Radical Education Dossier 16

Spring Worker Education 1981

RADICAL EDUCATION DOSSIER

16

Contents

RED 16 has been compiled and produced by Clift Barnard, Christine Baxter, John Freeland, Ken Johnston, Patricia Moran, Linley Samuel and Kaye 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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With this issue the price of *Radical Education Dossier* is being increased to $1.50. From now on subscriptions for three issues will be $6.00. For institutional subscriptions the price is $10.00.

While we regret the increase it is essential if the *Dossier* is to survive. For the past year we have been loosing money. What more can be said but the cliche that even left journals occasionally fall victim to inflation.

Hopefully the present increase will enable us to meet any future sales tax imposts without a further rise in price.

RETURN GAG.

+ Right to Study =

Right to Work

Right to Know

If working class people are to win for themselves "the right to know" they will have to struggle against at least three assumptions underlying provided education. The first is the assumption that the education of adults is fundamentally different from child education in both form and content. This sharp separation is little more than one hundred years old, but is viewed as an eternal truth. Ageism, like sexism and racism, drives a wedge between working people. Sam Altman explores ways in which some re-unification might be achieved through Transition Education Programs. He offers eminently practical suggestions about how workers, young and old, might push their right to study and how learners, young and old, can explore the world of work. Dealing with the age divide from another angle, Ian Davey and Pavla Miller draw on South Australian history to explore the forms of resistance developed by working class people in the face of the state take-over of education. The review article on the *925* poets also illustrates ways in which the experience of work can be a unifying, shared experience for student workers, unemployed workers, domestic workers and paid workers alike.

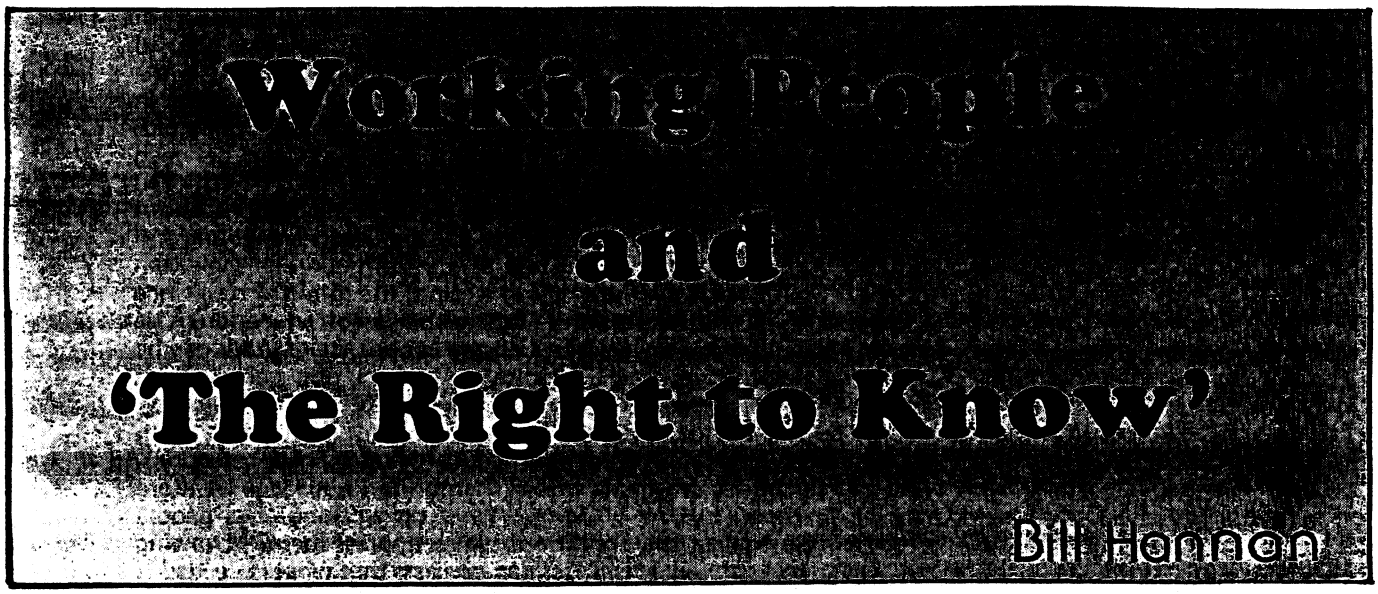
The second assumption to be challenged is that worker education is different from consumer education from community education from adult education etc. These categories, endemic to provided forms of education, fragment rather than unify knowledge. A more productive framework may be provided by the question "What do working class people need to know if they are to struggle against the conditions which oppress them?" Drawing on both the Italian and the Victorian experience, Bill Hannan suggests that what is needed is knowledge about basic union and general politics; "a language capable of giving a structure to their thought" and the ability to locate material that will help working people expand their culture. In all this he stresses the necessity for democratic procedures for determining answers to the question posed.

Thirdly, there is the assumpion that education necessarily requires a teacher. This monopoly of the professional must be challenged. Christine Baxter's interview with Heather Saville illustrates both the pain and the productiveness of adult self-education in the context of women's refuges.

International dimensions to these three assumptions are offered by both Ray Broomhall and Ken McLeod. Ray Broomhall's examination of current developments in worker education in Britain reveals both the dangers and the possibilities offered by a co-ordinated approach to worker education generally and union education specifically. His article also suggests the urgent need to effect some reconciliation between work-oriented education and community-oriented education.

Ken McLeod's analysis of the Lucas Aerospace Alternative Corporate Plan and the approach of the Norwegian labour movement to technological change helps us reshape our ideas about worker education. He redefines worker education as participatory research which involves a method of investigation and a process of education which will enable working people both to free themselves from the power of professionals and to mobilise against daily life problems and transnational corporate power.

As education in the schooling sector is contracting, adult education is expanding in two main ways. We are seeing the growth of training and retraining programs in a narrow, vocationalist sense and we are also seeing the growth of the "learning for leisure" syndrome. This expansion must be viewed critically, and its consequences considered in both an historical and practical context. It must also be recognised that there are huge hidden costs in this expansion. Not only must tuition costs be paid for, but adults attending day courses must receive some alternative source of income for themselves and their families. Working class families already have to pay twice for the education of their children: once through taxes for tuition costs and once again through increased maintenance costs for keeping a child at school. The article by Davey and Miller shows what pressures this has placed on working class families in the past. Such families face a similar problem when their adult members study. Many unions spend considerable amounts paying workers off the shop floor to attend union education programs. Some employers are forced to foot the bill for a few of their employees to attend other union education programs. In this decade we will see the right of workers to paid study leave institutionalised by legislation. The Italian metalworkers have 150 hours per year and the Australian demands are following suit. The crunch will come with the question "Who pays?". Working class people and educational professionals will have to struggle together to ensure that the bill is not posted off either to the unions or to working people themselves.



The main line of battle for educational democracy in Italy, as in Victoria, has been against selection in the school-university system. Italians call it a struggle for the right to study, the right to know. 1968 is the big date of departure for the struggle. Since then the old selective system with its dozens of different types of schools, most of them dead-end in that they prepared you to go straight into the workforce after two or three years, has been opened out to permit transfer, recognition of diplomas and eventual access for all to higher education. Effectively now, anyone who persists with secondary schooling and passes the basic qualifications can enter the university. And for adult students (over 23) entry is more liberal still.

As we know, however, structural reform of this kind, though necessary, **is only the first step.** A meritocratic selection persists at all levels, formally in the nature of courses and assessments, informally in the manner of teaching and the setting of goals for students. In Italy, only a few more than half the students finish the eight years of compulsory schooling (5 primary plus 3 secondary) in the minimum time. The rest are retarded by various failure systems – and one in ten has left! About 40% drop out in the year they reach 15, some certainly without their minimum certificate. By the end of secondary school the full-time student population has been slashed to about one in three of the total for the age group of whom only half have got through in the minimum time[1].

So, the process of democratisation within the schools has a long way to go. And as it arrives, it still only favours those about to go through the school system. The rest of the population, the great majority, the masses, and especially the working classes will already have suffered the consequences of the unreformed system. A noticeable proportion will be illiterate, many will lack the confidence to join in debate or discussion or to take on official jobs (in unions, parties, clubs or whatever); many will also be confused by everyday accounts, contracts and the like and be shallow readers of the press and probably suckers for the commercial mass-media. Not much, in other words, will have been done for their general culture. A few will swim, a lot will sink.

In Australia we seem to be resigned to losing forever those who've already left school. The excellent attempts, especially among women, to develop learning centres for people who've missed out at school, have remained fairly isolated and very vulnerable to the declining goodwill of funding agencies. Often, when their founders succumb to exhaustion or despair the enterprise collapses. Official adult education basically appeals to those already looking for more education and willing to put spare time into it.

Italian Metalworkers

Italy, characteristically, has a much clearer structural approach to this problem of a huge gap in the education system. Characteristic in that the right of the undereducated to more school is asserted through law, and the battle to make the right a concrete reality is fought by organised labour and by the political parties allied with the unions. Characteristic, too, in that **reform in this area is seen as part of a total pattern of restructuring education and society.**

Italy's point of departure was the Metalworkers' Award of 1972. This gave workers the right to follow courses outside the factory for a minimum length of 350 hours, 150 of which were in the boss's time and paid for by the boss. No more than 2% of workers could be absent from the factory at any one time. Because of the portion of bosses' time involved, the reform is now known as the 150 hours. In fact, for metal and chemical workers it is now 250 hours, and the 150 has spread to many other industrial awards.

The 76-77 school year, therefore, saw the end of the fourth year of the 150 hours. Time enough for evaluation and problems to emerge. There are indeed plenty of both. But first a

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quick description.

The commentators I've read generally regard the 150 hours as something of a reform from the top, the result of enlightened union leadership. To some extent, this is inevitable, but it does not mean that it lacked strong support among rank and file militants. The 150 hours had to be fought for by the customary union means, which always require some mass support. Italian unions, in any case, were not unfamiliar with the need to have concessions written into awards for workers studying to improve their qualifications or change jobs.

What is clearly different about the 150 hours (and perhaps not well understood by workers) is that they are for general education, not for improvement of job opportunities. This is what marks out the 150 hours as a unique reform in Europe.

The unions saw two basic areas for developing the 150 hours. The first (and priority) area was to get the minimum school leaving qualification for workers without it. This meant going back to the *scuola media*, or junior high school to complete the courses normally done by 14 and 15 year olds who get a certificate before passing on to senior studies or work. The second area was the university where new single topic courses were provided for those who already held the junior qualification.

If it seems surprising that a lot of workers lacked the minimum school qualification, we must remember that reform of the school structure is a matter of the last fifteen years at most, whilst attacks on heavily meritocratic selection in primary and intermediate schools are of even more recent vintage. Many a worker over 25 could have left primary school for a trade school, whose qualifications up till a few years ago were not equivalent to the minimum certificate. And retardation, though diminishing, is still a big thing in Italian schools[2].

In the first year, courses were set out by the unions, teachers were given some brief training and workers enrolled in both the junior high school and in the universities. Preference, as I said, was given to the junior high school requests. Generally substantial enrolments are reported, with more requests than places available, though with a bigger effort from schools and the Education Department there apparently could have been more places, since not all the hours theoretically available were used up. A union rep responsible for organising junior high classes, reports:

"In the first year the biggest problem was to find schools to hold the courses in. Plenty of principals said 'I don't want any of you trade unionists in my school, out', and they shut the gates . . . so the first phase was a physical battle to get desks and seats.

"Once we were in, we came up against the problem of what to do, how to bring the workers' experience of the factory and union struggles to bear on the school . . . how to bring together workers from different industries and of different ages, how to deal with the teachers. We have to admit, too, that not all the workers, even though they'd fought together, were used to discussing things together . . ."[3]

But the first year had this advantage: that most of the worker-students were committed union militants who had won the 150 hours and were determined to use it to increase their political consciousness and power. The union-proposed courses were solidly industrial-political: working conditions, pay, economic crises etc. In the succeeding three years, workers from other industries came in, along with housewives, apprentices and large numbers of young people, some only in part-time work, some unemployed. These presented much greater problems for the organisers, the teachers and the study groups.

Higher Education

At university level, progress has been slower in all ways. Officially the universities have virtually ignored workers. Only a few hundred teachers – more often temporary tutors than permanent lecturers – have been involved. In the South only Bari has had courses. The full-time students at the universities have generally not joined in. Hence, courses for the 150 hours have been pushed somewhat into a ghetto, and have had to depend too much on the initiative of democratic teachers working in isolation.

But we are sliding too quickly into the problems. Let us try to sum up first some of the obviously positive experiences that have been reported.

Clearly, the work in the junior high school has been more successful. To enable working people, factory workers and housewives, to get their basic end-of-school diploma is a clear blow struck against selective schooling, even if we are only talking of the same traditional schooling and not of new forms of education arising out of working people's needs and experiences. The basic diploma does contribute to people's general culture, and for some at least is also a necessary qualification for improving their job opportunities or admitting them to further education.

What has had to change in the 150 hours is not the general notion that people can profit from completing their basic education, **but the more militant idea that what they need most is a sound course in basic union and general politics.** In general, the teachers who've succeeded most have been those whom one union delegate called the most "humble", those who had learnt from teaching young children how to follow up the questions and often unspoken needs of their students. And researches into the demand of students in 150 hours courses suggest that **people want above all to learn about language, want to learn to use it in all its varieties, not only in its political and social forms**[4]. In the words of one of the worker-students:

"What I got out of the course was maybe greater ease in discussion and knowledge of many problems I didn't even know about . . . many (in the course) later became union reps, probably just because they became surer of themselves in talking and in arguing with others, either because they got a better grip on their ideas or because they widened their horizons beyond their own factory."[5]

New

Or as the researcher puts it:

"The workers want a language capable of giving a structure to their thought (. . .) that enables them to elaborate their own arguments and to critically analyse the arguments of others."

The Problems

This leads us now to the two basic and interrelated problems raised by the 150 hours experience:

1 establishing the real needs of learners; and
2 renewing the traditional school subjects and teaching methods.

The first of these problems is most acute among the young people, many of whom are still unemployed or in temporary apprenticeship: "They were against everything, work, society, school; their real need was just to be together, that satisfied them; they didn't give a bugger for discussion, reading or study. Still, something positive came out of this: if the teachers didn't try to impose the subjects, but just tuned in to what the kids were talking about, jokes and so forth, and learnt from them, something was salvaged in the form of other ways to be together and amuse themselves . . .".

And in less acute form this applied more and more as less-militant workers came into the courses from all kinds of industry. The important things were to find a teaching style that was different from what the students remembered of school – familiar, informal, open to suggestions – and to get down to discussing the concrete problems and events of everyday experience, the basic things like adding up the telephone bill at home, as well as the more obviously political and social issues of industry and youth. Generally speaking, those who were looking for greater ease in handling their daily lives and understanding the issues behind the news and the strikes were more satisfied than those looking for technical knowledge to help them in their work, or those looking (as many do) for encyclopaedic knowledge in dozens of subjects.

However, at the university level, the attempts to bring knowledge to bear on everyday experience met with really substantial checks. Generally, courses were pre-planned by teachers, in isolation, and set within the framework of the disciplines. Workers who had arrived in the university believing that they had "conquered a space" found themselves on the edge of things, often treated as objects of research by academics, unable to fit their experience of the factory into the intellectual frameworks proposed to them.

"They wanted the workers, once inside the university, to take off their overalls and put on white coats. We didn't want that: we wanted to go in in overalls and come out in overalls, but with certain gains . . ."

The most successful courses were invariably based on problems, not on disciplines: the mass media; the army; health in the workplace; women; the organisation of work. **The workers have a very rich knowledge of the realities of production. The separate disciplines often cast little or no light on this reality. Collective research by student-workers and teachers was usually necessary to unlock the structure of the problem. Some courses (eg on health in the work place) could then be translated directly into action in the factories.**

It should be no surprise that after taking such a large step as this, the Italian working movement finds itself with more problems than solutions on its hands. Whether they will be resolved depends on the capacity of the various forces – worker and student – that have battled for the 150 hours to stay together not just to stave off sabotage by the bosses and the school system but to analyse subject matter and methods sufficiently clearly to make positive demands on the school. Initiatives on the whole are not coming from teachers or from the general student movement. The load falls on militant and informed workers to re-examine the nature of knowledge and find in the academic disciplines and in traditional schooling the material that will help them expand their culture.[6]

One struggles to imagine such a reform arising from the worker or student or teacher movements in Australia. Education beyond school is thought of overwhelmingly in instrumental terms, and even within the ambit of compulsory schooling, the concept of general cultural formation tends to be subordinated to utilitarian notions of acquiring skills to make your way in an apparently content-free world. The Italian concept of general culture is the opposite of neutral. It sees democracy growing out of an understanding of the specifics of daily life at work, at home and in society. It proposes the experience of ordinary people and the instruments of social discourse as the subject-matter for school. Its aim is not individual advancement but the renewal of social structures.

Notes

1 I've upped all the rounded figures a bit because they have improved probably since 1972-73 which are the most recent figures I came across. The actual figures for 1972-73 are:

Age	Keeping Up	Retarded	Left
13-14 (ie after 8 years of school)	55.7	33.1	11.2
14-15	41.5	30.6	27.9
18-19 (end of secondary)	15.2	12.6	72.2

Source: *Inchiesta* July-Sept, 1976 page 57.

2 See above.

3 Apart from conversations of my own with worker-students and teachers, I've drawn on the magazines *Ombre Rosse* 18/19 (Savelli), *Riforma della scuola* (Editori riuniti) and *Sapere* (Edizioni dedalo). The quotation here is from *Ombre Rosse*.

4 R Simone (ed), *L'Educazione Linguistica per gli adulti*, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, Rome 1976. A report of research into courses of 150 hours in the region of Emilia-Romagna.

5 *Ombre Rosse* op cit.

6 *Ombre Rosse* op cit.

Roll over Dolly Parton

the 925 poets

Kaye Schofield

Poetry and worker education are not commonly linked in the earnest literature on either poetry or worker education, and the link may appear at first glance to be somewhat tenuous. However, the work of the *925* poets has a place in this issue on worker education because it is one example of a spontaneous effort by workers to increase their understanding of work and to share their experiences with other workers. The poems are both instructive to those of us who have never been waitresses or unemployed or electricians and a sheer pleasure to read. The energy, strength and humour comes through even in the most painful poems. They tell us more about the work process and how workers make sense of it than most erudite articles in the journals.

925 As A Magazine

925 is a poetry magazine. It is produced by workers themselves, and consciously rejects any state assistance. "We believe that dependancy on Grants has always led to compromises and undue stress, at feeding time. We believe that literature and art must be community based . . .".

It has a print run of about 3,000. Individual copies are given away over Telecom counters etc, and copies may be purchased from some bookshops at 50c a throw.

925 As A Workers' Bulletin

The poets view the magazine as "an open space where workers share their experiences, jokes insights, styles and sympathies". Free from interference from academics and professional poets, the workers use the magazine as an avenue of self-expression. For those whose work is isolated and isolating, this serves a very significant function.

Where I work there's me.
The only teacher.
The Education Department (Technical Schools Division) has
in all of its incredible wisdom
set the staff ceiling for the school at WYWS
at one. Me.
It's supposed to be four, but it's not like me to say anything.
I get
addressed to me
the letters (and there are lots)
from the TTAV teachers' union
addressed to the TTAV Representative
259 Ascot Vale Road,
Ascot Vale. 3072.
So I read all the newspapers, memos and progressive running
strike circulars.
For me it's easy to have a well-attended stop-work meeting
and an extensively debated discussion pro and con the
strike in two minutes.
There's no tit for tat.
The sheets are read between this and that
and I strike.

I write on the voting forms that I send back
"100% of the membership is present at the meeting.
100% of the membership has seen the printed material
100% of the membership have voted on the motion.
Results of the voting . . . . . unanimous."
I'm a very active unionist.

But then there's the problem,
the problem of quorum.
How can I assess when I'm all there ?
And who's going to take the chair at meetings ?
The schizophrenia of some days.
The product of too much doing
or too much done last night until too late.
I feel like taking an absentee vote
rather than risking a division of the house.

But despite these things
my cell of the union is strong
and I strike
for the same reason I talk about the 1870s
and the General Strike or the phrase
"an injury to one is an injury to all".

I strike with thousands of others and know
it's like links in a chain
It's about solidarity.
Just quietly.
With a staff ceiling of one,
it's a dammed flimsy roof in the rain of staff cuts.

Barry McDonald

The Aftermath

There was a big meeting at the shed the following Monday.
And the bosses said they weren't going to pay anyone for
the wet days.
One man spoke up and said
"The apprentices should be paid"
but they weren't.
At the height of the argument
Three men picked up their bullet-boxes of tools
and walked.
Two hesitated.
And that's the closest we ever got to winning.

Alan Jurd

925 As A Collective, Epic Poem

Eventually, all the poems will be put into one document, to be published under the title *The Works*. Ideas are formulated by one poet, extended, elaborated, drawn on by another and so the process continues from issue to issue of the magazine. The work of the Tea Lady is one such collective effort. We see Alice the Tea Lady, slowly being revealed and ultimately replaced by a Cafe Bar dispensing glutinous soup. Helen, the Tea Lady is shielded first by a paper cap and then by a polyester number. Many Tea Lady poems have been generated, illustrating the sort of communication and expression made possible through the poetry.

925 As A Portrait Of Work

925 only publishes poems about work. "Ultimately, the strength of *925* is in the way it highlights areas of work and the way in which it spurs other workers to add to it and therefore become part of the whole matrix." "The total effect is a portrait of work and workers in Australia now as written and experienced by those workers."

Mood

Now he's in a good mood
We can be in a good mood.
Chorus: We can be in a good mood
We can be in a good mood

Now we're in a good mood
He's in a bad mood
chorus: He's in a bad mood
He's in a bad mood

Now he's in a bad mood
We are in a bad mood
Chorus: We are in a bad mood
We are in a bad mood

Now we are in a bad mood
He's in a good mood
Chorus: He's in a good mood
He's in a good mood

Chorus: Now he's in a good mood
We can be in a good mood

*Jeltje**

when you're sitting on the back steps
in the evening
with your broken back,
and you feel your kid
picking the cherries of hard cement
from the back of your T-shirt
for a few moments
you forget the pain.

Alan Jurd

At a quarter to nine Andrew walks past Fiona, Jeltje, Nada, past the pot-plant, Charlie.
Hangs his coat on the coathanger on the filing cabinet.
Andrew is a pay-clerk.

I process Form 28E.

Had to stay home to look after wife, whom was confined to bed, ill.
Code ME 7610, Round 55,210.

Unable to attend for duty due to having a stomach upset.
Upset stomach.

Unable to attend for duty due to having a stomach upset, upset stomach and severe migraine pains as per certificate.
as per attached certificate.

Gastro-enteritis
Pneumonia
Pleurisy and
Bronchitis.
Bilious attack.
Father passed away.
Sore throat and painful legs.
Upset stomach and enteritis
Psycho-somatic spindilititis
Flu in the chest
Flu
To attend a funeral.

*Jeltje**

Varicose Story (extract)

I told them their cement floor turned my legs blue !
– that is what the doctor told me.
The blue strings of pain
and the red drips on my calves
throbbed at the day's end.
They had to cut the drumstick open
and clean the tubes with brushes.
The bill came. They wanted five hundred.
We couldn't pay.
. . . . . .

Caterina Passoni

925 On Education

The *925* concept of work encompasses "housewife-work", "unemployed-work" and "student-work". School-work poems written by students are frequent in the magazine and only a couple are included here. Teachers could well consider the comment of one of the teacher-poets that we rarely get a chance to read any of the creative work of students. In England, the rank-and-file magazine *Teaching London Kids* acts as a forum for the work of both teachers and students, and is an example we could well emulate here in Australia.

3Z (Extract)

We had this science teacher once
Was Ah-merican.
We didn't learn much until he realised that
"These guys ah-ppreciate rhythm."
"Class, to-day's lesson is on arsmosis.
Arsmosis is the process
where a sugar passes through a
semeye-permeable mem-brane.
"Repeat that after me class."
We did.
Arsmosis is the process
where a sugar passes through a
semeye-permeable mem-brane.
He must've thought he was pretty good.
We done it for weeks.
Arsmosis is the process
where a sugar passes through a
semeye-permeable mem-brane.

Aptitude Test

We heard.
They give you a biro in one hand
and a pencil in the other.
You draw a circle with the one
and a square with the other.
This is called an aptitude test.

*Jeltje**

Edge-You-Ma-Cation

Education ?
i'll tell ya bout, education !

My best friend,
in skool:
Gavin; 14.
thought e was a ,
homo sexual,
"poofta".

Worried e was.
Tried t commit

SUICIDE

in the dunny.
(slashed his wrist).
He got detention fer
breaking the window.

Wayne Smith

teacher's statement;
there are some people;
scientists, who spend
their whole lives
experimenting and
working with plants . . . . . .
. . . . . .
my comment;
yeh, they call them
gardeners.

Letizia Mondello

'The Job' by Cliff Smythe is a wonderful statement about teachers' aides and their relationships with the school. 'Absolutely Burned' by Alan Jurd; 'Ed' by Rory Harris and 'Morning No 5' by Jewelene Dinelli are just a few others which extend our understandings of students and their work. 'False Pretences' by Damien White is a short story set in the staffroom of any school and accurately portrays both teacher and student culture.

925 Is Funny

Humour shines through much of the work of the *925* poets, an earthy, sometimes laconic, often joyous form of humour.

"I spent two years in an office one week".

'Shit Poem' by Jas H Duke was censored from an ABC program on the poets, and is a lift-out supplement in No 10 of *925*. It is a delightful look at the sewerage business by one of its workers.

"I don't find shit offensive
most people do
they can't wait to push the button
or pull the chain or something
and then they think the shit has vanished
into the centre of the earth
it hasn't really
it just floats up somewhere else
However
it's all biodegradable . . . . . ." (Extract only)

Bon, in a poem called 'Shiftwork', describes her father's life on the midnight shift.

"Dad slept through 3 births
4 first school days, 14 eisteddfords,
4 first communions, & when we all
became soldiers of christ. Slept
when Peter joined the railways,
when Wal went to Sydney,
hairdressing, and when 2 grannies &
2 grandads died, when aunty
Poll forgot her hearing aid
& didn't see the train." (Extract only)

Here, as in much of the humour, we are offered a deep insight into the effects of forms of work on the human condition. The humour has direction.

Try to get hold of the *925* magazine. Read it. Enjoy it. Take it to work. Share it with your co-workers. Use it in your classroom instead of *Wide Brown Land* and encourage your students to have a got at work poetry. Reading it is an education. Reading it is a pleasure.

925 PO Box 2430V, GPO Melbourne 3001.
Back copies not available. Bulk copies available to some bookshops (Exiles, Jura etc) and to contributors. Any correspondence should include a stamped self-addressed envelope.

This article draws on both the *925* magazine and a number of tapes of radio programs the poets have done in Melbourne. The quotations are drawn from a number of sources.
(*) These poems are taken from taped material. The lay-out of these poems has been an editorial decision and our apologies to the poets if we have interfered too much with their version of the poems.

Trade Union Education in the UK

Ray Broomhill

A member of the Labour Studies team* at the Adelaide College of the Arts and Education reports on a fact-finding tour of the British workers' education scene.

Workers' education in the UK goes back a long way. It had its origins in the latter half of the 19th century and developed two equally influential traditions. The first tradition emerged from the perception of working people that education was an important part of the process by which their social circumstances could be understood and changed. The second was the perception by liberal reformers that if education were distributed more equitably not only would the lives of working people be qualitatively improved but increased social harmony would also be assured.

The latter tradition gave rise in the 1870s to the university extension movement which emerged in Cambridge and Oxford in an attempt to make the universities more relevant to the needs of all classes. By 1900 this movement was largely exhausted but from the same tradition emerged the more enduring Workers' Education Association which was founded in 1903. The WEA aspired to develop into a co-ordinating federation of working class and educational interests. Within a short time fifty branches had been established and tutorial classes were offered by Oxford, Cambridge, Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool, London and Manchester Universities. Courses were provided primarily in the areas of economics, politics and industrial history.

The goals and ideologies of those who developed the WEA were by no means uniform. A strong radical influence came from at least some of the 953 union organisations which by 1914 had affiliated with the WEA. However, some leading figures in the WEA perceived the main aim of workers' education to be to encourage the development of industrial and social harmony. The influential report on workers' education produced in 1908 jointly by Oxford University and the WEA commented that education would make the trade union leader "at once a more efficient servant of his own society and a more potent influence on the side of industrial peace".(1)

* See Ross Shanahan's article "Labour Studies – can the Colleges Contribute?" in *RED* 14.

On the other hand, a tradition of education for the express purpose of better arming workers for class struggle emerged in the later nineteenth century within working class communities themselves. Central to most mining communities was the local Miners' Institute, usually built and maintained out of subscriptions deducted from each worker's weekly pay. The Institutes were from the beginning highly political. As early as 1904 Marxian Clubs existed in the mining villages of South Wales. These institututes and their excellent libraries played a very important part in the intellectual and political development of working class communities – an observation made time and time again in the autobiographies, poetry and fictional writing which were themselves the product of that educational tradition.(2)

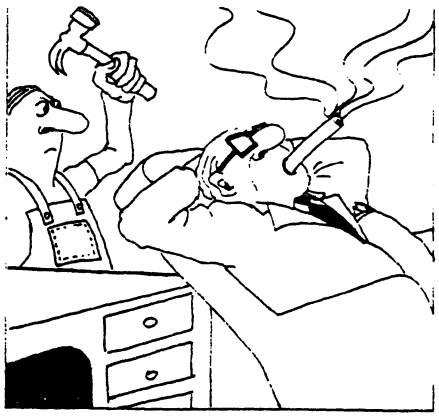
These two traditions of workers' education came into direct conflict not only within the WEA but also with the establishment in 1899 of a residential college at Oxford specifically for workers. Ruskin College was founded with the financial aid of an American philanthropist, Walter Vrooman. It was governed by representatives of Oxford University and of the unions but it remained financially dependent upon private donations from wealthy liberals. In 1908 Oxford University decided to establish even firmer links with Ruskin by allowing easier access for Ruskin College students to enter the University. However, the students enrolled at Ruskin were opposed to closer contact with the University. They established an organisation known as the Plebs League and demanded the establishment of union control over the college and the introduction of socialist courses. The end result of this conflict was a lengthy student strike and ultimately the establishment of an alternative college – known as the Central Labour College – in London. The new college drew most of its backing from the mining unions and the traditional mining communities. Branches of the Plebs League spread throughout the country and by 1912 several local labour colleges had been established which offered political classes for union branches, trades councils and political groups. In 1922 these colleges

were co-ordinated by the establishment of the National Council of Labour Colleges (NCLC).

The NCLC expanded during the twenties to provide an extensive system of union education, including a correspondence course which was particularly successful. The thrust of the NCLC's programme was uncompromisingly militant: "The definitive and avowed aim of all such classes shall be the education of the workers with a view to equipping them for the class struggle and aiding them in the fight for the abolition of capitalism"[3]. The NCLC eschewed state financial assistance of any sort, believing that such support placed crippling restrictions on the courses which could be offered by the WEA. The WEA in turn argued that by cutting itself off from the universities the NCLC was doomed to remain intellectually underdeveloped.

In many ways the NCLC may have been naive and sectarian in its approach to workers' education, but on the other hand it sought and succeeded in maintaining a form of workers' education which was rooted in a determination to assist workers to understand and change the economic system which produced the economic deprivation in their lives. In addition, the continual competition from, and example of, the NCLC forced the WEA to move away from its largely university origins and establish closer links with the trade union movement. Together the NCLC and the WEA provided a system of workers' education which had a profound influence on the labour movement in the UK in the interwar years and after. Something like two thirds of Labour members of the 1945 Parliament had attended Labour College classes, four cabinet ministers were former Central Labour College students and fourteen members of the Labour government had close affiliations with the WEA.[4]

'an inability to communicate'



The TUC Shop Steward Programme

After the war a number of major changes profoundly altered the direction of workers' education in the UK. The most important was the gradual centralisation of union education under the control of the Trade Union Congress (TUC). This process had begun in fact in the twenties and in 1921 the TUC had accepted, in principle, responsibility for union education. However, practical difficulties, finance and the often bitter rivalry between the WEA and the NCLC prevented the unification of workers' education until 1964 when the TUC eventually took over the WEA and the NCLC programmes and incorporated both into its own education department.

The overall responsibility for the scheme is now held by the education committee of the TUC's General Council. Ten regional education officers were appointed throughout the UK – usually these were the former local NCLC organisers. Each region contains a regional education committee comprising local trade union representatives and WEA district secretaries. While the TUC maintains overall control over the programme, it does not itself actually employ the tutors and run the classes. For this task it relies on the formal educational sector and "contracts out" its courses to various chosen institutions – mainly the WEA, colleges of further education, polytechnics and the extra-mural departments of various universities. The regional educational officers take responsibility for arranging courses, discussing course content with the tutors, recruiting and delivering the students and consulting with the regional committees as to "local demand, provision and problems".

The past ten years have seen enormous growth occur within the TUC programme. This period has been marked by a sudden expansion in the numbers of TUC courses offered and of students involved. In 1968 the TUC sponsored 155 day-release courses, involving 2 263 students. Ten years later a total of 3 100 courses were offered to over 43 000 students. To a very great extent this increase is a direct result of the trade union education initiatives introduced by the Labour government elected in 1974. These initiatives included the establishment, in the Employment Protection Act 1975, of a statutory right to paid time off for union courses for all workplace representatives – including shop stewards and health and safety representatives. In addition, since 1976 the government has directly funded the cost of trade union education provided by the TUC and its affiliates. The funding provided in 1979-80 was an amount of approximately 1.5 million pounds.

The TUC scheme operates in four distinct stages. Newly appointed shop stewards are initially given a brief induction course of between two and five days. The individual unions are responsible for the provision of this stage of the programme and the quality of what is provided naturally varies enormously. After a break of about six months the shop steward is then invited to participate in the TUC's basic training course which is known as the "Introductory Course for Union Representatives". This is a ten day programme – usually taken over ten weeks in one of the institutions mentioned previously. The aim of this basic course is to provide shop stewards with the information and skills to adequately perform his/her task as a union representative. The topics covered indicate the emphasis that is placed on practical skills and knowledge. They include "Your Job as a Shop Steward", "Trade Union Organisation", "Disputes and Grievances", "Rights at Work – Employment Law" and "Skills for Shop Stewards". However, while the structure of the course is very practical in its empha-

Makeall

'...your Directors have decided to implement closures...'

Extract from the Chairman's Address to shareholders:

'.....have to record a disappointing year for Makeall (Australia) Pty. The year has witnessed a dramatic fall in gross profits from $87 million to $9.5 million. This must be attributed to the combination of three adverse factors: a sharp rise in the cost of imported materials, the substantial wage settlement of last March, and the discontinuities in production caused by persistent labour disputes. It is a situation which cannot be allowed to become ongoing. In an effort to restore viability, your Directors have therefore decided to implement closures of our Perth and Brisbane operations.....'

Or, put another way:

'The unions have been as stroppy as usual. They squeezed a wage rise out of us even after we'd juggled the books – showing lower profits by over-paying for components imported from the Pommie parent company. On top of that, profit tax here is murder, and we're pretty worried about the next government. No sweat, we're up and off to the Philippines where they know what we want – labour discipline, tax concessions and a general freedom to do as we please.'

Makeall Global Corporation Ltd.

sis, tutors are encouraged to raise and pursue important political and economic issues related to the work of shop stewards and trade unions.

After another break of a year or so, shop stewards are then able to take one of a number of "follow-on" courses on specialised topics which are again of a fairly practical nature such as "Obtaining Company Information" and "Your Rights at Work". These courses are also provided on a day-release basis over ten weeks by the various institutions which participate in the TUC scheme. The final stage of this programme involves the provision of a more advanced course for senior shop stewards at one of the major trade union colleges – Ruskin College, Oxford or Northern College, Barnsley. This course is residential and is taken in a single four-week block. The focus in the advanced course is largely on political economy and trade unions and deals with topics such as: "Trade Unions and New Technology", "Trade Unions and the Labour Party", "Changes in the International Economy", "Public Expenditure and Public Finance" and "The Distribution of Wealth".

In addition to the shop steward training programme a number of other specific courses exist. The TUC offers a special Health and Safety course which developed as a result of new Health and Safety legislation introduced by the Labour government. Individual unions have also increased their expenditure on education. A number of unions have their own training colleges and increasingly full-time officers are required to undergo a training programme provided either by the individual union or by the TUC in its London training college.

While there can be no doubt that in many aspects the TUC education programme has been an outstanding success, a number of siginificant problems and challenges remain. One of the most impressive achievements of the programme has been in providing a basic course of training for an enormous number of shop stewards throughout the UK – an achievement of which Australian trade unions could surely be very envious. On the other hand in achieving this level of involvement the TUC programme has had to follow a strategy which has attracted considerable criticism. It has been said that the TUC has put growth in numbers before all else. As a result, the expansion of the TUC programme has developed in a piecemeal, unplanned fashion. While in principle the TUC claims it has exercised strict control over which institutions and tutors teach the course, in practice there are many tutors who have little or no real qualifications or experience. In some institutions the trade union programme is staffed by persons originally employed within a Department of Business or Management studies. In many institutions, tutors are employed solely on an "hourly-paid" basis. Partly because of such problems, the TUC appears now to have decided to "rationalise" the distribution of courses as much as possible by building up a smaller number of centres with excellent resources. A number of regions now have quite impressive centres with a core of full-time tutors to which workers from surrounding areas come.

To some extent the worst effects of the rapid and fragmented development of the programme have been countered by the fostering by the TUC of its central education department. In particular, the curriculum development unit has produced curriculum materials and guidelines which are of very high quality and which ensure that a minumum standard of input is provided in every course run. The curriculum development unit has also been quite successful in developing a coherent and progressive education philosophy and methodology based on the principles of active learning, the maximum utilisation of students' own experiences, small group work and the imaginative use of case studies. My own experience while in the UK suggests, however, that quite a gap remains between the methodological principles developed and implemented at TUC headquarters in London and what actually takes place in the classroom elsewhere. At this stage no training programme for tutors exists and there is no doubt that while this remains the case the TUC's programme will be less than fully effective.

A further criticism which might be made of the TUC programme is that it concentrates very heavily on the "skills" aspect of shop steward work and gives too little attention to the more general political and economic education of worker representatives. Some argue that this is a quite conscious choice made by the TUC. The former secretary of the NCLC said: "The less the members know about socialism the better the TUC like it". However, two other explanations can be found for this tendency to concentrate on the practical rather than the political. Firstly, the TUC programme developed along very basic lines largely because of the sheer numbers of shop stewards who needed basic training. More advanced courses which do provide a broader and more political education have not been developed largely because of the extent of the resources required to fill the enormous gap in basic training existing prior to the mid-1970s.

A second explanation relates to the dependence of the programme on the state and on employers. While there is no doubt that the level of consciousness within trade unions about the need for education has risen spectacularly over the past few years – largely due to the success of the existing programme – it still appears unlikely that unions at this stage could take up the reins if public funds stopped. Consequently, the central co-ordinators of the course perceive it to be strate-

gically preferable to allow tutors to introduce political material into the course in an informal way rather than to build it into the structure. Similarly, employers, while required under the current legislation to grant paid study-leave, have a measure of discretion in deciding how much is allowed. As economic conditions have deteriorated, employers have tended to become increasingly resistant to approving study-leave, especially for the advanced courses which are more obviously "political".

It could also be said that largely because of the emphasis placed on skill training for the shop stewards themselves, very little information of educational benefit flows from the programme to the rank and file. People within the TUC education department are aware of this criticism and some thought is now being given to the idea of preparing packages of materials for shop stewards to take back to rank and file members.

Overall, while criticisms of the TUC scheme can validly be made it has led to a quite remarkable improvement in trade union education for shop stewards from the limited offerings of ten years ago. Not only are a majority of shop stewards now obtaining a solid basic training in the skills required to carry out their job but the courses have also succeeded in promoting a new consciousness about the position of trade unions in society and of the importance of education in advancing the class interests of working people.

The Residential Colleges

A further major development occurred recently in trade union education in the UK when a new residential college for unionists opened in October, 1978 at Wentworth Castle near Barnsley in South Yorkshire. The Northern College is the first such institution to be founded since the 1930s.

Between the establishment of Ruskin College in 1909 and the thirties, six other adult residential colleges came into existence in the UK – Plater College (also at Oxford), Fircroft in Birmingham, Hillcroft in Surrey, the Cooperative College near Loughborough, Coleg Harlech in Wales and Newbattle Abbey in Scotland. Of all these colleges only Ruskin had a firm association with the labour movement from its beginnings (and as we have seen even this link was somewhat brittle). Plater was a Catholic foundation, Fircroft was a Quaker establishment, the Cooperative College sprang from the movement of the same name, Hillcroft was specifically a college for women and the remaining two had special links with Welsh and Scottish local universities.

There is no doubt that, until very recently at least, Ruskin College towered over the other residential institutions in terms of influence upon the labour movement. Over the years, Ruskin built up an impressive reputation both in terms of its success in producing extremely capable graduates who were welcomed with open arms into the Universities and also in terms of the impact which its graduates made on the labour movement when they returned to it. Something of a network of Ruskin graduates exists throughout the British labour movement. While Ruskin has always been criticised for educating working people "out of their class", it has been able to point out that a large percentage of its graduates have returned to the trade union movement – as union officials, research workers in the labour movement, politicians and especially teachers in the newly expanded courses of trade union studies in the 1970s. Nevertheless, it is clear that the main aim pursued by Ruskin has been the provision of a second chance at higher education for working people who had not continued their education beyond the minimum school leaving age.

Ruskin's courses tend to have a rather "academic" flavour and in many cases are not particularly labour oriented. Furthermore, it is clear that bright students are encouraged to aspire to university entrance after graduation rather than to return to their union. As a result of this orientation, Ruskin is still looked upon with some suspicion by many in the labour movement.

Northern College, on the other hand, has largely avoided such problems. The dynamic and highly respected Principal of Northern College, Michael Barratt-Brown, sees the college as playing a very important part within the trade union education system. At Northern, while importance is certainly attached to the college's role in providing a second chance for working people to obtain a post-secondary education, considerable emphasis is also placed on maintaining very strong links between the college and the trade union movement – particularly in the South Yorkshire region. Students at the college are encouraged to preserve their involvement with their unions. Courses are more strongly labour-oriented than at Ruskin and more geared to the interests and needs of labour activists. The aim of the college is to produce broadly educated, politically aware graduates capable of becoming highly effective trade union representatives and full-time officials. It has also become an extremely valuable resource centre for the labour movement in its region.

In the three years since Northern College began offering courses it has developed a most impressive structure and atmosphere. It offers a wide variety of courses. The basic offering is a two year full-time residential diploma. Approximately sixty students are involved in this diploma at any one time – most follow a strand described as "trade union and industrial studies" which is designed primarily for labour activists and experienced shop stewards. A smaller number of students pursue either "social and community studies" or "liberal and gateway studies" which are more explicitly "second chance" type courses for persons who wish to proceed to higher education. In addition, there are at any one time usually another sixty students resident in the College pursuing a range of short courses lasting from one to five weeks. Some of these are advanced courses provided under the TUC shop steward training programme. Others are ad hoc courses mounted to meet the specific needs of local workers. The most impressive thing about the college, however, is the very intense, but open, political atmosphere present and the vibrant attitude of the students. Partly this is due to the background of the students, who are almost all labour activists; partly to the quality of the courses with their heavy emphasis on political economy; and partly to the residential nature of the college which allows students to continue their classroom discussions and debates late into the night in the college bar.

Certainly, Northern College has succeeded in building a very close relationship with local unions and the local community. The funds for the establishment of the College were actually provided by the four local South Yorkshire education authorities – all of which are firmly controlled by sympathetic Labour Party administrations. While the Department of Education and Science gives recognition to the courses and provides state bursaries for students, the remaining finance has to come from the local authorities. The strength of the commitment of the local authorities to adult residential education is demonstrated by the complete absence of any hint of financial cut-backs in a time when their own sources of funds are being slashed.

Labour Studies Courses

Another significant development has occurred in the past five years as several institutions involved with the TUC shop steward programme have established diplomas in trade union or labour studies. These courses have tended to be modelled on those of the union colleges but are not residential. A number of labour studies diplomas exist throughout the UK, but the two major ones are both located in London. The Polytechnic of Central London offers a Diploma in Labour Studies and Industrial Relations, and Middlesex Polytechnic runs a Certificate in Industrial Relations and Trade Union Studies. Within the overall framework of union and worker education in the UK these courses fill an important need. They provide an opportunity for labour activists to acquire a more intensive and more political education than is offered within the TUC's programme without the enormous disruption to one's personal and work life that is involved in undertaking a two-year residential course.

Almost all of the students involved in these courses have been active either in trade unions or in the Labour Party and the reason most commonly mentioned for taking the course was their own increasing union activity and hence their desire for increased political awareness and understanding. I was interested to observe that quite a marked difference existed between the level of satisfaction with the courses expressed by students at the two institutions and this corresponded with the impression I received from speaking to people involved in trade union education elsewhere. The Middlesex course has established close links with the labour movement generally and has maintained a commitment to the TUC programme as well as its own course. While initially there was some suspicion of "credentialism" from trade unions and the TUC, the Middlesex course is now generally regarded as a legitimate and valuable part of worker education by the labour movement. Similarly, students expressed considerable enthusiasm for the course and its success in meeting their expectations. On the other hand, the diploma at PCL does not appear to have established close links to the labour movement at all and considerable dissatisfaction was expressed, particularly by students who felt that it had become an "academic" course about trade unions rather than a "political economy" course for trade unionists.

Conclusions

Trade union education has expanded enormously in the UK over the past ten years and in spite of massive educational cutbacks elsewhere remains relatively healthy at the present time. In fact the expansion which has already occurred has served to illustrate the huge need which exists for union and worker education and which yet remains unfulfilled.

Undoubtedly some expansion has also occurred in Australia over recent years through the establishment of the Trade Union Training Authority (TUTA) and the development of education programmes by a number of individual unions. Clearly, however, we fall considerably short of the UK's achievements in a number of areas. While it is obvious that we need not follow exactly the same path, certain aspects of the UK system can and should be considered as possible models for planning the way ahead in Australia.

Most urgently, Australian unions should be pressing for the introduction of a system of automatic paid study leave for all workplace representatives to undertake trade union

education. The attainment of the right to paid study leave for union representatives is the basic starting point for any effective education programme. Current ACTU policy is to urge individual unions to include study leave provisions in their log of claims. While this strategy is a positive step forward it is clear that not all unions are prepared to place a high priority on education and the achievement of paid education leave provisions will be piecemeal and sporadic. The UK experience shows that such a provision can be legislated into reality and that its introduction can have a dramatic effect not only on the strength of the union education system itself but also on the consciousness of unions and workplace representatives of the value of union education. The provision of paid study leave for union education and of funding to implement a national training scheme should become part of the ALP's platform for the next election.

The recent history of the UK union education system has demonstrated the value of a national training programme which provides a basic course for representatives from all unions – small as well as large. A national union education scheme should involve individual unions but have the advantage of not being restricted by what might be perceived as the fairly narrow educational interests of some unions. A union education programme should be more than merely a method of initiating shopfloor representatives into the existing operating procedures and ethos of the particular union. What is actually required is a course of trade union education committed to the trade union movement but thoughtfully self-critical of it.

In developing such a programme, the ACTU and Australian unions would probably be best off in following the British model of using the available public education system as well as existing union education institutions such as TUTA and the WEA. The Federal government is currently encouraging the development of Business courses in the post-secondary sector of education. Trade unions should similarly be pushing for these institutions' resources to be made more available to working people to fill the enormous need which demonstratably exists for union and worker education. The first task would be to develop a detailed education programme and then to find the institutions and staff who would be sympathetic and able to implement the programme. The ACTU should begin work on the development of such a programme in conjunction with TUTA as soon as possible.

While residential colleges such as Ruskin and Northern obviously play an important part in the UK union education system there is no similar tradition to be built on in Australia and the resources required to develop such colleges would be very costly. Furthermore, in the current situation few jobs are likely to be available for graduates of these colleges in the labour movement. For these reasons it would seem to be more sensible to attempt to develop advanced courses in labour studies and/or political economy within the existing tertiary institutions. These courses should be geared specifically for labour activists and unionists who are able to attend either on a part-time basis or who have study leave provisions.

As we have found in Adelaide the development of labour education courses in tertiary institutions involves a lengthy and vigorous struggle.[5] However, the recent approval and accreditation of an Associate Diploma in Labour Studies within our institution would seem to open the way for the establishment of similar programmes in other states. The major lessons to be learnt from the UK for those of us involved in these courses are: firstly, to ensure the educational and political relevance of the programmes from the point of view of the labour activist student; secondly, to maintain close links with the labour movement generally and more specifically the other sectors of union and worker education; finally, to attempt to ensure the usefulness of the courses to the labour movement by encouraging students to remain within the labour movement rather than using the course as a stepping stone to another career.

The areas of need in union education are diverse. A basic course for shop stewards, individual courses on policy issues, longer and more advanced courses on political economy – all are important and necessary. What is also essential is that there should exist at least a minimum amount of co-ordination and planning between the various areas of development. While the UK system can be accused of having developed in a somewhat rushed and piecemeal way, it does at least have a basic coherence whereby a newly elected shop steward begins with an introductory course and can proceed logically through more advanced courses which gradually become broader and more political. The opportunity which now exists in Australia to develop a similar or better system should not be lost.

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TRANSED from exploitation to exploration

Sam Altman

The co-ordinator of Transition Education at a Sydney high school suggests ways of introducing Transed courses, and presents details of a course he has developed.

Academic study for its own sake or to pass future exams never really caught on with working class kids. Higher learning for them almost invariably meant long experiences of failure, self-denigration, apathy and resignation. Having failed, and believing that school and society offered equal opportunity for everyone to succeed if they only worked hard enough, many working class kids and their families could only resign themselves to life at the bottom. They had been tested and were found wanting. All they could do was to put up with being powerless at work and in their communities, perhaps with the hope that the next generation of children could become socially mobile through more and better education. This is particularly true for many migrant families.

Transition courses (TCs) allow teachers to break out of this academic treatment of subjects at school, with learning artificially broken up into the various subject headings and into forty-minute time slots. Current assessment and discipline proceedures could also be done away with. Instead, education can become based on the direct personal experience of the students. This doesn't mean that higher learning doesn't take place. Rather that it can be relevant in ways that abstract and general learning could never be. Intellectual learning, critical and social awareness can all be developed, but always with concrete experience as its base and using materials and practices that are realistic not idealistic.

A Good Transed Course (at High School)

A good transition course would have work experience (WE) as workplace experience – that is, all the social relations of capitalist society that are played out at the workplace, such as wages and profit, ownership and control, skilled/unskilled, unions, could be studied consciously and critically at school.

Following the careful study of the workplace, the company and the industry that it is involved in could be realistically considered. The social nature of production and service in this society could be laid bare. Trade unionism, sexual and racial divisions in the workforce, the restructuring of the Australian economy, technological change – all become possible curriculum material (assuming, of course, that it is realistically presented and grounded in experience).

Now work at school before or after work experience and work visits (WVs) can only go so far in bringing out all these issues. For such issues to become real, students will have to develop close and understanding relations with the workers on the job who experience them first hand. And workers should not just teach work experience students the job skills that are required at work. They should, in fact, try to teach about all the other complex aspects of the workplace from their own experience and knowledge.

As well as workplace experience, and company and industry studies (best done around a series of work visits) a good transition course would also involve community studies, living skills, link courses with a technical college, and a communication project.

How to Balance the Employer's Input and Influence

Employers already have a large and growing influence on education in general and School-to-Work Transition programmes in particular. Why should workers and their unions worry about this?

Let's consider what is behind the current employer's demand for the reintroduction of external exams for all subjects at the school certificate level. Here employers claim that contemporary curriculum and teaching methods have given potential young workers "unrealistic" attitudes and expectations about work.

Young workers are too critical, too choosey. They are concerned about the ecological and social costs of the product they are producing or the services they are providing. They want their own work to have some intrinsic interest or satisfaction and are not just content to wait for their paypackets at the end of the week. They want their workplaces to be safe, humane, even pleasant places to spend one third of their adult lives.

Now it is debatable just how much influence schooling has on the formation of these attitudes but it seems that possession of these attitudes along with some understanding of the way economic and political power are used in our society would make for a good union activist.

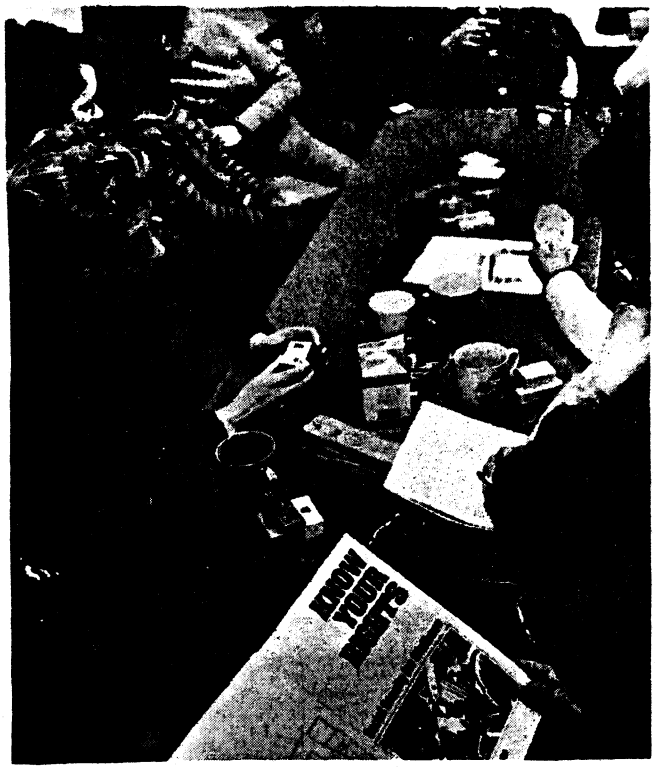
It's in their own interests for workers and their unions to make sure that the formation of these attitudes and the development of this knowledge can proceed at schools and technical colleges. These are the sorts of things that a good transition course could achieve. If the union movement doesn't become more active in this area it will all be left to the employers who, recognising their class interests, will certainly try to stamp these attitudes out.

Teachers alone cannot be left to try to present a balanced account. The influence of the employers is already too strong and anyway many teachers identify with the employers' view of things to some extent. These sorts of teachers have to realise that there is another side to be heard and the only organisations capable of presenting it are trade unions.

Other teachers who don't identify with the interests of the employers need active support and contacts and guidance so that they can better articulate the union or worker point of view.

Some suggestions as to what individual workers or their unions should do to start countering the influence of the employers or their representatives on education and at the same time beginning to develop and support an educational set-up that empowers working class kids:

- Unions must become more active on trade, apprenticeship and Education Program for Unemployed Youth course committees and on technical college councils. Employers are strongly represented and active in all these areas;
- Activists should ensure that a union representative is paid off to talk about union activities and give the union or worker's view to any visitors or work experience students;
- Unionists need to produce a union information sheet or set up a display for visitors. This can go with and balance the usual company "blurb" about the history and operations of the workplace;
- Workers must take part in consultations with teachers or organizers of work experience and work visits;
- Teachers can arrange visits to schools by union reps from particular workplaces;
- Unions can offer union offices as possible work visit venues.



The School-to-Work Transition Programme at Waterloo High School in 1981.

Basic Principles

i The concept of transition should not just be restricted to the changeover from school to work but should be wider, encompassing the change from child to adult or from dependence to independence. At school, Transed should not be seen as a secondrate education reserved for those who will leave early.

ii There is a vast store of community knowledge and experience at workplaces and community organisations that school students should be exposed to. The role of the Transed teacher is to devise realistic methods of relaying this knowledge and experience to the students through school and in the process showing that it is valuable.

iii The teaching strategy involved here is that students will best learn through concrete, practical experiences. This approach will have greater relevance and be consequently more motivating for these students than traditional academic approaches. These experiences can then be carefully generalised to satisfy the requirements of the courses which lead to the Year 10, School Certificate.

iv A good Transed course must be based on a good knowledge of the local youth employment patterns and the local community issues and development.

Organization

i The transition education programme at Waterloo High School is a pilot programme. Twenty students were chosen on the basis that they would make up a cross-section of the school population: 12 girls, 8 boys; 5 from non-English speaking backgrounds, 15 with English spoken at home; 5 Aboriginal students, 15 European; 13 from the low-stream classes, 7 from ordinary classes. These figures have changed slightly during the year.

ii The students all do English (6 periods), Maths (4 periods) and Science (4 periods). As well they do:

a Work Experience
- Job skills
- Wages and profit
- Work discipline
- Unions
- Workplace culture

b Industry Studies
- Company studies
- Specific industry studies
- General industry studies
- Key industry studies, (education, health, media, welfare, law).
- Themes to be studied would include the goods and services produced; technological change; sexism; racism; industrial relations; health and safety.

c Community Studies
- Belonging to a specific community.
- General problems and needs.
- Community organizations.
- History, planning and consequences.
- Local employment trends.

d Living Skills
- Consumer protection
- Sex
- Drugs
- Dole payments
- Current affairs
- Recreation

e Link Courses
- Specific job skills.
- Other generalised job skills, eg. typing, motor and house maintenance.
- Other courses offered by the NSW Department of Technical and Further Education (TAFE).

f Communication Project

A project that the whole Transed student group takes part in together. Such a project would extend over some time and serve as a unifying activity. Preferably it would be aimed at some specific audience. For example:
- A report and evaluation of what has been undertaken in the Transed course. Such a report could be aimed at the rest of year 9 and 10, or year 7 and 8 students who might do a Transed course, or parents and the community in general (with the addition of a teacher's report, this could provide the official evaluation of the Transed course).
- An "industry study project". Here the industries that the Transed students are involved in and are studying could become the topics of reports written by the students and aimed at the workers in that industry.

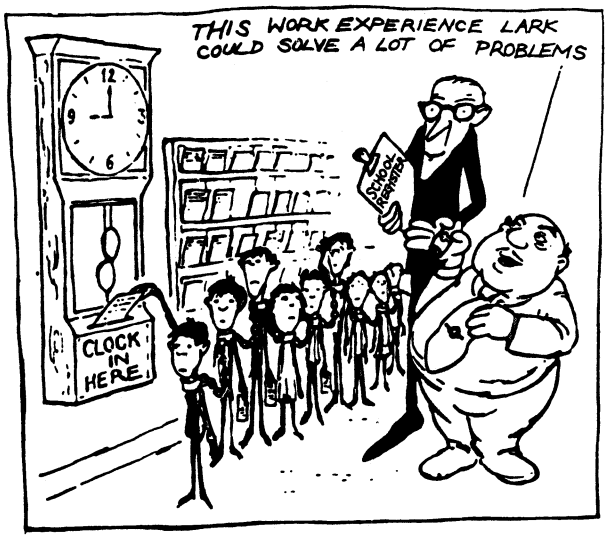
Such a project, if it develops genuine motivation and commitment from the participants, will provide a focus for the meaningful development of oral and written skills.

A Few Points About Work Experience

i The work experience component will provide the main motivating force for much of the rest of the programme. The relevance and importance of most of the rest of the programme stems from its relationship with the direct experience of work.
Being so important, it should take up at least three hours a week for a good proportion of the year. More important than its duration however, is that the placements should be made very carefully. Within the limits of what is available, not only should the students like where they have been placed but the placements should also be realistic – that is, they should take careful account of the interests and aptitudes of the students and the current employment prospects and trends.

ii *Work Experience and Employers.* With more work experience placements being sought through Transed programmes and other courses, places should be co-ordinated in regions or districts. This will stop any competition between schools for a limited number and duration of places, but it will also give rise to a central Education Department organisation to make initial contacts with employers and their organisations.

iii *Work Experience and Workers.* Before setting up a Work Experience programme, it's important to make contact with all levels of the union movement: Trades and Labor Council, individual union, region, branch or workplace level. This is important both for the success of the Work Experience programme and for the unions. Students should not be used instead of paid workers or to cut overtime. The best way to ensure that this doesn't happen is for both groups to know what is expected. The unions themselves will be studied in the Transed course and, hopefully, young workers who have gone through such a course will know a lot about unions and participate in union activities.
Beyond union issues, it is important for the students and workers on the job to develop a close and understanding relationship. The workers and their situations will also become part of what the student is studying, so a free and easy flow of information and experience from workers to students is essential.



COURSE OUTLINES

Industry Studies

This course is planned as part of a Transed programme for a group of year 9 students. It has been designed to try to keep open the option of doing the School Certificate for those students in year 10. This course should be looked at in conjunction with another proposed school course called Community Studies (see below).

Aims

i to acquaint students with the range of jobs people do in our society.
ii to allow students to investigate their own career possibilities.
iii to develop students' perspectives on work and work organization.
iv to increase the practical work contacts students at Waterloo High School have in the career areas where they would hope to work.

Skills Aims: to develop in students:

– independent research skills
– communication skills
– personal and work skills.

Time Allocation

Work Research including Work Experience – this would be organised to take up one afternoon each week for at least twelve weeks (this would be a workplace afternoon, not a school afternoon). Teachers would accompany students early in the course but later on would only pay the occasional visit.

Work Visits – hopefully it will be possible to organise one such visit taking one afternoon each week. Teacher(s) to accompany students.

Classroom Preparation – four periods a week.

Organization

The proposed course has three main components:

i Work Research (WR) including Work Experience (WE)
One afternoon a week in particular workplaces for an extended period (at least twelve weeks). Care to be taken to make sure that student and workplace are suited to each other, ie. not only that the student likes the workplace and is able to learn the job skills required, but also that the workplace is in an industry and in a locality where the student could realistically hope to look for a job later on. The basic idea is for the student taking part in a work experience placement to become a "participant-observer" and so be able to research various aspects of the particular workplaces.

ii Work Visits (WVs)
Hopefully it will be possible to organise one such visit each week, which would usually take one afternoon. Such a series of visits would provide extensive first-hand observations of a great range of different workplaces. Starting from the workplaces that are the sites of the work research and extending to:
a other workplaces or work stations in the same company or organisation, eg. clerical, supervisory, distribution;
b other workplaces in different companies in the same industry;
c other workplaces in different industries including especially education, health and welfare.

iii Classroom preparation, "de-briefing" and "extension".
Both work research and work visits involve out-of-school activities. These would all be prepared for at school. Students would be sensitized as to what to look for, who to ask questions of, processes to be studied and background research to be undertaken. Moreover, students will be "de-briefed" after a visit or a session at a workplace and through discussion and research what they have found out there will be generalised.

Teaching Strategy

The basic pedagogic principle involved here is that the student will best learn through concrete, particular experiences which can be carefully and realistically generalised. This to be done while never losing sight of the fact that the major motivation for students (and their families) of taking part in such a course is to increase their chances of picking up a job.

Content

Work research and work visits as described above would allow study of the following:

i Job Skills
Not only the skills a work experience student would pick up on the job, but also awareness and study of the range of job skills that are demonstrated at the workplace.

ii **Work Processes**
The various technical processes and methods of organization that take place at the workplace can be studied by the student-participant. This should be extended to awareness of the basic interdependency of all work processes and industries.

iii **Work Discipline**
This involves a conscious study of the formal and informal rules and regulations that the student will become aware of at the workplace. Such study would include such things like health and safety regulations and the imperatives that stem from management related to productivity and control (punctuality, rate of work etc.).

iv **Unionism**
This would involve such things as the operation and presence of a union at the workplace, awards and current campaigns, health and safety and the history of industrial relations at this site or in this company.

v **Wages and Profit**
The wage contract – what it means and rights and responsibilities on both sides. A historical study of how it came about in the form that is found in the workplace. Profit, what it means, what happens to it.

vi **Company Studies**
Basic accounting as it applies to the company or organisation. Patterns of ownership and control; interrelations of companies.

vii **Work Contracts**
The student will be compiling a dossier including:
- personal contacts made through WR and WVs;
- training/entrance requirements for the career(s) that the student is interested in;
- career prospects, especially as they are affected by technological change and regional factors.

viii **Specific Industry Studies**
The industry that the work research is being conducted in would itself become a topic of study. Hopefully a major motivating factor would be that eventually the student would be able to work in this industry (see vii). Competition, marketing and advertising as they relate to this industry could also be studied.

ix **General Industry Studies**
Through work visits, special attention could be drawn to the major service industries such as Education, Health, Welfare, Media and Transport. Here the students are interested not just as potential workers in these industries but also as current and future consumers of these services. At this stage it would not be a large step to generalise to the study of industry in Australia.

Themes
Some of the major themes that would be highlighted and demonstrated through work research and work visits are:

i Production or service provision: what it takes to produce a commodity or provide a service;
ii The market for goods and services (oriented towards the informed consumption of these goods and services);
iii Company organization;
iv Technological change;
v Sexual and ethnic divisions in the work force;
vi Health and safety;
vii Pollution;
viii Work and the law.

Evaluation

i Work Research – for individual evaluation students keep all written work in a folder (filled-in questionaires, records of interviews, reports and background research undertaken).
This work can be refiled and cross-referenced by occupation, industry, theme etc. to provide a classroom jobs information resource for continuing use by the students.

ii Reportbacks – students give oral and written reports of their observations on the themes and content areas. These classroom sessions encourage the sharing and comparing of information as well as discussion and revision of previously-held assumptions about work.

iii Work Contacts Dossier – students compile and keep all information collected on access to the jobs that they are interested in – eg. entrance requirements, industry and occupational analysis showing trends in employment due to regional or seasonal factors and the impact of technological change.

Course Evaluation
Building up an effective job information bank as well as useful work contacts dossiers would constitute positive material evaluation of this course. Other outcomes would be hard to quantify but would include less discipline problems, increased evidence of self-confidence, maturity and responsibility amongst the participants as well as an increased ability to find and keep a job (this would probably only become evident in the years to come).

Industry Studies

Aims

i to develop and articulate a feeling of belonging to a specific community in the student.
ii for the students to be able to appreciate the positive aspects and strengths of their communities.
iii for students to understand the problems and needs of their communities and to become involved in working out solutions.
iv to build up a working knowledge of the local community organisations and networks, both formal and informal: what they do, how they operate, their funding, history and personalities involved.
v to know where to go for help or support in various crises.

Skills Aims: to develop in students
- independent research skills
- communication skills
- personal and social support skills.

Time Allocation
Community Research (CR) including Work Experience (WE) or **Community Service** (CS). This would take up one afternoon each week for an extended period, at least twelve weeks. Teachers would make the original contact and probably accompany the student on the first session but later on would only pay the occasional visit.

Community Visits (CVs). In conjunction with work visits (visits to workplaces) this would take up an afternoon each week. Teachers to accompany students.

Classroom Preparation – Four periods a week.

Organization
The proposed course has three main components (just like industry studies):

i **Community Research**
This would involve students spending one afternoon a week at a community organization or agency. They would be expected to become involved in the work of that organization and so this component of the course could justifiably be called work experience or community studies. However, just as important as the experience gained or service provided, the student will be expected to undertake research into the operation, setting, history etc. of the organization. This research will of necessity be guided not just by the classroom teacher but also by the community workers that the student is in contact with.

ii **Community Visits**
This would involve organized group visits to a range of community organizations and agencies. Students see at first hand the variety of activities and concerns that these organizations are involved in. These visits would all involve careful preparation of the students (and teachers) as to the particular circumstances of the organization being visited.

iii **Classroom preparation, "de-briefing" and "extension".**
Both community research and community visits involve out-of-school activities. These would all be prepared for at school before a visit or a session. Students would be sensitized as to what to look for, who to interview and what background research is required. Classroom work would also involve students giving both oral and written reports as to what they have found out regarding the organization they have been "working" with or one they have recently visited. As well as this students will be "de-briefed" after sessions or visits. Here again, what the students have found out will be discussed and extended.

Teaching Strategy
The basic teaching strategy involved here is that the students will best learn through concrete, first-hand experiences. Not only will the aims of this course be achieved in this way but also these experiences will provide the motivation to do the research tasks that the students will be asked to do.

Content
Community research and community visits as described above would allow study of the following:

i **Job Skills**
Community research would involve the student doing some work or performing a service at the organization they have been placed at. This would involve learning some job skills as well as working with people who would be demonstrating other job skills. At a community organization, office work, publicity, planning, meeting procedures and other sorts of communications skills will be available for study and learning by example.

ii **Democracy in Action**
Community organizations come into being around a perceived need or problem (see items iv to xii below). They are often in the business of lobbying the various levels of government, corresponding with decision-makers in our society, holding public meetings, organizing petitions and deputations etc. This activity could be researched by the students at their placements. Through it they could learn about how Australian democracy works in practice.

iii **Government Authorities**
All the organizations researched or visited would be having on-going relationships of one sort or another with at least one of the three levels of government – local, state or federal. The nature of these relationships could be studied. Questions of appropriate government funding, access to decision-makers and information, conflicts of interests etc. would all come up. A detailed look at the structure and operations of the local municipal councils would be appropriate.

iv **Employment (or lack of it)**
Students who are doing Community Studies will also be doing Industry Studies, where they will be learning a lot about industry in Australia and which jobs or careers they should aim for. Employment or lack of it is of course a major community issue. In the Community Studies course students will be studying local employment trends, looking at various unemployed workers' support organizations and some possible local alternatives to full-time, paid employment.

v **Housing**
This would involve students looking at:
- the Housing Commission – its current plans and history
- housing co-ops – where they have been set up
- refuges (women's and youth) – other forms of emergency housing
- conservation and renovation of old houses
- resident action groups
- evictions, squatting
- tenants' rights and responsibilities.

vi **Transport**
- improved public transport, including the idea of a community bus
- road vrs rail
- container and other freight depots
- Citizens' Impact Statement (CIS) – a study of the social, health and environmental effects of changing transport patterns in the inner city.

vii **Environmental Health**
- air pollution, especially lead
- noise (traffic and aircraft)
- health effects of the petro-chemical industry
- pesticides
- radiation
- community health organizations
- local hospital services
- physical environment – parks, street closures etc.

viii **Education**
- issues around local schools – P&C's
- community schools eg. Falcon St., Murawina
- local learning exchanges, eg. community work short courses

ix **Law**
- tenants' laws and advice
- local legal services, eg. Redfern Legal Service, Aboriginal Legal Service
- children's court
- law and the teenager
- local legal workshops
- reviews and appeals
- compensation

x **Welfare**
- local government agencies, eg. Social Security, CES
- self-help groups, eg. for the blind and handicapped
- claimants' organizations, eg. Combined Pensioners' Association.

xi **Community Media**
- community TV and radio
- media access
- ethnic and local newspapers
- local community publications and newsletters, eg. *Inner Voice*

xii **Ethnic Community Organizations**
There are a large number of very active ethnic organizations. These would also be researched and visited in the way described above. It would probably be best for students who are themselves members of one of these ethnic communities to undertake the research and experience associated with this course at one of their own ethnic organizations. These organizations are concerned with social and cultural issues as well as the political and economic issues that other sorts of community organizations are involved in.

(N.B. For points iv to xii the best classroom preparation would be a visit to the school by a community worker active in one of these areas. It would be unlikely that classroom teachers would have much expertise in these areas.)

Preliminary List of Community Organizations

- Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development
- NSW Council of Social Services
- Resident Action Groups – Chippendale, Ultimo-Pyrmont, etc.
- Neighbourhood Centres – Surry Hills, Leichhardt, etc.
- Ethnic organizations (too numerous to name here)
- Housing Co-ops – Aboriginal, Chippendale
- Shelter
- South Sydney Community Aid
- South Sydney Women's Centre
- Elsie Women's Refuge
- Marrickville Women's Refuge
- Redfern Legal Service
- Aboriginal Legal Service
- Aboriginal Medical Service
- Combined Pensioners' Association
- Migrant Resources Centre
- Parents and Citizen's Associations
- Community Centres – Waterloo, Botany, etc.
- Surry Hills Society, Glebe Historical Soceity
- Tenants' Union
- Leichhardt Women's Community Health Centre
- Kids' Activities Newtown

Evaluation

i Students compile a fairly detailed "case-study" relating to the organization they are researching. The case-study would either show how the organization takes up an issue or what happens when an individual approaches it for help or advice.

ii Students keep all written work in a folder – filled-in questionnaires, records of interviews, reports and background research undertaken. This work can be refiled and cross-referenced to provide a classroom community information bank for continued use by the students.

iii Students give oral and written reports of their findings and observations through community research and community visits.

Course Evaluation

An effective community information bank would serve as a good material evaluation of the course. As well as the non-material outcomes noted in the course evaluation section of the Industries Studies segment, it would be hoped that as students became aware of the work of the community organisations, began meeting and mixing with the local community leaders and activists they would develop greater pride in their community. Hopefully, since they would be doing this through the school and with the active support of the school, this feeling of pride and belonging would carry over to the students' feelings about the school itself.

Community Studies Example Unit

Proposed Work Research Programme at the Children's Hospital in 1981.

Arrangements

i Four groups of from three to five students from Waterloo High School. All students will be 15 in 1981. The composition of the groups is unclear at this stage, but hopefully each group will contain boys and girls as well as Aboriginal and European students.

ii If the groups are called A, B, C and D then the proposed arrangements are that each group of students do a one-week block (five days in a row), then every Monday afternoon for the next nine school weeks after that.
- A. The week 2/2–6/2 then 9/2, 16/2, 23/2, 2/3, 9/3, 16/3, 23/3, 30/3, 6/4.
- B. The week 13/4–18/4 then 27/4, 4/5, (May holidays) 25/5, 1/6, 8/6, 15/6, 22/6, 29/6, 6/7.
- C. The week 13/7–18/7 then 20/7, 27/7, 3/8, 10/8, 17/8, 24/8, (August holidays) 14/9, 21/9, 28/9.
- D. The week 5/10–10/10 then 12/10, 19/10, 26/10, 2/11, 9/11, 16/11, 23/11, 30/11, 7/12.

ii It is proposed that this programme be more than just a Work Experience programme. Students will be expected to study the operations and organization of the hospital. It is hoped that through this study they will:
- a gain a real understanding of what is expected of them in a workplace;
- b expand their ideas of what sort of work they would like to do;
- c find out in some detail what the requirements are for the occupations they are interested in;
- d develop some self-confidence and maturity by relating to adults who are not their parents or teachers;
- e learn at a basic level how the hospital operates and what services are provided;
- f gain some understanding about job prospects in this area.

Work Research Proposals

During the one-week block and two or three of the subsequent Monday afternoons, students should concentrate on:

i Learning some basic *job skills* in a particular area of the hospital, eg. childminding, receptionist, clerical, nursing, hospital visitor etc. These jobs will have to be simple at first so that the student can pick them up and start to feel useful. They would have to start with more mundane tasks such as cleaning but hopefully after a while they will be able to go on to more complex jobs.

ii Learning the formal and informal *rules* and *regulations* that govern the various services that are provided at the hospital, eg. work times; what to do if sick or late; health; safety and cleanliness; work demarcation; union presence and activities etc.

iii *Work processes.* This involves two different sorts of processes: firstly the technical-scientific processes to do with providing the hospital services, and secondly the way these services are organized, eg. how patients are admitted to the hospital, how meals are provided, how visits are organized.

It is envisaged that these first three points can be picked up more or less informally by the students as they go about their work. The next four points, however, will require more time on the part of some of the hospital workers. Hopefully some arrangements can be made so that the students can find out this information without too much disruption to other people's work.

Students will be asked to concentrate on the following aspects of work at the hospital during the last six afternoons:

iv *Work contracts* and *prospects.* Students will be asked to compile a dossier on:
- a training requirements for the various occupations they are interested in;
- b work and training histories of a range of hospital workers;
- c selection criteria used in hiring new staff at the hospital;
- d names and methods of contacting people who are responsible for hiring new staff at the hospital;
- e prospects of work in the areas they are interested in for the foreseeable future both at this hospital and in medical care in general;
- f what influences these prospects, eg, government funding, technological change, regional differences.

v *What services* are provided at the hospital. Why are they needed? The *history* and *context* of the hospital. Future plans?

vi *Funding*. Where do the funds come from? What influences changes in funding? How the funds are spent and accounted for, eg. some understanding of cheque accounts, monthly budgets, balance sheets, annual reports, etc.

vii The *Government authorities* that the hospital is in contact with. Students should get some idea how this contact is maintained and an awareness of the functions of these authorities.

Points v to vii are all quite complex, but it is clear that it will be a valuable educational exercise to have students study a complex work-place as "participant-observers". Any staff at the hospital who are involved in trying to explain these points to the students should realise that it is very important to talk to them at a level they are likely to understand. As a teacher I know that this is not always easy but obviously unless this is done the students will learn very little.

Back at school students will be getting preparation and explanation of the things they will be asked to find out about. For example, it is thought that they could best find out about points iii and vii by conducting a series of short interviews with various workers at the hospital such as an administrator, nurse, receptionists etc. The questions to be asked would be worked out at school with the teacher's help.

Aboriginal Students

Five of the students who could be involved in such a Work Research programme at the Children's Hospital are Aboriginal girls. All have said that they are interested in the "caring" occupations and especially involving other Aboriginal people. It is hoped that if something like this proposal is accepted at the hospital then some special arrangements can be made for these five students to work with Aboriginal patients and workers at the hospital.

One final point: this Work Research Proposal is part of the Waterloo High School School-to-Work Transition scheme for 1981. Like the whole scheme it is a pilot programme. It has been set up on a small scale so that problems could be ironed out and also to prove that such an approach to education and the orientation of youth to work are both practical and useful. It's hoped that these developments can be consolidated and expanded in later years.

Living Skills

This course should be looked at in conjunction with the two other courses, "Community Studies" and "Industry Studies" that make up the Transed programme.

Course Rationale

To introduce to the Transed students a range of living skills and knowledge as well as useful contacts that have not already been covered in the rest of the Transed programme.

Aims

i To extend and develop the Personal Development programme that these students have taken in years 7 and 8.

ii To introduce students to:
- Legal Education
- Rights of a Social Security claimant,
- Consumer Protection,
- Drug and Alcohol Education.

iii To teach general skills such as home and motor maintenance and keyboard (typing) skills.

iv To introduce students to Career Education.

v To orient students towards Technical and Further Education through a Link course at Randwick Technical College.

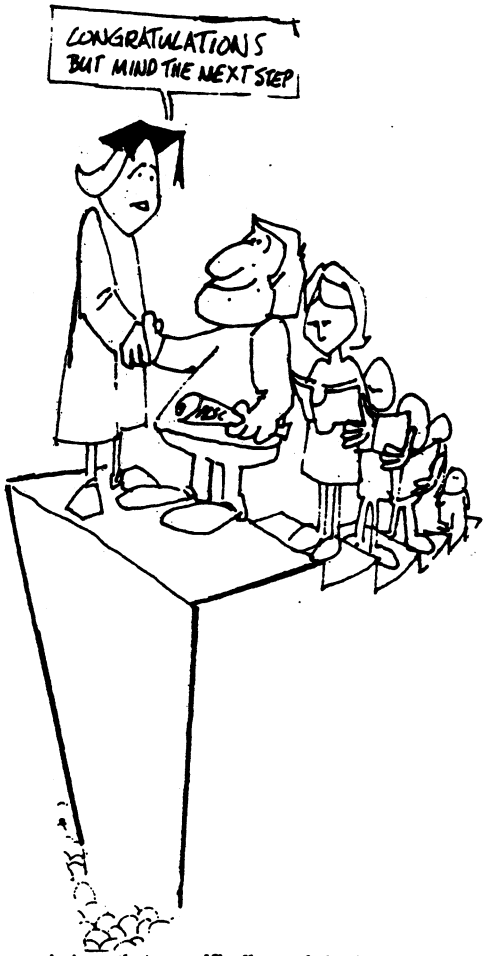
vi To help students develop satisfying recreation and leisure habits, skills and contacts.

Organization

The basic teaching strategy to be employed in achieving the first two aims of this course is to bring in outside people as "instigators" of the various parts of the course. These people will be experts in their fields and experienced at addressing groups of school students.

These "instigators" will only be able to set in train an educational programme in their area and not give a whole series of lessons that will adequately cover the topic. This programme will have been planned in consultation with the school teacher(s) who will then go on and present the rest of it. The agencies which will be providing these outside people have all developed teaching materials for schools that can be used to expand and develop the one or two lessons that can be given at school.

The rationale behind organising this part of the course in this way is that very few teachers have been trained to teach in these areas and would find it difficult adequately to prepare such a course by themselves. Bringing in outside people (usually education officers from the various associations that specifically work in these areas) would allow the school teachers to tap into the expertise and experiences that these people have.



On the other hand, these outside people are not in day-to-day contact with the students and especially in the "problem" areas of sexuality, drugs and the law it can often be the teachers who are in the position to give useful advice and support if they knew more about these areas.

The education policies of these associations are all leaning more and more to "educating the educators" so as to be able to reach more school students more thoroughly.

Another positive aspect of such a teaching strategy is that students will be exposed to fresh and realistic approaches to these areas by these "instigators".

Organization to achieve Aim number iii has not been finalised at the time of writing this proposal. Various possibilities exist, however. Firstly, negotiations are taking place with Randwick Technical College through a school area co-ordinating committee. As well, there are already in existence community education programmes offering these and other courses such as through Waterloo CYSS (Community Youth Support Scheme) and Outreach within easy reach of the school.

Aim number iv, Career Education will be conducted by the school career adviser.

Aim number v. The exact details of the Link course have not been finalised yet but it seems likely that there will be a six-to-eight week "taster" course offered to the Transed students at Waterloo High School. Such a course involves students going one afternoon a week to the technical college to observe a selection of the trade courses available there.

Aim number vi. The organization of this part of the course would be action-oriented. For example:

i getting students to survey the available leisure facilities in their community;

ii interviewing local residents and other students about their leisure activities and how they could be improved if there was a felt need;

iii inviting local youth workers and recreation workers into the school to discuss with the students their role in meeting the leisure needs of the local community;

iv use of various audio-visual materials about leisure, such as Southern Media's video "computerised leisure" as discussion starters.

Time Allocation

Five periods a week will be available for the Living Skills course. During the weeks of the Link course and the General Skills courses, at least four periods in a block would be used up.

At this stage it is unclear how long the Link and General Skills courses will be. The maximum is 24 weeks if both are done at a technical college but it might only be 14 weeks. The other areas of this course will be covered in the rest of the time available.

Content

Personal Development (outside speaker and materials from Family Planning Association).

i What am I like? – physical appearance, friends, interests.
ii How am I growing and changing? – conception, gestation, birth, growth, puberty, heredity.
iii Group membership – family, peer groups, school hierarchy, local community, class.
iv Healthy living – exercise, nutrition, causes of diseases, mental health, health agencies.

Legal Education (outside speaker and some materials from Youth Legal Centre).

i How laws are made, especially those concerning school-age children.
ii How laws operate, especially:
  – Family Law – custody, marriage, divorce.
  – Tenants – rights and responsibilities.
  – Property
  – Privacy
  – Criminal Law
iii Rights on being questioned by the police. Legal Aid.
iv Court Proceedure – especially offences young people are often charged with. Appeals and court structure.
v Jobs and the Law – awards, apprenticeships, compensation, tax.

Consumer Protection (outside speaker and some materials from Australian Consumers Association)

i Advertising
ii Sales methods
iii Contracts
iv Credit
v Competition
vi Consumer laws and agencies.

Drug and Alcohol Education (outside speaker and some materials from the Association of Drug Referral Centres)

i Historical perspective
ii Affects on health
iii Issues of dependency
iv Decision-making
v Social drug use.

Career Education

i Presentation of job information to students about occupations which interest them, eg level of schooling required, training required, aspects of the job, hours of work, pay rates, prospects.
ii Attainment of skills related to job finding, job application and job keeping.

N.B. Other important aspects of Career Education such as work experience and work visits are covered in the Industry Studies course which is done by the Transed students.

(Detailed content of the General Skills and Link course are not available at this time.)

Recreation and Leisure

Problem Identification.

The issue of students' use or misuse of leisure time is a common concern amongst the staff. The main problems are:

i Lack of open space for sporting activities.
ii An excess of commercial venues geared specifically to young people, eg cinemas, discos, skating rinks, leisure centres.
iii Leisure choices are often restricted to those provided by commercial interests.

Content

i The function of leisure in society.
ii Different uses of leisure according to sex, age and ethnicity.
iii How do people in the local community use their free time?
iv Who provides leisure facilities: commercial interests, State government, local government, community organizations, the individual.

Student Evaluation

For most of the parts of this course there are classroom activities that students will be expected to take part in, eg mock courtroom scenes, surveys, background research, etc. The Living Skills teacher will be able to evaluate each student accordingly.

Course Evaluation

Like the whole Transed programme, this course will be monitored regularly by the school's Transed committee (made up of teachers and members of the community). In general they will be looking for evidence of increased self-confidence and maturity amongst the Transed students.

As well as this a series of questionnaires will be prepared to gauge students' response to and interest in the various parts of the course. These questionnaires will include questions on:

– whether the students thought that they had learnt anything useful for now or in the future;
– whether the aims of the various parts of the course had been attained;
– whether the students thought that their other school subjects were more or less relevant than they'd previously thought;
– whether the course was pitched at the right level and how it could be improved in the future.

An Inside Job

- Workers' Research

Ken McLeod

Can participatory research help workers to wrest power from managers and divert productive resources to more socially useful ends. It's being done, says McLeod.

The unions, as the primary form of working class organisation, need to build up their extra-parliamentary power to meet the challenge of transnational domination. So long as rank-and-file unionists leave the regulation of economic activity to politicians and technocrats while the corporations become an increasingly powerful political force, they will always be bargaining from a position of weakness and will invariably lose.

Speaking at the Transnational Cooperative National Industry Projects Conference in April 1979, ALP front-bencher Tom Uren emphasised the importance of unions and communities intervening directly in the decisions that affect them:

> "A counter-strategy by the labour movement against the strategy of the corporate sector cannot be a blueprint, a set of policies to be implemented in the event of a Labor government. A counter-strategy has to be a process of shifting power. It demands intervention by people in the places where they experience the contradictions of the capitalist system in their daily lives – in the places where they work and live."

This corporate power is not exercised through influence over legislative processes or executive decision-making, though this influence is real enough and of importance. It is more fundamentally the power to allocate resources through investment decisions, control or manipulation of markets, and control of the work process. Real power in our society lies with those who control the production process – those social forces that determine what is produced (minerals or manufactures), how it is produced (machines or workers), and who it is produced for (Australian consumers or the capitalist industrial complexes overseas).

Any discussion of a response to transnational corporate domination of this country must therefore pose the question: what countervailing power can be mobilised to exert social control over the allocation and exploitation of our economic resources?

Unfortunately, the unions have been slow to take up this challenge. Under the daily pressure of basic organising, industrial disputes, arbitration proceedings, negotiations, and in the face of government attacks and the threat of technological change, union officials have tended to shore up their position by an ever increasing centralisation of union functions and by resorting to outside 'hired guns' – professional 'experts' who act as consultants to or advocates for the unions.

But the greatest resource of the union movement and the ultimate source of its strength is its rank-and-file members. Sadly, this is also often the unions' most under-utilised resource.

The growing realisation that the existing structures of the unions are inadequate to counter the powers of corporate management is causing new forms of union organisation and struggle to emerge. In Scandinavia, the United Kingdom, Italy, North America and Australia the notion of 'workers' intervention' is finding a variety of expressions.

Workers' intervention is a very general term meaning the development by both blue and white collar workers of the capacity to intervene in management decision-making, to extend their demands beyond wages and conditions into the very central prerogatives of capital – the allocation of the productive resources and the decisions over the use of such resources.

Its meaning in practice is best illustrated by examples

The Lucas Aerospace Workers And The Right To Socially Useful Work

The Lucas Aerospace workers' Alternative Corporate Plan is quite well known around the world. It was one of the first and most highly developed workers' interventions in Britain and has had a considerable impact on the British labour movement.

In 1970 they formed a Combined Shop Stewards Committee representing all thirteen unions, both blue and white collar, at the seventeen Lucas Aerospace plants in the UK. The purpose of the Combine Committee was simply to coordinate trade union policy on a company-wide basis.

"The Combine Committee is . . . a reflection of the growing awareness of those who work at the point of production, that traditional trade union structure based on geographical divisions and organised on a craft basis is incapable of coping with the new and complex problems of these large monopolies", the Lucas shop stewards later observed in the introduction to their Alternative Corporate Plan.

At first the Combine Committee lacked cohesion but, over a period of four and a half years, it steadily developed its organisational strength in the Lucas workplaces through action around problems arising from new technology, pensions and health and safety.

But, while the Combine Committee provided worthwhile services to the members and could be counted a success in many respects, it remained essentially a defensive organisation. Like the trade union movement as a whole the Committee invariably found itself **reacting** to management initiatives, usually after the event. When the Lucas management responded to a union occupation of a plant to prevent its closure, by vandalising the machinery and setting fire to the plant, the Lucas workers began to look for new forms of struggle that could more directly challenge the company's corporate strategy.

After frustrating efforts to enlist the aid of the then Labour government and to draw upon the resources of academic 'experts', the Combine Committee turned back to its own members.

As Shop Stewards Convenor, Mike Cooley, relates it in his book *Architect Or Bee? The Human/Technology Relationship*:

> "I have never doubted the ability of ordinary people to cope with these problems, but not doubting is one thing, having concrete evidence is something quite different. That concrete evidence began to pour into us within three or four weeks. In a short time we had a hundred and fifty ideas of products which we could make . . . with the existing machine tools and skills we had in Lucas Aerospace. We elicited this information through our shop stewards' committees via a questionnaire."[1]

Cooley explains that the questionnaire was designed to make the respondents think about their skill and ability, the environment in which they worked and the facilities available. They were to see themselves both as consumers and as producers, and to consider the use value of products as well as their exchange value.

In January 1976, after eighteen months' discussion, the Combine Committee released a report describing one hundred and fifty specific products that it was technically feasible to produce within Lucas Aerospace. Of course, Lucas management refused to consider the Plan and the British Labour government energetically avoided declaring itself. But the process of formulating the Plan and campaigning for its implementation created new knowledge and action capabilities amongst the Lucas workers and shifted the ground of their struggle to retain jobs in their industry by forcing management onto the defensive.

Since the release of the Plan, the Lucas workers have gone on to develop working prototypes of some of their proposals such as the road-rail vehicle, established a support organisation at the North East London Polytechnic called the Centre for Alternative Industrial and Technological Systems, and actively carried their experiences to other workers throughout Britain and overseas.

Their example has had a wide impact on the British working class movement. Workplace based multi-union combine committees are now functioning in a number of key industry sectors. At a recent meeting in London on workers' plans, nineteen combine committees were represented.

What is most significant about these intervention campaigns is the growing consciousness and involvement of increasing numbers of workers around the idea that they should have some say in how the resources they create are used and developed.

In the British context they have had a number of important results:

- they raise the sights of workers beyond traditional defensive unionism to think about the broader social implications of investment policies;
- by so raising consciousness and understanding they make workers better able to resist management efforts to intensify exploitation through economic and technological mystification;
- they have encouraged important links between shop stewards in manufacturing industry and unionists in the public sector (now 55% of all unionists in the UK), and between semi-skilled and skilled workers and technical staff workers;
- they have created much closer links between leading groups of unionists in the combine committees and various social action movements and community groups; and,
- they open up new possibilities of international worker solidarity against the transnational strategies of the global corporations.

Technological Change And Workers' Intervention In Norway

My second example is from the quite different social and political environment of Norway.

Most public debate on the social implications of computer-based information technology has been dominated by two issues: the protection of personal privacy and the unemployment effects of microelectronics.

In the Scandinavian countries, however, much greater attention has been given to the impact on the content of jobs and the environment of the workplace. As early as 1967 Norwegian trade unions began to include the study of computers in the workplace in their training courses.

A number of negative effects of computer technology were observed by the Norwegian unions:

- in many cases increased work load and surveillance of workers;
- the loss of the creative use of skills and work experience for large groups of workers;
- the creation of boring and stressful jobs for others, particularly women workers;
- the disruption of social contacts within the workplace; a marked polarisation of the workforce into a minority with highly skilled technical jobs and a majority with less responsible and less fulfilling work; and,
- the loss of union power in internal negotiations with management.

They also realised that traditional defensive union strategies could at best achieve only generous redundancy agreements, not halt the loss of jobs and the deskilling and trivialisation of work.

The challenge of new technology to the union movement is to carry democracy into the workplace as the only sure way of ensuring that the far-reaching social consequences of new technology are brought under some degree of social control. The Norwegian unions saw this as meaning, at least initially, a major educational effort to demystify the technology and to clearly pose the questions: who is using the technology, in whose interests, and for what purpose?

The Norwegian Metal Workers Union established workplace study groups of shop stewards and union activists with the aim of building up a base of understanding amongst its members. Then, in January 1971, the union began an unusual research project. Instead of commissioning outside 'specialists' to research the workplace impact of computer technology, the union organised its own members to investigate their work environment and develop their own criteria for evaluating proposals for technological and systemic change.

The project aimed at both building up a long term strategy for the national union, and developing methods and a knowledge base at workplace level to allow members to intervene in plans to introduce new technology **before** they are implemented. It was based on the premise that the acquisition of knowledge leading to an increased action capability is best achieved through action itself.

The project had far-reaching effects on subsequent developments within the Scandinavian union movements.

- it triggered off knowledge-building processes at workplace level and then demands for participation in system design in the Norwegian unions generally, and soon also in the Swedish and Danish unions;
- it led to demands for Data Agreements between unions and employers which sought to establish the rights of union members to full information and participation from the very first stages of system planning and design (the first such Data Agreement was won in early 1974 by the Askim Chemical Workers' Union);
- it reasserted the primacy of workplace organisation within the union movement, leading to the election of several hundred specially trained, on-the-job union 'Data Stewards' throughout Norwegian industry; and,
- it resulted in the inclusion of "systems employed for planning and effecting work" within the scope of the new Norwegian Workers Protection and Working Environment Act.

This Act, and the Data Agreements that now cover about 90% of Norwegian workplaces employing organised blue or white collar workers, focus on desired **system properties** that take into account the work environment and social implications of new technology, and the **system development** process. They establish workers' rights to full information, participation in system planning and development, training for effective participation, and local agreements at workplace level.

The existence of the Act and the Data Agreements do not in themselves guarantee that workers will enjoy these rights. But, through the development of participatory research projects in the workplace, the Norwegian unions have gained important insights into the necessary conditions for extending their formal rights into new areas of rapid change and then turning those formal rights into real exercised rights.

Knowledge Is Power ?

These two cases are examples of working people developing their own critique of corporate power and strategies in a very practical way that leads directly to concrete alternatives and new forms of organisation and struggle.

"Knowledge is power", the old adage tells us. But our common sense, which is often more reliable than conventional wisdom, tells us that this is not so. There are many things of which we know but which we do not have the power to affect.

The Italian socialist philosopher, Antonio Gramsci, suggested that "all men [sic] are intellectuals"[2]. He distinguished between what he called "traditional" intellectuals, the scholars and scientists who produce "official" knowledge and who are inevitably linked to specific dominant class formations, and "organic" intellectuals who are the thinking and organising persons in any class. These people are not usually recognised as being capable of creating knowledge – they are the union activists, the community organisers, the village leaders. Gramsci pointed out that, in these terms, the working class can and does produce its own intellectuals. One of the functions of those involved in organised working class politics, he suggested, should be to make links between radical "traditional" intellectuals and "organic" intellectuals, and foster amongst the former a recognition of the workers' right to create both knowledge and theory.

Radical social scientists have created important new knowledge about the ways in which transnational corporations serve the class interests of some sections of society at the expense of others. But it is not enough that we simply know about the social consequences of private corporate power. This knowledge does not give us the power to deal with the threat it poses.

However, if working people can connect this knowledge with the practical problems of their working lives, it might help them to transform their defensive union struggles and directly challenge the concrete reality of corporate power as they face it.

Participatory Research And Workers' Intervention

The development of processes within the union movement which can transform defensive union struggles into campaigns by workers to intervene in the decisions that vitally affect their working lives, should be a basic element in any effort to assert direct democratic control over corporate decision-making.

In both our examples of worker intervention campaigns, some form of "participatory research" as a method of social investigation and collective knowledge production was an integral part of the process of transforming the workers' defensive struggles into a conscious attempt to intervene. What are some of the typical characteristics of participatory research that make it a useful part of the intervention process?

The actual term "participatory research" arose from Third World development experience and owes much to the educational thought of Paulo Freire. In the struggle to break the bonds of neo-colonialism, the one-way, detached, elite methods of Western social research were obviously irrelevant to many of the urgent and immediate problems of economic under-development and social disintegration. A more engaged process of social investigation with the potential to mobilise and develop local social resources was sought. As Budd Hall of the International Council of Adult Education has put it:

> "The Third World's contribution to social science research methods represents an attempt to find ways of uncovering knowledge which works better in societies where interpretation of reality must take second place to changing that reality."[3]

Over recent years the International Council of Adult Education has encouraged and supported an international network on participatory research, linking autonomous project teams in Canada, the Netherlands, Tanzania, Venezuela, and India. Out of the workshops and seminars conducted through this network a body of literature on participatory research has developed, based on practical experiences in scores of community and workplace projects around the world. While heavily weighted towards Third World experiences, this literature can offer some guideposts to assist the investigative stage of worker intervention campaigns in our own context.

Participatory research has been described as a three pronged activity involving: a **method** of social investigation with the direct participation of those facing a common problem; a **process** of education or consciousness raising for those involved who develop new knowledge of society and new skills of investigation and analysis; and a means of taking **action** to develop new forms of struggle and organisation with which to more effectively confront the common problem. It acknowledges that any social research process has political implications and aims to empower people to investigate their own situation rather than remain dependant on professional researchers.

Characteristics Of Participatory Research

In all cases the project would be of direct use to the workers or community involved, being based on what is perceived as a problem by them. Thus participatory research projects typically start with very concrete often short-term problems and develop towards larger industry-wide or social issues. The learning experience integral to the process and the potential action outcome are often more important than a product such as a report or publication that might result from the project.

The project would also aim to activate the people involved through their own direct participation in all stages from formulating the problem to interpreting the findings and discussing appropriate action. By so doing the project would seek to free the creative potential of the participants and to mobilise the internal resources of the union, group of workers or community involved.

Participatory research projects also aim, as Mike Cooley's description of the Lucas shop stewards questionnaire illustrates, to be dialectical in nature, with new collective knowledge being created through the interaction of research and experience, action and reflection.

The method places great emphasis on releasing the participant's conscious and tacit knowledge about their own work situation. Obviously, the people who work in a particular industry know a very great deal about it, though the division of labour within the industry usually means that their knowledge is very fragmented. By involving workers in the industry, a participatory research project draws upon their considerable knowledge as a major source of information.

While participatory research aims first to activate those directly involved in the project, it also aims to create knowledge useful to other workers facing similar problems. Co-operation with other groups of workers in the same industry, in different unions or even in other industries, and with 'outside' community groups where appropriate, should be a part of the project. For this reason the presentation of data in forms accessible to other workers and related communities is important.

In practice most participatory research projects involve the assistance of an 'outside' researcher or resource organistion. This is probably particularly true of workplace projects where time off to work on the project may not be possible, even with the official support of a union, and the involvement of most of the participants would therefore be limited to their spare time.

The role of the 'outside' researcher or organisation as both a catalyst and a resource person can be extremely demanding. It would typically involve:

- assisting the group to establish its goals and keep them in sight throughout the project;
- assisting the group to tap outside resources of information or skills when its own internal resources are inadequate;
- making suggestions about suitable research methods and tools; and,
- guiding the project by pointing out pitfalls, posing options, and providing encouragement while at the same time being prepared to be led by the group.

The 'outside' researcher's role is particularly important during the first stage of a project, but should lessen as the group's internal resources are built up. Swedish educationist, Ingvar Werdelin, puts it like this:

> "The very philosophy behind participatory research demands that the participants are called upon to use their own capacities. Not all participants in a research project possess the skills and other pre-requisites for this from the very beginning, but the researcher must train them whenever necessary by presenting facts, by discussing research methodology, by informing them about ways in which knowledge and skills can be acquired. A fundamental aim of the research supervision must be that [the researcher] prepares the participants in such a way that they can take over the work themselves when [s/he] leaves the group."[4]

Participatory research projects in industry are likely to be initiated in several different ways:

- a group of workers such as a shop stewards or delegates committee might initiate a project itself and seek the assistance of an 'outside' researcher or resource organisation;
- a union might commission an 'outside' researcher or organisation to assist in establishing a project involving a particular group or section of its members; or,
- the researcher or organisation might propose the project to a union or group of unionists, perhaps in response to a request for a conventional research project to be undertaken on behalf of the union.

However the project is initiated, it is important that the participants are able to determine their own research methods, evaluate the project throughout, and change it in the light of their experience if they think it necessary.

Participatory research is not advanced here as some magical formula that will invariably lead to the kind of challenge to corporate power that I have posed as necessary. It does, however, offer unions and community groups another means of developing and mobilising the capabilities of their members to analyse specific needs, goals, demands, problems and opportunities within their own experience, and initiate new struggles and potentially more effective forms of organisation. Participatory research is not a strategy for combating the pervasive power of private capital any more than conventional political economic research is. But it does offer a process for mobilising the human resources that are essential to any such strategy.

Having earlier suggested that participatory research methods may provide the link between the daily life problems of ordinary working people and the analysis of transnational corporate power, I would finally emphasise the importance of developing our research, analysis and action at **both** micro and macro levels. For too long unions and other social justice movements and democratic political parties have made only a rhetorical commitment to grassroots organising and mobilisation. It is essential that we redress the balance now.

The importance of this balance has been clearly stated by one leading exponent of participatory research with experience in Tanzania and Canada:

> "Effective action is based on effective analysis. Participatory research can produce detailed knowledge about the ways in which certain social conditions function, but some kinds of information are only known outside the [workplace or] community. The ideal situation would appear to be a combination of a political-economy view with the detailed and mobilising potential of participatory research."[5]

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The Refuges - learning through struggle

The establishment and proliferation of women's refuges throughout the country has had a great impact on the lives of thousands of women and children who use their services each year. But this impact has not been limited to refuge residents. Christine Baxter talks to Heather Saville, who has been involved with New South Wales refuges for some time, about the effects of refuges upon their workers.

Can you explain a little about how individual refuges are organised?
Refuges are very new, having been first funded under the Whitlam government in 1975. In fact, one refuge in Sydney and one in Melbourne had opened without any government money before then. There are now 33 funded refuges in New South Wales and over 100 throughout Australia. They represent a variety of political perspectives and, as a result, there are a number of management structures. The feminist refuges, who have played an enormously influential role in the political development of 'the refuge movement', have always operated as collectives. Others have opted for less worker participation in decision-making, and often function as management committees to whom workers are answerable.

The difficulties which this form of management have encountered, coupled with the possibility for worker-participation which collectives offer, have meant that the issue of worker control is now regarded as an important one throughout the broad refuge movement. An exception must be made in the case of the small number of church-run refuges, where it is substantially more difficult to make changes because of the centrally-controlled system.

What advantages, in an educational sense, do collectives offer workers?
Well, I would argue that they should, and can, offer advantages not only to the workers but to the women in the house as well. Collectives should offer the opportunity for people to express their responses to issues and problems, to think through an argument rather than simply react, to gain confidence that their opinion is valid, and to have a real part in decision-making. Collectives also assume a responsibility on the part of individual members to express their views and concerns, and provide the possibility for these concerns to be taken seriously. This can result in individuals gaining self-confidence and self-knowledge on a number of levels, and in everyone benefiting from different perspectives. I'm a great believer in 'group wisdom' being an improvement over 'individual wisdom'.

Collectives are a conscious attempt to develop less exploitive and non-hierarchical organisational structures. They're a response to the existing power relations in society, whereby the weak have things decided for them, and an attempt to offer an alternative. As we've had virtually no practice at functioning in this way it often seems very difficult. It *is* very difficult. In the short run it's apparently inefficient. Things take longer to be done: decisions take longer to be made than if one person was 'in charge'. *But* people do learn many things through the process, and despite the frustrations and delays and mistakes I would still argue that in macro terms it is efficient.

It's a learning and re-evaluation process for everyone involved. I've had to accept that there are other ways of doing things than the way which seems immediately obvious to me, and that maybe some things don't actually matter anyway. Many women are now stronger, less dependent, more self-confident and therefore more capable of managing their own lives and developing further in masses of ways, as a result of that collective decision-making process.

How are jobs done within collectives?
In a variety of ways. Obviously for there to be any reality at all to the principle of collectivity, it must mean a sharing of knowledge and information, otherwise it's a collective in name only. Job rotation is one way that these skills can be learned. Individuals undertake to be responsible for a specific area of refuge work, such as legal aid, housing, etc, for a clearly defined time. They then move to a different area to learn that, but in each case have access to others for support and assistance.

This assumes a number of things. One, that the person responsible for a specific area does do the job, and in such a way that others can locate the information even if she's not around. It also assumes that others will take responsibility for her area at times when she isn't working. Such a sense of two-way responsibility is central to the efficient functioning of a collective.

You've talked about educational possibilities within the refuge. Do refuges use outside agencies for in-service training?
There are a variety of ways that refuges have devised to learn what they need to know. One refuge organised weekly training in basic counselling techniques for all workers; several have participated in a series of legal education workshops covering areas they deemed important to refuge work: some have been involved in seminars on dealing with drug and alcohol problems.

There is a very strong anti-professionalisation feeling throughout the refuge movement, which seems on the whole to cross many political boundaries. Social workers, psychologists, nurses and other 'professionally-trained' people have worked and do work in refuges. Some of their training is certainly useful in some aspects of refuge work; some is not relevant at all; and certainly there are many areas where their training wouldn't be of any assistance whatever.

The argument is not that 'professionals' should not work in refuges, but that being formally trained is in itself insufficient

qualification to do so, and may well be a hindrance, because of the role expectations that this training has imbued.

Another way of learning that has been really important in the development of a refuge movement, and therefore of a political consciousness, is the three-monthly state refuge conferences. These have provided a forum where both specific refuge, and broader political, issues can be discussed. The conferences are entirely autonomous – one refuge undertakes to organise a conference, and anyone is welcome to submit agenda items. Some results of these conferences are that people learn to speak in large meetings, to develop theoretical analysis, often based on practical experience, and perhaps most importantly, gain a sense of group solidarity.

You've talked of 'the refuge movement'. Can you give other examples of how this sense of identity or group solidarity developed?

Yes. The campaign to procure child care in refuges is a very good example. Under pressure the Federal government allotted each state $10 000 towards child care. New South Wales elected to do a study of the needs within refuges. Unlike many studies this one was done by people with refuge experience, and in conjunction with refuge regional representatives and involved all refuges directly. There were a number of important results:

- A greatly increased awareness of the legitimacy of child care within refuges developed.
- The involvement by refuge representatives at all stages of this study meant that many people gained a detailed knowledge of the limitations of child care, and the complexities of its funding structures in New South Wales. This knowledge has since been developed and used to advantage.
- To ensure that the report did not simply gather dust on departmental shelves, the group planned and executed a series of lobbying manoeuvres including intensive use of the media and interviews with government ministers to demonstrate the urgency of child care needs. The results were that both state and federal governments provided substantial funds for the first time for child care in refuges.

The success of this initiative has had far-reaching effects both on the individuals involved, and on the refuge movement as a whole. The level of understanding regarding the workings of bureaucracy, political lobbying and the importance of a united approach employing a diversity of tactics was greatly enhanced.

The structures that were developed then have been consolidated and built on since. State conferences have been one means of doing this, but so too has been the recognition of the need for consultation between all refuges. This consultation can now take place very rapidly if necessary. A network has grown up over the years which has been an important element in the recent struggle to ensure continued funding of women's services in the face of razor gang cuts. This network links all refuges regardless of political differences.

There have, of course, been other campaigns such as those organised around the issue of housing, which have had similar effects in terms of developing a sense of identity and unity of purpose. These campaigns have another benefit in that individual women discover that they can do all sorts of things that in the past they would never have contemplated. They also often discover that they know more about a particular issue than some supposed 'experts' on the subject, in itself a very strengthening revelation.

In six years the refuge movement seems to have come a long way.

Well it has, but that doesn't mean that all is wonderful. Leaving aside the never-ending problems of funding, and the very real differences in political perspectives between refuges, there are still masses of difficulties as far as working out the sort of things we've discussed.

For instance calling something a collective doesn't make it one. There are immense problems that encompass class, educational background and individual history, all of which become embroiled in the power relations of refuges. There are powerful people within collectives and there are those who feel unable to express themselves or who feel ignored when they do speak.

We all need more practice at listening, and really working through disagreements. We also need to understand that people don't always say what they mean or continue to mean it later. We haven't got all the problems solved. It's quite unrealistic to expect that we will. People who have a long history of being suppressed and powerless are not going to become strong, independent, reliable, innovative creatures overnight. Those who have no difficulty expressing themselves in front of twenty people need to learn to sit back in silence long enough to allow others the time to summon courage and speak. Sharing power seems to me to be a two-way process in this setting. Those who have it must be willing to share it, but those who haven't have to learn to take it. It isn't easy, and it isn't quick, but it is vital.

To me that's the really hopeful thing about refuges. They've made some awful mistakes, had some terrible rows and will certainly continue to do so. *But* they are one of the few groups that I know who really do try to get theory and practice together, even when individual self-interest or 'better judgment' is involved.

A good example of this is one refuge who a year ago decided in a traumatic upheaval to become totally staffed by ex-residents. There were many misgivings about the 'how' and 'when' of this event. There were far fewer about whether it was a legitimate aim. Most would argue that it is not necessary to have been a resident to gain from working in a refuge. That was not, however, the issue. The principle of women taking control, learning, taking risks, and gaining understanding and power was. The risks have been worth it. Gloom and doom has not descended. Funding submissions have been written. Things have continued to function, and much has been learned by everyone concerned.

FORCED TO RESIST

The Working Class and the Imposition of Schooling

Ian Davey. Pavla Miller.

Recently researchers have begun to discover what every state school teacher knows – the resistance of working-class children to schooling. Through the work of people like Willis and Corrigan in England we now have a much clearer picture of the nature of (male at least) working class experience of schooling and the place of education in working class culture.(1)

Given the development of compulsory state school systems in nineteenth-century capitalist societies, forms of resistance to them are not surprising. The school systems were based on bourgeois assumptions about behaviour and morality and compliance with their rules and regulations cut across many traditional working class practices. This frequently led to conflict between the school authorities and labouring people who were unable or unwilling to meet the demands of the new institution. However, resistance to state schooling implied the rejection of the **particular model** imposed and not a rejection of education as such, which was a very important element in nineteenth-century working class culture.

What follows is a discussion of working class educational experience inside and outside the state school system in late nineteenth-century Australia. It draws on recent research in Britain and North America and our own work on South Australia. In this colony, as in other parts of Australia, the move to establish a mass school system was formalised towards the end of the nineteenth century. The 1875 Act introduced a minimum compulsory attendance requirement for all children between the ages of seven and thirteen and brought the state schools under rigid departmental control. A subsequent act in 1891 abolished fees for elementary schooling and another in 1915 finally did away with the minimum attendance requirement and instituted full-time compulsory schooling for children between the ages of six and fourteen.

We would argue that the basic features of our analysis of the working class relationship to schooling apply in the other Australian colonies and, further, that they have important implications for an understanding of the role of state schooling in capitalist societies today.

Education and Working Class Culture

In "Really Useful Knowledge"(2) Richard Johnson elaborates on the complex of informal educational networks developed by the early nineteenth-century British working class and which, we may assume, immigrants brought with them to Australia. He identifies four aspects of radical education constructed by working people in response to the dilemma of prizing education itself while rejecting its provided form in capitalist society.

These included, first, a running critique of all forms of provided education from Sunday Schools through state-supported schools to Mechanics Institutes. Second, the development of an alternative education involving not only utopian visions of the future but "its own curricula and pedagogies, its own definition of 'really useful knowledge'...". Third, radicals conducted an important internal debate about education as a political strategy or as a means of changing the world. And fourth, they developed a vigorous and varied educational practice which, among other things, made very little distinction between the education of children and adults.

The main feature of this educational practice was its informality. Teaching and learning was not rigidly separated out from everyday life, nor was any distinction made between mental and manual labour. Men and women acquired useful knowledge as they acted, and taught their children out of accumulated experience. A knowledgeable neighbour, self-taught relative or a thoughtful workmate figure prominently as educators in working class biographies. Even more formal educational arrangements were closely integrated into everyday life. These included above all apprenticeship, one of the most valued sources of really useful knowledge, but also discussion groups in pubs and coffee houses, a network of small private schools, lectures by visiting speakers, and sometimes even the literacy taught in local Sunday schools. On many occasions, the labour movement undertook more ambitious educational ventures – most importantly the publication of radical newspapers.

In Australia, workers clearly stated the importance of education to their cause. In spite of widespread (if mostly unorganised) working class opposition to various aspects of **provided** schooling, labour leaders held high hopes for a state-provided free and compulsory system of education. In the labour press writers repeatedly called for education to liberate the working class from capitalist oppression. As one put it: "not the oppressors, but the want of knowledge by the oppressed as to their real power is the real reason why they have remained so long in bondage."

The strategy for the acquisition of such liberating knowledge included a variety of educational forms for working people of all ages. While it was important to "educate the buds of humanity before their minds are filled with the idea that they were born to be slaves as well as their fathers before them", this notion differed from the bourgeois conception of schooling in that education was not to stop at the end of childhood. Believing that "knowledge is power" one paper counselled working class youth:

> You will, after having left the primary school, where you have received only the merest rudiments of education, continue your studies . . . by attending the classes at mechanics' institutes, the University Extension Lectures, or whatever special means of education the locality affords. But by far the more important part of your education will be that which you will give yourself at home.(3)

Over the years, many proposals were made for such 'useful knowledge' to be transmitted in institutions controlled by the workers themselves. In South Australia in 1873, for example, workmen proposed to educate each other through a Mutual Improvement Society and eventually a Union College, which would invite outside lecturers and, undoubtedly, some of the many societies which helped to set up the United Labor Party took this form. Similarly, during the sitting of the Board of Enquiry into Technical Education in 1887-1888 it became evident that some unions were firmly in favour of Trades Hall administration and control of any technical education related to specific trades.

Yet, while these initiatives indicate that working people recognised the importance of controlling the form and content of education, they included the provided schools of the new state system among the educational resources available to them. In fact, throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, the organised labour movement (which mainly expressed the interests of skilled workers) actively supported the development of compulsory and free state school systems. It did so because its political strategy was one of seeking orderly social change within the accepted bounds of "legitimate" constitutional politics, and because it believed that the school system would produce a strong, self-conscious working class capable of reforming capitalism. Thus in 1891 in South Australia the newly formed political arm of the working class, the United Labor Party, helped to pass the Education Bill which made elementary schooling free as well as compulsory. As its newspaper declared, the Act would have far-reaching political consequences:

> The death knell of monopoly was sounded that moment the first righteous demand of labour received a concession in the shape of free education. Gradually the light of reason is being applied by the worker to problems which he before never had the temerity to grapple with, and the consequence is that the mask is being dragged off the rotten and inhuman system which afflicts all communities of the so-called civilised world.(4)

Organised labour's active support of public schooling was based on its belief that it was possible to win control of the state following the successful struggle to achieve universal suffrage. However, trapped within its reformist political perspective, it failed to make the connection between organisational forms and class power, which as Johnson shows, had been a feature of the critique of an earlier generation of radicals. As a result, it accepted as unproblematic the structure and social relations of the new state school systems.

This is particularly significant as the central feature of the "efficient" and "rational" model of bourgeois schooling was precisely the one that craft workers organised and struggled against in the workplace – specialisation and the division of labour under manufacturing capitalism as articulated by Adam Smith and the utilitarians. The essence of the centralised school system established in South Australia and elsewhere is that it wrested control of the teaching process out of the hands of the teachers and located it in the central administration. At best, this eliminated people who had no success in teaching the 3Rs; at worst, it transformed the teacher from craftsperson to a type of detail worker for the state under the oppressive supervision of the inspector. At the same time, it assailed another strongly held belief of working people – the right of parents to control the use of their children's time – by dictating the age and the period of time children were compelled to attend school.

Working Class Resistance to State Schooling

If the labour spokesmen failed to spell out the significance of specifically bourgeois features of the school system established in South Australia in 1875, their ramifications were not lost on those most directly affected. The teachers whose work was increasingly governed by central regulation and prescription and the parents who were forced to come to some accommodation with the demands of the new institutions expressed keen opposition to their loss of control. As we have suggested, the centrally controlled and hierarchically structured schools – which students were expected to attend regularly to be instructed in a standardized curriculum in age-graded classes – substantially changed the relationship of teachers and the working class clientele to schooling.(5)

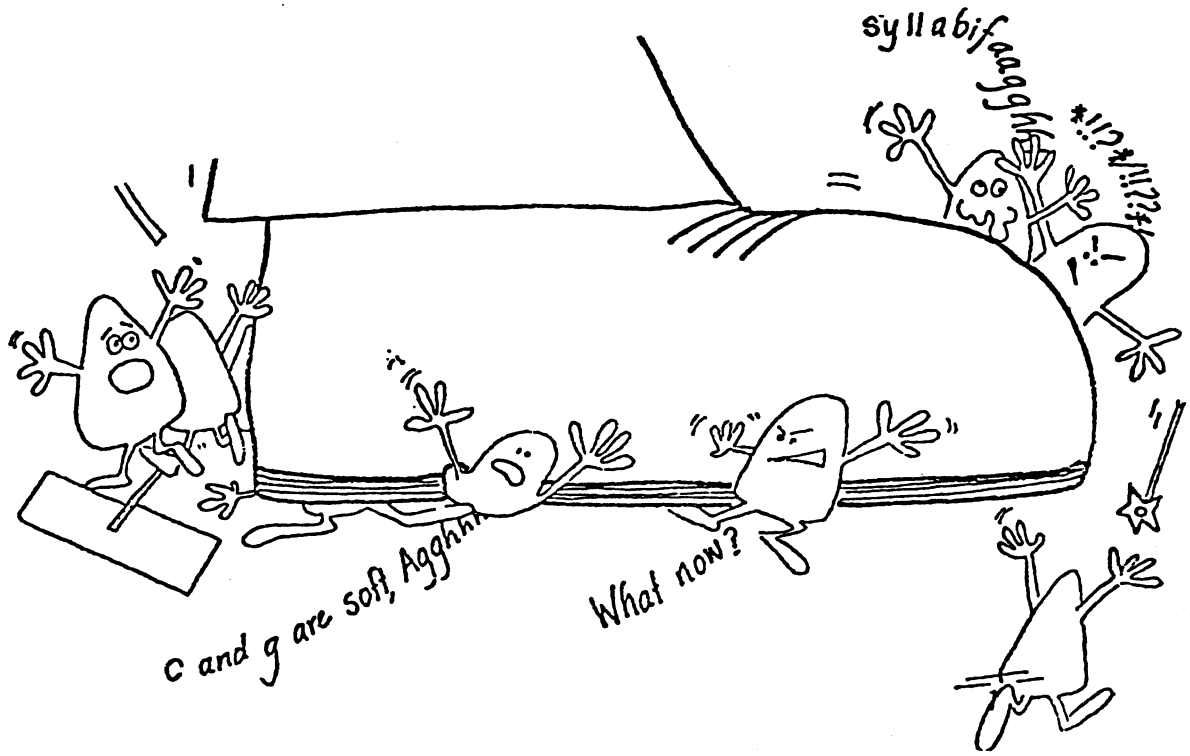
Teachers, used to controlling the content and form of their schools rankled under the excessive supervision of the educational experts in the state apparatus and often sided with the parents in their efforts to satisfy the contradictory demands of the school and the family economy. Working class parents and, indeed, many rural and petty bourgeois parents such as farmers, shopkeepers and small masters, were dependent on the casual labour of their children and were accustomed to making decisions about when and where their children would attend school. Not surprisingly, in a period when prolonged schooling had virtually no relevance to future job prospects of working-class children of both sexes, the battle for family survival took precedence. Children attended school when they were not required to work and attendance in both rural and urban areas was distinctly seasonal – peaking in the winter months and falling away in the spring and summer when the demand for child labour was greatest. Nevertheless, irregular attendance did not mean that most working-class families failed to share organized labour's enthusiasm for education. The vast majority of parents provided their children with a variety of educational experiences in the home and enrolled them in schools to take advantage of instruction when circumstances permitted.(6)

The conditions which affected regular attendance – poverty, seasonal and transient work patterns, insecurity of employment, sickness – remained just as potent determinants of family fortunes long after the passing of the "compulsory education" Act in 1875 as they were previously. Thus the redefinition of non-attendance as an infringement of the law forced many who relied on the help and earnings of their children to resort to a variety of more or less illegal devices to dodge compulsion. These ranged from restricting their children's attendance to the legal minimum of thirty-five days per quarter to obtaining false medical certificates, using a part of the child's earnings to pay the quarterly fine for non-attendance, or to enrolment in cheap and tolerant private schools.(7)

These small private schools which, for many years, competed with the state schools in working class areas, were a particular target of the education department administration. While it is important not to romanticize these institutions, they were an essential element in the working-class educational strategy, along with other forms of home-centred learning. Certainly some were simply neighbourhood childminding arrangements for the very young run by invalid relatives, older siblings or other people in need. Yet, most of them endeavoured to provide the basics of literacy and numeracy in settings which were much more attuned to the needs and rhythms of working-class life than the 'efficient' state schools. The education authorities denigrated cheap private schools for their use of 'outmoded' individual instruction, their intermixing of children of different ages and abilities and their use, as textbooks, of anything the parents might care to send. However, it was precisely the flexibility of this form of organisation which made it so attractive to working class parents: the tolerance of irregular attendance allowed children to attend as family circumstances allowed without cutting across the 'needs' of the school.

The legal attendance provisions not only led to conflict between parents and the education department, they created tensions in the age and sexual division of labour within families. School attendance often made it harder to make ends meet, and sometimes simply lengthened the pupil's working day – cows still had to be milked, chickens fed and messages delivered. Yet the children's decision not to attend school (or the parents' decision not to send them) could seriously threaten the welfare of the entire family. In the words of one contemporary observer, "continual truancy on the part of a child means a considerable amount of trouble to the parent... frequent visits from school inspectors, the receipt of notices to appear before the school board, and finally a summons to attend a police court, followed by the imposition of a fine or imprisonment in default."

Regular compulsory attendance was not the only point of contention between working class people and public schools. Riding on an avalanche of rules and regulations, the inspectorate attempted to eradicate many aspects of the children's behaviour and replace them by new ones – a different mode of timekeeping, dress, speech and morality. Realising that "the daily habits of the children are stronger than any rules unless the latter are constantly impressed and applied", the inspectorate tried to enforce discipline – defined as "general order of the school and utter subservience of the scholars to rule", even if it meant a relative neglect of school subjects. Many of these educators stoutly maintained that it was "of far greater importance to teach them habits of honesty, self-denial, and perseverance, than to drill them in the prescribed subjects."



In what amounted to a concerted attack on working class culture, the educationists encountered stiff – if largely unorganised – opposition. Working class children expressed open resistance to the regimen imposed on them by persistent disobedience and, even more graphically, by attempts to burn the schools down or at least to vandalise the buildings. Sometimes, open confrontation would be suppressed or avoided, only to be replaced by passive resistance. In the words of one exasperated inspector:

> Both in large and small schools the teachers are exhausting their energies in the effort to stimulate the children to take part in the lesson. The eager look, the alert mind, and the pupils' own question are the comparatively rare exception. Very often even the physical attitude of attention and work is wanting. In the absence of the real desire to know, the teachers in their haste are forced to use all the extrinsic motives, such as love of approbation and fear of detention after school hours.

Similarly, the attempt to standardize the children's language partly failed. Although an upper class dialect was honoured and codified through the examination systems as 'Correct English', children continued to speak in their own way out of school, often treating the unfamiliar 'Correct English' as another peculiarity of 'inside school' behaviour. As one inspector complained, in conventional despair, "it is no unusual thing in some parts of my district to hear children that speak fairly well while in school, drop into a style of speaking that is neither correct nor pleasant to hear as soon as they get into the playground."

The authorities' attempt to impose a new language on the children has been as unsuccessful as their efforts to inculcate one of the basic principles of 'efficient' schooling – the redefinition of school knowledge as private property. At the time of the establishment of the school system in 1875, one inspector severely criticised teachers for what he saw as the deplorable consequence of their over-emphasis on teaching and neglect of discipline.

> The effect of this most serious mistake is only too evident. The children hardly seemed to know that to copy from each other, or from books, which in many cases they placed openly on the desks were acts of dishonesty.

Over a century later, and despite diligent inspectors, supervision and countless examinations, many children still do not accept that their perfectly sensible learning strategy, rooted in working class approaches to co-operative education, constitutes 'cheating'.

Faced not only with persistent absenteeism but also with covert and overt resistance by working class children to the regimen of the state school, the school authority did two things: they tried to eliminate the 'inefficient' private schools, and attacked parents for failing to bring up their children properly. This amounted to an assault on the work patterns, habits, customs and attitudes – the culture – of working people.[8] In addition, it can be understood as an attempt to redefine the nature of childhood. Both took the form of an attack on the minimum attendance requirements which allowed parents to keep their children out of school for substantial periods each quarter, and its replacement by a dependency model of childhood in which formal schooling was the full-time activity of children. The authorities recast the casual labour of children and its associated irregular school attendance as a problem for the school to suppress – a problem of parental apathy and neglect – rather than as a necessity for the working class family.

Such actions led to the fostering, inside schools, of the moral and apparently neutral definition of working class patterns of life as a pathology: failure in school was a reflection of the personal failings of parents and children. Rigidly enforced routines, such as timetables and examinations, selected out certain categories of students as successful, necessarily ignoring the vicissitudes of child life, let alone the children's intellectual potential. These school practices helped to create a new commonsense category of 'intelligent children', one which seemed free from class bias and cultural factors. In reality, this 'neutral' category of successful pupils was largely determined by sustained and regular attendance at school, and this was itself shaped by the life experiences of the students outside school. Thus the poor, the sick, the residentially mobile, those unable or unwilling to master 'correct English' or to submit to the strict discipline of the school (the working class children, that is) – were, by definition, the group most likely to fail and to reject the school.

Conclusion

Our quick overview of the relationship between the working class and schooling in nineteenth century South Australia has emphasised several theoretical points which are equally useful in analysing contemporary capitalism, and which have often been neglected by both left and right wing analyses of the education system.

In the first place, schools are the sites of struggle. What we today identify as hidden curriculum was not hidden at all in the nineteenth century and was by no means spontaneously accepted by working class people. Although state schools occasionally received the unconditional blessing of labour leaders, who saw them as vehicles of social reform, it took the education department many years before working people started complying with the innovations such as regular school attendance. Even today, as every teacher knows, school authority has to be continually reasserted against vandalism, truancy and 'cheating', to name just a few examples.

Secondly, it is important not to romanticise working class culture and opposition to 'efficient' schools. Many people resisted school attendance because it imposed an additional burden on their already precarious existence. They did not prefer child labour to schooling, but saw no other way of feeding the family. Similarly, dame schools could be chosen as the lesser of two evils, rather than as an ideal working class educational institution.

In spite of their resistance to various aspects of schooling, there is abundant evidence that working class people put high value on education. In fact, they often attempted to use schools in an instrumental fashion – to acquire certain basic skills which would form the foundation of a lifelong self-education process, or would help them to get a job. For this they had to pay a price, regularly overlooked in the labour press: a prolonged and invidious participation in a closely controlled bourgeois institution, frequent failure, damaged self-esteem and often a profound hatred of systematic learning. Yet it would be incorrect to see schools merely as hegemonic bourgeois institutions. As Corrigan and Frith emphasise, "institutional incorporation is not necessarily ideological incorporation; working class experience, even of bourgeois institutions, is not bourgeois experience."(9) In other words, not only are the messages hidden curricula send to wealthy kids not the same as the ones sent to working class kids, but there is no guarantee that the ones specially tailored for working class kids won't be subverted by them into radically different conclusions.

Finally, we want to emphasise that because the schools are sites of struggle, the role of teachers is critical. The current tendency among reproduction theorists to assume that bourgeois ideology works with all the certainty usually ascribed to natural or biological processes implies that teachers are either (witting or unwitting) tools of the ruling class, or it consigns them to oblivion.(10) The logic of this theoretical stance is debilitating for both classroom teachers and the supporters of state schooling. In consequence, it can be – and is – used in attacks on state schooling by conservatives who, in line with their eighteenth-century economics, want to return state schools to their eighteenth-century role as charity schools. The left should not provide ammunition for such a dismantling of the school system, but join in the struggle to take over control of the form and content of educational institutions. In this struggle teachers are uniquely placed to co-operate with working class parents and students in the transformation of forms of resistance into political practice.

Footnotes

1 See Paul Willis, *Learning to Labour* (Saxon House, 1977; Paul Corrigan, *Schooling the Smash Street Kids* (MacMillan, 1979); For Australia, see D Ashenden et al. "Class and Education" *Discourse* 1, No. 1, 1980.

2 R Johnson, "Really Useful Knowledge", in J Clarke et al. *Working Class Culture* (Hutchinson, 1979). For Australia see B Bessant, "The Australian Labour Movement and Education Prior to 1914", *History of Education*, 3, No. 3, 1974 and "An Independent Working Class Education", *ANZHES Journal*, Vol 2, No 1, 1973.

3 *Our Commonwealth*, May 1887, p.371.

4 *Weekly Herald*, January 11, 1895.

5 See S Frith, "Elementary Education and Rational Schooling" in P McCann (ed.) *Popular Education and Socialization in the Nineteenth Century* (Methuen, 1977).

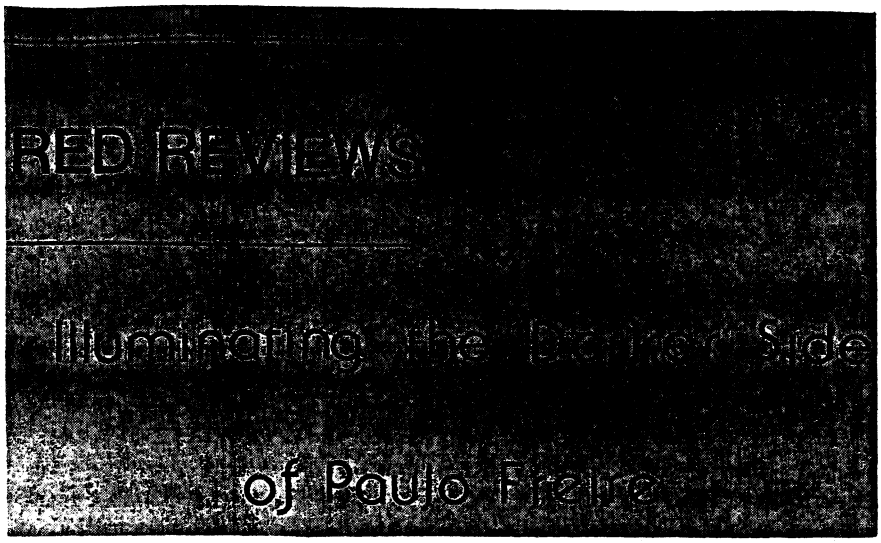
6 K Wimshurst, "Child Labour and School Attendance in South Australia", *Historical Studies*, 19, No 76, 1981. See also D Hogan, "Education and the making of the Chicago Working Class" in *History of Education Quarterly*, 18, No 3, 1978.

7 The documentation of the points made in the rest of this section can be found in P Cook, I Davey and M Vick, "Capitalism and Working Class Schooling in Late Nineteenth Century South Australia" *ANZHES Journal*, 8, No 2, 1979.

8 See R Johnson, "Notes on the Schooling of the English Working Class" in R Dale (et al.) *Schooling and Capitalism*, (Open University, 1976).

9 P Corrigan & S Frith, "The Politics of Youth Culture".

10 See R Johnson, "Three Problematics: Elements of a Theory of Working Class Culture", in Clarke, *Working Class Culture*; and Ashenden et al. "Class and Education".



Literacy and Revolution: the Pedgagogy of Paulo Freire, (ed) Robert Mackie, London: Pluto Press, 1980, pp ix, 166; $10.95 paperback.

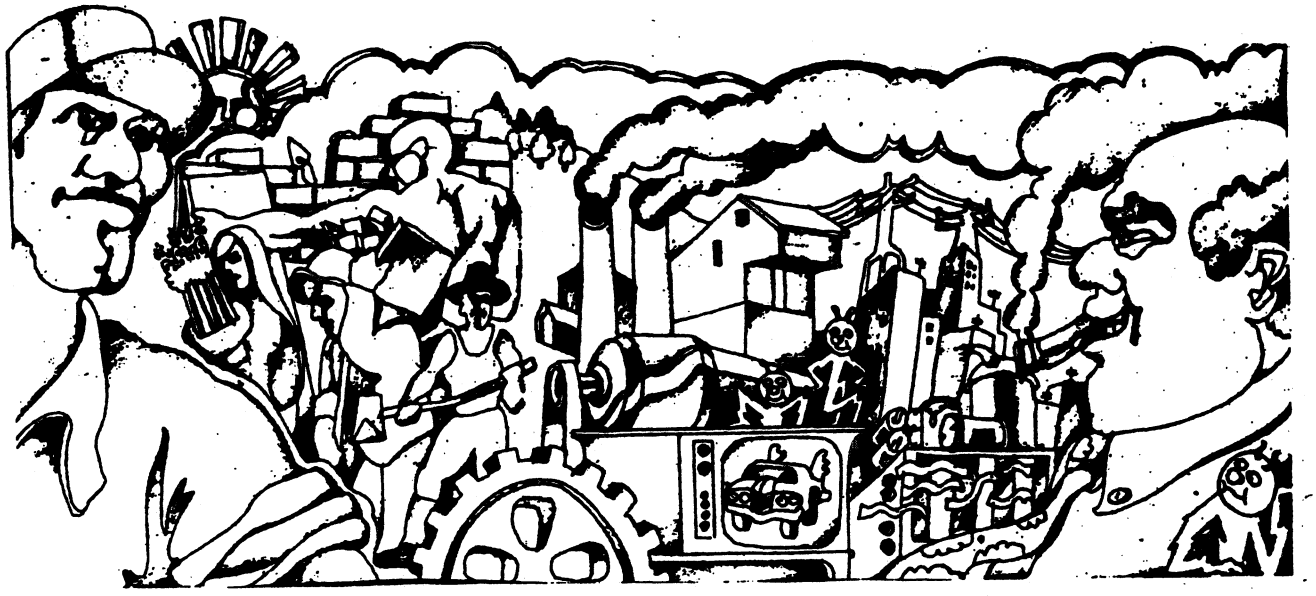
Paulo Freire's contribution to educational theory and practice must surely rank among the most important work ever produced in this area; at the very least there would be serious claim to regarding Freire as the most significant educational theorist and practitioner of the present century. Paulo Freire's writings, however, do him less than full justice. He has a peculiar way of making himself unnecessarily difficult to follow, both through the language he employs and through his ultimately unsuccessful attempts to juggle and integrate influences as disparate as Marxism and Christianity, Althusser and Sartre, Buber and Che Guevara. All too often Freire's works are put down in exasperation, put aside as being too difficult, or simply dismissed as the product of a muddled pseudo-revolutionary with little relevance to the western world: on the 'positive' side many tend to come away from Freire familiar with his famous "banking concept of education" but unclear of what else he has to offer. This is the reader's loss, but not necessarily the reader's fault.

Freire requires close, intensive, detailed study of the sort not many of us have the time to engage in. And this is where Bob Mackie's short and valuable collection of readings becomes important for us. *Literacy and Revolution: the Pedagogy of Paulo Freire* is the result of three years of close collaborative study and discussion of Freire, now manifested in eight chapters each dealing with one aspect of Freire's work, while the first and last chapters also attempt to integrate and make coherent Freire's total output. The result is not a gloss on Freire nor a parade of adulation. The essays are both expository and critical: the contributors attempt to tease out what Freire has to say, what problems confront his arguments and actions, and what remains and what is lost when the threshing has been completed.

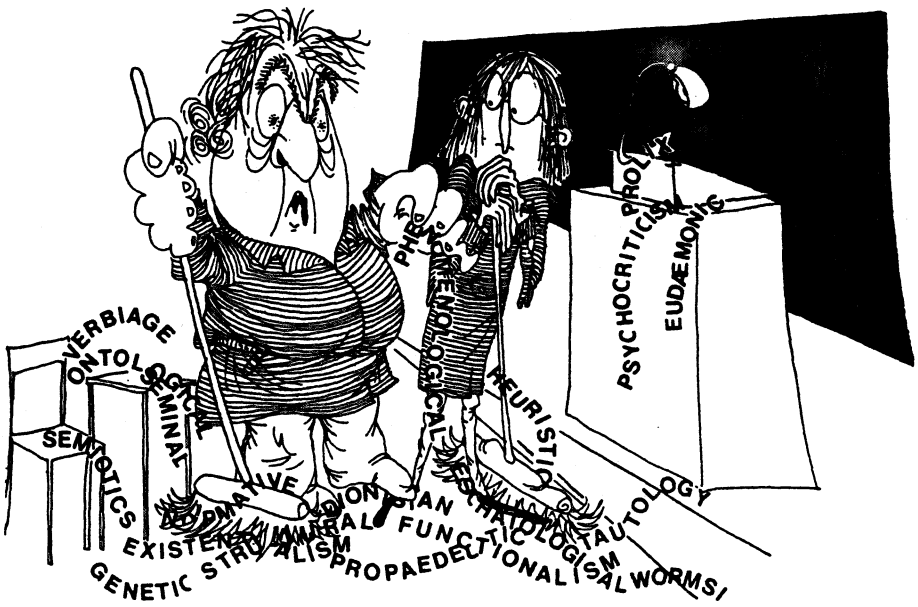
This is a book with something for everyone interested in Freire and in education. Primary school teachers will find plenty to dwell on in Barbara Bee's chapter: Clift Barnard places his discussion in the context of imperialism and underdevelopment; Michael Matthews attempts to illuminate some pretty dark corners in Freire's epistemology; Reg Connolly addresses himself to the notion of praxis; and Bob Mackie and Jim Walker in their three chapters provide the background to Freire's thought and action and a thoroughgoing critique of it as well.

In the final analysis this book is not a substitute for reading Freire – no secondary source is ever that – it's an aid to reading and understanding Freire, and an invaluable one at that. Read this book and then read Freire; or, read Freire and then read this book. Either way you'll find it the best thing that's happened with regard to understanding Freire since his original work was translated into English.

Kevin Harris



Working With Words – Literacy Beyond School by Jane Mace, Writers and Readers Publishing Co-operative, London, 1979, pp118.



"THEY WOULDN'T USE THEM LONG WORDS IF THEY HAD TO CLEAN UP AFTERWARDS"

In this book Jane Mace has attempted to examine the problem of adult literacy by presenting a largely descriptive account of the experiences of both the students and the tutors in the Cambridge House Literacy Project undertaken in South London during the 1970s. She herself was a tutor in the project. The discussion centres around the argument that literacy problems must be seen within their social context. To illustrate this, Mace draws heavily upon statements made by the students themselves – an approach that should be encouraged in educational research.

Mace argues that the problems the adults in the project face with literacy relate to the fact that society has treated them as socially inferior and inadequate beings rather than to the purely technical problem of mastering script. The school system had failed these students. They were alienated by authoritarian teaching methods and/or irrelevant curricula. They were made to feel like failures both inside the school system and in the wider society. This sense of failure was carried on into the adult world where illiteracy was equated with low intelligence. She argues that the main thing that the students had to overcome was this socially-instilled sense of inferiority and fear of the written word. The adult student didn't only have to attain a reasonable technical mastery of script, but, much more importantly, develop their confidence in using this knowledge in everyday situations.

Mace uses comments from the students to reinforce her comments. For example, one student said (p 50) –

> "I think I had a terrible complex, you know inferiority complex over it .... I used to go into a shell, sort of thing. If someone was giving me a piece of paper with an address on it to read, I would freeze and I wouldn't ever see what was on it. You know, somebody would say, 'do you know where that is?', and I wouldn't say anything. .... I wouldn't attempt to look, to focus properly, because I never had the confidence in myself that I would know what was on there."

Mace points out that the commonly held view of illiteracy being a state where an individual cannot read or write at all is far too narrow. Most illiterates, she states, can in fact sign their name and do other limited written tasks, but they cannot express themselves via the medium of written communication. This narrow view of literacy leads to the misconception of seeing literacy teaching as a simple, technical, easily measurable process that takes people from a stage of complete non-literacy to the point where they can read. On the contrary, literacy teaching should be a much more complex process concerned mainly with helping individuals overcome socially instilled inhibitions so that they can use written expression as a means for communicating their ideas.

The teaching techniques advocated by Mace place an emphasis on the role of the student in selecting material for study of relevance to themselves. In the project, students were encouraged to express their own ideas in written form. Sometimes the tutors wrote what the students wanted to say and together they edited the passages. In this way, the students started to learn about the technical aspects of language. Mace argued that this also helped them to overcome their fear of the written word. She also expressed a strong concern that the relationships between students and tutor should be democratic and equal – a twoway process of communication. There seems to be some attachment to the ideas of Paulo Freire.

There are some weaknesses in the book. For one, she tends to imply that "dyslexia" is a euphemistic label attached to illiterates rather than a genuine problem. However, it is obvious from research in the last few decades into behaviour of the central nervous system and also from research into the computer and artificial intelligence, that many of the simplest feats of co-ordination achieved by a human being are in fact complex tasks. There is validity in Ma[illegible]gument but she has a tendency to "wear blinkers" at times.

The analysis is weak. There is no apparent theoretical framework that would serve to link the ideas expressed, place them in a wider context for analysis, and provide a rational basis for action. Despite this, the documentation of the experiences of the students and the description of the teaching techniques used would be extremely useful to anyone working in the field. The weight given to the social context of the problems faced, and the emphasis upon pedagogy similar to techniques advocated by Paulo Freire, must be applauded.

Peter Frost

ABOUT RED

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