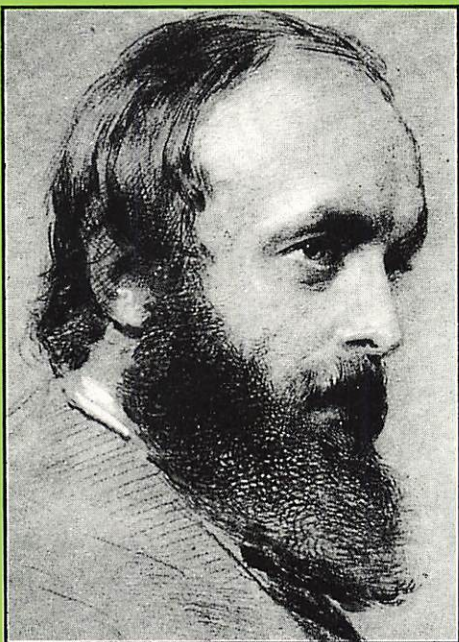


The Salisbury Review

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The quarterly magazine of conservative thought



The Third Marquess of Salisbury
1830 - 1903

The Betrayed Generations

John Marks

In IC3 Land

Roy Kerridge

Landscape Poetry

P D James

Aaron Copland

Robert Stove

The Grammar School

Imperative

Nula Bealby

Letter from France

Gillian Bardinet

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The Jackdaw

The Jackdaw, a monthly newsletter-cum-magazine, was launched last September. It is edited by David Lee, former editor of *Art Review* and writer of its hard-hitting editorials. While giving information and comment on the month's arts events, its main purpose is to expose and attack the chicanery and humbug of the Arts establishment and the unworthy recipients of its favours (v. its feature 'Gravy Train'). *Salisbury Review* readers will be delighted by its straight talking and its refusal to genuflect to idols or follow fashion. All the material is presented in a provocative and entertaining manner and enlivened by quotes from Brian Sewell and like-minded luminaries. Here is David Lee in his first editorial: 'The love of looking for its own sake is devalued by the promotion of superficiality, inane, perfunctory dabbling with new technology, stultifying political correctness and a discreditable collective prostration before what is generally a horrifyingly ignorant younger generation. From the way the visual arts are administered in Britain, a Martian might be forgiven for concluding that no art life exists after 35.'

The first issue carries an A-Z guide to the self-satisfied literature of official contemporary art: 'A is for Arts Council. The original charter of the Arts Council has gone up in smoke to be replaced by bias and effective censorship on a scale the old Artists' Union of the USSR

would salute. S is for Serotoland, a new cathedral to certain contemporary artists which masquerades as a national collection of 20th century art.' The December-January issue carried a piece entitled 'The Living Death of State Art': the end of the 20th century saw official art pushed as never before and rubbish dumped on a browbeaten public. Those who control state art will never admit that it has failed; nothing will improve until a future administration is brave enough to abolish the Arts Council and reform the whole moribund system.

Each issue carries regular features: Artbollocks — ferocious attacks on vacuous material from the Establishment. 'Life class' is an intelligent and instructive study of a selected painting — *Sigismunda* by William Hogarth, and *Sidney and Beatrice Webb* by William Nicholson. Up to date news on auctions and exhibitions, particularly information on important pictures up for sale, is also included.

Like the *Salisbury Review*, the *Jackdaw* wants to become a forum for views not articulated elsewhere and welcomes contributions and information on any art topic. The annual subscription is £25 in Britain, £35 in Europe, \$65 in North America and £40 elsewhere. It is published at 88 Leswin Rd London N16 7ND. e-mail dg.lee@virgin.net - internet www.thejackdaw.com

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Although Margaret Thatcher originally made her mark as a school-marmish Secretary of State for Education, she soon moved far beyond all that during her eleven and a half years at 10 Downing Street, and it is ironical that one of the most durable legacies of her premiership has turned out to be the inordinate attention given to education as public policy. Not that education isn't important: but one might well wonder why not even the failures of the health service (not to mention the criminal justice system, social work profession and local government) receive as much publicity, and also why it is that, though the political parties treat us to a steady flow of verbiage about education what they say seems interchangeable. The measure of what all this limelight is achieving is that whereas three decades ago teaching was still regarded as an attractive career — fulfilling work, convenient hours, long holidays — today there is such a shortage of teachers that there is talk of a four-day week, 12,000 teachers have telephoned a helpline in the space of a year, often to complain of stress and depression, and no fewer than 2,500 head teachers have left their posts.

In this Education Special Number John Marks argues that the failure to monitor what was actually happening in schools during the so-called reforms and rejiggings of the 197's and 1980's was a major factor in the ruin of the education system: today, when it is proudly announced that only 5.6 per cent of children leave school without a GCSE yet nearly one in five nineteen year-olds are found to be seriously lacking in basic skills and seven million adults have problems with reading, writing and arithmetic, it is clear that we need to rethink the whole nature of the statistics on which education policy needs to be based. John Marks also maintains that there should be much less emphasis on centrally imposed programmes such as class-size reduction, and more decentralization and devolution to schools. This is Jane Wharton's message too: she insists that there is a role for a variety of smaller schools which can provide services for special-needs children which the huge comprehensives are failing to give. Comprehensive schools are also failing abler children, except where they have exceptionally well-heeled catchment areas in stockbrokers' clerk suburbs. Nula

Bealby shows that our remaining grammar schools have a vital role in the system, and that it is the top as well as the bottom of the ability range that needs special provision. Essentially, as Tom Burkard and Dennis O'Keeffe argue, the market is the best organizational principle for school education. Robert Grant would extend this even to the financing of universities.

In the end devolution and the market come to the same thing: education is just one area of local or localized government where it became painfully obvious some time ago that decentralization on the basis of providing funds for locally-based public functionaries who are not answerable to higher authority about how they spend their money soon becomes power without responsibility — perhaps one should say, notional responsibility without a responsible attitude. There needs to be some sort of discipline at every level of public service provision: the attempt in education to impose it from above has failed, and sooner or later would have been harmful if it had succeeded. The pretence that the professionals on the spot could be safely left to pursue their own fantasies without interference is largely to blame for what went wrong in the 1970's. The market, the discipline of dealing with the consumer, is the only viable means of direction from below: a system of local elections with 25 per cent turn-outs and 10 per cent of the electorate providing governing mandates, as in many inner-London boroughs, is certainly not an alternative.

In their article Tom Burkard and Dennis O'Keeffe also warn of too much reliance on miracle solutions like IT, which Michael Strawson discusses from a different angle in 'Into the Internet'. Gillian Bardin's Letter from France provides some reassurance in reminding us that brass-faced self-interest wrapped up in hubristic posturing is a feature of public life in other countries too, while R J Stove's piece on the American composer Aaron Copland draws attention to the sometimes sinister agendas blended in even the most exalted of cultural endeavours. One would not normally wish to compare Copland's Third Symphony to a schools exam league table but one of the themes of this issue is the need to look below the surface of the advertised and the ostensible.

Education, Utility, and the Universities

Robert Grant

This essay was written in 1989, well before the Conservative Government's Further and Higher Education Act of 1992. That Act granted university status to all polytechnics, thus doubling the number of UK universities to something like 100. It also abolished the Universities Funding Council (previously the University Grants Commission), establishing in its place four regional Higher Education Funding Councils, with responsibility for both funding and the external, so-called 'quality assessment' exercises on which each institution's funding now crucially depends. Accordingly, much of this essay is out of date, in the sense that, unlike in 1989, its practical recommendations are no longer immediately feasible. On the other hand, its underlying principles seem to me as valid as ever, and ingenious readers may speculate on how they might still be applied.

(Author's note)

The present Labour Government has consistently treated with suspicion the grant-maintained, quasi-independent State schools encouraged by its Conservative predecessor to 'opt out' of LEA control, so that their future, let alone the possibility of their increasing in numbers, cannot be called secure. So they can no longer be seen as the precursor of 'opting-out' or fully independent universities.

It may seem odd that universities in a free society should require an excuse, when so much else, of far more dubious benefit — the popular music and junk food industries, for example — consumes what must be hugely greater resources. But the answer to that is obvious: rubbishy as they are, those industries are part of that free society,

while the universities (which ought to be) are not. At a time when the primary excuse for universities is generally thought to be their 'utility', it is particularly important to defend the education which only they can provide. But it will be as well first to distinguish education from other forms of instruction.

Human beings differ from other animals in virtue of the very much smaller and more indirect role which their fundamental genetic or instinctual equipment plays in their behaviour. The role of learning is correspondingly greater. No doubt we learn much spontaneously, or from experience; but by far the greater part of our learning results from a process of deliberate instruction, imitation, and initiation. In order to survive we must learn, not merely to shun danger, but to seek our subsistence, and also, in all but very primitive societies, to produce it. That requires not raw experience, undergone anew by each generation, but experience concentrated, ordered, and transmitted as knowledge and method, in other words, taught.

Of course, our need for instruction goes far beyond the satisfaction of material needs; but unless certain minimum requirements in that respect are met, our 'spiritual' potential avails us nothing. There is nothing materialistic in asserting that material needs are primary, so long as we understand that to mean only that they must be satisfied first. Materialism is the doctrine either that we have no needs distinct from those we share with the animals, or that our other, 'spiritual' needs are merely offshoots or disguised forms of them. It follows that to devote resources to our so-called spiritual needs is justified only so far as it also serves the needs of production.

In this light all or much of what we understand as 'culture' (by which I mean merely the non-material realm) can be seen as 'useful'. It becomes either a kind of rehearsal for production, as kittens learn to hunt by first stalking leaves, or a form of recreation, in which we recuperate our energies for the next bout of production. Mill in his autobiography attributes some such function to poetry and 'the very culture of the feelings'. According to him, Bentham rules in the 'real' (ie productive) world, but we also need Wordsworth and Coleridge to save us from its desiccating side-effects.

This view is closely connected with another, also associated with Mill and advanced in his *Utilitarianism*, which assimilates culture to 'pleasure'. No doubt it is a 'higher' pleasure (whatever that may mean, since pleasure is a quantitative conception), but it is still, like all pleasures, implicitly an object of self-centred consumption. The truth of the matter, however, is the reverse, to the effect that culture, or the spiritual side of man, is the goal of human existence, whereas production, or man's material pursuits, are merely some among the indispensable means to it, and thence derive their importance. That view of the matter, of course, stems from Aristotle, who used the word *scholē* or leisure — whence our 'school' — to express what I mean in the present context by 'culture'.

Things may be otherwise in educational theory, but in educational policy and administration no serious distinction is made between education and training. Both, after all, are forms of instruction, both in some sense equip people for 'life', and both involve expense, since at the very least teachers

and learners must be freed from immediately productive labour. But the distinction is nevertheless important, and as I see it, is this: education is a matter of ends, while training is a matter of means.

One is always trained *for* something. That 'something' may be education, or it may be production. Both a shop-keeper and a pure mathematician need at some stage to have learnt simple arithmetic. But there seems to be no conception of education proper in which it can be seen as a means to some end beyond itself. There is no answer to the question, 'Why should I be educated?', except this: 'It is your nature, destiny and fulfilment to be so, to whatever degree of which you are capable.'

Those who speak of 'education for democracy', or of the indispensability of educated people to a desirable society, and so on, either misconceive the nature of education (and are thus really talking about something else, eg a form of training) or are using a kind of shorthand to express the (correct) intuition that a desirable society is one composed of educated people. (I shall come later to what is meant by 'an educated person', merely observing here that it is not limited to the academically accomplished.) Education is not an *ingredient* of the good society; education, or a state of general educatedness, is what the good society actually consists in. Education is intrinsically conducive to the social bond, not merely because it is socially acquired, through the transmission of skill and knowledge from person to person, and generation to generation, but also because, tacitly or overtly, it is social in aim.

Each generation hopes by educating the next not merely to equip its successor to fend for itself, but also to endow it with its own interests and values and the means to hand them on to succeeding generations. In educating our children we intend, not merely to train them for survival, but to give them something that will make their survival meaningful and them tolerable companions for ourselves so long as we survive. We aim, in short, at perpetuating the things which most matter to us, even beyond the point when we will no longer be there to enjoy them. A Robinson Crusoe

marooned in childhood with nothing but basic literacy and numeracy, a store of books, and sufficient intelligence to have developed his mind, had he remained in society, to the highest degree, would by himself acquire no education to speak of; and even if, by some miracle, he were to do so, it would avail him little. For the end of education (if momentarily, for argument's sake, we treat it as after all a means) is nothing other than educated intercourse with people of like mind, in other words, educatedness. And that is merely to repeat that although education has a beginning and a middle, it has no end but itself.

Education is not all of the same kind or degree, and, so long as people differ in intelligence, background, and motivation, not everyone can be raised to its highest level. Even if things were otherwise, there would still always be an educational élite, though it consisted only of those engaged in instruction. For the whole notion of education as a process, and as something acquired, is inevitably inegalitarian, simply because teaching *eo ipso* presupposes ignorance in some and knowledge in others. On the other hand, the very same feature gives education an equalizing tendency, and more, since its object is to raise the learner as nearly as possible to the level of his teacher's attainments and to encourage him, if he can, to surpass them.

It seems unlikely that within the normal ranges of intelligence and emotional complexion there could be anyone completely ineducable. Observing the fact of the division of labour, Plato supposed that there must be an appropriate niche in society for everyone, and that each, if he could be steered to it, would find therein the greatest fulfilment of which his nature was capable. We need not agree with Plato's authoritarian *dirigisme*, or indeed with his very implausible assumption that niches and people will automatically match each other in both number and quality, to agree with his general point that fulfilment, of some kind, is desirable for as many as possible. For neither pleasure, nor utility, nor production is the point of education, but the rational fulfilment of the recipient ('rational', because his

fulfilment constitutes a real reason for him to be educated). A society whose members are fulfilled will be what Plato was centrally preoccupied with devising, a society at peace with itself, even if it does not much resemble his ideal republic.

Only that instruction can properly be called education, which treats the learner and what he learns as ends in themselves, no matter what secondary advantages in utility or material productiveness attach to what is learnt. Education rests on Kant's Second Categorical Imperative, the injunction never to treat anyone as a means only, but always also as an end in himself. Obviously, however, a society dependent on producers — a stage we have yet to outgrow — will do well to ensure that enough of the education it provides happens also to be useful in production, and also that as little production as possible takes the form of alienated, mechanical drudgery for those engaged in it (as it will do if the wrong people are allocated to it).

In proportion as a task engages the performer's talents, to that extent to train him for it approximates to education, and the more so the more the task requires the development of those talents. It follows that what is an education for you might amount to a mere training for me, if my talents lie in another direction, and are thus ill-matched to the task in question. That is perhaps one reason why training and education are easily confused; another is that to train a person merely to secure his subsistence is nevertheless to direct one's attention to his welfare, albeit only of a material — or if you like, 'selfish' — kind.

It is not hard, however, to show that education is more than a mere training in selfishness, and that it has a naturally altruistic tendency. It is perfectly true that self-fulfilment, self-realization and the rest have become the buzz-words of a peculiar cult of egocentricity much in vogue on the Pacific coast of the United States (one amusingly commemorated, a few years back, in Cyra McFadden's *The Serial*). But egocentricity, or self-gratification, is just the opposite of self-fulfilment. The 'self' which is gratified is as different from the 'self' which is

fulfilled, as selfishness is from self-respect.

Education capitalizes not upon the first, but upon the second. It harnesses the learner's self-respect to his natural curiosity, so that truth, like truthfulness, becomes a matter of honour. Scorning lies, one scorns even more to lie to oneself. Curiosity seeks to experience the world as it is in itself, undistorted by subjective fantasy or will. It gives us a certain pleasure for once to restrain our impulse to interfere, and to contemplate things in their independence of ourselves. In them we perceive the mirror-image of our own freedom. This, perhaps, is the primary scientific impulse, to which we owe our knowledge of the natural world, a knowledge truly amazing by comparison with what prevailed in the era of magic, when the immediate impulse was to bend nature to human purposes. It is evident that such an epistemology contains the seeds of a moral attitude, and thus that an education in scientific inquiry is also indirectly a moral education. (And that is true even if, as a result of our understanding, we find the long-sought-after mastery of nature within our grasp.)

The same altruistic impulse lies behind the desire to understand, rather than manipulate, the human world. It is not insignificant that the Sophists, who, like their latter-day champion Nietzsche, were sceptical about the possibility of truth, were also professional teachers of rhetoric. For them truth was what, by fair means or foul, people could be persuaded to believe, and they peddled the techniques of its manufacture in democratic Athens, where power hung upon the ability to convince. But a genuine education in the humanities is different, even though 'truth' there is inevitably something less factual and clear-cut than in science. Of course in science 'truth' is provisional, in the sense that it is always corrigible in the light of new interpretation and evidence; but in the humanities what matters is less the absolute truth (for that will always remain elusive) than the observer's will to approximate to it, in other words his objectivity.

Objectivity means something different in the humanities from what it means in the sciences, since the observer him-

self belongs to the world he describes. (He also belongs to the natural world, but only physically, not *qua* observer.) In order to describe it accurately — that is, objectively — he must take into account, or even share (though not uncritically), the intimations of value it contains. The scientist's task, by contrast, is precisely to rule out such considerations and to see his world as far as possible from a non-human perspective. To see the human world from the scientific angle, therefore, is not to see it at all, since, though no less open to inquiry in its own way than nature, it is not a scientific object. All educated inquiry presupposes a perspective appropriate to the particular object or field under study. Both science and the humanities demand a certain judgment, taste or *Taktgefühl* in the inquirer, so that he instinctively knows which assumptions or procedures are or are not legitimate (that is, likely to be fruitful). And that, of course, is something he can only learn as a member of a self-conscious community of inquirers, as the heir and contributor to a tradition.

The drive to objectivity is a feature not merely of academic studies. A man properly educated — and I mean educated — in bricklaying, gardening, cabinet-making or motor mechanics has learnt no less than the academic an appropriate scrupulousness in procedure, respect for his materials, the ability to follow up a hunch, and a love of his art and his fellow-practitioners. All these are really a form of respect for things as they exist independently, not necessarily of human will altogether, but of one's own purely subjective will. To have acquired them is to have forsaken the childish illusion that the world (and its other inhabitants) can or should be made to yield to one's desires. Self-knowledge, self-control and self-direction supplant the fantasy of control over nature and others.

It is obvious that in education as I have characterised it we have not only the strongest of all motives for voluntary association, but the germ of political order in a free society. It is significant that in totalitarian societies genuine education is scarce in many fields and forbidden in some, while so-called political education occupies a

major part of the curriculum. In free societies, by contrast, we have in ordinary education almost all the political education that the citizen needs, unless he also intends to make politics his study or career.

In talking of politics we now finally broach the subject of university education. It bears on politics not merely because all education throws political shadows, but because university education as currently administered requires political justification to the electorate, who foot the bill. There are two issues involved, because a university is not one thing, but two. On the one hand, a university is a permanent, voluntary community of scholars engaged in various kinds of inquiry; on the other, a transitory population of students who hope to learn something from them, and who for the most part have no intention of eventually joining their ranks.

It might seem possible to defend high-level free inquiry, whilst regarding the upkeep and tuition of those who were themselves never going to participate in it as a waste of time and money. It is obvious that the subjects traditionally studied in universities often have no immediate, tangible application. The average student of French, say, is not going to teach it, set up as a translator, or do business in it. And even in the sciences, some (such as pure mathematics) have no application at all, while others are read only to be abandoned on graduation. Of what value, to himself or anyone else, is the education of one who never actually uses the particular skills he has acquired? And a further, related question: why concentrate so many diverse studies in a single location? What is the university student supposed to gain that could not equally be gained in a liberal arts college, a language institute, a college of technology, or in a professional or other apprenticeship? In other words, what makes a university education a *university* education?

The history of universities is not an infallible index of their nature and function. Nevertheless, their history is not without interest. Though they had many precursors from Plato's Academy onwards, they first emerged in something like their modern shape in

mediaeval times.

The seven liberal arts which made up the mediaeval curriculum consisted of a lower or basic division, the *trivium* (grammar, logic, rhetoric), and of a higher, the *quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, music). The whole had both a practical and a theoretical character, though in each individual subject the two aspects are not always, if they ever were, easily distinguishable. The study of music was not meant to equip graduates to seek their living as composers or performers, nor astronomy to meet the needs of navigation; and something similar might be said of grammar and logic. But arithmetic and geometry are simultaneously abstract and applicable (indeed architecture, in which they are essential, had been reckoned among the liberal arts by the Romans), while rhetoric trained a man in public speaking in part by exposing him to literature.

Furthermore, university faculties had an unmistakably vocational aspect, being divided into law, divinity and medicine. It was evidently thought that though a university might equip a man directly for the professions, he could not practise his vocation to the full or in a proper manner unless his education had also contained what, from a narrowly pragmatic point of view, were irrelevancies. Thus it was that such vocations enjoyed the title of the 'liberal' professions, meaning those that the *liber* or 'free' man might practise, ie one who, though he might earn his living by them, was not constrained by necessity to do so.

In translating that idea into modern terms it is not necessary to assume with Aristotle that such a man must be of independent means and in that sense 'leisured'. For so long as he can make a living by his profession, he is precisely in the position of one who is financially independent. What matters, so to speak, is what is left over from the immediate exchange value of his services. That will be something that affords food for disinterested reflection, and (consequently) has a moral dimension. Moreover, in the longer view, it will play an essential part in his professional activities. For what is required in the professional man, and is, in a paradoxical

sense, also paid for (or rather, taken for granted) by his client, is his disinterestedness.

In Chapter 2 of *The Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith famously said that we secured the services of others by appealing not to their benevolence, but to their self-interest. This may be true of much economic activity, but it is not strictly true of the professions. The ideal structure of a professional relationship is something like this: I need your skills as a lawyer (doctor, priest). In asking you to act for me, I ask you to set aside the normal motives to which I might appeal if I required something simpler or more material (meat, bread, candlesticks). I ask you to consult not your interests, but mine. To enable you to do so without thereby imperilling your interests and those of your dependants, I and your other clients propose to take those immediate considerations off your hands and to see that you are supported at a level sufficient to make economic ambition superfluous. You will then be free to devote yourself to what we ask of you, and we understand, indeed, that in setting yourself up as a professional governed not by straightforward financial considerations, but by an ethic enforced by the corporation to which you belong, this is precisely what you undertake to do. What we are doing, in fact, is not 'paying for your services', but conferring financial independence on you so that you may, so to speak, provide your services *gratis*.

All this is much less fantastic or sophistical than it may sound. It is self-evidently the paradigm of the pedagogical relationship (which is one reason why education, like medicine, has a strong historic association with charity), though it is of course likely to appear idealistic in the light of much current practice in the professions, particularly in the United States, where professionals have largely become tradesmen or entrepreneurs working on commission. The consequences are visible in the vastly inflated damages secured by successful litigants from those who, at similarly vast expense, have insured themselves against it, and in the destruction of trust between doctor and patient by constant malpractice suits.

Some people may be doing well out of this grotesque lottery, but the cultural impoverishment is enormous. Indeed, the whole slide into materialistic anarchy may well have begun in the American education system, in which, by the very fact of their being taught and examined side-by-side in the same institutions, little distinction is made between academic pursuits, professional skills, business lore, and the whole baggage of pick-and-mix lunacies from *Women's Studies* to frisbee-throwing and underwater typewriting.

I instanced the professions as an example of an obvious, natural and long-established bridge between the academic and the 'outside' worlds. But the modern university usually includes subjects which have little or no abstract, 'liberal' or philosophical overspill. Economics is nowadays rightly reckoned to be a proper university subject; it contains elements which involve serious reflection on the nature and ends of human life, which, even if they were quite useless to a financier (say) in his day-to-day dealings, would still be of value and interest to him as a rational being. But, if there is any value in a university's having a school of accountancy, it will lie only in whatever 'liberal' values budding accountants imbibe from their environment, since accountancy is in itself a wholly utilitarian discipline, whose theoretical content is completely consumed in its own exercise.

I am not saying that utilitarian subjects necessarily lack the moral dimension of traditional academic subjects, nor that, in view of their commercial value, they must somehow be inappropriately 'materialistic'. As in the manual crafts I instanced earlier on, there is moral discipline, and hence educational value, contained in the very effort to master them. Moreover, in a student who has a genuine talent for them, they will conduce to what I have called his rational fulfilment. What they lack, however, is the ability to generate disinterested theoretical reflection. Though worthy and useful so long as an external demand for them exists, they open no windows on to anything else. If they are sometimes grouped together in a single institution, that is simply for

convenience' sake. They may share their usefulness, they may share techniques, resources and facilities, they may even team up to solve some newly-perceived problem or to pursue some potentially profitable research, but they have nothing fundamentally to say to each other, because, strictly speaking, they have nothing to *say* at all. Everything at bottom is doing, and when the doing ceases (just as when a skill or technique becomes obsolete) then so does the subject. They may be genuinely educational, but are surely inappropriate subjects in a university. The objection to the once-fashionable nostrum of a unified tertiary system is that the distinctive character of university education would be destroyed along with its self-management, and hence any profit that utilitarian education might have derived from a closer association with it.

In implying that 'real' university subjects have something to say about the world I do not mean that they have anything to contribute to the solution of its practical problems. So they may chance to have, and it will be a bonus if they do, but it is not their business. The 'world' on to which they open a window is not the everyday practical world (though it includes it as a possible object of reflection), nor a purely ideal world such as Plato imagined, but a world from which time, and thus the immediate motives to action, have been mentally bracketed out. As much is obvious from the study of history or theoretical physics, since we are powerless to affect the past, or the laws of nature. It is a world, in short, without urgency, and hence without the parochiality, and (be it added) the error, naturally consequent upon an exclusive preoccupation with the immediate. A man with his nose held perpetually to the grindstone will take his grindstone for the world; and he will be wrong.

For these general reasons, although an academic may also be, and frequently is, an intellectual, the academic and the intellectual are different, if related, species. Both seek theoretical understanding, but the intellectual does so as a prelude to, or excuse for, action. And action, like material subsistence, is always necessary, though the

intellectual is frequently the least reliable of guides as to what it should be, and is seldom to be entrusted directly with power. Nevertheless, he may perhaps be thought disinterested enough to be worth listening to when he calls for action to preserve an ethos to which he cannot *qua* intellectual belong. For the university is worth preserving as a major, if historically emergent, part of our distinctively human world. In it, we appear as pre-eminently creatures of culture, who do more than just eat, drink, squabble and reproduce like the animals we also are.

***Government funding
of all utilitarian
education should
cease forthwith. There
might just be a case
for retaining it in
liberal education, but
only until such time as
private, personal and
charitable initiatives
can take over***

Each traditional university subject offers an escape — though only the utilitarian will think that 'escapist' — from whatever purely practical concerns it may also happen to serve. What distinguishes it from other forms of higher education is that in it contemplation is of the essence, and not merely a possible by-product. Moreover, its immediate focus is not the self-fulfilment and self-realization of the student (the eliciting and development of his particular talents), but the good of the subject. It is true, of course, that the undergraduate has nothing much to contribute to his subject. But it is of the greatest importance that he be taught by those who do have something to contribute, so that he gets from them some idea of what it is to pursue a line of inquiry for its own sake. His fulfilment is achieved precisely by subordinating it to his subject, even though he will not usually persevere with his subject after graduation.

There is another, and difficult, point to be made about university subjects. How, it will be said, can they possibly conduce to the desired catholicity of mind or a synoptic overview, when their intrinsic differences, and the freedom of inquiry essential to each, leads them off in wholly divergent and unpredictable directions? To be sure, each may offer a particular perspective on the world, but how could any of them have anything substantial to say to the others, particularly as specialisms become increasingly rarefied and arcane? Do they not exemplify a centrifugal tendency that must ultimately destroy all communication between them, and hence all excuse for their being brought together in a university?

Some thinkers, such as F R Leavis, seem to have found this a worrying possibility, and have wished to promote certain so-called 'central' disciplines (his own, in Leavis's case) to pride of place in the university curriculum. I believe this move, though understandable, to be not without its dangers, and perhaps to rest on a misconception. First, to regard any particular subject as 'central' is surely to misconstrue the whole academic enterprise. So far from arresting the disintegration of the university, it would accelerate it, by marginalising less privileged subjects.

Secondly, to subject any discipline to the authority of another is to constrain its free development, and thus, by cutting off its academic life-blood, to extinguish it. There are reasons, which I have already given, for excluding perfectly genuine but non-academic subjects from university study, but none for introducing an inequality between those that remain. Thirdly, the motive for privileging some university subjects is not academic, but political, which is to say, itself practical. Whereas their supreme political value lies precisely in their not being available for immediate political consumption. In their self-motivated, corporate independence they are a public advertisement for the Aristotelian truth that the ends of the *polis* are no more narrowly political, than the ends of life are material.

I suggested earlier that there might be some value in exposing students of utilitarian subjects to a university

environment. As much is recognised, indeed, in the customary stipulation that students at polytechnics and even at Colleges of Further Education should attend classes in 'liberal studies'. (Though no-one who has seen a sensitive woman, or man for that matter, attempting to initiate an unwilling class of 17-year-old plasterers into the delights of *Adam Bede* will reckon the time or the tears well spent.) But there are difficulties involved.

One is, that the benefits of any 'liberal' discipline are likely to come only from full-time immersion in it. The aptitude for contemplation is not universal, nor is the kind and degree of intelligence it demands. If, under external pressure, and in order to preserve its liberal core, a university admits significant numbers to read wholly utilitarian subjects, it is likely to find that core dwindling into a rump, especially when their teachers — who in private may be as liberal-minded as you please, but also have their professional interests to protect — are admitted to university government. Alternatively, universities might admit polytechnic and similar students, who were also of sufficient motivation and intellectual calibre, to read 'liberal' subjects for some proportion of their higher educational career. That way the student benefits, while the university remains uncompromised in its fundamental aim. But then something like this (and generally preferable to it) already happens in reverse order, as when university graduates in maths or English go on to train as accountants, businessmen and so on.

But speculation on such minor logistical details is futile, when it is simply the external pressure on universities — in short, their dependence on government — that creates most of the difficulties they face. Higher education needs what secondary education already has within its grasp, namely independence. Government funding of all utilitarian education should cease forthwith. There might just be a case for retaining it in liberal education, but only until such time as private, personal and charitable initiatives can take over. Those who think their education requires some liberal component will then be at liberty to seek it from whatever

institutions are prepared to admit them, for whatever period.

Nothing is odder than the modern belief that government support should be concentrated on the utilitarian sector, for it is precisely those subjects which could safely be abandoned to the market. High-level practical skills are no different, economically speaking, from any other factors of production. So let employers pay for them directly, either by funding their employees' education as it proceeds, or by paying fully-qualified staff an appropriately enhanced salary on recruitment, so that they can finance their own education by borrowing against their prospects. Employers will be well able to afford either option, once repossessed of whatever proportion of their revenue is currently being expensively re-routed through government to precisely the same end.

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Producers are surely better judges than governments of what they themselves require. And so are universities of what universities require. As a result of governments' favouring utilitarian or (what they take to be the same thing) scientific subjects, some universities are now without a department of classics, or a department of philosophy, despite the piddling sums required to keep such minority disciplines alive. I should be inclined to say that an institution which lacked either, let alone both, scarcely deserved the name of a university.

Such an institution, however, typically has good departments in utilitarian subjects, and thus still discharges a valuable educational function. The answer is not only to allow, but to

encourage it to do so, only under its proper name, which is a polytechnic. Humanities or pure science departments could be wound up and their staff reallocated, with heavy compensation, to whichever universities were prepared to take them. Their students and their salaries would follow them.

All this amounts, of course, to reversing Robbins whilst retaining an expanded higher education sector. Robbins was concerned less with university education than with utilitarian education dressed up to look like it. What was needed was as many polytechnics as employers required, together with an expansion of established universities consonant with the preservation of the true academic ethos. Both would have come about spontaneously anyway, given the enormous post-war increase in wealth. There might have been a few new universities, but with each of them made large enough to sustain flourishing minority departments, and perhaps beginning as affiliates or extension colleges of established universities, with the latter awarding the degrees (the relation in which Newcastle once stood to Durham, and Dundee to St Andrews).

The outer limit of university expansion, as Enoch Powell has remarked somewhere, should have been set by the availability of suitably-qualified staff, and precisely that would have been ensured by the expansion of existing departments. For which of them would readily have admitted inferior colleagues to share in their decisions? Yet we all know what happened in many of the new universities, and where, in combination with early tenure, it has led. One especially serious consequence has been that, with 'Sixties mediocrities clogging the pipeline (and running departments and appointments committees), it is nowadays desperately difficult for first-rate graduates to find university employment at all.

In the short run, universities in the strict sense will continue to need some government support, simply because so much of what they do by definition lies outside the market. (And they should get it through some buffer institution on the lines of the UGC, in order to minimize direct political interference.)

With utilitarian education off their hands, governments should be well able to afford it. In the long run, however, there is no reason to think that universities cannot flourish as they once did, on a combination of economic tuition fees and charitable endowments. The latter, which also lie outside the market, have traditionally been motivated either by the donor's vanity or by his disinterested regard for learning. Both are potent incentives, and could be further stimulated (if one is not a rigorist) by tax breaks.

As for economic fees, those could be charged straight away, with the student subsidized where necessary from public funds. We are constantly told of the enormous (utilitarian) demand for graduates in applied science. Industry

therefore has only to put its money where its mouth is. And I see no evidence to suggest that graduates in humanities or pure science are any less in demand than formerly, and much to suggest the opposite. It has been observed at least since the twelfth century that a liberal education enables a man to turn his hand to almost anything. There is therefore no reason to think that students in the less immediately 'useful' subjects will find the funds any harder to come by than others. And economic fees of course also ensure funds for those very few students who wish to make their careers within the university.

In the long run, I believe, a successful enterprise culture should have no difficulty in generating the wealth neces-

sary to put universities back on their feet (much of it, after all, will come simply from its redistribution back from government to the public), and in re-establishing the habit of philanthropy. Desirable though endowments are, however, they are unnecessary to the universities' day-to-day subsistence. Simply by putting their services on the market at cost, universities would almost certainly recoup the maintenance of their other, central activities, which, lying outside the market, are literally priceless.

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The Campaign for Real Education

Nick Seaton

In the mid-1980s, the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) was at its peak and spreading its 'progressive' educational philosophy to other local education authorities around the country.

The content of traditional subjects was being subsumed into politicised integrated humanities, multiculturalism, anti-racism and anti-sexism. Standards in reading, spelling and maths were dropping dramatically and parents and many teachers were in despair.

Against this background, the Campaign for Real Education was formed early in 1987. Then, as now, the main objectives were to raise standards and improve parental choice in the state system.

The intention was to provide a media-friendly, grassroots organisation offering support and a voice to ordinary parents and teachers, and so it turned out. Coverage in the national press

brought more than 300 letters of support within two weeks of the launch.

By drawing attention to research, publishing newsletters and pamphlets, and working with the media, public opinion was gradually won over. Holding conferences and co-operating with other like-minded individuals and organisations such as the Educational Research Trust, the Reading Reform Foundation, the Queen's English Society and the History Curriculum Association, all helped to turn the tide.

For example, the teaching of reading by first systematically teaching the phonic code (the 26 letters of the alphabet and the 42 sounds of the English language) eventually gained importance, in theory if not always in practice. Politicians realised they would lose votes if they failed to ensure that phonics, grammar, spelling and some British history were taught in schools.

Nevertheless, there were bitter battles

over the implementation of the 1988 Education Reform Act, which gave parents more choice, and schools some control over their budgets and the opportunity to opt-out of local authority control. Because education ministers were not fully in control of their civil servants and changed jobs before they could recognise, understand and effectively combat their 'progressive' opponents, the educational establishment turned the National Curriculum into a bureaucratic monster. National tests for children at the ages of 7, 11 and 14 were never as simple, objective or rigorous as intended.

With two fundamentally opposed philosophies of education (traditional and 'progressive') competing for supremacy, it was, therefore, a tragedy that New Labour could steal the Conservatives' educational reforms. New Labour's clever use (and misuse) of language, media spin about the

National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, encouragement for 'specialist' schools, and 'co-operation' with the private sector, have all lulled the public into thinking that state education is improving.

The truth is that bureaucratic quasi-government organisations such as the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), with an £80m annual budget, are now implementing by deceit and on a national scale what ILEA started in the 70s and 80s. Indeed, a former ILEA inspector, Professor David Hargreaves, now heads the QCA.

The 'progressive' mantra, that schools should be used to change society, rather than be places to learn the content of subjects to gain worthwhile qualifications and jobs, is again supreme.

New Labour has deliberately confused the aims of education by making it a legal requirement for teachers to 'prepare all pupils for the... experiences of life', as well as giving them 'opportunities... to learn and to achieve' (*The National Curriculum Handbook(s) for Primary/Secondary Teachers*, DFEE/QCA, 1999).

Of course, preparing pupils for the 'experiences of life' has always been an implicit aim of education. Indeed, a similar phrase appeared in the preamble to the 1988 Education Reform Act. But by making this aim explicit, and giving it equal value with teaching the content of traditional subjects, New Labour has fundamentally changed the whole ethos of state education in a deeply sinister way.

In practical terms, this new statutory requirement has removed responsibilities from parents and turned teachers into surrogate parents and social workers. It has also allowed dozens of 'progressive' groups to influence what is taught in schools.

As part of the new National Curriculum for the year 2000 and beyond, ministers have proudly published a new 'Statement of Values for Education and the Community'. These new values appear under 4 main headings: Self, Relationships, Society and the Environment. Needless to say, the new values are secular, socialist and politically correct. The law, for example, need

not be obeyed, it must only be 'respected', because the educational establishment believes there should be no requirement to obey an 'unjust' law.

Whilst ministers claimed that revising the National Curriculum would slim it down and make it more manageable for teachers, in reality they have increased the burden on teachers by making Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE), which includes lessons in Citizenship, a statutory requirement for pupils from the age of three upwards.

With the introduction of 'cross-curricular' Citizenship, plus Information and Communication Technology, and without any research to suggest either will raise standards, there are now 12 subjects in the National Curriculum instead of the original 10. So with only limited hours in the school day, important knowledge and content are bound to be lost.

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David Blunkett, the education secretary, has claimed that PSHE and citizenship will teach children the difference between right and wrong. But that is disingenuous.

A fundamental tenet of 'progressive' values teaching is that instead of passing on traditional values from one generation to the next (values transference), children must make their own 'informed choices' and formulate their own moral code according to the current situation and from a range of options (values clarification). Thus all forms of adult

authority are undermined.

In his recommendations to ministers, David Blunkett's citizenship guru, Professor Bernard Crick, admits that: 'We aim at no less than a change in the political culture of this country both nationally and locally...' With unusual frankness, he also admits that the new lessons are 'very different from the teaching of civics'. This is true, not least because citizenship lessons now require (pro-) 'European Awareness', without any requirement to consider alternative views. As in America, where it is already happening, plans are afoot to test pupils' attitudes and values and record the results on a national computerised database.

So can these dangerous developments be reversed? The Conservative's 'Free Schools' policy looks promising, because it will remove public funding from the 'progressive' bureaucracies and groups, and give money directly to schools to spend as they wish. (Typical of these groups is the Sex Education Forum, which received £40,000 this year from central government to promote amoral safer-sex education.)

However, the key factor in any improvement will be knowledgeable parents, school governors and teachers, who will inform others and resist every move to turn schools into academies of socialism and political correctness.

Many people believe that the greatest danger we currently face is integration into Europe. But the international socialists have a second front: they are planning for the long-term by using schools to shape the minds of future generations. Widespread ignorance and apathy among responsible adults could hand them success without a fight.

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In IC3 Land

Roy Kerridge

IC3' is the Metropolitan Police code name for a young black man. When I asked a policeman why his radio crackled on about 'IC3's' all the time, he replied, in a tone of light irony, 'If we call them, 'West Indians' it's racist.'

Yesterday, a young Black British minicab driver told me that he was the only survivor of four brothers.

'Two of my brothers died of heroin, the third got stabbed over a heroin deal', he said. 'Then my Mum went back to the Caribbean. No, I don't blame the schools. It's up to you — if you make the choice to take heroin, that's what you can expect.'

Notwithstanding the opinions of the surviving Fourth Brother, I feel that IC3 criminals are made at school. John Paul Flintoff, in his autobiographical account of Comprehensive School life in the early 'eighties, *The Comp* (Gollancz, 1998) describes a classroom world ruled by enormous adult-sized 'black youths'. Most feared of all, by pupil and teacher alike, is a boy called Justice. A gigantic sadistic fourteen year old, he ignores teachers imperiously, and only has to beckon with a jerk of his head for the other boys to do his bidding.

Justice speaks in a Rastafarian-inspired monotone, full of menace. Although this 'patois' consists of sentences beginning 'Me no want dat', it is far from being baby-talk. It is a cryptic language that inspires Respect. Outsiders feel inferior, not superior, if they cannot speak or understand such English. In John Paul's day, if a white or Indian boy used 'black slang', he would be beaten up. On leaving school and becoming a successful drug-dealer, Justice mellowed.

Today, the grim 'patois' of Justice is used by boys of any colour. West Indian immigrants, hard working people of hard working stock, have achieved

a modest prosperity in England. Fortified by a chicken in every pot, bowed and wizened men have fathered super-healthy sons or daughters of enormous size. The same thing happened in America when former cotton-pickers went North and begat gigantic basketball players.

Recently, sizes seem to be levelling off. Black, white and Indian boys, now equally sized, have become social equals, with no one race ruling the roost. A bad Indian or white boy can speak in the ominous tones of Justice — 'Batty man, you wan' dead?' — without fear of retribution from black boys.

Adults who supposedly hold positions of authority quail before young people who misbehave. When a school bully is called in to the Head, he or she often slouches carelessly across a chair, frowning and answering questions with easy insolence: 'You wha?'; 'I never!'; 'That's a lie!'.

In return, the adult world metes out absurd punishments. It is noticeable that convicted youths sentenced to 'Community Service' always go to work at a council-run centre of some kind, where the damage they can do (amounting to thousands) is quickly made good by real workmen.

A teenage boy, of Irish 'travelling stock', was taken to court charged with attacking his sister at home. His punishment was being 'tagged' with an electronic shackle that 'bleeped' whenever he went out at night, confining him indoors with his sister.

An Indian boy, called in to the Head for persistently playing truant, was punished by being 'excluded' from the school.

A young man, who had been led into crime as a schoolboy by a paedophile friend of the family, found himself in prison. When he complained of

homosexual overtures from the older convicts, he was sent off to be 'counselled for homophobia'.

The first two boys live in my neighbourhood, while I met the last one at his mother's funeral, escorted by two warders. A youth in chains seems to be a feature of many a modern funeral. Earlier this year, I attended the funeral of a Jamaican bishop, only to meet his son handcuffed to the usual warder.

London police, with all their talk of IC3's, appear to have set themselves a Mission to rid the capital of black youths. A disproportionate amount of prisoners are of African or West Indian origin. Most of them, I suppose, are guilty of the crimes for which they are being punished. Yet white youths who commit crimes escape punishment, as the police seem no longer to regard them as part of their brief. Some even seem to regard them as 'our side'. If the boy who robs you is black, the police, in my London neighbourhood, are there in an instant. If he is white, they may not bother to show up at all, while if you hint he is Irish you may risk an accusation of 'racism'. Of course a boy is bound to rob you. Somewhere out there is a youth with your name on him.

At present, the unluckiest sort of youth to be is a Somali. The children of Somali refugees are only now taking their first faltering steps into crime, as they have reached Comprehensive School age. Black, white and brown youths, if filled with hate, often make Somalis the object of such feelings. A woman teacher in a Brixton secondary school enjoyed her job and got on well with the boys until Somali pupils arrived. Then an evil spirit descended on the other boys, who had to be restrained at all times from murdering the Somalis. I do not use the word 'murder' lightly, since the custom of kicking a person in

the head when he's down has resulted in deaths on school premises. When a girl at a local Comprehensive fainted, in fear of a TB jab, the other girls had to be restrained from kicking her in the head.

Recently I eavesdropped as middle-aged and elderly West Indians in a post office queue discussed 'the yout' men' as they called wayward young men. There had recently been a fatal shooting in a local Caribbean restaurant. Young men were carrying guns, and as many people were being shot for spilling a drink or treading on a toe in a crowded club or party as died in 'drug related' or 'gangland' shoot-outs. Older people were as baffled by all this as white people had been over milder Teddy Boy and Hell's Angel crimes.

'I'm not saying they're right to do crimes, but look at it from their point of view, there's no jobs and no future', a respectable-looking man in a suit remarked.

However, young men who aspire to be 'yout' men-about-town' are not very fond of work, as they cannot abide to get their clothes dirty. Not all those who describe manual work as 'degrading' become criminals — more become perpetual students.

Children used to want to grow up so they could *be* something — a nurse, a teacher or a train driver. Now they only want to *get* something, preferably something with a 'designer label'. The 'Nike Tick' has become the symbol of all youthful dreams, the very emblem of childhood. Clothes maketh the man risk imprisonment.

Out in the East End, my Jamaican friend Mrs. Wiltshire bitterly lamented the arrest of her fifteen year old grandson Kelvin. (All names have been changed).

'They say the boy is bad, but me tell you, Brother Roy, he is the Lord's Anointed!'

She produced a sheaf of documents, in an ill-fated attempt to prove the boy's innocence. I had only met Kelvin once, and thought he looked mentally disturbed. He 'lived wild' with a group of boys in their early teens, never going home, but sleeping here and there at friends and relatives' flats. He had wrecked Mrs. Wiltshire's flat several

times, but she always forgave him. Once or twice he had accompanied her to church, and she interpreted this as a sign of the boy's Divine Favour. Where others, myself included, saw horns, she saw a halo.

Thanks to Mrs Wiltshire's optimistic belief that I could prove her grandson to be innocent, I was shown not only the papers connected with his case, but also the elaborate journal he had composed at Feltham, the Young Offenders' Unit near Heathrow. Kelvin had been accused of stabbing another boy in the hand and of robbing a young woman, whose cries for help had brought a Good Samaritan to the scene, the man who caught Kelvin. So I was able to read the evidence of all four participants in the drama.

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First of all Kelvin, another boy of Jamaican origin and Okon, whose parents came from Nigeria, all met near the incongruously-named Samuel Pepys Estate. All three boys were fifteen. Kelvin had been suspended and enrolled and excluded from so many schools, so many times, that I doubt if he knew which school he was playing truant from. He began picking on Okon, who grew very uncomfortable in this company.

'He kept saying to me, 'How come you called 'Okon'? What kind o' name is that? What does it mean? Nigerians

are rubbish', Okon testified. 'Finally, Kelvin said he'd show me what he thought of Nigerians and stuck his knife right through my hand. At this the other boy walked off. 'Let him go', Kelvin said. 'I see now you got Respect for me, since I knife your hand, so you can come with me an' do a little job.' 'Thank you', I said. I tied my hand up, but I didn't know quite how bad I'd been stabbed till later. We began to walk around, looking at people. Blood came out of my hand, and people stared at us.

'Come on, we're live bait here', Kelvin said, meaning that someone might get us arrested. 'Let we go on the Pepys Estate.' In the Pepys Estate, Kelvin pointed at a white girl with a handbag. 'That one!' he said. 'Run!' We ran by. Kelvin push the girl, snatch the bag, and we away into the flats.....'

Carol, the 'white girl' had made a careful statement, describing the attack. 'I screamed and a black man came running over. When he saw what had happened, he gave chase and caught both boys in the corridors of one of the flats. He held the boys by the arms. One boy was injured on the hand. The other boy had my money in a pocket on the leg of his jeans, also my card and key, but the bag and purse were never found. I called the police, who came quickly....'

Samuel, the 'black man' gave his story. 'My parents are from Jamaica, but I was born and brought up in New York', he had written. 'I came to London to visit my aunt. On the way to her place, I heard a scream, and a young lady pointed after two boys who were running away. I caught up with them, held them tight, and made them turn out all their pockets. The young lady arrived on the scene and identified the boys and her property....'

Mrs. Wiltshire shook with indignation as she described the subsequent Juvenile Court trial, in which the Nigerian boy appeared as a witness, not a suspect. He had spent some time in hospital having his hand seen to. Fear of Kelvin (perhaps tempered with Respect) had made him take part in the crime. Okon had been thanked by the court for his help, while Kelvin had been sent to Feltham. 'Quite right!' I thought, but said nothing as Mrs W raged.

Until I read the evidence, I had thought, from Mrs. Wiltshire's rantings, that Kelvin had been charged only with wounding Okon.

'I never let Okon in my flat, but in the morning I saw he and the other boy had slept on the landing floor', she said. 'He never had no stab wound then. It's obvious! He stab himself to get Kelvin into trouble 'cos Kelvin such a good Christian....'

Kelvin's 'Feltham Journal' made interesting reading. He covered page after page with small intense lettering, badly-spelled but rivetting, written as it was in a self-righteous spirit of pure hate. Three teenage boys in my street, of Irish 'travelling' stock, constantly go in and out of Feltham in quite a happy-go-lucky spirit. When not in Feltham, they roam around stealing from people and cars, a way of life now regarded by themselves and others as quite normal. They could never tell me anything coherent about the famed Young Offenders' Unit, but laughed in recognition as I recounted some of Kelvin's stories. Here is my edited version of the Journal. Whether all of it, none of it or some of it, is true, I cannot say.

'I remember last time I was in Court, I showed my feelings, so this time I did not look grumpy but put on a false bright smiling face. I told them the usual stuff about going to church and a catering course, but 'cos of that Okon I got sent to Feltham. When I got there, the screws give me mash potato and meat but not in Caribbean style. How come I got to eat English food? (Obsessive descriptions of meals peppered the Journal, if 'peppered' is the right word for complaints about lack of pepper. Kelvin, I am told, is an excellent cook and takes over the kitchen in his grandmother's flat.)

'I get put in a room and sit there, say nothing. A 'breder' say to me, 'Speak up or get beaten up.' I asked the 'breder' what would happen to me. 'You and me go to Kestrel wing', he said. That's the black wing. The different building them all called 'wings' and all named after birds. The 'breder' say that the white boys go in Osprey wing and some in Swallow wing. So I go to Kestrel....'

'Breder' is Kelvin's way of spelling

'brother' by which he means a black boy of West Indian background. 'Bredda' would be a more accurate phonetic spelling of the word in Jamaican 'patois'. Although he and such boys are 'brothers', they are not *loving* brothers, and continually threaten and attack one another. Sometimes 'brothers' get together to beat others, sometimes others form gangs and beat up 'brothers'. 'Black versus Irish' fights apparently take place in Feltham. Indian boys have recently moved up from bottom place, beaten up by everyone, and now can beat up the new bottom dogs, the Somalis.

Everyone fights everyone, driving the 'screws' to distraction. All their time seems to be spent pulling youths away from each other and throwing assailants into 'solitary'. Kelvin uses adult prison-slang throughout. No doubt to the 'screws' relief, drugs, smuggled in

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from facing facts.
There is a recognised
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just as there is of
'public school crime'***

by a social worker (a man later to be imprisoned) sedate the boys some of the time.

'Every day I go to the gym, exercise up my muscles and do press-ups (writes Kelvin). When I get out, I'll be strong, I can really beat up Okon good for putting me here. I'll kill that boy. Some of the 'breder' got rizlas. (Cigarette papers for rolling tobacco or marijuana). I beg for rizlas, get some at last, get spliffs, light up. Some nights everyone got spliffs and some biling up. Other times there are fights over rizlas and spliffs, the white boys in Osprey fight and smoke the same way. There is serious need for more rizlas here. You don't let the 'screws' see biling up. ('Boiling up' — preparing crack-

cocaine.) Some stupid Paki ask me what I'm doing, I beat him so bad, the 'screws' pull me away....

'Today I get real mad 'cos this place is full of Somahllians (Somalians). I said to this boy, 'Why are you call ting like Mahmid, read Koran and got yellow teeth?' He don't answer, so I beat he till his head is *pulp*, blood spouting out of the sides. Three 'screws' jump on me, twist my arm and I get in solitary again. The food come, Shepherd's Pie, this is outrage, lack of rizlas. That Somahlli better look out....' Kelvin did not write his journal in Feltham, but after he came out, working for hours in grim solitude in his grandmother's flat. Now he is back in custody again, and threatens to write a best seller. He intends to find a publisher and make a career of writing. (Not that I'm jealous, of course).

With Kelvin's help, I have taken a tour of IC3 Land. It is a land where aggressors pose as victims if they get caught, and on the whole only IC3's *do* get caught. Perhaps, in a way, Kelvin is a victim. He has an uncaring mother and foolishly doting grandmother, always quarrelling. Youth Custody appears to be a nightmare, but it is the other youths who make it so. Why should a 'victim' feel obliged to victimise others?

In a well-thought of London Comprehensive, an inspector was told by a woman teacher that 'we make no attempt to teach the black pupils. Their home lives are so chaotic that we feel they ought to be able to relax at school and have a good time.'

I am not as shocked by the above remarks as you might suppose, since I have unhappy memories of teachers who persisted in trying to teach me things. At that particular school, the 'black pupils', excused from formal lessons, have made the school famous for its well-acted plays and well-sung musicals. In John Paul Flintoff's account of 'Comp' life from 1979 to 1986 the white teachers let the black boys alone out of fear, or Respect if you prefer. Flintoff's sinister description of the boy Justice reminds me somewhat of Kelvin. Yet Kelvin appears sufficiently influenced by the Samuel Pepys Estate to write elaborate dark diaries. His outlook on life seems to be that of a Nazi

'sniffing out' German citizens who are Jews — 'How come you're black yet you don't *act* black (i.e. Jamaican)? You must die.'

Just because youths of *every* kind are turning criminal, the specific problems of IC3 or 'breeder' criminals should not be ignored. Fear of being considered a 'racist' should not prevent us from facing facts. There *is* a recognised style of

'black crime', just as there is of 'public school crime'. Which came first, the chicken or the egg, the schoolboy-turned criminal or the *truant*-turned-criminal? Why do so many boys of any race become 'identi-criminals' whether their parents are kind and attentive or distant and hostile? The families are different, but the schools are the same, and it is to the schools that I think we

must turn to find the answer. It is not teachers who are to blame for youth crime, yet it is in secondary schools that the all-pervading rebel-worshipping 'youth culture' finds its natural home.

Roy Kerridge's next book *Subjects of the Queen* will be published by Duckworth this year.

Into the Internet

Michael Strawson

The advent of the Internet has been the most heavily hyped development of the decade. We have been inundated with numerous articles piling up promises about how it will revolutionise the whole world and at long last enable anyone anywhere on the on the globe to communicate with anyone else they may wish, a truly on-line real-time world. But the Internet is not the first attempt at linking up the world in an on-line real-time hook up. Over one hundred years ago, the first transatlantic telegraph line was laid and America and Europe started to transmit information to one another, the rest of the world then gradually became ensnared in the ever expanding telegraph cable web.

For a very small number of the earth's population the Internet could be the dawn of a new way of existence, their births, lives and deaths will be affected; but what you are never told, is that over 95 % of the earth's population are not at present and will not in the foreseeable future be on-line, thereby consigning them to a second class non-electronic existence. Media Hypemeisters would have us to believe that the advent of the Internet has opened amazing opportunities for drastically changing everyone's life for the better. Metropolitan trendies need not venture out of their ghetto and mingle with the great un-

washed, they can turn on their computers to order walnut and sun-dried tomato ciabbata on line and have it delivered to their homes. In the real world a million of us are waiting to see a NHS consultant, our children are being taught by semi-literate teachers, and when the time comes for them to leave school and look for work, they are herded from one government spin initiative to another with little or no chance of a full time meaningful job. Meanwhile countless billions of the earth's population are forced to eke out a miserable hand to mouth existence, for the whole of their lives. What will the Internet do for them?

When a growing number of teachers have been shown to lack even basic spelling skills, the chances of our children deriving the benefits from the net are in question

Already governments throughout the world are working on ways to curtail the current Internet revolution in communi-

cations so as to restore their control over the currently unhindered dissemination of information on the net. Interestingly enough, the United Kingdom, the home of the mother of Parliaments, was the first to propose an Internet statute giving all of the numerous overt and covert security organisations of the United Kingdom and therefore indirectly, the United States, unrestricted access to any E-Mail, both personal and business, they see fit. So much for the party of the people who went to the hustings promising an all embracing Freedom of Information Act.

The most worrying situation, is that of the semi-literate and semi-numerate nature of an ever-increasing number of school leavers in this country. When a growing number of teachers have been shown to lack even basic spelling skills, the chances of our children deriving the benefits from the net are in question. You must be able to read the output and be able to spell your query correctly; if you cannot, then you will continue to spend your Internet life with the shirt-without-the-'r'-syndrome. Some computer software houses have been promising speech-activated application software but after seven years the computer world is still awaiting a breakthrough in price and performance. Until the speech breakthrough materialises we find ourselves with a semi-literate

age group who find difficulty in conducting written, let alone electronic communication. Big business has decided that the net is their saviour in cutting costs. One bank alone has cut nearly 200 branches throughout the United Kingdom, whilst having to close down on-line banking services for some time as it tried to put its house in order, much to the consternation of its present and potential customers. Whilst trumpeting total security for all client records and credit card details, the utility company Powergen has been shown to be less than diligent with their clients' personal financial details, when these private details were demonstrated to be freely available to everyone with a computer to access them. The company offered fifty pounds per person in compensation accompanied by a highly trailed public relations whitewash. Powergen also advised the clientele it had openly compromised to open new credit card accounts, just in case, this despite countless protestations that all its clients could feel secure in the knowledge that their private financial details were as safe as Fort Knox. Barclays, Smile, Egg, Cahoot, one could quote many examples of financial institutions who have had their on-line fingers badly burnt; the smoke and mirrors departments bemuse the clients with a few well trailed special offers promising more interest on their accounts. The inconvenienced customers will lap it up; millions have been spent on programming them to do so and it will all be forgotten and buried with tomorrow's newest pop star revelations.

In virtually every case where the big organisations have encountered problems with their on-line services, subsequent Systems Audits have discovered that the organisations have used the 'throw money at it' approach to the initial design and installation. They left out the first major step in undertaking such an enterprise, the construction of a written overall systems specification laying out total system objectives. The System Overview should consist of a listing of overall objectives and how these will be attained, then in the body of the document a complete and unambiguous presentation, in the minutest

detail, of how each and every objective will be realised. Together with this crucial analysis there should be an attached System Fail Safe Report, containing procedures to be enacted in cases of total or partial system collapse. These two documents form the heart of any systems enterprise, but in many cases investigated where it had collapsed, a Systems Overview was hastily constructed only after the inversion of the applecart. In an attempt to head off the senior management at the pass, a few of the IT staff were given the politically correct opportunity to benefit from relocation to a virtual home working environment.

Looking at the new dot coms, most of the new entrepreneurs have little hands-on experience of designing systems, let

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alone interactive web pages; when it comes to real life experience of setting up real-time interactive back-office systems dealing with accounting, stock control, and distribution, further gaps appear, like the business of delivering real physical objects to the customer's door. Their trite answer to enquiring investigators is on the lines of 'if we attract the right level of seed money and on-going investment, we will buy in the best people'. If you think I am overstating my case, then I would remind you of Richard Branson's failure to sell cars on the net.

One, and by its very nature covert, income source for unscrupulous dot com's is that of selling client details to

list brokers. Of course they will tell you that they would never contemplate such an action, and your details are sacrosanct, but they have real problems in controlling discontented staff. The long moribund Data Protection Authority is supposed to look after our interests but their record of feeble slaps on the wrists of offenders is not encouraging.

One never ceases to be amazed at the gullibility of so-called 'investors in the know'. Anyone, with even the most sketchy knowledge of history, will remember the South Sea Bubble fiasco in the 1720's. This was a time when intelligent people scrambled to purchase shares in a company that publicly promised a 33% return on its third share issue and then openly fought one another in the coffee houses for the fourth share issue when 50% return was guaranteed. Other companies of those days, in which people in the know invested, offered the ability to turn lead into gold, another a perpetual motion machine and yet another an automatic crossbow that would blunt the bolts fired against Christian foe and allow the normally pointed ones to hit Muslim enemies only. Don't laugh at those shareholders 280 years ago, and call them unsophisticated, especially if you are one of the investors in the largest on-line bookshop in the world, which after several years of existence still has to post an annual profit. This dearth of profit is taking place at the same time as it was being hinted that the owners may be commercially disingenuous in openly favouring the products of suppliers with whom they have entered confidential sales agreements, whilst forgetting to mention the fact to the e-mail site visitors expecting totally unbiased criticism of the products on offer. The question in many dot com investors' minds is, who will be the next Internet Sir John Blunt.

As we used to say in the old pre-electronic era, *caveat emptor*. In over thirty years in the computer business I have seen all the 'Big New Things', seen the prime investors quietly slide in, make their money, let the secondary investors into the mire and then steal away, until the next 'Big New Thing'. A few dot com millionaires will appear but a great number of them will disappear,

only to emerge when the next snake oil scam appears over the horizon.

You can have the finest Web page in the dot universe, have acquired big investors, spent millions on TV advertising campaigns, but if you don't deliver the goods or services on time at the price promised, you will wilt away and die. Profitability is the sole criterion of a company's potential. Lastminute proved to be successful financially, at least for the two promoters. Its value

has fallen rapidly, but it is using the well tried device of buying in companies, which obviously tends to blur the potential investors' ability to arrive at a meaningful historical financial perspective. Similarly boo.com has also made money for the principals but has declined. The Freeserve floatation made money for Dixons then went in to near freefall, while still posting massive losses.

The net seems to be delivering, albeit

very slowly, on a relatively few of the million odd sites. In the end when sanity returns, the Internet will remain and become just one more communications tool along with the radio, TV, fax, telephone and the written word.

Michael Strawson has been providing computer services since the 1960's.

American Pie

R J Stove examines Aaron Copland, and his Bolshevik agenda

The tall, corpulent septuagenarian slumped so precariously in his chair on the rostrum that he looked about to collapse. He wore a deafeningly loud check shirt and an ill-fitting pair of pale blue slacks, which made him resemble the most callow tourist. His speaking voice, though agreeably deep and sonorous, irritated several hearers by its unmistakable New York twang. And yet once he gave the downbeat, the players under his direction were transformed. From a fractious bunch of adolescents, they suddenly and temporarily metamorphosed into a company of angels. Gaunt-sounding strings acquired an unexpected luxuriance; woodwinds otherwise distinguished mostly by arrhythmic shrieks took on a haunting refinement; and (above all) the brass choir immediately sounded like a brass choir, rather than ten headstrong individuals vying for the right notes.

The wonder-worker was Aaron Copland, the year 1977, the ensemble the New South Wales Conservatorium High School's orchestra. This reviewer was there in the audience, his own clarinet-tootling abilities falling beneath

even the standards the relevant band required. Copland's miracle that day — in directing the overture to his own 1954 opera *The Tender Land* — demonstrated afresh how a fine conductor can make dozens of amateurs achieve things greater than they could ever have thought possible, without his revealing the smallest apparent exertion. For those of us present, this miracle (unmatched by any other rehearsal in our experience) evoked St Francis preaching to an audience of enraptured wolves.

Not all Copland's rehearsals can have gone as marvellously well as this. A colleague recalls that the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, during the same tour, gave Copland the mother of all rough times. But over those — and there must be hundreds of us — who can boast such tiny personal experiences of Copland in action, Howard Pollack's tome *Aaron Copland: The Life and Work of an Uncommon Man* (University of Illinois Press, 2000) will exercise a particular appeal. Whilst *Esquire* as early as 1948 called Copland 'America's No. 1 Composer', secondary Copland literature (which, given Copland's habitat and

distinction, one automatically credits with a forest-wrecking amplitude) proves surprisingly scarce. The first words of Pollack's sown book are, in part: 'For many years I took Copland for granted ... he remained a shadowy figure at some distance from the central concerns of myself, my classmates and my teachers.'

Amazingly, between 1955 and the present volume not a single comprehensive study of Copland's life, by an outsider (as distinct from Copland's own explications of his aesthetic), appeared. 'Definitive' biographies of someone or other emerge, if we are to believe the book trade's spin-meisters, at least once every week; the account under review is so learned, so exhaustive — though never exhausting — and so detailed that it actually deserves this adjective. Its author (Professor of Music at the University of Houston) shows his love for Copland's oeuvre on every page, which helps; here is no glorified doctoral thesis where the authorial jargon struggles to drown out the authorial yawns.

Pollack is especially revealing on Copland's predominantly frightful last years, when Alzheimer's robbed him of his keen mind and left him — until his

death in 1990—at the mercy of ‘carers’ to whom one would not willingly vouchsafe Tiddles the cat. Anyone else tempted, in Pollack’s wake, to write Copland’s life can now be issued the same monosyllabic counsel that Mr Punch once supplied for those about to marry: ‘Don’t.’

The son of Lithuanian Jews whose original name was Kaplan—the spelling change having been made not by Ellis Island officials, as works of musical reference continue to state, but while the family lived in Glasgow during the 1870s—Aaron himself was born (1900) and bred in Brooklyn. In later years he described his father, rather scornfully it might be thought, as ‘bourgeois to the core.’ Certainly the father voiced alarm at Aaron wanting to make a living from music, though serious attempts at thwarting Aaron’s enthusiasm in this direction would have presupposed a single-mindedness very far from Copland senior’s predominantly malleable nature.

A greater hurt to both parents was Aaron’s falling away from the Jewish faith. (He underwent no dramatic, heaven-storming loss of belief: merely a drifting towards both Zionism and Communism, the former doctrine staying with him forever, at times expressed with a moderation disconcerting to more extremist minds.) Subsequently he evoked Eastern European Jewish folk life in the piano trio *Vitebsk* and the ballet *Grohg*; he did so with clear unease, as if the environment depicted was an unattractive relic that, given time and sufficient progressive activism, would within a generation disappear.

At the absurdly youthful age of twenty, Copland found himself in what could then be innocently called Gay Paree, his musical and his homosexual development attaining comparable swiftness. There, at (where else would an American in Paris have taken himself in the 1920s?) Sylvia Beach’s bookshop, he met his hero Gide: an introduction doubtless aided by young Copland’s dark good looks, almost unrecognisable to anyone familiar with the middle-aged and elderly Copland, whose visage by contrast suggested a more aquiline version of Fran Drescher’s grandmother in *The Nanny*. Despite his

limited spoken French, Copland went to Fontainebleau and there became a pupil of modern French music’s châtelaine: Nadia Boulanger, perhaps the most remarkably successful composition teacher who ever lived. (Her record in producing significant creators from her ‘Boulangerie’ becomes all the more notable in that she herself composed nothing of consequence.) Whatever her method was—and her best protégés’ sheer variety implies that she had no fixed method at all, other than a healthy disrespect for Schoenberg’s technical obsessions—it took years to burgeon in Copland’s creative life. Had Copland died in 1930, or even in 1935, his status in musical history would have been at best a footnote: if not indeed (to adapt Barry Humphries’ witticism) a misprint.

All the pieces that ensured Copland’s world-wide repute derived from a burst of creative power that lasted for most of the FDR and Truman Presidencies: *El Salón México* (1936), *Billy the Kid* (1938), *Quiet City* (1940), *Rodeo* (1940), *Lincoln Portrait* (1942), the Third Sym-

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phony whence ‘Fanfare for the Common Man’ derives (1944–46), the Clarinet Concerto written for Benny Goodman (1947), Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson (1950), Old American Songs (1950), and—probably most famous of all—*Appalachian Spring* (1944). (The last-named score, deriving from a commission by Martha Graham, originally bore the colourless title *Ballet for Martha*; it acquired its present designation only when Graham stumbled across the relevant phrase in Hart Crane’s *The Bridge*. Confronting an astonished Copland with her *fait accompli* only days before the work’s première, Graham said, ‘I just like the

title and I took it.’ None of which—as Copland took pardonable glee in recounting—stopped subsequent listeners from breathlessly assuring the composer: ‘Mr Copland, when I hear your music I can just see the Appalachians and just feel spring!’)

This simple catalogue of impressive work accomplished is fairly well known. What has not been at all well known—outside America anyhow—till Pollack’s researches clarified it, is the deliberation (and, where necessary, the pushiness) that Copland displayed in his long march through musical institutions. Other than innate musical talent, his chief provision for such a march was an unusually clear, plain prose style, which never matched the journalistic wit of his contemporary and rival Virgil Thomson, but which made him a born pedagogue. Copland overtly considered himself to be part of a clique—or, as he understandably preferred to call it, a ‘school’—and explained his circle’s musical aims with a doggedness far greater than anything Cocteau had ever shown across the Atlantic in championing those French composers known as Les Six. It all invites comparison with (and gains nothing in attractiveness from its resemblance to) Norman Podhoretz’s career moves from a later period, as chronicled in Podhoretz’s revealingly-named memoir *Making It*. The hothouse atmospheres of New York Intellectual intrigue that both milieux convey, though not identical, are similar: an editorial or festival board taken over here, an outsider sidelined there, and seldom a suggestion that creativity and PR might in certain crucial respects differ from one another.

It does need emphasising that Copland’s naturally courteous temperament protected him from emulating the full New York Intellectual Theatre of Cruelty: the indiscriminate moralising; the solemn excommunications, rather than mere expulsions, of transgressors against the party line (be that line Stalinist or ostensibly anti-Stalinist); the vociferous charges of ‘anti-Semitism’ hurled at anyone whose continued career is considered a threat. Some of Copland’s allies shared nothing of his racial background, musical tastes, or erotic

predilections. Conversely, several fellow homosexuals found themselves the targets of Copland's sharp censure. Fellow Jews he also criticised; he repeatedly deplored overt apparatchiks like Mike Gold, the wretched Stalinist goon who in his editorship of *New Masses* could be relied on to laud every possible self-contradiction of Kremlin policy as holy writ. But it is sad that no less a figure than the songwriter Ned Rorem should have been forced to conclude: 'Aaron had an entourage, so did Virgil [Thomson]; you belonged to one or the other, like Avignon and Rome, take it or leave it.' (Pollack furnishes no evidence that Copland knew about Thomson's most repellent strategy: his insistence on blackmailing orchestras into performing his own music, with the threat that he would punish any reluctance in this matter by writing near-libellous reviews of the orchestra's future concerts in his own *New York Herald-Tribune* column. With Dante-like appropriateness, Thomson suffered in his last years from a disorder that made listening to music a torture: somehow his damaged auditory nerves would confuse the pitches he heard, high notes sounding variously flat, low notes variously sharp.)

That Copland felt moved to call his clique a 'commando unit' is instructive, not least since neither Copland nor several of its other members had fired more than a popgun since high school. Thus a certain comic-opera character necessarily attaches itself to contemplation of Copland as a 1930s 'anti-fascist'. Admittedly, Copland's 'anti-fascism' was not the total self-regarding farce familiar from Auden, Britten, or inter-war England in general. (What reader of Cyril Connolly's Spanish Civil War verbiage can forget his squeaks of delight at the Republicans' 'absolutely new and all-pervading sense of moral elevation'?) Buggery Barn has many rooms; and its leftist Jewish inhabitants could not, on the whole, aspire to the privileged living quarters that Oxbridge graduates claimed by right.

Yet although Copland filtered Communism through his own predominantly civilised sensibility, there was a limit to how much his comrades — many of whom, unlike himself, went ahead and

joined the CPUSA — would allow that sensibility to operate. Close friends of Copland during the 1930s included the playwright Clifford Odets, who at his Bolshevik enthusiasm's height entertained the memorable delusion that Beethoven was a Communist. Such company exposed Copland to (at the very least) the dangers proverbially attendant on a man who walks, looks, and quacks like a duck, even if he always jibs at the final acceptance of an Ur-duck condition.

Copland's quacks included assurances that 'Every participant in revolutionary activity knows from his own experience that a good mass song is a powerful weapon in the class struggle'; that 'I was gradually being drawn, you see, into the political struggle with the peasantry! I

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wish you could have seen them'; and that certain musical confrères deserved reprimands for not exhibiting 'the salutary influence of a collectivist ideal.' Headed the Mexican kleptocracy of Presidents Obregón, Calles and Cardenas, where the agitprop of Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco — and of these painters' musical counterpart, the nativist administrator-composer Carlos Chávez — ravished his senses. Even Zhdanov's 1948 condemnations of Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Khachaturian et al (condemnations that in most musical fellow-travellers induced a disillusion amounting to nausea) struck Copland as having a sound moral basis.

After New York's 1949 Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace occurred (its most abject exhibit being Shostakovich, announcing how justified the Kremlin had been when putting the boot into Shostakovich), Copland, a conference participant, had second

thoughts. Not so many of these, however, that he failed to attend a subsequent dinner honouring that great humanitarian Andrey Vyshinsky; or that he even toyed with the public mea culpa common among French socialists from Camus to Bernard-Henri Lévy. When finally out of love with Communism, Copland upbraided it primarily for its inadequate obeisance towards artists. Its ability to produce a hundred million corpses during the eight decades after 1917 was not, apparently, worth lamenting. In view of this sheepishness, the discovery from Pollack's pages that Copland snatched back from the grasp of two pot-smoking friends the seventieth-birthday telegram Nixon had sent him — within the telegram the friends had rolled marijuana, which they wanted to inhale — hardly overwhelms one with the sincerity of his recantation.

But of course, the peculiar evil of mid-century Communist dogma was its complete abandonment of practical internationalism, and its open advocacy of patriotic imperatives. As subtle internationalists, Mao, Ho, Tito and Castro were in their varying ways useless; as noisy patriots, by contrast, they were all unstoppable. American Communists used as their most powerful recruiting slogan during the 1930s the words: 'Communism is Americanism.' Odets spelled out this epigram's implications with terrifying force when he called himself and his fellow Bolsheviks 'lovers of the honest words of great Americans — Jefferson, Walt Whitman, and Abraham Lincoln.' When the CPUSA wanted to assure the great American public of its honourable intentions in Spain, it named its contribution to the International Brigade in Lincoln's honour. Seen by this light, Copland's bland assurances about the inner artistic necessity that somehow compelled him to abandon his youthful Gallic influences, in favour of a style as quintessentially American as apple pie, acquire a quality not far removed from outright menace. It is a quality that, for some of us, not all the virtues of Copland at his finest — the unfailing metrical freshness, the translucent orchestral balances magically calculated to the last semiquaver, the inventive genius through which he builds large

structures from themes that would seem to defy such building — can outweigh.

Those in our midst whom Copland's attitude towards blatant Communism alarms, must feel equal consternation at Copland's other main ideological penchant: that fundamental, anti-intellectual, rejection of Europe, which is perhaps the post-1918 world's farthest-reaching cultural psychosis. Among the numerous illuminating letters, both to and from Copland, that Pollack cites is an exchange of Fanon-like billets-doux between Copland and Chávez, commiserating with one another about the European music that continued to dominate American concerts. Here is Chávez (in a conflation of several different epistles):

We must change the situation, Aaron. We must not accept to be [sic] in the hands of foreign conductors and interpreters whose mind and heart (if they happen to have any) is [sic] far away of [sic] the spirit and culture of

this new world ... Honegger, Hindemith, etc., etc... are simply unbearable for me, they are artificial, full of literature, bad literature and worst possible taste, I cannot stand them any more, they should be shut up [silenced? imprisoned? — RJS] for ever, so much the better.

And here is Copland (in epistles likewise conflated):

All you wrote about music in America awoke a responsive echo in my heart. I am through with Europe Carlos, and I believe as you do, that our salvation must come from ourselves and that we must fight the foreign element in American music ... together we will clarify [italics in original] the situation.

Can music's entire annals show a more breathtaking manifestation of the totalitarian impulse than we witness here in both parties' effusions? While Chávez naturally had a perfect right to resent Honegger's and Hindemith's respective idioms, his elevation of *ad hominem* dislikes into a moral code — to be

established by force against individual artists — has the authentic Politburo ring, however incompatible it might be with anything resembling high civilisation. But at least Chávez could plead in partial self-defence the congenital dopiness of the Third World cultural bureaucrat, which indeed he was: a sort of taco-eating Sir Les Patterson. What excuse will serve for the French-educated Copland? 'I am through with Europe': Pol Pot could scarcely have defined the aim of his Year Zero more succinctly than in Copland's five simple words.

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The Political Economy of Error

Tom Burkard and Dennis O'Keeffe

The British state got involved in the management and finance of education as a result of egregious error by the great and the good of the late nineteenth century. First, there was a mistaken understanding of the nature of intellectual/cultural transmission. Intellectual life is a spontaneously evolved phenomenon. Deliberate attempts to bring even its most elementary stages under state control and within the confines of public finance are not guaranteed to be successful.

We must wryly note, however, that the modern educational establishment has made Victorian bien-pensants look positively accomplished. This establishment is permanently Labour. What, though, shall we make of a 1980s Tory

government, led by Margaret Thatcher, herself well versed in the political economy of freedom, which even contemplated the National Curriculum, let alone established it? Just when Russian and other victims of Communism were saying that Leninist bureaucratic centralism never works, so the Conservatives imposed it on our schools. Familiarity with Hayek, or Mises, or Friedman, should have discredited this crazy venture.

No one planned intellectual life — high culture and science — and though its consensual and competitive processes have to be conducted according to very austere rules, it resists detailed codification. Its participants simply — or complicatedly — know it by living it.

Though it is a World 3 phenomenon in Popper's sense, embodied in books, libraries and other modes, it cannot be systematised bureaucratically or tied into rigid psychological learning schema. There is no Key Stage 2 Shakespeare, no level 9 ontological argument.

The second managerial error of the late nineteenth century was a woefully deficient grasp of the common sense decency of the British working class. As Christie Davies has shown in *The Loss of Virtue* (Social Affairs Unit), this class proved admirably biddable under good moral leadership in the closing decades of the Victorian era. Compulsory and tax-funded schooling was the one great educational mistake the establishment made in those years.

Unfortunately, it was a pointer to worse things to come. Since the 1960s, the current establishment has piled so many educational and political solecisms on top of one another that it will be difficult for historians in the twenty first century to chart the last four decades of education and welfare in the twentieth, without tears or mocking laughter. What began in error is finishing, thirteen decades later, as farce, in some ways of a horrific nature. A large segment of the British working class has been moronised and wholly disorientated morally by the ministrations of our educational and welfare state élite.

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Today the worthy but mistaken clergymen have been replaced by the even more wrongheaded cultural relativists of modern public largesse. Some are superannuated Marxists; all are unrepentant rent-seekers. They no longer aspire to the whole world, however. Today their dreams are meagre, their spiteful project now to try out their theories on the weakest, poorest members of society. They are ill with the H—H Syndrome, under which ideas dreamed up in Hampstead are tried out in most virulent form on children who live in Hackney or Haringey. The core of the fantasy is that children can learn without working and that their cultures cannot be improved on.

The problem does not, admittedly, reduce to a few benighted LEAs and schools in London, Manchester or Tyneside. The overall parlous condition of British education also reflects the educational establishment and its theories. There are pockets of illiteracy and innumeracy or conditions close to these in most parts of the country and a near nation-wide cultural blight. Many people in senior positions in education think there are no universal truths nor real criteria of beauty or excellence. One aspect of the present government's

commitment to political correctness is its denial that some art is intrinsically superior and that some so-called 'art' is not such.

Wrong and fantastical theories of learning, culture, reading and morals have produced this philistinism, as the relativism institutionalised in schools and universities and the rapacity of the worst spivs in our society have joined forces in a dialectic of moronisation. While the problem is nationwide, it is generally in the poorest LEAs that its worst effects are to be seen.

The Political Economy of Error and Fantasy

What though is the political economy of all this error? It is an interwoven exchange between wrong ideas and faulty institutions. An egalitarianism, at once sentimental and managerial, has been imposed from above on institutions which lack the corrective mechanisms which characterise markets proper. Instead we find:

1. Lack of easy exit from primary and secondary schools.
2. Severe barriers to entry for corrective educational initiatives.
3. Good teachers improperly rewarded and bad ones not penalised.
4. Weak curriculum, teaching and assessment persisting for decades.
5. Utopian fantasies or cultural quietism in teacher education.

Governments have colluded in the whole process, through abolition or watering down of examinations. They have allowed some universities to engage in a wholesale rectification of deficits from prior stages, teaching undergraduates basic study skills and even fundamental essay composition. Vast waste and duplication as well as dishonesty are involved. Many 'Access' courses have been very successful; only rarely is it said that the young people on them have been cheated in the first place. This is public sector, public finance bungling.

The financial compulsion effectively created by the maintained schools' exclusive access to state funds currently assures the socialist project of 93% of the UK schools 'market', if we may fix

such a term on arrangements in which consumer discretion has been so stifled. Defenders justify this virtual monopoly solely on the grounds of equity. Its real significance is its brutal reinforcement of the effective legal requirement of school attendance. The fact that these schools have signally failed the most disadvantaged children has discredited this whole case, and now Labour (Labour Government at least) and Conservatives alike accept that their monopoly must go.

First, we note that the state is the principal offending player in the game. It is no more efficient at providing education than at supplying other goods or services. In the *Guardian*, Nick Davies concedes that even after we have factored out social and economic variables, independent schools in Britain can still be seen to give better value for money than the state sector. Secondly, state control of education is a profoundly illiberal concept, its practice susceptible equally to subversion and populist tyranny. It may sit more easily in the semi-democracies of continental Europe, but in full-blooded law-states like Great Britain, it is grotesquely out of place.

State control rests upon the assumption of superior rights entitling it to overrule parents in determining the values and knowledge imparted to their children. In practice this means that unless the parents are wealthy enough to pay school fees, they have to take what they are given. The British would not put up with such nonsense in the commercial economy for five minutes.

The State Can Supply a Good Curriculum only in Special Circumstances

Admittedly the case is one of degree. The British do tolerate certain commercial nonsense. Their cars and their food cost too much, for example. The state, by contrast, cannot supply good quality education once the consensus between the educational government and those governed by it has been broken. For almost a century after 1870 there seems to have been a fair degree of general public/élite consensus on the nature of education. What we had then

was not economic efficiency but a 'getting by'. Moreover, occasional remission can be mistaken for renaissance. State education in Britain enjoyed what seemed like a renaissance under the Butler Act of 1944 and the general enthusiasm engendered by the Attlee settlement. It lasted about as long as the Butskellite consensus. While Ted Heath grappled unsuccessfully with the miners in the early 1970s, the Plowdenite termites were undermining the foundations of education. Strangely, the deterioration of education did not get truly out of hand until the Thatcher era. Mrs Thatcher's preoccupation with unions blinded her to an equally real enemy: the placemen and *rentiers* of the educational establishment. Her war against the former was won. She left the latter in a much strengthened position, a process cleverly dissected by Melanie Phillips in *All Must Have Prizes*.

Geoffrey Partington has deftly unfolded in more detail the subversion of our schools, bit by bit till the 1960s and after then in a gathering rush, in *Teacher Education in England and Wales*. We would add that our educational arrangements are now in systemic error, where 'systemic' implies not the voluntarism of individual human folly, but perversities made inevitable by faulty systems. It is these systemic errors which cry out for rectification.

Vouchers Versus Compulsion

The idea of using state funds to pay school fees for the poor goes back to Thomas Paine and John Stuart Mill; but this was long before there were any state schools. The modern concept of the school voucher was first proposed by Milton Friedman in the American context, and promoted in the UK by Arthur Seldon. They envisioned universal vouchers for all parents — regardless of their income — to pay a sum equal to the cost of a basic education at any certified school.

The reception of the voucher idea is an object lesson in the politics of interest groups. It has been universally condemned by those who obtain rents from the educational apparatus. The arguments advanced are truly insolent. Their advocates know they are offering

an unpopular and inferior product, and that their customers can be held only by legal and financial compulsion. Definitive compulsion, in the form of the abolition of all independent schools, remains a very strong idea in Labour circles. Indeed, even in Government ones the all-through comprehensive school still has fierce supporters.

Overall, however, the brute facts of irremovable private education are increasingly unanswerable. The present government mostly tries not to antagonise the truly rich and powerful. Thus it is state institutions catering for the modest middle classes and, crucially, those helping upwardly aspiring working class people, which have taken the brunt of socialist malice. In some low-income areas the kind of upward mobility once commonplace for the brilliant poor has now largely been eliminated. Those of us who went to state schools in the immediate post-war era usually received an education which was, by today's standards, excellent. State control, *per se*, is not the problem. State education can get by as long as the balance of belief among its élite does not undermine it ideologically. It is when this balance becomes adverse that the lack of exit and accountability becomes so dire.

The Adverse Laws of Socialism Applied to Education

The effect has not been to stop the upward social mobility characterising economic modernity, but to slow it down, to make it less assured. This is further evidence of the first distributional law of socialism: the poor always do worst by it. This law is universal. Wherever a socialist dispensation, even a residual one, comes to power, this law comes into effect. British Labour and its often supine Conservative educational counterparts have conformed to this in questions of education. The second tendency of socialism is that the middle classes become impoverished, unless they reach the inner Party circles or engage successfully in crime. This was true of Communism, for example. No social democratic movement has ever been able to reach this stage, and modern

Labour advisedly shuns the possibility, sticking to what it can get away with. It has to make do with a moronic mass culture — culture being the one area in free societies in which socialism has been able to sublimate its envy in the general 'screwing' of almost everyone — and a large and wholly unnecessary welfariat. Both the philistinism and welfariat are dear to the ongoing project. It is hard to envisage the former — worse — problem being dealt with by a Labour government which ducks any big issues, e.g. direct welfare reform. Even Labour may be prepared to move, however, on the limited front of basic literacy and numeracy. This is the breach now beckoning us.

The Tooley Case Against Vouchers

On the market-wise side of politics, the voucher concept has been questioned by James Tooley, who argues that the state should neither provide nor finance education. This is not as improbable as it sounds; were taxation reduced by the amount now spent on state education, and were schools competing in a true market, most parents could afford school fees. As Tooley points out, working-class parents of the 19th century could afford proprietorial schools, which by most accounts achieved higher standards of basic literacy and numeracy than do our modern state schools. Tooley argues that private philanthropy (encouraged by a favourable tax regime) would provide an adequate safety net for the indigent.

Tooley admits that vouchers might be a necessary step towards fully independent schools, but he sees this as a game of snakes and ladders. What the state gives, it can take away, and anything it finances it ultimately controls. Other measures to break the state monopoly — charter schools and tax credits — also need consideration. Before any of these measures can be effected, we need to understand just what is wrong with our schools. Some state primaries and comprehensives are very good in many respects. Their children learn to read and write, and perform well over measure on the degraded National Curriculum. Some independent schools

are dreadful, the sort satirised by Evelyn Waugh in *Decline and Fall*. What a market-oriented political economy of education can teach us is why so many state schools are bad; and why private schools are mostly better.

The Course of Human Projects

Whatever the underlying political economy, however, any human enterprise can be observed to have a life cycle. First, there is the new idea, accompanied by enthusiasm and rapid growth; secondly, come consolidation and empire building; and thirdly, complacency and collapse set in, in the face of some new challenge. This trajectory applies to private and public institutions alike. The difference is that private enterprises cannot dwell long in the second stage, or they proceed rapidly to the third. Government subsidies that delay this process only prolong the agony, forestalling corrective adjustments.

Attempts at Reform Have Failed: Markets Should Replace Them

The Hampstead contenders for Hackney's souls have issued one policy after another in a surreal attempt to reform education from above. Their profoundly illiberal policies have effected an anti-intellectual, politically correct curriculum, at odds with the wishes of the vast majority of their captive clientele. Today the teaching unions are more often on the side of the gods: their demands for powers to exclude unruly pupils and for more time for teaching rather than form-filling and meetings, are eminently sensible. Now the Labour leadership admit their loss of faith in the educational nomenklatura, the question of substantive reform is urgent. The policies put in place now will determine who wins the scramble to pick up the pieces of our imploding schools. It is exhilarating to realise that the establishment will not be able to maintain its present ideological posture and priorities. We are watching the early stages of the disintegration of educational socialism in this country.

There will be no lack of new entrants in this race; in the United States, where

this process has been in train for a decade, a thousand flowers have bloomed. A few have wilted already; but this is what markets are about. Others have been uprooted by the forces of reaction in the educational establishment; the arch-PC National Educational Association has just won a court judgement overturning Florida Governor Jeb Bush's voucher experiment. In a statement worthy of Louis XVIII, an NEA official argued that 'it is irrelevant whether the parents of the voucher students are satisfied or dissatisfied with the education that their children receive'.

We are watching the early stages of the disintegration of educational socialism in this country

Only markets can put British education back where G K Chesterton said it belonged — with the people themselves. For the middle class majority, the socialist experiment has left them, not illiterate and innumerate, but uncultured. For a frighteningly large segment of the working class the problem is outright illiteracy and innumeracy. The vaunted 'Literacy Hour' is only the latest in a long line of DfEE initiatives which have — if anything — only exacerbated the problem. All of David Blunkett's rosy spin cannot hide the truth from anyone who so much as walks into a classroom in one of our stricken schools.

The Government's plan for privately-run 'academies' announced on 15 March 2000 is only a cautious toe in the waters of market education. Although this plan was inspired by the success of charter schools in the US, it remains to be seen whether No.10 will be able to keep the DfEE from strangling it at birth. Stupidly, primary education will not be included. The Government seems deluded by its own propaganda on the Literacy Hour, failing to understand that the fires it is so desperate to extinguish in secondary schools all started in primary ones. In Michigan, where charter schools have proved very

successful, secondary schools account for only 6,400 of the 50,000 pupils enrolled.

Charter schools have revitalised primary education in Michigan, but James Tooley points out that charter school programmes lack two of the essential ingredients of a true market: there is no pricing mechanism, and the government retains a monopoly on funding. In the US charters have worked only in the few states lucky enough to have governors sufficiently powerful to withstand the education lobby. Universal voucher schemes restore the pricing mechanism to education, but leave the state in control of funding. Tax credits — i.e. writing off all or part of the cost of school fees directly against tax-liabilities — are a partial solution, but this still leaves the problem of supporting the education of children of indigent parents.

Perhaps the best way forward is simply the establishment of for-profit schools with costings at or near the level of state funding. Most independent schools in the UK deliberately price themselves out of the middle market. Most of them are run by charitable trusts, and their trustees are more concerned with maintaining the character of their schools than with expansion. There is no reason why excellent primary day schools could not be run on fees of less than £800 per term — this is well above the level of state costings. Even this could be reduced for impoverished parents; a sliding scale of fees, privately-funded vouchers, in-kind services and deferred payment schemes could all serve to liberate the residents of Haringey and Hackney from the patronisation of Hampstead socialists.

Schools so conceived could be left in an awkward position if Labour's 'academies' are not extirpated in infancy by the DfEE. Should these prove workable, there would be an overwhelming financial imperative for independent schools to 'opt-in' — indeed this would appear to be one of the Government's objectives. Yet if Labour's academies do appear in a form that allows entrepreneurs to offer an education worth having, the nettle must be grasped. Given the chance to create schools capable of transmitting our

culture, we cannot afford to be trapped in a cul-de-sac without any practical way of establishing true markets.

All Instant Solutions Are False Ones, Including Reliance on IT

There is a danger in assuming that the market will provide instant solutions. Markets stimulate new ideas, and in time reject the dross. In very imperfect markets such as are developing in education, very bad ideas can persist for some time. Of these, one of the worst is the idea that information technology can compensate for the manifest failings of the teaching profession. In education, IT has unquestionable power to facilitate the pursuit of information, but it cannot impart understanding, judgement, or moral perspectives on the unformed intellects of young children. Most importantly, it cannot teach children to read.

Knowledge is not a matter of acquiring random facts. Most of what is on the internet is trivial or even evil. Conspiracy theorists vent their wrath on countless websites, purveying hatred, half truths and lies. Educational software is routinely abused by pupils presenting downloaded material as their own work. Teachers accept this work even when they know that pupils haven't even

bothered to so much as read their own submissions because the skill of being able to access information is all that is deemed necessary. Children left in front of a computer with minimal supervision may be drawn to its most meretricious functions. IT in primary schools might turn out to be a life-support system for the clapped-out orthodoxies of Hampstead thinkers, perpetuating the false notion that children learn best when pursuing their own individual interests. It would be hard to devise a better way of producing a solipsist generation of children cut off from the intellectual traditions necessary for a free society.

Many new for-profit education companies are gripped with IT fever just as severely as the state sector. James Tooley, something of a deschooler, believes IT will be the liberating factor. In fact, computers have no incontrovertible place in primary schools. This is not a Luddite denial of the importance of IT in modern life; but we must not make a new secular religion out of pieces of office equipment. Junior Education Minister Charles Clarke has admitted that there is scarcely any evidence that computers in the

classroom have raised educational standards: a Dutch survey of pedagogical innovation found computer-assisted learning to be among the least effective methods. Indeed, the market has already taught the Edison Project — the largest for-profit schools chain in the US — something of a lesson. Edison made a great deal of their ambition to give every child a laptop, only to find that very few of them ever come back. Although they still may think it expedient to sell a high-tech line, a study of one of their schools in Colorado found that 'For all the talk of technology, one is not struck by the ubiquity of computers at Roosevelt-Edison. The computers often sit unused or are used for relatively mundane tasks.' At an Edison Project school in Detroit visited by one of the authors, no child was seen at a computer during the course of an afternoon. As we press for market-led reform, we must not confuse markets with their mere instruments.

Tom Burkard is Secretary to the Promethean Trust. Dennis O'Keeffe is Senior Lecturer in the Sociology of Education, University of North London.

NOTES ON REVIEWERS

Christopher Arkell is an accountant, and editor of the *London Miscellany*.

Lord Chalfont is a former Minister of State for Foreign Affairs.

A D Harvey's book on the Battle of Arnhem will be published in September.

P D (Baroness) James' new novel *Death in Holy Orders* is published this month.

Helen Szamuely is a translator and writer on politics

Steven Runciman on Broadcasting to Bulgaria (February 1940)

(Public Record Office FO 371/24878 R 2672)

Sir Steven Runciman, the historian of the Crusades, who died last year, was press attaché at the British Legation in Sofia in the early days of the Second World War. Amongst the Foreign Office papers in the Public Record Office at Kew is his account of a conversation with Leonard Miall, one of the pioneers of BBC broadcast talks to overseas countries. In the same file are 'Notes on Mr Runciman's Memorandum' by Guy Burgess (1911-1963), who was ostensibly attached to the Ministry of Information; he was in fact a member of Colonel Laurence Grand's Section D, an off-shoot of MI6, and also of course a Soviet spy.

I was rung up last week by Mr Leonard Miall of the BBC, who asked me if I could come to see him to talk to him a little about Bulgaria in connection with the Talks in Bulgarian that the BBC had recently instituted. I went; and, in case they may be of any interest, I herewith record my impressions and make one or two suggestions, which seem to me to be trite and obvious but which are apparently against the policy of the BBC.

(i) *Mr Miall*: I should like to say at the outset that Mr Miall was very courteous and seemed to be very anxious to learn something about Bulgaria, of which he clearly knew next to nothing. But it was quite beyond my powers to teach him all about Bulgaria, (even had I known it all), in half an hour, the more so as it was useless to make a point by comparing Bulgaria with, for example, Rumania, as he was equally ignorant of Rumania. Moreover, out of loyalty either to the BBC or to his own amour-propre, he kept pretending to understand all about various facts of which it would later be shown by his comments that he had never heard before. Mr Miall

is a very young man. At Cambridge he had the reputation of being rather clever and rather smug. He has had a certain experience of Germany but none of Eastern Europe. I do not know what his exact position in the BBC hierarchy is, but I presume from his conversation, that he is largely responsible for the BBC's talks to the Balkan countries. This seems to me to be unfair to Mr Miall, unfair to the BBC's listeners in the Balkans and unfair to Britain.

(ii) *The Presentation of the Programmes*: Here much of the mischief has been done already. The BBC's Balkan programmes slip into the world as if they were illegitimate babies. But the Balkan peoples, like most peoples, are impressed by pomp and tend to regard its absence as an insult or a sign of weakness. The BBC seems to me to be obsessed with the desire to behave like gentlemen, and ostentation is of course not gentlemanly. The BBC should forget its gentility and on the next possible occasion give Bulgaria a slap-up programme, with names that have snob value. Otherwise the Bulgars, who are a rather conceited race, will not think that they are being taken seriously. A national festival would be a good occasion, but I do not think that any are due at this time of year. (NB The British Council has made a similar mistake, in founding an Institute on the cheap at Sofia. The Bulgars think that Britain considers Bulgaria unworthy of an expensive Institute, or alternatively, that Britain cannot afford one.) From all accounts the most successful foreign programme sent out by the BBC is in Arabic, which was directed

at first by specialists in Arab administration lent by the Colonial Office, who saw to it that the programme contained glamour and pomp.

(iii) *The Nature of the Propaganda*: Propaganda in Bulgaria should have two aims, (a) to persuade the Bulgarians that Britain is certainly going to win the war, and (b) to persuade them in the meantime she understands Bulgaria's difficulties and grievances, with the implication that she will do something about them on her victory.

(a) As far I can gather, Bulgaria does not think that Germany will win the war, but she is very doubtful whether Britain will do so either. Meanwhile she is inclined to pin her faith on Russia. Our news should therefore emphasize every British success and every instance of Russian incompetence and should be presented forcibly, without any moralising comment — particularly without the sententious self-justificatory verbiage, (supplied by the Ministry of Information?), that the BBC inflicts on its British listeners. When I have asked Bulgars why they joined Germany against us during the last war, almost all have answered 'Because we thought Germany was going to win,' and some have added 'of course we knew that you had the better moral case.' There is no reason to suppose that Bulgarian politicians are much more idealistic to-day.

(b) The Bulgarians have several legitimate grievances. They are also a very provincial race and take very little interest in the outside world. They belong to the type of people

who read the newspapers in the hope of seeing themselves mentioned there and for no other reason. They will therefore be bored by talks about England or any other country, unless the Talk somehow has a bearing on their own interests, or unless it consists of an exciting adventure story, which is always agreeable to simple people. They also think themselves neglected, misunderstood and unappreciated. One talk, however platitudinous, by an Englishman about Bulgaria, showing knowledge and affection, will be ten times more valuable than twenty interesting Talks about England. All national festivals and all important anniversaries in Bulgarian history should be given special notice. I ventured to make that remark to Mr Miall, who told that the BBC could only notice them if they had some bearing on the present situation; otherwise it would look like Propaganda! It would, it seems, offend other countries and would be too much like the sort of thing that the Germans do. (To do Mr Miall justice, he did not seem able to follow the B.B.C's argument very well himself.) I should have thought that to notice anniversaries was a perfectly legitimate way of showing a friendly interest in other countries; and if all the Balkan countries are paid this small compliment, as they should be, none can have a grievance. In fact I offered to make out a list of such dates, but was somewhat chilled by the response. It is, however, necessary that these talks should be arranged by someone with a special knowledge of the country concerned and that they should be seen by specialists that deal with the neighbouring countries, to make certain that nothing likely to offend these countries should have been included. This would of course involve the BBC in a little extra organisation and expense. As to that, one can only platitudinously repeat that if the Balkan broadcasts are worth doing at all, they are worth doing fairly well, whatever the expense.

As regards Bulgaria, there is the special difficulty that there are practically no

Englishmen of distinction who can speak the language well enough to broadcast in it. Any that can be found should certainly be used. But even a translated message from an eminent man, addressed specially to Bulgaria, would produce an admirable effect.

By the way, is the BBC certain that there are an adequate number of wireless sets in the Balkans capable of receiving short-wave transmissions? My information is that there are not.

Steven Runciman.

**21 February 1940.
Notes on Mr Runciman's
Memorandum (Guy Burgess)**

Mr Runciman who is a Cambridge historian, is something of an expert on Bulgaria. His general point appears to be the lack of expert direction of broadcast talks (he is not talking of news) to Bulgaria and the Balkans.

The following points may be relevant in estimating the validity of Mr Runciman's strictures.

- (1) Talks in foreign languages are mostly news talks and are handled by a small group within the B.B.C which covers all languages and cannot, therefore, be specialised.
- (2) These talks are included in the language broadcasts without defined or regular consultation either with —
 - (a) the Sub-editor dealing with the news bulletin in which the talk is to be included (according to the Balkan Sub-editor in the BBC) or
 - (b) The specialist section of the FPD responsible for the country addressed.

Attempts to obtain regular consultation between the FPD and the BBC over these talks has brought about some improvements and individual talks when specially asked for have in one or two cases been seen in advance by the FPD. But the BBC have stated that these talks are usually only ready at the last moment and that any fixed consultation would be difficult. Apart from this, a reform has been instituted by which there are meetings between the BBC and sections of the FPD for the discussion of General lines of policy (but not of all these talks).

- (c) The Foreign Office — except at the

discretion of the BBC (The FO are not anxious to be burdened here but have minuted that these talks should be the business of the sections of the FPD whose business it is to be in touch with the appropriate expert at the FO.

In general perhaps the point is not so much that these talks are occasionally ill-judged but that full use is made neither of what is being done in other spheres nor of expert knowledge (broadcasting technique, whose full exploitation the existing organisation of the BBC Overseas News Services does not permit, is another matter.)

As to Mr Runciman's particular suggestions —

- (1) the necessity of dwelling always on the certainty — as apart from the desirability — of Allied victory is one that has been emphasised by Mr Bruce of FPD
- (2) the dwelling on National Anniversaries — the BBC have stated elsewhere that it is in fact their policy to do this.
- (3) Lack of short wave sets in Bulgaria
- (4) Necessity for a rather 'ostentatious' type of programme. These two points supplement each other — lack of shortwave sets indicates a selective audience.

You may think that this memorandum provides additional and independent evidence for the closer interest in these broadcasts for which the FPD has been striving.

*40 years
ago the name
Bulgarian was
almost
unknown;
every educated
person called
himself a
Greek*

Sir Charles Eliot, 1896

Thinking about Shelley

A D Harvey

The twenty fifth of March 2001 will be the 190th anniversary of Percy Bysshe Shelley's expulsion from University College, Oxford. It was the beginning of a prototypical young poet's career: sent down from Oxford for writing one pamphlet, nearly prosecuted by the government for circulating another, twice married to teenage brides, of whom one drowned herself and the other wrote *Frankenstein*, befriended by Byron, on whom he had more influence than any other contemporary, respected by all who knew him as a scholar and as an original thinker, he was dead before he was thirty.

His poetry has a restless, under-nourished quality, partly derived from his unusually frequent use of adjectives derived from verbs. It often reads as if translated from a foreign language. The frigid ardours and abstractness of his poetic world makes it more agreeable to remember his works as some sort of literary archetype than to re-read it. Even for his contemporary Thomas Carlyle, '... poor Shelley always was.... a kind of ghastly object; colourless, pallid, tuneless, without health or warmth of vigour; the sound of him shrieky, frosty, as if a ghost were trying to "sing" to us; the temperament of him, spasmodic, hysterical, instead of strong or robust; with fine affections and aspirations, gone all such a road: a man infinitely too weak for that solitary scaling of the Alps which he undertook in spite of all the world.'

His friends described him as a warm, sympathetic and enthusiastic personality, but his letters are pompous and self-righteous, and there are traces of the same characteristics in his poetry. Though he was a crucial influence on the poetic development of Byron, and though a poem written in deliberate

imitation of his style was published to commemorate his death (by one John Chalk Claris, who soon afterwards settled into a career as editor of a local newspaper), Shelley seems to have had less general influence on other poets than Byron or Wordsworth or Keats.

He was not even very well-known till twenty years after his death, by which time his association with Byron and Keats, and his reputation for political radicalism, were an important factor in persuading the early Victorians to grant him his special niche in their Pantheon of British poets.

The real interest of Shelley's career is that he is, with Milton, the most intellectual of English poets. His poems are to be seen as part of a kind of work in progress, with his critical writings providing another and perhaps more important chapter. His description of poets as 'the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration.... mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present.... the unacknowledged legislators of the world' seems merely typical of the grand but essentially imprecise imagery that characterizes his verse, but in fact Shelley was acutely sensitive to the relationship between the individual writer and his cultural environment, and to the mechanisms whereby the literary and intellectual novelties of one decade are transformed in the clichés of the next. The young men who so avidly read the poems of Lord Byron when they first came out were in mid-career, consolidating their grip on the levers of power and professional influence, during the great reform decade of the 1830's when Byron, who died only two years after Shelley, was himself fading from memory into myth.

According to Shelley, 'there must be a resemblance which does not depend

upon their own will, between all the writers of any particular age. They cannot escape from subjection to a common influence which arises out of an infinite combination of circumstances belonging to the times in which they live... And this is an influence which neither the meanest scribbler nor the sublimest genius of any era can escape.' Elsewhere he wrote 'Every man's mind is... modified by all the objects of nature and art; by every work and every and every suggestion which he ever admitted to act upon his consciousness; it is the mirror upon which all forms are reflected, and in which they compose one form.'

Shelley was not quite the first to express this, but he expressed it more fully and explicitly than anyone before him, and even today professors of Cultural Studies have not managed to come to grips with the implications of Shelley's analysis: they lack Shelley's omnivorous reading in seven languages, and his commitment to culture as a constantly changing experience within which the new is always in the process of becoming the familiar.

Most of all, the professors lack Shelley's belief that a gifted individual, a poet, can identify the hidden tendencies of his era, even if only in terms of fantasies or metaphors, before they have become obvious to the majority of his contemporaries. The modern notion that intellectual life consists essentially of learning, or teaching, how to mimic an established form of discourse, so as to qualify oneself for employment in institutions alongside other people who have learnt to think in the same way, would have been deeply antipathetic to Shelley. He knew that he, like any other individual, was completely part and parcel of his own time, but he saw this inclusion as involving a moral

responsibility to confront the culture of his time with the fact of his own individuality.

One imagines that Byron, if he had survived his Greek adventure, would have eventually made his peace with respectable opinion in Britain, perhaps even in time to have sat in Earl Grey's reforming cabinet of 1830-1834; there was something conventional and conformist in Byron, even in his most outré posturings. Shelley's journey back to respectability and acceptance would necessarily have been longer and more

difficult. 'The Triumph of Life,' the poem he was working on at the time of his death in the Gulf of Spezia, may well indicate the route he was beginning to take; his evocation of a distorted and gnarled Rousseau:

I feared, loved, hated, suffered, did and
died,
And if the spark with which Heaven
lit my spirit
Had been with purer nutriment
supplied,
Corruption would not now thus much
inherit
Of what was once Rousseau,

suggests the beginning of a repudiation by Shelley of the radical ideas he had espoused as a young man. At any rate he would have seen through Earl Grey and his gang of gerrymanderers: whatever the superficial consonance of some of their attitudes, he was in no way the forerunner of today's Pinkos on the Public Pay Roll.

A D Harvey reviews A C Grayling's new biography of Hazlitt on page 45.

The Betrayed Generations: Standards in British Schools 1950-2000

John Marks

A disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world.

Matthew Arnold, *The Function of Criticism at the Present Time*.

On the education of the people of this country, the future of this country depends.

Benjamin Disraeli, House of Commons, June 15, 1874

These two quotations from the last century but one continue to encapsulate the core of conservative purposes in education and in doing so exemplify the continuity between past, present and future which is essential to a truly conservative vision of education.

The first from Matthew Arnold, the first of Her Majesty's Chief Inspectors of Schools, provides a sound definition of a major purpose of education even though it is actually his definition of criticism. The second from Disraeli, the first One Nation Conservative, emphasises the role of education in securing the country's future. All it

needs to retain its edge today is the insertion of 'all' before 'the people'. This article attempts to evaluate how far we now are from achieving the aspirations of the Victorian era as exemplified by Arnold and Disraeli.

Over the last 30 years education has risen up the political agenda in Britain primarily because of widespread concern about low standards. There are enormous variations in standards from school to school — even with schools of the same type in similar areas. This is true at all ages for which we have national information:

— at 7, 11 and 14 in National Curriculum tests;

— at 16 in public examination results for GCSE and vocational qualifications;

— at 18 in A-level and GNVQ results and in access to higher education.

As pupils get older the variations in standards increase. The result is that there are great differences in achievements and opportunities for pupils from different backgrounds and areas. Even in the most basic of basics — the ability

to read and to calculate — standards in Britain are far too low. This is confirmed by recent reputable international comparisons such as the Third International Mathematics and Science Study, and detailed reports from the Office for Standards in Education. And all this is despite much more money in real terms being spent than ever before, a substantial fall in class sizes, and the raising of the school-leaving age to 16 and more people staying in education after that age than ever before.

This article, and the pamphlet on which it is based, surveys measurable standards in all kinds of schools for the whole country; it will cover both state and independent schools because the focus is the education of all not just of a few. The emphasis is on raw or unadjusted results of National Curriculum tests and public examinations. This is because unadjusted results have a reality and a meaning beyond that of any adjusted figures. They provide an independent external yardstick for the standards reached in schools. And it is

these results which individual pupils take with them as passports to careers or to college or university.

The aim is to present evidence about standards for the whole country which cannot be seriously doubted. Anecdotal evidence is not included except where it illustrates, in as graphic a way as possible, the actual standards which are being achieved. If evidence does not exist when public accountability requires it, the article asks why and concludes that quantitative measures of standards should shape and determine present and future policies for education.

1. Where are we now?

The first section reviews current standards in major subjects for all schools in England; gives evidence concerning vocational qualifications and current access to higher education; and compares standards within the United Kingdom and internationally.

Average standards are far too low and there are enormous variations in standards between schools in all parts of the country. Even the standards of the most basic of basics need to be raised considerably. Some of the worst results are in poorer areas of the country often with high levels of social deprivation. Opportunities are probably more dependent on social class and where you live than they were 40 years ago before the changeover to comprehensive schools.

The shortfall of actual standards from expected standards increases for older pupils. At the age of 7 pupils are a little ahead of expected standards, but by 11 they are about a year behind and by 14 two years behind. The spread between the standards of different schools of the same type in the same locality increases from about 2.5 years at age 7 (6 to 8.5 years) to nearly 4 years at age 11 (8.25 to 11.75 years) to 5 years or more at age 14 (9 to 14 years).

For GCSE at 16+ grammar schools do well (percentage with five A* to C above 90%) and independent schools do nearly as well. Results for comprehensive and secondary modern schools vary widely with some having 5 or 6 times as many pupils obtaining good GCSEs as others even in the same area. About 700

comprehensive schools — a quarter of the total — perform less well than the average for secondary modern schools.

Pupils in comprehensive schools make up 85% of the age group but obtain only about 75% of good GCSE passes. At A level their proportion of passes falls to about 65% and to about 50% for A grades. Results for selective schools taken together (grammar and secondary moderns) are about 35% better than for comprehensive schools which indicates substantial underachievement by many comprehensive schools and maybe a further 60,000 pupils achieving good GCSEs if we had a selective system.

Pupils in the selective system in Northern Ireland are 18 months ahead of pupils in England at 14 in both English and Mathematics and achieve GCSE results which are about 10% better absolutely and 25% better relatively than for pupils in England. These results indicate that selection is better for *all* pupils — those at the widely under-rated secondary modern schools as well as those at grammar schools.

2. How do we know where we are now?

Section 2 explains why so much information is now available; illustrates current standards by giving examples primarily from mathematics; and asks whether current standards are high enough. We know where we are in England now because we do have objective information about standards at various ages, school by school, for the whole country, but this detailed information has only become readily available since 1992 for GCSE & A level and since 1995 at 7, 11 & 14. The data — especially the enormous variations from school to school — show that average standards and expectations are not high enough and that pupils could be achieving much more at all ages.

3. How did we get here?

Section 3 reviews official data on public examinations, vocational qualifications and access to universities in the United Kingdom over the last fifty years; analyses possible causes for the trends revealed; and focuses on the effect on standards of three factors — the change from a selective to a comprehensive

system of schools in the 1960s, the introduction of the GCSE in 1987, and the lack of published information about standards over most of the period.

In England the percentage gaining good 16+ results rose steadily during the 1950s & 1960s and levelled off in the 1970s & 1980s. From 1987 to 1993 the percentage rose more than it had in the previous 30 years and by 6 times as much as in the previous 15 years; from 1993 the rapid rise slowed somewhat. The Northern Ireland results were lower than for England in the 1960s but overtook England about 1970 and continued to rise rapidly until they are now 10% absolutely and about 25% relatively above those for England. A DES projection for England, made in 1968, follows the pattern of actual results in Northern Ireland rather than what happened in England until it too, by 1985, is about 10% absolutely above the actual figures for England. At A level the pattern of results — for England, Northern Ireland and the 1968 DES projection — is in all cases very similar to that at 16+.

These figures suggest that the changeover to comprehensive schools has led to a shortfall in England of about 60,000 16 year olds each year failing to achieve 5 or more higher grade passes at 16+ and 80,000 18 year olds each year failing to achieve 2 or more A levels. The increase in access to universities for working class students up to 1960, primarily due to grammar schools, may have gone into reverse with the spread of comprehensive education.

The official Standards over Time enquiry in 1995 listed many factors which have lowered standards and expectations in both GCSE and A level. This conclusion is strongly supported by the data given here which show extremely rapid rises in pass rates after 1987, when no coursework limits existed, and a slowing down in the rise following the decision to limit coursework in 1991 and to introduce mandatory Codes of Practice for GCSE Examination Boards in 1992.

4. How can we put things right?

Section 4 proposes publishing more information about standards; setting higher standards in National Curriculum tests, public examinations and

vocational qualifications; and changing the National Curriculum so as to emphasise the basics in primary schools and to provide a specific vocational pathway in secondary schools.

Standards are so low that the first priority must be to leave existing good schools alone — whether they be independent or state schools of whatever type — and to continue to inform parents about standards in all types of school so that they may choose the school which they think is best for their children. The fundamental principle is and must be to set and monitor standards throughout education; to publish information about standards each year, school by school or college by college; and to ensure that any educational policy should be related as directly as possible to the standards achieved. New National Performance Tables are needed at 7 and 14 as well as those at 11 and for GCSE and A level. Performance tables should include columns for class sizes and costs per pupil alongside Curriculum and GCSE results so that policies can be evaluated by everybody; average standards of pupils on entry to the school should be shown so that proper progress can be seen to take place.

5. How can we keep things right?

Section 5 explains the failure of centrally imposed policies — such as the government's pledge to reduce class sizes in infant schools — and the success of decentralising policies — such as national performance tables, parental choice and grant-maintained schools. The paper concludes by advocating a more open approach to the necessary virtues of élitism and excellence.

The old comprehensive schools policy is a fraud. Variations in standards are so large that many pupils are condemned to suffer in inadequate schools thus damaging their life chances for many years or even forever. A more diverse selective system can achieve more for all and not just for those who are selected for academic schools. A new comprehensive policy must ensure higher standards for all and must recognise the major contributions to higher national standards made over the years by

grammar and secondary modern schools and by independent schools. Never again must major changes in education take place, as in the 1960s and again in the 1980s, without letting the public know what was happening to standards. Let us ensure that that era of closed politics in education — with information restricted to officials and politicians — is gone forever. The priority now is to devise policies which contain their own inbuilt mechanisms for evaluation.

Throughout all discussions of policies for education we should remember some fundamental truths: Education should be available to all according to their abilities and aptitudes and not their social origins. It should give a thorough grounding in basic skills such as reading and arithmetic so as to enable people to acquire many skills which are useful or even essential in their lives and to open doors to the glories of our culture and civilisation and to those of other civilisations and cultures too. Such doors should be open to all and not just to a few. Access to the highest standards that have been achieved in the arts, the social sciences and the natural sciences should be widely available. For both cultural and pragmatic reasons we need élites. But they must be open élites — with the opportunities to scale the heights available to all no matter from where they come. At present these highly desirable aims are a long way from being achieved. But if standards become central to everything we do, it will once again become natural to talk of excellence at all levels of the education system and for élitism to become a term of praise rather than condemnation — provided access to 'the best that is known and thought in the world' is open to all no matter from where in society they come. And it will become impossible for the present situation — in which about 40% of pupils enter secondary school unable to read well enough to cope with the National Curriculum — to continue for much longer.

It is surely a fundamental human right in the modern world to be taught to read. And it is a national scandal — amounting to child abuse on a substantial scale

— that so many children have been deprived of that right for so many years and have continued to suffer from that deprivation throughout their adult years. Moreover it is a disgrace that so little was done for so many years to evaluate the differences between schools or kinds of schools or even to make the raw data, when they were eventually collected at public expense, openly available in forms which would enable others to attempt that evaluation. But that era of closed politics in education — with information restricted to officials and politicians — is, hopefully, gone forever.

Policies involving more information and choice are more democratic, fairer, and provide better educational value for the massive and increasing resources, in real terms, which are spent on education year by year than can any centrally imposed system. If there are clashes of philosophy, arising from different views of the nature of education or for any other reason, they should be resolved by public accountability and choice and not by imposing solutions by central or local diktat. An open democratic society needs a fair, open and democratic education system based on information, choice and equality of opportunity.

As Pericles of Athens wrote more than 2,000 years ago:

Although only a few may originate a policy, we are all able to judge it.

But only if we insist that government gives us the information we need to do so.

This article is adapted from *The Betrayed Generations: Standards in British Schools 1950-2000*, by John Marks, published in January 2001 at £12.50 by the Centre for Policy Studies, 57 Tufton Street, London, SW1P 3QL; Tel: 020 222 4488; Fax: 020 222 4388; e-mail: mail@cps.org.uk; website: www.cps.org.uk.

The Reading Reform Foundation

Mona McNee

The sole aim of the Reading Reform Foundation is 'to restore the alphabet to its proper place as the basis of elementary reading instruction in English.'

The need for such a move arose after look-and-say swept the board of reading instruction in America after about 1930, and in Britain after 1945. We read by processing a sequence of letters, but look-and-say prefers to teach word shapes. The fallacy of this is evident when you think that the same shape fits cots cuts cats eats arts oats. The disaster this caused was exposed in Rudolf Flesch's 1955 best-seller *Why Johnny Can't Read*.

To defend and promote look-and-say two reading organisations in America, the National Association of Remedial Teaching and the International Council for the Improvement of Reading Instruction, merged to form the International Reading Association. It would, in a few short years, become the impregnable citadel of the look-and-say method. Thousands of people attend its annual conferences. Realising the danger that this promotion of look-and-say presented to America, a small group of Wall Street philanthropists set up the (American) Reading Reform Foundation in 1961. Its purpose was 'to enlighten teachers, parents, public authorities, and the nation generally on the nature and extent of the reading crisis, its cause and cure; to co-ordinate and encourage the numerous local reform movements already active; and to create an informed national public opinion in favour of quickly eradicating from all our schools the cancer of configurationism' (look- and-say).

In 1970 I was surprised to find that I, an untrained parent, could teach my son to read when 'specially qualified' teachers had left him on *Ladybird Book 2* for two years. Asking around, I found that many

other parents were worrying about their children's poor reading, but were too ashamed to shout about it and advertise the failure. This prompted me to search the literature, starting a long trek through reports, handbooks, research and studies, up to the report *Oversight on Illiteracy in the United States* March 1986, when I learned of the (American) Reading Reform Foundation. Its concerns seemed to mirror my own, so, since the look-and-say promotion showed no signs of weakening in Britain, I set up a U.K. Chapter in 1989.

I believe that student teachers hear about the U.K. Reading Association and the National Association for the Teaching of English during their training, but not about the R.R.F. We have operated on a shoestring but managed to keep up the pressure by producing 44 newsletters since 1989, which have endlessly reported on studies that show the need for, and effectiveness of, phonics-first. We have shown that phonics-first cuts out the need for most special education (which is mostly for reading failure) and thus Cheaper is Better. As Jean Augur said in 1981, if all children had the teaching dyslexics need [which is systematic phonics] they would learn along with the rest, and none would suffer, so inevitably we have worked to help people concerned with dyslexia to understand the causes of failure and how (for most dyslexics) to get it right first time around.

Far too slowly, people, politicians, have begun to realise the need for phonics. But after decades of teacher-training which has stressed 'real books,' and the latest red herring 'onset and rime', by now every post of influence is filled by someone who went through the postwar (mis)training so, although phonics is now no longer totally rejected, it is poorly understood and all too often presented as part of a 'mix of methods' or a last resort

after other strategies which are different versions of guessing.

Politicians mostly deal with money. Schools have in the past spent vast sums on programmes like Ladybird and Ginn 360, accepted on 'promotion' and enthusiasm, without any proof that they work, and despite plenty of proof that they have failed. The Basic Skills Agency spends much money publicising how much their work is needed. But these groups who ought to be using and promoting phonics have kept their distance from the Reading Reform Foundation. Evidence piles up of the coincidence of poor reading and delinquency, and California bases its estimate of future prison needs on the level of reading failure in Grade 8. Prisons are using some phonic teaching, but while this captive audience could be a major factor in improving literacy, the efforts only move in fits and starts, inadequately reported.

The National Literacy Strategy is a good example of government accepting a long-drawn-out, flawed programme instead of an existing scheme like Jolly Phonics (or my 'Step by Step'). Despite current evidence of failure among adults, created during big sales of 'Janet and John', this scheme has been revived this year. The first issue had a phonics version, but the new one (published by Star Kids) is strongly look-say (Whole Language). The Reading Reform Foundation will be needed in Britain for some years yet.

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The Grammar School Imperative

Nula Bealby

The diversity of schools in some localities has been a strength of the English education system. Many schools cater very successfully for different needs of the pupil population: among them the remaining grammar schools. However, their contribution to promoting standards in English education may be endangered by attempts to reduce diversity and revitalise the 'one-size-fits-all' comprehensive system.

Despite protests to the contrary, the introduction into comprehensive schools of initiatives such as setting by academic ability, teaching boys and girls in separate classes and extra provision for the more able or the worst behaved — are all attempts to revitalise the increasingly discredited 'one-size-fits-all' comprehensive school ideal. The ideal is based upon the flawed premise that equality of opportunity derives from equality of provision. It does not.

Diversity of provision is far more likely to raise standards than uniformity. Variety enables schools to customise their provision to suit the needs and abilities of those in their charge. In many European countries schools offer different pathways for different abilities but with flexibility between them and equal resourcing for all. Our schools need the freedom to be diverse and to serve the different needs of children.

Attempts to extend comprehensive schools, by doing away with selective or partially selective schools and admitting pupils on the basis of geographical proximity to the school, clouds important issues. Admission by geographical proximity accounts for the enormous disparity in comprehensive schools' performance — those schools situated in the leafy suburbs achieve better results than those in poorer areas.

Consequently high standards are too often the preserve of those children whose parents can afford the higher mortgages required in successful comprehensive schools' catchment areas. Ironically, the geographical admission criterion actually thwarts the realisation of a uniform comprehensive system. True comprehensives would have the ability range of society at large represented in their intakes with approximately one third of lower ability, one third of average ability and one third of high ability pupils. To replace selection with geographical proximity as the admission criterion is to adopt a blunt and clumsy tool that has little effect in a minority of favoured areas and helps maintain social disadvantage everywhere else.

Compelling all to attend local comprehensive schools begs important questions about the rights of parents to express preferences regarding schools for their child. Selection promotes choice because it offers a diversity of provision and is not tied to the geographical criteria for admissions. Selective schools have classes of more homogenous ability and can therefore address the needs of their intakes effectively. The nation requires schools that cater for the most able in their ethos, teacher orientation and curricular provision — bolted-on extra classes for a few pupils in the one-size-fits-all comprehensive is too often inadequate. Compelling all to sit an 11+ examination is equally prescriptive and parents should have the choice whether to enter their children for the entrance test.

The policy of inclusion is another attempt to extend uniformity of provision for all pupils. Inclusion has resulted in highly disruptive children being taught in schools because the bureaucracy surrounding exclusion is now so

insurmountable that schools are compelled to include them at the expense of most of their pupils. This has undermined discipline and standards. Headteachers across the land are appalled by the resultant difficulties. Indeed, one of the reasons for the current shortage of teachers is the presence of such pupils in mainstream schools. They have needs that demand specialist teachers and appropriate provision — academic, vocational and extra-curricular. The philosophy of educating all children together in one type of school is undermining standards and demoralising the teaching profession.

The task of tailoring the curriculum to suit pupils' academic needs is a source of debate. Some complain that GCSEs are too difficult or irrelevant for the less able or less motivated and seek a curriculum that is more relevant to their pupils' needs. Grade inflation at both GCSE and 'A' Level has not improved matters for those at this end of the spectrum who achieve little success within the current curricular parameters. By contrast many in high achieving grammars and independent schools are concerned that GCSEs provide mechanistic drudgery which reward accuracy rather than intellectual flair and are no longer appropriate for their intakes. They see in the new system of modular 'A' Levels an opportunity to replace GCSEs so that pupils take 9 or 10 subjects before narrowing down to 3 or 4 full 'A' Levels, thereby providing pupils with a much broader curriculum, with pupils working towards an 'A' Level quality of study from the age of 14 onwards. They are alarmed at the decline in standards of examinations and hope the introduction of 'World Class Tests' in 2002 will provide a further opportunity for stretching the more able candidature of these schools. Diversity of provision is

so important for standards — it is more likely to cater for the needs of all so that they might all realise their potential.

Many grammar schools are the centres of excellence that we expect them to be. Recent research confirms that able pupils are best served by grammar schools. It is pleasant to see the highest achieving grammars ranked among the premier division of the independent schools in the national league tables. Many grammars outperform scores of highly regarded, independent schools on a range of academic and extra-curricular criteria. A state school could possibly emerge as the highest achieving school in the country.

The delight of the grammars is that they achieve remarkable standards with children from a rich diversity of ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. Academic selection by entrance test is objective and helpful to schools in customising their provision to suit their intake. As such it is a more refined admissions criterion than the geographical 'piece of string' with all its limitations. Because grammar schools do not confine their intake to those parents who can afford the fees, or those who live in the immediate geographical locality, they are open to all. One such school in North London which became a grammar school in 1995, has seen a virtual doubling of the number of ethnic minority pupils in its intake, as well as a more diversified socio-economic intake with the pupils coming from further afield from modest backgrounds. It is hard to imagine a better milieu for educating bright young people to live in the Britain of the future.

The highest achieving schools in the country are selective and single-sex. Their success is due to the focused specialist teaching and not simply the result of the nature of the intake. This is crucially important in the case of boys whose overall academic performance, motivation and standards of behaviour in and outside of classrooms lag behind that of girls. It is more likely for boys to be bullied for doing well at schoolwork than for lagging or misbehaving. Academic underachievement, poor behaviour and adolescent criminality among boys have become alarming national

phenomena. It is remarkable that a boys' grammar school tops the national league tables. The teaching focus and curricular provision, the competitive milieu and lack of female audience for 'Jack the Lad' antics which characterise most selective boys' schools account for their success. Single-sex selective schools are good at motivating boys and achieve excellence in the face of national trends.

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Far too much is made of the divisions within the state sector which pale into insignificance by comparison with those between the state and the independent sector. Schemes to encourage co-operation between state and independent schools are trivial in their effect and merely paper over the cracks. The recent abolition of the Assisted Places Scheme eliminated nearly 7,000 sponsored places for pupils of poorer backgrounds at independent schools in the last academic year. What happened to these places at independent schools? Full fee payers have mostly replaced assisted place holders. The cheque-book has replaced ability as the criterion for admission. In one year nearly 7,000 assisted places have been lost to pupils of ability from less well off backgrounds to attend selective independent schools. This is a blow to provision for able pupils. It also exacerbates the divide between the independent and state sectors. The abolition of grammars would have the same impact on a far greater scale: provision for the able would be drastically set back; and many parents who could afford it would withdraw their children from the state sector and place them in independent schools

to get the specialist provision they want for their children. Far from being élitist, grammar schools are meritocratic institutions that play an important role in bridging the social and academic schism that exists between the independent and the state sector.

Their transformation into 'one size fits all' comprehensives would reduce grammars to compromising uniformity that would have detrimental effects at a local level. Attempts to force the re-distribution of able pupils from former grammars to local schools would not ensure a raising of standards. Indeed many would simply transfer to the independent sector or move to other localities. Furthermore even if some able pupils were redistributed across a range of schools in a locality, this smattering would not raise standards in these schools. To think it would is insulting to the quality of leadership and managerial prowess of would-be recipient schools. Schools would have to broaden their provision and in so doing compromise their facility to meet the needs of the pupils at either ends of the ability range with focused teaching and resourcing that is geared to the intake. Conversely, narrowing the ability range in classes and schools enables managers and teachers to target their teaching strategies and resources more accurately. Mixed ability teaching fails to stretch the brightest or provide adequately for the less able. In selective schools, the able children are brought in from the margins and placed in the very centre of the lessons. They are likely to feel more at liberty to take intellectual risks and think creatively in a social milieu of pupils of similar ability. Able children are entitled to have their needs addressed as much as any other child, not as a bolt-on series of extra lessons, but as cost-effective standardised provision for the most able in selective schools which cater specifically for their intakes. The destruction of grammar schools would in many instances pitch the ex-grammars into direct competition with local schools and in so doing exacerbate local difficulties. There is little local benefit to be derived from the destruction of grammars and a very great deal to be lost.

In the last 15 years, tertiary education has expanded and transformed. From providing for a purely academic minority in the past, today, roughly 50-60% of school leavers are engaged in vocationally oriented courses. Grammar schools provide pupils with the requisite breadth and depth of academic preparation for successful progression through school and to University. If the relative social exclusivity of the independent school-Oxbridge relationship is to be overcome — then it is to the schools such as the selective grammars in the state sector to which we must turn to ensure that our most able young people, irrespective of social background, are adequately prepared. Currently grammar schools provide for some 5% of the nation's pupils and

independent schools provide for some 7%. We need schools that offer specialist provision on merit for the top 10% of the ability range. This might be the case in some localities in the country but is certainly not in all.

If a Labour government were to destroy grammar schools during its second term of office, it would commit an act of vandalism. The UK remains one of the few industrialised countries which do not offer widespread selective education and this at a time when parents and employers are worried about a decline in standards. The provision for able children is not satisfactory in most schools.

Grammar schools serve boys particularly well, they enjoy enormous parental support and are held in high esteem

by many in their localities. Recent legislation placed the decision to maintain or abolish grammar schools in the hands of parents, who have demonstrated that local popular opinion is not keen on the destruction of good schools. Recent polls conducted by FDS International for *The Times Educational Supplement*, and a Radio 3 poll indicate very strong support for grammars. It is not surprising that their destruction is temporarily off the agenda as the general election looms. The threat remains and should be removed altogether.

Nula Bealby is a pro-grammar school campaigner.

Letter from France

Gillian Bardinet wonders whether the Nice fiasco will prompt some salutary thinking in France

Last September the French people demonstrated their apathy and scorn for the political establishment by a 70 per cent abstention rate in the referendum called by Jacques Chirac himself to endorse a shortening of the Presidential term, in the name of modernization, from seven to five years. The proposed change was accepted, with widespread indifference, and thanks to a minority of electors. The immediate result of this rebuff was a clear loss of authority for the President, who has, since then, come to look less and less like the patrician custodian of a noble and powerful republic as envisaged by de Gaulle and endorsed, at the time, by over 80 per cent of the population.

Was Chirac himself to blame, or had the time come, as some said, rather than tinkering at the edges, to review the constitution in its entirety? Doubts

about its adaptability came with the first 'co-habitation', doubts about its present relevance are inherent in public debates on themes such as, 'Is the five year term really the right answer?' This from Georges Vedel, a former member of the Constitutional Council, the very body set up by de Gaulle to oversee the proper functioning of the constitution.

For the most part, over the years, this Council has been an excellent watchdog, notable for both wisdom and probity. But, revelations of the more than dubious behaviour of its recent President, Roland Dumas, appointed to the post by his great friend, Francois Mitterand, gave rise to fears of partisanship, and doubt lapped round another of the great organs of the state. These have, moreover, been given a severe buffeting by Dumas' mistress, Christine Deviers-Joncours, whose trenchant and unabashed account, *The*

Whore of the Republic, drew attention to the enormous sums of public money channelled into slush funds and, of course personal gratifications such as splendid apartments, while her lover was Foreign Secretary. Nationalized companies like Elf were key players in this game. Dumas, who, like Pinochet has avoided the courts through a mixture of ill-health and politico-legal dexterity, may well be the last living illustration of the TGC (la très grande corruption) of the Mitterand coterie. Yet the whole question of the financing of political parties, for which much of the slush fund capital was used, is causing considerable waves, in the wake of which the current President himself is floundering.

Despite his uncanny buoyancy, (*Fluctuat nec mergitur*, the motto of the city of Paris, could well be his own!) Chirac might yet sink under accusations

of taking substantial kickbacks when he was Mayor of Paris and later Prime Minister. For the moment he is protected by Presidential immunity, but a petition signed by 58 MP's could launch a procedure which would waive this and expose him to official investigation. Such is the aim of a young socialist MP, Arnaud Montebourg, whose book *La Machine à trahir* (The betraying machine) has already sold 20,000 copies. Montebourg has been dubbed Torquemada, or a latter-day Saint Just. He is probably closer to the young Mitterand who drew attention to himself by a fierce attack on the Constitution of the Republic, 'Le coup d'état permanent', only to use it to the full in his mature years. Indeed, Montebourg admits that the sleaze of the Mitterand years does not interest him. 'I have the elegance and delicacy to leave his heirs in peace', he says with Tartuffian primness, so only passing allusions in his book to the great Urba or Elf scandals or indeed the MNEF (Mutuelle nationale des étudiants de France) which brought down Jospin's first finance minister. There can be little doubt that Montebourg's book is part of a campaign to destabilize, if not topple Chirac.

Theoretically, references to underhand funding of political parties pre-1995 should carry no clout, since specific legislation was passed between 1988-95 to wipe the slate clean and open up an era of transparency. However, it looks as though amnesty may have provoked oblivion rather than honesty, with some dubious erstwhile practices continuing to flourish. Whatever the truth of the matter, it is clear that the forthcoming Presidential campaign is already being waged by proxy and by innuendo.

In May 1997, two days after Blair's triumph, a Leftist majority was elected to the Assembly and Lionel Jospin, who had fought a close-run race with Chirac for the Presidency in 1995, became Prime Minister. Jospin initially showed some skill in welding together a motley group of Green, Red and Pink MP's to form 'La gauche plurielle', but he too has had a rough ride since September. His reputation for rectitude and

competence has been severely tarnished as four of his key ministers have, one by one, departed. Dominique Strauss-Kahn, who was hailed as the redeemer of the French fiscal imbroglio, left under a most ominous cloud of corruption charges. Jacques Delors' daughter, Martine Aubry, has abandoned Employment and Solidarity ostensibly to run for Mayor of Lille, or some would say to flee the problematic implementation of her cherished legislation setting up the 35 hour week. Jean-Claude Allègre tried unsuccessfully to reform the inefficient Ministry of Education. Teachers' unions forced him out. Finally the resignation of the Home Affairs Minister, Jean-Pierre Chevènement, over Jospin's plan for increasing autonomy for Corsica has fanned the smouldering debate about the very definition of French sovereignty.

Nevertheless, in a well-run state, such 'little local difficulties' can, as was seen during the Clinton impeachment affair, be more than off-set by a healthy and stable economy. But alas, in this domain too, as autumn turned to winter, the golden promises looked more and more chimerical. For the first time since 1994, France's foreign trade went into deficit and this in spite of the presumed competitive advantage of a weak euro. Now, thanks to failure to tackle longstanding fiscal and economic imbalance, debt too looks as though it may plumb new depths and even place France in an invidious position vis-à-vis the Maastricht criteria. The Governor of the Bank of France himself has constantly campaigned for a strong euro, no doubt seeing all too clearly that a weak currency, tantamount to a massive devaluation, would enable France to put off essential structural reforms and ultimately lose the confidence of the markets. Jean Arthuis, a former Finance Minister, railed against Bercy, the over-staffed obscurantist stronghold of the French treasury. It was recently revealed that the number of those actually employed there is unknown! Arthuis was not the first to be appalled. He has written with some bitterness on the subject, and recently delivered a lecture with the despairing

title, 'La réforme de l'Etat est-elle possible?'

This question is analysed in *La République prodigue* by Matthias Emmerich, himself a senior civil servant. He explains why no government which hopes to be re-elected, can face the challenge of reform. Emmerich sees weak-willed politicians as being hamstrung by cosy relationships at both local and national level. Civil servants, who have long been colonized by the political Left, cling to their 'acquis', oppose change, and in so doing, come to renounce responsibility. Meanwhile, irrespective of needs, but vital to statistics, their numbers grow. Vindicating Jean-Claude Allègre's attempt to, in his own words, 'slim down the mammoth' of national education, Emmerich points out the number of primary school teachers rises regularly despite sharply falling intakes. Costly and out-dated tax-collecting systems hold sway, but employ more scribblers than PAYE. Many of 'les petits boulots' originally temporary odd-jobs, are to be tenured, and naturally civil service salaries are set to rise. As the financial daily, *Les Echos*, noted in the Autumn, 'statist budgetary policy is back with a vengeance'.

Rather like successive British governments in the era of Butskellism, reform is eschewed and old vices joyfully indulged. The doctrinaire 35 hour week may cause a spurious fall in unemployment but it is set to cause havoc in many sectors of industry and especially among SME's where a fall in output is already predicted. By December, purchasing power was already falling. The bosses' organisation, the MEDEF, recently warned that unless an 'overall solution' was found, then this impetuously formulated legislation will 'destroy competitiveness while at the same time fostering a black economy based on massive fraud'.

Fraud, corruption, a whiff of regicide; all these have understandably excited the judiciary. For some time, certain juges d'instruction, like Thierry Jean-Pierre or Eva Joly, have been working like super-sleuths; armed with search warrants, they have entered offices and uncovered evidence of

misappropriation of funds and diverse other misdeeds. Press coverage has frequently been flamboyant as politicians and senior civil servants have been investigated. However, of late, there has been a certain disquiet, sometimes bordering on anger. Questions are asked. Is France about to undergo a massive 'cleansing', akin to that conducted in Italy, with 'une république des juges' on the horizon? Is the judiciary by virtually rewriting laws and adopting a de facto political role, not upsetting the sacrosanct separation of powers according to 'L'Esprit des Lois'?

Since the advent of the pro-European Giscard d'Estaing France has regularly ceded authority to European institutions and this has been matched by a tendency to set up independent commissions to deal with thorny domestic questions. Hence, over the years, the deputies of the National Assembly have become increasingly debilitated, frustrated and internecine. Against this background, the judiciary has naturally seized the opportunity to accrue to itself, while the lure of the highest office in the land has been enhanced by the National Assembly's loss of power and prestige.

These developments have resulted in constant efforts to topple Chirac. The Leftist coalition has recently tried to bring forward the date of the Presidential election so that it will precede the General election by two months. The hope is that this will put a socialist in both the Elysée palace and Matignon. Sadly, the struggle is as vicious among Chirac's own presumed supporters as on the Left. As has become the pattern under the Fifth Republic, the French Right and Centre Right have turned into a collection of competing 'tables', each of which is less concerned with programmes than with propelling its own candidate to the Elysée where it is assumed that patronage will reward hard graft. This conduct has led to an ominous disaffection for democratic practice, as was seen in the September referendum. Politics no longer inspires the people. 'Tous pourris', all rotten, is the refrain. Denis Tillinac, a popular author and commentator summed up this feeling recently in *Le Journal du*

Dimanche: 'people are tired of the egocentricity, the triviality, banality and petty corruption of the steamy, self-perpetuating world of politics'. Stanley Hoffman of the Harvard Centre for European Studies went further: 'When there is a loss of faith in the common will, which is the very root of Jacobinism, of the Republican ideal, and of Gaullism itself, then elections are no longer sacred'. This was the burden of Chirac's rebuttal of charges, televised on December 14th. He turned his guns on a 'media-mad judiciary' avidly seeking to create an atmosphere of moral and political crisis which he dismissed as baseless. Not surprisingly, he opposed calls for both public avowals of guilt and general pardons, while steadfastly backing a truly independent judiciary of which he is the titular head, 'le suprême magistrat'. As he pointed out, this status implies that as President he can neither sue for libel nor appear as a witness. His speech was shot through with references to basic Gaullist premises: he opposed a referendum on Corsican autonomy, claiming it would alter 'la nature du pacte republicain'. Likewise, when referring to the complexities of the recent American Presidential election, he cannily praised the scrupulous respect for the Constitution. In short, he claimed to be fulfilling his role of stewardship of the French constitution and ultimate arbiter.

Little mention was made of Nice, even less of 'les affaires'. Chirac's performance was astute in that it responded to the tacit wish of many Frenchmen to see in their President, a *deus ex machina*. It was sometimes difficult to remember that this was the impetuous Chirac, back-slapping, salami-eating star of many a Salon de l'Agriculture. Interestingly one of the best TV presenters, Ruth Elkrief, made a revealing slip, by referring immediately after Chirac's performance, to 'President Mitterand's speech'. There can be little doubt that speeches by his predecessor had been pored over, analysed and their tone incorporated. One was reminded of Mitterand's most successful election poster in which, against a reassuring background of pastures and woodland, that most urban of French politicians, posed under the phrase, 'La Force

Tranquille'. Good PR may have enabled Chirac to live to fight another day, nevertheless there is a keen awareness among the best intellects of a need to renew. The problems of social organization and governance are acute. 'We need a new Montesquieu', says Hubert Védrine, the sophisticated Foreign Secretary, as usual harking back to the Eighteenth century for references.

The truth is that for many years, the European dream and the great Franco-German entente fulfilled French ambitions, while conveniently facilitating the acceptance of cosmetic solutions to domestic problems. But even before Nice, it was obvious that a watershed has been reached. Schröder's Germany with its Berlin fulcrum and ambitions clearly expressed by Védrine's opposite number, Joschka Fischer, to create a European entity based on the German federal model, poses a challenge. Jean-Pierre Chevènement, who resigned over a limited degree of Corsican autonomy, is not the only Frenchman to whom the sovereignty of the unitary Jacobin state is sacrosanct. A native of the eastern marches of France, he claimed to discern in the new Germany with its *Drang nach Osten*, the premises of a born-again Habsburg empire. This statement was widely written off as due to either publicity seeking or paranoia. But it is undeniable that the German call for voting and other powers in the European arena to reflect population, has severely shaken the very foundations of the 1962 alliance between de Gaulle and Adenauer, based as it was on notions of spiritual equality and a common perception of equity.

In the event, Nice amply demonstrated the growing challenge to the old Franco-German entente. It also revealed poor management and bullying overlaid with a forced bonhomie on the part of Chirac which infuriated many. Despite his cavalry-charge pre-summit tour of European capitals, the French agenda was clear to no-one; both President and Prime Minister were all too obviously more concerned with domestic wrangling and the coming Presidential campaign. The ensuing confusion led Jean-Louis Bourlanges writing in *Le Figaro* on December 14th to lambast

Chirac in scathing terms.

Bourlanges is a former Gaullist who defected from Chirac's RPR party in 1989 to become a Centrist MEP and an essayist of note. He is widely acknowledged to be the most noteworthy analyst of French European policy. Far from endorsing the President's mealy-mouth, 'important steps forward were made at Nice', Bourlanges stated unequivocally, 'the Nice Summit was the greatest defeat for French diplomacy in the post-war era'. He scotched any illusions that Chirac was fulfilling his mentor's precepts. For Bourlanges, de Gaulle along with Robert Schumann must have been turning in their graves as both the European project and the Bank of France within it fell victim to the muddle-headed arrogance of their heirs. Bourlanges laments the decline of the noble Franco-German aspirations in to an atmosphere of grubby confrontation, summed up by a German headline, 'Germany 4—France nil'. His is indeed a *cri de coeur*; he sees his country henceforth isolated in Europe, berating Jospin for smugly practising an outdated and destructive socialism while Chirac's behaviour reveals the lack of foresight and diplomatic skill of a Napoleon III. Bourlanges is harsh. However, it is true that lacking a coherent plan, France lost the initiative.

Coverage of the summit in the German press was equally damning, 'Nice was a tragic hour for France', wrote *Welt am Sonntag*. 'A new look at the map shows Paris on the periphery and Berlin in the centre.' Geopolitics have indeed helped to destroy the struts on which the post-war Franco-German entente was built. But surely this has been obvious since the fall of the Berlin wall? One imagines that a Schuman or a de Gaulle would have worked valiantly to address the new situation. However, there has been scant evidence of productive diplomacy on the European front. France has preferred to dabble in Africa, with the result that despite the confusion and unanswered questions, as the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* reported, 'What Nice meant was a general recognition that the present German government feels emancipated from its bond with France'.

Gerhard Schröder played his cards

well, quietly allowing the bombastic, intransigent French attitude to alienate the smaller European states which are now ready to look to German leadership in a federal project. The Franco-British summit at Saint Malo, two years ago, was set in French eyes to develop an independent European armed force, a logical outcome of de Gaulle's defection from NATO in 1967 and a keystone of contemporary French thinking. The British, more keenly aware of reliance on US transport and military intelligence capabilities, used no provocative adjectives to qualify the new force. Pushed by the US Defence Secretary's opportune statement before the Nice summit, Tony Blair's thinking became more focussed. 'Yes', he declared, 'an independent European force would,' in Cohen's words, 'ultimately make NATO

From 1962 up to the Nice summit, Europe was a diplomatic success for France

a relic of the past.' Consequently there was British insistence that the European Rapid Reaction Force would work in co-operation with NATO and only when the former did not wish to be involved. Chirac has failed to create the nucleus of an independent European army, and in this he has failed both as a Gaullist and as a Frenchman. He now has little to show for his Presidency in the realm of defence. His main reform concerned the ending of national service with the aim of creating a more professional army which was to be the advance guard of the RRF. Meanwhile, allegedly due to more kickbacks and cronyism, the much trumpeted new aircraft-carrier, *Charles de Gaulle* has suffered severe technical problems with broken propeller blades which have meant an ignominious return to port.

The New Year seems set to begin in twilight rather than dawn. However, France is far from being a basket case. It is above all, a country of paradoxes. The outmoded political and fiscal structures exist alongside a dynamic civil society. The most thrusting elements of French business and industry are

already wedded to free-market, hyper-globalism. The creation of EADS, the world's third largest aeronautics company, challenging Boeing, combines the French Aerospatiale Matra with the German DASA, the Spanish CASA and BAE Systems. Its first-born is the giant A380, the father is Jean-Luc Lagardère, a hands-on engineer and business man who owes nothing to French hierarchical structures. Interestingly EADS' business headquarters are in Amsterdam. In the *Sunday Telegraph*, Michel Bon of France Telecom admitted wistfully that only the French government's golden share prevented him from establishing his headquarters in London. The giant glass maker St Gobain is present in 42 countries. Questioned about the hurdles of high taxation in France, Jean-Louis Beffa blithely replied that France, maybe unwittingly, creates a climate of Darwinism, in which only the super fit survive! Nevertheless, he did admit that there was a growing hiatus between government and industry.

Americans themselves are impressed by this new breed of engineer-managers. David Ignatius, editor of the *International Herald Tribune*, said recently that Thierry Desmarests of Total, was 'beating the Americans at their own game'. 'The reality is that the inter-relationship (between the USA and France) is increasingly driven by the private sector', said Felix Rohatyn, the outgoing American ambassador. 'Now', he went on, 'the big French multinationals are managed by people who are completely modern.'

Naturally, Mr Rohatyn is keenly aware of the dichotomy between the forces at work in the private sector and the resistance to change on high. He expressed it in careful terms; 'in Paris, the élites, intellectuals, media, and political leadership, both left and right, feel that they must be much more involved with the philosophical differences between us.' This type of debate is often presented in vehement, unproductive form, whether it be in Viviane Forester's wild account, *L'horreur économique* which presents a Hieronymus Bosch view of the world of capitalism, or the reasoned but violent condemnation of the death penalty which earned Robert Badinter the Prix Femina. The result is relentless

anti-Americanism, focussed recently on the new President.

From 1962 up to the Nice summit, Europe was a diplomatic success for France. Its original springs were twofold; the obvious need to create an alliance with Germany, but equally the need to move on from the disastrous colonial wars in Indo-China and Algeria. This latter period has always been linked in the French collective memory to American meddling, epitomized by the humiliation of Suez. In *Diplomacy*, Henry Kissinger recalls that Adenauer, visiting Paris on November 6th 1956, said to Foreign Minister, Pineau, 'Europe will be your revenge'. And so it has been. Evolving from Monnet's original plans, the compact Rhenish, Catholic Union outlasted both de Gaulle and Adenauer. Though some of its tenets owed more to the Vatican than to the French Revolution, the French as a nation, nurtured the core Franco-German entente to the extent that it became a veritable creed, fostered and sponsored in the high days of German prosperity by numerous associations. Its tokens were Charlemagne, Strasbourg, de Gaulle and Adenauer, Mitterand and Kohl, its apostles the *énarques* (graduates of the Ecole Nationale d'Administration) who not only represent France at Brussels, but also hold all the key decision-making positions in both government departments and state-run or subsidized industries.

In 1981, Mitterand, aided by Finance Minister Delors, experimented with socialism in one country. The result was disastrous. In 1983, the decision was made to abandon this strategy for complete commitment to Europe. Delors was despatched to Brussels, where during his Presidency of the Commission, he introduced as much neo-Keynesianism as he could. The paradoxical result of all this is that Frenchmen of the Left have come to believe that Europe means a managed economy and the imposition of 'social justice', while those on the Right believe that Europe has saved France from the worst excesses of primitive socialism. Understandably, Euroscepticism has for years been seen either as a heresy, or, since its adoption by Le Pen,

as a breach of good manners. Criticism of the project has been essentially limited to thoughtful economists like Jean-Jacques Rosa, whose book, *L'erreur européenne* evokes a latter-day Leviathan, the TGE (Très grand état) which will inevitably emerge with the euro and fiscal harmonization. He is a prescient critic of 'one fits all' rates and is trying to delay the introduction of the euro in January 2002.

The question of threats to sovereignty has been addressed from time to time by essayists like Paul-Marie Couteaux or Alain Griottesay, but their arguments are stymied on several counts. Brussels and Strasbourg have long been seen as impregnable Frankish fortresses, so that transfers of sovereignty arouse few fears. This is equally true of euro-directives, implemented with lack of both speed and zeal; (just before Nice, Jospin had to rush over a hundred from limbo on to the statute book). Finally, de Gaulle's 'sovereignty is democracy' borne out in the election of the Head of State by universal suffrage, makes the Presidency rather than the weak National Assembly, the legitimate and powerful repository of sovereignty. Unlike any other European country, France has one clear figurehead imbued with massive authority.

But with a wind of change blowing through Europe and waves of indignation regularly beating against the institutions of the Republic, will France seek a system of governance which reflects the new aspirations of civil society?

Gillian Bardinet teaches at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques in Paris.

Sophist's Corner

First, local education authorities and the Learning and Skill Councils need to identify all their aspiring teachers in Years 10 and 11 and ensure that their post-16 education includes rich work-shadowing and short courses designed to consolidate their ambition.

Second, the Office for Standards in Education model of harsh and frequent inspections needs to change to externally moderated self-evaluation with full inspections used sparingly.

Third, one of the many extraordinary own goals of the 1990's was an embargo, which in effect precluded all graduates in subjects outside the national curriculum from even considering teaching as a career. That embargo needs to be lifted at once.

If these were done my first four days in Birmingham 2001 would not be seen as exceptional, but as the natural signs of a nation beginning to recognise teachers as the creators of society's 21st century prosperity.

Tim Brighouse is chief education officer of Birmingham. For more information on 'teaching' and 'learning' go to www.bgfl.org

Times Educational Supplement
12 January 2001 (the same edition contains nearly 300 pages of jobs)

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Education or Instruction?

Jane Wharton

Initiatives, Initiatives, Initiatives, might be a suitable assessment of New Labour's contribution to the Education debate. From the 'domish' quality of the Education Action Zones to the idealism of inclusivity for all children, warehouses have been filled with paperwork.

Nevertheless we still have an increasing problem of truancy from school, both at primary and secondary levels, and high levels of exclusion. Teachers too, are dissatisfied; many are at breaking point and recruitment is worryingly low.

Perhaps David Blunkett would do well to remember the words of Gaius Petronius in AD66 '...We trained hard—but it seemed that every time we were beginning to form up in teams, we would be re-organised. I was to learn later in life that we tend to meet any new situation by reorganising, and a wonderful method it can be for creating the illusion of progress whilst producing confusion, inefficiency and demoralisation —"

My own experience in the field of education goes back twenty five years, in a variety of posts mostly concerned with trying to stem the flow of educational drop-outs. The big difference between the mid seventies and now is not the extent of the problem but the opportunity to talk about it. In the eighties when I worked for the ILEA I found myself in serious trouble for writing a piece for *Contact*, the ILEA newspaper, highlighting the numbers of adolescents out of school at any one time. Any attack on the success of the comprehensive model was experienced by the ILEA hierarchy as tantamount to blasphemy.

Now I'm afraid the cat is well and truly out of the bag. Anyone involved with state education knows that we have

some very serious problems on our hands. Despite the supposed reassurance that standards are going up, that the government is committed to improving literacy and numeracy, over 50% of children leave school with less than 5 good GCSE passes (grades A to C). In addition, there is ever more concern about safety at school. Bullying and even violence are rife in some places, particularly the down-at-heel inner city comprehensives.

So how are the most vulnerable children faring these days? Since Labour came into power a vast amount of rhetoric has been evident. A whole new department — The Social Exclusion Unit — has been opened to address the problems of the disaffected in our society. 'Joined-up government' is the name of the game and a variety of government departments have been encouraged to work together. Nevertheless, full-time educational provision outside the comprehensive school is at an all time low.

Since Labour came into power a vast amount of rhetoric has been evident

Back in 1977 I started a small school for truants in South London. It was funded in the main by the LEA but run by a local charity. It was a time when there was plenty of money and a recognition that the authorities would tolerate a certain amount of experimentation in education. The examination system was still two-tier (CSE's and GCE's) and the school leaving age had only been raised to 16 in 1973.

As you might expect, the job wasn't easy. The children had a myriad of

problems that made attending school a low priority. Although some had hated school, others lived in such a degree of domestic chaos and upheaval, that meant getting out of bed, putting on a uniform, procuring bus fares for school and getting there on time were Herculean tasks.

My task was to turn non-attenders into attenders and to encourage and enable the students to study again, to achieve qualifications and to move on to further education or work. Were we successful? In some ways, No. Our students didn't all achieve 5 GCE's with grades A to C. Some got halfway there. Some even managed to go on to college later on and pursue a variety of courses. A few made it to university and now have degrees. One even has a pilot's licence. But in the main, we did turn truants into attenders who left feeling that they had the possibility of achievement in their lives. Most have a far more positive attitude to their children's education and reflect a commitment to the advantages education can offer. So, how did we go about it?

By getting to know those with whom we were dealing, parents as well as children. A 14 year old who chain-smokes, stays up half the night, eats irregularly and mostly junk food and lives usually with one parent and sometimes with neither is not well prepared for the disciplines of school. We had to create calm and order in a welcoming manner. We had to gain the confidence of both students and parents, to break the cycle of disillusionment with school. (Many parents had little belief in education and were, themselves 'failures' at school). We started by offering a hot drink on arrival, sometimes toast as well, as many pupils had not had any breakfast.

We began as a very small school. I

started on my own with six pupils but after a year was offered another teacher so that I could take on an extra 6 children. The two of us had to cover a broad and balanced curriculum. No easy task but strangely this played to our advantage. It meant that we operated more as a family than an institution. As teachers we had to iron out difficulties in order to work effectively. We had to give up our professional roles as secondary school teachers and go back to the drawing board. No more the adherence to the university model of being a subject specialist, rather the building up of a village school in the city.

It was exciting. The opportunity to learn became synonymous with helping the children grow up. Their achievements were a spur to further success and gradually a sense of hope replaced a premature cynicism and aggressive gloom. Surprisingly, the move to begin formal exam courses came from the students. They wanted to be 'normal' though they feared they were not. They even set about designing a sweatshirt that would be a sort of uniform.

I think that most of all they wanted to belong to something that felt positive. During the late seventies a large number of little schools grew up in London. Some were successful, some not. Most have now closed down. In the Eighties, following The Warnock Report, educators decided that all children should be encouraged to go to comprehensive schools. Special Schools were closed down and resources moved into the mainstream. Teachers were given all sorts of newfangled jobs as peripatetic staff. The idea was that they should run around the mainstream schools troubleshooting classroom problems.

In many ways this structure is still operating today. Whereas the buzz-word of the Eighties was 'integration', in the Nineties it has been 'inclusion'. Children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties are expected to thrive or survive in the mainstream. If they have severe difficulties, identified at an early age, they may get a Statement of Special Educational Need (a legal entitlement to extra help — usually in the form of a part-time helper). Most do not get this formal support. Not surprisingly, the

amount of bureaucracy involved does not sit happily alongside families whose skills and interests do not usually run to spending hours on end in meetings discussing their difficulties with people they hardly know.

Consequently, most children who are failing in the education system are failing through the very networks set up to support them. This is a waste of public time and money. Why is this happening and why are the Labour government no nearer solving these problems than the previous Tory administration?

Fundamentally, I think there is an enormous philosophical vacuum in the debate around state education. We use the word 'education' but rarely analyse what we mean when we do so. Are we talking about the transfer of skills or the

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development of the person? Are schools to be responsible for personal, social and health education as well as teaching Maths and Physics...let alone citizenship and dishing out the morning-after pill? It is no wonder the teachers smell a rat, especially when being told that they will be moving towards a performance-related pay structure.

The best book I have read on education, certainly the most helpful in clarifying this issue is Siegfried Bernfeld's *Sisyphus or The Limits of Education*. Written in 1925, and only little over one hundred pages long, it highlights endemic problems for those involved in trying to ascertain what they are trying to achieve:

Educational philosophers and theorists insist that teachers not merely instruct

but also educate. Unlike teaching, educating is not a profession entrusted to a single group: numerous and various social forces have a share in it. Educational philosophers also fail to provide any criteria that would permit us to judge whether a child has been 'educated', whereas it can easily be determined whether he has learned to read. Their insistence that schools not merely instruct but also educate might at least lead them to recognise that the schools, such as they are, make it impossible for teachers to be educators also.'

If New Labour were serious about turning schools into places where children can develop and fulfil their potential, there would be massive financial implications. Education in the private sector costs at least three to five times as much as the state is offering the public sector. Class sizes are far smaller in the private sector and resources, sports, music etc. are far greater. Yet the government continues to publish legislation offering all things to all children.

Take, for instance, *Excellence for All — Meeting Special Educational Needs*. The gist of the document is that children's individual needs must be met. If they need extra support it should be given, if possible, in the mainstream school. A posse of Learning Support Assistants will be available to give the extra attention that some children require. What this means in practice is that some very disturbed and disturbing children are being left in ordinary classes with the extra help limited to half a day a week. Most vulnerable children do not turn their disaffection off and on to order. Consequently the mainstream teachers as well as the majority of children are under ever increasing strain. It is no wonder that teachers are often off work. Lack of control at work is one of the key indicators of unendurable stress.

The government needs to rethink what it is asking people to do. If schooling is to be an experience — friends, groups, learning to tolerate others as well as struggling to achieve academically, then schools have to find some stability again. Teachers have to get back control of their own institutions, albeit endorsed by parents through governing bodies. The inspectors too, have a part to play.

The little school that I was involved in starting, is still going; but only because it has some robust and committed people sitting on its charity's executive committee. And, of course, because the teachers who run it are strong characters who prefer to run their little school than sit in endless meetings discussing the latest technological wizardry that makes it easier to track truants. Despite the LEA cutting its grant and leaving its staff without professional support, it has grown in size. This is because the work going on makes sense; to the staff, the parents and the children themselves. It offers a model that the government would do well to investigate. Although it is not cheap, the funding comes from

a variety of sources, both private and statutory. It is a model being developed in several other European countries as well as in response to educational problems being identified in America.

The central issue in this country about whether the state really wants to educate the masses or merely to provide instruction is pivotal if a way out of the present morass is to be found. Schools cannot be all things to all people. Because children do not all need the same experiences at the same time surely a variety of different kinds of schools offers a greater chance of providing a satisfying educational environment for all.

Unfortunately the government has

two incompatible languages when it pronounces on the matter of education. The first is the language of instruction or business — targets, league tables, performance indicators etc. The second is the language of educate, or child development — answering the needs of the child etc. Unless the state faces up to what it wants from the education service, teachers will remain ever more disillusioned and children and their families ever more dissatisfied.

Jane Wharton is now an educational consultant, and also works in the NHS as a psychotherapist.

Lewes Priory Trust

A Journey to

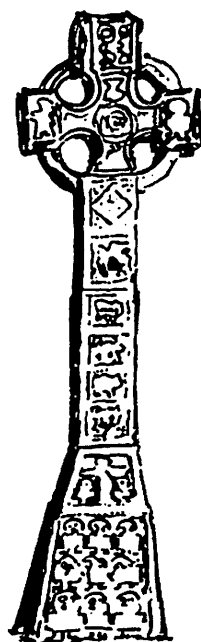
Early Christian Ireland

July 2001

ADVANCE PLANNING INFORMATION

Celtic Ireland kept Christianity alive in Europe during the Dark Ages. A five-day visit to some of Ireland's most spectacular early Celtic Christian sites is planned for next July, to the south-west, the Midlands and Dublin. This will include the Dingle peninsula, for the Gallarus Oratory and the early Christian site at Reasc. Weather permitting, a visit will be arranged to the island of Skellig Michael, a remarkable 6th century monastic site perched 600 feet above the Atlantic waves. Then we continue, via Clonfert, Clonmacnois and Glendalough, to Dublin, where there will be a brief opportunity to see the magnificent metalwork and illuminated manuscripts (such as the Book of Kells and the Tara Brooch) in the National Museum and Trinity College.

The visit is organised by Dr Anthony Freeman FRSA of the Lewes Priory Trust in Sussex, which oversees the earliest Cluniac monastery in Britain. It is intended that the cost will be in the region of £390. If you would like to register an interest please write to Tony Freeman at: "Fairview", Halland Crossroads, Halland, Lewes, East Sussex, BN8 6PW (Tel. 01825 840831).



Conservative Classics — No 2

Hobbes's *Leviathan*

While it is generally agreed that Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*, since its publication in 1651, is a political classic of the English language, what is less clear is whether that classic can be considered as conservative. Learned commentators, including Edmund Burke, Russell Kirk, Ferdinand Tönnies and Robert Nisbet, can be cited on behalf of those who would portray Hobbes as an archetypal leftist thinker. Combining a materialist theory of knowledge with epicurean ethics and an exceedingly atomistic anthropology, Hobbes arrived at a view of the state based on amoral power. Atheism, a conception of man as thinking (or calculating matter), and a reduction of justice to obeying any existing laws are all positions his critics have attributed to Hobbes. *Leviathan* bristles with unkind references to Aristotle, whom Hobbes accuses of misrepresenting human nature and society. Unlike himself, Hobbes suggests, Aristotle and his medieval scholastic followers had unrealistically depicted people as sociable, a quality that Hobbes finds characteristic of animals more than of humans. Aristotle had also thought 'in a well-ordered commonwealth not men should govern, but the laws.' 'What man that has his natural senses,' Hobbes asks rhetorically, 'though he can neither write nor read, does not find himself governed by them he fears, and believes can kill or hurt him, when he obeyeth not?'

This last statement indicates the critical sense of human nature apparent in Hobbes's political writing and raises questions about placing its author in any line of modern progressives. Hobbes never shared the characteristic Enlightenment view that man's nature is basically altruistic or can be reconstructed to become such. It is impossible to read his description of life in the state of nature or of 'the restless desire for power in all men' without thinking of the Christian doctrine of original sin,

indeed of that doctrine in the Calvinist form in which Hobbes had learned it in his youth and during his university years at Oxford's Magdalen Hall. Though not well disposed toward their fractious parliamentary politics, Hobbes did pick up and trick out in the language of the seventeenth-century New Science the Puritan view of human depravity. So natural to the human condition are violence and sedition that Hobbes presents it as a blessing that men can live in peace even where 'sovereignty is acquired by force'. Men should consider their liberty as consisting in 'submission' even to foreign sovereigns, if their lives are being protected from their fellow-subjects.

Note that Hobbes wrote *Leviathan* as a royalist exile in France and as the tutor to the future Charles II. Though the work contains conciliatory passages aimed at Cromwell and his friends, including long tirades against Catholic and High Church rituals, it is hard to read this voluminous text as a celebration of democracy and equality. Humans are shown to be equal only in their capacity for calculation and mischief, and one of the nastiest charges Hobbes brings against Aristotle, depending on a particular Renaissance reading of the *Politics*, is that Aristotle, like Cicero, treated all but popular regimes as tyranny. Hobbes warns against the reading of ancient authors, on the grounds that 'men have gotten a habit, under the false show of liberty, of favoring tumults and of licentious controlling the actions of their sovereign.' Hobbes recommended, however, the history of Thucydides, which he translated, as an object lesson on the perils of democracy. Both the reckless expansion of the Athenian democratic empire and the civil strife during the Peloponnesian War on the island of Corcyra influenced Hobbes's portrayal of violence in *Leviathan*. The work takes its key image from the sea monster mentioned in the Book of Job but also draws heavily and repeatedly from Thucydides's masterpiece about the

Greek world coming apart.

Two final observations might be made about this 'conservative' reading of Hobbes, toward which I strongly incline. The first is one that Michael Oakeshott offers in an expansive commentary attached to an anthology of the philosopher's political writings, *Hobbes on Civil Association* (1975). Stressing Hobbes's minimal expectations about government as an instrument of order and his memory of the English Civil War and the then recently ended European religious wars, Oakeshott sees no reason to ascribe to Hobbes a statolatry that was not his intention. To the extent Hobbes speaks of the sovereign state as a 'mortal deity' and fears the intervention of the Roman Church in English political affairs, he is looking at the problem of how best to avoid civil disorder and its attendant violence against life and property. Unlike later children of the Enlightenment, Hobbes did not aim to achieve a planned society or call on the modern state to improve on human nature.

The second observation is one made by another devotee of and commentator on Hobbes, Carl Schmitt. The German legal theorist, who devoted an entire book in 1938 to its symbolism, presents Hobbes's *magnum opus* as the text of choice for those who believe that 'human nature is dangerous.' Despite the fact that Schmitt in *The Concept of the Political* criticizes Hobbes for 'his extreme individualism,' he also describes him 'as perhaps the greatest systematic political thinker.' And most importantly, from Schmitt's point of view, Hobbes drew on the physical sciences and mathematical methods of his age to support a properly 'pessimistic' but also realistic 'science of politics.' Though by no means a return to the ancients, the political theory developed in *Leviathan* has both Christian and classical roots and conservative realist implications.

Paul Gottfried

Letters

Sir,
I read Peter Coleman's article on the Congress for Cultural Freedom (SR, Winter 2000) with considerable interest. Not for the first time, in retrospect, I wish I had been there, in West Berlin, with the likes of Arthur Koestler, James Burnham, Malcolm Muggeridge and others. Instead of which I was in my native country (Australia) working as deputy Chief Foreign Sub-editor for *The Sydney Morning Herald* and involved in bringing the news about the communist army of North Korea crossing the border into anti-communist South Korea.

It would have been much more interesting to be with the liberal conspirators in distant Germany. Little could I have guessed that, years later, the CCF would play an important part in my own life. Such was my ignorance on returning to London in 1954 that years passed before I knew that *Encounter* (to which I was instantly addicted) was an integral part of the CCF.

After ten years on *The Economist*, I went free-lance and was approached by Tony Hartley of *The Spectator* who wanted to know whether I would be prepared to take over the feature services of the CCF and commercialise them. The first outcome was a two-months tour of Latin America to find out how the Spanish service was doing. Not long after, I did take it over, along with the English and French services.

One further detail is relevant to Peter Coleman's interesting article. At about the time Hartley approached me, I was approached by MI6 and offered a contract. I mentioned the Hartley approach and was taken aback when my interlocutor told that the Congress for Cultural Freedom was financed and ultimately controlled by the American Central Intelligence Agency.

One more anecdote. I joined the Left Book Club in 1937 and the first choice that reached me was Arthur Koestler's *Spanish Testament*. It was not until 1954 that I learned that Koestler had been a Comintern agent at the time and

had written *Spanish Testament* under the direction of the senior KGB officer Willi Muenzenberg. Koestler revealed this fact in his autobiographical book, *The Invisible Writing*.

Brian Crozier
London

Sir,
Paul Rowlandson's review of *The Faithful Tribe* (SR Autumn 2000) draws attention to the decline in the percentage of Protestants in the Republic since 1921, and to Ulster Unionists' anxiety lest 'the same fate should befall them'. But are the two situations similar? Present-day Northern Unionists' fears are likely to concern Republican terrorism, tacitly condoned by acquiescent governments in Westminster and Dublin. Is it seriously suggested that the new Irish Republic, from 1921, carried out such a policy; that they subjected the Southern Irish Protestants to 'cultural cleansing'? The fall in the Southern Protestant population was presumably due to two factors: the practice of contraception, and that mysterious impulse by which a group sometimes sees only a limited future and appears to half-consciously will itself not to reproduce.

Mr Rowlandson refers to Irish Catholicism as 'united, agreed on its theology, hierarchical and collectivist'. He sees Ulster Unionists as expecting to be 'forced into a monocultural Catholic Irish state'. But this ignores the largely successful campaign to de-catholicise the Republic, and remove all Catholic influence from its laws and culture. Southern Ireland is not yet quite 'monocultural', because the campaign has not quite conquered all the rural areas. But so far as the Republic is on the way to having a single culture, it will be the same secularist and hedonistic culture that obtains in the rest of the British Isles and Western Europe.

If Northern Unionists fear that, then they have good reason. But for the

foreseeable future, it will be their condition whether they are governed from London, from Dublin, or more exactly, from Brussels.

David Foster
Brentwood, Essex

Sir,
Sir Alfred Sherman has some telling comments about the somewhat hapless course of Conservatism in our time (SR Winter 2000). Since the current dystopia has resulted from specific legislative acts both of omission and positivism, the obvious cure is to repeal them.

Sir Alfred's deference to Thatcherism obscures the fact that Mrs Thatcher was not a leader as much as a temporary mouthpiece for ideas generated by others at a time when, 'the Conservative party.... was in serious crisis'. Mrs Thatcher managed to benefit from the British Parliamentary system and not any sort of natural female leadership.

In America the balance of power is now upset by the gender gap — 10-20% more women than men vote for socialistic causes and emotivist appearances rather than the substance of constitutional order and freedom. Perhaps as much as ours, your country can handle the competing factions of the 'melting pot' as long as an organic balance is maintained. We now know that the inordinate gender gap makes this impossible and tilts the scales in favour of various self-serving minorities, unions, and other somewhat discordant groups. A Protestant country may have more such trouble than a Catholic country, since Protestants are less inclined to adhere to past folkways as they indulgently reinvent themselves each generation.

So I shall offer the solution Sir Alfred avoids: Repeal laws forbidding 'discrimination as to sex.

W Edward Chynoweth
Sanger, CA, USA

But the Agricultural Revolution and Enclosure changed their self-indulgent rural fantasies and led to the harsh reality recorded in Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village*.

The Industrial Revolution of the early to mid 19th century transformed a rural economy, in which virtually all the population lived, gained their livelihood and derived their recreation from the land, into an increasingly prosperous industrial society. The 1851 census showed that for the first time more people worked in towns than on the land, and the result of this largely uncontrolled change was as catastrophic for the landscape as it was for the lives of the city poor. The destruction of rural England continues today as the high divorce rate makes its own demands for housing, and increasingly the fields surrounding small towns and villages in the South East are defaced by the red brick conformity of new housing estates and the roads which serve them. Our grandchildren may see a south east England which is little more than a string of theme parks set in suburbia.

There are sections in the anthology on 'Industrialisation' and 'Violation of Nature and the Landscape', but this last can provide only seven poems, including John Betjeman's *The Planter's Vision*, John Heath-Stubbs's *The Green Man's Last Will and Testament* and Philip Larkin's *Going, Going*.

And that will be England gone,
The shadows, the meadows, the lanes,
The guildhalls, the carved choirs.
There'll be books; it will linger on
In galleries; but all that remains
For us will be concrete and tyres.

Most things are never meant.
This won't be, most likely: but greeds
And garbage are too thick-strewn
To be swept up now, or invent
Excuses that make them all needs.
I just think it will happen, soon.

It is perhaps surprising that the violation, in particular of the English landscape, the destruction of species including some songbirds and butterflies, doesn't arouse more passionate protest from modern poets. The poetry of landscape remains predominantly the poetry of nostalgia, of joyful response to pastoral beauty, of emotion recollected in tranquillity.

Patriotism, with the English more often felt than expressed, is rooted in the soil. Those who have died for the United Kingdom in every century have died for their own corner, their local habitation, for that last mental picture of a beloved familiar place. In the section 'Pride, National and Local', Kenneth Baker gives us not only John of Gaunt's great speech from *Richard II*, but humbler, more localised longings or, as in Patrick Kavanagh's *Stony Grey Soil*, an expression of a more ambivalent memory. Similarly in this collection many of the

poets recalled an intensely-felt emotion born of one particular scene; the child Thomas Hardy walking the Roman Road with his mother; Edward Thomas's blackbirds singing at Adlestrop; Sylvia Plath blackberrying in Devon; Seamus O'Sullivan recalling the grey rain beating on the bare hills of Donegal. The great vistas may gratify the eye and fortify the spirit but it is more often the familiar moments which evoke the poetic imagination, as in Andrew Young's *In Teesdale*:

No, not tonight,
Not by this fading light,
Not by those high fells where the forces
Fall from the mist like the white tails
of horses.

From that dark slack
Where peat-hags gape too black
I turn to where the lighted farm
Holds out through the open door a
golden arm.

Here are great poems, good poems and others less poetically distinguished as they are less well known. All deserve their place. This anthology fittingly commemorates the landscape which has influenced our history and helped form our national character, its beauty, its grandeur and its small beloved habitations. Kenneth Baker has undertaken his task with loving enthusiasm and readers will return to this anthology with gratitude.

At Least He Wasn't Politically Correct

A D Harvey

The Quarrel of the Age: the Life and Times of William Hazlitt, A C Grayling, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 2000, £25.

Those academics and journalists — in fact they seem mainly to be academics — who seized every opportunity to puff and cry up Soviet Communism

during the heyday of the gulags, and who still occasionally take time off from more topical concerns to sneak in a word of praise for Beria and Brezhnev,

had their counterpart two centuries ago in William Hazlitt. He was a life-long admirer of the French Revolution and of Napoleon. His friend Benjamin Robert

Haydon recorded that when after more than two decades of war news came of the French Emperor's final defeat at Waterloo, 'he seemed perfectly prostrated in mind and body, he walked about unwashed, unshaved, hardly sober by day, and always intoxicated by night, literally without exaggeration, for weeks.' He was relentlessly bitter against those like Southey, Coleridge and Wordsworth who had espoused reform as young men but turned against it when they saw where it was leading. His sense of failure — his own failure and the failure of what he had believed in — seemed to fuel his indignation. He was not a sympathetic character: but A.C. Grayling has written about as sympathetic a study of him as seems possible.

Grayling is an academic philosopher, and is excellent on Hazlitt's philosophical ideas and on the originality of his *Essay on the Principles of Human Action*. He also makes a good job of bringing out the importance of Old Dissent's contribution to the culture of reformism in the 1800's, but he has not always been entirely successful in skating over the minutiae of early nineteenth century history. He seems unaware that prior to 1832 the government always won general elections — why else would the Whigs have been so anxious to reform the electoral system? — and describes the boxer Tom Cribb, a former coal porter from Gloucestershire, as a black man. When he writes of 'the transfer of Norway and Sweden between powers as if they were chattels', he probably means Norway and Finland, Sweden being one of the three powers involved in the swap. And though he says quite a lot about Hazlitt as a critic, he does not say quite enough. Hazlitt's *Lectures on the English Comic Writers*, with its discussion of stage comedy from Shakespeare to Sheridan in relation to changing social attitudes, comes close to being the first social history of modern literature. Hazlitt was also the pioneer in England of the school of evocation and personal reference in criticism. Sometimes his raptures on Italian painting are uncomfortably reminiscent of Bernard Levin on Beethoven, but his was a

major contribution to the tradition that the sensibility of the reader or viewer was a key issue when discussing literature and art. This approach tends nowadays to be regarded as intolerably naive: the literature faculties of most of the universities of the western world prefer to discuss literature and art in terms of an abstract mumbo-jumbo designed to appeal to those who find the sociology of Tony Giddens too intellectually demanding; but the sensibility of the reader may well come back into fashion, if there are any readers left, in a century or so. Hazlitt's notion that Shakespeare's plays may usefully be discussed in terms of the characters of Shakespeare's protagonists, exactly as if the latter were real living people, is also out of favour, having been regarded at least since Wilson Knight's time as misrepresenting the plays' essential poetic quality. It is a useful approach for those rehearsing the plays for the stage or for those teaching Shakespeare to fourteen year-olds. It is something for a critic to influence critical thinking even for a hundred years, perhaps a major success to be viewed negatively as a point of reference 170 years after one's death. In this respect Hazlitt as a critic is much less dated than Cyril Connolly.

This book certainly brings out the interest of Hazlitt and his writings. The fact that the man was wrong-headed, on the wrong side and frequently just plain wrong matters much less after all this time than his gift for putting a sense of life and aliveness down on paper. Grayling compares the viciousness of the personal abuse printed in newspapers and magazines in late Georgian times with the moderation of our own more buttoned-up, libel-conscious era, though it is possible he overlooks how little institutional power people like John Russell — the hack, not the future Whig Prime Minister — and William Gifford had compared to their latter-day counterparts, who naturally prefer behind-the-scenes assassination in appointment committees to risking receipt of a libel writ. An important point about Hazlitt is that unlike the vast majority of late-twentieth-century

apologists for dictatorship and political corruption he was not a salaried institutional insider pretending to be an oppositionist from the safety of a tenured professorship. He lived almost entirely from his writing — had to write in order not to starve — and though in practice he was as well-paid as he would have been if he had written for the Tory establishment, there was nothing time-serving or hypocritical or contradictory about his oppositionism. Though there was a great deal of self-deception and special pleading about him, in the basic framework of his life he was not a fraud or a humbug. When his contemporaries were put on trial for their opinions he did not pretend it was not happening, or concoct excuses for the prosecution, he was the friend of those prosecuted. He did not grow up with his times but then it is possible his times did not really grow up either. If we could be reborn two hundred years from now and could judge our first lifetime by a longer perspective of lived experience and with a fuller knowledge of how what we contributed to would develop, would we be at all proud of the part we had played? Hazlitt I think would have been, because whatever his principles, they were always subordinated to a first principle of striving to be honest to one's beliefs.

*Few are
qualified to
shine in
company; but it
is in most men's
power to be
agreeable*

Jonathan Swift

Specially Impossible

Tom Burkard

What Are Special Needs? An analysis of a new growth industry, John Marks, Centre for Policy Studies, 2000, £7.50.

John Marks introduces his pamphlet on the special needs industry with the words of Lewis Carroll's White Queen: 'Why sometimes I've believed six impossible things before breakfast'. As a veteran of that industry, I can only observe that Marks is fond of understatement.

When Margaret Thatcher signed the 1981 Education Act, she effectively signed a blank cheque for the education establishment. The provision that all children are entitled to an education appropriate to their needs seemed unanswerable: even those of us who don't think that that the state should have an unlimited duty to succour the feckless tend to make an exception in the case of children of the feckless. What Thatcher didn't realise at the time was that the moment the government makes an open-ended commitment to solve a problem, the problem inevitably gets worse.

And so it has proved with the special needs industry. Now, almost one in every five children attending state-maintained primary schools in England and Wales is adjudged to have 'special needs'. In one school, the figure reaches a staggering 79.5%. One pities the 'normal' child in such a place. The conventional view is that high rates of special needs are correlated to social and economic disadvantage. This is true, but correlation is not the same as causation.

At the celebrated Kobi Nazrul primary school in Whitechapel, 90% of the pupils come from Bengali homes where little or no English is spoken. Despite the fact that 63% of them are entitled to free school meals, only 3% were on the special needs register in 1999. All of

their 7 year-olds can, without exception, read. My own tests revealed that Kobi Nazrul's year 4 pupils could spell almost as well as the average year 6 pupil—indeed, they were only 7 months behind the year 7 pupils at a suburban Norwich comprehensive where I taught.

Marks quotes the *Telegraph's* Minette Marin on Kobi Nazrul:

Something stands out a mile here: a negligible rate of SEN registration seems to go hand and hand with a very high rate of reading success. (17 Dec, 1998)

Make no mistake: 'special needs' is overwhelmingly a literacy problem. Marks quotes the conservative estimate of Martin Turner, Head of Psychology at the Dyslexia Institute, that 75% of special needs pupils simply can't read or spell. My own data puts it at closer to 90%. Curiously, the number of pupils on special needs registers seems to be growing at the same time that David Blunkett claims that reading scores on 11+ English SATs are improving at rates which are statistically impossible—according Tony Gardiner, a left-wing maths lecturer at Birmingham.

The success of Kobi Nazrul—and many other schools which teach all of their children to read by ignoring the deeply flawed National Literacy Strategy — is conclusive proof that it is schools which create almost all special needs, bar bona fide medical problems. By contrast, the SEN (Special Educational Needs) Code of Practice is based upon the assumption that reading failure is due to factors intrinsic to the child or his environment. There are no objective criteria whatever for defining 'special needs' — the official definition,

quoted by Marks, could have been written by the White Queen herself:

A child has *Special Educational Needs* if he or she has a learning difficulty which calls for *Special Educational Provision* to be made for him or her.

Although the blank cheque has come due with a vengeance, we have no idea what the total damages are. As if it's not bad enough that successive governments have landed the taxpayer with an enormous bill for creating unprecedented failure, they have failed to make even the most elementary measures for accountability. Marks is a veteran of education quagmire, but even so he is appalled that no one can put even an approximate figure on special needs expenditure. He guesses that it could be as high as £7.1 billion pounds per annum, or about a third of all education spending. He doesn't know, and (as he states) no one knows. What's worse, no one seems to care.

The Tories are inhibited from making an issue of this because it all started on their watch. And in fact, Labour has responded by forming yet another consultation group to revise the SEN Code of Practice. This group is composed almost exclusively of functionaries who feed at the special needs trough, and it would be idle to expect any changes which do not make the problem even worse.

Yet here we have a problem which cries out to heaven: those of us who have had a child begin school, only to find his bright infant optimism dashed into misery by the teasing and taunts of his peers, will never forget and never forgive. And there are an awful lot of us—20% by last count. I was lucky

enough to find the redoubtable Mona McNee, the tireless campaigner for phonics when I discovered that my son couldn't read a word after a year and a half of full-time education.

His problems disappeared within months of being taught the English spelling code through intensive phonics, and subsequently I started a charity to help other parents whose teachers are hopelessly misled by the official wisdom on reading pedagogy. I found that the parents of this 20% of poor and non-readers start off by assuming that once their child's 'special needs' are

recognised, they will get the extra help they need.

They assume that a statement of special needs carries funds which will meet those needs. In fact, the extra money that schools get goes into a general fund that can be spent for lesbian outreach or carpeting the headmaster's office without anyone being the wiser. In the school where I taught, only 7% of the monies allocated to special needs actually went on teaching literacy skills (ie, my salary). I had five minutes per week for each pupil on the register.

There are no easy answers to the

problem. The last thing we need is yet another government initiative to 'do something'. Since it is obvious that intervention only makes matters worse, the only option is to set schools free, and allow parents to choose schools other than those provided by the state. In broad outline, that is what Danny Finklestein, Hague's chief policy advisor, proposes. The devil is in the detail.

While no sentient politico can ignore the enormous powers of our educational elite, there are a lot of votes to be won by tackling the scandal unveiled by John Marks.

The Dead Hand of Moscow

Alun Chalfont

La France au ordres d'un cadavre, Maurice Druon, Editions de Fallois/Editions du Rocher, 2000, 85F.

One of the central characteristics of the Cold War was the extent to which the Soviet Union was influenced by the principles of Sun Tzu, the Chinese strategist of the fourth century BC, who believed that the highest art of war consisted of conquering countries or cities, not by engaging in pitched battles, but by weakening the national or communal spirit and undermining morale to the extent that there was no longer the will to defend. It was then possible to shake the tree and gather the fallen fruit.

Chinese military leaders have always followed closely the precepts set out in Sun Tzu's *Ping Fa* (The Art of War) and in turn, the Soviet secret services appeared to adopt these doctrines as a basic text in their attempts to destabilise the western democracies. Any subversive manoeuvre was put to good use — the dissemination of false news, the exploitation of internal rivalries, the infiltration of agents of influence, the paralysis of industry by the organisation of strikes. This is the point of departure of Maurice Druon's penetrating study of what he sees as the demoralisation of

French society.

The 'cadavre' of Druon's title is the Soviet Union and his thesis is simple but startling — that the corpse of the USSR, after a decade of decomposition, continues to act like a slow, paralysing poison in the system of French society:

Les cheveux et les ongles persèverent à pousser sur les morts.

The French people, he claims, are crushed beneath a pyramid of decrees and ordinances, most of them inspired by the culture of class warfare. France is no longer a free country, but more and more subject to the grinding pressures of authoritarianism, as the Russians were for seventy years.

Druon proceeds to justify this somewhat bleak and alarming proposition in a tract of remarkable power. Those familiar with the impressive corpus of his historical and political writing over more than half a century, will not be surprised that it is written in language 'as clear as a pane of glass', but with a sharp polemical urgency as though the edges of the glass were broken into shards of anger and disenchantment.

The analysis begins with Lenin's

formulation of the twenty-one conditions for membership of the Comintern, the international party of world-wide revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. One of its aims was to create, alongside the legal machinery of the bourgeois state, clandestine organisations capable at the critical moment of fulfilling their revolutionary destiny. This became the gospel of the French Communist Party, whose acceptance of the role of France as the principal target of Soviet foreign policy was underlined at the 7th Congress of the Comintern in Moscow in 1935, when Maurice Thorez entered the conference hall immediately after Stalin and was seated at his right hand.

The election of 1936 in France saw the advance of the Popular Front in which the Communist Party, which had never before held more than ten seats, now entered Parliament with seventy-two deputies. For Maurice Druon, the political face of France was changed irrevocably when the French people belatedly discovered that the Popular Front had been invented solely to serve the interests of Soviet foreign policy.

One of the most significant consequences of this was the fear which the Front inspired in the French bourgeoisie. The spectre of proletarian revolution led many of them to regard the Hitler régime in Germany as a potential rampart against Communism. This led to what Druon describes as the vain and shameful surrender at Munich.

Quand ce sont les faibles qui
applaudissent la paix, la défaite n'est
pas loin.

From these sombre beginnings, Druon pursues his theme through the Second World War beginning with the volte-face of the French Communist party following the Soviet-German non-aggression pact of 1939, to the France of today. Taking as his maxims Tocqueville's famous aphorism:

Les Français veulent l'égalité; et quand
il ne la trouvent pas dans la liberté, ils
la cherchent dans l'esclavage

and Herbert Agar's 'People are so supreme that they can vote themselves into slavery', Druon notes, not without a certain *schadenfreude*, that the French communists, accustomed to serve the interests of Moscow and now left without instructions after the collapse of the Soviet Empire, continued to conform, unimaginatively, to the orders that were given to them in a world which had disappeared. One of the manifestations of this was the debasement of the French educational system during the Fourth and Fifth Republics. Druon characterises this as an example of political strategy in action.

In a passage which again invokes the spirit of Sun Tzu, he declares that to control education is one of the surest ways of achieving power. In a coup d'état or a revolution, the tree is struck down by the blows of an axe; but the tree with a hollow trunk and weakened roots will fall one day under its own weight. To bring this about, it is necessary to 'unlearn' (*désapprendre*) the traditional values of one society and to replace them with the principles of another — to throw into the dustbin of history the values, customs and reference points of aristocratic or bourgeois society. It is necessary to 'unlearn' correct language and to replace it with popular argot. Elegance is abandoned

in favour of the usage of the gutter. As for Latin and Greek, those symbols of an outdated and bourgeois culture, everything is done to replace their study with courses in Corsican, Breton and Basque. In this way, young people are indoctrinated in an educational environment which Druon describes as 'intellectual anarchy'.

As a result of all this, France is at the mercy of a system, erected at the time of the Liberation and in the course of the Cold War, which was intended to weaken and destabilise the country and eventually to bring it into line with the Soviet model. This has now become so much a part of French custom and habit that the citizens of France are no longer aware of it.

In the course of his analysis, Druon draws contrasts between the French experience and that of other European countries, including Britain, where he claims Thatcherism demonstrated the virtues of principles and policies radically opposed to Marxist theory. Maurice Druon, committed Anglophile, may not have appreciated fully the extent to which this country has, by a different route, reached a crisis of identity and self-belief no less alarming than that which he has perceived in France. While there may be relatively few relics of the fellow-travelling enthusiasms of the Cold War, there is instead a pervasive lowering of standards in public behaviour and political discourse; a passion for collectivism, 'modernisation' and egalitarianism; a foreign policy based less upon the pursuit of national interest than upon some vaguely ethical concept of universal human rights; and a contempt for tradition which has begun to erode the national sense of history — a process which was one of the worst manifestations of life in countries under totalitarian communism. As Druon remarks in his final chapter, anyone who questions the received wisdom of the modernisers is met with the familiar mantra:

"Temps nouveaux, temps nouveaux"
nous chante-t-on sur toutes les notes
de la gamme, "Il faut nous adapter".

In France, Druon's latest essay has been hailed as that which, before now, no-one has dared to say. Coming from the pen of one who has held high office

in his country, from one of the 'immortals', until recently Permanent Secretary of the Académie Française, this is a message to which, as Arthur Miller wrote in another context, attention must be paid, especially by those obsessed by the Napoleonic dream of a united Europe. The relentless process of integration reflected in such projects as the single currency and the European Security and Defence Initiative, is likely to end in a political organisation in which France and Germany are predominant. The current popular image of this condominium (as a French jockey on a German horse) begs the interesting question of whether it is the horse or the rider which decides where to go and at what speed. If Maurice Druon's analysis is valid, the jockey might not turn out to be entirely in charge.

While this may be a jaundiced view of France, Maurice Druon believes that the situation might have been even more depressing. His conclusion is that the only thing which has saved France from the worst consequences of its semi-alignment with Soviet-style Marxism is what he describes as the French miracle, which leads him to ask, rhetorically, how could he, in the evening of his life, lose faith in France?

Tant qu'il me restera souffle je
m'obstinerai à la servir, pour ce qu'elle
peut continuer d'offrir au genre
humain.

But he brings his philippic to a close with this uncompromising warning — that those who follow him should not count too long upon the miracle.

*Why should we
subsidize
intellectual
curiosity?*

Ronald Reagan

Strange Company

A D Harvey

Dumbing Down: culture, politics and the mass media, edited by Ivo Mosley, Imprint Academic, 2000, £12.95.

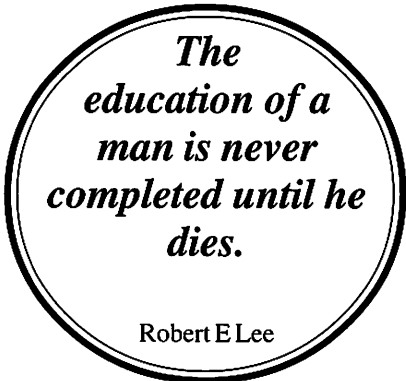
The same commercial alchemy that has changed Christmas into Xmas also changed *Living Marxism* into *LM*, which served as a kind of thinking man's *New Statesman* until closed down by a libel action last Spring. Now Claire Fox, *LM*'s publisher and Mark Ryan, *LM*'s arts editor, have joined up with Tam Dalyell and various descendants of Sir Oswald Mosley to produce a collection of essays denouncing 'the destruction of community, responsibility, morality, art, religion and the natural world'.

It's a bit of a hodge-podge. There are essays by Michael Oakeshott and Michael Polanyi, who are dead, a piece by C.D. Darlington first published in 1972, and a recent interview with Ravi Shankar that is more interesting than obviously relevant to the volume's supposed theme. Some of the new essays are rather good. Ivo Mosley in 'Dumbing Down Democracy' warns that 'the push for more state power is the chief perversion to which democracy is vulnerable....the dumbing down of democracy to a simple formula of "Cast your vote and we'll take care of you", is a process dangerous to civilisation itself. Dominic Hobson in 'Government as Business or Let's Play Shops!' points out that 'New Labour thinks it can avoid difficult choices about the role and limits of the state by making government less like government and more like business. But government is different from business... Unlike a company, the primary role of the state is political and judicial, not economic or commercial.' Mark Ryan in 'Turning on the Audience', a discussion of current thinking about the social role of museums and art galleries, argues that 'much of the new

generation of audience-centred administrators are zealous officiates of the new culture, eagerly devising new schemes to interfere with the public... They are insulting the intelligence of the visitor by assuming that the only way that he can appreciate what is available is by the museum meddling and interfering in how he approaches the collection.' On the whole though, this collection is more like a bumper issue of a monthly magazine than a definitive statement about the ills of our time.

Apart from the Dominic Hobson piece just quoted there is little in these essays about the Blair government as distinct from the general phenomenon of dumbing down, but this volume does prompt one to reflect on how far the present government is involved in dumbing down and how little anyone not involved with the present government is doing to resist the process. At the same time *Dumbing Down*, like *LM* before it disappeared, like *Spiked*, *LM*'s reincarnation on the internet, serves to remind one of how wide a constituency there is of people who don't believe in Tony and never will. Although it is usually a mistake to pretend that the enemies of one's enemy are one's friends, they may be useful allies. I don't believe Claire Fox and her chums are waiting for the rest of us to drop our guard for a moment so that they can leap out of their sheepskins, seize the commanding heights of the economy, nationalize Asda and reopen the Dome as a labour camp for anyone thinking of voting for Michael Portillo; but *LM*'s programme, set forth in its penultimate issue — '*LM* stands for progress.... *LM* upholds a future-oriented world view

that unambiguously champions the extension of human knowledge and control in every sphere' — is not *The Salisbury Review*'s programme. It comes close to being the exact opposite of what some of us believe. This does not mean that we have no common ground, if only in disliking the same things for similar reasons; it doesn't mean that there's no basis for some interchange of ideas. This book reminds us that the very nature of Blairism is that out there, up and down the country, there are millions of individuals who are being left unsatisfied, in their material needs, in their legitimate social claims, above all in their notion of decency as individuals and identity as Englishmen and women, Britons, citizens of the United Kingdom. The opposition to Blairism needs a stronger message than 'Come unto us all ye who are cheesed off and we will give you a small tax-cut and a token punch-up in Brussels'. *Dumbing Down* seeks to come at this constituency of the dissatisfied from one direction, the *Salisbury Review* from another. How are we to get something moving that will rally this constituency not just at its edges but all the way across the board?



*The
education of a
man is never
completed until he
dies.*

Robert E Lee

Diary Of A Good German

Christopher Arkell

Diary of a man in Despair, Friedrich Reck-Malleczewen, tr Paul Rubens, with an introduction by Norman Stone, Duck Editions, 2000, £12.99.

This is a book to buy, read and re-read. It is the journal, written up in 39 irregularly spaced entries between May 1936 and October 1944, of a Prussian Protestant aristocrat living on his country estate not far from Munich.

The entries, superbly translated by Paul Rubens in 1970, grip on many levels. There is the fascination of reading Reck-Malleczewen's thoughts on the significant days of the period. On the day of Stauffenberg's attempted assassination of Hitler, 20 July 1944, he is visited by Maria Olczewska, then a notable opera diva. The entire entry runs: 'We talked about Furtwängler — a subject I hardly want to touch on. There is, evidently, a way of conducting in the 'blonde' manner. And the favouring of this shade, whether in fact or as a concept, is something which in itself compromises the man who does it. I can't help it.' The jotting down of these remarks on the day of the most celebrated of the unsuccessful attacks on Hitler is a reminder that the internal opposition to Hitler's regime required an immense discipline of mind, as well as daring physical courage. These few phrases also capture the essence of Reck-Malleczewen's own response. They show his contempt for the regime's vulgar barbarity; his condemnation of the weakness and self-abasement of those who compromised with it in order to 'get on'; and his sardonic perceptiveness which he knew well enough would get him into trouble.

In this he was right. He was executed in February 1945 at the age of 61, following his second arrest. The first is described with laconic elegance in the last two entries of this book. After years of

personal resistance to 'mass-man', and having spent more than a decade devising various 'terrible revenges' to be heaped upon the Nazis for what they had done to his beloved German land, Reck-Malleczewen writes (to himself in prison, remember, for I doubt by that time he expected his journals ever to be made public): 'I cannot enjoy the thought of what lies in store for them, and this fact makes me thoughtful. Strange: I have progressed. Ten years ago I worked out plans for a terrible revenge upon them. And today? Today, I know that no such thing as 'revenge' exists, and that those passages in the Bible which emphasise this fact, reflect an ancient, honourable wisdom ... A man need not be a Christian to know all this. But one must be a Christian to give form to this, and then heroically to live and die.' Reck-Malleczewen's profound Christian adherence provides one of the two constant threads connecting the entries. He writes of seeing a Hitler Youth adolescent ripping a crucifix off a school-room wall and hurling it into the gutter with the words, 'Lie there, you dirty Jew!' He fears the extinction of Christianity altogether as the war progresses. 'It tempered somewhat the brutality of the Germanic delight in war, but was completely unable to change the feeling, and if the day comes when that moderating symbol, the Cross, loses its power, the senseless, berserk rage of which Nordic poets write and sing so much will break loose again and then Thor will spring forth, raising his mighty hammer, and smash into nothingness the Gothic cathedrals.' [11 March 1942]

The other constant thread is Reck-Malleczewen's soul-deep hatred for modern 'mass-man' and its surroundings. He hates its deceptions, its ersatz dishonesties, 'the junk called unfinished goods'. He excoriates National Socialism as a society entirely comprised of crooks and thieves. He abhors 'the ideal of the classless society as preached by Hitler ... postulated on the limbless organism ... a god-forsaken troglodytism.' [May 1937]

The result of such a society is eerily reminiscent of Blair's Britain in 2001. By October 1942, 'mass-man' had become so degenerate that it believed everything that it was told: 'The latest is a story concocted by Goebbels that our so-called 'Leader' appeared in some town without previously announcing he was coming. Nevertheless, there the whole town was, lined up awaiting him, as though some kind of radiance emanating from him had made itself felt in advance! If an official of Imperial or Weimar Germany had dared put out such a story, the shout of laughter that would have gone up would have sufficed to send him flying out of office ... but this is broadcast by the networks, and believed, and digested, without a soul's daring so much as smile.' Reck-Malleczewen was an eye-witness to the decline and degradation of an entire nation. His Diary is a sobering memento mori to us all, teaching us that what happened in Germany seventy-odd years ago, can happen again wherever people stupefy and abase themselves before 'a middle-class antichrist'. [9 September 1937]

Change or Decay?

Helen Szamuely

Empire: The Russian Empire and its Rivals, Dominic Lieven, John Murray, 2000, £27.50.

Years ago, when the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge still had their entrance examinations, I, with many others, had to do a general history paper for Cambridge entrance. Among other things we were asked to give an example of a modern empire and compare it to one in the past. Empires, by this time were in short supply, though there were still a few British possessions dotted around the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and Portugal was still hanging on to some African colonies. Rather cockily I suspected that it was an analysis of the Portuguese sea-borne empire that was required of me and decided to take a different route. I produced the only example of a then successful empire: the Soviet one and compared it to the Napoleonic. It did not get me into Girton – perhaps I should have gone for the Portuguese example – but made me think a little more seriously about what constituted an empire and what its foundations could be: power, national identity, territorial possession and, above all in those cases, ideology, or, rather ideology that almost imperceptibly turned into national power.

Presumably questions like that are no longer asked in examination papers. The study of history has become more fragmented and wide comparisons are not encouraged. But what goes around comes around. Dominic Lieven, one of the leading historians of Russia, has produced a splendidly wide-ranging study of empires. Although he concentrates on the Habsburg, Ottoman, British, Russian and Soviet empires and their aftermath, the book in its entirety tries to cover the whole complex subject. It is an amazing and truly admirable undertaking. Compared to it Crane

Brinton's no longer fashionable study of four revolutions is child's play. And, of course, another thing has changed since that far-off examination paper: now that the Soviet Union has disintegrated nobody has any trouble about describing it and its East European acolytes as an empire. As Professor Lieven says, it is polite to wait until an empire is dead before calling it that.

There are many problems with comparing such very disparate entities. So many events and developments need to be covered that much of the book is a breathless gallop through centuries of history. Indeed, most of the time one wonders whether there really are any parallels between the four (or five) empires and the successor states to each. In fact, the answer often is 'well, no, not really'. Nor is it entirely helpful to look at past examples of empires collapsing or disintegrating in order to draw comforting or useful lessons for the post-Soviet period. The situation was usually very different, the relations between the empires and the post-imperial states almost endlessly varied and, most importantly, we are still living through the post imperial stage with all the empires that came to an end in a more or less orderly fashion during the twentieth century.

Professor Lieven is an interesting and original historian of Russia. Unfortunately and not unexpectedly he is much more conventional in his interpretation – insofar as he has time for interpretation beside the need to convey a huge number of facts – of other countries. In particular he is disappointing on the post-imperial stage. In the early parts of the book he makes many fascinating and robustly unfashionable points about empires in general, the conflict

between Islam and Christianity and about possible advantages of empires in troublesome parts of the world. But the last chapters on the post-imperial developments and conclusions to be drawn are surprisingly bland and almost platitudinous. It is a pity that he does not consider a little more closely the Napoleonic empire, the most modern attempt to create a pan-European state. He might have a clearer idea of what the European Union is about. As it is, he appears to see it as a benevolent and inevitable development of European history, that is much desired and welcomed everywhere. Oh yes, and it is, apparently devoted to modern ideas of free economy. One can enumerate examples where twentieth century developments are described with almost journalistic simplicity: post-imperial Britain continued to sink economically and politically until it was saved by the EEC; the Balkans are seen as relicts of the Ottoman Empire, which they are, but not of the Soviet one, which they also are; the difficulties of assessing the impact of successive imperial rules are mentioned but not analyzed.

The interest in Empire lies in Professor Lieven's chapters on the Russian and Soviet empires, his analysis of how one grew out of the other and of what happened after 1991. Of all the imperial powers Russia is peculiar in that it became a nation simultaneously with becoming an empire. As its empire has shrunk and its internal politics collapsed into turmoil, its people have found it more difficult than any of their predecessors cast into a post-imperial role to adjust and accept developments. Economic difficulties have not helped. The Austrians, as Professor Lieven points out, had similar identity problems

until the catastrophe of *anschluss* and rapid economic development after the war reconciled them to their new status. To this one might add the fact that new generations for whom the Habsburg Empire is little more than chapters in history books have grown up and have viewed the world very differently. Time may play the same healing role in Russia.

It is not fair to expect an historian to make any predictions about the future. In fact, Professor Lieven attempts to do so and these are the weakest part of the book. To assume that empire will be an unpopular concept in the twenty-first century seems to me to be unduly presumptuous. To assume, furthermore,

that the developments of the last fifty years will simply carry on (to be fair the assumption is made largely about Europe and the United States) is unwise. The collapse of the Soviet Union, of the Soviet Empire, whether it is permanent or temporary is likely to have very serious repercussions. It is not just, as Professor Lieven points out, that it has left only one empire, which is not really an empire in any meaningful sense of the word, the United States. It has initiated the collapse of the entire post-1945 world structure. We have already seen its disintegration in the Balkans. Africa is becoming more and more unstable and it is only a matter of time before the

post-colonial boundaries are readjusted probably with yet more bloodshed. And pace Professor Lieven's assumption, the European empire is not really likely to outlive its usefulness. It played its part in the reconstruction of Europe (though not as great a part as its proponents imply) and now it may well disintegrate into what Europeans have always wanted: an alliance of separate nations. The collapse of the Roman Empire was a catastrophe; the disintegration of the great Eurasian empires in 1918 was the beginning of a long agony; the collapse of the EU will be little more than a damp squib.

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In Short

Europe — A Concise Encyclopaedia of the European Union, Rodney Leach, Profile Books, £20, 2000

The first (1998) edition of Leach's *Encyclopaedia of the European Union* came as a welcome relief from the turgid material churned out by official EU sources. Distinctly more readable and more independent of Community orthodoxy than its two main rivals, the pedestrian Penguin Companion and the uneven Dinan Encyclopaedia, its lucid entries, enlivened with trenchant observation, shone light into many dark corners, dispelling the fog that so often hangs over EU affairs.

This third edition marks a further improvement. Longer than its predecessor, but no less economical of words, it brings us up to date with the adoption of the euro, the prospects for Eastward enlargement and developments in defence, as well as with the new faces that now occupy the Community stage. Compelling articles on such topics as sovereignty and human rights betray the author's younger years as a logician, while the exposition of EMU could only have been written by one who is as much at home in high finance as in modern European history.

The advantage of an encyclopaedia compiled by a single author is consistency of style and content. The disadvantage is that no individual would normally be expected to have a grasp of so many different subjects. Leach, however, seems armed at nearly all points and the wry charm of his prose makes browsing an enjoyable experience. The tone of the book is set by a four page introductory review of the EU's ideological evolution. An advocate of a formal European constitutional settlement, Leach understands that each member state brings to the table its own historical legacy. Sympathetic to British and Nordic enthusiasm for the role of national democracies, he is equally able to get under the skin of the hegemonic Franco-German alliance and

the desire of the Mediterranean countries to bury their authoritarian pasts in a European federation run through political bartering mediated by relatively benign elites.

The encyclopaedia will come as a disappointment to blinkered eurosceptics hoping for a partisan reference work. But it will come as a heavier blow to that particular breed of europhiles that thrives on half truths, wishful thinking or downright obfuscation. For the rest of us, it is a book that will simultaneously entertain us and answer all our questions.

Sophie Scruton

The Dictionary of Dangerous Words, compiled by Digby Anderson. The Social Affairs Unit, 2000.

Fifty years ago Orwell prophesied that attacks on language would be a vital part of the ammunition needed to establish totalitarianism. This glossary of words that have changed their meaning to serve the purposes of the PC lobby is a useful little tool in the defence of the Western culture which they are trying to destroy. Amusingly and lucidly written, it is small enough to carry around and assist in engaging the enemy. Building the new utopia involves imposing changes in the meanings of words by appeals to social justice. Years ago, some people were poor; now they are socially excluded or under-privileged. Illegal immigrants become asylum seekers or refugees, normal people become non-disabled, the mentally handicapped have severe or profound learning difficulties. A wheelchair user has impaired mobility. Anthony O'Hear observes that access used to mean a way into a building. Now everyone must have access into buildings and many other things like education; when they do not it becomes an injustice which should be put right. Theodore Dalrymple finds that brave people who conceal their feelings become emotionally disturbed,

for which the only cure is intensive counselling. Xenophobe used to mean someone who was frightened of foreigners; Richard Body notes that it is now used by Euro-enthusiasts as an answer to *any* argument about the European Union. Xenophobia still means a dislike of foreigners, but it does not matter if the foreigner is American. English intellectuals, unlike the French, hate their own country as well.

Merrie Cave

The Horseman's Manual, R.S. Surtees, RS Surtees Society, Manor Farm House, Nunney, Frome, Somerset, BA11 4NJ, 2000, £12.50.

The Horseman's Manual was the first book by R S Surtees and the only one to which he ever put his name. Although its subject-matter — the buying and selling of horses — is even narrower than the title suggests, the book should nonetheless appeal to anyone interested as much in the byways as the highways of our English past. Surtees lifts the curtain on a corner of post-Regency England seldom visited by social historians.

Moreover, in vividly evoking the local life of his times, along with the entirely serious purpose of instructing the reader, Surtees appears to be rehearsing not only the finer points of equine trading but also some of the eccentric character parts which later populate the pages of his novels. Here is Surtees already exercising the talent for comic sketch-writing which was soon to find fuller expression in his fictional descriptions of English fox-hunting society:

It appeared that a Quaker had a horse for sale, which, like many others, was 'the best in England', and meeting with a customer who wanted a gig-horse, he of course recommended his own. The purchaser inquired if he was quiet in harness; to which the Quaker replied, 'Friend, it would delight thine eyes to see him draw', whereupon he purchased him, and

immediately put him into a gig, which he broke all to pieces. The purchaser remonstrated with the Quaker and told him that he had warranted the horse to go 'quiet in harness'; upon which the Quaker replied, 'No, friend, I did not: I merely said that it would delight thine eyes to see him draw; and faith so it would delight mine too, for he would never bear a pair of shafts in his life'.

The manual remains an invaluable source of reference alike for first-time buyers and the unfortunates among us who have learned too late that the admonition 'caveat emptor' is never more pertinent than when buying a horse. How often does that immaculately plaited and 'trotted-up' animal displayed for viewing turn out to be anything but docile and blemish-free. However there is so much horse-sense packed into this slender volume that attentive readers may perhaps lessen their chances of riding for a fall.

The book is full of concise and accurate descriptions of the many unsoundnesses to which horses are heir, including wind sucking, (de)nerveing, buck eyes, and roaring, the last 'heard' in a court case of 1817, when Lord Ellenborough ruled 'that any infirmity which renders a horse less fit for present service, or any malady which renders him less serviceable for a permanency, are unsoundness'.

With an erudite forward by David Edelsten, this book mixes enlightenment and entertainment in equal measure.

Kristina Crowther

Interesting Times. Uganda Diaries 1955-1986, Peter Allen, The Book Guild, 2000, £16.95

Since the 1890's Uganda has been an arena for power struggles and strategies to control a corridor across Africa. The political reasons change but the economic ones remain. Disparate carpet-baggers have meddled in the region. They range from France, Britain, Ethiopia, Israel and South Africa to Tanzania. Peaceful and prosperous under a benign and enlightened colonial rule, potentially rich Uganda started its

descent in to chaos and anarchy under Obote, egged on in his Marxist dreams by Nyerere. It has never recovered and now faces the decimation of its population by Aids, malaria and rampant T B. Allen, who rose from the lowest rank in the colonial police service to become Uganda's Chief Justice, manages to make the thirty years of Uganda's volatile, bloody and criminal politics under Milton Obote and Idi Amin dull. His chronicle of disconnected events reads like a tropical version of Mrs. Dale's diary. Aspirant writers about Africa, however, should keep the book for reference into a particular type of colonial mind; the gaps are more interesting than the filled spaces. His diaries do not tell us why he chose to stay in Uganda under Amin and continued to stay when Obote was restored to power by the area hypocrite Julius Nyerere. Allen does not comment on the consequences of his brave decision to allow the registration of voters for general elections (1980) which started Uganda on the long haul back to democracy and the rule of law under Museveni; neither does he mention 'Pat' Russel, a Ugandan High Court Judge, who was in his chambers in the High Court when the Chief Justice Benedicto Kiwanura was arrested and murdered. Russel and the other judges closed the court and left the country. He does not mention many other judicial inquiries over which Russel presided, like Milton Obote's arrest and detention of five of his Cabinet Ministers. A proper record of Uganda's recent politics still remains to be written.

Geoffrey Connell

Overspending in the NHS. An analysis by five doctors, Social Affairs Unit, 2000.

It is an accepted axiom that an ever expanding bureaucracy in the Health Service creams off funds that could be spent on patient care. This study reveals that vast savings could be made in medical procedures and treatments. The cost of ante-natal care for low risk pregnancies could be reduced by 50%

without sacrificing safety, providing the care is properly managed. Mothers and babies are far healthier these days than when the structure of ante-natal care was first set up, while ante-natal classes and advice on smoking and baby care work best for those who need them least. Dr. O'Dowd calculates that a 33% reduction would provide half a million hours of doctor and midwife time. Dr. James Lefanu draws attention to the current tendency to over-investigate and over-test. One example he gives could cost £5,000, the alternative—a dose of aspirin—nearly nothing. We need to rethink our attitude to the care of the elderly while making sure that conscientious doctors are not accused of negligence: are operations like hip-replacements necessary or kind when the patient only has a month or two to live? The cost of health promotion, which has helped to make us into a nation of hypochondriacs, should be used to make the old and infirm more comfortable. Theodore Dalrymple shows how two essentially non-medical problems, drug addiction and the prevention of suicide, cannot respond to medical solutions. Nurses and doctors have never reduced the suicide rate and only a drug addict himself can stop his addiction. Unfortunately the industries set up to alleviate addiction believe in victimhood, not free will.

Dr Myles Harris's analysis of general practice is the most controversial section of this study but undoubtedly correct. The GP is overtrained for the work he does, being a liaison between specialists and patients. He is also overpaid (not for his qualifications), for the work could be done by a nurse at half the price. Harris predicts the disappearance of the GP within 15 years and the replacement of the service by nurse practitioners and clinical assistants. 'The myth of free medical care has robbed both patients and GP's of their sovereignty'. Nothing will improve until the link is re-established between payment and service as it is for nearly everything else.

Merrie Cave

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