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education and democracy

A socialist alternative for the twenty first century

THE HILLCOLE GROUP

RETHINKING EDUCATION AND DEMOCRACY

A socialist alternative for the twenty-first century

the Hillcole Group

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SECTION I

PRINCIPLES FOR LONG TERM CHANGE

The global context

Most education proposals for the 21st century assume our educational system will remain much the same and that change will come largely in terms of growth: more students, better funding, wider access. By contrast we assume that the 21st century will need an education system very different from that of today, if only because every country will face an explosion in communications, a continuing crisis in employment, growing ecological damage and its own escalating interdependence on the rest of the world.

If education systems are also to assist in protecting democracy in the face of authoritarian governments, whether ruled by military regimes or powerful multinational corporations, education will have to help people to use the new technology to take control of their own lives rather than have it used to control them. For this, information free from manipulation by governments and media empires is essential to enable people to form their own opinions, and needs an education service accountable to the community, to ensure it.

If democracy is to be developed as well as protected, we have to involve growing numbers in decision-making for communities as well as in campaigns to ensure a sharing of useful, fairly paid work for everyone rather than full-time work for some but unemployment or poverty-wages for millions. In industrially advanced countries such sharing would be part of a drive to control an economic system that fuels a runaway gap between over-rich and a growing 'underclass' with an increasingly insecure 'middle'. As the 21st century continues, such drives will increasingly be allied to struggles for social and economic justice in countries where the majority are visibly poor, many without their most basic rights.

Growth can also be expected in the numbers supporting a drive for sustainable economies where society's needs can be met without destruction of the earth's resources that results from over-stimulated consumerism for the purpose of unlimited profit-making. Society will have to see that more time and money and training are spent on renewing and reusing resources to fend off wars over water, wood, fuel and land, to save vanishing species and stop the poisoning of the world by organisations dedicated to profit without concern for the consumers' health, society's welfare or planetary survival.

In short, the 21st century will see our prevailing capitalism being re-questioned by liberal, radical, socialist and ecological movements and ultimately challenged by large sections of world opinion.

The classical socialism of the past was based upon the poor condition of the industrial working class. In future, socialism will be related to everyone, for its aim is not merely to end gross economic inequality; it is also to sustain the world itself, as it gradually becomes apparent that unlimited profit-led development and exploitation of people and non-renewable resources threaten everyone's stability. A world where 358 individual billionaires own as much as 45 per cent of the world's population¹ (as is now the case) is not likely to survive unquestioned.

Behind our long-term education proposals, therefore, is not merely the challenge to capitalism but simple human survival.

Britain's system: a 30 Years' War

Seen within this wider context, Britain's current hierarchical education system with its narrow, elitist preoccupations, seems even more inadequate than it does when viewed within its own national context. The country's economic and social policies have been notoriously short-term and its education plans bedevilled in every field and at every age by elaborations of long-standing historic social divisions from which Britain seems chronically unable to free itself. Once upon a time these divisions were addressed directly, even if remedies proved inadequate; today they are rarely discussed by leading political forces. Indeed, during the 1990s, many proposals (from political parties, think tanks, media

columnists) have given positive encouragement to disregard the unequal structures of the system, and have urged new forms of attainment selection and segregated curricula—the very policies that helped sustain divisions in the past.

Today's argument is often misrepresented as a war between loony, liberal radicals and sound, back to basics traditionalists. But this is a false dichotomy because no one person's or group's position conforms to this caricature on either side. More important, a less superficial analysis would show that for the last thirty years there has been a war between a weak social democratic pragmatism, played out in the 1960s and 1970s, and rigid conservative dogmatism, dominating the 1980s and 1990s. Although each made a few positive changes, neither was really successful.

Today a truce is being called on terms far more favourable to conservatism, which started as crude anti-egalitarianism strictly concerned with preserving and increasing social and academic superiority for favoured minorities, but later developed into a grand political strategy of imposing privatisation and capitalist market principles on the education system as a whole.

This was not because 'privatisation' and 'marketisation' ensure better education, but because both reduce public spending on public services and enable savings to be transferred to the private and corporate pockets of the better-off. Consequently, the education system is mimicking the economic: the rich getting richer, while those at the lower half of any education 'league' get poorer, their condition showing itself in deteriorating facilities, increasing alienation and continuing high levels of dropping out. At the same time those in the middle are ever more insecure and doubtful about the quality of the education that they are getting. There is widespread concern as to whether anyone will be able to afford education after 18 in the 21st century or whether our public education service will even exist.

The attack on education is part of the deconstruction of the welfare state (to which a generality of the political leadership now seems to be subscribing) constructing in its place a new contracting post-welfare

system, combined with a heavy increase in moralising, which places the blame on those the system is failing. There sometimes seems to be a competition at the top to establish supremacy in tough talking when it comes to the education of the majority, whether it is tracking down 'bad' teachers, chastising 'bad' parents or punishing 'bad' children, along with rooting out 'bad' schools. Everyone wants higher standards of education but can we honestly say that the structure and operation of the education system and the context in which schools operate are as irrelevant as we are now being asked to believe?

Contradictions in the new consensus

Back in 1993 we pointed out that 'in a sort of parody of "permanent revolution", the government is beginning to destroy those elements of its earliest achievements which now appear insufficiently radical' (Hillcole, 1993 c, p. 1). The accelerating pace of the government's educational changes was beginning to undermine its earlier changes deemed insufficiently destructive of some imaginary progressive conspiracy.

Now the hunt for conspirators against 'standards' within the once neutral inspectorate, renamed OFSTED (Office of Standards in Education), finds this mechanism itself producing its own internal debates within an office that is supposed to safeguard the system from fashion, foible and failure, but is increasingly being seen as the mouthpiece of old conservatism (Mortimore, 1997).

Temporarily, conservatism may have the upper hand, but there are deep disagreements within its ranks. On the one hand there are the 'Black Paper' elitists², often little Englanders, who believe the British private system leads the world, and state education (except for certain grammar schools) is a distinct second best. For their own children almost all major Conservative politicians and top civil servants, for example, opt out of any experience of the state system used by 93 per cent of the nation.

For some in this group this is part of their commitment to Britain as a low-wage economy, competing successfully with the 'third world',

workers needing only to learn how to assemble components for multinational factories, or run the service sector increasingly required to provide for the better-off. The generality of the population does not need extensive, expensive schooling; they need education for service, obedience, basic skills and learning in socio-economic and social matters that inculcates 'the right kind' of thinking. As they did in the first industrial revolution.

There is another kind of conservative, including several industrial gurus and business people, unimpressed by attainment selection, and a few large multinationals, supportive of comprehensive schools. And although the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) may be committed to a right-wing economic strategy and a capitalist future for the world, it too remains largely aloof from nostalgia for some imagined high quality past and at least attempts to be robustly enterprising. It has invested its hopes in a 'cultural revolution' of sorts (*Towards a Skills Revolution*, 1989) by backing a programme that would encourage more individual self development and lifetime learning, focusing on a multi-skilled future for as many as possible rather than on a return to the selective past for some. This kind of conservative, to be found in all political parties, has a vested interest in the European Union and the imagined discipline of co-operative capitalism that until recently has produced highly skilled workers and higher rates of employment in many European countries.

The proposals of this camp are, however, marked by a conspicuous fault line between aspiration and the realities of what British business and industry, left to their own short-term priorities, have ever been able to deliver. Universal training policy sits uncomfortably alongside the unlikely prospect of UK employers being able to incorporate the unemployed at any level in any numbers, young or old, with or without qualifications. By itself British industry, which even resists paying a tiny levy for training, cannot achieve modernisation without putting a great deal more of its own investment into education and training; and it might be short-sighted to continue pretending it can.

Nor are the CBI's own publications optimistic. On training they leave a reader worried about the retention of the largely unsuccessful Training

and Enterprise Councils (TECs), Local Enterprise Councils (LECs) in Scotland), which administer training and enterprise programmes, with their 'uneven quality' and great 'disparity' in approach, as well as the market's failure to use school leavers, whatever their qualifications (CBI, 1994, p. 20). CBI optimism about the new people-centredness of industry is belied by its admission that there is indeed a 'two-tier workforce' (CBI, 1994, p. 24). The highly skilled might be secure but the rest are to be used and then discarded.

Workers of the 1990s know that the much-trumpeted 'flexibility' of the 1980s has turned out to be a euphemism for disposability in the 1990s. Conservatism, as we approach the new millennium, has little to offer other than its own internal bickering between a 'nationalist' and 'European' version of capitalism, neither providing a long-term workable alternative in either education or the economy.

New Labour: How new a policy?

Labour's decisive win in the general election of 1997 provides a wonderful opportunity for a fresh start, despite the fact that Labour policy pronouncements maintain a detachment from commitment in many of the most debated areas of education, while suggesting that radical change is possible. Instead, they offer a soothing scenario as in the economy at large: socio-economic change of the degree and kind required to end polarisation and economic insecurity by means that are wholly 'benign' and involve no real change or fundamental challenge to economic policy or social system. The view seems to be that, because a change is required, it will occur even in the present unchallenged economic system; and that educational change with greater equality, fairer distribution of resources and mass improvement will occur even in the present inequitable education system—if ministers insist on it.

Promising higher standards by exhorting practitioners but refusing to examine the system in which they practise, avoids the issue that it is the structure of the education system overall which divides Britain. In particular, it demotivates many students from disadvantaged groups, and will continue to lead to polarisation. Like all who seek to address

the quality of education without addressing the quality of social or economic life as a whole, Labour's fundamental promises—concerning universal access and a rapid rise in levels of attainment—could be hard to achieve without a much wider social focus than Labour has envisaged to date.

Of course there can be improvements and a Labour Government will deliver some. But Labour begins with some gigantic concessions to existing discontent: Grant Maintained (GM) schools stay, albeit in new legal guise; private education is untouched and still enjoys substantial state subsidies, despite the end of the Assisted Places scheme³; the unimpressive TECs and LECs retain their huge budgets outside the education system and outside locally elected accountability rather than using these funds to support an extension of education and training programmes run by public colleges in co-operation with democratically accountable bodies. Overall, proposals for the regeneration of local democracy, much touted, are as yet unformed outside promises for devolution for Scotland and Wales and a London mayor.

After all this time there is even ambiguity about ending the '11-plus' process still kept in being by a significant number of grammar schools in England, as well as a lack of clarity about reforming admissions systems, and little prospect of ending 'league table' divisiveness (since 'value added' proposals do nothing to end polarisation even if they do add an extra dimension to individual school judgements). The biggest concession is to the market itself, putting Labour's education programme inadvertently in danger of becoming an alternative conservative policy, not an alternative policy that will tackle what the *Times Educational Supplement* (TES) and others have repeatedly called the hierarchy of status into which all schools and colleges are now being forced. Policy fails to confront the alarming prospect of a future bedevilled by continued social and economic polarisation, which will be inevitable unless amended by political action.

There is also a dearth of proposals to deal with inequality. Some policies seem likely to increase it: like specialising comprehensives

free to select on 'aptitude' and discouragement for new forms of unstreamed teaching (with no apparent knowledge of their potential or of the limited use today of old forms); or the pitfalls of subject streaming or segregated post-14 pathways. The continued imposition of a much-disputed 'National' Curriculum framework, with its 'streaming' of teachers as well as dictating how and what they should teach, will be examined eventually, but what of meanwhile?

There are no firm proposals yet to integrate academic and vocational education, to give everyone wider curriculum choice, leaving Dearing's anaemic changes to stem the tide of renewed pressure from conservatives for internal 'tracking' of schools. Above all, there has been widespread dismay at the failure to give positive encouragement and support to the principle of comprehensive education itself. Ironically, just when it has attained a commanding lead in public opinion.⁴ No wonder there is some suspicion that Labour leaders and advisers (as distinct from the Labour Party) are seeking to bury the comprehensive idea and that its 'modernising' policy will lead to the reintroduction of the grammar/secondary modern division inside schools themselves.

What policy proposals are made raise few objections because they reinforce the *status quo* in terms of the basic operation of the system, while also insisting on yet more activities schools, teachers and parents must undertake whether they like it or not. Many are coming from an increasingly contracting inner circle of 'experts' who 'unveil' them from on high, risking consequent failure by the learning community to claim that 'ownership' so essential to getting ideas acted upon within institutions.

Outside the compulsory sector there is still some lack of clarity about the proposals for pre-5 education, particularly over the way education will be combined with day-care provision; and fewer plans of substance for the rational and cost-effective reorganisation of 16-19 education in 1997 than were put forward in Labour's publications in the 1970s and 1980s.⁵ As for post-18 policy, the Labour Party is content to farm out the future to the ubiquitous Dearing: giving his team *carte blanche* to recommend future higher education policy separate from policy for the

majority of post-18 students' education in further education, as well as to concentrate on solutions dominated by the market. In the event the government decided even before Dearing reported that for university students, grants and loans would be replaced by fees and loans. Despite remission of fees, the loan debt for the poorest would be higher than for those whose families could afford to contribute.

Making the most of democratic change

But since Labour's 1997 victory there has been a sea-change in society's hopes for itself and thus a chance for alternatives to be debated. So, let us assume the best: that there will be some questioning of the leading role of the market as the sole arbiter of education policy, and even some attempt to resurrect the role of local and regional government; that there will be key legislative changes to reorient the system in the direction of non-selective education from 5 to 19; that there will be some dismantling of self-perpetuating oligarchies in schools and colleges, some audit of equality among social groups; and even some additional funding beyond that already designated. Can these measures succeed if they remain minimal in scope or inadequately funded; can they engage parents and teachers and lecturers and students and communities if they are a continuation of top-down imposition from the central government, unrelated to renewed popular activity at ground level?

And how far could such a policy avoid a return to the old post-war social democratic consensus, a consensus that collapsed precisely because it was so inadequate?

For example, despite decades and millions spent on equal opportunity measures, no real dent has ever been made in the monopoly of educational chances by the wealthy, the educationally knowledgeable and the traditional upper-middle classes. Though particular groups, like middle-class women and some upwardly-mobile Asian, black, and other minority ethnic groups, have made progress, the working class as a whole (which, however defined, is still a substantial proportion of society, e.g., in the latest census 50 per cent of all men⁶) has not made significant

progress. Large swathes of outer and inner city areas have regressed significantly, and over-pressed educators' own work on equal opportunities has lapsed in many areas, especially inside schools and colleges (Benn and Chitty, 1996).

The intractable inequalities of a class system that is encouraged in its divisions by the national education structure are a brake upon educational improvement in many parts of Britain, as is recognised elsewhere in the world. Not without interest, President Clinton's main political advisor, explaining why Clinton was concentrating on a whole 'package of education reforms', stressed it was a change which 'has to happen so we can make sure we are not turning into an old fashioned European class system, where the children of people at the bottom stay at the bottom'.⁷

Both social democratic consensus and all forms of conservatism shared the same fault: a political approach that was inadequate, where 'we' gave 'them' opportunities processed from the top down rather than greater empowerment of parents, teachers, students of all ages and all sorts of communities, to make their own way. Education was inherently paternalistic under the social democratic model, and inherently dictatorial under the conservative. Neither system encouraged teachers or learners or institutions enough or gave them the wherewithal to act for themselves in many areas of education; neither promoted innovation or enthusiasm for the development of learning within the community to engage both children and adults in large numbers.

Except in the most exceptional of experiments, neither widened definitions of intelligence and achievement in learning within the education system, or encouraged more than a few new forms of assessment, so that the full range of intelligences could be tapped and recorded in both children and adults. And neither devised means to measure progress that did other than reinforce the old hierarchies of 'excellence' in terms of narrow 'academic' success. Today this means that selection is creeping back and infecting area after area of education, often using 'choice', 'diversity', 'standards' and 'specialisation' as camouflage. All good words that are now tainted.

Lack of popular support

In recent decades equity and equality have been overridden by the market. The education system—like the health care system and the social system—drifts towards increasing polarisation. Some groups with better education, topping league tables, living in affluent areas or with advantaged admissions systems, are able to benefit by the many forms of selection or by public spending which goes to them disproportionately. On the other side of the line, others are often in decaying inner cities and neglected housing estates or areas abandoned to dereliction, enduring ever worsening conditions, attention and prospects, particularly for employment. The policy approach of conservatism is that the context of schooling is irrelevant, and the same for structure. It is only standards that matter. Yet the world over it is known that standards are conditioned by context and depend on structure, just as much as upon good teaching.

Students and pupils of all ages react to experiences that arise from poor context and unfair structure by truanting, addiction and self-destructive behaviour, or much the most common: indifference and the desire to escape education as quickly as possible. And no wonder. In a market system a formalised, extended system of league tables for individuals and institutions during the whole length of compulsory education now teaches the 'bottom' half of the population that they are 'failures' which is far more discouraging than the old '11-plus' because it is continual, not just once for all.

It is curious that conservatism's prescriptions should still be so strong, for, as we wrote earlier (Hillcole, 1993 c, p. 4): 'the new right has negligible supports within education'. Many political leaders seem oblivious of the most fundamental defect embedded in so much educational change in the last fifteen years: it never arose from popular demand. The issues addressed may have been popular, like more choice and better information, but the policies devised to deliver them were not.

Popular opinion may want higher standards, better funding, helpful assessment, and an equalisation of opportunities as well as an extension

of learning. But no majority of parental or teacher or lecturer or local authority or civil service opinion ever supported projects like the National Curriculum (in the form introduced by Baker and his colleagues), perpetual mass testing in the form being introduced, or the 'league table' version of comparative information—not to mention vouchers, opting out, privatisation, reduction of local democratic accountability, and the virtual abandonment of planning.

For these changes, the Conservative Government had to rely for eighteen years on two pillars alone: the support of the media and the powers of Westminster office, using a strategy of never-ending (and often hastily conceived) legislative changes. The pressure was reinforced through financial cuts and moves to control the system in the interests of certain sections of society over others. To do this (against the interests of so many) has been an exhausting business and any new government seeking to adopt the same strategy will find this out. It is exhausting in the wider world as well. Cuts in fairly won and widely supported improvements continue to generate resentment whether taking place in public services, firms' 'restructuring', the EU disciplining of national economies to satisfy the banks, or the world bank disciplining the developing world to accept poor wages and poorer conditions—all required for the maximum functioning of capitalism.

Resistance

Of course there is resistance, and it contributed to the anti-Conservative electoral victory in 1997. When we predicted (Hillcole, 1993 c, p. 2) that the 'current and planned-for changes will bring about failure and provoke opposition to an extent that will imperil the whole Conservative project in education', we little realised the extent to which teachers and parents, for example, in that year and the next, bypassing an equivocating political opposition, would demonstrate their refusal to continue with the extremes of destructive testing and imposed curriculum regimes. Resistance was even stronger in Scotland, where it still continues.

To cut opposition short at that time, carelessly introduced proposals were equally hastily modified, but inevitably—with no alternative proposals being forwarded—the changes that took their place were only a little less destructive, spilling out of far-right think tanks, those tiny and interlocked groups so influential in the years of Conservative Government. Such changes as: a return to grammar schools for every area; a wasteful oversupply of school places in order to retain ‘choice’ for a minority; and mass testing running riot from infant years onwards—with ‘results’ used, as feared, not to assist learning and teaching for everyone but to rank individuals and institutions (boosting some but shaming and blaming others).

The pressure for a continuation of comprehensive education, so long monopolised by the compulsory years, is now moving on to the years before 5 and after 16. This has spawned utterly unworkable and costly voucher systems (and ‘credit’ systems in training) poised to subsidise private provision in every area of education and training, but actually preventing pre-5 expansion in both state and voluntary sectors and hardly making a dent on the training of the young unemployed. Nursery vouchers are going but has the old voucher idea gone for good?

In the years 14 to 19 we have a proposed consolidation of outdated tripartite education embedded in the proposed post-16 curriculum (now being retroactively forced on the years 14 to 16) from the ever-obedient Ron Dearing, again against the recommendations of almost all national bodies which have submitted plans for the far future, where a wide common core and progressive integration of vocational and academic education are what have been identified as needed.⁸ In view of this, suggestions in the summer of 1997 that the government might rethink the curriculum and assessment for 16-19 were welcomed.

Even the growth of numbers going on to higher education since 1990 has been used to signal an end to the entitlement to free higher education, while competition is ensuring resource-cutting and closures in further and higher education colleges, not to mention renewed apprehension about ‘training’ schemes that substitute conditional workfare for the benefits which social insurance payments were

supposed to have guaranteed. Meanwhile, adults struggle to secure 'life-long' opportunities in the face of a much reduced offering in the 'independent', business-led colleges, as well as against vested higher education interests seeking to retain and extend post-18 selection.

Alternatives

The lesson is that conservative education policy, to borrow an old phrase, isn't working. Its many and manifest failings have evoked, since 1990, a surge of alternative thinking, from a variety of political quarters. All perceive that emphasis on the market, at the core of conservative policy in education, accentuates inequalities, and a growth in 'distressed areas' in education. Unfortunately, a change in government has yet to produce any definite alternative itself in any overall sense—other than promises of better 'management' of the existing setup along with exhortation to serve the many, not the few. All this is very welcome, but is it enough?

The National Commission on Education (1993) at least recognised the disabling divisions of the British education system which led to minority success and majority frustration. It particularly noted the failure for decades of the working class to increase its share of education at higher levels. It suggested useful short-term changes like bringing vocational and academic education closer and moving away from a subject centred curriculum in schooling. But its prescriptions are entirely limited by economic perspectives which endorse the necessities of international competition on a free market basis; its proposals are conceived in 'top down' terms and reflect the concerns of dominant social groups. Its model of change is bureaucratic and, having no experience of the cultures of the majority, leaves little space for local or popular initiatives which would pave the way to mass participation in education.

In particular, it does nothing to deal with possibly the single most urgent problem education has suffered over the last few decades: the draining away of democratic accountability in all its constituent parts. In this respect, some of the Commission's proposals are positively

dangerous: that the undemocratic TEC and LEC oligarchies should take over from elected local authorities.

The Commission for Social Justice in 1994 was another body offering solutions, borrowing many progressive ideas from the National Commission. These two in turn seemed for a while to have influenced Labour Party thinking, though Labour's *Opening Doors to a Learning Society* (1994) was more ambitious than either. In the latter's pronouncements there were some encouraging signs: reorienting expenditure towards the earlier years, backing for individualised learning (in and out of school contexts), the linking of study and work, ending selection. They stressed community and showed some realisation that a framework of collective social provision was necessary. But how much of this document now survives?

Are the existing alternatives adequate?

Welcome though it was to find that several policy documents from the Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR, 1990 and 1993) called for such changes as the scrapping of A level, upgraded and integrated vocational education and training, the establishment of universal nursery education, most (even if enacted) would hardly qualify as radical, since comparable 'western' societies have already introduced almost all of them. They are plans for catching up, not going forward. Even the hardly radical Clinton administration's plans for the USA include the extension of comprehensive education beyond secondary school—up to two years of higher education for everyone, making 14 years of education up to the age of 20. Similar changes are taking place in other countries.

Nor are qualifications really the Big Idea they started out to be in the early 1990s. The new hierarchy of qualifications being imposed on learners at work and in education threatens to turn the qualified society into the certified society—a new system of divide and rule. It is employer oriented, not learner oriented; urged on us for the health of a multinational capitalist world market rather than the interests of our own neighbourhoods or our own wider social or personal development.

There is lip service about communities but little that fosters any collective advance.

The one-sided approach is individualist throughout, ironically limiting many individuals' development, for the chance of 'getting on' still narrows dramatically within the British educational system, as it did in days past. By the time even the end of secondary education is reached, the majority have already fallen at the hurdles the system imposes. More survive now than ten years ago but the point is: it is still a system of hurdles—not a system of doors that can be opened one by one, as the learners themselves decide to open them. As one eminent educationalist has often been heard to joke, 'No matter how far you go in English education, they'll fail you in the end'.

All too often education systems, including our own, still use failure to define themselves—rather than exploring ways of ensuring success. Until this is changed, major improvements will be difficult, if not impossible. This is why we believe that changing the system in a new direction requires a much larger change in our own culture than is presently envisaged.

A new culture of education means a new social culture and a new economy

We believe society is ready to start moving in a new direction and abandon two decades of rightwards policy exploration that now leaves no future except ever more unworkable and unpopular possibilities. At the same time we believe that neither a market-led modernisation of society on the one hand, nor, on the other, the old social democratic, corporatist order, which the market displaced, can meet the needs of a 21st century society or the individuals within it. We cannot rely on 'state solutions' alone; even if they are supportive. The only alternative is an education system that can offer the democratic reconstruction and cultural regeneration of society that is daily becoming more necessary if we are to ensure adequate social provision while also modernising the economy. Our objectives are very long term but it is long term change that is required.

Despite our misgivings, we do not wish to undervalue the salutary effects that will come from ending nearly 20 years of official conservatism—where the popular perception is one of education being cut in quantity and quality while the democratic perception is of education being subject to ever more unaccountable central direction. This central direction has been accompanied by a new breed of ‘inspectors’ and ‘quangocrats’ poised to crack the whip on all who do not do it the way conservative’s think-tankers have prescribed, which largely works out to the benefit of the social and economic groups in society who have already received the most benefit.

New hope will be unleashed but education is unlikely to do more than inch ahead, particularly in the long run, until the culture of education itself has been reoriented in a new direction. This is unlikely to happen if the driving force for change is limited to the narrow need for British industry to compete ever more fiercely in an ever more stridently market-driven world, overseen by media moguls who can ‘buy’ the right to enforce their views on as many as they can pay to reach. Or where the choice is between an inward-looking nationalism or world-bank internationalism, patrolled by the American military, with a more or less permanent division of ‘advanced capitalism’ from the rest of the world, and full protection for multinational corporations’ operations regardless of the consequences. Without encouragement for wider thought and education about alternative economic and social systems for the world, ‘free’ and unrestrained capitalist development will proceed by its own laws and very possibly result in unacceptable levels of destructive change.

There may be occasional pleas for more concern for the disadvantaged or some endangered species, spurred by compassion or the inability of even the very rich to escape the effects of diminishing nature and pollution. But an increase in ozone protection is a limited objective, not the social or economic redistribution of wealth and power in the world that would be necessary to really challenge a whole range of destructive practices. We need to turn development around towards co-operative, redistributive, mutually agreed laws related to sustainable

development, devised by a representative range of human beings acting in their several societies on criteria that put the survival of the human race and its planet before the iron law of profit. This is a struggle that has to be consciously 'socialist'—in the sense that it is about society itself—in order to succeed.

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NOTES

- 1 United Nations, *Human Development Report*, 1996
- 2 The Black Papers were a series of populist publications by conservative politicians, academics and journalists which supported academic selection and opposed comprehensive education. The first one was published in 1969 and the last in 1977.
- 3 See Pring, R. (1983) *Privatisation in Education*; Walford, G., (1990), *Privatisation and Privilege in Education*, p. 76; Benn, C., (1990) 'The public price of private education', *Forum*, 32 (3), pp 68-73.
- 4 ICM national poll, published *Guardian*, 7, 1996.
- 5 For example: Labour Party, *16-19 Education*, (1976) and *Learning for Life*, (1982).
- 6 *Living in Britain*, (1995), General Household Survey, Table 4.4. The percentage for women was 38 per cent, as more of the jobs women do (like supermarket checking out) is not classified as manual work. Classifications are based on jobs held by all persons aged 16 and over (or if unemployed, last held).
- 7 Elaine Kamarck, senior White House Policy Advisor, quoted in 'Education leads next term agenda', by Martin Walker, *Guardian*, November 2, 1996.
- 8 Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) (1990) *A British Baccalaureate: Ending the Division between Education and Training*; and IPPR (1993) *A Different Version: An Alternative White Paper*; Crombie White, R., Pring, R., and Brockington, D. (1995) *14-19 Education and Training: Implementing a Unified System of Learning*
- 9 See, for example, the speeches of government ministers in the House of Commons during the week of June 1 to June 5, 1997.
- 10 For a critical evaluation of post-modernism, including its supposed left-wing variants, see Green, (1994), Cole and Hill (1995) and Hill and Rikowski, (1997).
- 11 See, for example, two studies (one from the Harvard University School of Public Health and the other from the California Department of Health Services) both showing that in areas where the gap between rich and poor was wide, the health of the entire society was worse than in areas where the economic gap had narrowed. A summary of these studies was printed in the *British Medical Journal*, April 20, 1996. See also *The Changing Distribution of the Social Wage*, 1997, The Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- 12 See Cole (1997) for a detailed discussion of these conceptual issues and their relationship to primary, secondary and higher education respectively. See also Hill and Cole (1998).

- 13 House of Commons, Select Committee on Grant Maintained Schools, 1993, p.9
- 14 Audit Commission (1996) *Trading Places*.
- 15 Edgar Faure, French socialist, was one of the first to spell out the idea of 'education permanente'.
- 16 See Reports, Youthaid, 1996 and 1997
- 17 Reported in 'The US Experience' by Gary Younge and John Carvel, *Guardian Education*, 22 April, 1997. See also Schweinhart *et al.* (1993) for the effects of nursery school attendance on African-Americans brought up in poverty.
- 18 *Changing the Future: Redprint For Education* (1991), *What's Left in Teacher Education?* (1991) and *Whose Teachers? A Radical Manifesto* (1993), Hillcole Group, London, the Tufnell Press
- 19 See Ainley, P. and Bailey, B., (1997).
- 20 For example, Keith Joseph, Angela Rumbold, Stuart Sexton, and Anthony O'Hear.
- 21 See David Hart, National Association of Headteachers (NAHT), *Times Educational Supplement*, 10 June, 1994; and reports of NUT April Conference, 1996, where a large number of teachers indicated support for a boycott of tests at 11 if plans went ahead. See also school and college opinion on league tables in Benn and Chitty, (1996).

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

BFI	British Film Institute
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
FE	Further Education
FEFC	Further Education Funding Council
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GM	Grant Maintained
GNVQ	General National Vocational Qualification
HE	Higher Education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspectorate
IPPR	Institute of Public Policy Research
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
LEC	Local Enterprise Council
NAHT	National Association of Head Teachers
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
NUT	National Union of Teachers
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
TES	Times Educational Supplement

TEC Training and Enterprise Council
TTA Teacher Training Agency
TUC Trades Union Congress