policy on community participation and the control of schools, teachers, parents and students require:

- time – the ACTU should press for employer, government and union agreement to time release for workers to participate in school community activities, eg school community based curriculum development;
- a school structure for shared decision making in curriculum, finance and staffing;
- support services – funds for school community support staff and funds for school community based curriculum development;
- shared decision making structures in schools with worker representation.

Structures, organisations and processes within schools must build on the collective life of working class groups rather than concentrating on competition between individuals.

The workshop believes that the segregation and selection of individual children by means of IQ testing, labelling (eg 'gifted', 'disadvantaged' are processes which create artificial barriers to learning. We urge the ACTU to.

- reject all forms of national/state assessment of schools and of children;
- reject the use of IQ tests in schools;
- reject corporal punishment.

The group opposes any structure of education which stratifies children on the basis of social class, eg selective high schools, technical schools and private schools. Funding to private schools must be dependent on the same degree of public accountability as operating for the state school systems.

Union Education

ACTU to encourage all unions to appoint fulltime education officers or part-time where funds are limited.

To assist this process unions be encouraged to get their members to follow the example of the Naval Dockyards workers and establish an education committee on the job, or at least a job representative to organise education activities.

As a concrete step to assist the above processes that the ACTU seek substantial government funding over which unions have sole control to dispense for union education activities.

Paid Leave

The ACTU be asked to recommend that all unions include in their logs of claims:

1 Workers' education paid leave of 100 hours for study of own choice.
2 Parents to have a minimum of 60 hours paid leave to attend to their children's education.
3 People on school councils to have a minimum of 60 hours a year paid leave to carry out their function.

Statement for implementation of points 2 and 3.

To highlight working class involvement in schools, each state/territory Labour and union council is called upon to declare one day each year as Education Day on which unionists will be urged to stop work to visit their children's schools, meet with teachers and discuss the educational policies of the school. This action to be taken in cooperation with teacher unions and the parent organisations.

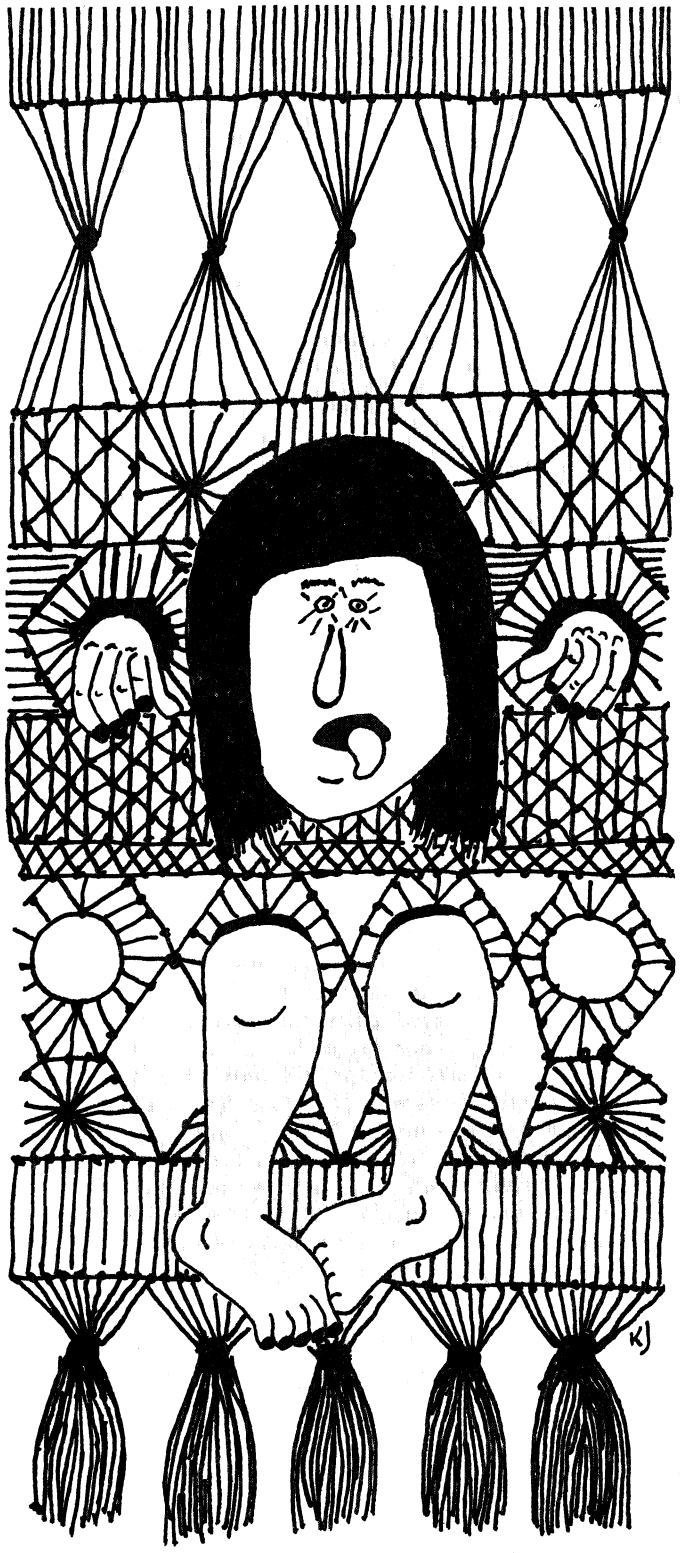
4 Paid leave for unionists to act as resource people in school curriculum.

Education Spending Cuts

Recommend that the ACTU protest vigorously against the cuts in national educational spending from 9 to 8% together with a reduction of 16.6% in allocation to Government schools.

The ACTU undertake an immediate campaign for the increased funding of the rull range of educational services, among its affiliates and the organisations represented at the conference.

The 'self-development' peddled in much adult education is often more apparent than real. Sobski argues that education for women needs to be a means for solving real-life problems, not a cosy hobby session for a privileged few.



BREAKING THE MACRAME CYCLE

Jozefa Sobski

A cursory glance at adult education provision in New South Wales could leave an observer with the impression that there is available an exciting, innovative and thought-provoking array of courses catering for the needs of a wide cross-section of the adult community; everything from pottery and yoga to Marx, ethics and Aristotle. Such a glance, however, reveals nothing of the deficiencies in present provision for adult learning nor does it reveal how adult education functions, which bodies determine policy or what group forms the bulk of students and why. In fact, the major revelation from such a glance is that adult education is still based largely on the liberal notions of 'education for life' or education for productive leisure, supplemented by a notion of education for the development of 'a straight-thinking, clean-living intelligent democracy'[1] – a way in which the early Workers' Educational Association viewed its work.

Funding

The bulk of funding in this area is derived from the State. Adult education will receive $3.1 m for the 1980/81 financial year from an education vote of over $1.4 billion. This amount will be divided between the Evening College system ($2.6 m), the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) and grants to voluntary agencies ($.4 m). An additional and negligible $142 000 received from the Technical and Further Education Council of the Tertiary Education Commission by the State will be disbursed among voluntary agencies on a needs basis.

The responsibility for the distribution of these meagre funds (and indeed for policy-making in this area) lies with the NSW Board of Adult Education which distributes them among the two large groups and the hundreds of organisations which provide the non-institutionalised adult learning in New South Wales. The meagre funds are subsidised by student fees and payment for material needed in courses.

Evening Colleges

The Evening College system, which receives the major proportion of funds, has existed in some form since the passing of the Public Instruction Act in 1880 when 46 schools were operating with 951 students (905 males and 46 females) teaching reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar and geography[2].

In 1976, this system had some 53 000 students, 32 000 of whom were women. This considerable shift in the sex balance may be easily accounted for by the fact of the availability of a secondary education to a majority irrespective of sex and class and the growth of technical education which has absorbed most men. The increase in the number of women enrolling must be seen against a background of far fewer women than men selecting to undertake further education or training both in the past and today. One of the reasons women enrol in these courses is to supplement their secondary education without committing themselves to a longterm program of work.

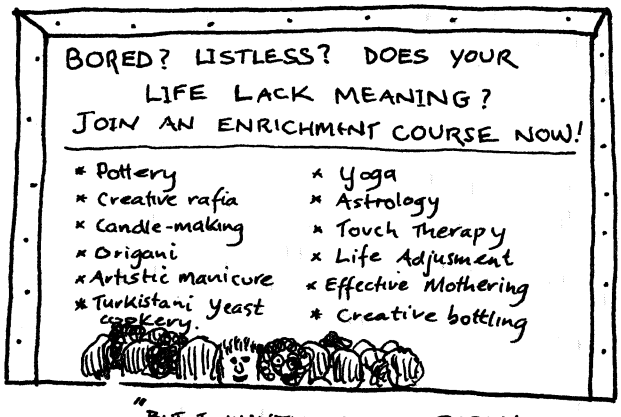
The colleges are administered by regional directors of education and are usually staffed by teachers[3], the majority of whom, because they have fulltime jobs, must see their evening work as peripheral. Classes are held after hours in school buildings in a wide range of general (non-vocational) leisure and cultural activities. Day classes are an exception or are non-existent. Parents with young children are prevented from attending unless they can make their own arrangements for their care.

Although community participation in the establishment of a college is encouraged by regulation, not much in fact occurs and community needs tend to be largely dictated by those already part of the network and are not determined by any systematic inquiry, survey or spontaneous public demand. Courses may be mounted based on their success in past years or on the availability of teachers. Sometimes the inspiration of a local college principal may be the sole determiner. Most people who enrol in courses do so as a result of reading a newspaper advertisement or contact with friends[4].

People attend courses for a variety of reasons ranging from interest to a desire to acquire knowledge and enhance present job skills[5]. Many attend for social rather than educational reasons. Women form the majority of students although most college principals and deputies are men[6]. As might be expected, 'housewife' forms the single largest occupational category among students according to a survey conducted of five evening colleges[7].

The WEA

The largest non-government agency which provides adult education is the WEA in cooperation with Sydney University. It has been the major provider of adult education since 1913 and boasts of its non-partisan, non-doctrinaire approach. Freedom of discussion is one of its central principles and this is pursued 'through the encouragement of serious and sustained study of the social sciences and cultural subjects' (WEA pamphlet). It runs classes for a modest fee and, like the evening college system, offers no certification or accreditation. The 'joy of learning' is fundamental to its function and the content of its courses.



In 1976, of the WEA's 140 000 enrolments, 98 000 were women. (Figures available from the Board of Adult Education.) Its courses read rather like an introduction to or an extension of university studies. Like the college courses, they largely ignore political, social and economic issues or include them in token numbers. More so than the college courses, the WEA's reflect an elitism, a fixation on matters erudite and a preoccupation with specialist knowledge to no apparent purpose or end except enjoyment!

Such a description should not be seen as a condemnation of the entire system. There are, no doubt, some tutors who may bring both political and social purpose to this 'learning' and classes of students which may reject the 'expert'-as-teacher approach generally adopted.

Controversy has periodically racked the WEA from its inception. The educational philosophy on which it functions has been frequently challenged by forces from within and outside the Association. In the 1930s, the assistant director of tutorial classes proposed at an annual conference that the WEA abandon its impartial, non-partisan position on programs, and moved to adopt a policy that would achieve a socialist state of society by education[8]. The move was defeated.

More recently, divisions have emerged again. (See the report by Machin in this issue.) Resignations have been followed by accusations of authoritarianism in the running of the Association and demands for more 'usefully oriented' courses[9]. Such accusations do not accord with the long cherished 'democratic' principles on which the Association has functioned and to which it aspires in all its literature. They raise serious questions about the administration of the Association and some about whose interests it serves. The reason for the amount of government funding received by the Association as opposed to other voluntary agencies also needs careful scrutiny. Is traditional commitment enough to justify the proportion received?

. . . it is possible to claim that most adult education courses, on the surface, offer little and lead nowhere. It is difficult to see Cake Decorating, Basic Screen Printing, Raku Pottery, Orchid Culture and Twilight Cricket in any other way.

Response To The Needs Of Women

Because voluntary agencies, apart from the WEA, do not receive significant financial support and because little is recorded about how they operate, the following comments are applied mainly to the Evening College system and, to a lesser extent, to the WEA.

There are a number of ways in which the present provision for adult education serves the needs of women inadequately.

Without entering the complex and indeterminate debate which poses liberal and hobby education against useful and vocational education or explores the role of political education, it is possible to claim that most adult education courses, on the

surface, offer little and lead nowhere. It is difficult to see Cake Decorating, Basic Screen Printing, Raku Pottery, Orchid Culture and Twilight Cricket in any other way. No doubt such activities-based education should be available, but it is questionable whether it allows for anything more than the development of minor skills outside any social and political context and frequently outside any occupational or vocational context. It reaches those who are not deterred by an institutional framework; who are often 'hooked' on education for its own sake; and who are in the main likely to be passive learners. This is supported by some of the conclusions reached in the survey of five evening colleges:

d) The educational level of members was very high compared with the community at large . . .

f) Most popular courses were pottery, dressmaking, typing and yoga.[10]

Students are not engaged in any process of social or political evaluation or criticism and adult education probably contributes negligibly to those seeking to make major changes in their lives, as many women are when they recommence study[11]. It could be argued that all this points to an injudicious allocation of the available resources and that the criteria employed for present funding need urgent review.

Women's needs and interests are determined narrowly, and are usually reduced to the domestic, as a reading of district college programs shows – Dressmaking, Nutrition and Family Meals, Home Furnishing and the like. It would of course be claimed that this is all women want – at least those women who enrol. That is a classic cyclical argument which conveniently removes the responsibility for creating a vigorous and progressive learning environment from all involved and may doom all programs to a repetition of last year's 'fine' effort. This must result in the continual exclusion, by default, of certain segments of the community. Adult education's potential for sustaining or promoting social, economic or political change, for example, is rarely explored.

Other factors also serve to restrict access for women. Child-care is not provided and travelling expenses are not covered so that women isolated by distance or locality and/or restricted by family responsibilities cannot easily avail themselves of the opportunities it supposedly offers to all. The scheduling of most courses in the evening is also an inhibitor. The payment of fees, however small, must act as a deterrent to those unemployed or who are financially dependent on husbands and are forced to measure their spending with meticulous care. Women rarely put their needs first, and, with something as seemingly intangible in its results as education it is unlikely that, where money is a problem, women would spend it on themselves in this way. This would suggest the need for a study allowance to support those who fall into this category.

The fact that no accreditation or certification is offered on completion of a course devalues it in the eyes of a community which places a high premium on credentials. It is credentials moreover which women most frequently lack. Yet there is not much evidence (there is a need for research in this area) that the Evening College or WEA courses act as an opening for women to tertiary or technical education providing qualifications and training and retraining for the workforce. Nor is there evidence to suggest that they attempt to deal with the problems outlined by Fraser in her brief article:

> 'In moving outside the house, into education or employment, women are faced with conflicting interests and responsibilities; on a simple level this is the family and home set against women's needs and interests. Women who have been at home . . . have a low self-image.'[12]

Such women are probably not reached by present provision anyway because most evidence that is available indicates that adult education is mainly a sphere for middle class people exploring a hobby in all its facile detail. Such people would not be particularly concerned with the intricacies of social and economic change, reform or revolution. Those who may be concerned with this are not always attracted by yoga and pottery. Neither are those seeking a non-formal alternative to tertiary and technical education, an alternative which might offer substance, purpose, direction and development.

There are no simple answers to the problems outlined and the issues raised. A restructuring of adult education taking some of them into account would be useful in this time of economic dislocation or relocation. Such restructuring would need to occur with the assurance of increased federal government funding and a close look at how this sector of education may be related to the so-called Manpower and Training schemes (NEAT, SYETP and EPUY) mounted to deal with youth and adult unemployment.

For women, child care facilities, flexible instruction times, a learning and travelling allowance, a different range of courses and even a different learning environment are all necessary. In Victoria, where institutionalised adult education is not very different, women have organised to provide an alternative which suits their needs and problems. The Diamond Valley Learning Centre, Nunnawading, and the Footscray Women's Learning House are all examples of neighbourhood learning centres which claim to provide 'a warm supportive, caring place . . .' involving participants in a process of determining 'how to fulfil their own educational needs'. These centres attempt to develop women's 'knowledge and understanding about society and about women in society'[13]. They all provide childcare and they are client-oriented rather than teacher- or institution-oriented.

Some voluntary agencies in New South Wales go some way towards this alternative, but scarcity of resources and minuscule government funding would hamper the extent of their activity.

This neglected sector of education requires attention, reassessment and a perspective which accommodates changing social and economic conditions. This article may contribute to thinking in this direction.

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3 Knights, Susan and Munro, Jenny, 'Who, Why, How? A Survey of Students and Teachers', *Australian Journal of Adult Education*, vol XIX, no 2, July 1979, p 31.

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5 Ibid; p 27.

6 Ibid; p 24.

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9 *Sydney Morning Herald*, November 24, 1980, p 11.

10 New South Wales Board of Adult Education, 'A Survey of Five Evening Colleges, No 1', *New South Wales Studies in Adult Education*, March, 1979, p 21.

11 Fraser, Gael, 'Women as External Students', *Australian Journal of Adult Education*, vol XIX, no 1, April 1979, p 18.

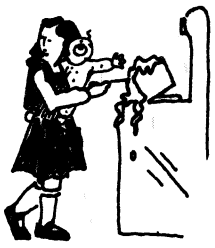
12 Ibid; p 18.

13 Lee, Chris. 'The Footscray Women's Learning House: Education as Self-Development: A Participatory Model'. Paper prepared for the International Community Education Conference, August, 1979.

overtime, and no penalty rates...

Letter I

I have not yet completed my Cluster Recall Report. I have found it very difficult during the holidays with my four children at home to go to the university to collect information. I was able to leave my children watching a movie at Macquarie Theatre last Wednesday night while I spent two and a half hours in the library researching. My washing machine broke and I have had to do all the washing by hand and now the generator in the car has come off one of its bolts and I cannot drive far in case it comes off the other bolt and falls off; this will be repaired next week. Unfortunately all next week I have to teach for the Teacher Education Program course but will try to finish the Cluster Recall Report as soon as possible.



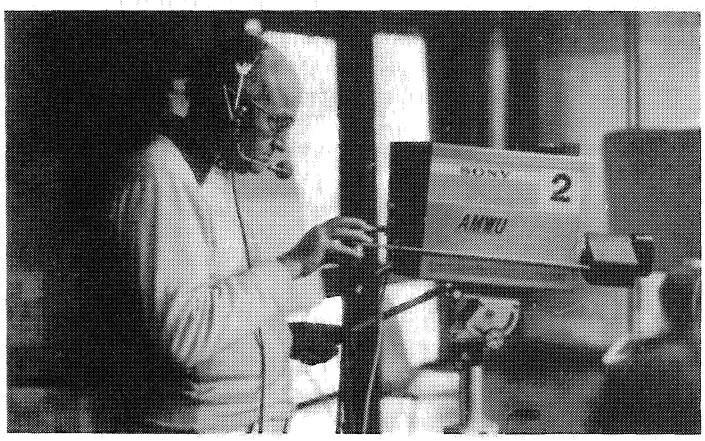
Letter II

I am sorry this assignment and my tutorial assignment are late but I have only a few hours a day to work on it, when my son is asleep. I also have very little time to spend in the library during term time and it is even worse during the break as I do not have a babysitter. The problem is compounded by the fact that most references are in periodicals or journals and cannot be taken out of the library. This means that they have to be photocopied or done without. If we had enough money to photocopy them all, we could probably afford more babysitting. This is why this assignment, and probably the next one also, is not very thoroughly referenced.

I had considered asking my husband to look after Geoff in the evening last week so I could go to the library but I sprained my back on the Tuesday night lifting Geoff and I could hardly walk for about three or four days and even sitting was painful. By the time we have had our tea and Geoff is in bed there isn't much time left for the library anyway.

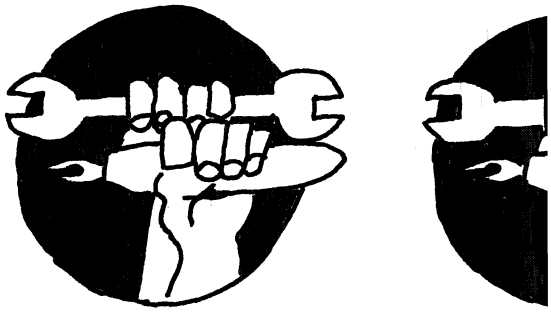
Geoff celebrates his first birthday on Wednesday, probably another set-back for my study but I am hoping to hand in my tutorial paper this Friday.

some problems of mature age students: letters to tutors.



Leading in Union

Australia's largest union, the Amalgamated Metalwo running educational programs for its members. Bob I spoke to *RED* about the union's training scheme for education system. This account is based on that interv



The most striking thing about the AMWSU scheme is its heavy emphasis on participatory forms of decision-making, which are very different from those of the formal education system, but which parallel closely the union's own structures. Shop stewards attending union training schools decide at precourse meetings on the content and format of the schools, with project work occupying a lot of their time: students determine, for example, what they want to learn about the companies they work for, learn where the information is available, and are sent out to get it. Leaflets produced as a result of these inquiries are often well received by the rank and file, and the shop stewards have a series of experiences which they would not get if taught in a more formal way.

The AMWSU has planned to spend over half a million dollars nationally on its education budget in 1981, much of this to provide paid study leave for shop stewards to attend the training schools. Courses cover matters such as union structure, how to chair a meeting, negotiating, reporting back to members, and workers' compensation. Follow-up schools deal with more specialised topics like industrial health, the wage-fixing system, and issues of current interest. More than half the stewards attend a course at some time, either on a day-release basis or in blocks of up to ten days.

Late in 1980 the union distributed to its 6 500 shop stewards a manual dealing with the role of the shop steward, speaking effectively, reporting and negotiating, and workshop meeting procedure, and giving a glossary of union terms.

The national and state headquarters at Chalmers Street in Sydney houses the Audio-Visual Unit, which is to get $30 000 in 1981 for its work in producing, among other things, video-tapes for use in the stewards' schools, lunchtime meetings and other gatherings*. Those tapes relating to industrial health or the impact of technology are especially popular. Their effect can be seen from the example of a NSW Public Transport Commission maintenance workshop, where the workers revised their practices in dealing with brake shoes after seeing a tape on asbestos. Tapes may be recorded off-air from television programs or produced by the Unit itself. The AMWSU has pioneered this sort of work in Australia, and finds that working people want material which relates to their immediate, specific problems. Consequently, the union is making more tapes directed at members in particular industries. Stewards are being more and more extensively involved in these productions. All the production staff in the Unit are shop stewards or ex-stewards, including Bob Richardson himself.

Development Of The Program

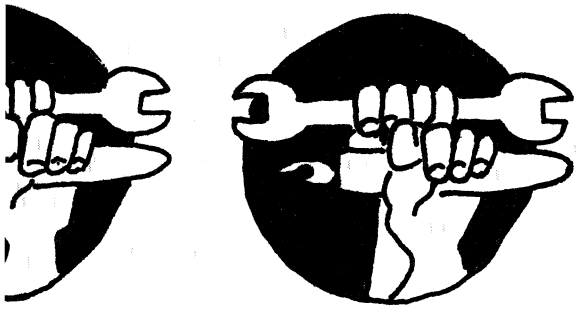
Pressures on unions, both here and overseas, to become more involved in areas such as industrial health, technology, and industrial democracy, contributed to the introduction of the program. The concept evolved during the amalgamations of the various metalworkers' unions and the shipwrights' union in the late sixties and early seventies. Some activists saw Australian unions as old-fashioned, under-resourced and fragmented. Part of the aim of amalgamation, in addition to a desire to gain extra industrial muscle, was to get the finance for education and research.

Planning the program was a process which built on the union's own experience and methods: shop stewards' schools were originally run by organisers and financed by levies on the membership, but this took up too much of the organisers' time and distracted them from the membership's immediate problems. So it was decided to appoint a fulltime education officer and finance the program directly from the union budget. Teaching techniques quickly shifted away from the original lecturing approach towards greater use of role-playing and other participatory methods. The Audio-Visual Unit grew out of the

* Videotapes are available to people outside the union for a hiring fee of ten dollars a week plus a deposit of thirty dollars: video and audio tapes are also sold. High schools, universities and colleges, and Movement Against Uranium Mining groups are among the users.

the Way Education

s' and Shipwrights' Union, is also a national leader in ardson, the union's New South Wales education officer,) stewards and that scheme's implications for the formal



use of videotape in these role play exercises. Later, experimental black-and-white documentaries were made and the Unit was on its way, pushed along by the enthusiasm of those involved and by the wider realisation that a unit producing video resources was sorely needed by trade unions and progressive organisations generally.

Changes continue. The shop stewards' schools are becoming increasingly industry-based and are conducted in close conjunction with the stewards' organisation. Discussion of educational issues like health and safety can then dovetail with the work of state and national industry committees and meetings of shop stewards. This policy is linked to the AMWSU's 'intervention' approach to industrial democracy, which holds that workers should be equipped to have their own ideas about what should happen to their industry and bargain collectively for those ideas as well as campaigning politically and industrially. They thus avoid the pitfalls of 'worker participation' schemes where the employer almost always has the initiative. Inevitably, education and research take on greater significance within the union.

Strains Within The Union

The sheer growth of the AMWSU and of the services it provides, embracing over a hundred thousand workers, a turnover in excess of eight million dollars a year and the ownership of a lot of property, creates difficulties for decision-makers whose training is as fitters and turners or boilermakers. Many union decisions are still in the form of policy resolutions which set out objectives but neglect the resources needed to achieve these objectives. Members have to learn communication skills, how to handle the media, budgeting, management by objectives and similar techniques. For instance, mass lunchtime meetings are a poor medium of communication: the material is almost entirely spoken words, occasionally supplemented by a handout, and there is rarely enough time to grasp complex questions. Officials can hardly wonder if their message is not properly understood. They are learning to use more visual aids, to seek more feedback and not to rely exclusively on the spoken word.

A big slice of the union's budget is still devoted to leaflets and newspapers – the more traditional forms of information and education – and some members still do not support the education program described in this article. In particular, they see schools as a medium for **telling** people things – 'This is what needs to be done' – and do not fully understand the importance of discussion and testing of what has been studied as part of the total learning process. Under these circumstances, reinforcement and practice may not be adequate. In the early days, some officials even expressed doubts about letting shop stewards pick their own topics for the schools.

Part of the problem is generational. Many shop stewards are aware of the value of the program and of the use of audio-visual media, but some middle-level officials of ten or fifteen years'

standing are more conservative, especially when considering the costs involved and the real limits on what can be achieved. Some of this can be put down to lack of training and experience in running a large enterprise: some objections were raised, for example, at the cost of advertising *Australia Ripped Off*, the union's publication on trends in the Australian economy. A proposed twenty-thousand-dollar publicity budget was knocked back because it looked like a lot of money, irrespective of the union's total resources for publicity and education.

Direct Experience

Progress has been made on other fronts. Shop committees have been established with representation based on ethnic origin as well as union membership, and in these it is possible to conduct meetings in the native language of the rank and file. In another scheme, rank and file are taken to Arbitration Commission hearings to hear the bullshitting at first hand. There is also a system of teaching a 'second line' of organisers by delegating acting organisers while the 'first line' are away. In all these initiatives, the principle of teaching by experience rather than by telling is underlined. And once again the importance of relevance to immediate problems comes through, so that changed awareness leads to action about a particular situation.

The experience of dealing with a specific issue can give a shop steward a wider perspective: one who was attending a school wrote a leaflet about the health issues in his factory and got it endorsed by the other shop stewards. All were carpeted by management, who used pipelines into the union to try (unsuccessfully) to stop publication of the leaflet. That shop steward learned some useful lessons about how to protect himself and about how management thinks.

Certain shop stewards still expect to be taught in an authoritarian manner, by an all-knowing speaker. They often find on reflection, though, that they do not remember much of the information given to them by such speakers. Several factors seem to predispose school participants to these old-fashioned methods: the media presentation of demagogic images; the background of the workers; and their own experience of school. However, given the opportunity they do prefer more flexible and participatory formats, especially role-playing. The Audio-Visual Unit is trying to counter the possible ill-effects of videotapes in sensationalising and trivialising issues and shortening people's attention span by limiting the use of interviews and by introducing more diagrams and models as a way of explaining concepts. This is essential when most shop stewards watch television mostly for entertainment and rarely read anything more subtle than the *Daily Telegraph.*

Overseas Comparison

The AMWSU program is, in some respects, very advanced. The role of shop stewards in selecting study topics and in carrying out research is more developed than in some countries. On the other hand, countries like Britain have far more extensive schemes with courses of greater length and detail. British unions are able to offer three-week courses on areas like time and motion study, bonus systems, etc. Negotiators are thus better equipped to bargain on the basis of company efficiency rather than simply arguing for a wage rise on the grounds of an increase in the boss's profits. In Australia, only the coal mining unions could do this.

Unions And The Formal Education System

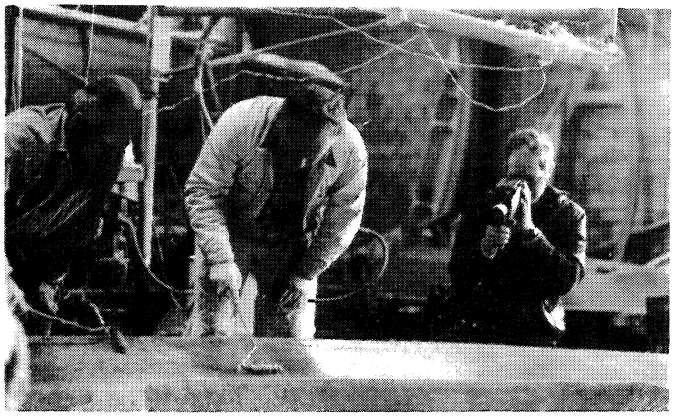
The union's scheme has been highly successful in educating people who, in many cases, would be regarded as 'failures' by the formal education system. And, as mentioned earlier, the AMWSU effort has not followed at all the methods used in that system. The union's aim of widening participation and organising in a democratic fashion would be out of place in schools whose aim is to produce obedient and well-drilled underlings. Moreover, a wide range of people come to AMWSU courses, where the concept is one of fitting people and skills to each other, rather than expecting entrants to have certain basic qualifications before they come near the place. If someone is elected as a shop steward, the program has to find some way of equipping them for the task, which leads to a more student-centred approach than applies in the schools.

In fact, some of the least successful contributors to union courses have been speakers invited in from colleges and universities. They may be able to teach 'communications' to managers, but few of them have ever chaired a factory job meeting of two or three hundred people of several different nationalities. They have little understanding of the problems faced in such workplaces.

The union education program also differs from schooling in its concentration on specifics: people are taught how to write because they need to do a leaflet **now**, rather than so that one day they may be able to do one. And, of course, the scheme is voluntary, which schools are not. Union members can have a say in how it is run and identify with it because it is part of their union.

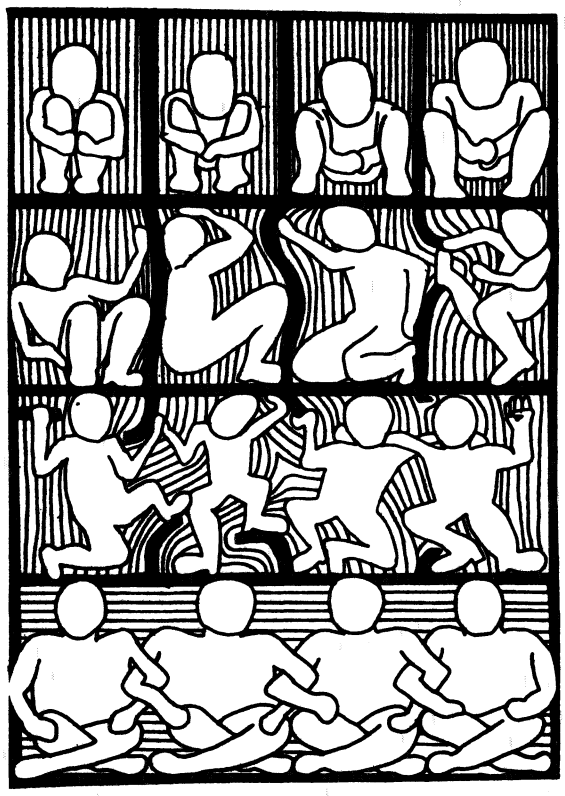
Bob Richardson feels that the union's job would be much easier if the education system were more successful in teaching literacy to kids, and also if people came into work with more social skills – how to function in large groups, how to direct a discussion or chair a meeting, how to make a speech. The literacy problem is compounded by the dominance of electronic media and the fact that shop stewards tend to be twenty-five or over when they are elected and to have been out of school for nearly ten years: even if they had writing talent, it has often atrophied by that time.

Richardson finds that another problem with school-leavers is that they frequently come into the workforce with very negative attitudes to trade unions. Television, radio and the press are obviously the main villains here, and it takes a certain amount of direct contact to unlearn this garbage. Work experience schemes can be useful, as long as there is a union say in their control. Despite the danger that kids will be exploited, a combination of workplace experience and academic study might give them some idea of what to expect when they are really going for a job



THE WORKING WOMENS CENTRE

Mary Owen



'The age-long struggle for equality of opportunity in education, industry and citizenship for women draws towards triumphant fulfilment. This is the great hour of the emancipation of the womanhood of the world.'

You haden't noticed? Well, perhaps it passed so quickly that you didn't see it – or maybe you weren't born when the great hour flashed by.

That brave declaration came from a small brochure published by the National Women's Trade Union League of America in 1918. The League did admit that things were not quite perfect. 'Industrial relations are still laggard in response to this high call of our age,' continued the writer. This obviously accounted for the existence of the League. Its purpose, according to the brochure, was:

- To provide a common meeting ground for women of all groups who endorse the principles of democracy and wish to see them applied to industry.
- To encourage self-government in the workshop.
- To develop leadership among the women workers, inspiring them with a sense of personal responsibility for the conditions under which they work.
- To insure the protection of the younger girls in their efforts for better working conditions and a living wage.
- To secure for girls and women equal opportunity with boys and men in trades and technical training and pay on the basis of occupation and not on the basis of sex.
- To secure the representation of women on industrial tribunals and public boards and commissions.

The League recognised the vital role of education and training in providing equal employment opportunities for women and in equipping them to take their place among union leaders. They actually established a school for women labour leaders and provided training scholarships for a period of a year in academic and field work.

Fifty years later we do not have any union training school for women in Australia and very few women attend the various trade union training courses run by the Trade Union Training Authority. However, the Australian trade union movement has established an organisation for women which may well be unique in the world and whose objectives are very similar to those of the American Women's Trade Union League.

History

In October, 1974 the Australian National Advisory Council for International Women's Year wrote to the Australian Council of Salaried and Professional Associations (ACSPA), inviting suggestions for programs which would 'develop a sensitivity to the overwhelming problems facing women in the workforce . . . and a determination to concentrate on bettering their conditions during this coming year'.

In response ACSPA submitted a proposal to set up a resource centre for working women and sought a grant of $40 000 for that purpose. The grant was made in June 1975. Mary Owen and Sylvie Shaw were appointed as co-ordinators and the Working Women's Centre was officially opened on September 15, 1975. Then began a long battle to obtain continuing funding. Apart from grants for special projects, the Centre depended for three years almost entirely on donations from seventy unions until, on International Women's Day 1979, the Federal Government approved an annual grant of $25 000 for three and a half years.

The need for the Centre was apparent almost from the day it opened. Since then it has received thousands of telephone and personal calls from women and men seeking information, help and advice on a wide range of problems. The most prevalent relate to discrimination in pay, superannuation, promotion, reclassifications resulting from 'equal' pay, training,

retraining, child care, workers' compensation, health, safety, exploitative piecework conditions (particularly among migrant women), sexual harrassment and, of course, inquiries for employment. The co-ordinators receive more invitations than they can cope with to speak at seminars, conferences, schools, technical colleges, union meetings and on radio and television.

. . . women would never obtain true equality with men until they had abandoned the role of dependency forced upon them by traditional attitudes. The aim of the Centre was not, therefore, merely to transfer women's dependence on to the co-ordinators . . . but, rather, to help women solve their own problems.

The original proposal for the Working Women's Centre was drafted by the ACSPA Committee of Women's Affairs which was an ACSPA federal policy committee. The members of the committee realised that the main reason why women in the workforce were mostly to be found in low-paid, unskilled, dead-end jobs was because few had received the education and training to qualify them for better positions. The discrimination in education is itself partly a product of traditional attitudes by which women are regarded merely as temporary workers and not 'true' breadwinners. By this thinking women are not supposed to have dependants. Rather, they themselves are seen as dependants and it is presumed that they will always have a man to support them. Therefore, the reasoning goes, it is not necessary or desirable for girls to undertake apprenticeships or lengthy training courses for 'they will **only** get married'.

Goals of the Centre

The philosophy behind the establishment of the Working Women's Centre was that women would never obtain true equality with men until they abandoned the role of dependency forced upon them by traditional attitudes. The aim of the Centre was not, therefore, merely to transfer women's dependency on to the co-ordinators of the WWC but, rather, to help women solve their own problems. However, the co-ordinators knew that not all problems could be solved in isolation and that the unions were obviously the organisations best able to assist women to obtain equality in the workplace. Thus the broad objectives of the Working Women's Centre are:

- to encourage women to tackle their own problems by joining the appropriate union, actively participating in the union's affairs and educating male unionists to recognise the needs of women workers; and
- to assist unions to overcome the special difficulties faced by women because of society's expectation that they should accept the main responsibility for family care whether they are employed or not.

More specifically, the Centre aims to:

- provide information and support for women who have problems which affect their work or their ability to get work;
- increase women's self-confidence and ability to help themselves.
- Act as a focal point where women can meet and discuss ways of solving problems.
- gather information on the special problems of women in the paid workforce;
- relay information to all unions and assist them in their efforts to obtain justice for male and female members.
- Inform government bodies of the effects of policies, legislation and current practices and to pressure them to take appropriate action to promote real equality between men and women.

Developing Networks

Once the WWC was established the first step was to let women and unions know that it existed and how it hoped to be of service to both groups. This provided an opportunity to develop skills in promotion, publicity and public relations. We had no problems with the media. We were given good coverage in print and on radio and television and, as a result, women flocked to the Centre. This gave us an opportunity to collect first-hand evidence of the problems we suspected most women encountered. It also provided a network of women activists who were delighted to share experiences with other women and to pool their resources.

It became apparent that many women were diffident about taking part in union affairs because they did not understand meeting procedure. We ran a series of basic one-day training seminars which dealt with meeting procedure, union structure, the role of the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission and Wages Boards, the meaning of union terms such as 'ambit', 'log of claims' etc. – terms which those of us who have been involved in the union movement take for granted but which can be quite mystifying to other people. We also included a section on the roles of the organiser and shop steward. Some unions were very co-operative about getting their members signed off the job on paid leave to attend the seminars and several provided organisers, shop stewards and other officials to assist with the instruction and role-playing exercises. It was quite amazing how women thawed out during the day and went away ready to enthuse to other women with whom they worked and encourage them to join the union and participate in the activities. Eventually we persuaded the Trade Union Training Authority to provide special training courses for women which were designed to overcome the nervousness induced by the traditional women-as-dependent syndrome and prepare them to participate in other courses with men.*

Much of the work of the Centre has been directed towards providing unions with resources to enable them to deal with the rising expectations of their women members. Soon after the Centre was established the co-ordinators, in conjunction with the ACSPA Committee of Women's Affairs, drafted a working women's charter which was adopted as ACSPA policy in October 1976. A similar charter was supported in principle

When I attended the United Nations Forum for the mid-decade of women in Copenhagen . . . there was an enormous amount of interest in the Working Women's Centre. So far as I could gather, no other country in the world had a centre for working women set up within the union movement which provided anything like the range of services to women, both inside and outside the union movement.

* (See Lesley Podesta's account in this issue of one of these courses.)

by the Council of Australian Government Employees Organisations (CAGEO) in May 1977 and in September of that year the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) also endorsed a working women's charter.

Publications

In addition to the information gathered from women who contacted the Centre, the co-ordinators amassed a vast amount of data relevant to the problems of women in the workforce and measures which could be taken to alleviate them from a variety of individual contacts and women's organisations, interstate and overseas, from government committees of inquiry and from research of published and unpublished papers. This material was collated, sifted and relayed to unions in the form of a series of discussion papers based on points in the charter. Because of the enormous interest in these papers – not only from the union movement but also from government departments, educational institutions, health and welfare workers, students and other individuals, it was decided to produce the papers in book form. With the assistance of Sally Milner of Sisters Publishing Ltd, *Working Women* was published in September 1979 and has already gone through two editions.

The original discussion papers are constantly being updated and revised through our Working Women's Information Service bulletins and, although all unions receive a free copy of these bulletins, so many other organisations pay a subscription that we actually make a profit on their publication.

One of the most valuable initiatives of the Working Women's Centre is probably its multilingual newspaper, *Women at Work*. This paper originated as part of the Working Women's Charter campaign. There have been approximately six issues per year since May 1976. Apart from translations and printing, the paper is entirely produced by a group of volunteer women who meet at the Working Women's Centre once a fortnight and spend a weekend laying out each issue. Nine thousand copies of each edition are distributed through unions which buy the paper and distribute it free to their members. Several unions have told us that their migrant women members prefer this paper to anything else provided through the union.

Recognising that almost all discrimination against women stems from the conditioning of children to certain expectations dependent on their sex, the co-ordinators have worked with teachers and vocational guidance officers to promote the development of nonsexist teaching material and to introduce girls to a wider range of career opportunities. The Centre applied for and received a special grant from the Schools Commission to establish a register of women in nontraditional occupations. Subsequently we obtained another grant to pay these women to visit schools and tell students about their jobs with a view to encouraging girls to widen their vocational aspirations and thus improve their employment prospects.

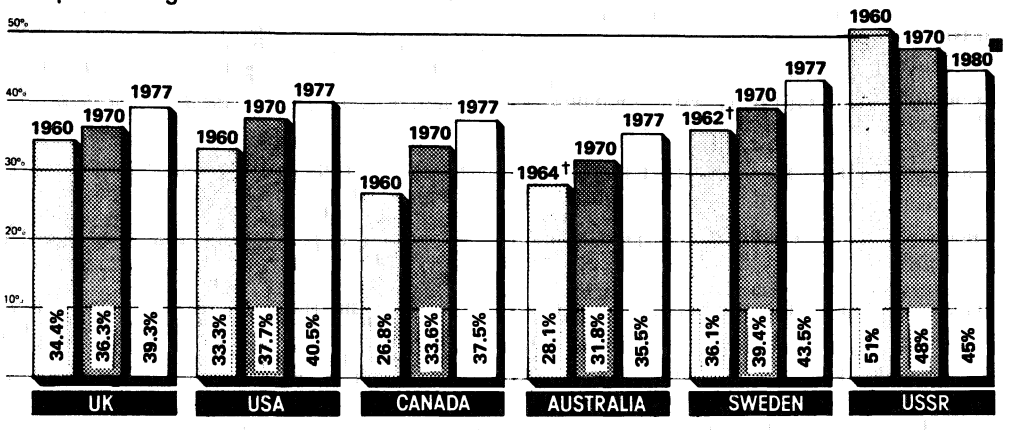
One of the major problems faced by women in the workforce is the need for good-quality, reasonably-priced child care. In 1977 ACSPA obtained a grant from the Department of Social Security which enabled the WWC to employ a person to liaise with unions to develop union co-operative childcare centres. As a result ACSPA and the ACTU formed a joint Child Care Corporation and, with the assistance of a further grant from the Department of Social Security Office of Child Care, they bought a house in an industrial suburb of Melbourne which is currently being converted to a child care centre. It is hoped that other centres will follow. The present child care co-ordinator is Katherine Henderson who joined the WWC in November 1979.

During 1979 Carolyn Lloyd was appointed Administrative Officer and in April 1980 Lynn Beaton replaced Sylvie Shaw who had resigned her position as co-ordinator. In September 1979 ACSPA merged with the ACTU and the following year the Working Women's Centre was accepted as part of the ACTU although it was decided to maintain the Centre at its central city address.

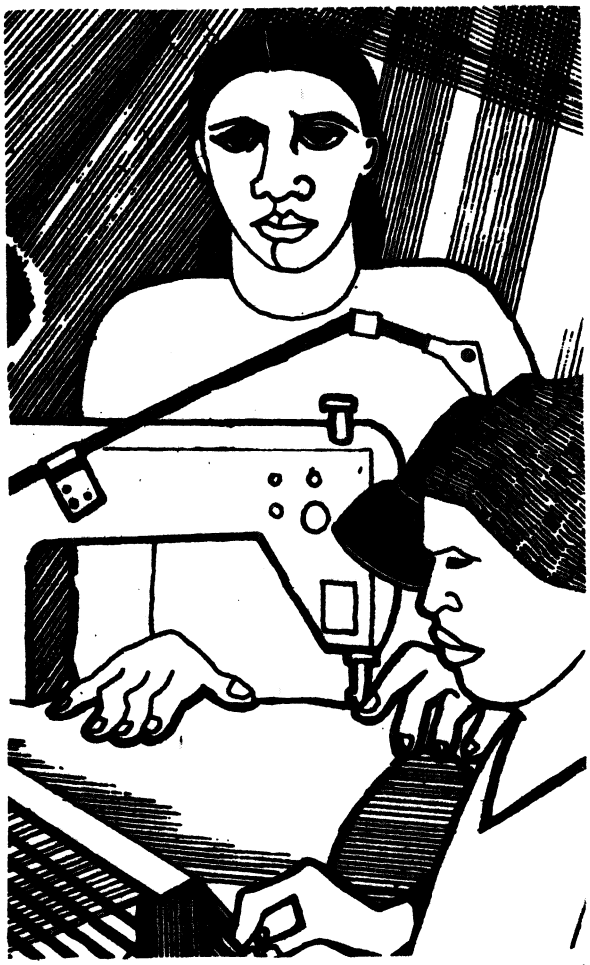
Survival and acceptance

Many people have wondered how the Working Women's Centre has managed to survive for more than five years when so many community welfare organisations have disappeared. No doubt we have been lucky, but we owe much to the financial support of unions – particularly ACSPA, which provided rent-free

Women as percentage of total labour force



† *1960 data not available* ■ ILO estimate



accommodation and many other facilities. Apart from irregular donations, several unions committed themselves to regular contributions which enabled us to survive until the government provided more regular funding. I think also that the co-ordinators developed some skill in selecting projects which were compatible with government and union policies, could be incorporated into existing frameworks and demonstrated a longterm benefit to women. On several occasions the Centre has acted as a catalyst by starting projects and then getting some government or other body to carry them on. For instance, the Centre initiated a bridging program for women wishing to return to study. We managed to get funding from the Victorian Education Department to run a pilot project at a technical college. It was so successful that several technical colleges now run similar programs.

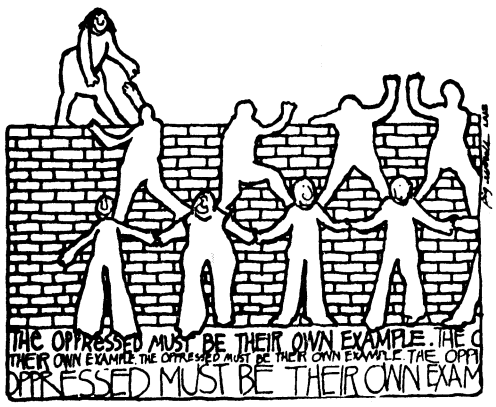
The centre has made numerous submissions to government departments and committees of inquiry and is now recognised as an authority on matters concerning women in the workforce. We have been asked to provide a representative on a number of state and federal government bodies dealing with the affairs of women.

The Royal Commission on Human Relationships commended the work of the Centre and recommended that similar centres be set up in other states. In January 1979 the South Australian Government provided funding for a working women's centre at the Trades Hall in Adelaide and it is possible that the New South Wales Government may set up a similar centre in Sydney. It is hoped that other states will follow suit. Now that our Working Women's Centre has been incorporated into the ACTU it is regarded as a national union resource centre and the ACTU organisational structure will facilitate wider distribution of our publications.

When I attended the United Nations Forum for the Mid-decade of Women in Copenhagen last July there was an enormous amount of interest in the Working Women's Centre. So far as I could gather, no other country in the world had a centre for working women set up within the union movement which provided anything like the range of services to women both inside and outside the union movement. The women at the Forum were vastly impressed by our published material and many asked to be put on our mailing list. The Australian Government was happy to claim credit for the Centre in the report it produced for the Mid-decade Conference and Forum. The Australian trade union movement can be proud that it has established a world first with its Working Women's Centre.

There is a long way to go before women are represented in the decision-making areas in proportion to their numbers in the workforce and in the union movement. However, at a press conference on January 14, 1981, Mr Cliff Dolan, President of the ACTU, announced that the ACTU would campaign in 1981 for greater participation by women in the trade union movement and would encourage them to seek leadership positions in unions. Mr Dolan was supported at the conference by Ms Jan Marsh, the ACTU industrial advocate and by WWC Co-ordinators Lynn Beaton and Mary Owen. He announced the ACTU's support for the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination and called on Federal and State governments to take the necessary measures to enable Australia to ratify the Convention. Mr Dolan outlined a package of proposals for achieving increased female trade union membership and activity.

It is encouraging to note that the proportion of female employees who are members of unions has increased from 35 per cent in 1969 to 47 per cent in 1979. During the same period male membership only increased from 57 per cent to 60 per cent. Since the Working Women's Centre was established in 1975 female union membership has increased by 7.7 per cent while male membership has actually declined. During 1979, the last year for which Australian Bureau of Statistics figures are available, female membership increased by 46 000 whereas male membership rose by only 300. It now remains to see women appropriately represented at the top of the union movement.



LABOUR STUDIES

Can the Colleges Contribute?

Ross Shanahan

SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT
ASSOCIATE DIPLOMA IN LABOUR STUDIES

CORE UNITS

Code	Name
BA500	History and Structure of Australian Trade Unions
BA501	Trade Unions and Industrial Relations.
BA502	Trade Unions and Social Change.
BA503	Work in Modern Society
BA504	Social relations and the Workplace.
BA505	The Corporation in Modern Society.
BA506	Australian Society/Social Structure.
BA507	Australian Society/Economic Structure.
BA508	Australian Society/Political Structure.

OPTIONAL UNITS

BA509	Contemporary Industrial Society.
BA510	Mass Media, Education and Social Control.
BA511	Popular Culture.
BA512	Introduction to Labour Economics.
BA513	Current Economic Policies.
BA514	International Trade, Development and Underdevelopment.
BA515	An introduction to Australian Labour History.
BA516	Trade Unions and Environment.
BA517	Minority Groups in Australia.
BA518	Sexuality and Society.

PRACTICAL INVESTIGATIONS

BA/520/23	Practical Investigation Part I.
BA524/28	Practical Investigation Part II.

The establishment of colleges of advanced education in the early seventies seemed to offer the opportunity for widening the scope and style of tertiary education in Australia. However, a flurry of programs established within the colleges during this time turned out, on closer analysis, to be parallel to existing programs already done at universities and technical colleges. More significantly, the colleges addressed themselves to much the same student population as the universities, believing that the apparent democratising of entry to tertiary-level studies meant an expanding clientele of school leavers. The newly-acquired autonomy was interpreted by the colleges as a licence to establish, occasionally on the basis of teacher training programs, pale reproductions of university sidelines.

This reaction is explainable in terms of a failure of college committees to understand the role somewhat tentatively suggested for them by the Martin Report*. However, it is also true that the universities and technical colleges were the only models of autonomous tertiary institutions available to the colleges. College performance was inevitably judged by the entry procedures, the standards and the methods of teaching of the universities. Not altogether surprisingly, colleges were loth to jeopardise their new-found independence by embarking on courses for which there were no clear precedents in the universities. Proposals for courses which aimed at areas of study not well established at universities and technical colleges or which widened the accessibility of tertiary education made little headway.

Ironically, it was the contraction of numbers of potential students which induced, at last, a consideration of questions about the appropriateness of college courses at both bureaucratic and academic levels. Beset by economic stringency and stung by a well-orchestrated and politically astute attack on tertiary institutions, college administrators began to proclaim the rhetoric of 'community' involvement. They listened more attentively to those who could identify genuine 'community' need in the midst of some obviously spurious creations. Whereas previously (1974) those of us who put forward proposals that had no counterpart at universities had witnessed administrative eyes glaze over, we were latterly (1978) agreeably surprised by the hearing we were given. This change occurred in an atmosphere of pointed criticism of colleges for maintaining too academic a program in the midst of rising unemployment of graduates. While the media versions of this criticism were undoubtedly part of a campaign to reduce expenditure on the colleges, they nevertheless left an opportunity to respond to the criticism by developing studies related to work and evolving a set of structures which then opened such courses to students already in the workforce. For these situational reasons, a proposal put forward by the Sociology Department of Adelaide College of the Arts and Education to begin the planning of a Labour Studies program for full or part-time students, though initially propounded in 1974 without success, was accepted for consideration in 1979.

* *Tertiary Education in Australia. Report of the Committee on the Future of Tertiary Education in Australia to the Australian Universities Commission*, Canberra, 1964.

The concept of a Labour Studies program emerged out of a perceived gap in the provision of social, political and economic courses suited to the needs of people at work. There were within the tertiary sector sufficient courses geared to management and production goals. What seemed to be lacking were any programs which dealt with the experience of work considering political and economic issues in a social and historical framework. Trade Union Training Authority (TUTA) courses provided role-specific courses for members of unions and the

There were within the tertiary sector sufficient courses geared to management and production goals. What seemed to be lacking were any programs which dealt with the experience of work considering political and economic issues in a social and historical framework.

Workers' Educational Association (WEA) ran a series of general courses for workers from elementary to advanced levels, especially in their admirable postal mode. What Labour Studies sought to enompass was the presentation of materials supplementary to these, not for union role training but for educational development in a wider context. In order to establish the grounds for such a program, detailed discussions were held with both TUTA and WEA. Representatives from both these organisations helpfully criticised the first drafts of the program and encouraged the development of areas which they were constrained by their charters or their resources to omit. Essentially, they saw the Labour Studies proposal as not in conflict with their interests but as adding to the range of options open to their students after the completion of their courses. Encouraged by this response, the Sociology Department met representatives of the trade unions at a formal meeting in April 1979 to ask their views on the program and to establish an advisory education committee to advance the planning of a possible course.

After frank discussions of the advantages and possible dangers to the trade union movement the meeting endorsed unanimously the proposal and set up an advisory committee comprising representatives of WEA, TUTA and several interested unions to assist the Sociology Department. A small survey of course preferences was developed and distributed to students in TUTA and elsewhere. The results confirmed our earlier intuition of considerable interest among members of the workforce in courses about work.

Planning became action when at an Advisory Education Committee the research officer of the Amalgamated Metal Workers and Shipwrights Union (AMWSU) asked that several pilot courses be conducted immediately, giving a guarantee that twenty students would be released to do a five day (30 hours) course on alternate Wednesdays. There were several difficulties in meeting the request, not the least being our own need to advance the preparation of courses. In addition we had to persuade the Academic and Planning Committee of the College to allow this to occur. In the upshot there was some residual opposition but resistance was limited to insistence that the staff should teach the units on overload. Two units on trade union history and the economic structure of Australian society were devised and taught in September and October 1979.

Although these were clearly trial units they were successful enough to enthuse students and defuse conservative feelings in college committees.

Trial run

On the basis of the trial, seven units were planned for 1980. College administrators were convinced enough of the viability of the units to fund the operation. Three of the courses were held during the day, mostly for shop stewards; four were run in the evenings for students interested in union affairs but not formally holding union positions.

The next step was to get the nod from the Tertiary Education Authority of South Australia (felicitiously known as TEASA) to allow the project to continue. TEASA examined the proposals with considerable care, noting opposition from the Department of Further Education (DFE), South Australian Institute of Technology (SAIT) and, interestingly, from Flinders University. Each of these institutions had a vested interest in areas which Labour Studies seemed to trespass on. Both DFE and SAIT were running courses with Industrial Relations components. By carefully defining the ambit of Labour Studies as beyond the scope of Industrial Relations, as conventionally defined, in that it was to focus broadly on the experience of work in a humanistic context, we were able to demonstrate that there was little duplication of DFE or SAIT courses in our proposals. The challenge from Flinders University was concerned that Labour Studies should not be confused with the work of its Institute of Labour Studies Research Unit which is given over to research, usually of an economic complexion, with a small teaching component. Assurances were given to Flinders that the practical part of the teaching program in Labour Studies would not cross over the legitimate interests of their research unit, nor would the likely clientele be drawn from any potential students of the university. We would not, however, agree to change the name 'Labour Studies'. In May 1980 TEASA finally approved an Associate Diploma in Labour Studies to begin at Adelaide College of the Arts and Education in 1981.

The final step to establishment was to get approval from the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC). TEASA submitted the proposal with its approval. TEC approved without demur in October 1980. Full accreditation, based on detailed examination of all elements, is yet to be granted. It is anticipated that this should occur in mid-1981.

The approved draft of the content of the Associate Diploma in Labour Studies divides the program into three sections: (a) core units, (b) elective units, (c) practical project.

a The core units are nine in number, each involving thirty contact hours per term. They are divided into three general areas:
   i Work Studies (3 units)
   ii Trade Union Studies (3 units)
   iii Australian Society Studies (3 units)

b Ten elective units are planned. Students will do six. The electives are seen as dealing with important but less salient issues. They allow for broadening of student interests and for deepening the treatment of units of the core.

c The practical investigation projects are compulsory for those proceeding to the Associate Diploma. Each will take a year to bring to completion. Together they are weighted as the equivalent of nine course units. The student doing these will be encouraged to use his or her own work experience and interests for devising first a detailed description of a discrete

work situation and thereafter an analysis of its implications for workers or more broadly for Australian society.
(Unit titles are appended).

It was not the intention of the planners to establish the Associate Diploma as just one more credential to be added to a proliferating list of awards, but several considerations intervened to convince us of its importance. The protection of the program required that it be taken into college structures where it could be funded as any other tertiary course is. The funding structures normally require award status. In addition, our survey of potential students showed, to our surprise, that students wanted a formal award structure apparently not only for their own satisfaction but to convince employers of the legitimate nature of their studies, an important issue given the newness of the course.

Nevertheless, students are encouraged to do single units for interest if they wish. Both TEASA and the college agreed that the Associate Diploma structure should not imply discrimination against students who wished to limit their enrolment. The importance of this policy needs to be stressed if structural barriers are to be reduced to allow entry to those who have little experience of tertiary studies. Entry qualifications were devised to make work experience a significant element of eligibility. Cases of doubt can be discussed at an interview. Our experience to date shows that students with trade qualifications and/or union experience and interest are more than capable of coping with the materials presented.

A Labour Studies program provides some interesting challenges to Adelaide College. Obviously, most of these are yet to be met. Among them are these:

a It will be necessary to attract and hold sufficient numbers of students to make the courses viable institutionally. For students who are in the workforce there are clear limitations on free time. Daytime release may be possible for some under educational provisions of various trade union awards but these provisions are subject to a measure of interpretation by both unions and employers.

b A policy of making entry as structurally easy as possible may clash with institutional entry requirements.

c Keeping the focus of the course on worker interests will require constant monitoring of materials used and techniques of teaching developed. The establishment of an education committee for consideration of course content has worked well to date. The functions of this committee seem vital to the continuing progress of the venture.

d Evaluation of the course, teachers and students requires careful consideration in the light of institutional structures which may clash with the stated aims of a Labour Studies course and in the light of long-term student satisfaction.

e Although there are numerous overseas precedents for Labour Studies the materials particularly suited to the Australian version are scattered widely where they exist at all. The gathering and sorting of these will take years of work. We have already found it necessary to write a history of the labour movement in South Australia. We hope to publish a monograph on the subject by John Wanna in early 1981. There is also a great need for help from people with expertise in particular areas across the range of units offered. Given the stringency of the college budget, getting these people on any sort of professional basis will be difficult.

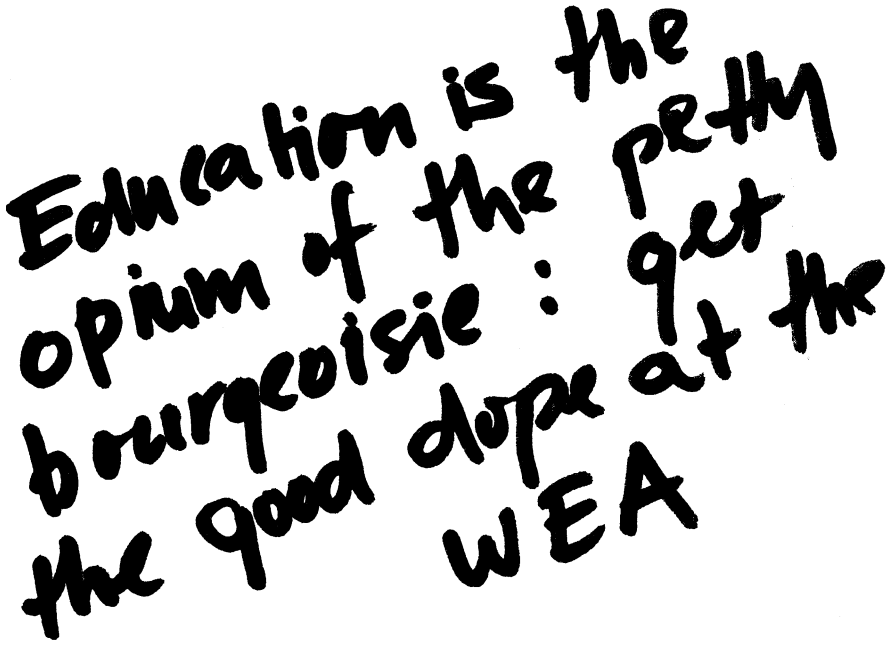
f Perhaps the most difficult problem will consist in maintaining the identity of the Labour Studies program so that it establishes and retains the confidence of the students for whom it is intended and of the college. In one sense the process implies a kind of balancing act between two extremes. In another sense the question is one of maintaining, in the face of possible changing circumstances, the notion of a course intended for a particular clientele which has traditionally not been able to avail itself of tertiary-type studies.

A more general challenge was the desire to ensure that the course was not male dominated. The participation of the Public Service Association from the early stages of course planning partly ensured a significant participation rate by women. To date one third of students have been women. The Working Women's Association has a representative on the committee and efforts have been made to ensure that course content focusses on problems and interests specific to women. In the Work and Modern Society unit, for example, work is defined in the broad sense, incorporating paid and unpaid work. This concern, however, will be the subject of continuing examination and development as the courses progress.

The establishment of Labour Studies at this time was the product of a fruitful association of the staff of the Sociology Department of the college and members of unions interested in the development of avenues of education for workers. Several organisational points seem to emerge from its genesis. The first is the need educational institutions such as Adelaide College have for strong, articulate groups outside the structures to ask for particular services from the college. In our case this form of particular request came from the AMWSU, South Australian Public Service Association and TUTA. The second is that college courses in this area need to be structured so as to complement but not compete with WEA or TUTA which have well-established areas of operation. The field of studies for working class men and women has been so neglected in the tertiary area for a hundred years that there is no need at this juncture for duplication to any significant extent. Close consultation with TUTA and WEA is called for at each step, especially through the advisory committee. Thirdly, college courses should define their interests outside management-oriented directions. Finally, any award established should be geared to reducing structural entry provisions.

A great deal of experimentation with methods of learning and content of courses remains to be done. It suffices to say that all concerned with the project will be bending every effort to make this a genuine advance in the field of worker education. Given that the ACTU discussions on worker education in 1980 have recommended extension of programs, the establishment of Commonwealth-funded courses at colleges may well be seen as a complementary, and possibly a necessary, adjunct to implementation of ACTU policy. With proper safeguards, college courses could become a useful means of extending some knowledge of working class interests in Australia.

A rumpus within the New South Wales branch of the Workers' Educational Association highlights the contradictions involved in so-called 'objective' and 'non-partisan' educational enterprises supposedly aiming to educate 'workers'.



The current row is partly the sort of clash which is inevitable in all voluntary organisations between voluntary committees and paid staff, some of whom see the matter as an 'old-guard' oligarchy interfering in matters of professional competence. In October 1980 things came to a head with the resignation of the metropolitan secretary and the state education officer after disputes with the same member of the 'old-guard'. These staff are supported by a coalition of liberals, leftists and opportunists which includes the metropolitan president and some tutors. They are opposed by the 'guardians of the mission' – a small group of office-bearers on crucial committees and governing bodies who have dominated the WEA for a long time and who wish to use their strength to prevent control of the organisation by the paid staff, which they call 'bureaucratisation'.

This is not the first time the WEA has been racked by conflict. Some historical background may be helpful to understanding the present dispute.

The Workers' Educational Association was set up in NSW in 1913 by the state Labor Council, along the lines of the WEA in England, as a 'non-partisan educational body controlled by its members and representatives of affiliated organisations' to provide 'education for social change'. Its purpose was to educate the workers to participate in 'democracy', not the class struggle. By the early 1920s, it had lost most of its union support and the composition of study groups had changed. Today the closest the workers get to the WEA is when they get lost on their way to the dole office upstairs.

As a voluntary adult education organisation the WEA is funded by class fees and a grant from the NSW Board of Adult Education. It has three branches. Newcastle, Wollongong, and Metropolitan (Sydney) – the site of the current struggle. In theory, Sydney WEA is run by a council consisting of elected representatives of classes, individual members, and members of affiliated organisations, which range from unions and the Labor Council to the Australian Association for Cultural Freedom. In fact, it is run by the small group of people mentioned above who are individual members of the Association, the 'guardians of the mission', and who aim to preserve in all its purity the idea of liberal education based on concepts of 'objectivity' and 'disinterested intellectual curiosity'. They have consistently discouraged and excluded others from council and committees. (Recently a tutor who was nominated for Education Committee was excluded because of his left-wing political views. Classes have been rejected or discontinued because they do not meet the criteria of 'liberal education'; books suggested for the library have been rejected because they lack 'objectivity'.)

David Hutcheson, a former state president of the WEA (and not a ratbag leftie in anybody's terms) recently resigned from the committees of which he was a member, charging 'totalitarian attitudes' among the hierarchy and suggesting that some courses had been suppressed on political grounds. Questions of this sort had been raised at a council meeting in November 1980, which called for a committee of enquiry (membership excluding the old guard) to look at the structure and functions of the organisation, the nature of participation in council and committees, and the relationship with the State Office and Sydney University Department of Adult Education. The motion to set up the Committee was passed, but a motion of rescission was foreshadowed.

Meanwhile, it is expected that the committee will call for submissions and seek the views of interested people on possible new courses and new directions. The December Council meeting saw the airing of more grievances, while the faction pushing for change had the numbers, the 'old guard' threatened to go to court over the conduct of the meeting.

At the time of writing, the future of WEA seems uncertain. Enrolments fell in 1980 and the future of the Department of Adult Education at Sydney University seems uncertain too. (A large part of the class program administered by WEA is that of the Department, and the link has always been important.)

Continuing controversy appears likely. Peter Tyler, the former metropolitan secretary whose resignation helped to precipitate the latest struggle, has stated that he intends to be active as a member of the Association and on its committees. It is unclear who will fill the two vacant staff positions, and the annual general meeting in March will see elections to all the committee positions. Although those elections will probably not settle the issue, they will be an interesting indication of the strength of the two sides.

Grace Machin

GAINING GROUND

One woman's experience at the TUTA 'Women in Unions' course, 1980. The special problems experienced by women unionists in developing themselves for an active role in their work- are summarized in a personal statement.

I attended the course in mid-1980 at the Victorian Centre (Carlton). The unions represented were largely from 'white-collar' industries (eg teachers, public servants, municipal officers). This reflects, of course, the fact that women within such industries are more likely to have heard about Trade Union Training Authority (TUTA) and to be able to exercise 'study leave' are open to all union members and women from the railways, post office and a clothing factory were on the course.

All of us found that meeting and talking with other women trade unionists was the most valuable aspect of the course. Although our politics ranged across the political spectrum, most of us were committed to the principle of free, quality childcare. This was seen as a vital issue to enable the full participation of women in the paid workforce.

Unfortunately, I felt that the course was very rushed and contained too much irrelevant information and 'workshop experiments'. As a result, women were unable to contribute; for instance whenever theoretical work touched on individual experience the lecturer would discourage comment. Although we had some sympathy for the lecturer – she had a lot of material to cover – we all found this frustrating. This attitude contrasted sharply with the 'Women and Health' section of the course where, with a doctor, women shared common experiences regarding backache, fatigue and eyestrain. Everyone was eager to ask questions and listen. As a result it was easily the most satisfying and valuable part of the course.

The first section of the course was the history of Australian trade unions. It was vast and covered the eight-hour campaign, the 1890s strikes, Labor Party, 1930s depression, conciliation and arbitration, and other topics. There was no mention, however, of the equal pay campaign, maternity leave, Working Women's Charter etc – in fact no recognition of women's role and contribution to the labour movement.

TUTA lecturers were sympathetic and 'sorry about the sexism', explaining that there had been no time to revise the notes. In my view this should be the first priority of any group attempting to work around the question of women's oppression. One of the first demands of the contemporary women's movement was 'reclaim our history'. This course made no pretensions about a feminist analysis of trade unionism – it totally ignored it.

'Public Speaking' terrified some of the women on the course – to the extent that one woman burst into tears and ran from the room when it was her time to 'face the cameras'. Most of us were critical of this section, judging it to be both unrealistic and unfair. Each woman was handed an exercise at random and told to prepare and deliver a speech in 15 minutes. Often these exercises were totally alien to our experience. For instance, I had to speak against the formation of a shop committee – with only a hazy picture of what a shop committee was. As a result most of us forgot all the hints and rules regarding how to 'public speak' and concentrated instead on the material.

We all enjoyed the exercises on 'Meeting Procedure', recognising this as a structural obstacle to our effective participation in many areas. Unfortunately there was no class time to discuss personal experience or to offer suggestions.

The next section of the course made me very angry. It was entitled 'Comparing non-assertive, aggressive and assertive behaviour and their consequences'. This was like a *Cleo* pop psychology quiz where one ticked the appropriate response to a series of mythical situations – ranging from turning down a friend to ordering a waitress about. I don't agree with assertiveness training courses that teach women to put down others whilst 'asserting' our rights. Confidence comes through practice and awareness – not from acting out situations removed from reality.

The last days of the course were better. These covered the Equal Opportunity Act, a visit to the Working Women's Centre, Women's Health and Women in Unions.

Overall I was disappointed in the course. If you are going to take part, don't expect a feminist analysis or approach. You're expected to be pretty passive and not too critical. There is no real criticism of unions and the sexism experienced by women with years of work in the labour movement. Emphasis is mostly on individual participation – 'pitching in' and recruiting. There is no advice on political action or how to oust the bureaucrats. The course also fails to recognise the structural barriers to women's active participation and ignores the questions of economic and political reality. There is some value in attending though: the personal contact with other unionists is fantastic – but the structure and content of the course leave a lot to be desired.

Lesley Podesta

RED REVIEWS

Liberatory Learning and the American Hamburger

Critical Teaching and Everyday Life
by Ira Shor. South End Press, Boston, 1980, A$9.95.

In *Critical Teaching and Everyday Life* Ira Shor presents an analysis, an educational theory, and a teaching method, all of which should be of interest to radical teachers of secondary and post-secondary students. The first part of Shor's book is about the kind of American post-secondary institution which was the context for the development of his 'critical teaching' theory and method. This background is relevant for us in Australia because it analyses a direction in state education to which Australia also turned with the rise of the CAEs and the expansion of TAFE. (Australia started later and halted progress in this direction sooner than did the US, but for similar reasons.)

In the late 1950s and early 1960s a new layer was added to public education in the US – community colleges for the working class, or as Shor bluntly and accurately calls them, 'budget colleges'. These two-year colleges extended into a student's adult years the socialising and 'streaming' functions of schooling, thereby expanding its ideological role. During the post-war boom period the budget college system was important as well in making education a growth sector of the economy, able to absorb surplus labour in the form of unemployed workers, and also the surplus of commodities which resulted from the increasingly mechanised industrial sector.

Shor points out that the huge budget college network, which has come to serve four million students each year, embodies a mass of economic and ideological contradictions. These have meant that, rather than functioning solely as a well-ordered state apparatus for the service of modern American capitalism, the two-year colleges have developed in a complex and in some ways positive relationship to the working class and its interests. In the current economic crisis, the contradictory nature of the two-year colleges has made them battlefields for the conflicting interests of the state and the people.

Shor, as an English teacher, focuses particularly on the uneasy place of the humanities subjects in the budget colleges. Working class education has long had a narrowly vocational orientation. This has been extended in the past two decades from the schools into the budget colleges, where the pragmatic advice is that liberal arts education, although it is the mainstay for students at elite colleges, must be seen as a frill for members of the working class. The curriculum demands 'exclusive choices between earning a living and learning how to think, between a narrow skill and a spacious encounter with reality' (p 23). At the same time, largely because of the liberal egalitarian notions which provide the rhetoric and official rationale for mass higher education, the humanities subjects do form a component in the offerings of working class colleges. So the humanities are on the curriculum, and in the humanities, according to Shor, lies the potential for what he calls 'liberatory' education, or, using Freire's term, 'conscientisation'. While liberatory education is far from being an automatic outcome of humanities teaching, Shor holds that the potential is there, and can be realised with results which are politicising for students and subversive to the narrow vocationalism which has been foisted on the working class.

Shor's theory and practice of liberatory education, to which the bulk of the book is devoted, is grounded in his experience and analysis of humanities teaching in a working class college, but it is also applicable to other teaching situations with working class adults or young adults. Shor has adapted Freire's pedagogy, along with bits and pieces from the progressive educationists, to American working class post-secondary students. It seems to me that his book gives radical teachers in Australia one of those rare glimpses of what we seem always to be looking for: a useful model for our own teaching.

Following from Freire, Shor begins his theory and practice of liberatory education by exploring the experience of his students and the obstacles to critical awareness which they need to overcome. In chapter two, 'Interferences to Critical Thought: Consciousness in School and Daily Life', he sorts out some of the components of popular consciousness – vocationalism, reification, mystification, etc, to explore the bases of popular consciousness and what it means in the lives of working class students.

This analysis leads Shor to a theory of critical teaching which is largely corrective (one term he uses is 'de-socialisation') but which has as its goal the active transcendence of domination. Critical teaching aims at developing the students' ability to analyse and evaluate the society in which they live. The key concept in Shor's theory is 'extraordinarily re-experiencing the ordinary' – ie enabling students to study critically the life and culture they have accepted uncritically.

Teaching toward this end demands attention to both teaching style and content. Much of what Shor outlines in the way of style will already be familiar to progressive teachers: collective work, 'withering away' of the teacher, etc. The part about content is the new part, for Shor sees aspects of daily life as the chief subject of liberatory learning. Conceptual skills and literacy are developed in relation to the real life of the students; rigorous study is applied not to an alien text but to the mass culture that shapes everyday experience.

The second half of *Critical Teaching and Everyday Life* is devoted to a detailed exposition of such rigorous study, as Shor has conducted it in his own teaching. He describes, for example, how the theme of 'work' was used to develop critical literacy – literacy skills in the service of critical analysis, and he details the methods of a 'Utopia' course, where the emphasis was not on literary study but on actually learning to practice

Utopian thought. (An intensive problematic analysis of the hamburger was a major component in this particular course!)

Schooling, sexism in marriage, the students' neighbourhoods, and sexist language are discussed as subjects for inquiry and for the production by students of 'language projects'; and there is a chapter on using the theme of 'marriage' to question sexism and develop critical literacy. In his last practical chapter, Shor describes a playwrighting course which led to the production of short video plays, and which he saw as a step for his students toward the reversal of cultural domination by the mass media

The themes and activities might sound like the staple fare of progressive junior secondary language teaching, but Shor's treatment is rather more directed than the 'interest theme' approach. Besides the assertion of everyday life as a valid object of critical study, what makes these practical chapters extremely valuable is Shor's clarity about what skills are required for conscientisation, and what exercises can be used to develop these skills. I'll outline two examples from his 'Utopia' course. Structural perception is developed in the course through a three-step problem solving method which involves first describing an ordinary object (eg a classroom chair), then investigating its problematic nature – its social context, social history, consequences, etc, and finally reconstructing the object so as to resolve the problems that have been uncovered. Abstract thought and language are practised through another three-part exercise. In this one, a generic name or concept (eg 'junk food', 'inequality'), its general definition, and specific examples are charted for several concepts, starting with either the concept, the definition, or the examples. The ability to perform 'negations' is developed through an extension of the same exercise.

The practical chapters include many such exercises. They are fully explained in the context of the actual courses in which they were developed, and most are presented sequentially, so that we see how new skills may be built upon those which have already been gained. Reading Shor's book, we begin to understand how it is possible to systematically engage in the kind of critical teaching that so many of us have been attempting for years, but in a more haphazard, and possibly less successful fashion.

This is a dense book, and its self-created jargon may irritate some readers, but it is not difficult to read, and has much to offer. It is the surest confirmation I've come across that intellectual rigor is not the sole province of the classics and academic 'hard options'. Critical teaching presents a promising radical alternative to 'back to basics'.

The analysis of the 'budget college' system as well as the general theory of critical teaching should be of interest to anyone concerned with education. Shor's theory and methods seem to be tailor-made for such courses as the TAFE 'Communications' course, but they are certainly adaptable to secondary as well as post-secondary teaching.

Finally, for me *Critical Teaching and Everyday Life* passes the real test of a good education book: reading it over the holiday, I find myself itching to get back into the classroom to try it out.

Janet Kossy

PRAISE OF LEARNING

Learn the simplest things. For you
whose time has already come
it is never too late!
Learn your A B C's, it is not enough,
but learn them! Do not let it discourage you,
begin! You must know everything!
You must take over the leadership!

Learn, man in the asylum!
Learn, man in prison!
Learn, wife in the kitchen!
Learn, man of sixty!
Seek out the school, you who are homeless!
Sharpen your wits, you who shiver!
Hungry man, reach for the book; it is a weapon.
You must take over the leadership.

Don't be afraid of asking, brother!
Don't be won over,
see for yourself!
What you don't know yourself,
you don't know.
Add up the reckoning.
It's you who must pay it.
Put your finger on each item,
ask: how did this get here?
You must take over the leadership.

–Bertolt Brecht

RED REVIEWS

Are Skills Enough?

Further Education or Training? A Case Study in the Theory and Practice of Day-Release Education by D Gleeson and G Mardle, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980.

I find it easier to dispose of the book than of the issues that it provokes. First the book. It is an attempt to examine the relationship between further education (FE) and industry through an 'in depth' study of one English college. The basic thesis of the book is fairly straightforward and not particularly original – that despite its rhetoric about the development of the individual for autonomous functioning in society, FE, or at least that section of it involving apprentices, represents little more than a means of reproducing the existing social relations of production. The formal curriculum is of little relevance – after all technological change rapidly reduces the value of the cognitive skills taught – and the real learning lies in the hidden curriculum. Any attempt to broaden the apprentices' horizons is seen as little but window dressing and is barely tolerated either by the students, their employers, or their lecturers. When the crunch comes it is the needs of industry that are all important.

There is nothing particularly novel in this. If you have read Bowles and Gintis, Illich or other similar radical critics of education, you have read most of it before and you have read it better. Gleeson and Mardle simply provide a case study of the by now fairly well established theory of education as a work house.

The problem is that they have not chosen a particularly good college, and they share many of the same narrow views on education and on its relationship to technology that they criticise. The college seems to be basically a single purpose institution and as such it shares many of the same problems of relevance and survival as single purpose CAEs in Australia. Like most academics, its staff mostly have received no pedagogical instruction, and have been given no opportunity to consider the purposes of education beyond the boundaries of their particular disciplines. Consequently they appear to share much of the narrowness of vision found in lecturers who see their own discipline as more important than the students' education. The college seems to be involved in constant internal warfare between departments, as are many poorly run educational institutions. The students do not seem particularly enthusiastic, but who can blame them if they are expected to attend classes from nine in the morning until nine at night? They adopt a narrowly instrumental view of the time spent, waiting for the day when they are awarded the ticket which they can use to negotiate higher pay. I remember having a similar attitude when attending night lectures for three years in order to make up the difference between a pass and an honours degree. The condition is not peculiar to apprenticeship education.

Indeed this is one of the book's major weaknesses; by failing to put its findings into a broader educational context it gives the misleading impression that what it describes is peculiar to day release apprenticeship education.

Another major fault is its failure to examine the technical curriculum, despite an in-depth analysis of one of the college's technical departments.

Gleeson and Mardle airily dismiss the formal curriculum as irrelevant on the fairly shallow grounds that technological change is making it outdated. This is merely asserted – it does not stem from a detailed study of technological change in industry and of the ways in which the curriculum attempts to adapt to this. Even worse, there is no attempt to find out the extent to which the curriculum tries to teach specific technical skills, the extent to which it concentrates on teaching technological problem-solving, the extent to which it strikes a balance between theory and practice. I suspect that the omission stems from the authors' basic ignorance of technology.

Herein lies the authors' fundamental narrowness. They are unable to conceive of ways in which technological learning can constitute an education. They assume that the domain of knowledge appropriate to an education cannot be purely technological, but that an education must derive from understandings acquired from the social, political and economic domains. It is quite possible that the students were receiving a good technological education, rather than narrow technical training. That they were not encouraged to challenge the existing social relations of production is not the point. Were they encouraged to critically examine the technological relations of production? Or were they taught to uncritically accept the technology that they were confronted with and to be content with a few narrow skills? This is the real distinction between education and training, and it, rather than the formal content of the learning, is the critical issue. (I suspect that the students were getting more of an education than the authors realised, for they drop the hint that some of the apprentices' employers complained that the syllabus was 'too broad').

Of course, the question of the breadth of the learning cannot completely be divorced from the question of what constitutes an education. Leonardo and Henry VIII would both have argued that the educated person needs to know both philosophy and mechanics. However, social scientists like Gleeson and Mardle are rarely able to apply the lessons that they preach to their own domains. They tend to view with amused dismissal suggestions that students of sociology need to supplement their narrow learning with some mechanics, bricklaying or physics. Mathematics is usually acceptable for it is after all 'useful' and 'relevant' to the (vocational) practice of sociology.

Nevertheless it is at heart the quality rather than the content of the learning that constitutes an education. The status, and therefore the power, of different areas of learning is another issue.

In March 1980 the award rate for a first class machinist was, at $187.20 per week, $35.80 below average weekly ordinary time male non-managerial earnings. While educationalists such as Gleeson and Mardle continue narrowly to view the liberal arts and the social sciences as the main province of education, technological learning, learning about the physical world and practical learning will continue to be devalued, the dignity of craft skills will remain a myth, and tradespeople will continue to be paid a pittance.

Richard Sweet

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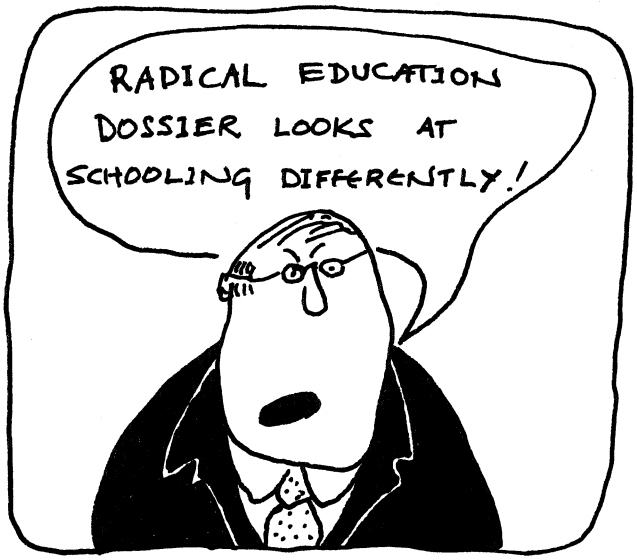

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