

Is Prime Minister Tony Blair 'one of us'?

"... the revolution in business ... will, over time, take place in education, too. We will move away from a system that assumes every child of a particular age moves at the same pace in every subject, and develop a system directed to the particular talents and interests of every pupil."

Tony Blair

(quoted by Michael Barber in The Guardian 30/1/96)

Well, this does rather sound like personalised learning, based on a catalogue curriculum, operating within a flexible and learner-friendly set of arrangements.

Is Professor Bengu, Minister of Education for South Africa, 'one of us'?

In his inspiring address at the Co-operative College, Stanford Hall, Loughborough, during the conference on *Democratic Discipline, Democratic Lives: educating citizens for a changing world*, Professor Bengu noted a key characteristic of democracy as being **"the absence of domination"**. **"Democracy means doing away with relations of domination"**. Yes, Education Now supporters would agree.

Professor Bengu explained how the idea of **school governing bodies** *"are transformed to become fully representative of the major stakeholders - students, parents, teachers, and the other workers in the school,"* and that this was now law in South Africa.

He also talked of the need to move to a **"learner-driven curriculum"**. *"Democracy in education does not just end with the way the school is managed or governed. In fact it is my contention that these are meaningless if the real essence of schooling, the learning process, is not democratised."* This sounds like the same territory as Tony Blair is exploring in the quotation above.

Early childhood practitioners in the audience were thrilled to hear that the best of nursery and infant practice, **(the plan, do and review, the interactive approach)** was to be the basis on which the rest of the system in South Africa was to be built. He concluded:

"Maybe this conference should take a firm resolution to ensure that all the countries of the world educate their citizens

democratically for a democratic world order, devoid of conflict and domination of person by person."

Is David Blunkett 'one of us'?

Not so far, according to Roy Hattersley writing in the Observer on the 25th May 1997:

"The Failing Schools initiative was a carefully contrived signal sent to confirm that the Department for Education aims to 'get tough'. After years of pointless conflict, a Labour victory should have heralded a new age of co-operation and consensus. But the psychology has not changed. Schools are to be frightened into improvement by the threat of exposure. ... Bullying teachers is the cheap as well as the easy option for a Secretary of State who genuinely wants improvement but has not been provided with the resources essential to bring it about.

"The problems of the English education system ... are going to be solved by encouragement, not threats ... The casual willingness to damage the interest of 18 deprived schools is, by any standards, demeaning to a Labour Minister and made all the more so by the pretence that somehow they are being helped. At least when the Roman generals decimated their failing legions, they did not pretend that they were doing a favour to the twitching corpses left along the Appian Way."

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After 'New' Labour, 'New' Education Now?

Perhaps it should be **'Re-Newed' Education Now** rather than 'New'. We now have a new government with, as yet, an undisclosed education vision (unlike the new Republic of South Africa which already has its new democratic vision enshrined in law). We do not count woodenheadedly barking up the same wrong tree as the previous government as a vision.

The work of *Education Now* is still not over - we need to renew our efforts to campaign for the humane vision of a more flexible, personalised and democratic education system. There is, however, **a new membership scheme and details are to be found on page 6.**

Hope for all through parent power in Romania

In May I met Laila Onu and her team of workers who are the administrative and teaching staff of *Speranta*. I am told that *Speranta* means 'hope'.

Laila, a trained engineer, was enjoying a healthy career until her child was diagnosed as having a learning disability. Schools in Romania are not keen to accept children with learning difficulties, or any form of disability, so Laila and other concerned parents formed the *Societatea Romana Speranta*. Begun in the city of Timisoara in 1990, *Speranta* now has 660 members. Essentially it is a parent run co-operative which manages a number of important services and facilities including

- a day centre for children with learning disabilities
- a day centre for adults with learning disabilities
- a support programme for families on very low incomes with mentally handicapped children - providing twinning arrangements, visits, food supplies, legal advice and help with school equipment
- training programmes for parents - led by professionals
- a psychopedagogical support service - furthering the 'mainstreaming' of children with special needs

Whilst these services provide immediate practical help for children and parents, *Speranta* has bigger ambitions. It is busy pressurising the Government to change laws, and school managers to make provision, for the integration of students with special needs into ordinary schools.

As *Speranta* is a working example of excellent practice, the group has attracted considerable professional and material support. Despite an impoverished beginning, it has acquired premises (two converted houses) and funding for equipment.

The group's stated purpose is "to increase the quality of life of persons with learning disabilities and their families". Ultimately, they aim to change the social norms that exclude such people from their rights to education and a job, a vision which is reflected in their slogan: **Together Towards a Society for All**. It seems fitting that *Speranta's* story should appear in this issue of *News and Review* - these parents are, in fact, fighting for democracy and basic human rights.

They do have one problem that needs a speedy solution, though. The Society has been given three mini-buses by a Dutch charity, but unfortunately the road tax for each bus costs the equivalent of £2000! Does anyone know a willing benefactor? The buses are sitting on a driveway, unusable until the road tax can be raised. Still, there's hope!

***Speranta*: phone: 40 56 190245 fax: 40 56 201152**

Sharon Ginnis

Study points to the importance of shared values

Christopher Greenfield, currently Head of Sidcot Quaker School in North Somerset, has recently completed his Doctorate of Education at the University of Bristol. The title of his thesis was *Teaching and Learning Citizenship in an English Comprehensive School*.

Using an ethnographic approach, Christopher conducted his research in an excellent comprehensive school in Cambridge

which has a strong policy commitment to citizenship education. Using interviews with pupils and staff as well as senior administrators, Christopher found that, despite the school's clear official policies, the messages about citizenship received by pupils were confused and fragmented. The research emphasises the importance of school teaching staff having a shared set of values if there is to be coherence in any school's citizenship education programme.

Dear Editor,

As a Council Member of the Peace Pledge Union, I would like to tell you about a major teaching pack - *'Women and Peace'* - which we published last autumn.

The pack, aimed at Key Stage 3, introduces pupils to the role and experience of women in war as well as the efforts of women working for peace around the world. A novel feature of the pack is the back-up, periodically updated, which is available on a special section on our web site. This expands the pack material and provides links to other resources. Students are invited to submit work for publication on the web site.

The pack was produced with financial support from the Polden-Puckham Charitable Foundation and a number of generous special donations. It is available from **Peace Pledge Union, 41b Brecknock Road, London N7 0BT**
Tel: 0171 424 9444 Fax: 0171 482 6390

Yours, Arthur Acton

Resources Cupboard

Changing our school: promoting positive behaviour

by Highfield Junior School, 1997. This practical book relates how the school uses negotiated rules, circle time, work on emotions and behaviour, rewards and sanctions, school's council, guardian angels and mediation to bring about school improvement

ISBN 0 85473 509 7. Available from Highfield Junior School, Torridge, Efford, Plymouth. PL3 6JQ. Price: £6.00 plus £2.00 for P & P.

Our World Our Rights, edited by Margot Brown of the Centre for Global Education and produced for the Education In Human Rights Network, 1996. This handbook includes practical exercises, puzzles, games and lessons through which children can explore human rights topics

ISBN 187 332 8168. Available from Amnesty International UK, 99 Rosebery Avenue, London. EC1R 4RE Price: £15.00 plus £1.50 P & P

Global express is produced by Manchester Development Centre and the Panos Institute. It is a rapid response information service for schools on development issues in the news. The eight page editions are distributed within 10 days of a story hitting the headlines, and provide material to both answer pupils questions and increase their understanding of development issues.

Available from Room 2, Panos Institute, 9 White Lion Street, London. N1 9PD. Price: £15 for five mailings.

In conversation with ...

Geoff Harrison

Sharon *Tell us something about yourself Geoff.*

Geoff My name is Geoffrey Harrison. I am now 62 years old.

This article is being dictated, using voice recognition technology, it is being developed by a company for dyslexics, I am severely dyslexic in particular spelling, I have no idea of spelling simple words like, (MY OR EVEN MY SECOND NAME GEORGE).

Sharon *You and your wife have been involved in fights against educational conservatism for many years. How did it all start?*

Geoff

I married Iris in 1961, I had opened a new hardware store in a new housing development in Cheltenham. Iris had started a launderette in the same area.

I first met Iris on a Wednesday morning when she wanted a small tin of paint. I thought to my self she looked extremely attractive, I managed to have enough courage to ask Iris if I could see her one evening, to my surprise she accepted my invitation to come out with me, three days later I asked her if she would marry me? She said yes. The best day of my life.

I would just point out at this stage, Iris' business was doing extremely well, so Iris and myself decided that I should become a director of the launderette. The bank manager arranged for both of us to have a interview with him, to sign some documents regarding the directorship, just at the last minute the manager asked me to write a few words at the bottom of the document, (I completely froze), Iris must have realised I had a problem because she spelt out each letter for me.

After Iris found out that I had literacy problems, we used to sit up in bed practising spelling different words, especially my second name GEORGE with no success at all, Iris encouraged me in focusing on what I could do well, such as arts and crafts and practical things.

Life was very much in the business world until our eldest daughter started school.

She started to behave like a wild animal from being a very charming little girl, she would start damaging her toys and hitting her sister and brother.

I used to put Wanda into the car locking all of the doors, otherwise she would open them and run away. Eventually I would arrive at the school entrance, I would have to carry her screaming across the school play ground. By the time I arrived at my business the school would phone and say that Wanda had run away.

After a very short time we decided to educate her at home.

Sharon *You and Iris had very strong views about what kind of education your children required - so what happened next?*

Geoff

After some time the education authority decided that our approach to the teaching wasn't what they required, then we eventually moved to a small island of the West Coast of Scotland, it was a tremendous relief that we experienced just not having the local education authority hassling us.

We discovered that living on the West Coast of Scotland in the middle of winter wasn't really the best place for having the family. We decided to move back South, eventually we settled in Tenbury Wells in Worcestershire. We found the area was well suited for the children, it seemed the ideal place for the children to experience real freedom.

Eventually we were reported to the local authority which started our legal battles. We were starting our fourth appearance in court when we were introduced to Roland Meighan who became one of our main witnesses in the courts which ended in the Divisional Court of Appeal.

At one point through all this it had been agreed that the Court papers would be forwarded for our Appeal at the Crown Court but at the last moment we were told that these had been destroyed. This influenced Central Television to pay a scribe in the Crown Court which became the basis for the film 'Flying to the Wind'.

The judgement for this hearing had resounding affects on home schoolers. It stated clearly that our autonomous approach to education was acceptable for our daughter but on the other hand, we lost the appeal for our two sons as they could not read and write.

(I would like to say at this point that our children were assessed by a Dr Margaret Newton who warned us to be prepared that the two boys would never learn to read or write.)

Sharon *When did you first become interested in Voice Recognition Technology?*

Geoff

We first got interested in voice recognition technology when my son wanted to acquire qualifications in plumbing and heating. He approached a technical college, he informed the registrar that he had dyslexia, the registrar informed him that they had no facilities for dyslexics.

After many telephone calls Iris eventually found a company that supplied voice recognition technology. We arranged for a demonstration at Roland's house. I was invited to try the computer out. When I dictated a couple of words and the computer responded accurately, I just couldn't believe what I was seeing and hearing. I couldn't sleep that evening with the thought just going through my mind, what potential this technology will have on people like myself, unable to spell. Yet using technology to spell words accurately, I believe this is one answer.

I must thank Bilston Community College for accepting this technology, because they were the only college that showed an interest.

At the moment I am teaching voice recognition at Bilston, also at home I have one student who has difficulty in reading and spelling, in fact he has problems reading NO OR ON.

Sharon *Thank you for sharing your story with us Geoff.*

If you are interested in Voice Recognition Technology, Geoff and Iris can be contacted at their home: **The Burntlands, Tenbury Wells, Worcestershire, WR15 8SH. Phone: 01584 781341 Fax: 01584 781686**

Another 'one of us'?

"What people need now is an individual portfolio of experience, knowledge, and a capacity to learn and learn effectively and swiftly. They need to be personal performers as well as team workers. They need to be able to change direction time and time again and not be unnerved by it."

Sir Geoffrey Holland KCB, in RSA Journal April 1997

Perhaps the best known and most influential writer on education for liberation is the Brazilian, Paulo Freire. For Freire, the essence of education about society is that social reality is made by people and can be changed by people. It is important that learners see that social and political reality is not fixed, immutable and inevitable, but that it can be changed and transformed. This is because the social and political reality facing young people in developing countries is most often one of inequality, exploitation and oppression. All too often schools are part of what Freire refers to as a 'culture of silence' where young people are taught to accept what is handed down to them by the ruling elite. Their education aims to socialise them so that they carry out orders from above in an unquestioning and unthinking manner. Their understanding of

Paulo Freire, Political Development and Liberation Theory

"... schooling at whatever level plays one of the most vital roles as an efficient mechanism for social control. It is not hard to find educators whose idea of education is to 'adapt the learner to his environment', and as a rule formal education has not been doing more than this. Generally speaking, the good student is not one who is restless or intractable, or one who reveals one's doubts or wants to know the reason behind facts, or one who breaks with pre-established models, or one who denounces a mediocre bureaucracy, or one who refuses to be an object. To the contrary, the so-called good student is one who repeats, who renounces critical thinking, who adjusts to models, and who 'thinks it is pretty to be a rhinoceros'." (Freire, 1985:116/7)

One influential school of thought in global debates about the nature of political development has been liberation theory. In particular this school of thought has made the case for a connection between education and political development. Liberation theory is built on the assumption that as a result of colonial and neo-colonial relationships there are both oppressors and oppressed in so-called 'under' or 'less' developed societies. The oppressors are either the colonial power or the rich neo-colonial power holders who succeed them, and who both share the values of the former colonialists and need to perpetuate inequality, injustice and authoritarianism in order to serve their own interests and protect their privileges. The oppressed on the other hand are the poor, often illiterate peasants and workers. For liberation theory, therefore, radical change to the structure of society is required in order to end oppression.

reality is limited to what they are told to accept and believe - the myths that keep them silent and in ignorance.

Freire argues that instead of this, education should be a process of 'conscientisation', an attempt to raise critical consciousness so that learners both understand their social reality and can act upon it. Education can never be neutral - people are educated either for domestication in an oppressive culture of silence, or for liberation through conscientisation. Such an education aims at the development of a frame of mind, a way of thinking, which takes nothing for granted and which emphasises doubt and uncertainty.

"What I learned in exile I would recommend to all readers of this book: each day be open to the world, be ready to think; each day be ready not to accept what is said just because it is said, be predisposed to reread what is read; each day investigate, question and doubt. I think it is most necessary to doubt. I feel it is always necessary not to be sure, that is to be overly sure of certainties." (1985: 181)

Such an education is not compatible with traditional, didactic forms of teaching where the teacher formally transmits factual knowledge from the front and where the learners passively receive it, memorise it and repeat it in examinations. This is sometimes referred to by Freire as 'banking education', whereby knowledge (as defined by the teacher) is 'deposited' in the student and on which he or she is later expected to 'capitalise'. It implies a view of knowledge as static, as made and finished, and of learners as empty and lacking consciousness. Freire cites ten ways in which this sort of student-teacher relationship manifests itself.

- 1. The teacher teaches and the students are taught.**
- 2. The teacher knows everything and the students know nothing.**
- 3. The teacher thinks and the students are thought about.**
- 4. The teacher talks and the students listen - meekly.**
- 5. The teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined.**
- 6. The teacher chooses and enforces his or her choice and the students comply.**
- 7. The teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher.**
- 8. The teacher chooses the programme content and the students comply.**
- 9. The teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with professional authority which he or she sets in opposition to the freedom of the students.**

10. The teacher is the subject of the learning process while the pupils are mere objects. (Freire, 1972: 46-47).

Critical education, on the other hand, means involving students in their own learning and interpretation of the world through dialogue, questioning, participation and discussion.

However, a major problem with Freire is that while the teaching and learning methods he posits are compatible with education for democracy, there is a problem with outcomes. It often appears from his writing that there are clear-cut, 'correct' answers to the questions of whether or not there are oppressors, who the oppressors are and what the way forward should be. Moreover, once these answers have been established the masses must be 'educated' to see them. The answers to these questions may be straightforward in a colonial situation but where formal political independence has been won they are a question of value rather than fact.

Unfortunately, Freire often appears to favour the indoctrination of a new orthodoxy as favoured by the revolutionary party that has liberated the country from colonialism. Indeed, he has been accused of siding too closely with Amilcar Cabral and the PAIGC (Partido Africano da Independencia da Guinea e Cabo Verde) in the West African state of Guinea-Bissau when he worked there in the 1970's. When the Portuguese colonialists left and the PAIGC became the sole party of government, Freire was prepared to accept Cabral's dictum that the people must find their political existence and expression through the party and develop under its tutelage "*because of the economic and cultural limitation of the masses*". As the writer who makes this point states,

"The contradictions in Freire's theoretical enterprise, within the context of subordination of all basic functions to the processes of a single organisation, the party, produce the negation of some of his most basic ideals ... Conscientisation as cultural action for liberation is ultimately impossible unless the implicitly authoritarian model of political leadership is jettisoned." (Walker, 1980:146)

Such contradictions in Freire's thought pose problems for those who support a genuine education for democracy. While much, if not all, of what Freire has to say about educational method is consistent with education for democracy, the problem arises in relation to the goal of such an education. If there is a predetermined 'answer' to education for critical consciousness, the correctness of the post-colonial party and its version of socialism, then much of what Freire has to say about doubt, uncertainty, investigation, questioning and dialogue is rendered meaningless. What is required in the light of the increasing international prominence of democracy since 1989 is thinking that retains Freire's valuable insights into the political nature of education and the need for critical educational method but which resolves this contradiction in terms of the purpose of such an education.

Education for democracy is as much about the way in which people think and behave, how they hold their political opinions, than it is about what they actually think. Education for democracy, therefore, does not assume a predetermined outcome. The aim of political education for democracy is not, for example, to create conservatives or socialists but rather that people should decide their political opinions for themselves on the basis of informed judgement. This would mean that political learning in schools would move to a genuine political education where there is an attempt to create critical awareness of political phenomena by open, balanced discussion and analysis of a range of evidence and opinions. The political

opinions that resulted from such a political education are unpredictable and should be held in a manner which is not dogmatic but which is open-minded and subject to a degree of uncertainty for, as Thomas Robert Dewar the American writer put it "*Minds are like parachutes: they only function when they are open*", to which can be added Carl Rogers' observation that "*People who can't think are ripe for dictatorships*".

Readings

Freire, P. (1972) **Pedagogy of the Oppressed** (Penguin)
Freire, P. (1985) **The Politics of Liberation** (Macmillan)
Walker, J. (1980) 'The end of dialogue: Paulo Freire on politics and education', in R. Mackie (Ed). **Literacy and Revolution: The Pedagogy of Paulo Freire** (Pluto Press) (Freire died on May 2nd 1997)

Clive Harber

Human Rights Education Newsletter

This is the Newsletter of the Education in Human Rights Network, an informal grouping of individuals and organisations concerned with promoting the teaching of human rights. Its contents include articles, reports, reviews, information and news.

For further information about the **Network** contact Audrey Osler, c/o School of Education, University of Birmingham, Birmingham B15 2TT

Newsletter: three issues per year individual subscription - £7.50. Further information from Margot Brown, Centre for Global Education, University College of Ripon and York St John, Lord Mayor's Walk, York Y3 7EX

Primary Schools And The Future

by Patrick Whitaker
Open University Press

This book has two important purposes. The first is to **consider** the challenges facing primary schools as they move towards a new century and a new millennium. The second is to **celebrate** the work of primary schools and to note their unique qualities and achievements.

1997 ISBN 0 335 19423 0 Price: £13.99

Teaching for Citizenship in Europe

edited by Audrey Osler, Hanns-Fred Rathenow and Hugh Starkey
Trentham Books

This book will be of value to students, teachers and teacher educators who are committed to promoting justice and equality in education. It examines the values appropriate for teaching in pluralist societies and offers strategies for encouraging global responsibility and active citizenship.

1996 ISBN 1 85856 052 7 Price: £15.95

Teacher Education and Human Rights

by Audrey Osler and Hugh Starkey
David Fulton Publishers

This book explores the contribution that teacher education can make to the protection and promotion of human rights. It suggests practical ways in which teachers can increase young

people's awareness of the importance of actively securing their rights and those of others in the community.

1996 ISBN 1 85346 406 6 Price: £13.99

The following two books have been received for review:

Interactive Research in Drama in Education

Edited by David Davies, Trentham Books, 1997
ISBN 1 85856 078 0 Price: £8.95

Teaching About Values: a New Approach

by Graham Haydon, Cassell, 1997
ISBN 0 304 33560 0 Price: £14.99

Undemocratic discipline?

The new head teacher "has tried to impose too much discipline and our youngsters are rebelling against her regime, with some running away from school during the day". Concerned parents speak out in the Nuneaton Weekly Tribune, 22.5.97.

All Year-Round Education

The 'Educational Futures Trilogy' is made up of three books from the Educational Futures Project, USA, directed by Don Glines. The first, 'Creating Educational Futures' logs the experience of the now defunct Mankato Wilson School, still recognised as one of the most innovative public educational institutions ever to be created. Its new principal, Don Glines, introduced 69 immediate changes to the traditional school he took over, setting the scene for his venture into personalised learning programmes, individualised integrated curricula, non-graded assessment, elimination of compulsory classes, and a timetable that was reconstructed every evening for the following day. All Year-Round Education was part of the plan.

The other two books in the trilogy deal with this idea of Year-Round Education. One is entitled 'Year-Round Education: History, Philosophy, Future', and the other is 'The Great Lockout in America's Citizenship Plants: Past as Future'.

All Year-Round Schooling

In 1969, Dr. White, Superintendent of the Fayetteville, Arkansas, schools presented a building plan to his Board of Education. The president, Henry Shreve, felt moved to ask why was it not possible to operate schools year-round so that maximum use was made of them and the need to build new ones avoided. "We try everything else, why can't we innovate in the area of school calendars?" This set in motion a revival of all year use of schools which has now extended to 39 States. The National Association for Year-Round Education will hold its 28th annual conference this year.

The idea is not new since versions of it can be found in 1904, and before that in 1870 and even before that in 1840. Schools were open all year, with students attending on a flexi-time basis.

One of the most noted calendar options was devised by William Wirt, a superintendent who began the programme in Bluffton. The scheme ran from 1907 to 1937, 50 weeks a year, 12 hours a day, six days per week. In some variations, activities were also available on the seventh day too. The Second World War marked a pause in these arrangements and they were not revived until Dr. White's work in 1969.

All Year-Round Education

The first move to re-establish year-round schooling was economic, to save money and land. The second wave of

concern was to create a flexible concept of year-round education:

- **Continuous learning**
The concept that schools, like hospitals, are helping institutions and should never close, is a central idea in year-round education. Students should be able to learn in any of the twelve months at will. Some of this learning will be on site and some in other locations in the community on a flexi-time and flexi-schooling basis.
- **Employment realities**
Flexible employment patterns are now the norm for more and more people and families involved in year-round education have grown to value the flexibility of choosing periods of school attendance and periods of vacation throughout the year to suit their circumstances.
- **Lifestyle diversities**
Families can be offered four short breaks in a year, or one long one, or other combinations. Those who like travel, or winter sports or summer breaks can all be accommodated at will.
- **Curriculum facilities**
Pressure on facilities is reduced if computer suites, art studios, drama studios, sports facilities are all available all year, and another result can be smaller classes and less crowding in schools.
- **Improvement catalysts**
The flexibility in the calendar enables staff to plan and implement innovations. It opens up the opportunity for change and re-appraisal of practice.
- **Community enhancements**
Flexible attendance has effects on traffic congestion, on use of community facilities, on volunteering, on staff morale and on student motivation. The culture of the school is changed from compulsory uniformity to invitational variety.
- **Personal choices**
Year-round education allows real choice for families. Those who particularly like the present calendar, can still have it whilst others can select the pattern that meets their needs in a particular year.

All Year-Round Education has not yet been considered as a possible innovation in UK, yet it has the same potential as in the USA. It pleases the accountants because it saves money by using facilities more efficiently, and it facilitates a more flexible and personalised approach to learning which begins to liberate students, teachers and families from the present gridlocked system.

Further information can be obtained from:

**Don Glines, Educational Futures Project, P.O.Box 2977,
Sacramento, California, 95812, USA. Tel: 00 1 916 393 8701**

Another year has come round for Roland Meighan who is **60 today**. Congratulations old timer! Any errors in this edition of *News and Review* are entirely due to the celebratory mood and spirit!

New membership scheme for *Education Now*

Education Now has been overtaken by its success. In spite of the fact that it is a non-profit making co-operative,

with its volunteer workers giving their services free, the vast increase in enquiries and requests for support constantly deplete its limited financial resources. We are, therefore, asking members to contribute a little more to the campaigning activity of the co-operative.

At the last meeting of the Central Co-ordinating Team, it was decided that the membership scheme needed revision both to raise more revenue and to simplify administration.

In return for their donation, minimum to be £25, or £20 by Standing Order, members would receive the four editions of *News and Review*, plus information about new books and conferences, along with 50% discount on *Education Now* books, (rather than 'free' books as in the past) and concessions on conference fees. Membership can include two people in one family but sharing one *News and Review* and with only the same discounts as for a single member. There would be a non-waged rate of £10.

Working with the street children of Brazil

As I wrote *Children for Social Change*, Britain was in one of its increasingly frequent spasms of angst about its children. The epicentre of agitation this time was not the killing of a child by another, or by some deranged adult, nor the systematic sexual abuse of children in the state care system, but a threatened strike by teachers demanding the exclusion from their school of violent and uncontrollable pupils. In the past year alone, we learn 13,419 children were permanently excluded from schools in the UK, adding to the 100,000 or so disaffected young people said to be growing up marginalised from society.

In the brief tumult of words, admonishments and articles that followed the teachers' action, blame has been cast liberally about. Recommendations have included moral instruction for children, punishment of children - ranging from a slap in time to the return to corporal punishment - fines for parents and even the electronic tagging of persistent truants aged ten and upwards.

Scarcely a word has been breathed of the two unfashionable experiences children need most - love and respect. It is as though, in our consumer and market focused culture, the very terms are lost to us, let alone how we might accomplish what they stand for.

A curious consolation for me in all of this, is that it may explain why I have found the subject of my book so hard to get to grips with. *Children for Social Change* is about an innovative way of working with socially excluded children developed in Brazil. Better known for that ultimate expression of the exclusion of troublesome children of the underclass - their elimination by death squads - Brazil is also home to the most concerted effort to encourage their participation and organisation. Activists, known as street educators, lay the foundation for this work by setting out to give children the experience of being loved, respected and included.

The exclusion of children from a school is never a single or even simple chain of events, as some of the remedies proposed recently in the UK would seem to imply. Teachers' demands for their expulsion contribute to a complex experience of rejection in which many people will have had a hand and which is likely to have been partly determined even before the children were born, with the social rejection of their parents. It is not by chance that boys of Afro-Caribbean origin in the UK

are six times more likely to be excluded than white boys. In Brazil, the majority of street and criminalised children are among the descendants of the country's massive former slave population, upon whose backs concentrations of great private wealth were built.

What Brazil's street educators do, quite unlike the UK teachers who threatened to strike, is assume a personal responsibility for reversing the social exclusion of the children they work with. By engaging with them, instead of accepting their abandonment, they forge a new social alliance that is mutually and socially transforming. Being loved, valued and included, the children are able to become critically aware of the processes that consign them and their families, among 32 million fellow Brazilians, to live in poverty. Instead of being made victims of these processes, or of recreating them, many become, in various ways and degrees, protagonists for social change.

A vigorous National Movement of Street Boys and Girls has emerged, whose members - poor community children and educators - have taken a prominent role in defining children's rights and responsibilities, securing legal rights and developing an educational experience through which both educator and child learn to exercise citizenship. Here is utopian political action, based not on wishful thinking but on an experience of a common humanity, created daily through relationships that challenge, and are challenged by, the established norm.

In trying to convey something of the development of the children's movement in Brazil, I focus largely at a local level on the Movement of the Republic of Emmaus (formerly the Republic of Small Vendors). This Movement is just one tributary of the National Movement, whose membership is made up of several thousand educators and children located in a host of local movements and organisations around the country.

Some of these organisations create scarcely any infrastructure, concentrating on street-level work and instead putting the children in touch with what resources are available in the community. Others have created complex structures. The Movement of the Republic of Emmaus is among the latter. In addition to its street and community-level work, it recycles donated goods, offers employment and occupational training, provides a range of sports, games and other activities, operates a multi-disciplinary health clinic, has established a pioneering community school, an agricultural production unit, a herbal remedies nursery and dispensary, a children's legal defence centre and even a news agency, reporting on children's rights issues throughout Amazonia.

The Republic engages youth from poor communities in the work with children on the street, rather than recruiting experienced educators. Its educators are trained before and on the job and, through their work with the children, enter into a dynamic relationship in which both learn and undergo a distinct change of orientation and outlook.

Progressive work with poor community children in Brazil today has evolved over more than quarter of a century. It was born in a military dictatorship and continues to take part in the struggle for real democracy, surviving the opening years of neo-liberalism, with its embrace of socially disastrous free market theology, privatisation and downsizing. Through all these phases, the conditions of poverty endured by millions of Brazilians have generally worsened, undermining the potential for voluntary action and making popular resistance more difficult. The movement has survived and continued to realise its goals through the hard work, resourcefulness, imagination

and readiness of its participants to reformulate their approach to meet the changing times.

Anthony Swift

The above piece comprises extracts from the Introduction to *Children for Social Change: education for citizenship of street and working children in Brazil* published by Educational Heretics Press on 19th June 1997 price £11-95 (pre-publication offer to Education Now members is £9-95 if ordered before 19th June)

The problem of 'alternative' education in UK

In some European countries, there is a wide variety of different types of school available, often 75% government funded. Sadly, UK is not one of these countries. Parents in UK have very little choice. Choice often means the schools choose the families and not the reverse.

Sorting out the idea of 'alternative' is complicated. For some, this just means a private version of the same authoritarian approach as the 'state' schools, perhaps with smaller classes. Such schools are listed in the guide produced by ISIS (Independent Schools Information Service) available from bookshops. Others want a religious option and these too are in the ISIS guide.

Those who want an alternative philosophy of education, such as autonomous-personalised or co-operative-democratic have a struggle and are forced into various forms of 'do-it-yourself' grassroots action. In this they follow the actions of the vegetarian pioneers who wanted a more healthy diet, and the non-smokers who wanted to breathe nicotine-free air in public places, who had to set to and do it themselves, against official discouragement and opposition.

Parents who want a personalised education that builds on the learning of the first five years, aiming to sustain its levels of happiness, curiosity and sparkle, find that it is not available in most of our schools. Most schools, both private and State, have adopted an authoritarian learning system based on imposition, coercion and toughness. The psychological results are analysed in books such as Alice Miller's *For Your Own Good* but these are kept away from public awareness, much in the same way that the effects of smoking are allowed only a low public profile.

Parents may seek **small schools** with a more personalised curriculum but such schools are hard to find. Only a few such schools exist under the umbrella of Human-Scale Education (96, Carlingcott, near Bath BA2 8AW) and they struggle to survive. Another option is **flexi-time schooling**, part-time at home and part-time at school, but this, too, is rare, although a few families have negotiated such programmes with local schools, both State and private..

The fastest growing and most successful alternative is opting out of schooling altogether. Over one hundred parents a month in UK now turn to **home-based education**. This may lead on to other grassroots initiatives such as **Otherwise Clubs**, where

local home-educating families establish a co-operative learning centre where they undertake some activities in common,

Most families opting out of schooling into home-based education are reluctant educational heretics. Many are uncomfortable about their 'heresy' in questioning the dogmas of mass schooling, and seek reassurance by keeping lines of communication open with the system for later examination work or subject-based study. Few families see themselves as blazing a trail to the next education system, even though that is the consequence of their success. Their aim is more modest - to bring happiness to a child or two. Their radicalism is either accidental or incidental. They discover the approach of the **catalogue curriculum** without necessarily knowing it or appreciating its total contrast with the totalitarianism of the adult imposed National Curriculum.

Often to the surprise of the parents involved, they find that home-based education is not only much easier than they thought, but also works either well, or extremely well. Some of the reasons for the success of home-based education have been identified:

- 1. The school classroom is mostly one-way communication** often of a stilted kind and few meaningful interchanges are in evidence. In home-based education the opposite is the case.
- 2. Schools are products of the factory age** with batches of uniform products running on the conveyor belt in lockstep motion towards standardised qualifications. Therefore it socialises children into this rigid and inflexible kind of mentality. Home-based education, in contrast, works to more personalised, creative and resourceful educational outcomes.
- 3. An unnatural aspect of school is that of age-segregation:** learning to get along with peers alone does not prepare students for varied interactions with older and younger people in life. Home-based education avoids this trap for people of various ages are encountered in a way that more accurately mirrors society. Such learners thus become more socially mature.
- 4. The approaches of most home-based educators** encourage self-discipline and learner-managed learning, and the personal confidence this produces creates young people who can adapt to new situations and new ideas.
- 5. We now live in an information-rich and communications-rich environment** and home-based education gives learners direct and regular access to it. Indeed, families begin to see why futurists already see mass schooling as obsolete and belonging to the era of the horse-and-cart and the town-crier, in a society that was poor in communications and information.

Roland Meighan

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Democracy, the vision, the goal, and the method

The world can only change for the better if it becomes a democratic world. Some of the fundamental characteristics of that democracy should be: access to basic needs by all people; meaningful participation of people in shaping their lives; respect for human rights and human dignity of all people in the world; and an end to any form of domination of one person by another, of a group of people by another group on whatever grounds, including tribe, ethnicity, religion, race, and gender, of any

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Feature

South Africa leads the way

Key extracts from the address of Professor Bengu, the South African Minister of Education, to the May conference *Democratic Discipline, Democratic Lives*:

In the invitation to this conference I was asked to say something on the topic, "Developing education in the new democracy of the Republic of South Africa". I would like to begin by expressing some thoughts on the general theme of this conference, "democratic discipline, democratic lives: educating citizens for a changing world". In order to understand fully what democratic education means, we need to understand what kind of world we are trying to create.

What is the world changing from?

The first question we should ask ourselves is what are we changing from. The main feature of our world as we know it is division. The world has been divided between poor and rich nations, between east and west, between north and south. Within nation states there has been further division between tribes, races and classes. These divisions have led to immeasurable human misery. When we talk about changing the world therefore, it is these realities that we must address. The world can only change for the better if such change guarantees a life for all people without war, poverty, conflict and exclusion.

Globalisation and change

No one can deny that the advent of new information technologies has had a tremendous impact on the world as we know it. Many people have suggested that the world has become a 'global village'. This has reduced world economies to one big economy, with nations competing within it. However, it is important for us all to realise that globalisation can still result in the same misery we have already witnessed in this century. Our role then is not merely to respond to globalisation by ensuring that our countries are ready to compete in the global market, but also to shape the resulting content of globalisation to make sure that it results in a better world.

nation by another, and of any country by another. Democracy means doing away with relations of domination.

Democratising education for a democratic South Africa

It is this vision that guides our government in South Africa as it sets about transforming our society from an apartheid one to a new non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa. The programme of our government, the *Reconstruction and Development Programme*, seeks to transform our society into a new nation characterised by respect for all its people and their rights. In order to achieve this the RDP identifies five major policy programmes: **meeting basic needs; developing our human resources; building the economy; democratising the state; and implementing the RDP.**

We in South Africa believe that the success of our mission depends on the success of our human resource development. Investment in people is an important pillar of our Reconstruction and Development Programme. The transformation of our education system therefore is critical to the attainment of the goals of the RDP. Since the first democratic elections in 1994 my Ministry has been taking up this challenge with enthusiasm

From fragmentation to unity

One of the first challenges that faced us when we came into power was to unite a fragmented system of education, which was divided into 17 separate racially and ethically based departments, each with its own approach, culture and ethos, into a single non-racial department.

The framework for transformation of education

Having succeeded, we set out to develop a framework that would guide our activities. Our first White Paper on education was adopted by Cabinet after an unprecedented level of democratic participation. It contextualised our transformation project, established a set of goals and principles, outlined our vision, and gave a broad overview of activities we were going to embark on. This White Paper has become a unifying framework for transformation, with everybody using it as a yardstick against which to measure progress.

The National Qualification Authority

One of the most important instruments identified in the White Paper was the National Qualifications Framework. The main aim of the NQF is to integrate all elements of the education and training system, to enable learners to progress to higher levels from any starting point. The NQF aims to recognise credits towards qualifications from one part of the system to another.

School Organisation, Governance and Funding

Another major transformation programme was the creation of a new framework for the organisation, governance and financing of schools. We had to find a mechanism to bring together the different and varied types of schools in a coherent and organised fashion. After much discussion in the country, which saw more than three thousand people participating in face to face consultations with my Ministry, we were able to adopt another White Paper. This declared that we would have only two types of schools, Public and Independent, doing away with the apartheid school models.

This White Paper also democratised school governance in two important ways. First, it gave powers to local communities to run their schools in co-operation with the government. Secondly, the structures of governance are transformed to become fully representative of the major stake-holders: students, parents, teachers, workers form the governing body.

Another aspect is funding and financial management. Apartheid funding policies were distorted in racial terms, with schools that served the white race being funded at a much higher level than those in the black communities. Our transformation agenda means that we have to equalise education expenditure and redress these imbalances. Because of the huge backlogs in our education, we could not immediately move to a point where education would be free for all. We recognised that there was a need for people who could afford to pay to do so, if we were to ensure the protection of the public school system from collapse. This does not mean that we have abandoned our goal of free education for all. We have only recognised that our inequities are so vast at this stage that it would be unfair to the poor to treat them the same way as the rich.

But even as we adopted this approach, we still adhered to the principles of democracy, and left the decision over fee payment in the hands of the school parents. In other words, school fees can only be compulsory if the parents in a particular school have taken this decision. To protect poor parents, we gave power to the Minister to determine a national threshold of income, below which parents would not be forced to pay. But more important is the protection we gave to the learners in our School's Act, where we declared that no learner shall be excluded from school on the basis that parents cannot afford to pay fees.

School governing bodies were also empowered to run their own budgets, and encouraged to use other means of raising resources, be they in cash or in kind. We believe that schools have not only become places where people learn about democracy, but they have themselves become microcosms of our democratic country.

Democratising the curriculum

Democracy in education does not just end with the way the school is governed. In fact, this is meaningless if the real essence of schooling, the learning process, is not democratised. The curriculum is a very important instrument for whatever goals we want to achieve. So when we examine how we educate our citizens for a democratic world order, we should look at the curriculum - that is the content of what we teach, the aims of teaching, as well as teaching and learning methods. For

example, the South African curriculum we inherited was geared towards white male domination. In line with the ideology within which it was embedded it could not produce citizens capable of independent and critical thought. This was a curriculum for the world order we said we are changing from.

Let me submit to this house that while our country's curriculum was an obvious and extreme case of clear domination, many curricula will not escape similar criticism if subjected to close scrutiny. The challenge I therefore want to pose to this conference is to what extent are we prepared to transform our curricula such that we rid them of values of racial domination, religious arrogance, and gender biases.

In our country we recently launched a new curriculum, which we have called "Curriculum 2005" because it will become fully operational in the whole education system, including adult education, in the year 2005. This curriculum is outcomes based, and therefore marks a shift from a content driven learning process to one based on learners' competencies. The new curriculum is much more learner centred and learner driven. We have completed developing broad outcomes for the eight learning areas of our new curriculum, and we are now busy preparing learning programmes. In the second half of this year we will be conducting intensive in service programmes for teachers in Grades 1 and 7, where we will be introducing the new curriculum next year.

We believe that learning and teaching will indeed be democratised through the use of multimedia in the classrooms, learner-centred methods such as group work, teacher empowerment through recognition of professional status, classroom support by various agents including the publishing industry, and the use of ongoing assessment methods such as learner profiles to aid the process of teaching and learning. Our classrooms will now be centres of democratic learning through democratic practice.

Higher education

The last area I would like to touch on is the higher education sector. Again this sector was characterised by fragmentation, inequities, stark disparities in access and participation rates, racially and gender skewed representation of students in scientific and technological fields, and an overemphasis on eurocentric perspectives. All these meant that higher education was not fit for the new democratic order and needed to be transformed. We appointed a Commission on Higher Education and its report formed the basis of a draft White Paper, which is presently subject to public scrutiny.

Conclusion

There are many other activities that we have embarked on in democratising our education system which I have not dealt with here: early childhood development, which lies at the base of our education endeavour; adult basic education; out of school youth; the disabled and access to education; rural women who remain the most marginalised sector in the world today; the development of the further education sector.

What I have merely done is to show that the development of democratic education in our new democracy is indeed a mammoth task, but my Ministry is rising to the occasion. However, our country's democratisation endeavours can only succeed if the drive towards an African Renaissance succeeds. And that drive can only succeed if the world begins to see Africa not through the eyes of domination, but through the eyes of democracy, friendship, and respect. All this is dependent primarily on the kind of education the people of the world receive.

If they continue to receive education for domination, the world will merely change for the worst.

Young people can - and should - be trusted

I wish we could have had some common-sense merchants at the Conference. I mean the sort of people who round on you when you talk about giving children some say in their lives and bludgeon you with their pathological certainty that youth is a paradigm of ignorance and irresponsibility. I like to think they would have been forced to abandon their position after seeing some of the young people who took part in workshops and plenaries.

The two young students from Denmark, Sofie and Binh, were dauntingly impressive. They had come to talk about the various school student organisations in their country, and how they play a full, statutory role in the way schools are run. This was heavy-duty self-confidence such as I, for one, haven't seen in England for a very long time. No, I tell a lie: such as I have never seen. They talked clearly, with precision and authority, in a language which, even allowing for the legendary Scandinavian gift of tongues, they cannot have been studying all that long.

Their education system ought to have fallen apart long ago with rioting in the streets and chaos in the classroom, if the Rhodes Boyson, common-sense, grown ups-know-best view of childhood had any truth in it. Danish schools have student councils which talk to management with authority, and which are represented on governing bodies. The Danes do not fear their young people, and they recognise that students are full partners in their education. Therefore they must speak as well as be spoken to. They must have the measure of power they need to ensure that adults don't endlessly force on them modes of learning and behaving which have become intolerable to them.

Democratic schooling was clearly working in Denmark, but what of it here in England? Representatives of the school council of Wolverhampton Grammar School were present, and gave a guardedly optimistic account of how their Head was trying to democratise their education. They had had some successes, though the cultural resistance of almost everyone involved in education here to anything which might smack of 'giving in to children' still makes any serious endeavour of this kind seem almost suicidal. Yet academic results improved, which ought to have justified not less democracy, but more. It was clear that as they began to feel that the school intended to meet their needs - and was trying to find out what those were - they gave more of themselves to study.

I appreciated this Conference enormously, because it confronted a question which to me is at the root of all sensible educational thinking. How - I say again, how - can you claim to be educating people when you never ask them how they feel about your actions and the things you try to teach them, and when you specify in detail what

they shall be made to learn, whether they need that knowledge or not? And how - I say again, how - can you possibly be preparing them to live in a mature, consultative democracy if you never ask them to express an opinion which might differ from yours, and live by the consequences of it.

You can't, of course.

Christopher R. Shute

Report from a Danish Delegate

The main purpose of the school is to teach pupils how to get on in the world and prepare the pupils for life in society. Society in England is based on democracy. Therefore it should be evident that the everyday life of the schools in England also should be marked by democracy, mutual respect and equality. It is a delusion to believe that democracy can be learned primarily through old dusty books. Only by participation will pupils learn about democracy.

Each school must have a student council and pupils must be represented in the school government and in the committees the school sets up. Being a member of the school government is a big responsibility. Responsibility to attend the meetings, to keep up-to-date with the political debates concerning educational issues and most importantly to be prepared for the meetings. It is my opinion that the English pupils are ready for this responsibility. Yet, do parents, teachers and headmasters have enough faith in the pupils to involve them in the decision making?

Binh Pham

International Secretary, GLO (Danish School Students' Union)

Can it be true?

Have we at last come out of the closet and become respectable? Certainly the Conference left all its participants feeling that education in and for democracy is now seen globally as the right and legitimate approach, and no longer the preserve of 'the lunatic fringe'. We went out into the world from Stanford Hall feeling that, instead of lurking in the shadows, we could trumpet the need to democratise schooling, particularly in Britain. How can Britain continue to hide its insecurities behind authoritarian and oppressive approaches when the South African Education Minister had the courage to talk openly and honestly about the enormous problems facing his country and to demonstrate his unshakeable determination to build democracy in South Africa through a democratic education process? It was both humbling and immensely encouraging.

Bernard Trafford

Welcome appreciated by younger students

The East Midlands Flexi College (a small co-operative learning group of 15 students from 8 to 16 years) says thank you to Janet Meighan who organised the conference and included us, to Josh Gifford who made us feel at home, and to the Comino Foundation which paid for our places.

At the end of the day I had the following conversation with Jenny, one of the two students elected to attend the conference.

Q "How has it been then, Jenny?"

A "I feel different somehow."

Q "Oh yes, what do you mean ... different?"

A "Well, I don't think things will be the same again."

Q "How can that be then?"

A "We went and I was listened to and people were nice to us. And we had our say and they said things and I listened to them. We told them what we do and they seemed interested."

Q "But how did that make you feel different ... why won't things be the same?"

A " I feel as though I've grown up!"

Professor Bengu said that the classroom should become "a microcosm of our democratic society". This, too, is our vision and day-by-day practice in Flexi College.

Philip Toogood

Open letter to David Blunkett

During the conference the idea of writing to the Secretary of State for Education gathered momentum. The following letter was drafted and redrafted using the varied contributions of many participants. The final text was received at the closing session when a decision was taken to send it immediately, not as a formal Conference Resolution, but as a summary of common themes and recommendations.

Dear Mr Blunkett,

A major international conference took place on May 12-14th at the Co-operative College, Loughborough, called *Democratic Discipline, Democratic Lives: Educating Citizens for a Changing World*. This was organised by *Education Now* and the *Institute for Democracy in Education*, two linked and significant groupings in contemporary educational thinking. The conference was attended by participants from a range of European and African countries as well as UK. Professor Bengu, the Minister of Education of South Africa, gave a keynote lecture. He commented on his delight at seeing school students represented. The Conference forms part of the Council of Europe project on democratic citizenship, supported by the British Government, and was attended by the Vice-chair of the project who is to report it to the Education Committee of the Council of Europe. The Conference contained a number of disparate groups and views, but was united in the knowledge that democracy in education is a fundamental plank of current and future educational policy. One outcome was the following statement which members of the Conference have supported.

There is now a global interest in democracy. Organisations such as UNESCO and Council of Europe, as well as the DFID in UK are promoting democracy as a core value in the governance both of a country and of its education system. Countries such as South Africa, Denmark, Poland and Israel are taking democracy very seriously in their constitutions and their legal frameworks for schools and colleges. Both Denmark and Poland have built into their legislation that schools should have School Councils, that school students should be represented on governing bodies, and that students should have access to local and national levels of government in relation to education. We are aware that the Labour Government is equally committed to democratic processes in education, to resolution P.85 of the Council of Europe on the teaching and learning of human rights in schools, and to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. We applaud this stance.

Similarly, we are aware of SCAA's ongoing work on citizenship and values. We note and endorse a number of features of Labour commitment to teacher education and to raising standards as well as its concern about racism and abuse of human rights, and the link to poor performance. There is a growing body of research evidence that demonstrates that democratic practice in education raises achievement levels and directly contributes to school effectiveness. We are now

discovering new information about quality learning, multiple intelligences and learning styles which make solid links to participatory processes in classrooms and organisations. This, together with the 1996/7 Intergovernmental Conference on the political development of Europe and its citizens, the principle of subsidiarity, and the restoration of levels of aid to developing countries, leads us to endorse the following proposals which will help to facilitate the development of democratic processes in education.

1. **Legislation that enshrines in education law the rights of the child, for example Article 12 on children's right to participate in decisions which affect them**
2. **A legal requirement for a Student Council in every school and college**
3. **Restoration of representation of school students on governing bodies**
4. **Support for training for students, teachers, heads and governors to enable full participation in democratic processes in their institutions**
5. **A national initiative for youth, such as a National Youth Council and a Commissioner for Children**
6. **Audit procedures built into school and college inspection and quality measures to examine whether institutions are actually meeting client needs for participation, representation and communication**
7. **An examination of the ways schools and colleges are controlled and financed, and consideration given to developing frameworks of democratic accountability, particularly in terms of unelected quangos**
8. **The promotion of international links and mutual exchange, whereby lessons from democratic practice elsewhere are learned.**

We are aware of some possible resource implications for implementation, but are convinced of the cost effectiveness of the above measures. More democratic schools and colleges are also, as the research shows, those with better discipline and higher achievement, which represents a saving in areas of school failure, violence, exclusion, and eventual unemployment. Members of the conference would be happy to share their current work more widely and welcome the opportunity a new Labour government brings to have democracy as a central platform in future educational strategy.

We welcome your response.

Lynn Davies, Conference Chair

So far, so good

At the time of going to press, one very encouraging response to the open letter had been received - from **Don Foster**, Liberal Democrat Education and Employment Spokesman. He says,

"... You will be interested to hear that in our education policy document, *Investing in Excellence*, Liberal Democrats are committed to encouraging secondary schools to establish student councils to develop a dialogue between pupils and school management teams. We believe that the standard of education provided in school matters most to its pupils, yet pupils rarely have any say in how a school is managed. We remain committed to pupil representation on governing bodies. Pupil representatives should present the views of the student council to the governing body and should report back decisions. The

decisions of governing bodies should be made available to both pupils and parents.

On other specific points you raise we would also introduce a Minimum Curriculum Entitlement in the place of the National Curriculum - and which would include skills in citizenship, and abolish - for example - the Funding Agency for Schools as an unelected quango ..."