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SOCIALISM IN THE SIXTIES

EDUCATION IN A CLASS SOCIETY

The Queen and her Horses Reign

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TWO SHILLINGS

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EDUCATION IN A CLASS SOCIETY

The Queen and Her Horses Reign

I. A Stagnant, Divided Society

IF you ride down Whitehall, unless I dream, I believe that as you look up from your bus you will see on the wall of the Foreign Office a series of sculpted bas reliefs which show (in series) Europe, Asia, America, Africa, Australasia and Education. This strange succession symbolises, I think, the place of education in contemporary discussion; it is the odd man out. It comes, of course, a long way after foreign policy and defence as a topic of world importance: next to the issues of peace and war, the eleven-plus does not loom large. Yet in the long run our position in the world depends directly upon what the education system does; its place on the Foreign Office wall, though odd, is not so odd. But education is the odd man out domestically as well as in foreign affairs. There is a yearning that all good men and true might come to some common agreement about the future of education. The 1944 Act (we are told) is the best creation of the coalition Government; the essence of modern Conservatism and solid Labour thinking.

It is my purpose to challenge this point of view and to suggest to you why I think education should take a major part in the current controversies about the future of this country, and why it will play an increasingly crucial role in the development of our society and our economy.

When we talk about schools in this country we talk autobiographically, and we talk about class. I speak as one who is a don at Oxford and has been a don at Cambridge; I speak, in other words, as a working-class boy who has "made good" (if that might be the right phrase) largely through the education system. I sympathise, nevertheless, with those who feel to some degree excluded from our present day society; fairly often I agree with them.

Why should they feel thus? I think the answer is quite clear. This society is extremely stratified; power quite obviously lies with the possessors of vast wealth; with the hereditary and social advantages which are theirs, they rule us; and the extent to which other people have been able to break into this charmed circle is extremely limited. I will not bore you with statistical tables of quotations from percentages, but I am satisfied, having looked at the evidence, that all things considered, there are singularly few sources of power in this country which to any great degree are yet available to those outside the category of those born to inherited wealth or established position. Ten Etonians are in the Cabinet. This is part joke (one thinks of Lord Dilhorne—the Widmerpool model), part tragedy (one thinks of Macmillan), but it is intolerable.

It is true, of course, that there are places in Parliament, in the Civil Service, and even in business, which are open to those born outside these ranks. Between a third and a half of the places at the older universities are already open to us. But I insist that the evidence is clear that these are exceptions. I have been struck in recent months by the degree to which inherited wealth still dominates the country. I have been astonished to go and see the houses in London which are advertised at £10,000 and £12,000 and to find them being bought by ex-debutantes and their chinless wonders of husbands (just down from Oxford—earning under £1,000 a year in stockbrokers' offices) and I have discovered that most of these houses are being bought outright through the family trusts (and therefore, by the taxpayer) which furnish comfort—tax exempt comfort—and provide for the privileged in our society.

But if this were all it would not be, I think, an overwhelming criticism of our society. It might be that change is occurring, that the situation is disappearing. Claus Moser's study of town life showed that in 1951 a fifth of the people in Gateshead were overcrowded, and only one in fifty in Coulsdon; but (you could say) this is the inheritance of the past; we are eroding these differences. Are you sure? The rate of economic growth in this society is so low that the prospects of the erosion of this situation or even of the general amelioration of the lot of the average person are remote. We have an average rate of growth of between one and two per cent a year, and simple arithmetic will tell you that any prospect of really significant material improvement in our standard of living is remote indeed, let alone any significant shift in its quality.

The Queen and Her Horses Reign*

Now I ask myself, why is our rate of growth so low? As an economist, the technical reasons seem to me to be fairly obvious. The rate of investment until recent years has been low, an acceptable incomes policy is impossible under this government, the pound is over-valued, the internal affairs of this country are dependent upon an irrational attempt to maintain the international role of sterling. But it is more than this. Fundamentally, one suspects, there is a basic lack of desire for economic growth; an impotence which arises because the positions of power are largely in the hands of those who are comfortably off—those who have inherited money, and see no great reason for change. More fundamentally, perhaps, the rest of us, most of us, are convinced by the nature of the society that we live in, and above all by the nature of the upbringing that we have been given, that to seek change is to seek to destroy; that to rub along nicely with things as they are is the best of things in this vale of tears which is what modern England seems to be. Between us and our betters a great gulf is fixed; the Queen and her horses reign, and to seek to bridge the gulf is to seek to overthrow the Queen, common decency, and fate itself. Perhaps this situation is made more dismal by the atmosphere of lamentation and constant recrimination which prevails; our time and energy is being spent in continual lament for our lot. I travel frequently abroad and I think the rulers of this country are unhappily out of touch with what is happening elsewhere in the arts, in the sciences, and in the common decencies of organised life. They have become unaware in their smug complacency (and we in our introspective depression) of the degree to which this country has fallen behind.

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* Author's Note.—I intend no disrespect to the Royal Family by this. They must be as bored by the flow of continual adulation as the rest of us are nauseated by its emptiness. And do they wonder, too, when their unwelcome lickspittles will turn and rend them as they rent the Duke of Windsor?

Now, there are many explanations for this: the war itself; the fact that we were preserved from invasion means that the traumatic experience of defeat passed us largely by. We are confirmed in our fundamental beliefs that because things are English, they are right; although Dunkirk was a defeat it nevertheless saved us; because the country was inefficient we were providentially guarded (by nonconformist and low-Church Gods) in the decency of our remote Island Monarchy.

This, it seems to me, will not do. Times are changing, and changing fast, and we need to begin to think about catching up with the foreigners —a thought as deeply repugnant to xenophobic social democrats as it is to those who rest comfortable in their country houses on the basis of their virtually untaxed family trusts. In short, I think we have rarely been in worse case; but if there is hope, it comes from a new generation and a new atmosphere.

2. Education as a Priority

I WILL try to explain why I think that education should take first place in our domestic policy. First, our economy (in comparison with other economies) is short of skilled man-power; and the supply of skill depends directly upon the education system. Furthermore, such prognostications as may be made of the implications of a higher rate of economic growth, suggest that improvement depends in large part upon the recruitment of skilled workers and increasingly requires a greater use of skills than we have previously been accustomed to.

Second, the quality and decency of life itself depends upon there being an adequate school and university system available to anybody who wishes to make use of it. I need not enlarge on this point.

Third, this country's economic and social progress is handicapped by the existence of rigid class divisions—divisions which are an affront to our own sense of decency.

Now what does this mean?

It means first that we must try to raise the average standard of education to that of the best; to close—or at least to narrow the gap—between the secondary modern schools and Eton. We must try to give every child what we now only give to the grammar school child and to the public school child—to the clever few and the middle class—an education which is worthy of the name. This would involve increasing expenditure on the primary and secondary schools attended by average children by a factor of between 5 and 10—just to put it in money terms.

How do I relate this point of view to what a Labour Government must do as soon as its comes into office? What will happen on that blissful day when some bright young man, some solid female, some grizzled elder worn with service in the T.U.C., faces the dry and cynical[1]—and impeccably upper-class—people at the top of the Ministry of Education? (It is only recently that a non-public-school boy has risen above the level of Principal in the Ministry of Education, I understand). Let us not flinch from the prospect; let us assume we get a good Labour Minister. What will he do? I think you can look at two areas of public policy. You can look first at industry and society and say what their needs are and translate them into educational terms. Secondly, you can look at education itself and say what its needs are; what is needed just to keep the education service going.

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[1] This is unfair in its over-emphasis. What they are interested in, too often, is administration, not education. The result is a dislike of "enthusiasm".

Industrial and Social Needs

Now to take the first thing first—industrial and social needs. At the moment, compared with other countries and by any absolute standard, we are short of skilled people at all levels. We are short of nurses, architects, teachers, skilled clerical workers, social workers, engineers and scientists. If the rate of growth of the economy were to rise from its present lamentable level, acute shortages of these and other categories of skill would reveal themselves. Furthermore, there are many industries where the existing skilled workers are not skilled enough; where they have been given an inappropriate, traditional form of training which makes them unadaptable, lacking in resilience and unprepared either to accept or promote rapid technological change. Now this leads immediately, I think, to policy conclusions. It leads to the conclusion that our system of giving industrial and commercial skills must be changed—if indeed it is appropriate to refer to a "system" at all when we talk about the way we give people skills in this country. We have to provide an adequate apprenticeship system closely linked with the education system. Furthermore, we have to make sure that the higher education system expands in order to provide the number of highly qualified people which the advancing economy requires. The shortages of skilled people could be acutely handicapping to a Labour Government. For example, shortages of skilled social workers will undoubtedly limit the growth of the probation service and of the mental health service. The shortage of nurses will handicap the National Health Service; the shortage of teachers will, itself, limit the growth of education.

Now, I am usually criticised by Godly people when I suggest that the provision of skills is the first and most important task of the education service, but if we think it is quite clear that practically everything that we hope to do in improving the quality of life here, and in the poorer parts of the world, depends upon the country being richer, then it is increasingly clear that one of the reasons why our rate of growth is low is that people are insufficiently skilled. So I must emphasise that the basic problem to which we have to turn the attention of the whole country is the problem of generating sufficient economic growth. This is, of course, the chief reason for wishing to change the present state of things in education, and especially in apprenticeship.

But what then of the quality of life? What can we say about the education service?

Downward Bound

I think there are a number of defects in education to which we can draw people's attention. The most striking is the stratification of our society which adversely affects the quality of life. First, because it frustrates people who otherwise would rise to positions which they would fill more adequately than the people holding them at present. Second, because it just divides people from each other in unnecessary and unpleasant ways. Third, because the people who hold the governing power in our society are people who are culturally, in many respects, inferior. Fourth, because an education service based on rejection itself inhibits human growth.

Therefore, one of the major tasks that we must set ourselves is to reduce the degree of segregation at present taking place in our schools. There are a number of ways in which this must be done. One is to bring the "Public" schools into the public sector. Another is to try and reverse the present appalling trend towards single sex schools. The persistence of girls' schools is one of the major reasons for the low status of women in our society. Yet a third way to reduce segregation would be to bridge the division between the grammar schools and the other secondary schools. Thus far, I am sure, most people would agree with me: we would see a pattern emerging in which the schools at secondary level, although widely diverse in size and in their special emphasis, would be largely non-selective, largely co-educational. They would lead on to a system of industrial training for those who leave school at 16 or 17, with the provision for such people of recreational and cultural facilities no less adequate than those provided for the grammar and public school children and the university students. This should in itself lead to far greater relaxation and happiness in our schools and to a far greater degree of cultural and social integration than we have at present.

Of course, in a more relaxed and egalitarian set up a number of imaginative and amusing things can be done. In a country belonging to the Common Market is there any reason why whole age groups of children shouldn't be sent to France for six months at a time, while whole groups of French children are brought here? This, I am sure, is the best way of learning French and, of course, an incomparable way of understanding a foreign culture. Is there any reason why travel should not be subsidised for young people generally in the way that it is now for those lucky enough to get travel awards from the universities? Should not art galleries and art schools be as widely available as they are at Dartington or Bryanston?

These and other schemes, I am sure, could help to redress the present appalling balance in sheer access to good and jolly things which is at present so alarmingly tipped against the working class—and would also tend to counterbalance people's enthusiasm for the Boy Scoutism of the Duke of Edinburgh's award. Why not get an award, for example, for going to see modern Italian painting at the Venice Biennnale rather than for walking up marvellous Snowdon in bare feet or whatever it is you have to do to gain a Gold Medal at present? The Gordonstoun heresy is as awful in its way as public school orthodoxy. Let us rescue Prince Andrew and throw to him the key to the Tate Gallery, assuming the pictures haven't been pinched by then.

Now all this implies vigorous and imaginative changes in the way in which the schools are organised; it means a shift towards comprehensive schools; it means a real passion on the part of the authorities to give young workers the amenities and decencies of cultivated middle-class life.

Hoggart in Curzon Street

I have tried to spell out the inevitable changes in some detail in a number of recent books and articles. I don't want to deal with them now because I want to turn your attention directly to the central question which we all of us have to consider—and which will face a Labour Minister the moment he passes through the air-raid shelter which is the way in to that hideous building in Curzon Street that houses—one almost says, entombs —the Ministry of Education. He will put down our manifesto on his desk. "That," he will say in a sturdy yeoman accent, "That, Secretary, is our policy. Your job is to carry it out, so that our boys and girls at last have access to their birthrights: I remember," he will go on, a finger in his Albert watchchain, "I remember Professor Tawney saying to me when I were in his class at Stoke. . . ." At which point, the Secretary will say: "Minister, these things are Good—or some might feel them to be so. But how on earth is this to be done?" For two facts, surely, dominate our present situation. The first is the acute shortage of teachers. The second is the enormous expense of educational reform. Now, obviously the expense will not matter if we can't get the teachers; there won't be anything to spend the money on. The expense only matters if we can get the teachers. How then can we find the teachers in the next few years to give an opportunity to our children to have an adequate education?

Now there are two lots of people to blame for the shortage—only it is too late now to start blaming the people in the Registrar General's office who are responsible for the miscalculations about child population. All competent demographers have long mistrusted these calculations and the Ministry of Education itself, not hitherto notorious for its statistical excellence, has been forced to require its own calculations to be made.[2] We are also the direct inheritors of the appalling decision of the U.G.C. in 1952 to use the next five years as a period of consolidation, a period during which they enthusiastically cited Cardinal Newman's idea of a University and the comforts of academic communities as an excuse for doing nothing, while the country was crying out for the creation of an adequate higher education system. The people who sat on the U.G.C. in those years carry a great load on their consciences. But even if they were stripped of their titles and honours in an Admiral Byng-like episode, we cannot, alas, undo the harm they have done. We have to start with the present shortage.

The Supply of Teachers

The long-run solution to the supply of teachers is quite clear. This is a drastic, radical expansion of higher education. There is no reason why this cannot be taken in hand immediately by means of a crash programme. phasing into a long-term period of expansion leading to at least six to seven hundred thousand students in our universities and colleges by 1980.

But in the short run we are faced with an acute crisis, which can only be overcome by the rapid return of married women to the schools and the rapid training of a number of people with other qualifications who could do temporary duties as teachers. In addition all the devices and techniques of modern technology will have to be used in order to make large classes more suitable mechanisms for modern teaching methods than they have been in the past. I emphasise that this is only a temporary expedient, but it is a temporary expedient which could yield large dividends in the long run, because technological research applied to the teaching of large classes could yield remarkable results, not only in the improvement of learning, but in the happiness of teachers and taught.

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[2] The Ministry's Statistical Branch is now good, though not yet up to Scandinavian or U.S. standards.

The third policy which I think we shall have to consider seriously is to raise the school entry age from 5 to 6½ next year. If this were accompanied by a firm commitment to raise the school-leaving age to 16½ in 1967 no child would have less than 10 years' schooling, and at the same time the size of infant classes generally could be drastically reduced, thus considerably improving the quality of the schools.[3]

I have put these three suggestions forward very quickly and very succintly because they represent the sort of policies which may have to be adopted in the short run in some form or other by a progressive Minister of Education. Having scared you by my brief and brutal presentation, I will spell them out a little more carefully, if I may, because they present us with certain policy characteristics which will be of general interest to those who are not immediately concerned with education.

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[3] I assume that the extension of nursery education for the children of working mothers (and other urgent cases) would take place; this would require teachers, but there would be a net saving.

3. The short run and the long run

ONE thing that we must immediately note is that in the short run there will be an abundance of urgent problems which will have to be coped with. They must be coped with in such a way that the short-term solutions do not interfere with the long-term solutions. I will take as an example one of the consequences of the shortage of teachers in the present and of the remedies which we shall have to adopt to cope with it. Whatever we do for the next five to seven years, the schools in the public sector will be seriously overcrowded. In order to overcome the difficulties inherent in this overcrowding there will have to be experiment and change. Inevitably some of the experiments will be great successes, some will be failures. I have suggested elsewhere what these experiments are likely to be. But whether they succeed or fail, one thing is certain: a large and growing proportion of our population will buy their way out of this crisis. The private schools will bid away teachers and resources from the maintained schools. If we seriously believe that the urgent task of the present is to build up the maintained sector, somehow or other we shall have to prevent this rapid expansion of the private sector because by its expansion it will slow up the growth of the maintained schools.[4]

In saying this, we lay ourselves open to many objections, some legitimate and some not. The major objection will be that we are interfering with people's freedom in its most fundamental aspect; their right to have their children educated as they want. To this we have a legitimate response, that their right is only at the expense of the children of the great mass of the people of the country. Their exercise of their "right" uses teachers that we need in our own schools. Some public schools have 12 or more mathematics and science masters with good degrees; many maintained grammar schools have one; most secondary modern schools have none. But, to any one individual, any one parent, I must admit such a statement sounds a little hollow. We shall be driven therefore by our short-term problems to find a policy which leads to the integration of the public and the private sector. Now this is one of our long-term aims, and we must be careful that our short-term policies make it possible for us to do it without too much heart searching, without too much conflict of interest, without too much "fundamental" debate—or apparently "fundamental" debate—designed to obscure the very simple point that with limited resources an expensive education for the rich means a bad education for the poor.

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[4] See Appendix.

I will take another example of the interaction of short-term and long-term policies. Because of the lamentable decisions of the eleven years of policies of "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof", we have an appalling shortage of university places. Just in order to accommodate the children coming out of the sixth forms, we shall have to adopt expedients like double-banking, prefabricated huts, incentives to existing university teachers to teach longer hours. We must be very careful indeed that this policy of rapid expansion of existing institutions, of the up-grading of existing technical colleges and teacher-training colleges into universities, does not interfere with our long-term plans for the expansion and the unification of higher education. We, in this Society, are now committed to 70 or 80 universities, many of them fairly big ones, throughout the country, catering for the bulk of those people over the age of 18 who are qualified to continue in full-time education. The arguments for rapid long-term expansion are familiar. So are the arguments for a unified higher education system. In our view the perpetuation of teacher training colleges and of technical colleges in their present form would be a perpetuation of a quite unnecessary and a very harmful division of higher education.

Yet we have to face the fact that, as things are at present organised, in the short run it is far easier and far cheaper (and probably more efficient) to expand the technical colleges and the teacher training colleges as they are than it is to expand the universities. And we have also to recognise that in attempting to expand the universities faster even than they have hitherto themselves asked that they should expand, we shall probably stir up opposition (opposition no less from the civic universities than from the ancient universities) which could be very serious and could handicap the long-term programme. The objection to teaching longer hours in prefabricated buildings will come on legitimate and illegitimate grounds—but whatever the reasons, the attack will be powerful.

So the Minister of Education will have a great deal of complex subtle political manoeuvring to do if his short-term expedients are not to jeopardise the long-term chances of our programme.

A Heart-rending Choice

Or let us take another serious problem—this is the question of whether you should raise the school-leaving age or whether you should try and concentrate all your resources on providing adequate nursery schools. I am sure myself that in the short run the raising of the school-leaving age has the highest possible priority in our society. Only thus, I think, in the long run can the present evils of the social division be eradicated. But in the short run the consequences to young children who might otherwise have had a fairly decent nursery or infant education will be bad. And what possible guarantee can anybody give that within the foreseeable future the shortage of teachers will have eased in such a way as to allow the expansion of nursery education? I put it as bluntly as this because I want to make it quite clear that, in my view. unless we take emergency steps to add to the number of teachers as rapidly as possible, we shall continue to be faced with choices of this kind—choices which are not only heart-rending (heart-rending because of the human beings involved, heart-rending because they could easily have been averted by a little forethought) but also full of political dynamite because they could, in a very real sense, wreck the long-term development of the education services. The decisions that are taken could make people disillusioned and angry. Instead of being angry at the necessity for choice they will be angry at the choice that is made. And although those whom they should be angry with grace the House of Lords (there are no fewer than four ex-Ministers of Education in the House of Lords at the moment),[5] the people they will be angry with will be those who are forced to take the decisions. We saw that last time.

I think that this general problem of how to phase the short run emergency measures into the long run programme is one which is going to be of importance to every single member of the Government. And consequently I think it behoves us to make all our long-term plans as flexible as possible, and to make quite sure that they are based upon certain simple elementary principles which can be embodied in the short-term expedients. And then we have to make the short-term policies exciting and bold. The moment we take office the 100 days must begin. But let us not forget how hard the choices will be—or their long-term consequences.

I wonder, for example, how far we should be driven to make a choice between the needs of the teaching profession for professional improvement —for longer and longer courses for intending teachers, or compulsory training for the graduates—and the needs of the children to be taught by somebody who has some kind of training? Will we not be faced with a similar problem in the case of social workers and nurses? Even perhaps with doctors? Is not the growing professionalism of our society making it more difficult every year for certain elementary social needs to be met, even though when the needs are met they are perhaps met by more adequately trained people than in the past? It is common knowledge that at the present moment the training of teachers gives a great deal of satisfaction and pleasure to the trainers of teachers, but that the teachers themselves (and particularly the graduates) regard their training as in part a waste of time.

Team Teaching

I am convinced myself that a great deal could be done in the reorganisation of the methods of teaching in our schools to make use of people of good average educational background who can perform some, but not all, professional duties. This requires new kinds of training. Obviously many married women fall into this category, and I am also convinced that a large number of students could be used in the schools to very good effect—and remember we expect to have more students at university than there are teachers in the schools. What this requires, of course, is constant flexibility in the organisation of our classes. It is a very striking fact that at the present moment a quarter of the teachers in America are involved in some sort of experiment with team-teaching. That quarter may be a fairly small proportion but it represents in absolute numbers as many teachers as we have in our maintained schools. It is only by using teachers in teams, I think, that we shall be able to make use of people of perfectly good ability but lacking experience, or lacking confidence, who could make a considerable contribution to the schools.

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[5] Lord Soulbury (formerly Ramsbottom), Lady Horsbrugh, Viscount Hailsham (formerly Hogg) and Lord Eccles.

What I am saying is this: a good, progressive Minister looking at this problem of the shortage of teachers can use it, I think, to experiment with social and educational organisation, to bring out the strength of individual people, so that there is a substantial jump forward in what is actually done in the schools. Instead of using the shortage of teachers as an excuse for not raising the school-leaving age, instead of lamenting the fact that the shortage of teachers prevents desirable things from being done, the shortage could be used creatively. There is no doubt, for example, that television can be used far more effectively in education than it has been up till now. There is no doubt that the teaching of modern languages in England today is a public scandal, and that the use of tape recorders, of films, of educational journeys and so on could rapidly improve the level of attainment. My argument is that the shortage of teachers forces the schools to experiment—and that the experiments may yield results which will be surprising in their effectiveness.

The same goes for a number of other fields. I have in mind, for example, the re-designing of houses or the re-organisation of the Health Service. In both these fields, present methods of provision are expensive and inefficient and can be improved. Be that as it may, it is abundantly true of education.

4. More - and cheaper - education ?

NOW what I have just said has a considerable lesson for the finance of the education service. I cannot imagine that the education service can cope with the rising tide of children and the rising tide of expectations without an expansion of 6 per cent a year at least. It would be unwise to expect that the national income, even under a Labour Government, would rise by more than 4 per cent a year. Simple arithmetic leads immediately to the conclusion that the result must be a rapid increase in expenditure on education; an increase which will exceed the rising yield of taxes. I have said before that I suspect this is going to prove to be generally true of a large range of public services under the Labour Government, and it therefore follows that there is a problem of financing the public services which will become an increasingly serious one. It is quite true that in the long run the logic of compound interest will solve a large number of these problems. It is quite true that by 1980 we shall be able to afford a lavish education service, a lavish health service, a lavish road system. We know this is so if only because other countries have done it and are doing it. But in the short run when we are trying to make up the appalling leeway that we have to make up, the problems will be hard and difficult. We have a number of choices before us. I will take three: one is concerned with the future of Local Government. It is going to be increasingly true that the Central Government will have to find the resources for the expansion of education, not only because the local rates are an obsolete and inefficient tax, but because people increasingly expect national standards in education. By local diversity we now mean diversity of organisation, we do not mean diversity in the standards of provision, and it is only by differing standards that you get different rates of expenditure per head. So there is little justification for local finance on any substantial scale.

Therefore, quite early on there will have to be some sort of reversion from the present Block Grant to a higher rate of percentage grant for education. How far it will be possible to make this into a one hundred per cent grant I am not sure. How far will it be possible to take certain services entirely out of local Government finance—say all further education? Or certain parts of education expenditure, say teachers' salaries? But that something like this will be done there can be little doubt. (The only exception that I would put to this would be a fundamental re-casting of Local Government on a regional basis which gave the regional authorities an adequate basis of taxation. But this would be an immense and complicated piece of legislation which could not come into operation until some years after the immediate crisis in the finance of education has been dealt with).

Another major problem which we shall face in financing the education service is the finance of higher education. The rate of expansion which we are looking forward to (and which is essential, not only to the future of the country, but to the future of the education service itself) is a high one. The unit costs of higher education in Great Britain are certainly among the highest in the world. Now, therefore, the whole question of the finance of higher education needs to be looked at because the rapid expansion of a high cost service means that it will become a major item in Government finance. The sources of finance from private industry and from local authorities will, I am quite certain, dwindle as a proportion of the whole. We have to ask ourselves here, I think, how far we are prepared to make higher education a hundred per cent Government financed service; how far we expect contributions from industry; how far we expect parents and students themselves to make contributions to their university education. There are legitimate grounds for expecting industry to contribute to higher education. The universities not only provide industry with the fruits of their research, but they provide industry with their most highly skilled workers. And we have to remember, too, that people with higher education, by that very fact become entitled to much higher incomes throughout life than they would otherwise have received. There is a considerable case (by no means an overwhelming case, but there is a considerable case) for expecting them to contribute to the cost of this education.

The Canning of Peas and the Carting of Books

Anyway, whatever their merits these are certainly arguments we shall hear a great deal more of. But if I may take the specific case of student grants and student labour, it will lead me into a third point about the finance of the education service which I think is important. Many of us agreed, wholeheartedly, with Professor Brinley Thomas's Minority Report to the Anderson Committee on Student Grants, in which he brilliantly argued the case for a Means Test on students. At first sight it seems illiberal to support means tests, but when you have regard to the social origins and the financial backgrounds of the bulk of students in higher education, it becomes quite clear that to abolish the Means Test is to redistribute income in favour of the well-to-do and I, for one, find that difficult to stomach. Now the more we throw open higher education to the people at large (and that, after all, will be a major effect of returning a Labour Government to office), the higher will become the cost of student grants. If you have 600,000 students in 1980, each getting a grant of £500 a year, that is £300 million a year of government money going in student grants. Now, it is true that by then the country will be much richer, but even so, the cost of student grants will be a significant element in Government finance. I wonder whether we are not going in the wrong direction in expecting students to live on State grants, and in frowning on their doing work during term-time—and even during the vacation. I am not at all sure that in view of the steady increases in the cost of domestic labour which the universities experience, their growing difficulties in staffing libraries and finding junior research assistants and laboratory technicians, there isn't a great deal to be said for making more use of student labour in an efficient and organised way than has ever been done before. I cannot see the logic of our hiring people to carry books about in libraries at £12 to £14 a week, while the students are all canning peas at £12 or £14 a week.

In the long run we all shop at Marks and Spencers

This seems to be a particular case of the general point that we must try all that we can to reduce the unit cost of education if we are to make it available to all classes of society equally. This is the thing which we all of us believe in, which we all of us want to see done, and yet so many of the reforms that we advocate imply raising the unit cost of education to new heights. It costs between five and ten times as much to educate a boy at a prep. school, at Eton and King's as it does to produce somebody from a secondary modern school, and it therefore seems a democratic argument that we must raise expenditure on the poorer boy. But on reflection, surely we are saying that the policy of raising the worst to the best can only be fulfilled after decades and decades of raising Government expenditure. In the short run we cannot hope to do much along these lines. That is depressing.

Then optimism breaks through. The significant changes which have raised the standard of living of ordinary people in this country have been accomplished quite largely by reducing the cost of the services which they are able to make use of. Rich and poor alike, we are told, shop at Marks and Spencers, because St. Michael is better than the Boutiques. What we have to do is to try to discover how to produce a much better education by using the whole resources of our technological discoveries in such a way that it can be provided lavishly and generously for everybody—a St. Michael's education to replace the boutiques. If this is not so, if I am wrong, if we cannot improve the output of education—then it does seem to me that we have a tough battle on our hands. Because equality will then only come through getting rid of the lavish parts of the education system. And harmful though Eton and King's may be, such a course is fraught with political and educational danger. But unless we end the divisions in education there is no hope.

APPENDIX: PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The integration of the public schools with the rest of the education system raises serious problems. The crucial issue is what to do with the hundred or so leading independent schools which are members of the Headmasters' Conference. If they were thrown open to a much wider social range than they are at present, the existence of the other independent schools would be less serious.

The following proposal is taken from a letter I wrote to Mr. Anthony Crosland, M.P., which he reproduced in *Encounter* in his essay on education—an essay which has since been reprinted, without the letter, in his distinguished volume, *The Conservative Enemy*.

"The public schools are often exceptionally good as schools.

Their bad characteristics—the emphasis on leadership and 'character,' and the snobbery—spring directly from their socially selective entry. An intellectually selective entry would be nearly as disastrous, because it would harm the grammar schools, be purely 'meritocratic,' and impossible to select. So the problem is to keep them going while changing the entry.

Fortunately they are public bodies in more than name, nine of them having been reorganised by public authority in the nineteenth century; so Parliament has a special right to intervene. Our argument starts from the proposition that existing schools must be kept going, whatever we as individuals may think of them, so long as they are recognised as efficient by Her Majesty's Inspectors. It would not be necessary to deal with all private schools which, including preparatory and days schools, educate half-a-million children. The leading 100 or 150 public schools (the Headmasters' Conference ones) are those which most of us would like to see 'democratised.' And within the system there are many teachers (including headmasters) who believe in their work, but object strongly to the social basis of their schools. Why not try to help them, rather than antagonise them? We should certainly try for an agreed scheme first; and if most of the major schools came in, this might be sufficient. Only if a majority declined would the Government have to consider compulsion.

All these 'top' schools, specified by statute, would be put under an Educational Trust consisting of independent and impartial persons. The Trust would be charged with maintaining, so far as possible, the existing character of the schools—whether religious as at Downside, pedagogic as at Dartington, or occupational as at the Royal Commercial Travellers' School. But the schools would be required to take only boys and girls of at least 15 (in order to make the problem of educating children from non-preparatory schools easier), and to take their entrants from a pool composed of a completely representative sample, socially and intellectually, of the whole population aged 15. Within this limit the schools would be free to choose their own recruits, although they would have to explain to the Trust any serious deviation from their representative character.

The pool would be chosen by asking every secondary school (private and maintained) to nominate, in strict proportion to the number of its pupils aged 15, several pupils for a 'pool' of those who wished to go on to the Educational Trust schools. For example, if there are 800,000 pupils in the age-group and 20,000 places in the Educational Trust schools, each school (grammar, comprehensive, secondary-modern, technical and private) would get one place in the pool for each 40 pupils in the age-group. Each Educational Trust school would be required to draw all (or most) of its pupils from this pool, having regard to its special characteristics. Thus, Downside, for example, would still recruit Roman Catholics; but its entrants would be drawn from all Roman Catholic schools and not a few expensive preparatory schools.

Tuition fees would be abolished, but the boarding element of charges would be subject to a means test. The cost to public funds would be of the order of £15 million.

There would be two main snags. First, the choice of the children to go into the ' pool ' might be invidious. I doubt whether this is likely to be so. If a secondary modern school has to choose two boys, it will ask parents for nominations and draw up a list of its own. There will be discussion and argument; certainly jealousy and annoyance in the grammar schools; but I doubt whether a great many parents will really want to choose these schools on other than educational grounds when the social cachet they hold has gone. If they are chosen on educational grounds, then we should simply build more of them.

Secondly, it will be argued, each school will choose its ' best ' boys and girls; the most middle-class child in each school will be nominated. This is obviously possible. But everyone who knows about the social class distribution of school populations knows that there are hundreds of non-grammar schools with no child who could remotely be called middle-class. And once the social cachet is gone, it is extremely unlikely that schools will be anxious to push their ' best ' pupils away from them. Scalp-collecting (' I got 6 Winchesters and 12 Royal Commercial Travellers this spring ') would be prevented by the quota system.

At the same time, it is urgently necessary to make entry to direct-grant schools wholly non-fee-paying. This will further reduce the ' social cachet ' element in education. It would also be necessary to apply the same teacher-rationing scheme now prevailing in the maintained sector to the independent schools. If we added to this a tightening up of the various public subsidies (through tax remission and payment of fees) now given to independent schools, the public school problem would effectively disappear, while the good schools would survive to do a worthwhile job.

The prep schools, for example, would no longer be able to ensure entry to the ' top ' schools, because their quota would be the same as that of every other school—and if they had no pupils of 15 they would not have one. Only parents who positively believed in sending boys of 7 or 8 away from home would continue to do so. It would be interesting to see what would happen to the schools in that case.

As I see it, there are two contradictory principles of selection. One is that the race is to the swiftest—the Grand National principle—with all its disastrous consequences in enforcing narrow curricula, intense competitiveness at an early age, and a close correlation between merit, social origin, and prestige education. The other is the principle of food rationing. These places are scarce and there should be a roughly equal chance of going to them. Is this not the better English tradition?

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