

A **Militant** Teacher Pamphlet

# A Socialist Education Programme

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# A SOCIALIST EDUCATION PROGRAMME

**E**ducation is in the firing line. The Tories are determined to turn back the clock and reintroduce a selective education system in which the majority of working class children are taught a restricted and tightly controlled curriculum in underfunded schools. Even Eric Bolton, the Chief Inspector of schools for most of the 1980's, was recently moved to condemn the direction of education policy under John Patten, particularly "the influence of right-wing think tanks on the Government's education thinking (which) appears stronger under John Major than it was under Mrs Thatcher."

With Patten at the helm, the sixth Education Secretary in thirteen years, it is clear that the Tories neither need nor intend to fund a decent education for all. Patten and Blatch represent the most reactionary wing of the lunatic right let loose on education. However, the combined strength of teachers, education workers, parents and students can stop the Tories. In this pamphlet we examine the Tory record and explain Militant's education programme. We intend that it be used as a campaigning document in the battles that lie ahead in the defence of state education.

## Tory Aims since 1979

**S**ince the 1979 Tory election victory we have witnessed a continued and ever-widening assault on the state education system. In education, as elsewhere, the old post-war consensus has been broken. In every sphere there has been a ruthless pursuit of policies designed to bolster the economic and political power of the ruling class; the maximising of profits for big business, the transference of wealth to the rich, the stifling of dissent. In this context there have been three principal features of Tory education policy since 1979.

Firstly, deep cuts in public spending on education. As with housing and social services, such spending, the social wage of the working class, is there to be cut - and preferably redeemed in tax handouts to the well-off.

Secondly, the pursuit of privatisation in as many forms as possible. On the one hand has been the fostering of the private sector itself; on the other, the introduction of market ideas within the much larger state sector. The privatisation of the inspectorate (in spite of near unanimous opposition) is the latest example of the privatising trend.

A third, related feature of Tory education policy has been to centralise control, whatever the rhetoric about “parental power”, with democratically elected local education authorities the most obvious target.



## Underfunding

**T**he Tories use highly selective statistics to give the impression that schools have never had it so good. They hide the fact that only a minority of favoured schools have done well. In fact, as the figures show there has been an actual decline in education spending since 1980.

- An OECD survey in 1991 compared spending in Britain with nineteen other countries. Britain came out worst: real spending per pupil had fallen by an average of 1.8% per year between 1980 and 1988.
- Education spending as a proportion of GDP has fallen from 5.5% to 4.8% since 1979. This is the lowest proportion of all the developed countries.
- The Department for Education (DFE) estimate that in 1989 there was a £3 billion backlog of repairs in schools. Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) estimated that a quarter of children

were educated in buildings whose condition has adversely affected their schooling. The position has worsened since then.

- Class sizes are increasing. A quarter of primary children (over 900,000) are taught in classes over 30. Government figures show a significant increase in classes over 40 since 1988; at present, at least 9000 primary school pupils in England are in classes of more than 41. The ratio of pupils to teachers in British primary education is worse than 20 of the 24 OECD countries.
- The National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations estimated that £55 million of extra cash for schools was earned by fundraising in 1991. It's needed to pay for essentials, even building maintenance. The BBC have reported that there are now some 2000 schools applying for money raised by its Children in Need appeal.

Meanwhile schools are bracing themselves for another round of cuts. Government plans leaked to *The Guardian* revealed plans to cut spending from (in real terms) £323 million in 1988/9 to only £264 million by 1995. Schools will be encouraged to seek out private funding to meet the shortfalls. The concept of an education service "free at the point of use" envisaged in the 1944 Act has already been eroded - and the losers have been pupils in working class neighbourhoods lacking wealthy benefactors. Yet, of course, not everything is being cut. DFE spending on publicity has gone up 28 times since 1979. It now stands at over £6 million! No amount of glossy brochures, however, can paper over the holes, literal and otherwise, that now disfigure the education service.

## Local Management of Schools

**T**he responsibility for making cuts has been dumped onto the plates of school governors through the Local Management of Schools scheme. LMS means that school governing bodies are in control of the management of their schools, and this includes control of the individual school budget which has, up to now, been the responsibility of the local education authority.

Governors, often with hardly any training or experience, have been given considerable power; increasing administrative burdens have fallen on schools with no increase in resourcing to compensate; local authority provided services have been cut not to be replaced (advisory teachers, for example, have been made redundant in many LEA's).

The size of the individual school budget depends on the size of the pupil roll. This helps to create a desperate school versus school struggle as each one vies to attract the money carrying pupils into its own gates. Those



schools that start to lose out, perhaps because their performance in one year's exam league table was not so good, will find themselves on a spiral of decline whereby fewer pupils will mean less money will mean fewer teachers and resources will mean a further drop in pupils, and onwards to closure.

The full effects of LMS are only just beginning to make themselves felt. All over the country schools and education departments are facing budget cuts. Since teachers' salaries account for around 80% of a school budget, it is by reducing costs here that savings will be attempted. This explains the 1992 NFER report, which found that at least 20% of primary schools would now rather employ young, inexperienced and therefore cheap teaching staff. On the same lines there was the (failed) attempt of the head of Bishop Stortford High School to employ an 18 year old out of the sixth form to teach geography and games (the head considered him "a good lad"). In early 1992 there were cases reported of primary schools in Surrey where parents were asked for £100 donations so the school wages bill could be met.

This is as nothing when compared to the impending budget crises (and attendant threat of redundancies) that will follow from the latest round of public expenditure cuts. Militant campaigns against cuts in spending. We believe that it is no part of school governors roles to inflict government inspired cuts on their schools. Therefore we must campaign for governing

bodies to **refuse to implement cuts**, but instead to form and to join local anti-cuts committees linking teachers, education workers and parents from different schools in a unified resistance. The need is for these to be linked to the education unions in a national campaign against the government that directs the cuts.

LMS has had the effect of bringing parents and governors into the front line. An editorial in the *Times Educational Supplement* (TES) of 20/12/1991 highlighted the potential dilemma for the Tories:

"The most serious sign for the Government, however, is that parent power is finally being unleashed, and it is against Government policies rather than for them.. The Government imperative has been to keep the community charge down, to cap without regard to the effect on school budgets, and blame cuts on mismanaged local authorities. That may prove to be a serious miscalculation if parents line up with teachers."

The replacement of the Poll Tax with the Council Tax will provide no respite for the Tories; indeed, it will result in even greater pressures on local government finance. We must therefore ensure that the scenario of parent/teacher unity envisaged, by the TES in this editorial, becomes a reality. Reality by building a national campaign to defend comprehensive education.

## Public Schools

**O**ne of the most obvious aspects of privatisation, yet also one of the least discussed, has been the encouragement of the misnamed 'public' school sector. The continued existence of public schools and the failure of successive Labour governments to deal with this issue, inevitably undermines comprehensive education.

These schools, via Oxbridge, still offer the most secure guarantee of a place in the ruling class that controls society. Thatcher's first cabinet in 1979 had as many old Etonians and Oxbridge graduates in its ranks as did Balfour's at the start of the century. Indeed, in October 1991 a TES article showed that of the top 16 Civil servants in the DES (as it was then) seven went to Oxford, three to Cambridge and nine to public school. None is a woman.; *The Independent on Sunday* (4/10/92) surveyed 97 bosses of top City firms: 10 went to Eton, nine to Winchester and 37 to other public schools.

Of course money talks: fee paying schools enjoy pupil teacher ratios (PTRs) at least 45% better than in state secondary schools; spending per pupil on buildings and equipment is five times higher. The public schools have an obvious vested interest in projecting the failings, real and imaginary, of the state sector. Not surprisingly, the numbers attending public school have been on an upward tend since 1983.

The principle of buying a private education is one thing. What makes matters worse is that the rest of society is doing a lot of the paying. The Assisted Places Scheme, established in 1980, provides £60 million of workers' taxes to independent schools to pay for up to 30,000 'bright' pupils to be withdrawn from the state sector and taught in the 280 schools in the scheme.

The scheme is supposed to offer pupils from low income parents the chance to study at these 'schools of excellence' - yet a survey found that only 9% of fathers and 4% of mothers involved in the scheme could be classified as working class. It is, in reality, fairly high income families who benefit.

The handouts provided through Assisted places are the tip of a much larger iceberg. Public schools enjoy charitable status and thereby manage to avoid the tax bills other businesses are required to meet. One commentator, writing in 1983, catalogued the disguised payments that are often overlooked in the funding of independent schools:

"A key practise has always been 'place - buying', whereby, incredibly, the general public pay the private school fees for certain privileged parents - like diplomats and military officers. These payments to private education quietly grew in the 1960s and 1970s, as other groups tried to claim they too 'travelled' or had specially gifted children or desired boarding as a way of life. Direct taxpayer subsidy was nearly £200 million a year by the end of the 1970's. Indirect subsidies were far higher: tax concessions for fee paying parents; tax relief for private schools classed as charities, who often pay no rates on extensive properties...Including money for special education and money to train teachers who teach in private schools, the total bill is now (written in 1983) approaching £500 million a year."

The current level of subsidy would now be considerably greater.

## City Technology Colleges

**A**nother expensive example of the Tories' privatising crusade has been the fiasco of the City Technology Colleges (CTCs). Announced amidst the usual fan fare, Kenneth Baker launched this would-be exciting experiment at the 1986 Conservative Party Conference.

The idea was for around 15,000 pupils to be taught in 20 inner-city bases CTC's in 1990. Initially these would be 'centres for excellence' for science and technology - but the eventual aim was for there to be 200 or more such colleges concentrating on different specialisms.

In fact only 15 CTCs made it past the drawing board, mainly because the companies Baker imagined would sponsor the scheme did not exist, or were



otherwise occupied becoming bankrupt in the recession. The government is providing virtually the whole funding - to the tune of a colossal £105 million in capital grants. In Nottingham, the Djangoly CTC (so named after its sponsor) received, in 1991, a capital expenditure per pupil of £8270, compared with £38 per pupil in the county's 512 other schools. At Djangoly a no-strike contract for teachers was introduced. As the college principal put it "People can belong to unions, but we are not discussing salaries and service with unions but with individual members of staff."

The rationale of the CTC scheme - as with Grant Maintained schools - is to create a privileged education for a minority, rather than excellence for all. As with opted out schools, they play havoc with local authority planning of educational provision. The opening of the Kinghurst CTC in Solihull led to a decrease in pupil applications to neighbouring comprehensive - threatening their very existence.

Militant campaigns to end such schemes, and for all opted out schools and CTCs to be returned to local democratic control.



## Opted Out Grant Maintained Schools

**T**he provision within the 1988 Education Reform Act for schools to "opt out" of LEA control, after a parental ballot, and become Grant Maintained (GMS), ie funded by central government, represents another facet of the privatising and centralising direction of Tory education policy. Patten's proposed Funding Agency for Schools (FAS), which is somehow supposed to coexist with and subsequently replace the local LEA

when enough schools have opted out, gives the lie to the idea that opting out is anything to do with greater local control. The FAS is a government appointed quango which will exercise vast power with no accountability.

The creation of a semi-privatised tier of CTCs and GM schools has been presented as a means of increasing parental choice. In reality, these provide benefits for a few by denying opportunity to the majority. They must be seen to succeed and they have therefore been given every assistance - at the expense of the rest of the state sector. For instance, in 1990/1 GM schools received huge capital grants for building work and refurbishment. Ten GM schools were handed over a quarter of a million pounds each.; Pates's Grammar in Cheltenham, getting a £1.5 million grant, benefited most. In addition GM schools have fared considerably better than LEA maintained schools in bids for capital and special projects (£326 per pupil v £83 per pupil).

At yet, for all the bribes, opting out has proved another headache for the Tories. Only a tiny handful have been tempted to leave the LEA - some three hundred in total (just over 1%) - and the vast majority of them have sought refuge from Tory authorities such as low spending Kent, rather than the Labour Councils against whom the measure was originally directed. Secondary schools in Tory areas have been six times more likely to jump than those in Labour ones.

The Tory controlled Association of County Councils has talked of "planning blight" created by the uncertainty arising from opting out. Whilst it is true that LEA's often really mean closure when they say planning, it is also a fact that an opt out system is anarchic as well as divisive.

In the Conservative controlled London Borough of Hillingdon four schools opted out. Since those schools began, in effect, to offer places to whom they chose, it left 100 parents being told that they might not be allocated a school place for four months. Similar letters were sent out to 250 parents in Bromley. Opting out, apparently designed to increase parental choice, results in pupils left without a school, let alone a choice! As the Director of Hillingdon said: "In this area it is the schools choosing the children, not the parents choosing the school."

On top of that there has been the case of Stratford School in Newham, where, to the embarrassment of the Tories, the head and the governors fell out, leading to two ministerial interventions - to reinstate the headteacher, and to impose governors on a governing body for whom opting out had been held out as a chance to exercise some real authority.

But the Tories refuse to give the scheme up. Patten aims for 4000 opted schools by April 1995. It is to be made easier to go (although, of course,

there is no "choice" allowing a school back into an LEA once it has left.) Since the financial inducements to opt out are now threatened by the crisis in public spending Patten is launching an Education Task Force in a pathetic effort to whip up some enthusiasm for this failed policy.

The underlying reason why opting out can and must be fought lies in the social threat GM schools pose. Grant Maintained Schools will in many cases opt, overtly or covertly, to be selective. Research carried out at Leicester University has indicated that about a third of the first wave of opted out schools have been operating a selection policy. Naturally enough, Patten supports this trend, and his measures will more easily enable schools to change their character, including their admissions policies. Really, what he would like to see is 4000 grammar schools providing for a privileged 15%.

## Race and Education

**A**s Stratford and other cases show, inner city schools are a tinder box which could be ignited by the issue of racism. The Tories, and most of the press throughout the last ten years, have aimed to give the impression that blacks were getting special treatment in schools at the expense of whites. So we have seen, in this period, the deliberately inflammatory way the Tory press dealt with the Burnage and Maureen McGoldrick cases, and their support for the right-wing headteacher Honeyford against the local black community in Bradford.

The reality, however, is that the education system, like the society it reflects and upholds, is laced through with racism. It is an almost incredible fact that only 2% of teachers are black or Asian; moreover, black experience is excluded from the curriculum itself. This is particularly apparent in the history National Curriculum, which emphasis white superiority and black inferiority.

Alongside of this, there is the continuing, unremitting and largely unreported overt harassment of large numbers of black children. In 1981 33 pupils, mainly Asian, had to evacuate a Birmingham classroom minutes before a firebomb exploded. In 1984 a 12 year old Bengali boy was dragged out of his school in the East End of London and stabbed repeatedly by a gang of white youths. In January 1988 a black school student hanged himself during a depression brought on by continual racial harassment at school. Where were the "shock horror" stories about these, or countless other outrages that have occurred over the past dozen years?

Meanwhile the 1988 Education Reform Act compels schools to hold a daily act of collective worship - which must be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character - and provide compulsory Religious Education - which "shall reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the

main Christian” (Only 2.5% of the population, incidentally, attend the established church!) Although the act allows for parents to opt out of daily worship if they wish their children not to go, the intended impact is clearly to effect a change in the ethos of schools. If fully implemented, it will only serve to reinforce racism as well as further encouraging the movement for separate schools.

The creation of a two tier education system, accelerated by opting out, on top of the massive underfunding that blights inner city schools, threatens to leave an “underclass” of sink schools for black and poor white children. Faced with this prospect, and against the background of racist abuse, discrimination and inaction, it is no surprise that many Asian parents in particular have turned to the idea of separate schools as an attractive solution. Such a development would lead to the creation of racially segregated schools - which would be an enormous setback for the working class as a whole. As well as entrenching the position of reactionary religious leaders, it would also act as a spur for separate fundamentalist Jewish schools, Black schools etc.

Opposition to separate schooling can only be effective if it acknowledges and addresses the concerns which lie behind the demand. We need to campaign for improved state provision for all. This should be linked to the demand for the repeal of the Education Reform Act, with its divisive open enrolment, opting out and religious clauses. It is also important to campaign for the democratisation of all schools - including the church controlled voluntary sector. It has been a particularly divisive anomaly that in areas such as Tower Hamlets, local authority funded Christian schools have denied places to non-Christians at a time when Bangladeshi pupils in the Borough could not find places in any LEA school.

Militant therefore campaigns for:

- **A commitment to anti-racist education that stresses the need for working class unity.**
- **A fight against all education cuts and a massive increase in spending to allow for the necessary resources and staff to ensure the highest quality education for every child.**
- **A campaign to recruit more black and Asian teachers, with greatly expanded mother tongue provision.**
- **Opposition to racially segregated schools.**
- **Repeal of the Education Reform Act.**

- **Democratisation of all schools, including voluntary schools, though committees of teachers, parents, pupils, trade unionists and local authority representatives.**

## **Sex Inequalities in Education**

In any class society, the ruling class seeks to use the education system in order to prepare the young generations for their allotted role, according to the division of labour at any given time. The capitalists' main interests are in ensuring the maintenance of huge profits, and of preserving its own rule. In this scheme of things, working class women are at the bottom of the pile - a source of cheap labour at work, and unpaid labour in the home. Education under capitalism encourages sex stereotyping as a means of preparing girls for the double exploitation and second class status of adulthood.

In fact, most girls - and boys for that matter - need look no further than their own teachers to learn some significant lessons. Within the teaching force itself, the mass of women are effectively segregated into lower grades. One in three male teachers in primary schools is a headteacher, compared to one woman in 14. A man is three times as likely as a woman to receive the top D or E allowances in secondary schools. Equal pay in teaching, only won as late as 1961, is far from a reality; indeed, the gap between average men's and women's pay is continuing to widen. The explanation for this situation is material. For instance, far more women than men take a break in service, usually in order to have children. Returners often find themselves once again at the bottom, having in the meantime lost the chance to apply for promotion.

A programme tackling sex discrimination in teaching must look at the material factors that determine the low status of female teachers. We therefore demand:

- **An end to the abuse of fixed term contracts**
- **Secure right to return schemes**
- **Democratic organisation within schools, whereby responsibilities are undertaken on the basis of additional non-teaching time**

The position of female teachers, occupying the "lower" posts, and being underrepresented in subjects such as maths and technology, carries its own signals to pupils. Recent research demonstrates that girls are generally far less confident in their own abilities than are boys at a similar skill level. These factors help to explain why girls underachieve relative to boys in "high status" subjects (maths, physics, technology etc). Ironically, the Tories themselves, faced with imbalances in the labour supply in the late 1980s,

took some steps to address the issue of girls' access to science and technology (eg in TVEI policy and funding arrangements.) However, in the current jobless climate, these concerns no longer figure, and all reference to equal opportunities for girls is noticeably absent from Patten's 1992 "Choice and Diversity" White Paper.

Some have argued that one way forward lies with the creation of more single sex schools, staffed with women teachers, and have pointed to the relative academic success of girls in such schools when compared to results in mixed schools. In general, such comparisons are flawed as they fail to take into account the fact that single sex schools are disproportionately more elitist and middle class than mixed schools. A 1975 DES survey showed that girls' social class was a far more significant factor in explaining subject choice and exam success than was the gender composition of the school. Selection on any basis, including gender, is not an answer; it creates and deepens divisions. Support for comprehensive, coeducational schooling does not simply mean that the current practise in most schools is satisfactory. Through the proper training of teachers, the reduction of class size and the specific targeting of curricula areas, girls' achievements in mixed schools can be improved. Consideration should be given to single sex teaching groups in some areas (sex education being the most obvious example).

Overt, and more subtle sex discrimination in schools must be opposed. Teachers need to challenge the underlying assumptions and expectations that lead to discrimination against girls. Schools should develop policies that challenge discrimination - although, as with race, such policies require a class approach. However, whilst the approach of the teachers and the development of school policies plays an important role, it would be naive and false to believe that "progressive" schools as if somehow divorced from capitalist society and its ideology, can by themselves end sex discrimination. The battle for equality for girls and for women is linked to the wider struggle to rid humanity of a class society that relies on women's oppression for its maintenance. We therefore demand:

- **Coeducational schools - but with the resources and facilities to monitor and combat sex discrimination**
- **Training of teachers to incorporate programmes tackling sexism and discrimination, including discrimination against lesbians and gays**
- **A broader struggle against the capitalist society which spawns oppression**

## The Curriculum

Since 1979 the Tories have attacked public sector expenditure, the “social wage” paid to the working class. At the same time, they have sustained a relentless ideological war - against the “failings” of teachers, of comprehensive schools, the “fall in standards” and so on. Key to this whole process was the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988. At one stroke, what was and was not to be taught was centralised under direct government control.



Many subjects which involve students examining the society in which they live, such as politics, economics or sociology, have been carefully excluded. The History Committee, charged with drawing up guidelines for the subject were all personally interviewed by the Education Minister. Chaired by Commander Saunders Watson, an ex-naval land owner, the Committee was briefed to produce a history syllabus which emphasised Britain's history and heritage. The far right “think tanks”, currently engaged in rewriting the English syllabus, apparently can still detect some vestiges of left wingery in the history syllabus, and Patten seems determined to let them loose once they've sorted out the nation's reading and writing.

The testing element of the National Curriculum is its most pernicious feature. Testing of all pupils at 7, 11, 14 and 16 is supplemented by a plethora of mini-tests. Such testing will inevitably be crude and damaging to pupils and schools alike and represents a complete break from all accepted methods of learning in primary schools. Many pupils will now be expected

to see their work as "failed" from the age of seven. The Tory flagship borough of Wandsworth have gone one better, and introduced an initial round of tests for their five year olds.

The overall impact of testing, and the subsequent publication of inter-school league tables of results, will rapidly lead to a narrowing of the curriculum as schools and teachers simply teach to the tests. The constraints of the National Curriculum and of the testing is intended to push primary schools into adopting streaming and setting. Moreover, with opting out creating a growing number of selective secondary schools, it is clear that the tests for 11 year olds will become an 11+ mark two.

Each school will find themselves under pressure to take the academic high fliers, and close their doors to those who might threaten their percentage pass rates and local league table status. One ugly aspect of this has been that schools have started to expel pupils for poor academic performance rather than bad behaviour. Patten's decision to publish a list of the "worst performing schools, based solely on raw examination results and with no reference to the pupil intake (eg how many do not use English as their first language) will make matters worse. It is impossible to compare schools with totally different intakes and resources.

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors, Mr Wilde, commented on this process: "In judging the efficiency of a school, one must weigh well its peculiar circumstances, as these vary so much. I should be very sorry indeed to have to publish a list of best schools. I have several where from the results of the examination I am obliged to give a flourishing report, whereas I am far from satisfied with the tone. Many a school with far less satisfactory results is doing much greater work."

Mr Wilde was considering an earlier version of a curriculum linked to testing ....in 1871! This was the era of "payment by results", when teachers' wages were calculated according to the number of passes obtained. Now in the 1990's, with plans to link Performance Related Pay for teachers to national testing, we have a government attempting to resurrect this discredited system, abandoned as anti-educational 100 years ago. Just as in 1871, it will be teachers and pupils in less affluent working class areas that will be hardest hit.

The Tories present this in terms of a crusade against falling educational standards. The first question that arises from this recurrent refrain is: if standards are falling, who is responsible? Who has been in charge for the past dozen years? In reality, when Tories talk about doing something to improve standards, they really mean doing something to enforce greater inequality.



In the summer of 1992, for example, Patten attacked the results for GCSE - there were too many passes for his liking. Tory thinking is that if results are improving, standards must be falling. Ironically, the relative success of the GCSE has been the very reason why many on the Tory right now want to see it scrapped. In fact, it is no great surprise that performance in GCSE has been steadily improving. After four years experience schools and teachers have become accustomed to the exam indeed, secondary teachers are forever expected to attend courses on GCSE, often in their own time. Moreover, for reasons already explained, teachers are pressurised to enter fewer "marginal" students to keep pass rates looking good. In addition, the complete lack of jobs forces more students to stay on and gain more qualifications.

So why does the GCSE attract the fire of the Tory right? Ironically it was the Tories themselves, under Keith Joseph, who replaced the existing two tier O level/CSE system with GCSE, arguing that it would lead to higher standards and better qualifications. However, at that time there was economic growth and there were staff shortages - employers wanted a qualified, educated (to a point) workforce. Now too many young people are being turned out with too many qualifications and high expectations but with too few opportunities. No wonder Patten's demanding a return to standards. One of his right wing advisors, Dr Marks, is advocating a return to O levels which would mean, in his words, "greater differentiation".

It would be wrong to idealise the GCSE exam. All examination systems exist under capitalism to exclude students, to close down opportunities to millions of mainly working class young people. GCSE is fundamentally no different. The course work elements of the exam are cited by GCSE supporters as showing its fairness. Research has indicated that extensive home-based course work emphasises class differences in exam achievement. Favouring children from better-off backgrounds where parents can provide their child with more books and equipment and where there is more likely to be a quiet working area in the home. In that sense the exam hall is the more equal environment.

On the basis of an adequately funded education system, with reduced class sizes and proper specialist support, overall achievement would improve dramatically. The examination system would be seen for what it is - a strait-jacket which blights rather than enhances the educational attainment of the majority. Parents, teachers and students have a common interest in fighting for an education system which places learning not examination success or failure at its heart.

Militant campaigns for:

- **Opposition to national testing - diagnostic testing where there is proven educational need**
- **Promoting a wide pastoral curriculum, including sex education. Schools should also tackle the questions of drug and alcohol abuse**
- **Opposition to compulsory religious education. Religion to be studied as part of humanities, history and philosophy**
- **Opposition to streaming and selection - for reduced class sizes**
- **An education system based on learning and attainment rather than exams**

## **Nursery Education**

**I**t is twenty years since the then Education Secretary, Margaret Thatcher, promised a nursery place for every 3 and 4 year old child whose parents wanted it. Yet today, that pledge remains unfulfilled. Patten's White Paper is totally silent on the question and Britain is at the bottom of the European pile in providing nursery education. In Belgium, 95% of 3 and 4 year olds have a place in nursery education for at least 5 hours a day, in France it stands at 95% for up to 8 hours; in Italy 88% for 7 hours a day. In Britain, by contrast, some 23% are in nursery education, mostly for two and a half hours a day, a further 20% are in reception classes in primary schools, which is generally agreed to be a worse option than a nursery education.

These figures alone fail to expose quite how pathetic the Tory record is. There is only one Tory local authority among the top 35 in England and Wales. Recent figures show



that only 3% or 3 and 4 year olds in Tory West Sussex, a mere 1% in Somerset and 0% in Gloucestershire were placed in a nursery school. Even if places in infant school reception class are included, West Sussex still only caters for 8% of 3 and 4 year olds, compared to Labour Salford's 86% and Liverpool's 83%.

It is clear that the Tories are not prepared to fund any increase in nursery provision. Their preferred "solution" is to turn to private industry to provide workplace creches. This is a far cry from what is needed, and is in any case wholly dependent on companies seeing it in their own, commercial interests. At a particular time, for a particular firm, it might be seen as a useful inducement for retaining women workers; but in a recession, not only does the woman risk losing her job, her child would also lose its nursery place. Workplace nurseries represent the privatisation of a service which should be statutorily provided by local education authorities. Only guaranteed places in nursery schools can ensure both provision and education.

Militant champions the demand for statutory nursery education and campaigns for:

- **A free nursery place in a nursery school for every 3 and 4 year old. This to be supplemented by local authority provision of professionally staffed child care and day nurseries for all under fives open on a 24 hour basis.**

## **Special Needs**

Inadequate provision is most glaringly apparent when considering the education of pupils with special educational needs within mainstream schools. Parents seeking for their child an official "statement", which is the basis for determining provision, have had to wait anything up to three years in some local authorities for assessments to be completed.

Meanwhile, local authorities have become much more selective when determining who is to be entitled to additional help, and, in an increasing number of cases, statements are being written without allocating any additional resourcing.

The 1978 Warnock Report, which favoured the integration of pupils with special needs, led to the 1981 Act. But progress towards integration has been desperately slow, and, in some areas, non-existent. Although the term "special needs" contains a vast diversity of physical, mental, emotional and behavioral needs, it is clear that the vast majority of such pupils could and should be educated in mainstream schools. Such integration is not occurring essentially because the resourcing is not forthcoming. It costs considerable sums of money, for instance, to make the adjustments to the physical structure of school building necessary for the safe and adequate education of

disabled pupils. Additional teaching, nursing and other trained staff is a further prerequisite. We must avoid the progressive idea of integration being transformed into a cynical, cost-cutting exercise by which units and special schools are simply shut down, and pupils are "integrated" without resourcing, or even statements.

The ideology of the 1988 Education Reform Act, of LMS, open enrolment, testing and league tables, is - as Warnock herself has pointed out - incompatible with the principles of integration. More ludicrous still is the extension of LMS and now the ability to opt out to special schools. Children with special needs, of whatever category, are likely to be the biggest losers from all the recent "reforms". We therefore:

- **Support integration but campaign for full and adequate resourcing, including the adaptation of buildings**
- **Oppose the closure of all special schools and units because of cuts, or where adequate provision in mainstream schools cannot be guaranteed. Decisions on integration on the basis of full parental consultation**
- **Campaign to extend the provision of support services, including speech therapy, physiotherapy, psychological services etc.**

## **A Socialist Programme for Education**

**S**tate education in Britain is in a desperate condition; after having faced years of cutback and a catalogue of ill thought out and reactionary "reforms" the very fabric of the system is close to breaking point. And this is before the next planned wave of public spending cuts takes effect.

Militant appeals to all those who work in education to unite in defence of our schools. Unlike the Tories, and regrettably, many Labour authorities, we reject the idea that it is the workers in education that are responsible for the failings of the system. If anything, it has been the failure of the trade unions at a national level to lead a fight against cuts, privatisation, Compulsory Competitive Tendering, worsening hours and conditions that has allowed things to deteriorate. Labour has totally abandoned the basic principles of socialism, and, time and again, Labour councils have been among the most ruthless in carrying out cuts and privatisation against their own workforces.

The mood among teachers is explosive, particularly as the demands on time have become intolerable. Job satisfaction for most teachers has become a distant memory. A 1991 survey showed that infant teachers are now working up to a 58 hour week (TES 12/7/91). A 1990 survey carried out by academics from the University of East Anglia showed desperately low morale

amongst an "underclass" of around a third of teachers; the researchers found a noticeably high incidence of frustration and alienation. A 1990 NUT survey showed that 46% of secondary teachers would leave the job if they could; indeed, for every three teachers entering training college, only one is left in teaching in five years. This is the time when Patten is trying to hold back pay, and make any rise linked to performance.

Militant campaigns for improved pay and conditions for all education workers:

- **An end to CCT which, as well as worsening the levels of service provided, has led to a serious erosion of workers' pay and conditions. Return all privatised services to local authority control, on national pay rates**
- **For all non-teaching support staff to be paid a decent, living wage, and to be on permanent contracts**
- **The restoration of teachers negotiating rights**
- **A pay increase for teachers restoring salaries to 1974 levels**
- **Minimum non-contact time of 20% for all teachers**

Unlike the Tories, Militant considers that education workers and teachers' working conditions are pupils' learning conditions. A socialist education programme recognises their concerns. By campaigning in support of a programme of socialist demands that coherently puts forward a positive, clear alternative to what exists now, we can unite trade unionists, parents and students in a potentially unstoppable movement.

Militant is fighting for such a programme:

- **No redundancies - end job losses in schools**
- **Governors to refuse to implement cuts pushed through via LMS but to link up schools in a unified campaign to maintain and improve spending**
- **Organise action committees of education staff, parents, students and governors against school opt outs**
- **For a massive programme of spending in schools and school buildings**
- **Immediate implementation of NUT limits in class size with the aim of a maximum class size of 20 across the board**

- **Scrap the 1988 Education Reform Act; End LMS; oppose the Funding Agency; return power to democratic local control**
- **Abolish the public school system. Bring all such schools under local democratic control**
- **Full comprehensivisation, including the removal of the special status of CTCs and Grant Maintained Schools**
- **Open enrolment to be scrapped in favour of a planned equitable admissions policy. For neighbourhood schools that serve the local area**
- **End the glaring disparities in provision for schools within and between authorities - for equal provision nationally for equivalent schools**
- **A nursery place for all 3 and 4 year olds**
- **A fully resourced local authority organised school meals service providing free meals for all students**
- **For democracy within schools - for head teachers to be elected every 2 years by an electoral college of parents, teachers, school workers, students and local authority representatives, as in Spain**
- **Support for school students' unions**
- **Every school to have a democratic governing committee. All governors to be subject to recall and to receive paid time off to attend governors' meetings during the day. The governing committee to consist of teachers and workers in the school, parents, representatives of the local trade union movement, the local authority and secondary school students**

## **Conclusion**

**W**e have set out the case here for a socialist education policy, but, although we will battle for each and every one of these reforms, no gain can be permanently guaranteed as long as a decaying capitalist system continues to exist. We link our demands in education to a wider programme aimed at transforming Britain into a socialist society where, for the first time, the basic requirements of working people can be addressed and met. Join us in the fight - both for a better education system and for a socialist future!

**1.11.92**

**For further information or any comments  
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