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COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND THE CONFLICT OF IDEALS  
IN THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH ADULT EDUCATION MOVEMENTS

Andrena Elisabeth Telford

Submitted to the University of Durham  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
1995

**THESIS ABSTRACT**

The main objective of this thesis is to examine a conflict in the field of community education in the 1970s and '80s over whether its efforts should be directed mainly to the intellectual, social and cultural development of the individual (in the tradition of liberal adult education) or, conversely, to the cause of social change. The two schools of thought which confronted one another are termed the 'liberal' and the 'radical' wings of adult and community education. The thesis argues that the type of debate which ensued was not in fact new to adult education, but has been endemic in the history of adult education movements in this country, representing not simply a difference of opinion on organisation, content and methodology, but a more fundamental divergence of beliefs, values and attitudes.

The thesis attempts to identify the significant factors leading to the adoption of a particular educational stance and from these constructs a theoretical framework for analysis in the form of a matrix, identifying three particular positions upon a continuum (Paternalist, Liberal and Radical). Throughout the thesis's treatment of adult and community education, in both their historical and their contemporary applications, links to this matrix are demonstrated and developed.

The thesis examines in detail the emergence both of the dominant school-based model in this country and of the new 'community action' or 'community development' model. It considers the defence put forward by proponents of liberal adult education and the contrary critique mounted by the 'radical' side. It presents the results of a series of interviews with six individuals who took part in the debate over community education and finds that its analysis is for the most part corroborated by the recollection and reflections of the participants. It ends by considering briefly the current state and possible future of community education, as well as suggesting what further research might be relevant and useful.

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OF IDEALS  
IN THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH ADULT  
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**Andrena Elisabeth Telford**

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**A Dissertation submitted to the University of Durham  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**School of Education  
1995**



**11 DEC 1995**

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The inspiration for the topic of this thesis came from three very enjoyable and satisfying years which I spent, in the mid-1970s, as Senior Community Education Tutor at Parkside Community College in Cambridge. I was already acquainted with the Cambridgeshire Village Colleges through a two-year stint prior to this as a Careers Advisory Officer with Cambridgeshire County Council, and I have fond memories particularly of Swavesey and Bassingbourn, which were among "my" schools. It was both a challenge and a delight to be the initiator of the new community education programme in the first urban equivalent of the village college in the county. My admiration for the institution soon broadened into a fascination with the concept, and when, some time later, I was fortunate enough to be awarded an SSRC Studentship, it was natural that community education should be the subject of my research. Since my career has been largely in one form or another of adult education, it was inevitable that I should want to examine community education within the context of adult education. The result is this volume. It is, I should state, the result of my independent research into the literature of adult and community education, and for its content and conclusions I alone am responsible. However, many people have participated indirectly in the process, and I should like to take this opportunity to acknowledge this network of support.

The writing of the thesis has been an extremely protracted process, during which I have worn out three successive supervisors, not to mention my family and friends and a number of tolerant bosses. It is with heartfelt appreciation that I now record my thanks to them. I count myself very fortunate to have benefited from the support of Mr. Vivian Williams of Oxford University Department of Educational Studies, who saw the thesis started, and of Mr. Beverley Shaw of Durham University School of Education, who, with humour and patience, nursed both thesis and research student through many vicissitudes and a record number of extensions. I am particularly grateful to Professor Michael Byram, also of Durham, who took me on when I was long past my due measure of supervision, convinced me, with admirable optimism, that I could complete the thesis, and then sustained me with perceptive insights, wise advice and a generous allocation of his time.

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Purpose of the Thesis

The purpose of this thesis is three-fold. In the first place, it sets out to examine the nature and function of community education in this country as it developed from the 1920s on. Secondly, it focuses on a significant division which emerged especially strongly in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and which crystallised around a debate on the aims and methods of community education. It is the contention of the thesis that the roots of such conflict can be found in the earlier history of English adult education movements and that this particular dispute has in fact been endemic within organised adult education since its beginnings in the eighteenth century.

Since the systematic investigation of any phenomenon requires a theoretical framework upon which to base its analysis, the thesis begins by attempting to identify the significant factors which have given rise to very different schools of thought in adult education. From these factors, a matrix is constructed upon which this and subsequent investigations may be based. The third main focus of the dissertation is on the application of this matrix to adult and community education, in both their historical and their contemporary contexts.

## 1.2 Summary of the Argument

One of the main characteristics of the concept of community education has been the fact that it has proved quite difficult, even for those actively involved in it, to define. The literature of community education, over the last twenty years in particular, reveals a whole range of definitions, indicating a considerable variety of activities and operating through a number of different structures. Such diversity is not necessarily a bad thing, indeed can be positively welcomed, but this apparent inability to present community education as a clear and recognisable entity has undoubtedly caused great confusion among providers and consumers alike. The failure to justify its existence in strong and clear-cut terms may also be a fatal flaw that has made not just community education but adult education as a whole more vulnerable to the kind of cut-backs from which it has recently suffered.

In actual fact, when one looks at descriptions of *practice* within the field, one finds that the nature of community education in this country has been more homogeneous than the literature would suggest. There has been one predominant form i.e. the type which incorporates adult education, youth provision and community activities, which is (largely) school- or (on occasion) college-based and which comes within the remit of Local Education Authorities. The first generally recognised model of community education in this country, the Village Colleges of Cambridgeshire, was of this type and the spurt of growth in this area of educational activity after the Second World War largely followed the same pattern (though adapted

for an urbanised society). In many respects, this development was very much in the nineteenth-century tradition of liberal adult education, which can be defined as: concerned with the social, intellectual and cultural development of the individual; committed to the improvement of the national good by fostering the growth of educated, responsible citizens; rational and enlightened, though (in its earlier manifestations at least) with strong Christian leanings; romantic in its aspirations but cautious in its intentions and traditional in its approach. Community education in its earlier stages of development was very much in this mould, and the ethos of liberal adult education continued to influence community education through several decades.

However, by the late 1960s/early 70s another strand of community education was fighting hard to make its presence felt. This model, devoted to social action and social change, I call (using its own terminology) the 'radical' model, and it was radical in both its aims and its methods. Its main purpose was to bring about a decisive change in the structure and balance of power in communities by educational means. It was committed to the poor, the disadvantaged and minority groups, and aimed to right the imbalances of society by educating people concerning their rights and by providing them with the power to voice their needs and to use the democratic process for the meeting of these needs. In its methodology, it borrowed from the field of community development, using both British and North American models of practice. Some 'traditional' community education providers reacted by embracing the new gospel; others responded with anger to what they saw as a potential hi-jacking; still others tried to establish a *via media* which would bring the two strands together.

Although other issues and other threats have preoccupied adult and community education in the past decade, this basic conflict, I would argue, remains unresolved.

What is in dispute is not merely a difference in aims or approaches but a fundamental split between two widely divergent schools of thought, akin to, but not identical with, the gulf between right and left in political terms. Here we have two very different, even contradictory, sets of perceptions: about the nature of society, about the role of the individual in society, about the function of community, about the purpose of education, and about the uses of democracy. It is a disagreement which, as I shall show, began in the social ferment of the 1960s/70s but which continued to reverberate throughout the 1980s.

While this may seem to be a very modern quarrel, it is not in fact a phenomenon which has only recently arisen. The dichotomy runs through the history of adult education in this country. Even a brief study of earlier English adult education movements reveals a similar cleavage between those who saw education as a means of improving the quality of life for the individual, while encouraging him or her to contribute as a responsible citizen to society, and those who saw education primarily as a key which would allow access to power and through this means to overturn an unequal and uncaring society and forge a better social system. To some extent (and particularly within the earlier adult education movements) this split followed social divisions, but even within the working class widely differing views were to be found. It would seem that this is a schism which has persisted throughout the history of adult education over the last two

hundred years, and which has occurred not only between educational movements but within the movements themselves.

While a survey of the early adult education movements reveals a great diversity of opinion on the aims, methods, content and organisation of the 'education of the people', as it was frequently termed, there has been no systematic attempt to determine whether any kind of pattern to the conflicts can be detected. However, there are certain key elements around which the argument regularly focuses, certain modes of thinking which are usually connected with one or other side of the debate, and an examination of these can help to make some sense of the apparent formlessness of adult education and its offspring, community education. Out of these key elements and the stances adopted by proponents of the various schools of thought a framework can be constructed which will be of help, not only in understanding the history of adult and community education, but also in clarifying and articulating its present and future aims and function.

### 1.3 Structure of the Thesis

The dissertation begins (chapter 2) by indicating the importance of a more systematic analytical approach to research in adult and community education. It illustrates this by reference to the literature of community education, and highlights the tentative steps which have been taken in the direction of critical evaluation and objective assessment. As a contribution towards this, and to provide a framework for this particular investigation, the chapter proposes an analytical matrix for the purpose of investigation into both contemporary and historical forms of not only community education

but adult education as a whole. The matrix consists of a table of values, viewpoints or perceptions, linked to each of three significant educational positions. The chapter puts forward the justifications for this approach and the possible uses of the matrix, and goes on to demonstrate its application with examples from the history of adult education movements in this country in the nineteenth century.

The thesis then sets out (chapter 3) to look at the origins and the development of community education since its inception in the earlier part of the twentieth century and to examine the thinking which led to the particular model which came to be adopted on a wide scale in this country. In so doing, it examines a series of influential documents which both reflected current thinking and supplied guidelines for development to the providers (in this case, principally schools). It argues that the concept of community education was not in fact a new one but that its essential elements were already current in adult educational thought at the time of its earliest development, and had developed out of an existing tradition, that of liberal adult education. Finally, it relates the predominant stance of mainstream community education to the matrix and attempts to define its position in terms of both attitudes and practice.

Chapter 4 goes on to consider the new emphasis which emerged in the early 1970s, beginning with two reports which provided some of the rationale for a more 'radical' form of community education. By examining the writings of proponents of the 'community development' approach, it documents the development towards a 'radical' model in a number of Educational Priority Areas, and analyses the model in terms of aims, content and method. A further section is devoted to

an investigation of the philosophical roots of the new approach, and considers four prominent educational philosophers to whom reference is frequently made in the literature and who can be shown to have influenced the thinking of the radical educators.

Having scrutinised the 'radical' model, the chapter then turns to the defence mounted by the advocates of liberal adult education, and to two strong voices in particular - those of K. H. Lawson and R. W. K. Paterson. It analyses and considers the grounds upon which the liberal adult education approach is thus justified, and follows this with an analysis of the radical critique of the liberal tradition. Both are then considered in light of the matrix.

Chapter 5 moves forward to the present day and describes the author's investigation of contemporary perspectives on the conflict of the 1960s/'70s, conducted with a number of those who took part in the community education debate at that time. From interviews with six of the participants, a retrospective is provided on the significance of the debate, the grounds of the argument, the expressions of the differing viewpoints and the individuals' perceptions of their own role in the conflict. Once again the matrix is used for examination of the stances of the individuals, though some caveats are entered against too rigid application, and also against too ready acceptance of both the accuracy and the wisdom of hindsight.

The concluding chapter of the thesis returns to the question of the place of community education within adult education, historically, at present and in the future. Using materials from the interviews which formed the basis of chapter 5, the question is posed - and some

speculative answers hazarded - about the future of community education and the possibility of its surviving into the twenty-first century.

#### 1.4 Methodology

Much of the subject-matter for this thesis arose out of an examination of the literature of adult and community education, both primary (the official documentation, mainly consisting of government reports) and secondary (books and articles on adult and community education, largely written by those actively employed in some area of one or the other). This material formed the basis for chapters 3 and 4 of the dissertation.

However, the analysis of this material has been measured against and linked to a piece of empirical research, already described briefly, consisting of an investigation into the views of some of those who were combatants in the 'battle of words' over the value and the purpose of community education. In-depth interviews, based upon a questionnaire cum interview schedule circulated in advance (see Appendix I), were carried out with six individuals, all formerly (and in some cases presently) involved in adult and community education and all of whom contributed through their writings to the argument over community education which we shall be examining in chapter 4 of this thesis. The interviews were recorded, then transcribed, and the subsequent analysis of the material is presented in chapter 5 of the thesis, together with a more detailed description of the research procedures.

### 1.5 A Note on Use of Terms

There are two respects in which I may be accused of using terms loosely within this thesis and I should like to address these now. The first concerns the fact that 'adult education', 'community education' and 'adult and community education' may appear at first sight to be utilised interchangeably, thus seeming to indicate that I do not differentiate between them. The use of these terms has posed some difficulty, it is true, since I am looking at community education within the history of adult education and have frequently wished to refer to one or the other or both in the same context. To treat community education only in its adult education manifestation is to ignore part of its history and identity, but I have found it necessary to do so, to avoid unnecessary complication and obfuscation of the main argument. I have, therefore, treated community education as the child of adult education (which I would argue it is, historically, in this country) and for the purposes of this thesis have used 'adult education' both as an umbrella term (to include community education) and to represent the continuing adult education activities of the Responsible Bodies. The specific meaning in each case I trust will be clear from the context in which it is placed. When 'adult and community education' appear in tandem, this indicates a reference to both Responsible Body and Local Education Authority sectors.

The second instance in which I am aware of some imprecision is in the use of the term 'adult education movements'. Strictly speaking this should refer only to organisations which have had the education of adults as their principal aim. However, if I were to include only movements of this kind, I would thereby exclude a large proportion of

the educational activities of the nineteenth century, since much of the work of educating the working classes was carried out by organisations whose purpose was social or political, rather than purely educational. I have therefore chosen, for the sake of simplicity, to utilise the one term, and trust the reader to understand that I am in a good number of cases referring to the educational agenda of a social movement and do not mean to imply that the Co-operative Movement or Chartism was only or even predominantly concerned with working-class education.

Finally, where the 'he or she'/'his or her' question is concerned, I have used the full phrase where this can be done without distracting the reader. Where it would become repetitive or irritating, I have settled for 'he' and 'his' as the generic term.

## Chapter 2

### THE CONFLICT OF IDEALS : A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

#### 2.1 Introduction

As has been stated already in the Introduction, it is a contention of this thesis that conflict has been endemic in adult education throughout its history, that it is a conflict of ideals, and that in the late 1960s and early 1970s the continuing argument focussed on the issue of community education and used this popular and strongly growing sector of education as the battleground over which a sometimes bitter debate was fought. This process is examined in considerable detail in chapter 4 of the thesis.

From this examination of the 'liberal' and 'radical' schools of thought within adult and community education, we can see that the conflict arises, not simply from disagreements over the practicalities of content, organisation and methodology, but from a more fundamental contrast in what might be termed the 'life-view' of the two sides. In other words, what we are looking at is a basic difference in beliefs, values, ideals and aspirations concerning education and society, the interaction between the two and the relation of the individual to

each. When we turn to the adult education movements of the late eighteenth and the nineteenth century, the differences, as we shall see later in this chapter, are even more pronounced, more varied and more extreme.

How is one to account for this pervasive theme of dissension within the history of adult education? I have already mentioned the link between the form of adult education and the values and beliefs of providers. But what exactly are the factors which have tended to push the educators of adults in one direction or the other? Moreover, do we actually *need* to understand this phenomenon? Does it matter that adult education should demonstrate harmony and cohesiveness, or would a striving for some kind of artificial unity in fact act merely as a curb on something which is, by its nature, diffuse and diverse? These questions form the basis for this chapter, in which I propose a structure by which an analysis might be carried out and some answers obtained.

## 2.2 The Analysis of Community Education

Before tackling these questions, however, it is perhaps useful to look at previous attempts to articulate what exactly constitutes 'community education' and to define its role and its position within the nexus of adult education. The following section, therefore, examines what has already been written by a number of individuals involved in adult and community education who have turned their attention to these basic questions. From this, one can go on to consider in what respects this analysis falls short, as a basis for the formulation of a more comprehensive approach.

### 2.2.1 Defining Community Education

When one turns to the literature of community education from its earliest beginnings to its full flowering in more recent decades, it becomes clear that the great preponderance of material is primarily descriptive rather than analytical. This may in some respects be considered an artificial distinction, since there is of course an area of overlap. However, I would argue that much of the material has as its main (if not its sole) purpose to inform and inspire, to supply what are in effect case-studies or exemplars, and to provide guidance gained from practical experience.

There is, however, a body of work (predominantly articles, but with an increasing number of books), covering the same period and appearing in parallel with the descriptive material, which has as its intention the critical scrutiny of the theoretical basis of community education - its aims, its assumptions, its values and its functions. Many of these contributions to debate are reasonable and reasoned enquiries by proponents of community education. Others are more in the nature of attacks by opponents and would-be reformers, and, interestingly, these come, as we shall see later, from both the educational 'left' and the 'right'.

A great deal of the debate, and not just in the earlier years, centres upon definitions of what exactly is meant by 'community education' and by 'community' as the defining element in the term. It is striking to note how many writers despair of achieving an acceptable definition of either expression, regarding 'community' in particular as a rather slippery concept, to be treated with some suspicion. Cyril

Poster, in his Introduction to *Community Education: its Development and Management*,<sup>1</sup> points out that 'community' has become "a vogue word, lacking in precision and full of emotive overtones", and furthermore that we use it "in two quite different senses: to represent a feeling, a state of mind, an abstract quality that can only be appreciated conceptually; and to denote a group of people apparently drawn together by a common purpose" (p.1). He goes on to quote Eric Midwinter on the same subject, to the effect that community is "a terribly vague concept which, although recognised by all, is not easy to grasp. The two words - community and education - must be among the most difficult in the language to define" (p.2). A Scottish HMI report of 1977 humorously illustrates the quandary:

In the beginning was the word and the word was community education, and there arose many prophets willing to interpret the word, but few to deny its veracity. So that community education became a self-fulfilling prophecy, for its tenets were not written down on tablets of stone handed down from on high. And since no man knew what either community or education meant as separate creeds, when they were joined together their offspring multiplied exceedingly, offering diverse avenues to salvation. <sup>2</sup>

Ian Martin, who includes this wry quotation in his own analysis of community education, describes 'community education' as having "a credibility problem".<sup>3</sup> He sees the development of community education as reflecting "the kind of conscientious but essentially unreflective pragmatism which Tawney....identifies as a fundamental attribute of our national character" and argues that while "localized

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<sup>1</sup> London, 1982.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Martin, I., "Community Education: towards a theoretical analysis" in Allen, G., et al. (eds.), *Community Education: an agenda for educational reform* (Milton Keynes, 1987), p.11.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.10.

and ad hoc development has produced a rich diversity of practice.....a price has been paid in terms of lack of conceptual clarity and theoretical coherence" (pp.9-10). Several writers, including Martin (p.12), refer back to Raymond Williams' ironic description of 'community' as "the warmly persuasive word to describe an existing set of relationships, or the warmly persuasive word to describe an alternative set of relationships" and his contention that "unlike all other terms of social organization.....it seems never to be used unfavourably, and never to be given any positive opposing or distinguishing terms."<sup>4</sup> The use, or abuse, of the word 'community' is also deplored by Brian Stewart, who describes it as a "loose" word that "consorts to an almost abandoned degree with a host of other words, without necessarily forming deep, meaningful relationships!"<sup>5</sup> The appeal of the word, however, is more sympathetically described by Colin Kirkwood:

The word community is popular, because through it people can express [the] yearning for a communion with each other. It is a yearning for social wholeness, a mutuality and interrelatedness, as opposed to the alienated, fragmented, antagonistic social world of daily experience. Linked with this desire for warm relatedness is a desire for stability.<sup>6</sup>

(pp.148-9)

In highlighting this desire for community, Kirkwood is identifying yet another characteristic tendency in the history of social movements in Britain, as represented by the communitarian strand in English adult education.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> R. Williams, *Keywords* (London, 1976).

<sup>5</sup> "A community adult education service", *Adult Education*, 49 (July, 1976), 69-74.

<sup>6</sup> "Adult education and the concept of community", *Adult Education*, 51 (Sept., 1978), 145-151.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, W. H. Armytage, *Heavens Below: Utopian Experiments in England 1560-1960* (London, 1961), and Dennis Hardy, *Alternative Communities in Nineteenth Century England* (London, 1979).

Despite the chorus of caveats, a few writers have been bold enough to grasp the nettle of definition. Some of their efforts have been very broad and sweeping in their nature. Most of the writers who have attempted to analyse what is meant by the term, however, find themselves driven back to consideration of the aims and functions of community education, inferring that in its actions can be found its rationale. Even Angela Skrimshire's insightful article, "Community Schools and the Education of the 'Social Individual'",<sup>8</sup> while critical of the "imprecise" use of the term, deals with community education in functional terms. She notes that 'community' is "not just a descriptive but also an evaluative concept" which "labels an institution or policy as being concerned with people by virtue of their social relationships, their membership of a social group, not just as individuals" (p.53). She sees this as a view shared by many otherwise divergent schools of thought. She also considers the allegation that "exhortation to 'community' is an active political tool .... a means of diverting attention away from fundamental economic and political issues, which are not of local origin at all" (p.53); in this case, its "latent" function is "defence of the status quo, as well as perhaps nostalgia for the 'community' of traditional societies, as in the conservative tradition of Tönnies" (p.53).

Reference to Tönnies' articulation of 'Gemeinschaft' and 'Gesellschaft' communities is also made in Peter Jarvis's analysis of community education in a chapter within *Adult and Continuing Education; theory and practice* (pp.44-45).<sup>9</sup> As Jarvis points out, Tönnies, a German sociologist writing in the nineteenth century, recognised that a

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<sup>8</sup> *Oxford Review of Education*, Vol.7, No.1 (1981), 53-65.

<sup>9</sup> London: Croom Helm, 1983. See chapter 2, "An Analysis of Contemporary Concepts appertaining to the Education of Adults", pp.23-56.

change was taking place from the traditional form of community, or *Gemeinschaft*, to a form of community based upon association, which he designated *Gesellschaft*. This connection is further explored by Richard Bates, in a paper presented to a World Education Conference in New Zealand in 1975.<sup>10</sup> *Gemeinschaft*, according to Bates' analysis of Tönnies' theory, is characterised by four major elements:

- “1. A system of universally shared beliefs and values.
2. A coherent and accepted pattern of social organisation.
3. A system of authority which protects both values and organisations.
4. A resultant pattern of stability, predictability and belonging.”

This type of community is, Bates points out, usually associated with extended kinship groupings and, although often seen in a highly positive light, can be restrictive, inimical to individuality and intolerant of any deviation from accepted norms. Modern society, however, has no universal system of beliefs and values, has a wide variety of patterns of social organisation, has an ambiguous system of authority, and is dominated by change. 'Community' in this kind of setting is likely to be of the *Gesellschaft* type, formed by alliances of interest and more temporary in nature.

Skrimshire points out the difficulty of 'community' as a descriptor in a situation of shifting urban population, and adds that “the idea of a purely 'functional' community, a community of common interest, may be closer to the conscious experience of modern society” (p.54).

'Community'. she argues, can still be useful, however, in describing “a

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<sup>10</sup> Bates, Richard J., “School and Community”, *Delta* (Massey University Education Department, New Zealand), 19 (1976), 14-22. Paper presented to the World Education Conference of the Auckland Branch of the New Zealand Educational Institute, Auckland, August 30, 1975.

form of social process”, which is likely to be a partial and changing one. When applied to education and schools, she continues, it also has “tactical value”:

It has provided support for a variety of interesting ideas, some of which might otherwise have had little public appeal, and small chance of being put into practice. It has linked ideas which seem at first to have little in common. The linking has led to conflicts of objectives, but also to mutual enrichment.

(p.54)

The one assumption which Skrimshire singles out as being central to “all the confused and complex historical developments” is the idea that “education should be both of and for people as members of a social group, not for individual achievement alone”.

Martin too recognises the ‘tactical’ aspect of the concept, pointing out that the term’s “inherent ambiguity” can be “a convenient cover for all manner of expedient re-interpretations”.<sup>11</sup> However, he goes on to argue that this ‘functional ambiguity .... allows community education to be understood as inclusive rather than exclusive” and quotes approvingly David Hargreaves’ conclusion that the essence of community education is “the blurring of boundaries between educational establishments and their surrounding communities, as well as between teachers and students, and work and leisure”.<sup>12</sup> The association of ‘education’ and ‘community’, Martin posits, implies a renegotiation of the relationships between what he describes as “the ‘us’ and ‘them’ of the educational process e.g. teacher and student, professional and lay person, producer and consumer”; thus, community education is about “evolving more open, participatory and

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<sup>11</sup> Martin (1987), p.10.

<sup>12</sup> “Community Education: towards a theoretical analysis” in G. Allen et al. (eds.), *Community Education: an agenda...* (Milton Keynes, 1987), p.14.

democratic relationships between educators and their constituencies.”<sup>13</sup> As a corollary to this, he posits that community education also implies a commitment to the concept of ‘lifelong learning’, and points out that both the Community Education Association and the Scottish Council for Community Education “identify forms and varied contexts throughout life .... as the starting point for their interpretations of community education.”<sup>14</sup>

In summary, there is much discussion of the aims and functions of community education, its particular characteristics and, as a consequence, the role of the community educator. However, a number of the writers on community education, aware of the assortment of activities subsumed under the heading of community education, are clearly keen that some order and meaning should be brought to bear upon this embarrassment of riches. Out of this has arisen a number of attempts to distinguish specific categories within community education (and within adult education as a whole).

Increasingly, one sees emerging in the literature the concept of a continuum in adult and community education, often expressed in a typology. In some cases this takes the form of a progressive listing of the potential tasks of the community school. For example, J. Nisbet et al. in *Towards Community Éducation: An Evaluation of Community Schools*,<sup>15</sup> list six ‘elements’ in community education “which can be combined in almost every possible permutation and with different weighting”. These are:

1. Mutually supportive relationships between school and

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<sup>13</sup> Martin (1987), p.17.

<sup>14</sup> Martin (1987), p.17.

<sup>15</sup> Aberdeen, 1980, pp.98-110.

community

2. Shared facilities between school and community
3. Community-orientated curriculum
4. Lifelong education
5. Community involvement in decision-making and management
6. Community development

Nisbet and his co-writers emphasise that this is not intended as a sequence of development. In their own survey, they found that most schools limited their commitment to elements 1 and 2, and “the majority do not regard element 6 as a legitimate part of their function” (p.99). A shorter but similar list is to be found in Wallis and Mee, *Community Schools: Claims and Performance*,<sup>16</sup> where five “persistent ideas” are listed as having emerged in community education policy and practice:

1. The school as a centre for social, recreational, cultural and educational provision
2. The community school as a base for community development and social action
3. “Needs-meeting” and outreach policy
4. The compulsory school curriculum: relevance and continuity
5. Participative management.

Moving to the wider concept of community education, a number of models or typologies have been suggested. Stephen Brookfield, in *Adult learners, adult education and the community*,<sup>17</sup> identifies three dimensions of community adult education: (1) Adult education for the Community (which “covers the kind of activities regarded as the

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<sup>16</sup> Nottingham, 1988; chapter 2, pp.12-30.

<sup>17</sup> Milton Keynes, 1983; chapter 4, “Community Adult Education”, pp.60-89.

staple diet of adult education programme planning ..... based on some kind of needs assessment of the wishes and desires of adults within the locale of the providing centre" - pp.84-5); (2) Adult Education in the Community (which equates to what is elsewhere referred to as 'informal adult education' and 'outreach work', and in which the adult educator acts primarily as adviser and resource, rather than provider - pp.85-6); and (3) Adult Education of the Community (which rests on the adult educator's identification of deficiencies within the community and initiates action among the members of the community to improve the social health of the community - pp.87-818).

Peter Jarvis, in *Adult and Continuing Education*,<sup>19</sup> also defines three forms of community education: education for action and/or development; education in the community; and extra-mural forms of education. The first of these is what might be termed the 'radical' model; the second equates to the community school-based form; the third is a rather vaguer concept which largely focuses upon independent self-help groups meeting for informal discussion outside of any educational institution. Similarly, Barry Elsey, in *Social Theory Perspectives on Adult Education*,<sup>20</sup> presents a three-pronged model of adult education, based upon their "ideologies of social purpose" (p.119). He summarises his three models as 'conventional

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<sup>18</sup> Interestingly, and in contrast to most supporters of this mode of adult/ community education, Brookfield defines this as a highly *prescriptive* form of adult education: "In adult education of [this kind] the community educators have in mind a notion of the kind of community they wish to see and they do their best to ensure that this ensues."

<sup>19</sup> London, 1983; chapter 2, "An Analysis of Contemporary Concepts appertaining to the Education of Adults", pp.23-56.

<sup>20</sup> Nottingham, 1986; pp.115-121.

<sup>21</sup> *Journal of Community Education*, 6, 1 (1987), 2-5.

(Social conservation/maintenance, individualism and economic development)', 'liberal-progressive (Social reform and individual development)' and 'radical (Far reaching social change and collective egalitarianism)'.

The most idiosyncratic typology is that of Bob O'Hagan, as outlined in his article, "Efficiency, enrichment and empowerment"<sup>21</sup> and subsequently in *The Charnwood Papers: fallacies in Community Education*.<sup>22</sup> As the title of his article indicates, O'Hagan's tripartite model is based upon, in his words, "the purposes postulated for community education" which he considers "central to an understanding of how and why particular patterns of community education emerge" (p.2). The "efficiency" model he sees as being intended to "improve the efficiency of the education service" and "stems from a philosophy of bourgeois or liberal individualism"; it is a response to demands from commerce or individuals and emphasises the transactional exchange between teacher and pupil (p.2). The 'enrichment' model has the aim of enriching the culture of particular communities and is also aimed at "minimising interpersonal conflict among isolated individuals by social engineering which will change people's negative attitudes" (pp.2-3). Through a 'multi-cultural strategy' social bonds will be formed and a sense of belonging restored. In the 'empowerment' model, the purpose of community education is "to assist the powerless sections of society to gain more control over their circumstances"; it is thus associated with "socialism and other radical movements", is based upon class interests and leads inevitably to conflict with the ruling groups in society (p.4). These three models O'Hagan sees as being "not only

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<sup>21</sup> *Journal of Community Education*, 6, 1 (1987), 2-5.

<sup>22</sup> Ticknall, 1991; Chapter 8, pp.107-22.

distinct, but mutually exclusive - antagonistic even, since they rest on antagonistic ideological foundations" (p.5).

As these examples would suggest, a consensus appears to have emerged that different models of community education can and do coexist, but that their differing ideologies can lead to conflict and confrontation.

### 2.2.2 The Limits of Functional Analysis

It can be seen that most of the above typologies are based upon identification of the varying *functions* of community schools or of community education as a whole, while others go a stage further and link their models to what Barry Elsey termed 'ideologies of social purpose'.<sup>23</sup> Elsewhere<sup>24</sup> I quote an eminent community educator to the effect that the whole discussion concerning adult education and social change can only be understood "in relation to the question of purpose". To a large extent I would agree with this, and the analysis of the two camps in chapter 4 will demonstrate, I believe, that this is so.

However, as will become clear from more detailed study of the dispute over community education, there are numerous other areas of dissent which are separate from, but linked to, the question of purpose. One example is the discussion of the concept of 'deprivation' which is addressed by a number of the proponents in the course of the argument and which is obviously germane to the question of working-class education. There are, moreover, certain elements which seem to

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<sup>23</sup> *Social Theory Perspectives on Adult Education* (Nottingham, 1986).

<sup>24</sup> Chapter 4, p. 197.

correlate with the basic division but which are not necessarily derivatives of the purpose of a particular model of education (for example, the teaching methodology which employs problem-solving and enquiry is much more widely advocated by the 'community development' type of community education, but is not dictated by the goal of social improvement; rather it is a natural expression of the mind-set which embraces a practical, egalitarian, student-centred ideal of education). As soon as one looks at the diversity of arguments put forward in the debate, it becomes clear that the issues underlying the split are far more complex than is indicated by identification of "purpose" as the rock upon which adult education divides. Thus, although a consideration of purpose is essential to any critical examination of adult and community education, there are numerous other factors which must be taken into account in attempting to construct a useful tool for analysis, and it is to these that we now turn.

### 2.3 Internal and external factors

The question immediately arises whether one should look for the factors which have led to the 'great divide' within or outside the educational movements themselves. It seems common sense to admit that education in general is greatly influenced by societal pressures. Indeed, many educators of more radical leanings would argue that the educator's agenda is set by certain dominant groups in society and that education is a tool used by these groups to consolidate their own position of power and preserve the status quo. Regardless of one's response to this contention, it cannot be denied that education and the society in which it exists are inextricably linked. It is

undoubtedly a truism to say that whatever affects a society - whether war, peace, revolution, prosperity, depression, technological advances, or the less definable shifts in thinking which occur - inevitably has its effects on the educational philosophy and practice of that society. A sizable literature already exists which examines the effects on British social movements of, for example, the French Revolution, agrarian changes, the industrial revolution, various religious revivals, and any number of the other significant events of the time. Much of this literature deals incidentally with the subject of education, sometimes devoting a substantial amount of attention to it. There is also, as I have indicated, a very respectable body of work on the history of adult education,<sup>25</sup> which has inevitably dealt with the consequences of social change for educational philosophy and practice and vice-versa. But, so far as I have been able to establish, there has been no major analytical study of the *patterns* of social and educational change, where the history of adult education is concerned.

Before one can begin the study of the patterns of interaction between education and social change, however, a usable model of the patterns within education itself is required. What is here being attempted is a construct which will identify and classify the crucial attitudes, values or beliefs to be found among the *providers* which, as I hope to demonstrate subsequently, are what dictate the form of adult education and so determine whether a movement will tend towards a particular agenda, whether 'liberal', 'radical', or any other kind. These elements, I would suggest, together function as a litmus test for each of the predominant orientations within adult education.

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<sup>25</sup> One can cite, as examples, the work of R. Peers, T. Kelly, J. F. C. Harrison, H. Silver, and B. Simon, all of whom have made seminal contributions to this field.

Out of these elements I have assembled a matrix based upon three distinct positions on a continuum, under which are listed eight elements representing attitudinal 'markers'. I have then gone on to suggest what would be the archetypal stance of each position in relation to each of the elements, and have allocated each a label to serve as a code for that stance. I should emphasise that the code words are meant to be indicative rather than definitive, and that other one-word descriptors could arguably be better applied.

Where the positions or models are concerned, I have attached identifier labels, two of which ('Liberal' and 'Radical') are those identified as the main proponents in the battle for the soul of community education described in chapter 4. In looking at the earlier adult education movements, it must be pointed out, however, that a third model can be discerned - one that is now largely defunct, but which is most clearly represented (as we shall see subsequently in this chapter) in late eighteenth/early nineteenth century basic education for adults. Although the attitudes, values and beliefs which informed this model would largely be rejected by modern educators, nevertheless it constitutes a third school of thought which has, historically, shaped certain forms of adult education, and so it cannot be ignored. I have, therefore, included it as a third point in the continuum, if only for perspective on the other two, with which we are principally concerned, and to set the others within a historical context; this I have designated the 'Paternalist' model.

The factors which I would single out as attitudinal 'markers' are as follows:

- 1) the perceptions of the providers concerning their client

group(s);

- 2) their understanding of the function of education;
- 3) their own educational motive force;
- 4) their concept of the ideal society;
- 5) their organisational preferences;
- 6) their chosen pedagogical style;
- 7) their commitment to a certain content;
- 8) their expression of the desirable 'end products' of education.

I shall consider these in turn, and then outline a suggested matrix which might be used as a first step in analysing the ideological profile of adult education movements past and present.

#### 2.4 A Structure for Enquiry

My main criteria in selecting these particular elements were, firstly, that each should have featured at some point as an issue for question or debate in earlier analysis and discussion of community education and, secondly, that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to form a complete picture of an individual person's or organisation's educational ideal if their view on this element were lacking. In each case, what I am describing is an extreme of some kind, and therefore stereotypical, but, as I have already pointed out, each is intended to be seen as a point along a continuum.

- 1) The perceptions of the providers concerning their client  
group(s)

In the Paternalist model of education, the person to whom the

educational activity is directed is seen rather as Dickens depicted Mr. Gradgrind's pupils in *Hard Times* - as empty pitchers waiting to be filled with appropriate knowledge as and when the master determines. The view of the student in this case is a negative one, implying that he is ignorant, untutored, lacking, possessing deficiencies which must be remedied. His role is a passive one, that of someone who is 'done to' rather than 'doing'. For this position I have used the code-word '*object*'.

In the Liberal model, the student is considerably more active in the learning process, but he is still seen as in need of the knowledge and skills which the 'expert' teacher possesses and will transmit. At the same time, because his participation in the educational activity is voluntary (and frequently paid for) he occupies to a certain extent the role of customer. As such, he can pick and choose, accept or reject what is offered. Because of this comparative autonomy, he is advised, rather than directed, by the teacher, who, therefore, perceives him as the '*client*'.

In the Radical model, the educator deliberately attempts to identify with the people for whom he acts as an educational resource. He may regard them in the first instance as victim (of deprivation, injustice, powerlessness), but he also sees them as at least potentially independent, self-determining, and activist. He believes in their right to make their own decisions and follow their own choices; his own task is to assist them in this and so considers them to be in the role of '*co-worker*'.

## 2) Their understanding of the function of education

Education can undoubtedly be harnessed to the chariot of many causes. It can be seen as an instrument to improve the moral life of the nation or of particular classes within the population. It can be the means of attaining (or restricting) political power. It can be primarily vocational, for the benefit either of the aspiring employee or of the employer. It can be a tool for establishing and maintaining social order, or it can be the means of training a responsible citizenry and ensuring democratic participation in the governing of the nation. It can transform an individual and, through the elevating of many individuals, an entire society. Or it can be the motive force which spurs people to overturn society itself.

In a later section we shall be discussing the extent to which education (and the restriction or denial of education) was seen as a means of reducing crime, ensuring the stability of society, and protecting the property and privileges of the establishment. There are, of course, educators who would argue that education fulfils this function even today, the only difference being that it is covert rather than overt. However, those early philanthropists who took a Paternalist approach to the education of adults and children alike were open in their conviction that this method of social control was not only justified but admirable.

For the Liberal model, the principal function of adult education, as we have already explored, is to encourage the intellectual, cultural and civic development of the individual, while for the Radical it is to free him from his position of powerlessness in society and to enable him to make and carry out decisions concerning his own life. These

three stances I have coded as '*control*', '*enrichment*' and '*liberation*' respectively.

### 3) Their own educational motive force

For this element, I have chosen the three code words '*evangelical*', '*developmental*' and '*empowering*'. The first of these may be somewhat misleading, since it is not intended to indicate a religious or sectarian context, but rather a characteristic fervour for the conversion of individuals (from ignorance and vice to knowledge and respectability). In fact, throughout the history of adult education, as we have seen, religion and education have frequently gone hand in hand, but here the evangelical motivation of the Paternalist model applies to secular as well as religious education.

In the case of the Liberal provider, the motive force is '*developmental*' in the sense of a wish to foster the growth of the individual. Here, the educator is in the role of the gardener who plants, feeds, waters, trains and prunes as required. His intention is to produce a person who knows and understands more, who interprets and analyses more skillfully, who appreciates more widely and who lives life more fully. The Radical educator, on the other hand, see himself more as the one who provides the tools for other people to learn to wield. His motivation is to see people increasing in power, confidence and autonomy and to help them acquire a just share of society's resources. His purpose is an *empowering* one.

### 4) Their concept of the ideal society

It would probably be difficult in our present society to find any

educator who supported the social system in which the Paternalist model flourished. The notion of “the rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate” would be looked at askance, but to wealthy Victorian providers (if not to the poor recipients) this order of things seemed ordained and immutable. To them, not only was the stratification of society the natural order, but to tamper with or attempt to overthrow it was to open a Pandora's box of disruption and misery. For them the only safe society was a '*hierarchical*' one.

For the Liberal wing, society must always be based on democracy. Repeatedly the advocates of this approach link their educational efforts with the encouragement of democratic participation and one of their frequently expressed goals is to fit individuals for such participation. This stance inevitably, therefore, embraces the '*democratic*' ideal. The Radical model of society goes one step further, presupposes a basic democracy and goes beyond to envisage a society characterised by collaboration and in which a communitarian approach is welcomed. In this society, people form common-interest groups to work together towards mutually agreed goals; the community is highly valued and is the crucible within which relationships are formed and the forum in which life largely takes place. For this ideal I have used the code word '*co-operative*'.

##### 5) Their organisational preferences

In considering this element I have chosen the code words '*directive*', '*institutional*' and '*devolved*', linked to the Paternalist, Liberal and Radical stances respectively. The '*directive*' preference of the Paternalist requires no elaboration, since in this model organisation

is inevitably a 'top-down' structure, and control remains in the hands of the provider. The Liberal model, however, normally operates within an institutional structure and is associated with the concept of professionalism. This external and impersonal framework to a great extent defines and formalises the relationship between teacher and student, thus providing the security of the known and expected but also restricting the interaction to certain specified modes. By contrast, the Radical preference is for a model which removes the power of decision-making and structuring from the educator and devolves it to the participants. In many ways it is *anti-structural*, opting instead for a flexible, mutable, organic kind of organisation which is readily responsive to changing needs and fluctuating circumstances.

#### 6) Their chosen pedagogical style

In the Paternalist model it is difficult to imagine a pedagogical style other than '*didactic*'. Like the massive systems established by Lancaster and Bell for the education of children, which were based totally upon a didactic, not to say mechanical, approach, so the Adult Schools adopted a highly directive mode of instruction. It was seen as logical, reliable, replicable and, above all, economical. That its scope and effectiveness were strictly limited was not regarded as a major problem by its promoters at the time. In contrast to this, the Liberal model is especially associated with a '*tutorial*' style which retains the separate roles of tutor and student but introduces the element of discussion and interaction, and thus of personal relationship. The Radical model leans towards an '*egalitarian*' style, very much in the Dewey mould, where the distinction between teacher and learner is

blurred and learning becomes a joint, collaborative process in which both are engaged

7) Their commitment to a certain content

In this case, the stances of the three models can be described as '*prescriptive*' (Paternalist), '*advisory*' (Liberal) or '*open*' (Radical). For the Paternalist, the content of education is screened and strictly defined according to the criterion of possible effect. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Bible was often the sole text used in the earliest adult education movements and the ability to read the Scriptures the only test of educational achievement. The Liberal educator, although he also believes in a defined content, adopts a very different stance. His role, he believes, is to introduce the student to a recognised body of knowledge and to act as a guide to the student as he navigates the scholarly seas. His capacity is, therefore, an advisory one. The Radical wing, on the other hand, fights shy of any kind of prescribed curriculum. His starting point is a very different one, focusing upon the existing knowledge, the particular experiences, the interests and the aspirations of an individual or group. From this beginning, a route is constructed which may lead in any direction but the justification for which is the 'need' of the person or group. It is, therefore, a completely open approach to learning, unrelated to any idea of a particular content.

8) Their expression of the desirable 'end products' of education

Even in their identification of the objectives of the educational process, the three models differ substantially. Where the Paternalist is concerned, the indications of success tend to be in terms of changed ways of acting or an altered way of life. As will be shown

later in this chapter, this often took the form of 'before' and 'after' pen portraits of the educated as opposed to uneducated working man (or woman). I have, therefore, termed this stance the '*behavioural*' one. For the Liberal model, the emphasis is on development of the analytical, critical and appreciative faculties, and so I have used the word '*intellectual*' to denote this set of goals. And finally, because the Radical model is largely concerned with the improvement or wholesale reform of society, and sees its objectives in terms of demonstrable social change, I have used the code word '*social*' to identify this set of desired end-products.

## 2.5 The Analytical Matrix

The models and characteristic stances identified above can be presented in the form of a matrix, as the diagram below illustrates. In this case I have summarised it in tabular form, but in fact each line should be seen as a continuum - a line upon which the values, beliefs, ideals and aspirations of the various forms of adult education can be located, so that each emerges with its own individual pattern of ideology.

	<u>PATERNALIST</u>	<u>LIBERAL</u>	<u>RADICAL</u>
<b>Client perceptions:</b>	object	client	co-worker
<b>Function of education:</b>	control	enrichment	liberation
<b>Motive force:</b>	evangelical	developmental	empowering
<b>Ideal of society:</b>	hierarchical	democratic	co-operative
<b>Organisation:</b>	directive	institutional	devolved
<b>Pedagogical style:</b>	didactic	tutorial	egalitarian
<b>Content:</b>	prescriptive	advisory	open
<b>Objectives:</b>	behavioural	intellectual	social

## 2.6 Uses of the Framework

Having thus constructed a framework for analysis, I must now indicate the reasons for this type of analysis and the potential uses of the matrix. It is one of the contentions of this thesis that community education has suffered, over the past two decades in particular, from confusion and lack of clarity of purpose. Its relation to the wider field of adult education has been uneasy and it has been riven by internal dissension which has served to weaken its impact and syphon off its energies. If the concept of community education is not to disappear as yet another temporary fad or failed experiment, it must work out its *raison d'être* and, in these hard times, justify its share of diminishing resources. For this reason alone, it is important that we understand what it is, what values it stands for, what functions it can fulfil, and what width of parameters it can withstand.

Confirmation of the need for the approach taken in this chapter is contained in an article by Ian Martin entitled "Community education: towards a theoretical analysis".<sup>26</sup> Published in 1987, some time after this present investigation was begun, the article complains that at present "there is still a dearth of value-based ideological analysis of community education as a generic and inter-disciplinary field" (p.21). Study of the history and literature of community education, Martin claims,

reveals distinctive elements in its development, originating in particular social and political circumstances. Furthermore, historical enquiry leads naturally to ideological analysis because it inevitably raises questions of context, purpose and

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<sup>26</sup> In Allen, G., et al. (eds.), *Community education: an agenda for educational reform* (Milton Keynes, 1987), Chapter 1, pp.9-32.

value. It can therefore be used to explore some of the hidden agendas that inform the practice of community education. But this necessarily involves a conscious effort to get under the surface to the implicit ideologies beneath.

(p.21)

Martin notes that "most community education takes place in the blurred areas between theoretical models" (p.25) and goes on to point out that

Given their ideological differences ..... cross-fertilization will produce a degree of tension or incompatibility of the kind that is often evident in practice. The applied value of ideological analysis is that it can help to explain this and to clarify the dilemmas of choice which frequently confront practitioners.

(p.25)<sup>27</sup>

In what respect, then, does the analysis outlined here contribute to the formulation of a theoretical basis for community education? Earlier in this chapter, I summarised a number of typologies which were already contributing to the understanding of community education and which had been deduced from current practice. To a certain extent, the above matrix is an extension and elaboration of the process begun by these. Where does it differ from previous efforts? In the first place, it locates the analysis within the wider context of the history of adult education - something which has not, so far as I have been able to discover, been done before. No movement can be divorced from its antecedents, if we are to fully comprehend it, and so this is an important element in the process of analysis. Secondly, it focuses, not upon the learner, but upon the provider (whether an individual or an organisation), whose own ideological makeup is an important determinant of the type of adult education offered; in so

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<sup>27</sup> Evidence gleaned from the interviews with adult/community educators, and detailed in chapter 5, would seem to support Martin's point.

doing, it emphasises 'purpose', as opposed to 'function'. In these two respects, therefore, it is hoped that the above, though yet to be tested, may provide a starting point for the kind of enquiry of which Martin's article deplores the lack.

## 2.7 Applying the Matrix: Some Examples in the History of Adult Education

I have already made reference to the Paternalist model as being embodied in many of the adult education ventures of the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, and, indeed, as we shall see, examples of this particular set of principles and attitudes abound. However, it would be a mistake to think of this as the only or even the predominant approach. In actual fact, the "education of the people", in the hundred and thirty years between 1790 and 1920, was itself less a movement than a somewhat chaotic welter of activity, characterised by great enthusiasms and bitter dissensions, by rapid expansions and equally rapid declines, by the highest ideals and the most cynically self-interested motives. It gave rise to a unique succession of organisations and institutions, of which some have lingered into the present age, others barely survived their infancy, and a few were virtually strangled at birth.

These organisations ranged in size from the handful which constituted a mutual improvement society to the hundreds who filled the lecture halls of the larger mechanics' institutes and working men's colleges. Their clients included the unlettered agricultural worker wrestling with scriptural syntax in parson's kitchen, the clerk or shop assistant attending lectures on art or literature, and the politically-minded artisan debating with his fellows on Tom Paine's

*Rights of Man* or Thomas Hodgskin's *Popular Political Economy*. The providers were Utilitarians, Owenites, radical Tories, Chartists, Christian Socialists, Nonconformists, trade unionists, middle-class evangelicals, Anglican "slum parsons", university dons, and, not least, the working classes themselves.

The content varied widely - from basic literacy and numeracy to Principles of Mechanics and Chemistry, from the mundane practicalities of book-keeping to the higher flights of astronomy. Many institutions, beginning with limited aims (teaching people to read the Bible, science for artisans), as time went on broadened their scope to include literature and the arts and other subjects of more popular appeal, encompassing social as well as educational activities.

(Phrenology, that peculiarly Victorian pseudoscience, consistently outdrew all other topics, much to the dismay of more serious-minded educators.)<sup>28</sup> Not all subjects were acceptable to the educators. The controversial topics of religion and politics were banned in some institutions or restricted to decorous expressions of conformity, while the issues themselves were being debated furiously outside their doors. In other organisations, religion or politics was the staple fare from the beginning.

Against a background of what seem almost insuperable difficulties (long hours of work, exhaustion, poverty, illiteracy, apathy and the warmer attractions of the pubs and gin palaces to combat on the one hand; restrictive legislation, fears of revolution, vested interests and complacency to be overcome on the other hand), the societies and

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<sup>28</sup> It is difficult for us to understand the respect which phrenology (the study of the shape of the skull as an indicator of character and temperament, popularly referred to as the 'reading of bumps') was accorded in the nineteenth century. For an interesting analysis of this phenomenon, see J. F. C. Harrison, *Learning and Living* (1961), 114-7.

clubs, schools and institutes fought tenaciously to raise the level of education and by this means the standard of living of the great mass of the population. Their methods were often crude, their aims arguably misguided at times, their failures as great as their successes. Taken as a whole, however, their efforts constitute one vast ferment of educational experimentation, the results of which have yet to be fully assimilated by modern adult educationists.

And within this hive of activity are to be found examples, not only of the Paternalist model but of the Liberal and, particularly among working class organisations, of the Radical approach. An example of each is discussed below. It should be noted, as has been emphasised earlier, that there are few, if any, 'pure' examples of the three 'poles'. An organisation may lean towards one pole in certain respects, towards a different pole where other elements are concerned. Nor are organisations static in their approaches - over a period of time, considerable alteration may take place in the stances they adopt. It is possible to trace such shifts both in organisations and in individuals, and some examples of this kind of development are also given in the following sections.

### 2.7.1 The Paternalist Model

The Paternalist approach to adult education can perhaps be seen most clearly in the Adult School movement, which pursued through various means the teaching of the labouring classes to read. In the last decades of the eighteenth century, illiteracy was still the norm for the agricultural labouring population<sup>29</sup> and was, if anything,

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<sup>29</sup> Much attention has been given recently to the whole question of literacy in the 18th and 19th centuries in the British Isles. Individual studies are too numerous to mention, but a comprehensive bibliography is to be found in Graff, Harvey J., *Literacy in History: An Interdisciplinary Research Bibliography* (London, 1981).

increasing in the towns, which were rapidly swelling with a huge influx of the rural dispossessed. In these circumstances, the need for adult literacy teaching became pressingly obvious, but, typically, the motivation which led to the spread of adult schools was religious and social (in terms of the preservation of the social order) rather than purely philanthropic. In all of this, it is important to understand the prevalence among many of the more fortunate members of society of a distaste amounting to contempt for the "lower classes". Even among those with the greatest sympathy for the plight of the impoverished working class and the greatest desire to help, there were strong reservations about the type and extent of schooling which might safely be provided for them. Hannah More, for example, whose educational activities in the Mendips represent one of the earliest ventures in the 'education of the people', wrote:

My plan for instructing the poor is very limited and strict. They learn of weekdays such coarse works as may fit them for servants. I allow of no writing. My object has not been to teach dogmas and opinions, but to form the lower class to habits of industry and virtue. I know of no way of teaching morals but by infusing principles of Christianity, nor of teaching Christianity without a thorough knowledge of Scripture.<sup>30</sup>

Where the Adult Schools were concerned, the object of such institutions was to teach the poor to read the Scriptures, naturally for the good of their immortal souls but also in the hope that the education of the lower orders would result in a decrease in crime, a reduction in the number of paupers (and therefore of the poor rate),

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<sup>30</sup> Letter to Mrs. Bowdler, quoted in Collingwood, J. & M., *Hannah More* (Oxford, 1990), pp.75-6.

and greater security of property.<sup>31</sup> In this, as I have already indicated, the perception held by the upper and middle classes of the character and habits of the lower ranks was decisive. As an example, here is a quotation from a letter written, in the autumn of 1795, by Hannah More to her friend William Wilberforce, describing the opening of a school at Blagdon in the Mendips:

Several of the grown-up youths had been tried at the last assizes; three were children of a person lately condemned to be hanged; - many thieves! all ignorant, profane and vicious beyond belief! Of this banditti we have enlisted one hundred and seventy; and when the clergyman, a hard man, who is also the magistrate, saw these creatures kneeling around us, whom he had seldom seen but to commit or punish in some way, he burst into tears.<sup>32</sup>

Similarly, Robert Owen, describing the beginnings of his work at New Lanark, summed up the materials for his social experiment thus:

I soon found that I had every bad habit and practice of the people to overcome. They were intemperate and immoral, with very few exceptions, throughout the whole establishment ..... Theft was very general, and was carried on to an enormous and ruinous extent ..... The population had been collected from anywhere and anyhow, for it was then most difficult to induce any sober, well-doing family to leave their home to go into cotton mills as then conducted.<sup>33</sup>

The picture of the working classes which is presented in the letters, journals and polemical writings of late eighteenth/early nineteenth

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<sup>31</sup> Ironically, some of the recipients of this type of education soon advanced sufficiently to perceive these ulterior motives and there followed a strong demand from the working-class itself for a non-denominational, secular education. That many working-class people took advantage of religiously-based adult classes for secular educational ends is interestingly demonstrated by T. Laqueur in his *Religion and Respectability: Sunday Schools and Working Class Culture 1780-1850* (New Haven/London, 1976), pp. 148-60.

<sup>32</sup> Roberts, W., *Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Mrs. Hannah More* (2nd edn.; London, 1834), Vol. II, p.220; quoted in Collingwood, J. & M., *Hannah More*, p.96.

<sup>33</sup> Owen, Robert, *The Life of Robert Owen by Himself* (London, 1857; repr. 1920), pp.79-80.

century philanthropists such as Hannah More and even Robert Owen (who, however, adhered to a much stronger belief in the *potential* of the working population) is not an attractive one. The frequent reaction of the middle and upper classes to their discovery of the degraded condition and immoral habits of working people was horror, not unmixed with blame which was frequently laid at the door of the poor themselves. It is undoubtedly to their credit that they persevered in their desire to elevate this underclass to a better way of life through the improving effects of religion and education, but they did so without any reliance upon the innate intelligence, judgment or abilities of the working classes themselves.

In these circumstances and with this perception of the lower classes, it is not surprising that the type of education prescribed was circumscribed in its content and heavily moral in its emphasis. The proscription against writing which Hannah More imposed was not uncommon, since many of the philanthropic providers of education for the poor believed that the ability to write might be misused (for example, in forgery). Hannah More herself expressed anxiety about the possibility of over-educating the poor and making them unhappy and discontented by raising their educational level beyond what they could expect in life. She wrote to Sir William Pepys in 1821,

I have exerted my feeble voice to prevail upon my few parliamentary friends, to steer the middle way between the scylla of brutal ignorance, and the charybdis of a literary education. The one is cruel, the other preposterous.<sup>34</sup>

It was safer just to teach the lower classes to read only, and especially to read their Bibles. Morality, obedience and contentment with their lot was implicit in the curriculum which arose out of this view of the

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<sup>34</sup> Roberts, *op.cit.*, vol. IV, p.176; quoted Collingwood, *Hannah More*, p.77.

recipients of their educational efforts.

By contrast, William Cobbett, who had begun his life labouring from the earliest age on his father's farm and who knew something from personal experience of poverty and the agricultural labouring class, exclaimed:

Instead, therefore, of applauding 'happy poverty', which applause is so much the fashion of the present day, I despise the man that is poor and contented; for such content is a certain proof of a base disposition, a disposition which is the enemy of all industry, all exertion, all love of independence.<sup>35</sup>

And during the agrarian revolts of 1830, when soldiers were sent in to subdue the starving agriculture workers, Cobbett wrote in defence of "the honest, sensible and industrious English labourer".<sup>36</sup>

The predominant thinking of the middle-class benefactors, however, continued to be paternalistic and reproofing, as is illustrated in an address by Dr. Thomas Pole, the contemporary historian of the Adult Schools movement:

We are now called upon to become instrumental in opening windows to admit celestial light into the habitations of darkness and ignorance; that those who sit in the valley of the shadow of death may be brought to the saving knowledge of the Lord ... But when the good seed hath been sown ... how changed will be the state of our favoured isle! The lower classes will not then be so dependent on the provident members of society as they are now, either for the comforts or necessities of life. Industry, frugality, and economy will be their possession. They will also have learned better to practice meekness, Christian fortitude, and resignation. Our poor's-

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<sup>35</sup> *Cottage Economy*, 2-3; quoted in Williams, Raymond, *Cobbett* (Oxford, 1983), p.31.

<sup>36</sup> *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, Nov. 13, 1830; quoted in Williams, *op.cit.*, p.26.

rates [sic] will thus be lightened: our hospitals, alms-houses, dispensaries, and other public charities less encumbered: the generous efforts of the well-disposed will thus become a legacy of blessing to succeeding ages; whilst those whom Divine Wisdom has seen fit to place in the humbler stations of life, will recount with gratitude the favours conferred upon them, and give praise to Him from whom is derived every good and perfect gift.<sup>37</sup>

The Adult Schools of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century which Pole is describing were initially an offshoot from the Sunday schools movement begun by Robert Raikes in Sooty Alley, Gloucester, in 1780. Here Raikes founded a school (on Sundays, the only free day of the week for the working population) for chimney sweeps' children, which, publicised in Raikes' own newspaper, the *Gloucester Journal*, was quickly imitated elsewhere. So rapid was the spread of the schools that by 1785 a national body, the Sunday School Society, was formed to co-ordinate their efforts. In Wales, where Welsh-language "circulating schools" (i.e. short-term schools taught by a peripatetic master) begun in the 1730s had fallen away considerably, the Sunday school idea was adopted with enthusiasm, but in Scotland, already well-provided with parish schools, the movement made little headway.

Originally intended for children, the Sunday schools soon extended to the teaching of adults, and since this was not always a satisfactory arrangement the adult sections tended to split off into their own separate schools. The first independent adult school in the country was that founded at Nottingham in 1798 by William Singleton of the Methodist New Connection Church (in whose premises it was held) and Samuel Fox, a Quaker grocer. Intended at the start for young

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<sup>37</sup> Pole, Thomas, *History of the Origin and Progress of Adult Schools* (Bristol, 1814).

women employees of the lace and hosiery industries, it soon included a class for men. Reading (of Scripture), writing and arithmetic were taught, principally by the assistants from Mr Fox's grocer's shop. There are other early examples, such as the Sunday school for adults established by the Rev Thomas Charles at Bala in North Wales in 1811, but the main expansion followed the opening at Bristol in 1812 of an "Institution for instructing Adult Persons to read the Holy Scriptures". Within five years, it is estimated,<sup>38</sup> between 200 and 300 adult schools were created, in the industrial centres and in smaller rural towns alike.

The aim of these schools was strictly limited - pupils were ejected as soon as they could demonstrate some competence in reading the Bible. The teaching of writing caused a storm in some areas among sabbatarians and led to the introduction of week-day evening classes for writing, arithmetic and other subjects.<sup>39</sup> Teaching methods were unsophisticated, discipline severe, and these early schools had none of the democratic spirit to be found in their counterparts later in the century. Their influence is difficult to assess. The fact that by the middle of the century almost all the schools in existence between 1815 and 1818 had disappeared indicates perhaps that they had exhausted their limited objective.

From this survey of the Adult School movement a number of points have emerged which serve to place it firmly in the Paternalist camp. Where perception of the client is concerned, the low opinion in which the working classes were held even by their active benefactors has

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<sup>38</sup> Thomas Kelly, *A History of Adult Education in Great Britain* (Liverpool: University Press, 1961), p.151.

<sup>39</sup> J. W. Hudson, *The History of Adult Education* (London, 1851), pp. 18-19.

been clearly demonstrated. The latent, if not the overt, function of the provision offered was in fact to mould the working classes into habits of honesty, sobriety, economy, obedience and hard work, with a view to protecting society from criminality and to relieving it of some of the cost of poverty. The providers were spurred on by, in this case, a literal evangelical fervour of the religious kind, and their goals were primarily behavioural - the moral (as well as spiritual) reform of the recipients (seen primarily as 'objects'), resulting in improved habits of the kind listed above.

The quotations from the writings of individuals such as Hannah More and Sir Thomas Pole indicate the extent to which the organisers of the Adult Schools were bound by a hierarchical view of society. Their instinctive assumption of class superiority, coupled with their observations of the often horrifying details of life in working class communities and of the ignorance and brutishness of many of the inhabitants, confirmed them in their right, indeed duty, to decide what was best for their clientele. Thus, their approach to school organisation, teaching methods and content were all highly directive and prescriptive. Consultation was not a common feature, it seems clear, and involvement of the recipients in the direction of the educational process was probably never considered. No doubt there existed many examples of more informal, less rigid arrangements for adult basic education, but the letters, journals and reports of those who organised the larger-scale educational efforts of this kind reveal the strongly Paternalist approach which has just been described.

### 2.7.2 The Radical Model

While the Adult Schools leaned overwhelmingly towards the Paternalist pole, examples of the Radical model are scattered throughout the history of adult education in the nineteenth century, sometimes as organisations in their own right, at other times as the extreme wing of a movement generally adhering to a more middle-of-the-road approach.

Among the earliest examples were the public debating societies, many of which were working-class or had a sizable working-class element in their membership. In the last twenty years of the eighteenth century, when the enthusiasm for political reform, fanned by the revolutionary winds sweeping across the Channel from France, was at its height, large numbers of the debating societies and discussion groups merged into the political reform societies which were springing up everywhere. Some of these groups, named Corresponding Societies, Constitutional Societies, Revolution Societies, Friends of the People and so forth, were active in educational work, arranging lectures and debates, distributing pamphlets, setting up reading rooms and organising circulating libraries. Their main function, however, was the achievement of political reform, and the educational activities were subsidiary (and contributory) to this overriding purpose.

The frank political comment emanating from the societies proved too much for the authorities, as the various trials arising out of their activities testify, and in 1799 the Corresponding Societies were suppressed by Act of Parliament. Public opinion, sickened by the brutality of the later stages of the French Revolution, had already turned against them to some extent. Nevertheless, the societies had made a valuable contribution to education. As Francis Place, the

tailor who later attained such prominence in the cause of reform, wrote of the London Corresponding Society, which he joined in 1794:

The moral effects of the society were very great indeed. It induced men to read books, instead of spending their time at public houses; it induced them to love their own homes, it taught them to think, to respect themselves, and to desire to educate their children ..... The discussions in the Sunday afternoon reading and debating associations held in their own rooms opened them to views to which they had been blind. They were compelled by these discussions to find reasons for their opinions, and to tolerate the opinions of others. In fact, it gave a new stimulus to a large mass of men who had hitherto been but too justly considered, as incapable of any but the very grossest pursuits and sensual enjoyments. It elevated them in society.<sup>40</sup>

Although the early reform societies ceased to function, the spirit of enquiry and the egalitarian fervour which they had fostered lived on to inspire similar organisations early in the following century, such as the parliamentary reform groups (the Hampden Clubs and the Unions of Political Protestants, for example), whose educational activities followed the form of Methodist class-meetings,<sup>41</sup> with the difference that the 'scriptures' studied tended to be the works of William Cobbett and radical journals such as Carlile's *Republican* or Wooler's *Black Dwarf*. Once more, however, as in 1799, the Tory government reacted fiercely to suppress the societies with the 'Gagging Act' of 1817 and the Six Acts of 1819. The movement died down for a considerable time thereafter and the working classes turned to the co-

<sup>40</sup> Place MSS (British Museum), MS 27808, ff 59-60. Quoted in Kelly, *History*, p.

<sup>41</sup> An interesting summary of the influence of Methodism, and in particular the widespread adoption of the class-meeting by a variety of radical organisations throughout the 19th century, is contained in J. F. C. Harrison's *The Early Victorians 1832-51* (London, 1971).

operative and trade union movements which flourished in close association in the years from 1825 to 1835,<sup>42</sup> and, in the 1840s, many became active in the Chartist movement.

The co-operative societies owed much to the work and thought of Robert Owen, though there were other important influences, including the older benefit societies. The original intention of the Owenites, who formed a sizable minority in the co-operative societies, was to create independent working communities, living in co-operative settlements in the countryside. These utopian schemes (which, when put into effect, failed with alarming regularity) were few in number, however, most cooperative societies being associations of people engaged in the same trade. As Iorwerth Prothero points out:

The co-operative movement of 1828-34 was in fact a many-sided phenomenon which must not be treated in a linear fashion. It drew together a wide variety of techniques and concerns that were already prevalent in society at large. There was co-operative retailing to buy cheap, ensure proper quality or raise funds. there was the bazaar ... where people hired a stall for a time. There was the industrial school, in which the children would receive education and also do work ... There was ... 'home colonisation' to settle the destitute on the waste lands ... [But] very many members of the trading associations saw no further than retail stores and this is why most societies were confined solely to such activities ...<sup>43</sup>

Whatever the actual expressions of their co-operative spirit,

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<sup>42</sup> Co-operation and the trade union movement, it should be noted, also attracted many members from the Mechanics' Institutes, which suffered over decades from a struggle for control between the working-class membership and the middle-class benefactors who frequently provided essential financial support.

<sup>43</sup> *Artisans and Politics in Early Nineteenth Century London: John Gast and His Times*, (London: Methuen, 1979), p. 247.

nonetheless education was invariably high on the co-operators' list of priorities. The necessity of education was driven home continually by *The Co-operator*, an influential monthly periodical edited by Dr. William King of Brighton. One issue lays down a set of rules for a co-operative society, including the following clauses:

IV Members should not be ignorant and prejudiced persons, but as well informed as their rank in life admits of, and desirous of adding to their knowledge and improving their minds, as far as their circumstances and opportunities allow  
.....

XI The Society should meet in their own room once a week, for the mutual instruction and improvement of the members in the principles of such Unions .....

XII On the other evenings of the week, those members who have leisure, should meet at the room and form themselves into classes for mutual instruction. As the societies will consider labour to be the source of all wealth, and therefore be called Working Unions, so they perceive that labour must be directed by KNOWLEDGE, and therefore they will acquire all the useful knowledge they possibly can.<sup>44</sup>

Beginning with the London Co-operative Society in 1824, societies sprang up like mushrooms, and by 1832, the year of the first Reform Bill, there were thought to be between four and five hundred.<sup>45</sup> In the meantime, following the repeal of the Combination Acts in 1824, trade unions were also proliferating, many of them linked to Owenite co-operative ideas. The most ambitious of these was the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union, established in 1834 under

<sup>44</sup> *The Co-operator*, 6 (Oct. 1, 1828). Quoted in Dyson, A.E., and Lovelock, Julian (eds.), *Education and Democracy* (London, 1975), 61.

<sup>45</sup> Kelly, *History*, 136.

Owenite leadership and rapidly growing to half a million members. But within a year this massive organisation had crumbled and in its collapse carried many of the co-operative societies with it.

Yet another phoenix sprang out of the ashes, however, when the founding by William Lovett and Henry Hetherington in 1836 of the London Working Men's Association gave rise to a spate of Working Men's Associations in both Scotland and England. This time the aims were primarily political rather than economic. The People's Charter, drawn up by Lovett and his associates and embodying six points of parliamentary reform, became the focus and the battle-cry of the Chartist movement during the 1840s:

The educational activities of the Chartists were many and varied, although it must be emphasised that education *per se* was a subsidiary rather than a primary aim. As one Chartist leader exclaimed in disgust, "We ask for the Charter, and they give us a reading-made-easy. Out upon them!"<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, lectures and discussions, weekly classes, Chartist reading rooms and, in particular, the efforts of the Chartist churches, all furthered the cause of working-class education. Chartist Halls were built or purchased to house schools and libraries, often at the instigation of the 'Knowledge Chartists', as the followers of Lovett were known.

When the organised Chartist movement fell apart after 1848 many Chartist leaders turned again to the co-operative movement which had contributed so many of their early recruits and which was enjoying a rebirth, starting with the Rochdale Equitable Pioneers'

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<sup>46</sup> John Watson, *Northern Star* (24 Feb., 1838); quoted in Harrison, *Learning and Living*, p.101.

Society of 1844. Although the Rochdale Society and some of its imitators put aside 2.5% of their profits for education purposes, the co-operative educational drive was considerably weaker in this second flourishing. As one member expressed it in a Leeds Co-operative Society Meeting in 1872, "We want no eddication, give us a bonus."<sup>47</sup>

To attempt to describe in such a truncated form the 'reformist' organisations of the first half of the nineteenth century is to do them a great injustice, and to hugely oversimplify their complex and fascinating history. For the moment, however, this brief summary may suffice to demonstrate their resemblance to the Radical pole of the continuum outlined in the matrix. It can, I think, be claimed that these were *primarily* movements for social and political reform; for many, though not all, of those who participated in them, education was seen as a necessary instrument rather than (or possibly as well as) a 'good' in its own right. As such, its function, in line with the Radical pole of the matrix, was the liberation of the working class, its motive force the desire to empower the powerless. Its ideal was an egalitarian society, based on the principle of co-operation among equals, and its approach to education - in terms of organisation, pedagogical style and content - was democratic, non-directive, explorative and open.

Naturally, this ideal was seldom achieved, even within those organisations membership of which was principally working-class. The involvement of the organisations' middle-class supporters, for example, was frequently the cause of much disharmony, since these tended to assume a more directive role than was welcomed by the

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<sup>47</sup> Reported by G.J. Holyoake in his *Jubilee History of the Leeds Industrial Co-operative Society, Ltd.* (Manchester, 1897, 89); quoted in Harrison, *Learning and Living*, p.105.

members, and since they often held the purse-strings their influence was hard to resist.<sup>48</sup> This direction from the top tended to skew the organisations more towards the Liberal stance and helped create the kind of recurring conflict of ideals to which I have referred and which surfaced again, though in somewhat different form, in the attitudes to community education in the 1960s and '70s.

### 2.7.3 The Liberal Model

In many ways, adult education in the nineteenth century represents a steady progress towards the triumph of the Liberal model, which, as I shall argue in the following chapter, established a pattern for the predominant strain of adult education - and thus of its offspring, community education - in the first half of the twentieth century. It is rather too easy to underestimate the extent to which the Liberal stance represented a giant step towards a more humane, respectful and constructive approach to the education of adults. In this respect, it is perhaps salutary to recall the astonishment of Dr. George Birkbeck, the young Professor of Natural Philosophy at Anderson's Institution in Glasgow, who, while having some apparatus built for him in a tinman's shop, was, in his own words,

arrested by the inquisitive countenances of a circle of operatives, who had crowded round a somewhat curious piece of mechanism (a model of a centrifugal pump) which had been constructed for me in their workshop. I beheld, through every disadvantage of circumstances and appearance, such strong indications of the existence of unquenchable spirit, and such emanations from "the heaven lighted lamp in man", that the

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<sup>48</sup> The clearest example of this is to be found in the Mechanics' Institutes, where the opening of subscriptions to wealthy benefactors all too often meant that control of their committees was wrested from the democratically elected working-class members and devolved to prosperous middle-class supporters and middle-class lecturers.

question was forced upon me, Why are these minds left without the means of obtaining that knowledge which they so ardently desire, and why are the avenues of science barred against them, because they are poor? It was impossible not to determine that the obstacle should be removed: and I therefore resolved to offer them a gratuitous course of elementary philosophical lectures.<sup>49</sup>

The course offered by Birkbeck was on "the mechanical properties of solid and fluid bodies"; it began with an attendance of 75 and by the fourth week was attracting 500. It was repeated annually until Birkbeck's departure for London in 1804, and the class continued to meet under the direction of his successor, until in 1823 it broke away from the parent institution to form an independent body, the Glasgow Mechanics' Institution. This was not the first Mechanics' Institute,<sup>50</sup> but Birkbeck's Glasgow class was the prototype for those which claimed this title both before and after its own incorporation, and it is generally recognised as the first organised effort to supply advanced technical education for the working man. Many of the great technical colleges, further education colleges and even universities of a later period had their origins in these modest early institutions. They were, moreover, the first institutions to concentrate largely upon the intellectual development of the individual working man, rather than upon his moral and social improvement. This is not to say that the motives of the providers were purely disinterested - the advantages of a better educated, technically knowledgeable pool of workers were

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<sup>49</sup> George Birkbeck's speech at the opening of the London Mechanics' Institution in 1823, reprinted in *Mechanics' Magazine*, I (1823-4), 114-8; quoted in Kelly, *History*, 28.

<sup>50</sup> It had been preceded by the Edinburgh School of Arts (despite its name, the first proper mechanics' institute, founded in 1821 on the model of the Glasgow classes), by the Haddington School of Arts (1823, modelled on the Edinburgh one), and by the Liverpool Mechanics' and Apprentices' Library (also 1823).

clearly not lost upon them - but we can see here the emergence of a different perception of and attitude towards the recipient of the educational process, from passive object to active enquirer to, in the later stages of the movement, the concept of the client who chooses from a menu of educational offerings and who is advised rather than directed by the provider.

If the first half of the nineteenth century saw the beginnings, through the Mechanics' Institutes and similar organisations, of technical education, then the second half of the century was notable for the process resulting in the opening of higher education to the working classes, and it is in this latter milieu that the ideal of Liberal adult education developed most rapidly.

Several movements contributed to this particular development, most notably the Working Men's Colleges which grew up in the 1850s and '60s, the University Extension movement, the University Settlements (residential centres set up in the poorest areas of London and other large cities where university students, particularly from Oxford and Cambridge, could learn to know, work with and establish a bond of brotherhood with the poor), and the Workers' Educational Association.<sup>51</sup>

The history of the University Extension movement would require a

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<sup>51</sup> There was also considerable educational activity on the part of Labour organisations (the Democratic Federation, the Socialist League, the Fabians, the Land Restoration League, the Clarion movement, even Labour Churches), together with the establishment of a number of colleges (of which the most famous - and controversial - was Ruskin, but including Ruskin's rebellious offshoot, the Central Labour College, and the Scottish Labour College in Glasgow). The following section looks at these and compares their purpose and underlying ethic with that of the WEA.

volume in itself, and can only be glanced at here. However, there are a number of points worth noting in the history of its development. For example, it was a very long time from conception to birth. The term "university extension" was used as early as the 1840s, but it was initially utilised in the sense of opening full-time university education to a larger proportion of the population. A number of reforms to achieve this did in fact take place between the 1850s and 1880s, but it was not until the '70s and '80s that university extension in the alternative sense of facilities for part-time study of university-level courses was considered seriously and began to be put into practice, largely due to the efforts of James Stuart, fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, and later Professor of Mechanism and Applied Mechanics in the University.

The initiative leading to Stuart's active involvement in the wider area of adult education came from two groups which had always been firmly excluded from higher education - from women and from the workers. In 1867, the Ladies Educational Associations of Liverpool, Leeds, Sheffield and Manchester combined with other northern women's groups to form the North of England Council for Promoting the Higher Education of Women and invited James Stuart to give a course of lectures for women teachers on the history of science. This beginning was rapidly followed by requests for lectures from the railway workers at Crewe and from the Equitable Pioneers' Co-operative Society in Rochdale. Stuart's lectures were a great success, the Rochdale course attracting audiences of nearly a thousand, and, as the volume of work over the next few years continued to grow, Stuart was encouraged to make a formal approach to the university of Cambridge. In 1871, backed by written memorials from the North of

England Council, the Crewe Mechanics' Institute (which had hosted the lectures to railwaymen), the Rochdale Equitable Pioneers and the Mayor and other inhabitants of Leeds, he appealed to the University Senate to take over the work and place it on a permanent footing.

As a result, the university appointed a syndicate, with Stuart as secretary, to consider the matter and in May 1873, on the committee's recommendation, agreed to a new scheme of extension lectures, to be carried on for an experimental period. A permanent Syndicate for Local Lectures was set up in 1875, and the Cambridge lead was followed by the establishment of a London Society for the Extension of University Teaching in 1876 and, in Oxford, a Delegacy for Extension Lectures in 1878 (though the Oxford scheme did not catch fire until Michael Sadler became secretary in 1885). In the north, the Victoria University (a federation of Owens College, Manchester, with the recently-established colleges in Liverpool and Leeds) began extension work in a formal way in 1887, and Durham was brought into the Cambridge scheme.

As a general indication of the speed with which the work grew, J.F.C. Harrison<sup>52</sup> points out that in the 1875-6 session Cambridge was responsible for over 100 courses, with 7,000 students in 37 centres, and, although a temporary decline followed almost immediately, by the peak year of 1891-2 Oxford and Cambridge between them were providing 722 courses to nearly 47,000 students. (In Scotland and Wales, by comparison, although a start was made in the 1880s and '90s, extension work failed to take hold, for reasons not yet fully explored.)

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<sup>52</sup> *Learning and Living*, 243.

In light of the subsequent development of university extra-mural education, it is interesting to note the structure and content of these early schemes. The courses offered generally consisted of 6 to 12 lectures (12 was the norm originally, but Oxford subsequently switched to a 6-lecture system, to reduce the cost to sponsoring bodies), each lecture being followed by a class for those who wished to discuss the subject matter further with the lecturer. Written work on the part of the students became a feature of the courses from the earliest stage, originating in Stuart's practice of circulating in advance questions to which written answers were required. Students could, at the end of a course, sit an examination leading to a university certificate.

A wide range of subjects was offered. H. J. Mackinder and Michael Sadler, in their *University Extension Past, Present and Future*<sup>53</sup>, indicate that, in the 1890-1 session, of 457 courses offered by Cambridge, Oxford and London, 191 were on natural science, 159 on history or political economy, 104 on literature, art or architecture, and 3 on philosophy. At one period, the universities also assisted with technical education and Thomas Kelly, in his *History of Adult Education*, notes courses 'on such surprising subjects as Dairy-making, Manures and Soils, and Veterinary Science'.<sup>54</sup> However, vocational courses of this kind were the exception rather than the rule, although general educational courses for pupil-teachers were a longer-term concern.

Some controversy surrounds the question of the extent to which working men were involved in university extension study. It seems

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<sup>53</sup> 3rd edn., 1891, 62. Quoted in Kelly, *History*, 224.

<sup>54</sup> *History*, 225.

clear that middle-class students predominated, and daytime courses were largely attended by middle-class women. But working men did join evening courses, and in the north-east (especially the mining areas of Northumberland) the enthusiasm and determination of the miners who frequently walked miles in all weathers to attend classes, have become legendary. The main problem inhibiting the working classes from joining extension courses was, not surprisingly, a financial one. The universities did not subsidise tutors' fees, and courses had therefore to be self-supporting. Kelly<sup>55</sup> cites 7/6 for an evening course, a guinea for an afternoon course, as common charges. Significantly, extension work in the north-east suffered severely, and never quite recovered, from the colliery strike of 1887.

The high cost of providing courses, it must be said, had other unfortunate effects. It was generally necessary to have an audience of over 100 if fees were to be within the reach even of the middle classes; this meant, on the one hand, that subjects had to be selected on the basis of their popularity rather than on their educational value, and, on the other hand, that even the smaller classes which followed the lectures were too large for effective teaching. In addition, local committees were understandably reluctant to continue to sponsor courses when the risk of financial loss was so high. The retention of lecturers was an additional problem, because although lecturing fees were generous enough to be attractive, the insecurity and irregularity of the work available, together with the incessant travel required, resulted in a high rate of attrition among extension workers.

Nevertheless, despite these difficulties, the extension movement almost from its inception was making a notable contribution to adult

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<sup>55</sup> *History*, 225.

education. Kelly<sup>56</sup> picks out three particular areas in which its activities were especially significant. In the first place, the extension movement provided the first real opportunity for women to participate in higher education. Secondly, at a time when much adult education was becoming increasingly technical and vocational, the movement preserved and fostered the concept of liberal adult education. Thirdly, the extension movement formed a bridge between the universities and the mass of the population, and helped bring about an increase of mutual respect and understanding. This last achievement undoubtedly owed much to the institution of annual summer meetings at Oxford and Cambridge (the first was organised by Oxford in 1888) which gave extension students much-valued opportunities to live briefly within the whole ambience of an Oxbridge college and to encounter some of the leading scholars of the time. Kelly quotes J.A.R. Marriott, recalling his years as Secretary of the Oxford Delegacy, who described the experience thus:

What it meant to an elementary teacher from a country school, or to a Lancashire mill-hand, or a collier from South-Wales, to come even for a month under the magic spell of Oxford's beauty, to listen to some of the greatest authorities on history, science, or art, come into daily contact with men and women inspired by similar zeal for higher education, and to exchange ideas with them can be understood only by those who, like myself, were privileged to be their confidants, and to see the leaven visibly working.<sup>57</sup>

The 'liberal adult education' ideal came into full flower within the movement for University Extension and continued to permeate and inspire university adult education throughout the twentieth century.

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<sup>56</sup> *History*, 236-7.

<sup>57</sup> Sir John Marriott, *Memories of Four Score Years* (1946); quoted in Kelly, *History*, 229.

It is this conception of the purpose of adult education (as exemplified by the 'educated man') which, as we shall see in subsequent chapters, helped to form the character of community education in the twentieth century and which was so vigorously defended by one side in the debate of the 1960s and '70s.

In terms of our matrix, the Liberal position on our continuum relates very closely to that of the liberal adult education ideal. It treats the student neither as an object for improvement, as in the case of the Paternalist model, nor as an equal co-worker, as in the Radical model. The learner, it is assumed, owes a certain deference to the lecturer or tutor, because of the greater knowledge which the latter possesses; but the hierarchical structure which this implies is made to be broken as the learner assimilates knowledge and approaches closer to the expertise of the teacher. The overall ideal is of a society of equals, where all have access to knowledge and all are prepared to exercise the rights and assume the responsibilities of citizenship. The personal enrichment of the individual, and the development of his or her intellectual potential, rather than practical/vocational training for career progression and for the supplying of the labour market, is, as we have seen, reflected in the type of subjects on offer, and within that range the choice of subjects is the student's, rather than the provider's; indeed, the provider must take account of the demand for certain subjects over against others which he might regard as equally or even more deserving of inclusion in the programme. The provider's part is to advise, rather than dictate, the content of an individual's learning path.

The role of the lecturer is modified to the extent that the practices of

questioning and discussion are introduced, thus rendering the teaching more of a two-way process (a trend furthered, as we shall see below, by the introduction of the tutorial class). His responsibility, like that of the provider, is to inform and advise, rather than to prescribe, and decisions ultimately remain in the hands of the student. In addition, the introduction of a formalised, more impersonal, institutionalised structure for administering university extension courses tended to shift the balance of responsibility (and thus of power) from the provider to the consumer, thus further diminishing any remaining traces of Paternalism which might cling to the system.

#### 2.7.4 The Conflict in Evidence

I have already stated my conviction that the debate over community education which forms the basis for this dissertation was not a new phenomenon but in fact was a continuation of a basic conflict of ideals in the history of adult education movements. As an example of this, it is enlightening to consider the essential differences between two contemporaneous adult education initiatives in the first decades of the twentieth century, namely, the Workers' Educational Association and the educational institutions spawned by the Labour Movement. Kelly sums up the differences thus:

The work of the WEA was rooted in the liberal, humane philosophy of the universities: it believed that truth was one, and that differences could be resolved by impartial study and discussion. The Labour College, on the other hand, based its work on the Marxian analysis of the class struggle, and offered an education "designed to equip the workers for their struggle against capitalism and capitalist ideology". It did not believe that impartiality was possible. The WEA, being politically

neutral, had the advantage in being able to draw on public funds, but the Labour College was able to claim support as the champion of independent working-class education.<sup>58</sup>

In light of our overall argument for the existence of two or more basic social and educational philosophies at work in adult and community education in the second half of the twentieth century, it is worth looking in more detail at these two movements, so representative of their own underpinning philosophies.

#### 2.7.4.1 The Labour Movement and Adult Education

It was a small group of intellectuals, including H.M. Hyndmann and William Morris, who founded in 1880 the Democratic Federation, out of which grew the Social Democratic Federation and the Socialist League. In both organisations, education was a primary concern, but particularly in Morris's Socialist League. As Morris wrote to Burne-Jones:

I am sure it is right, whatever the apparent consequences may be, to stir up the lower classes (damn the word) to demand a higher standard of life for themselves, not merely for themselves or for the sake of the material comfort it will bring, but for the good of the whole world and the regeneration of the conscience of man: and this stirring up is part of the necessary education which must in good truth go before the reconstruction of society.<sup>59</sup>

Suiting their actions to their words, the early socialists embarked on energetic programmes of public education, lecturing up and down the country, often at open-air meetings.

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<sup>58</sup> *History*, p. 260.

<sup>59</sup> E.P. Thompson, *William Morris, Romantic to Revolutionary* (1955), 415; quoted in Brian Simon, *Education and the Labour Movement* (London, 1972), p. 25.

In response to their urgings to working men to educate themselves, study and discussion groups sprang up, sometimes as branches of the Socialist League, at other times in local Secular Societies, or in Radical Clubs or Co-operative Societies. The emphasis in these groups was generally on politics (specifically on Marxism), although some centres went on to organise lectures in a variety of other subjects.

Educational work was also carried out by the Fabians (mostly middle-class intellectuals who lectured and published pamphlets on socialism, distributed "Book Boxes" and organised correspondence classes), by the English Land Restoration League (who sent vans round the countryside distributing literature), the Clarion movement (associated with Robert Blatchford's socialist weekly, *The Clarion*, which promoted clubs and societies combining a socialist purpose with social and cultural activities), and the Labour Churches, which preached a strongly socialist gospel and supplemented it with adult classes teaching social and economic history as well as religion and ethics.<sup>60</sup> The trade union movement (considerably strengthened in the second half of the century, as the formation of the Trades Union Congress in 1868 indicates, and increasingly under socialist influence), was particularly interested in economics. As two leading trade unionists wrote in 1890:

We want to see the necessary economic knowledge imparted in our labour organisations, so that labour in the future shall not be made the shuttlecock of political parties. Our Trade Unions shall be centres of enlightenment and not merely the meeting place for paying contributions and receiving donations.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Henry Pelling, *The Origins of the Labour Party* (1954), 144; quoted in Simon, *Education and the Labour Movement*, 39.

<sup>61</sup> Tom Mann and Ben Tillett, *The "New" Trade Unionism* (1880); quoted in Simon, *ibid.*

The various socialist organisations active towards the end of the nineteenth century were similarly agreed on a related point - the necessity of producing working-class leaders to direct the movement of social change. William Morris advocated

a body of able, high-minded, competent men, who shall act as instructors of the masses and as their leaders during critical periods of the movement. It goes without saying that a great proportion of these instructors and organisers should be working men ...40

One response to this appeal was the founding, in Oxford, of Ruskin Hall (subsequently Ruskin College), established in 1899 by two visiting Americans, Walter Vrooman and Charles Beard, and Vrooman's wife. The aim of the college, as described in Kelly's *History*, was to provide courses in subjects "essential for working-class leadership".<sup>62</sup> These were mainly history, economics, sociology and politics.<sup>63</sup> The students were working men, mostly in their late twenties, ardently socialist in outlook and frequently dependent on trade union or co-operative scholarships.<sup>64</sup> The American founders returned to the US in 1902, and the college was left in somewhat shaky financial circumstances. Its difficulties were compounded six years later when the Report on *Oxford and Working Class Education* was published and gave discreet indication of the university's intention to absorb the college and use it as a kind of preparatory college for working-class students about to embark on degree courses in the university. A split promptly developed between the majority of the students, backed by the unions, who saw Ruskin primarily as a Labour college, and the college governors and lecturing staff (a large

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<sup>62</sup> 244.

<sup>63</sup> *Education and the Labour Movement*, 311.

<sup>64</sup> Kelly, *History*, 245.

number of both being university dons) who favoured a non-partisan college offering a more general education. Matters continued in this unsatisfactory way until 1909, when the Principal, Dennis Hird, who was in full sympathy with the student body, was dismissed. The majority of the students responded with a strike, and ultimately a group seceded to set up a new institution, the Central Labour College, with Hird as its first Principal. In the meantime, Ruskin gained a new council (largely representative of trade unions, the co-operative movement and other working-class organisations), under which it established a better relationship with the university, and by the following year was presenting its students for the University Diploma in Economics and Political Science.<sup>65</sup>

Of all the educational movements we have looked at so far, there is no question that this is the one which can be most clearly linked to the aims and objectives of the 'radical' wing of community education nearly a century later. In their open espousal of the necessity for wholesale social change, in their embracing of a Marxist concept of class struggle, and their encouragement of the working-class to seize control of their own destiny, they established a chain which, on the one hand, linked back to the early 19th century co-operators and Chartists and beyond them to the Constitutional and Revolutionary Societies of the late 18th century, and, on the other hand, laid out the programme for the 'radical' educators who followed them.

#### 2.7.4.2 The Workers' Educational Association

The WEA was the brain-child of Albert Mansbridge, the son of a carpenter, who had himself left school at fourteen but who continued

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<sup>65</sup> Kelly, *History*, 246.

his education thereafter in extension classes at Toynbee Hall, while employed as a clerk with the Co-operative Wholesale Society.

Mansbridge brought to the work of adult education the ideals of the Christian Socialists, an evangelical fervour (both religious - he was an Anglican lay-preacher - and educational) and the friendship of a number of men eminent in church and university (Kelly<sup>66</sup> lists: Charles Gore, William Temple, Michael Sadler, J.A.R. Marriott, R.D. Roberts, A.E. Zimmern, A.L. Smith and R.H. Tawney; Harrison<sup>67</sup> adds: A.D. Lindsay, Sidney Ball and Scott Holland).

Mansbridge's aim, voiced at co-operative conferences, at the Oxford summer meeting of 1899 and finally in three articles published in the *University Extension Journal* during 1903, was to bring about an alliance of the universities with the co-operative and trade union movements in the cause of educating the people for democratic participation. His immediate objective was to create a joint university and working-class association to promote the work of university extension. His Association, formed in 1903 and renamed in 1905, made a promising start, but came fully to life following the crucial Oxford "Conference of Working Class and Educational Organisations" in 1907. Out of this conference came the committee which produced the report, *Oxford and Working-class Education*, that so infuriated the students of Ruskin, but which, among its various recommendations, laid down two fundamental characteristics of the WEA - the Joint Committee, consisting of equal numbers of university and WEA representatives, and the tutorial class, inaugurated so brilliantly by R.H. Tawney at Longton and Rochdale. The tutorial class (pioneered in a fashion some decades before by Canon Barnett at Toynbee Hall)

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<sup>66</sup> Kelly, *History*, 248.

<sup>67</sup> *Learning and Living*, p. 264.

was intended to provide the kind of intensive teaching needed by working-class students, through small groups committed to three-year programmes. J.F.C. Harrison sums up the significance of the tutorial class thus:

These classes marked a new departure in adult education. It was not so much that the ideas behind them were new; most of them were in fact traceable to an earlier tradition. But their combination into a complete scheme of higher popular education was novel. The idea of an equal partnership between the university and the working class movement, the emphasis upon the scholarship of the tutor coupled with the necessity of teaching subjects from the angle of the students' needs, and the conception of the social purpose behind all studies, gave a distinctive slant to the typical tutorial class. Other ideas, such as the class as a self-governing unit, the pooling of knowledge and experience by tutor and students, and the discipline of regular home reading and essay writing, added to this.<sup>68</sup>

In the meantime, numerous organisations, including trade unions and cooperative societies, became affiliated to the Association and branches were springing up so rapidly that by 1908-9 there were 50, of which 27 were formed into five districts with full-time secretaries, the remaining 23 being directly affiliated to Central Office.<sup>69</sup> Between that year and the start of the First World War, the number of districts increased, as did the number of full-time staff and the complexity of their tasks. By 1914, the WEA had 2,555 affiliated organisations, 9 districts, 179 branches, and 11,430 members (3,343 of whom were students in 145 tutorial classes). At this stage, the students were

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<sup>68</sup> *Learning and Living*, 269.

<sup>69</sup> Mary Stocks, *The Workers' Educational Association: the First Fifty Years* (London, 1953), 56.

predominantly male.<sup>70</sup> They were principally interested in economics and economic history, but also filled classes in general history, literature and politics.<sup>71</sup>

During the war, after an initial setback, the Association continued to grow, and its new recruits were mostly women, who joined in such numbers that by 1917-18 they constituted 39% of the tutorial class membership. The large-scale participation of women in adult education had begun, and has been a significant trend ever since. The early history of the WEA also illustrates another trend which was to be of rapidly increasing importance from the end of the war - the assumption of some financial responsibility by the Local Education Authorities, who, by the Education Act of 1902, were empowered to organise or give assistance to evening classes for adults, regardless of the subject. Financial aid from the LEAs, together with grants from central government, was a saving factor in the shaky financial situation of the youthful WEA, but may have contributed to its gradual assimilation into the university extension type of education and consequent charges that it had abrogated its original role of providing specifically for the working class.

#### 2.7.4.3 The Roots of Conflict

I have already quoted Kelly on the essential differences between these two organisations. In the disagreements and rivalry between them, we can see reflected the later divisions between the schools of thought in adult education, and the seeming irreconcilability of educational movements which sprang from two such different philosophies. In

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<sup>70</sup> Stocks, *op.cit.*, 60-61.

<sup>71</sup> Simon, *Education and the Labour Movement*, 328.

certain respects they would seem to have a great deal in common. Both were intended for the education primarily of the working classes; both had a particular interest in political and economic education; both had strong links to the trade union movement; both were democratic and participatory in structure. But ultimately they were competitors rather than collaborators, and that can only be attributed to the fact that they belonged to different schools of thought. The WEA was firmly in the liberal adult education tradition, the Labour Colleges and their supporting organisations clearly belonged to the radical branch of adult education. The WEA's focus was upon the development of the individual, the Labour Movement's on the empowering of a class and the amelioration of an unjust society. The WEA's objectives were primarily intellectual, the Labour Movement's mainly social and political. And though the methods each applied to the education of adults may not have differed greatly, their purpose and envisaged aims certainly differed. It was a pattern to be repeated, as we shall see in chapter 4 of the thesis. Before going on to consider the later conflict, however, we must examine the ground over which the battle was to be fought.

### Chapter 3

#### COMMUNITY EDUCATION IN CONSTRUCTION 1920-1970: SOME KEY DOCUMENTS

##### 3.1 Introduction

Although, as was pointed out in the earlier chapters of this thesis, there is a great deal of confusion and controversy about what constitutes 'community education', there is, perhaps surprisingly, fairly general agreement about its beginnings in this country. Historians of the movement, while identifying different antecedents as well as varying definitions, are nonetheless almost unanimous in locating the first British model of community education in Cambridgeshire in the 1920s. Cyril Poster, in *Community Education: its Development and Management*<sup>1</sup>, asserts that in Britain "community education grew out of nineteenth-century philanthropy, and an innovation in the 1920s ..... in an obscure county noted then for little more than its agriculture and its lack of funds for public services." He was referring to the scheme carried out in Cambridgeshire by the then Secretary for Education, Henry Morris, to build a network of centralised institutions, based upon secondary schools but catering to the educational, social, cultural and recreational needs of the whole population in the surrounding rural countryside. The result was the renowned Cambridgeshire Village College, which provided a starting point for the movement towards making education more widely available to local populations, initially in rural and subsequently in

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<sup>1</sup> London, 1982, p.21.

urban areas. Other writers have acknowledged the debt more grudgingly ("As in all books on community education, I must pay obeisance to Henry Morris and the village college principle," Eric Midwinter wrote in *Patterns of Community Education*<sup>2</sup>), but, as we shall see, there is little doubt that the predominant school-based pattern of community education in Britain has been modelled largely on the village college idea.

This is not to say that community education sprang fully-fledged from the head of Henry Morris and has remained static ever since. Indeed, it is the argument of this thesis that the original concept has given birth to a variety of offspring, some of which are in disagreement if not in direct conflict with one another. Before considering these conflicting interpretations and practices, however, it is worth examining the ways in which community education has evolved over the last seventy years.

Institutions are as much creations of the spirit and the imagination as they are of the architect and builder. They are held together as much by thoughts and words as they are by nails and mortar. In looking at the development of community education from its early twentieth century beginnings, one is examining not only the pattern of events (the opening of this school, the achievements of that project) but also - and just as importantly - the thinking (aims, assumptions, values, prejudices, ideals) behind the events.

Educational movements both influence and are themselves influenced by published documents, whether official or unofficial. In this chapter I shall be analysing a number of seminal documents which, I would contend, both arose from and themselves in turn affected the

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<sup>2</sup> London, 1973, p.45.

course which community education, in its various manifestations, has taken.

### 3.2 The Emergence of a Model: a study of the documents

Bernard Jennings, in his study of community colleges in England and Wales<sup>3</sup>, describes three waves of development in the history of community education. The first of these took place in the period from the 1920s up to the start of the Second World War and centred largely, as we would expect, around the work of Henry Morris in Cambridgeshire and the creation of the Village Colleges. The second phase consisted of the flurry of activity following the appearance of the Education Act of 1944, when Morris's followers, by then reaching positions of influence in other parts of the country, "carried away the ideals and worked them into post-war plans and memoranda in their respective authorities" (p.24). The third phase, Jennings concluded, was that beginning in the late 1960s and continuing into the 1970s, and characterised by "extrapolation from the rural/small town context and ideas of the first two waves into entirely urban communities" (*ibid.*).

Although this is a rather simplified division (the development of community education, as Jennings himself would no doubt admit, was a far more complex and erratic process than this construction would suggest), it is certainly not an arbitrary one and is in fact a useful framework for an examination of the stages by which community education came into being. It also provides a structure upon which to hang a survey of the various documents which I have

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<sup>3</sup> *Community Colleges in England and Wales* (London: National Institute of Adult Education, 1980).

selected as being of some importance in the formation of the concept of community education. The first two stages I shall be looking at in this chapter; the third, divergent period will be considered in chapter four.

As always, there are difficulties in deciding what belongs properly to the study of community education. Certain of the documents listed below were specifically addressed to adult education; one was concerned with further education; another was largely devoted to schools, with a single section given to further education; while yet another concentrated upon community centres. In each case, the determining factor was the inclusion in the documents of a concern for the welfare of the 'community' (however defined) and an awareness of the role of education in this concern. A number of these documents were wide-ranging in their scope and in the variety of their concerns; in these cases (as, for example, with the 1944 Education Act), only a very small part of the document is relevant and thus is considered here. However, their inclusion is justified by the weight of their influence upon official education policy.

### 3.3 Between the Wars: the development of an ideal

In 1924, Henry Morris had published at his own expense a 24-page pamphlet entitled "The Village College. Being a Memorandum on the Provision of Educational and Social Facilities for the Countryside, with Special Reference to Cambridgeshire".<sup>4</sup> Despite its unwieldy title, the Memorandum was an impressively clear and concise proposal for revitalising rural life through the creation of a new institution, the Village College. Morris's concern over the drift from

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<sup>4</sup> Cambridge, 1924. Reproduced in Harry Rée, *Educator Extraordinary* (London, 1973), pp.143-157.

country to town and the consequent pauperisation (both economic and cultural) of the rural areas of England was the motive force behind the plan. It was an anxiety shared by local government, national government and voluntary and charitable organisations, all of whom had some responsibility for providing help for the ailing countryside and all of whom must be consulted and involved in any measures for revitalisation. Morris's achievement was that not only did he have the vision to propose one imaginative yet practical solution to the problem; he also had the eloquence, the political skill and the determination necessary for the realisation of his scheme.

On its initial appearance the Memorandum had, by today's standards, a very limited circulation. As well as being delivered to each member of the county council, for whom, principally, it had been written, it was sent by Morris to the Board of Education and the Ministry of Agriculture (each of which would of necessity be involved in the financing of the statutory educational elements). Copies were also sent to the National Council of Social Service, the Hadow Committee, the Development Committee for post-war reconstruction and the Carnegie Trustees.<sup>5</sup> But though the Memorandum itself was by no means widely distributed, the visible manifestation of it in the appearance of successive village colleges dotted throughout the county certainly generated an immense amount of interest and not a little controversy. Moreover, as Rée has demonstrated so convincingly in his biography (pp.134-140), the subsequent spread of the village college concept may have owed less to the Memorandum

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<sup>5</sup> See Rée, *Educator Extraordinary*, pp.28-29. The Hadow Committee was then deliberating on the reorganisation of secondary education. The Development Committee (which could provide government grants for reconstruction projects) and the Carnegie Trustees (with control over very substantial resources for charitable causes) were both appealed to for funding in the concluding section of the Memorandum.

than to Morris's ability to create disciples among up-and-coming local education authority staff, who took his ideas up the ladder with them in other counties. Nonetheless, as the first and most complete statement by the individual most frequently (if not universally) cited as the progenitor of community education in this country, it must surely deserve to be regarded as a key document in the history of community education, and its content and significance will be considered at some length in this section.

What is not so often recognised is that the ideas which Morris propounded so persuasively in the Memorandum were neither entirely novel nor particularly radical. In fact they are strongly reminiscent of, and would appear in many respects to be a direct response to, the analysis and recommendations of the Adult Education Committee set up by the Ministry of Reconstruction after the First World War, in their Final Report published in 1919.<sup>6</sup> This substantial, thoughtful and comprehensive report set the tone and the agenda for adult education between the wars and its influence could probably be traced long after this period. Certainly modern proponents of the various strands of community education would all find something in it which would strike a sympathetic chord. As a closer examination will show, it stands as a major document in the development of adult and community education and must therefore be given first consideration.

Following on from the 1919 Report are a series of Papers published by the Board of Education Adult Education Committee between 1922 and 1933; eleven in total, they cover various aspects of adult education stemming from the recommendations of the Report. A number of them deal with specialist areas (music, drama, natural

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<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Reconstruction Adult Education Committee, *Final Report*, London, 1919.

science) or applications (recruitment of tutors; full-time studies), but a few, more general in scope, have much to say of relevance to our enquiry, and one in particular (No.3, "The Development of Adult Education in Rural Areas", published in 1922), is of particular interest in relation to Morris's Memorandum. These, then, are the documents which, I would suggest, first set out the cluster of educational ideas which laid the framework for what later became known as 'community education'.

### 3.3.1 Ministry of Reconstruction Adult Education Committee: Final Report (1919)<sup>7</sup>

In 1917 the then Prime Minister, Lloyd George, created a Sub-Committee to the Reconstruction Committee over which he himself presided. Eventually turned into the Adult Education Committee of the Ministry of Reconstruction, its remit was "To consider the provision for, and possibilities of, Adult Education (other than technical or vocational) in Great Britain, and to make recommendations" (p.1). The experience of training much of the male population of all classes for military service and the subsequent necessity to provide for their return to civilian life was one of the motivating forces behind the enquiry, but the Committee cast its net much wider than this. It produced three Interim Reports: the First (completed March 1918) dealt with the effects of poor industrial and social conditions in relation to adult education; the Second (completed July 1918) was on "Education in the Army"; and the Third (completed May 1919) examined Libraries and Museums.

The Final Report, covering adult education past, present and future,

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<sup>7</sup> London, 1919.

runs to 13 chapters and 5 appendices. It begins with a concise but informative history of adult education from 1800 onwards, followed, in chapter 2, by a general review of adult education in Great Britain at the time of writing. Subsequent chapters go on to look at such topics as standards and methods, supply of teachers, organisation and finance, the various bodies involved in adult education and specialised areas such as rural education. Its detailed approach, balanced tone and thoughtful recommendations are noteworthy.

It is interesting to note, in the Chairman's prefatory letter to the Prime Minister, some of the Committee's basic assumptions concerning adult education. Among the propositions upon which its conclusions are based we find:

1. That the main purpose of education is to fit a man for life, and therefore in a civilised community to fit him for his place as a member of that community.
2. That the family, the school, the trade union or profession, the local town or district, are successive stages which reach their fullness or completion in the community and that therefore, while each part of the process of education must be related to its appropriate stage, the goal of all education must be citizenship - that is, the rights and duties of each individual as a member of the community; and the whole process must be the development of the individual in his relation to the community.
3. That the essence of democracy being not passive but active participation by all in citizenship,

education in a democratic country must aim at fitting each individual progressively not only for his personal, domestic and vocational duties, but, above all, for those duties of citizenship for which these earlier stages are training grounds.

(pp.4-5)

So important did the Committee consider two further principles that the letter enshrined them in capitals:

5. THAT THE NECESSARY CONCLUSION IS THAT ADULT EDUCATION MUST NOT BE REGARDED AS A LUXURY FOR A FEW EXCEPTIONAL PERSONS HERE AND THERE, NOR AS A THING WHICH CONCERNS ONLY A SHORT SPAN OF EARLY MANHOOD, BUT THAT ADULT EDUCATION IS A PERMANENT NATIONAL NECESSITY, AN INSEPARABLE ASPECT OF CITIZENSHIP, AND THEREFORE SHOULD BE BOTH UNIVERSAL AND LIFELONG.

6. THAT THE OPPORTUNITY FOR ADULT EDUCATION SHOULD BE SPREAD UNIFORMLY AND SYSTEMATICALLY OVER THE WHOLE COMMUNITY, AS A PRIMARY OBLIGATION ON THAT COMMUNITY IN ITS OWN INTEREST AND AS A CHIEF PART OF ITS DUTY TO ITS INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS.....

(p.5)

Here we have, quite clearly expressed, the elements which I would hold to be the characteristics of traditional, mainstream community education: the goal of preparing the individual for life, the emphasis upon membership of 'the community' and upon the community itself as 'civilised' and as the highest level of association, the importance

given to 'active participation' in the democratic process. While unflinchingly underlining the 'personal, domestic and vocational duties' of the individual, however, the Report is no less emphatic about the responsibility of 'the community' to provide education as a 'permanent national necessity'. It is particularly interesting to note the early emphasis on education as a lifelong activity, long before 'lifelong education' or 'éducation permanente' became part of the educational vocabulary!

What is not quite so clear in the Report is how exactly its authors defined 'community'; it seems the eminent contributors used the term as variously as their counterparts today, sometimes applying it to indicate a local community, sometimes (as here?) to mean the wider community or even the nation. Certainly there is a strong emphasis on the idea of 'citizenship' as a role to be fulfilled conscientiously by informed and responsible individuals, and this implies membership of a nation-wide community. Similarly, the Report frequently stresses the importance of participation in local democracy, a theme which (as we shall see later in this chapter) was to play an increasing role as community education developed.

Apart from the prefatory letter, the second chapter of the Report, which contains an overall review of adult education in Great Britain, also makes some general points which are of interest to our investigation. Once again it reinforces the mutual accountability of the individual and the community of which he is part, pointing out that "the object of adult education is not merely to heighten the intellectual powers of individual students but to lay the foundations of more intelligent citizenship and of a better social order" (p.44). In

the same chapter, the commissioners almost seem to anticipate the argument between the two rival schools of thought addressed by this thesis. While considering the relationship of adult education to other social movements, the report has this to say:

The growth of movements which have as their aim the creation of a better social order is not less important than the progress of education itself. In some ways it is more important, for such movements create the background of aspiration and endeavour which is the foundation of more directly educational work, and suggest the questions for which men and women seek in study to find an answer.

(p.45)

However, the writers do sound a caution:

- o That motive for seeking education has its dangers; what motive, indeed, has not? It may lead to sectarianism and one-sidedness, to a lack of detachment and an undue preoccupation with immediate practical issues . . . [but] most new departures in education have, in the past, been the expression of some such social ferment. Education has been revived because men sought to reinterpret the world in which they lived, or to find a rational solution for the problems of their practical life.

(p.46)

The long-standing suspicion of any alliance between education and agitation for social reform may perhaps be surfacing here, despite the authors' effort towards fairness. Although the tone of the document, to which I have already referred, is determinedly considered, sympathetic and fair-minded, the overall impression is of

conservatism and of adherence to the traditional values of duty, self-improvement, discipline, rationality and mutual responsibility.

The sections of the Report from which I have quoted thus far can be said to have laid out the general values and attitudes which its authors felt should permeate adult education in the aftermath of the First World War. However, it is in a later chapter that we find the most direct link to community education. Chapter 10 of the Report is entitled "The Development of Rural Education", and it is here we find outlined an approach which provides a link to Henry Morris and the Village Colleges. After touching upon some of the more general problems which contribute to rural decline and which also affect adult education (for example, poor housing and inadequate public transport), the Report makes three concrete recommendations: (1) that all organised local activities should centre upon a village institute; (2) that public libraries and museums should be made more widespread; and (3) that rural educational provision should be properly organised and more money put into educational facilities. With regard to the first, the Report declares:

The rural problem, from whatever point of view it is regarded - economic, social or political - is essentially a problem of recreating the rural community, of developing new social traditions and a new culture. The great need is for a living nucleus of communal activity in the village, which will be a centre from which radiate the influences of different forms of corporate effort, and to which people are attracted to find the satisfaction of their social and intellectual needs. We conceive this nucleus to be a village institute, under full public control.

It is worth bearing in mind, when we look at Morris's Memorandum, this emphasis on the institute which will provide a focus for community life. When we look back on the history of adult education in the nineteenth century, we often find a similar interest in focal buildings - a surprising number of the rather grand buildings of the last century which feature in our urban landscapes prove, on investigation, to have begun life as mechanics' institutes, Chartist halls or other symbols of working-class solidarity and self-improvement. Similarly, in the more recent literature of community education, a significant proportion of the writers demonstrate their concern with the physical setting of community education and the need for an identifiable *locus* for learning in the community.<sup>8</sup>

The 1919 Report goes on to specify exactly what the Committee was envisaging:

The institute should be the headquarters of organised local activities of all kinds. Trade union branches, friendly societies, pig clubs and bee clubs, and agricultural and horticultural societies of one sort or another, adult schools and classes arranged by voluntary organisations, women's institutes, schools for mothers, chess clubs, and so forth should be encouraged to use the institutes; and one or more rooms, as may be necessary, should be provided for the purpose of their meetings. The institute should contain a hall large enough for dances, cinema shows, concerts, plays, public lectures and exhibitions. At the institute there should be a public library and local museum. If arrangements can be made for games and sports, so much the better. The institute, in a word, should be a centre of educational, social and recreational

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, the interest taken in the plans and physical layout of the large multi-purpose centres being built in the 1960s and '70s, referred to in the following chapter.

activity.

(p.101)

The building of these institutes (which, as we shall see, fulfil much the same function as Morris's Village Colleges) should, the Committee recommended, be financed largely out of public funds, with the State paying 90% of the cost and the remaining 10% to be raised locally. In this way, the members clearly felt, each community would have an investment, both emotional and financial, in the new institute, while not being saddled with an impossible financial burden.

Concerning its second point, on libraries and museums, the Committee quotes its own Interim Report on the subject, including a recommendation that County Education Authorities should be given the task of organising and administering rural book provision schemes. It is interesting to note, again in light of the subsequent plans for village (and later community) colleges, the Committee's quotation of a memorandum submitted to it pointing out that "the schools are the natural places where the books may find accommodation, and the schoolmaster is naturally a person in more or less direct contact with the inhabitants of the village" (p.105). Although the writer of the memorandum also cautioned that the school "may not always be the best depository for the consignments, and where village institutes or the like exist, consignments may be better placed therein" (*ibid.*) nonetheless the idea of the school as book repository for the community had been implanted.

One final recommendation of the Report must be mentioned, and this is contained in a section on content and organisation. While every

village should have its own study circles and classes, "such a network of activity would by no means fully meet the needs of rural areas". It proposes, therefore, that "the market towns and larger villages should become the centres of educational activity and that classes, weekend conferences, exhibitions, etc., should be arranged in them with the co-operation of the surrounding villages" (p.144) Here, too, university tutorial classes and provision for special needs would be centred, and the Committee further recommends the appointment of resident tutors and lecturers, as well as resident organisers to open up new centres and carry out the administrative work. It is impossible to say whether Morris's idea of designating the larger villages as the centres of rural life, providing educational and social activities for a cluster of satellite villages and hamlets, followed on from this recommendation of the Report or developed independently. Certainly it fitted neatly with the village college scheme, as did the notion of resident tutors, lecturers and organisers. The residential proviso may have been transmuted to allow wardens and tutors not to have to live 'above the shop', but the emphasis on full-time commitment certainly remained, as we shall see, in Morris's detailed requirements for village college staff.<sup>9</sup>

To sum up, then, the 1919 Report anticipated the development of the village colleges in a significant number of its recommendations and incidentally laid out the framework for adult education which was to profoundly influence the type of community education that subsequently developed in this country. It delineated the area to be considered 'adult education', namely, education which was 'not technical or vocational', and set out its goals: to prepare individuals for life and to equip them for their role as active, participating

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<sup>9</sup> See p. 106 below.

citizens and members of the community. It set goals also for the community: to treat adult education as a 'permanent national necessity' and to ensure that educational opportunities for adults were 'universal and lifelong'. It recognised the linkage between education and the pressure for social reform, while warning of some possible dangers in this respect. Above all it provided a model and a vision for adult education in the rural areas, where the earliest form of community education began, making a plea in the process for proper organisation and financing of the provision. This vision rested upon a community centre, which would provide a focal point for the social, educational and recreational life of the community. It pictured a busy institution, with a variety of lively activities taking place in purpose-built (or adapted) accommodation, including meeting rooms, hall, library and museum, and sports facilities. It recommended strong leadership, allied with democratic participation on the part of the community. It encouraged co-operation between voluntary and statutory organisations in the provision of the centre. It also floated the idea of a number of centres in larger settlements, equipped to provide for more specialist requirements, and serving in this respect a cluster of smaller satellite village institutions.

The major point in which the Report differed from Morris's subsequent proposal was in its identification of the village institute as the focus, rather than the school. Perhaps it took a hard-pressed local education officer to recognise the great financial benefits of doubling up in shared adult/school accommodation. Certainly Morris was quick to point out the advantages to his Education Committee, and his successors in community education have also made much of this selling point. There were other reasons for the promotion of the

school as community centre which we shall be looking at in considering Morris's Memorandum, but in the meantime the Adult Education Committee continued, despite their advocacy of 'lifelong education', to separate the strands both vertically (according to age) and horizontally (recreational vs. vocational).

The great achievement of this Report was its concise and balanced summary of the existing situation and its clear delineation of the way forward in adult education. How this last was carried forward can be seen in the next section.

### 3.3.2 The Adult Education Committee Papers (1922-1933)<sup>10</sup>

In April 1921, the President of the Board of Education initiated an Adult Education Committee, with a triple purpose in view:

1. to promote the development of liberal education for adults and in particular to bring together national organisations concerned with the provision of adult education, so as to secure mutual help and to prevent overlapping and waste of effort;
2. to further the establishment of local voluntary organisations for the purpose of arrangements for co-operation with Local Education Authorities;
3. to advise the Board of Education upon any matters which the Board might refer to the Committee.

(p. 1 of each report)

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<sup>10</sup> London, 1922-1933.

The Committee published 11 reports in all between 1922 and 1933, as follows:

Paper No.1: Report on Local Co-operation between Universities, Local Education Authorities, and Voluntary Bodies (1922)

Paper No.2: Report on the Recruitment, Training, and Remuneration of Tutors (1922)

Paper No.3: The Development of Adult Education in Rural Areas (1922)

Paper No.4: The Development of Adult Education for Women (1922)

Paper No.5: British Music (1924)

Paper No.6: The Drama in Adult Education (1926)

Paper No.7: Full-time Studies (1927)

Paper No.8: Natural Science in Adult Education (1927)

Paper No.9: Pioneer Work and Other Developments in Adult Education (1927)

Paper No.10: The Scope and Practice of Adult Education (1930)

Paper No.11: Adult Education and the Local Education Authority (1933)

The Committee was chaired initially by the Bishop of Manchester, then by the Rev. R. St. John Parry and latterly by Major-General Sir Frederick Maurice. At the start, five of the committee members had served on the Ministry of Reconstruction Adult Education Committee: Albert Mansbridge (who later became Vice-Chairman), R.H. Tawney, Parry, A.L. Smith (chairman of the earlier committee) and the Rev. Basil Yeaxlee. It is perhaps not surprising, then, to find these reports frequently endorsing the conclusions and recommendations of the 1919 Report.

This can be seen, for example - and following up our chain of evolution towards the Village College - in Report No.3 on "The Development of Adult Education in Rural Areas", which was one of the four Reports published in 1922, only three years after the 1919 Report. It begins with an analysis of the factors which have led to "a long record of failure" in rural adult education, and describes in graphic terms "English villages . . . strewn with the wrecks of admirably meant efforts to brighten or instruct the villager" (p.4). The report goes on to analyse the level of current activity and enthusiastically promotes the idea of Village Clubs, of which at the time (March 1922) there were 460 affiliated to the Village Clubs Association (founded in 1918). The principles upon which each Club was based were as follows:

- (i) It should be the centre of all social activities, and of all

forms of physical and mental recreation.

(ii) It should be self-supporting and free from the element of patronage.

(iii) All inhabitants of the village, without distinction of class or opinion, and, when practicable, of both sexes, should be eligible for membership.

(iv) The entire control should be vested in a Committee elected either by (a) the members; or (b) the members and all residents of the parish.

(p.14)

Here again we have the idea of a central institution which will provide a focus for the social, educational and recreational life of the community, an institution which will be open to all and which will be to a certain extent self-directing and self-supporting. Particular emphasis is once again (as in the 1919 Report) laid upon this matter of democratic participation: among the committee's conclusions are that "an indispensable condition of success is the encouragement of initiative and co-operation in the village. Any scheme must be on a democratic basis", which, it rather grandly concludes, "is a commonplace of adult education in the twentieth century" (pp.17-18).

Elsewhere in the report, the Committee recommended the formation of Rural Community Councils which would act in a consultative and advisory capacity to bring together the various bodies at work in any county, and also suggested that each village within a county should have "a body inclusive of the whole community" (p.22). Once again

the appointment of full-time tutors for university extension and similar work is urged. Moreover, considerable space is given to the necessity of a village hall or institute. Schools, parish rooms, shops and rooms in private houses were all unsuitable (not to mention the cow-shed which, the committee was informed, was used as a meeting-place for discussion by the men of one particular village! - p.23).

There is no doubt, the report continues, that "where a village hall can be erected by the co-operative effort of the village men and women, is managed by a representative committee, and is at the service of all organisations alike, this in itself makes a most valuable educational factor in village life" (p.24).

This report, like its predecessor in 1919, dwells a little on the difficulties of attracting the rural population into educational activities, citing a lack of regard for education, an aversion born of previous failure, and a reluctance to commit themselves to any more than a very short course of study (to which modern community educators may murmur, "Plus ça change . . . "). And like the earlier Report, this one similarly emphasises the necessity to begin with practical subjects of immediate relevance to the prospective students' everyday lives (pp.25-27). Again following on from the 1919 Report, the committee underlines the importance of rural libraries and an adequate supply of books, and advocates that County Councils should be empowered to finance "good educational music, and possibly cinematograph performances and suitable drama", as well as the concerts already taking place at the instigation of (and financed by) the Carnegie Trustees (p.32).

So far, our emphasis has been upon rural concerns, since these have

the greatest relevance to the early model of community education demonstrated in Cambridgeshire. However, the committee was also keenly interested in the quality of urban life, and in Paper No.9, "Pioneer Work and other Developments in Adult Education", published five years later than the previous report, in 1927, much more attention is given to the encouragement of adult education activities in urban areas. This was no new departure: the desire of working people to acquire and the enthusiasm of providers to promulgate adult education operated pretty well across the rural/urban continuum. Of particular interest to the committee, and described in fair detail in this report, was a new experiment by London County Council, which began in 1920 to create a number of Men's Institutes, based, interestingly, upon existing school buildings. His Majesty's Inspectors had recently produced a descriptive report (published as Educational Pamphlet No.48, by HMSO) and the committee quotes liberally and approvingly from this. The inspectors had pointed out that "there are large numbers (of the population) for whom *higher* education is impossible; but they have other needs, and to neglect them is to leave unsolved one of the most serious problems of a great city" (p.22). The Inspectors' report summed up the clientele at whom the educational venture was aimed as the "mass of men who, except that they had once passed through the elementary schools, had remained untouched by any educational influences" (p.23). Nor were they promising recruits. "Their whole mode of life, habits, outlook, tastes and prejudices made it unlikely that any of the recognised forms of education would attract them or be much use to them" (*ibid.*).

It is interesting to note the approach taken by the providers in this

instance:

At the outset it was impossible to define with any precision the aims of the new Institutes. The nature of the demand - if it can be called a demand - had to be explored. No one could predict what shape the work would assume, for it was a new class of people whose needs were to determine the scope of the enterprise. A large discretion had to be left to the organising Heads, for their task was one of the greatest difficulty, requiring tact, sympathy, resourcefulness, untiring energy and patience. They had to establish relations with men who were apparently indifferent to all forms of education and even suspicious of the good intentions of any public authority.

(p.24)

The importance of the attitude expressed here can hardly be overemphasised. Far from the prescriptive approach which characterised earlier ventures in adult education (in the Paternalist mode of our matrix), we find here a willingness to tailor the work to the needs of the clientele, coupled with a realistic analysis of the likely response and a sympathetic understanding of the feeling of irrelevance which turned working men away from anything which smacked of education or public benefaction. These are characteristics which appear again and again in the contemporary literature of community education, and it is significant to find it expressed at this early stage.

In the end, it was "facilities for physical exercise in a gymnasium, boxing, games, and workshops for the pursuit of simple handicraft" which provided a starting point in "some of the least promising neighbourhoods." The organisers discovered that "Anything of the

nature of academic instruction was shunned. The 'library' was avoided; the magazines provided remained almost unread." What did appeal, they found, was specialist clubs and societies, and "Courses which failed to attract when announced as 'lectures' succeeded when transformed into the 'B..... G..... and District Society.'" Many of these had developed, the Inspectors reported, into more formal educational enquiries and the result was that within three years "most of the Institutes had firmly established a large and miscellaneous group of classes, and had become centres of the social life of the neighbourhood". In conclusion, the Inspectors had pointed out that "to judge the Institutes merely by their academic achievements would be to mistake their whole value and purpose. They are a civilising agency in every district in which they are placed. They prevent moral and intellectual wastage among a class living in some of the least favourable surroundings of urban life ..... There is much," they end by saying, "still to be explored . . . in the discovery of what the average man can make of his leisure in association with his friends and neighbours with such skilled guidance as can be afforded by a wise and sympathetic teacher" (pp.26-27).

Once again, in quoting so extensively from the description of the approach used by the London Literary Institutes, the committee is laying down certain ground rules which were to be followed, certain standards to be emulated in adult education across the board. These included respect for the individuals, groups and communities at which educational efforts were aimed, sensitivity to the needs and wishes of the target population, and imagination and flexibility in both the interpretation of what constituted 'education' and in the means of introducing it. Here too is recognition of the importance of

a measure of self-determination and democratic control which was advocated in the 1919 Report and which, as we shall see, is part of the philosophy of the village colleges and their successors, thus leaning them towards at least the Liberal, if not the Radical, positions on our continuum.

One other point of special relevance is included in this particular paper, and that is to do with accommodation. Here for the first time the committee mentions the potential of secondary school buildings as homes for adult education through dual use. The London Institutes, it notes, "are housed for the most part in Secondary School buildings. The same building is used throughout the session and from year to year, and the Institute has the use of the whole building and not merely one room in it. A student can feel that the building is, and will continue to be, a centre of adult education in his neighbourhood."

By the time this report was produced, in 1927, Morris had already published his plans for Cambridgeshire. There is no available evidence to indicate whether either had directly influenced the other in its advocacy of the use of school buildings by the community to provide a centre for adult education. It is interesting to note, however, that in the committee's final published paper (No.11, "Adult Education and the Local Education Authority"<sup>11</sup>), on this topic of a home for adult education, the authors of the report note that "the appearance of new Community Centres, where adult work shares the premises with other types of social activity, has been a hopeful sign" and in this regard "invite readers to study the plan of Sawston Village College in Cambridgeshire" (p.140). Morris had arrived.

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<sup>11</sup> London, 1933.

### 3.3.3 The Village College Memorandum (1924)

When Henry Morris produced his innovative plan for revitalising rural life through the institution of the village college, he was thirty-five and had been Secretary for Education in Cambridgeshire for only two years. Already he had engineered a major coup, the production of an Agreed Syllabus of Religious Instruction (drawn up by an impressively weighty committee of academics, churchmen and representatives of education) which would be used in both voluntary (church) and county schools. In so doing, he removed a major obstacle to the transfer of children at the age of eleven to the new county secondary schools he envisaged. One of these schools was already in existence, at Burwell, where several smaller schools had been closed and older children from the remaining ones funnelled to the central senior school. This had been possible because all of the schools in this case were local authority schools, but Morris was quick to hold it up as a model for future development throughout the county. Having persuaded the churches (in particular the Church of England) that children from their schools would be following an approved course of religious instruction in the county senior schools, Morris found less difficulty in persuading county councillors of the benefits of streamlining the system. Once again the recent Burwell amalgamation was used to illustrate how savings could be achieved while at the same time the standard of education could be improved by reorganisation. With such careful preparation of the ground by Morris, the Education Committee was pleased to approve both the Agreed Syllabus (in January 1924) and subsequently the plan outlined in the Memorandum (February 1925).

The history of the translation of Morris's vision into the first of the Cambridgeshire Village Colleges (Sawston, opened in October 1930) and the spread of the institution throughout the county has been detailed elsewhere<sup>12</sup> and need not be repeated here. What is of significance for our enquiry is the particular set of ideas put forward by Morris in the Memorandum, the origins of these ideas (as far as this can be determined) and the extent of their subsequent influence in the creation of what came to be known as community education.

The Memorandum itself is a remarkable piece of work, notable, first of all, for the clarity of its imagination and expression and, secondly, for the prescience with which it anticipated the attitudes and practice characteristic of community education some 40-50 years later. It is not easy to determine where the ideas which Morris put forward in the Memorandum came from, although it must be regarded as likely that he had read the 1919 Report at least. Without mentioning the Report or other published material, Harry Rée, in his biography of Morris, attempts to reconstruct the background and influences which may have given rise to Morris's grand scheme. He mentions Morris's own experience of drab and stultifying schooling and of an enclosed, isolated and insular college (St. David's, Lampeter, where Morris studied from 1910 to 1912, with a view to ordination). On the positive side, he points to the contact Morris had (as junior reporter for the "Southport Visitor" and as unofficial social organiser for his friend and mentor, the vicar of Crossons, Lancashire) with "the small world of local dramatic societies, choirs and clubs: seedbeds of indigenous collective initiative" (p.16). Rée adds to this Morris's emotional response to Oxford and Cambridge, where he read initially for a Theology and finally for a Philosophy degree before and after the

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<sup>12</sup> Rée, *Educator Extraordinary*, passim.

First World War, and where, according to Rée, he acquired from his tutor, the Oxford historian Hastings Rashdall, an “attachment to the pure essence of the university ideal” (p.18). These hypothetical roots are quite possible, but rather tenuous and unsupported by any of Morris’s published writings or any of the recollections available to us in Rée’s otherwise immensely informative book.

Where Rée is on firmer ground is in his identification of the values and ideals which fuelled Henry Morris’s vision and which are copiously attested to in his articles, his radio talks and his letters to friends, as well as in the Memorandum. Rée mentions in particular his attachment to religion (not in the sense of a set of beliefs, for he had abandoned Christian doctrine in favour of a more humanist philosophy, but more in the sense of what he himself referred to as the ‘numinous’), to science, to education and to the arts (especially poetry, music and, above all, architecture). In addition, Rée identifies two further sources of Morris’s energy: “a binding loyalty to local government” and “an active and almost Victorian social conscience. These kept him working for twenty-five years with a small staff, in a small office, in a small county; kept him too from seeking and sometimes from accepting offers of much bigger things.”<sup>13</sup> As we shall see in a closer examination of the Memorandum, Morris clearly operated from the premise that education at its best was to do with quality of life and those qualities of the mind and spirit which allow individuals to realise their full potential whatever the circumstances of their lives.

One possible external influence sometimes claimed to be a source for

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<sup>13</sup> In 1924, Morris turned down an offer from the BBC to take charge of educational policy . at a salary more than three times his existing pay.

the village college idea is the Danish Folk High School, established by Christen Kold in Denmark from the 1850s on and based on the educational thinking of Nikolai Grundtvig. Morris himself roundly rejected this ascription; the Schools are mentioned specifically in the Memorandum and are the subject of an article, "The Danish High School Myth", which Morris contributed to the December 1941 issue of *Adult Education*,<sup>14</sup> and in both of these he is at pains to point out the unsuitability of the folk high schools for the English situation. He cites in particular the fact that the high schools were residential, that they were to a large extent remedial, providing basic education for young adults who had suffered from the inadequacies of the Danish elementary education system, and that they were "non-local and seasonal" (p.79). "The truth is," he continued, "that rural life and adult education both in this country and in every country require in the first place a *local* institution which will affect the life of the rural community as it is lived from day to day ..... As to the big towns and cities, even a large number of residential settlements would not solve the problems of urban adult education and social life. The city itself must be made the forum of community life. . . . To provide residential hostels in the countryside, to which a minority can escape at infrequent intervals from the squalor and frustration of the contemporary town, does not begin to deal with the cultural needs of modern communities" (p.79). There may be more than a touch of protectionism in this critique, since, despite the differences, there were some similarities of purpose and method, in particular the emphasis on music, literature, craftwork, an atmosphere of community, lively presentation and a non-didactic approach, relevance to adult living and the encouragement of indigenous culture. However, the religious and nationalist aims of the Folk High

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<sup>14</sup> Vol. XIV, no.2, pp.76-79.

Schools, and, under Kold, their frugality and austerity, would have been anathema to Morris, whose own appreciation of the wider world (as evidenced by his travels) and of its sensual and aesthetic attractions permeated his ideal of education and whose efforts to make the village colleges places of beauty as well as activity were unceasing and continued even after his retirement.<sup>15</sup>

In the Memorandum itself, Morris put forward a strong argument for a new form of rural education which would equal the advances that had taken place in urban state education. His goal in so doing was to halt the economic deterioration in the countryside, the leaching of rural youth to the towns, and the disappearance of a distinctive and valued way of life. The countryside, he argued, should have its own "localised and indigenous" system of primary, secondary and higher education and a stable social and recreational life in order to "build up a rural civilisation that will have chronic vigour" (p.15).

One of his first goals, upon which his scheme depended, was the reorganisation of the country's small village schools, which he saw as being both unsatisfactory and expensive, into a rationalised scheme of 30-40 senior or central schools based on the larger villages, with 'feeder' junior schools in the smaller villages surrounding each of these. It was very much the Burwell plan, and Morris argued that the larger central schools would be better equipped and staffed, and would be able to offer advanced instruction. He foresaw three prime benefits: the larger number of children at the central schools would allow for "a class system based on age and attainments" (p.15);

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<sup>15</sup> His greatest achievement was undoubtedly his recruitment of the German architect and Bauhaus director, Walter Gropius, to design, with Maxwell Frye, the Village College at Impington, described by Nikolaus Pevsner, in his *Buildings of Cambridgeshire* (Harmondsworth, 1970), as "one of the best buildings of its date in England, if not the best!"

specialist facilities could be developed more generously as the number of schools was reduced; and teachers in junior schools could concentrate better on their younger clientele, once the older children had departed. He pointed out that such integration and rationalisation had already led to the agreed syllabus of religious teaching and was already attracting better qualified teachers to the country schools. There would, he continued, be enormous organisational benefits, "in the economical provision of buildings and equipment, in the development and enrichment of the curriculum and in the training of teachers'. Overall, he enthused, there would at last be "all over the English countryside a rural education of a secondary type for the training of boys and girls for life as countrymen and countrywomen" (p.17).

From this one might deduce that Morris's main preoccupation was with the education of school-age children, and therefore would bear little relation to the adult education reports we have argued are precursors of the Memorandum, but he quickly makes it clear that he has a much broader intention in mind. As he goes on to describe his aims and his proposed means for achieving these, we can see how much his ideas have in common with those of the Adult Education Committees whose reports we have already examined, as well as the areas in which he diverged.

The core of his proposal was the creation of a new institution which would function as the educational, social and recreational centre of community life, and in so doing bring about a revival of the rural communities it served. In order to achieve this, he argued, what was needed was the gathering of all the educational and social agencies of



an area, both statutory and voluntary, into "a new institution, single but many-sided, for the countryside" (p.18). He advocated "a wide conception of education as covering all ages and activities and including social and physical training" (p.19). In these respects, Morris was perfectly in line with the Committees - here once again we have the idea of a centre providing a form of lifelong education and bringing together a variety of activities while acting as a focus for community life. Similarly, his proposal for bringing together students from a number of villages had been anticipated by the 1919 Report, which considered this as a possible solution to the problem of over-small rural adult classes. The Report expressed reservations about the idea, thinking it "not generally practicable" (p.264) other than for the more specialised forms of provision, but Morris saw the great potential benefits as far outweighing the practical difficulties.

As was pointed out earlier in this chapter, where Morris differed from his predecessors was in his vision of the *school* as the basis for the new, all-embracing community institution. Translated into practice for Cambridgeshire, this entailed the establishment, in about ten centres where senior schools already existed, of "a system of village colleges which would provide for the co-ordination and development of all forms of education - primary, secondary, further and adult education - together with social and recreational facilities, and at the same time furnish a community centre in the fullest sense of the neighbourhood" (p.19). He drew a simple diagram of what the village college might look like: "two wings or three-sided courts, one containing the school portion, the other accommodation specially set apart for adult activities, and with the village hall between" (p.19). The accommodation would include, in addition to the facilities

required by the primary and secondary schools, a nursery school cum Infant Welfare Centre, a library and reading room, a room for agricultural education, two to three rooms for adult evening classes and meetings, shower baths and a dressing room, the village recreation grounds, a school garden, a careers centre, a Warden's house and space for indoor games such as billiards. All of this, Morris believed, could be provided and maintained by the Statutory Authorities - principally the Board of Education and the Ministry of Agriculture - which had a legal responsibility for the various parts of the proposed educational provision.

It is in dealing with the architecture of the proposed village college that the quintessential Morris breaks out. Design and construction of the new institution must be "very carefully provided for. For we are in measurable sight, if we use imagination and have administrative courage, of giving to the English countryside a number of fine and worthy public buildings" (pp.26-7). Existing rural schools, he declared, were "nearly always bad and seldom beautiful". Since many were due to be replaced following the 1921 Education Act, this was an opportunity not to be missed. In a rhetorical address to the architect he pleads for a building

that will express the spirit of the English countryside which it is intended to grace, something of its humaneness and modesty, something of the age-long and permanent dignity of husbandry; a building that will give the countryside a centre of reference arousing the affection and loyalty of the country child and country people, and conferring significance on their way of life.

(pp.27-28)

Where earlier (and some later) committees tended to see the village

institute as the nub of adult and community activities, Morris realised that the school, provided appropriate accommodation for adult users was added, was just as capable of fulfilling the social function of a community centre, while being infinitely better suited to the educational purpose. This was not the first time that adults and children shared educational accommodation (as histories of the Adult Schools testify), but it was certainly a departure from the thinking of the 1919 Report. It was also, as we shall see later in this chapter, crucial in the development of the particularly British type of community education, which, in its mainstream form, has for the most part been based upon a specific educational centre, and usually upon a school.

Where the purpose and functions of the village college were concerned, Morris was very much in tune with the Adult Education Committee Reports. This accord is perhaps best expressed in an inspired passage in which Morris graphically describes his own vision of the village college and its role in the community. By taking "all the various but isolated activities in village life ..... [and] ..... bringing them together into relation", Morris argued that "an organic whole" would be created. The college, he went on,

would provide for the whole man, and abolish the duality of education and ordinary life. It would not only be the training ground for the art of living, but the place in which life is lived, the environment of a genuine corporate life. The dismal dispute of vocational and non-vocational education would not arise in it, because education and living would be equated. It would be a visible demonstration in stone of the continuity and never-ceasingness of education. There would be no "leaving school"! - the child would enter at three and leave the college only in extreme old age. It would have the great virtue of being local, so that it

would enhance the quality of actual life as it is lived from day to day - the supreme object of education. Unlike non-local residential institutions ..... it would not be divorced from the normal environment of those who frequent it from day to day, or from that greater educational institution, the family ..... The village college would lie athwart the daily lives of the community it served, and in it the conditions would be realised under which education would not be an escape from reality, but an enrichment and transformation of it. For education is committed to the view that the ideal order and the actual order can ultimately be made one.

(pp.28-29)

Here once more we have the same themes which were identified in the earlier Reports: education as training for life, providing for all aspects of a person's life ('the whole man') and available at every stage of life; the necessity of relevance to local and community concerns; the importance of the educational environment; the desirability of bringing together the assortment of provision into a unified whole; the ideal of the corporate life.

One further strand of thought in the Memorandum which echoed a concern of the 1919 Report in particular was to do with local democracy and leadership. The disappearance in part of the old landowner class mean that the responsibilities of leadership and "the maintenance of liberal and humane traditions in our squireless villages", as Morris put it, would devolve upon the community as a whole. The village college would be the guardian of these traditions, "the training ground of a rural democracy realising its social and political duties" (p.29). As such, it could never outlive its function since it would not be "committed irrevocably to any intellectual or social dogma". "Intellectually," Morris concluded, "it might be one of

the freest of our English institutions" (p.30). He anticipated considerable local involvement in the running of the village college, through a board of governors with strong local representation. This would, however, act largely in an advisory or consultative capacity. The day-to-day management of the college would rest with the head (to be called Warden - or possibly, as with the Oxbridge colleges, Provost, Master or Principal). He would provide a new model of leadership, "a new type of leader and teacher with a higher status and of superior calibre ..... a man country-bred and trained at a University ..... above all ..... a man with a love of and understanding of rural life, with powers of leadership" (pp.24-25). The members of the Adult Education Committees had also considered this matter. They themselves had pointed out<sup>16</sup> that "there is latent in the mass of our people a capacity far beyond what was recognised [before the war]" to develop which they "only require teachers and leaders whom they can trust; and here, as always, the successful working of democracy depends upon the people recognising 'the natural aristocracy that is among any body of men'." In both cases, the old aristocratic squire might be dead; the new meritocratic squire would arise to take his place and lead the people to new heights of civic responsibility. Nevertheless, there is clearly in all the Reports quoted in the earlier section, and also in the Memorandum, a genuine sensitivity to the burgeoning desire, among a working population whose horizons had been roughly torn back by a bloody European war, for greater independence and a more substantial measure of self-determination at home. Here, if anywhere, we have a marker of the extent to which the Liberal tradition had by now supplanted, if not entirely eliminated, Paternalism in the field of adult education.

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<sup>16</sup> 1919 Report, p.5.

From the above comparison it can be seen that Morris's Memorandum, far from cutting an entirely new furrow in the educational landscape, was following a line already clearly established by the end of the First World War. His particular genius lay in his ability to translate existing principles into a model of impressive originality and practicality, and then to achieve, through sheer, grinding effort and determination, a convincing demonstration of his model in practice. This demonstration was to have wide-reaching effects, particularly in the period directly after the Second World War, for just as reconstruction efforts following the First War had focussed upon education for a new, post-war order, so the end of the 1939-1945 conflict produced its great educational plan for a new age. And in the working out of the new scheme for education the ideas of Henry Morris can be clearly detected.

#### 3.4 Post-1945: Consolidation and Institutionalisation

The following sections concentrate upon the last year of the war and the five years immediately after. This was a particularly important time for education, bringing as it did a milestone new Education Act. As we shall see, this Act had considerable repercussions for the development of community education, and this is reflected in two of the Ministry of Education's own publications, which are examined below. The Act precipitated a flurry of educational planning on the part of the Local Education Authorities, many of whom chose to incorporate plans for community education (and community schools) into their broad schemes for further education. We shall look at one example of this, in one of the counties which most wholeheartedly adopted the community education approach. But let us begin with

the Act itself.

### 3.4.1 The Education Act, 1944

At the official opening of Bassingbourn Village College in October, 1954, shortly before Henry Morris retired, R.A. Butler, who had been invited to preside, spoke admiringly of Morris's educational achievements. In the course of the speech he reminisced about his visit to Sawston Village College, soon after its opening by the Prince of Wales, and declared:

We met Mr. Morris and I am quite certain that my experience on that occasion made a profound impression on my mind when I came to plan the Education Act of 1944, and I therefore feel I am coming back to pay a small debt of gratitude for the inspiration given me .....<sup>17</sup>

Nor was this the first time Butler had credited Morris with influencing his thinking. In 1948, addressing the Linton Students' Festival, Butler had similarly referred to that early visit to Sawston. "I decided," he said, "that if we were going to reform English education it would have to be done on the lines of the Cambridgeshire village colleges. My visit definitely did have its effect on me in framing the 1944 Education Act."<sup>18</sup>

While allowing for the expansiveness of the visiting politician, these are strong statements clearly linking developments in education after 1945 with Morris's work in Cambridgeshire in the Twenties and Thirties. However, an examination of the Education Act of 1944<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Rée, p.91.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Rée, p.91, fn.2.

<sup>19</sup> I have here used A.E. Ikin's *The Education Act 1944* (London, 1944), which provides a contemporary commentary and interpretation on each section of the Act by Dr. Ikin, an expert on education law (whose last work this was; he died before publication). His meticulous notes are themselves a valuable source for the educational historian.

reveals not a mention of village colleges. The only reference to Cambridge is in relation to the Agreed Syllabus for Religious Instruction, and the primary emphasis in the sections on 'Further Education' is on the idea of 'county colleges', which, in fact, designated an entirely different type of institution. It is difficult to determine, therefore, exactly what Butler meant.

Two things do emerge clearly from the Act's pronouncements on Further Education. First of all, we have a clear definition of further education as

- (a) full-time and part-time education for persons over compulsory school age; and
- (b) leisure-time occupation, in such organized cultural training and recreative activities as are suited to their requirements, for any persons over compulsory school age who are able and willing to profit by the facilities provided for that purpose.

(p.104)

What is significant in this description is its inclusiveness, bridging the gap which had existed between formal or technical adult education and informal, leisure activities and bringing them into an equal partnership for the first time. Secondly, the Act places the responsibility for the provision of further education firmly with local education authorities, requiring them to draw up and submit schemes of further education for their own areas. While directing the LEAs to "have regard to any facilities for further education provided for their area by universities, educational associations, and other bodies" and to consult and co-operate with these other providers (p.107), the Act clearly puts the Local Authority in charge of further, as well as primary and secondary education, with the proviso that all schemes produced by the LEAs must be

approved by the Minister. It is possible that the success of Morris's local education authority in managing further education in Cambridgeshire, and Morris's criticism of what he saw as the artificial distinctions between different kinds of post-school education, may have had some effect on the formulation of this section of the Act, though it is certainly far from proven.

This section's main thrust, the proposal for the formation of county colleges, is undoubtedly far from Morris's concept, being concerned with compulsory continuing education for school-leavers and young adults, or, to put it in the words of the Act,

the duty of every local education authority to establish and maintain ..... centres approved by the Minister for providing for young persons who are not in full-time attendance at any school or other educational institution such further education, including physical practical and vocational training, as will enable them to develop their various aptitudes and capacities and will prepare them for the responsibilities of citizenship.

(p.107)

The Local Education Authorities were enjoined by the Act to draw up plans for such colleges, having first carried out a survey of the needs of their particular areas. The Act further specified that the plans must be in process of being put into effect within three years. Ironically, in light of the emphasis given to county colleges and the detailed prescription for them laid out in the Act, this particular element was never put into practice - the county colleges did not materialise. Many LEAs, however, did, as directed, carry out surveys and draw up schemes for further education and/or county plans, and we shall be looking at one of these later in this chapter.

One other brief section of the Act, however, should be mentioned, as it has direct bearing on the development of the community school. Section 22 (pp.60-63) deals with the powers of local education authorities "as to use and care of premises of voluntary schools". Here the Act makes clear the respective powers of the LEA and the school managers/ governors over the use of school premises on Saturdays and Sundays when they might be required for community purposes. Although principally intended as direction for voluntary schools, this section of the Act simultaneously spells out the position for schools under local authority control ('controlled' schools). The managers and governors of a controlled school were, according to the Act,

entitled to determine the use to which the school premises or any part thereof shall be put on Saturdays except when required ..... for the purposes of the school or for any purpose connected with education or with the welfare of the young ..... and the foundation managers or foundation governors shall be entitled to determine the use to which the school premises or any part thereof shall be put on Sundays .....

(p.61)

As Ikin's accompanying note points out, this "obviates the necessity of the L.E.A. .... being referred to every time the village school is wanted for some non-educational purpose, some public meeting, or a flower show, etc." Where voluntary schools are concerned, the local authority can exercise control over the use of these premises to the extent that if they wish to provide accommodation

for any purpose connected with education or the welfare of the young and are satisfied that there is no suitable alternative accommodation in their area for that purpose, they may direct the managers or governors of any aided school to provide free

of charge accommodation for that purpose on the school premises or any part thereof on any weekday when not required for the purposes of the school ..... [though not] on more than three days in any week.

(*ibid.*)

Apart from this power to requisition voluntary school premises (which “may be of special value in a village where evening institutes or youth organisations are at work, or courses for further education are organised for the immediate district,” Ikin adds),

the occupation and use of the school premises of any voluntary school shall be under the control of the managers or governors thereof.

(*ibid.*)

As Ikin points out in concluding his notes on this section,

Taking the section as a whole, on the occasions when managers or governors are responsible for letting the premises out of school hours, they may allow their use *for any purpose* they approve. On occasions when the L.E.A. control the letting, a school may be used *in the interests of the young*, so that altogether the school may be used out of school hours for what constitutes the greater part of the life of the community.

(p.63)

The importance of this clarification in practical terms for the emergence of community schools should not be underestimated. Without a clear devolvement of the power to decide on external bodies' use of school premises to the school's governors or managers, attempts to centre community activities on the school would have been mired in local authority bureaucratic procedures and an important element of local educational democracy would have been lost. At the same time, the LEA's overall control and responsibility

for community use of school premises is maintained, thus contributing to the rooting of British community education, as it developed, firmly in the local authority education structure.

#### 3.4.2 *Community Centres (1944)*

I have pointed out earlier that R.A. Butler's stated admiration for the Cambridgeshire Village College was not in fact reflected in the provisions of the Education Act produced under his aegis. More instructive concerning the government's intentions in this respect is a report produced by the Ministry of Education immediately after the appearance of the Act in 1944, entitled *Community Centres*.<sup>20</sup> The Prefatory Note to this publication declares that the government

has decided that the provision of Community Centres to promote the social and physical training of the community should be regarded as coming within the scope of the education service administered by local education authorities, such provision being covered by the terms of the Education Act, 1944.

This almost casually worded declaration is another important building block in the creation of the community education framework in this country. When the LEA has overall responsibility for use of school premises by the community and when, in addition, it has direct responsibility for the provision of community centres, it seems inevitable that the two should merge together. As we shall see, this assumption was not made in the report, which continued for the most part to see the centres as separate units, but nonetheless considered *attachment* of community centres to schools as having certain benefits. And to provide us with our link from Henry Morris to the community schools of the post-war period we find the report citing (though with modified approval) the example of the village colleges of

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<sup>20</sup> London: HMSO, 1946; reprinted 1950.

Cambridgeshire<sup>21</sup> as one possible model for rural areas at least.

The idea of community centres as a focus for both urban and rural neighbourhoods was far from a new one. We have already seen the village colleges fulfilling this role in rural Cambridgeshire (and there were other rural models), but the institution, in a variety of manifestations from university settlement to miners' welfare institute, had also been a long-established feature of urban and industrial areas. The report itself describes the community centre as having been 'born in the slums and spent its infancy in the dark valley of the dole' (p.5). During the period (just before and during WWII) which immediately preceded the appearance of the report we find that there was already a considerable amount of activity. An informative Appendix to the Report describes the numbers and types of community centres in existence under the aegis of three major voluntary organisations,<sup>22</sup> as well as under the local education authorities, the housing authorities and the Miners' Welfare Commission. The statistics included in the Appendix, compiled for the most part in 1942-43, suggest that there were over 1,550 centres affiliated to these organisations, the largest number (1,305) being Miners' Welfare centres. It is clear from the description in this Appendix that the Report was building upon, and borrowing from, an already existing tradition of neighbourhood-based centres, linked by common concerns and goals, however varied they might otherwise be.

The continuing tradition is also noted in the introduction to the Report, where the authors acknowledge that "although the

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<sup>21</sup> Chapter III, paragraphs 32-37.

<sup>22</sup> The National Council of Social Service, the British Association of Residential Settlements and the Educational Settlements Association; see *Community Centres*, pp.27-31.

community centre we have in mind exists at present only at the experimental stage, it has many prototypes resembling it to a greater or lesser degree, but differing somewhat in purpose." Among the progenitors listed are the Christian Church, the YMCAs and YWCAs, University Settlements, Women's Institutes, Miners' Welfare institutes, the village halls and "the village colleges of Cambridgeshire" (p.4).

It is worth looking in some detail at the purpose and organisation of the type of community centre advocated by the Ministry, in order to examine, first of all, the extent to which it reflected the aims and practice of the village college and, secondly, to consider the ways in which it anticipated the community college of the future. It is interesting also to identify the points at which the 'Ministry model' differed from what came before or after.

Where the role and functions of the community were concerned, the booklet identified a number of these:

- a) to help people make better use of the increased leisure available to them as a result of the mechanisation of work;
  - b) to provide suitable premises for social, educational and recreational activities;
  - c) to foster a sense of community, and in particular to assist with the creation of "a socially conscious community";
  - d) by providing practice in management of the community centre, to encourage intelligent participation in local and national government, thus advancing democracy through education.
- (pp.3-4)

These unexceptionable aims could be incorporated with great ease

into the schemes both of Henry Morris (who might well have thought them rather modest) and, as we shall see in a later section, of local authorities after the war laying down guidelines for the development of community education.

The Report goes on to describe the characteristics of the model community centre, basing its recommendations upon the comments and advice of a number of 'witnesses' consulted for their expert knowledge. A community centre, it declared, should be open to all, but pointed out that it would not necessarily appeal to or be used by all the members of the community. Nor should it be seen as a substitute for the home, the church, or even for the other suppliers of recreation and education already available within a neighbourhood. The centre should nonetheless cater to as wide a variety of interests as was practical, and its programme should be geared as closely as possible to the needs and wishes of that particular locality and its residents. Local consultation was an essential element, and the centre should itself be 'owned' by the community ("Once it is their possession, it will presently be their pride" - p.7). Where the centre's strategy vis-à-vis the community was concerned, the Report advocated a low-key approach, with an initial emphasis on social activities, on appealing to the women of the community and on facilities for skills affording "some immediate material return" (p.8). The authors of the Report seem to have felt somewhat defensive of this 'recreation before education' tactic (a concern which was to resurface in arguments among later adult and community education theorists and practitioners, as we shall see in the following chapter), since, while admitting that "without some educational purpose a community centre is unlikely to make a permanent contribution to the needs of

the community”, they are quick to point out that “the purely social activities of the community centre are also in their own way educational” (p.9). The demand for education, the writers believed, had to be stimulated and nurtured, but no “special prestige should attach to classwork” and it should not be assumed that the standards applied in informal education “must necessarily be inferior” (p.8).

In addition to the statement of its aims and functions, which concurs largely both with Morris's vision for the village colleges and with subsequent LEA statements of purpose,<sup>23</sup> there are three other aspects of the Report's recommendations which put the model community centres firmly in the chain of development. These are: the importance given to appropriate accommodation, the central role of the warden, and the emphasis upon democratic management of the institution. Where the first of these is concerned, the Report is extremely practical in its approach, attaching an Appendix in which it gives detailed specifications for community centres of various types, including advice on furnishings and finishes and architectural plans for a purpose-built adult and youth centre, two school-based centres, three village hall arrangements, and (for immediate use after the war) a community and youth centre in huts.

The proposed plans underline one respect in which the Ministry model deviated from the theory (if not the practice) of the village and later community colleges, namely in its conviction that the community centres were primarily *adult* centres, in which youth accommodation and youth activities were kept separate from the adult equivalents (p.13). The youth club was seen as a possible gateway to adult education for young people, but it was a separate provision, and there

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<sup>23</sup> See *Memorandum, passim*, and Section 2.3.5 below.

was no embracing of the 'seamless web' ideal of continuing education in which the different age groups mixed and melded and education, in the later catchphrase, was a part of life 'from cradle to grave'.

Equal attention is given in the Report to the staffing and management of the centres, and in particular to the role of the warden. The specification for this important post bears many resemblances to that outlined by Morris in the *Memorandum* (although the Ministry to its credit recognises that the role might be occupied by either a man or a woman!). Here again there is an emphasis on the skills of human relations:

men and women having the qualities of democratic leadership, with informed minds, resources within themselves and the gift of friendliness, possessed of personality and character and having a real love of the work.

(p.18)

Academic qualifications were seen as less essential than personal qualities and experience of life (though "a sound educational background" was held to be desirable). Another common theme was the suggestion that the warden, if not personally from the community to which he or she was appointed, should "set out to 'become local'" and should be "willing to allow local interests to develop" (p.18). Morris too had emphasised the identification of the warden with the community and had seen the role as entailing a form of leadership from within, rather than from above.

The other main element common to the 'model' community centres, the village colleges which preceded them and the community colleges which came after, was the stipulation that part at least of the responsibility for the government of the centres should be devolved to

the local community itself, thus introducing a form of democratic management. In each case, in fact, the overall control remained with the local authority, which held the purse-strings. The Report, after describing the various structures favoured by the existing community centres, recommends this division of responsibility as a positive good.

Implicit in all the schemes devised by voluntary organisations for the government of community centres we find two fundamental principles. The first is the principle of local control of day-to-day management; the second that of stability and continuity in the body bearing the ultimate financial responsibility. We are convinced that both are sound; indeed we would go so far as to say that only upon this foundation will it be possible to erect any system of government for community centres which would be generally acceptable in this country.

(p.21)

The Report is keen to emphasise that the control exerted by the local authorities should "be limited and should not give the impression of external control by public authority" (p.21). It recommends the setting up of a local management committee for each centre, and suggests that local authority officials should "exercise their powers with tact and ..... remain unobtrusively in the background" (p.23). Most significantly, from our point of view, the authors of the Report describe as "of interest" the structure adopted by the Cambridgeshire village colleges and proceed to give details of this. Thus we have here a direct link between the village colleges and the guidelines for the community centres of the post-war period.

One other point of interest has already been touched on, but should perhaps be underlined again before we move on, and that is the

Report's statements concerning the question of locating community centres in schools. Although clearly impressed by the 'free-standing' community centres set up by both the voluntary and statutory bodies between the wars, and while expressing understanding of the negative feelings "going back to school" might engender, the authors are also acutely aware of the advantages of dual use, particularly in terms of cost and in view of the likely competition for building labour in the post-war reconstruction programme. In general, the Report continues, objections to the use of schools for the purpose of adult education and recreation are based not so much on antagonism to schools per se but on the unsuitability of the type of accommodation (including furnishings) they offer.

We consider that if the community centre provides the members with comfortable social and reading rooms *of their own* and pleasantly served light refreshments, and if the members can sit down to their lectures without having to squash themselves into seats several sizes too small for them, it will be found that they raise no objection to using school premises for those activities which can most conveniently be taken in them.

(p.24)

The authors also point out the advantages of thus linking school, youth and community activities, particularly in new housing estates. They advise against the use of primary schools, which are much less adaptable to community use, in their opinion, and are cautious about the use of classrooms and, especially, equipment belonging to the school. However, in conclusion they state:

we are of the opinion that whenever a new secondary school or college for further education is to be built, consideration should be given to adding provision for a

joint community centre and Youth Centre. Where no new school or college is to be built, but extensions or alterations are being made, the likelihood of demand for additional community centre facilities should be considered and experiments for this purpose should be encouraged.

(p.25)

We shall see examples of how this was put into practice when we go on to look at the County Plans for Further Education which followed in the wake of the 1944 Education Act to which this was a supplement.

In the meantime, there is one further official publication, produced to clarify and expand the provisions of the Education Act, which has considerable bearing on the development of the particular form of community education which came to be prevalent in this country in the post-war decades.

### 3.4.3 Further Education (1947)

*Further Education: The Scope and Content of its Opportunities under the Education Act, 1944* <sup>24</sup> is a detailed analysis and set of guidelines for the development of further education under the aegis of local education authorities and in line with the injunctions of the 1944 Education Act to LEAs. As in the Act itself, 'further education' is interpreted in its broadest sense to include full-time and part-time education and both informal, recreational learning as well as more formal vocational training. Once again in the Introduction to the booklet we have a restatement of the aims of adult education

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<sup>24</sup> Ministry of Education, Pamphlet No.8, London:HMSO, 1947.

("constructive use ..... of leisure", "a balanced community of well-balanced men and women", the "need for fully-trained citizens", "help to quicken the cultural, artistic and social life of the community", "a system of vocational preparation to meet the exacting needs of to-day" - pp.5-6). Thus this booklet from the Ministry of Education is very much in the mainstream where post-compulsory education is concerned.

In an initial survey of the contemporary scene, the pamphlet lists the earlier movements from which further education had developed ("the Mechanics' Institutes, the Polytechnics, University Extension Lectures, the Workers' Educational Association and the Y.M.C.A., the Trade Union and the Co-operative movements" and in Wales "its older traditions of Adult Sunday Schools, literary societies and eisteddfodau" - p.6) and goes on to illustrate the variety of provision which had stemmed from these early roots. Among the "more recent" additions it cites the village colleges of Cambridgeshire.

The influence of Morris and the village colleges may be detectable in the first concern with which the pamphlet deals: accommodation. Deploring the dearth of "worthy buildings of dignity and beauty" to house further education (the few existing ones are described as "oases in the desert" - p.8), the authors make a plea for buildings which would be "appropriate, functional and adaptable" (pp.8-9). "Above all," they conclude in words which might have been penned by Morris himself, "let us build as beautifully as we can" (p.9). Once again we have the emphasis on a suitable building as an essential ingredient in educational provision which we found both in Morris's *Memorandum* and in the *Community Centres* report.

It is worth noting the pamphlet's discussion at this point of the term 'college of further education'. The designation nowadays usually indicates a college which operates in the median band between school and higher education (though overlapping into both of these areas) and is primarily (though not exclusively) concerned with the provision of vocational education. The pamphlet, however, sees the term as a "general description ..... to include technical, commercial, and art colleges, institutes of adult education, village colleges, county colleges when these are established, and other further education establishments whatever their original bias may have been." The colleges are intended to "provide the framework of further education as a whole", the educational umbrella under which "smaller and more intimate centres of social and educational activity" would develop (pp.9-11). In actual fact, the term 'adult education' continued in more common use to indicate non-vocational post-compulsory education and the two terms, often used in conjunction<sup>25</sup>, were later to be joined by some of the other newer terminology, such as 'continuing education', 'lifelong education' and 'éducation permanente'. Of perhaps greater interest from our point of view is that this particular document is, as far as I can discover, the first to use the actual term 'community education', when it discusses the responsibility of the local authorities to "assume leadership in the co-operative enterprise of community education" (p.12).

Much of the pamphlet is, not surprisingly, concerned with pre-vocational education and preparation for work. However, one chapter is devoted particularly to "Learning for Leisure" and the role and

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<sup>25</sup> For example, many Local Education Authorities set up Departments of Further and Adult Education.

purpose of the LEAs in this area of work. Here once again we have the emphasis on the 'civilised community', the development of the individual's talents and interests, the responsible exercise of democracy, and the fostering of a sense of community as the principal goals of learning (pp.32-34). To achieve these aims, the authors put forward some familiar recommendations:

- a) co-operation with other educational and voluntary bodies;
- b) use of organising staff to stimulate demand;
- c) adequate accommodation<sup>26</sup>;
- d) methods and organisation which are flexible and responsive to the needs of the individual and the community;
- e) informality and a realistic approach;<sup>27</sup>
- f) a balanced and varied programme;
- g) "a warden of imagination and wide culture".

(p.62)

Taking these documents and their ideas together, it can be seen that there was emerging, in fact had emerged, where the Ministry of Education and the Local Education Authorities were concerned, a certain consensus about the desirable form of approach to the education of the community, to the point where the actual term 'community education' was becoming part of the vocabulary. It also seems clear that the cluster of ideas outlined in the last two documents, representing official policy in the post-war reorganisation of education, owed a great deal to the brain-child of Henry Morris, the village colleges of Cambridgeshire. We have already speculated that

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<sup>26</sup> The authors suggest pressing into use "for immediate and temporary service rooms in schools, libraries and adapted premises, and to furnish these suitably for adults" (p.33).

<sup>27</sup> "Education," they write, citing the experience of the Forces during the war, "is a social process and often flourishes best in an atmosphere that is free and informal, and where activities and responsibilities are shared appropriately among all concerned" (p.36).

the model pioneered by Morris and incorporated into the thinking of the post-war educational planners was to become the standard pattern for community education in the following decades. For confirmation of this, let us go on to look at how these ideas were translated into practice in one particular local authority.

#### 3.4.4 The Leicestershire County Plan

One of the major planks of the 1944 Education Act was, as we have already noted, the requirement that every Local Education Authority should draw up, for submission to the Minister, a scheme for further education in its own area. These 'County Plans', as they came to be known, were not generally published outside the counties which produced them, but one in particular has become more widely known, largely due to the interest engendered by its early and wholehearted adoption of the idea of the community college. This is Leicestershire, whose Director of Education in the period after the war, Stewart Mason, had earlier in his career been one of Morris's assistants in Cambridgeshire. In his detailed and highly informative account, *The Leicestershire Community Colleges and Centres*,<sup>28</sup> a later Director of Education, A.N. Fairbairn, makes clear the line of continuity from the Cambridgeshire model. In the Preface to the revised edition he points out that he has "taken the opportunity [of the re-publication] to trace the Community Colleges' historical connection with the Cambridgeshire Village Colleges ..... [and] ..... to pay tribute to the pioneers Henry Morris and my predecessor Stewart Mason" (p.3).

Under Stewart Mason's direction the 'Leicestershire Scheme for

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<sup>28</sup> University of Nottingham Department of Adult Education, 1979; revised and expanded version of a first edition published by the National Institute of Adult Education.

Further Education and Plan for County Colleges' was produced and was presented to the Education Committee. It outlined the local education authority's proposals for both vocational and recreational post-school education, and advocated the creation of "multi-purpose institutions" (p.5). In addition a Memorandum entitled 'Community Education' and further developing the proposals outlined in the Scheme was put before the Committee in April 1949. The LEA's submissions to the Committee were accepted and in the three decades that followed community education in Leicestershire expanded rapidly and steadily.

As outlined in the 'Scheme' and the accompanying Memorandum, it was envisaged that the existing colleges of further education would "act as the Community Centres for their immediate neighbourhoods" but that, since this arrangement would leave parts of the largely rural county unprovided for, there should be created "a number of community colleges on the lines of the Cambridgeshire village colleges, wherever the size of the local population warrants" (pp.5-6).<sup>29</sup>

It is interesting to look at the details of the community colleges, as described in the proposals, and to compare them with the Cambridgeshire prototype. Once again we have an emphasis on the use of schools as dual-purpose institutions catering for the educational needs of the entire population of a community (it was not until some time later that the further education colleges were able to expand into the areas of recreational adult education and youth

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<sup>29</sup> Fairbairn points out that in the original document the term used to describe the proposed new colleges in Leicestershire was 'county' college, but the word 'community' was later substituted to avoid confusion with the Ministry of Education's planned further education institutions of the same name.

work). There appears once again the idea of the larger villages serving as a central resource ("It is ..... planned to staff the Community Colleges on a more generous scale so that instructors can travel to the smaller villages to organise courses" while functioning as "the core of [their own] community" (p.6) Once again there is the emphasis upon the physical resource to be provided by the college: "assembly hall, gymnasium, craft rooms and playing fields" as well as the county library and, "by means of separate wings, the amenities required for youth and adult wings".<sup>30</sup> Moreover, the plan specifies "the appointment of a warden to superintend all the activities of the community college, so that he will be able to weld it into one organic community unit" (p.6). A fuller description of the warden's qualifications and role emphasise that the school and the community centre must not be "two uneasy bed-fellows in rivalry with each other, and frequently at cross-purposes" and that this can only be achieved "if one man is ultimately responsible .... not merely for the proper use of the whole set of college buildings, but for the success of the community centre as much for the success of the school" (p.42). Furthermore, where the content of the programme is concerned, it is underlined that there should be no differentiation between more formal studies and those classed as "social and recreative" (p.43). Two further statements strike a familiar note: firstly, one of the main aims of the community college is to foster "a vigorous sense of community living" (p.44), and, secondly, a "positive attitude of enthusiasm, pride and affection towards a community centre can be achieved only when the day-to-day government of the institution is in the hands of the people who use it" (p.47).

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<sup>30</sup> In fact, youth provision lagged considerably behind the adult education facilities. Two grades of community college were identified, with only Grade I colleges being supplied with separate youth accommodation.

In all of this, reference is made to the Cambridgeshire experience and its lessons for Leicestershire. Considering the question whether the existence of a strong central community college might rob the contributory villages of all local initiative, the report points out that "experience in Cambridgeshire has shown that the reverse is the case" (p.47). On the subject of whether school accommodation is suitable for community use, "the Cambridgeshire experiment has conclusively proved that youth and adults do not resent 'going back to school' provided there is additional accommodation they can regard as their own" (p.47).

Fairbairn's book goes on to provide a detailed description of the evolution of Leicestershire's numerous community colleges, including, following local government reorganisation in 1974, the development of urban colleges in the city of Leicester. What is striking about his account, despite the diversity of the communities involved, is the common pattern which emerges. And this pattern, as is indicated in the next section, was to become the norm for community education as it developed in this country in the post-war period and into the 1960s and '70s.

What both Cambridgeshire and Leicestershire demonstrated - and other counties as far apart geographically as Cumbria and Devon were quick to echo - was that the secondary school, given a modicum of purpose-built accommodation for adult, youth and community activities, was in many respects eminently suitable as a focus for the educational, social and recreational life of a community and could command the loyalty, affection and active involvement of a not

inconsiderable proportion of the members of the community of all ages and from all backgrounds. This pattern of community education, based upon the community school or college, quickly became the dominant model. Backed as they were by the weight (and financial support) of the local education authorities, founded on already established and respected educational institutions, it is not surprising that the community schools flourished in the 1960s and '70s.

### 3.5 Summary: Community Education and the Liberal Tradition

When we examine the pattern of community education which evolved in this country from the 1920s on, several features serve to indicate the point on our matrix continuum with which it is most closely aligned. Where client perception is concerned, the local community are seen as the recipients of a form of provision, rather than as providers (or co-providers) themselves. While many of the activities which constitute the programme of the community school can be seen as self-generated and self-governing (the clubs and societies), the educational element generally takes the form of classes (whether LEA or Responsible Body provided). While much is made of the necessity of local involvement in the governing of the community schools, the fact that the majority of community education was tied in to LEA financing and administrative structures acted as a severe limitation on the actual amount of power wielded by 'the community'. The emphasis on the Warden as a leadership figure, and on the role of community education staff in 'determining needs' and in acting as an educational advisor vis-à-vis the community further diminish the self-determination to which lip service is frequently paid in the literature.

It is clear that this model of adult education (omitting for the moment the other aspects of community education), while a far cry from the Paternalist model, is certainly not Radical in its orientation, and in fact relates most closely to the by now well-established tradition of liberal adult education, with an overlay of informal and recreational involvement.

However, when it comes to the 1960s and '70s, the ethos of these two turbulent decades was in many ways inimical to this established pattern. In the next chapter we shall examine the alternative form (and philosophy) which rose to challenge the standard pattern of community education.

## Chapter 4

### COMMUNITY EDUCATION IN CONFLICT : 1970-1990

#### 4.1 Introduction

While the nineteen-fifties and sixties were a period of confident expansion, the following decade by contrast represented a period of intense analysis and self-questioning by many community and adult educators. To some extent, this may have stemmed from and been a reflection of the social turmoil which characterised the late sixties and early seventies - an era in which many established institutions and forms of social relations were under severe scrutiny, in which the old certainties were being, if not swept away, certainly rudely buffeted and shaken about, and in which the concerns of the poor, minorities, the handicapped and the politically powerless became a rallying point in a way not previously seen in affluent western societies in the twentieth century, not least among educationists.

At the start of the 1970s, community education was in many respects at its maximum growth point and enjoying its greatest popularity and influence as an educational concept. Community colleges were well established in Cambridgeshire, Leicestershire and Devon and had made inroads into other rural counties. In addition, many urban authorities were considering or had actually instituted a policy of developing community schools, some of these on an unprecedentedly lavish scale (Sidney Stringer College, Coventry; Sutton-in-Ashfield, Nottinghamshire; the Abraham Moss Centre, Manchester; and others

of a type sceptically designated by Colin Morgan as "multi-purpose hybrid monsters"<sup>1</sup>). Cyril Poster, in *Community Education: its Development and Management*,<sup>2</sup> quotes Harold Marks<sup>3</sup> to the effect that by 1976 'twenty-five local education authorities had decided on a policy of establishing community colleges in part or all of their areas, and over two hundred schools called or calling themselves community schools or colleges had come into existence in fifty local authority areas.' His own researches, Poster adds, 'indicate that by 1980 the number of such schools had increased to well over 250, nearly half of which are to be found in four local education authorities:

Cambridgeshire, Cumbria, Devon and Leicestershire" (p.15). In some instances, the community school initiatives were given considerable impetus by the process of local government reorganisation in 1974 and the resultant re-thinking (and for a time more generous funding) of individual Authorities' educational strategies.<sup>4</sup> During the fifteen years from 1965 to 1980, while this steady growth was taking place, a regular succession of articles appeared documenting the successes (and the lessons) of a wealth of community education ventures. Much of this descriptive material was modestly congratulatory and optimistic in tone.

It seems contradictory, then, that at this time of continuing growth and consolidation of the place of community education within the

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<sup>1</sup> "The community concept 2: origins and development. Growth of a multi-purpose hybrid monster", *Education*, 145 (14 Feb., 1975), 176-7.

<sup>2</sup> London, 1982.

<sup>3</sup> "The roots of the community college in England and Wales," in Jennings, B. (ed.), *Community Colleges in England and Wales* (National Institute of Adult Education, 1980),

<sup>4</sup> Colin Fletcher writes: "Even local government reorganization played a part because, again for the briefest of moments, authorities were prepared to borrow and to spend large sums. Between 1968 and 1974, therefore, the ferment in three sectors, comprehensive education, urban aid and local government reorganization, made it possible for Labour and Conservative Councils alike to invest in community education complexes." ("Developments in Community Education: A Current Account" in Fletcher and Thompson (eds.), *Issues in Community Education*, Lewes, 1980, p.8).

educational system there should also exist such fragmentation and dissent - a phenomenon equally well documented in the literature, as we shall see. The nature of and reasons for this apparent dichotomy are the subject of this chapter and entail examination of a representative selection of contributions to books, journals and other publications.

## 4.2 The Seventies: a new emphasis

As if to emphasise the extent to which the concept of community education had seized the imagination of educators, two influential publications of the late 1960s and early 1970s both endorsed the community school and suggested its extension into new areas. The first of these was *Children and their Primary Schools: A Report of the Central Advisory Council for Education (England)*, more usually known as the Plowden Report.<sup>5</sup> The second was A.H. Halsey's extensive report - on the Educational Priority Areas experiment set up in the wake of Plowden - entitled *Educational Priority*.<sup>6</sup> While neither was principally concerned with community education, each contributed in turn to the new way of thinking about the nature and function of community education and about the role of the community educator which we shall be examining in this chapter,

### 4.2.1 The Plowden Report (1967)

The scope of this Report was extremely broad - namely, a comprehensive survey of every aspect of primary schools, including the growth and development of the children who attended them - and included an entire section on "The Home, School and

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<sup>5</sup> London, 1967 (2 Vols.).

<sup>6</sup> London, 1972 (2 Vols.).

Neighbourhood". Within the context of this part of the Report, two recommendations in particular are of relevance to our enquiry.

In the first place, the Plowden committee, concerned to involve parents much more substantially in their children's schooling, advocated the development of community schools in the primary as well as secondary sector. The committee defined a community school as one "which is open beyond the ordinary school hours for the use of children, their parents and, exceptionally, for other members of the community" (p.44, section 121). Pointing out that, under the terms of the 1944 Education Act (Section 7), local education authorities had "a responsibility to contribute 'to the spiritual, mental and physical development of the community'" (p.44, section 122), the Report emphasised that this applied to primary, no less than to secondary, schools. It cites the model provided by the "Cambridgeshire Village Colleges inspired by Henry Morris [and] famous throughout the world" (p.45, section 122), as well as numerous other examples of school-based family and community activities organised by local authorities, voluntary agencies and schools themselves. Nonetheless, such provision is described as being "very uneven" and the Committee felt that other countries were far ahead of the U.K. in this respect. Despite the disadvantage of primary school accommodation being not as well suited to adult activities as that of secondary schools, the Report strongly recommended that community schools should be developed wherever possible, and particularly in educational priority areas.

This last point introduces the second major recommendation of the Plowden Report which has a bearing on our investigation, namely the

setting up of a number of Educational Priority Areas into which proportionately greater resources for education would be poured, to offset the cycle of deprivation which existed in such neighbourhoods. This suggested programme of "positive discrimination" was intended to "make schools in the most deprived areas as good as the best in the country" (p.66, section 174). Better teacher-pupil ratios, salary supplements for teachers in designated schools, generous provision of teachers' aides, allocation of additional funds for improvement of run-down buildings, extra books and equipment, and expansion of nursery education were all put forward as definite steps to be taken from 1968 to 1972, and among the further recommendations was a proposal that community schools "should be tried out first in priority areas" (p.67, section 176).

This strong emphasis in the Plowden Report on the harmful and stultifying effect of a poor environment on the child's development (physical, emotional and intellectual) and on the ways in which schools, in particular primary schools, could help to improve the classrooms, homes and neighbourhoods in which children should grow and learn, raised some questions about the links between education and social welfare and about the role of the school in community development - questions which were to be asked ever more loudly and pressingly in the subsequent debate over the purpose and function of community education. Where the Plowden Committee was concerned, their opinions on this matter were modestly couched. While recognising the extent to which education affects economic development, the Committee concluded that:

The schools unaided cannot provide all the opportunities their pupils deserve, or create the labour force this country needs.

Industry, and the authorities responsible for housing,

planning, employment and other services must also play their part.

Although, as they pointed out,

from the earliest stages of education, the schools enlarge or restrict the contribution their pupils can make to the life of the nation,

(p.55, section 145)

nonetheless they tended to see the role of the school as contributory, rather than pivotal - as one of a number of institutions which needed to collaborate to bring about an improvement in deprived neighbourhoods.

Co-ordinated action will be necessary on the part of authorities responsible for employment, industrial training, housing and town planning if educational deprivation is to be rapidly reduced.

(p.67, section 177(i))

The Plowden Report was highly influential, not least among its achievements being the consequent setting-up of a number of experimental Educational Priority Areas, initially as part of a research project sponsored jointly by the Department of Education and Science and the Social Science Research Council. It is the work carried out during this project which was the subject of our second report.

#### 4.2.2 *Educational Priority (1972)*

Following on from the recommendation in the Plowden Report which we have just examined, an action-research proposal was put forward and approved for a three-year programme to be carried out, under the overall direction of Professor A.H. Halsey, in five Educational Priority Areas - four in England (Deptford in London, the Sparkbrook district in Birmingham, Liverpool 8 and two small mining towns in the West

Riding of Yorkshire) and a subsequently added one in Scotland (Dundee). The programme had four objectives:

- (a) to raise the educational performance of the children;
- (b) to improve the morale of teachers;
- (c) to increase the involvement of parents in their children's education; and
- (d) to increase the "sense of responsibility" for their communities of the people living in them.

All of these aims, as Halsey points out in *Educational Priority*, "were derived directly from Plowden" (p.570) and they were supplemented by guidelines worked out at a series of conferences in Oxford in the early stages.

Nevertheless, each project was free to develop in its own distinctive way, according to the particular needs and priorities of the area in which it was situated. *Educational Priority* details the background, the progress and the results of these distinctly diverse projects, and reaches some general conclusions, two of which in particular are of interest to our present study.

The first of these claimed that

The idea of the community school, as put forward in skeletal outline by Plowden, has now been shown to have greater substance and powerful implications for community regeneration.

(p.180)

In fact, in the elaboration of this conclusion, Halsey goes as far as to say that it was "an *essential principle*" (p.189 - his italics). His description of the community school, as outlined in this concluding chapter of the report, reflects very much that of Eric Midwinter,

Director of the Liverpool EPA Project, whose ideas we shall be examining below, in that it mainly emphasizes the blurring of the lines between school and community and the goal of “turning the community into a school and the school into a community” (p.189). Since the experience of the EPAs was largely with primary schools, the report does not attempt to outline a blueprint for all community schools, but underlines the necessity for “local diagnosis [as] a *sine qua non*” (*ibid.*).

While the EPA experience provided a resounding confirmation of the useful role of the community school in deprived areas, another of its conclusions was that

The E.P.A. can be no more than a part, though an important one, of a comprehensive social movement towards community development and community redevelopment in a modern industrial society.

(p.180)

This rather cautious assessment of the potential of an essentially educational initiative for generating social change is barely elaborated upon in the final section of the chapter, Halsey confining himself to remarking that “the limits of an educational approach to poverty ... cannot be removed by any kind of E.P.A. policy” but that within them “a higher standard of educational living” can be achieved for children in disadvantaged areas (p.198).

Whatever the reservations expressed in Halsey’s summing up, the EPA projects were very effective in highlighting and illuminating Plowden’s point that educational and social disadvantage were frequently inextricable linked, thus raising into higher profile the question of the relationship between education and social change. It was a question

that was to reverberate throughout the succeeding decade, most dramatically in the field of adult and community education.

#### 4.3 Community Education and Community Action: the emergence of a New Model

The EPA experience was studied with interest and widely publicised in a succession of books and articles, the latter appearing both in general educational periodicals and in adult and community education journals. There was particular interest in the Liverpool EPA and a number of the contributions which subsequently appeared were written by three of the main figures involved in the Liverpool experiment: Eric Midwinter, the Director of the project; Tom Lovett, the WEA Tutor-Organiser; and Keith Jackson, from the University of Liverpool Institute of Extension Studies. Individually and collectively, these three respected educators produced a body of writing which, as examination will show, began to question the current definition of community education and to push it in a new and different direction.

As early as 1971, while the EPA Project was still in operation, Eric Midwinter published an article in *Comprehensive Education*<sup>7</sup> entitled "The School and the Community". In this, he argues against the "sham facade of equal opportunity schooling" and presents a strong case for the working class neighbourhood school, which, rather than removing the child from the environment with which he is familiar and in which he is likely to continue to live, uses the community as the basis for a worthwhile and stimulating educational process. In the article, Midwinter touches on some familiar themes, beginning with the necessity of close collaboration and identification between

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<sup>7</sup> No.18 (Summer, 1971), pp.31-36.

the home and the community or neighbourhood school, defined as “one which ventures out into and welcomes in the community until such time as, ideally, it is difficult to decide where one starts and the other ends” (p.32). There is the familiar tilting at “the continued old-hattedness and sterility of much of the content” of education and its irrelevance to working-class life. Instead, Midwinter advocates a community approach to the curriculum

with a strong emphasis on social environmental studies embracing other disciplines and being fed by them, with groups of children examining life-themes over longish periods with content, attitude and method drawn from and fed back into the community.

(p.34)

He goes on to provide, in his characteristically colourful style, examples of other ways in which the Liverpool project had successfully fused learning and community involvement through a series of activities emanating from Paddington Comprehensive School. None of this is particularly new; nor is his description of the changing role of the teacher and of the class, from “one teacher teaching thirty children” to “thirty-one humans learning about life together”. John Dewey would have nodded approvingly.<sup>8</sup> In the concluding paragraph, however, a different note is struck, when he abruptly tenders the thought that “community education, in the frame of community development, may be the one alternative in the major urban centres to threatened dislocation and breakdown” (p.36). He is cautious in putting this forward, describing himself as “pessimistic rather than euphoric”. Nevertheless, he ends with a plea for “an education system that might well help to avert the chaos and violence of destructive

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<sup>8</sup> See the analysis of Dewey’s influence on the proponents of the ‘community curriculum’, pp. 162-3 below.

unrest.”

In subsequent publications of that period (1971-1975),<sup>9</sup> he develops each of his main themes, including this last. “The aim of community education,” he writes in *Patterns of Community Education* (p.44), “is to service community development. It is a social rather than an academic conception of education, one which is intended to prepare children, and indeed adults, for their social life of work, leisure and citizenship.” In “Curriculum and the EPA School”<sup>10</sup> he expands on this:

The community school is normally seen as a method of achieving harmony between school and community. but it could go beyond that. As well as providing a means, it could suggest an end ..... In the EPA the fundamental need is for communal regeneration and for the resolution of the dreadful social ills that beset the inhabitants. Eventually, this should mean some form of self-regeneration as the people involved set about solving these problems. Pouring palliatives in the form of resources or services from outside is not sufficient; indeed, without the active and vital participation of the local inhabitants such interventionist policies lose much of their point....A natural aim for the community school might be the education of children to be the next generation of parents, voters and citizens in the neighbourhood, in the hope that they will conceive of creative responses to the pressing needs of the downtown and other disadvantaged districts.

(p.24)

The principle of community self-help figures largely in Midwinter’s thinking, along with his defence of the “community curriculum”.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, *Priority Education: An Account of the Liverpool Project* (Harmondsworth, 1972); *Projections: An educational priority area at work* (London, 1972); *Social Environment and the urban school* (London, 1972); *Patterns of Community Education* (London, 1973); and *Education and the Community* (London, 1975).

<sup>10</sup> Included in Midwinter (ed.), *Projections: an educational priority area at work* (London, 1972).

Neither, as we shall see subsequently, was without its critics. Midwinter's approach, however, was taken a few steps further by the other participants in the Liverpool Priority project.

A few months before the Midwinter article first mentioned above was published, a double article, entitled "EPAs - reports and reflections", appeared in *Adult Education*.<sup>11</sup> It is interesting to examine and compare the two linked articles. The first, entitled "London - community education in the EPAs" and written by Charles Betty (then Project Director of the Inner London Educational Priority Area Project), is very much in the mainstream of community education. Having raised the vexed question as to why adult centre classes continually failed to attract "the good solid working class mums or dads living in the decaying innards of our big conurbations" (p.283), Betty goes on to describe one community (primary) school which had succeeded in overcoming the barrier and in attracting, in particular, parents and young people into a variety of informal educational and recreational activities at the school. It is a picture very much in the Henry Morris/village college image, and even the "major re-think in adult and community education" (p.287) which Betty calls for is far from radical when spelled out in specific proposals.

By contrast, Lovett's accompanying article, entitled "Liverpool - an interim report", launches out in a quite different direction. He, like Betty, deplores the inability of adult education to reach that section of the working class he was encountering in the Liverpool Educational Priority Area, but declares that the lack of interest in education "can now be seen as a direct result of the education which [working-class adults] have or have not received during their early school years"

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<sup>11</sup> No.43 (January 1971), pp.283-7; 287-93, 298.

(p.288). Lovett, like Midwinter, voices the need for relevance in both school and adult education, and advocates

an education which is rooted in the immediate environment in the hope that an intimate awareness of the environment will result in an atmosphere of 'constructive discontent' that will break the present vicious circle of poverty and depression.

(p.288)

Citing "the experience of professional workers engaged in the expanding field of community development work here in Liverpool" as an area from which much could be learned, Lovett goes on to detail his involvement in two successful ventures in community development on a new housing estate. Just as education in schools should centre around "involvement and discovery", so, Lovett declares, should adult education in an EPA. Because people in these areas have little say in important concerns such as housing, education and jobs, adult education, he argues, "must attempt to give back to the communities concerned a sense of confidence in their ability to choose and accept responsibility" (p.289). It is clear from the article that Lovett sees a great deal of overlap between the roles of community educator and community development worker. He delineates the function of the latter as being

to stimulate an interest in community problems amongst the adult population in their area; to assist in the setting up of residents' groups and tenants' associations; to offer such groups advice and information if, and when, it is required. The field worker takes a back seat, leaving it to the group to learn through their own efforts and mistakes.

(p.289)

In the examples he cites of "community involvement-cum-adult education", Lovett was clearly putting himself in the community development role as he had described it, supplementing the

development activity at certain points with short information-giving inputs on such topics as committee procedures. In all of this, he felt, the local people

were being educated through 'doing'. Experiences had been widened and people were being educated through their involvement in an activity with a social purpose. They showed initiative, accepted responsibility, admitted the need for some form of action on their part to solve the social and educational problems in their area. It was an exercise in informal adult education.

(p.291)

In another article published in the same year, "Community Adult Education",<sup>12</sup> he writes that

adult education must be seen, not simply as classes and discussions for the adult members of the community, but rather as an integral part of a whole series of activities ..... which are community-based and concerned with the whole community.

(p.2)

On the subject of adult education and community development, he declares that community development or community action is "the only practical course which an adult educationist can adopt in certain situations when working with some communities in an Educational Priority Area" (p.3). He cites the example of two projects with residents in the Liverpool 8 EPA and demonstrates how these practical, self-help experiences led to the participants seeking relevant educational inputs. He concludes that such exercises

can be exciting experiments in adult education, with people learning to deal with real, immediate problems in a practical way, picking up essential skills and items of information as

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<sup>12</sup> *Studies in Adult Education*, Vol.3, No.1(April, 1971), pp.2-14.

they go along. To seek a formal structure and treat such groups as 'classes' is to impose middle-class standards in working-class situations, and in most instances, at least in EPAs, such efforts will lead to failure and alienation.

(p.4)

In a subsequent article, "Light at the end of the Mersey Tunnel"<sup>13</sup>, Lovett is more explicit about his linking of education and social action:

The problem of organizing adult education to fit the needs of working class communities is part of the more general problem of social deprivation - bad housing, broken homes, isolated family groups and poor performance in school together with the subsequent feelings of rejection and alienation.

(p.50)

The Liverpool EPA Project, he goes on to say,

is an attempt to rectify some of these social ills by emphasizing the role of the school in the community as an agent for bringing about change, both through a curriculum which is relevant to the needs of children in the area and through the school acting as a social and community centre reflecting the local people's needs and aspirations.

(p.50)

The philosophy of the EPA, he continues, "is, in many respects, a revolutionary one" (p.50), and, having listed a substantial number of adult/community activities currently in operation in the EPA, he concludes that the essential difference between EPA adult work and 'normal' adult education is that, in the EPA, "the concern is with the contribution of adult education to the total process of community development and the emphasis is on 'learning situations' rather than formal classes or courses" (p.52).

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<sup>13</sup> *Education and Training*, 14 (February 1972), pp.50-52.

Lovett's conception of the relationship between adult education and community development is further developed in an article entitled "Community development - a network approach".<sup>14</sup> Pointing out the increasing interest among adult educators in community development as a proper area for their endeavours, he cites again the experience of the Liverpool EPA Project and puts forward a suggested structure for adult education within a community development setting, involving the construction of a network for all those organisations (both statutory and voluntary) and individuals involved. What is of particular interest in this article, however, is the concluding section entitled "Adult education or community development?", which raises the question concerning the nature of what Lovett has been describing. It is, he admits, very much a community work approach, but he claims that

the nature of the community development process is such that not only can adult education be seen as another network in the web ... but it is also an essential element in the whole process.

(p.164)

Adult education, he concludes,

is an essential ingredient in a situation where people and organisations need to "learn through doing", i.e. to question themselves, their attitudes, their institutions and way of life, at the same time as they attempt to tackle the problems of social, economic, educational and political deprivation. The former is adult education and cannot be separated from the latter.

(p.165)

Thus Lovett clearly ties adult education for the working class into a

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<sup>14</sup> *Adult Education*, 46 (September 1973), pp.157-165.

broader, more radical programme of community development and community action, which follows a different agenda from the more traditional forms of adult and community education and which, as we shall see in greater detail below, uses methods borrowed from another discipline to pursue more fundamental social aims.

Two years later, Lovett published *Adult Education, Community Development and the Working Class*,<sup>15</sup> a fuller account of the Liverpool EPA experience. Interestingly, the first chapter begins with a quotation from the Brazilian adult educator and radical thinker, Paulo Freire:

“There is no such thing as a ‘neutral’ educational process. Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of younger generations into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it or it becomes ‘the practice of freedom’, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. The development of an educational methodology which facilitates this process will inevitably lead to tension and conflict within society.”

[From P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*<sup>16</sup>]

The chapter later goes on to describe briefly Freire's work in Brazil and Chile, his philosophy, his terminology and his pedagogy. This inclusion of Freire, and the positioning of this particular quotation in such a prominent location within a book by a well-known adult educationist, is in fact a significant indicator of a new train of thought in British adult and community education. Freire's major work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, only became available in English

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<sup>15</sup> London, 1975.

<sup>16</sup> Harmondsworth, 1972.

translation in 1970; it and a companion volume, *Cultural Action for Freedom*, were published by Penguin in the Penguin Education Series in 1972. But, although it may have taken some time for Freire's work and his educational thinking to reach European shores, they were very quickly adopted by those educators in this country who were particularly concerned with education, the community and the working class. In Freire's approach, as we shall see later in this chapter, they found a rationale and a methodology for an attack on social problems through educational means. Lovett's analysis in fact considers Freire's relevance to British working class adult and community education with some circumspection. While endorsing Freire's emphasis on "the need to start where people are", he is, in his introduction, cautiously critical of Freire for "over emphasizing the role of education as a process for transforming society" (p.17) and further points out that the Brazilian and Chilean experiments, unlike British working class education, had government backing for adult literacy programmes and substantial funding from both national and international organisations. Nonetheless, it is clear from Lovett's own interest and from his references to others' adoption of these new, radical ideas, that Freire's influence was already making itself felt. In a later chapter, "Culture, class and communication", he returns to Freire's concept of 'conscientization', relates it to the work of Basil Bernstein on language, class and culture, and describes it as "very similar to the philosophy and approach adopted in the EPA" (p.105).

It is interesting to note that in a much later article (1984) on "The Relevance of the Work of Paulo Freire to Radical Community Education in Britain",<sup>17</sup> David Alfred cites Tom Lovett as "perhaps Freire's leading advocate" in Britain (p.105), and goes on to use the

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<sup>17</sup> *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, Vol.3, 2, pp.105-112.

Liverpool EPA experience and Lovett's *Adult Education, Community Development and the Working Class* to illustrate the application of Freire's ideas to adult education in this country.

In looking at the thinking of Lovett's colleague in the Liverpool EPA Project, Keith Jackson, one early article, published in 1970, is of particular interest. "Adult Education and Community Development"<sup>18</sup> is written very much from the point of view of University adult education and shows quite clearly an adult educator within an established tradition beginning to grapple with the new ideas linking education and community development. Jackson begins by examining the American experience, from the long-established 'community chests' to the contemporary urban renewal programmes initiated and/or studied by Sol Allinsky and others. From there he goes on to consider the British situation and cautiously considers the potential inter-action of adult education and community development, though still within a Responsible Bodies context. He concludes that there is much to recommend an overlap between the two, and that

the application of community development principles to adult education agencies will throw new light on traditional problems as well as bring new ones to light.

(p.176)

It is curious to note that, while Jackson, whose work in Liverpool with Lovett and the EPA Project, is frequently cited as being in the vanguard of the community action approach, his own writings on community education have a certain distance and ambiguity. It is not always easy to determine exactly where he himself stands vis-à-vis such issues as the community curriculum, the community

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<sup>18</sup> *Studies in Adult Education*, Vol.2, No.2 (1970), pp.156-179.

development approach, the role of the community educator or the community school as central to community education. This slight ambiguity is illustrated by a later article, "Some Fallacies in Community Education and Their Consequences in Working-class Areas", which was included in a volume on *Issues in Community Education*.<sup>19</sup> In it, he is apparently taking the role of devil's advocate, in order to induce adult and community educators to rethink some of their assumptions, for example, about the concept of 'community' itself and about the identification of community education with working-class education. He queries the supposition that education must be tailored to the community in which it is located, asking whether in fact community education in the case of EPAs may not in fact "reinforce the consequences of the oppression which has created them" (p.41). In pursuing these questions, however, it becomes clear that, far from attempting to undermine the community action approach, Jackson's concern is to encourage greater rigour of thinking, greater clarity of expression, and, above all, a more courageous commitment to both community and working-class education. He makes clearer his own stance in his conclusion when he writes:

For many of the ideas and practices now promoted by advocates of community education can be found also in association with significant sections of the working-class movement, in the past and in the present, in Britain and across the world. They are harnessed, however, to a different concept of 'relevance'. The key issues of political and economic power beyond the local community are considered of primary not secondary relevance, determining incidentally the economics and politics of adult education itself along with

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<sup>19</sup> Ed. Colin Fletcher and Neil Thompson (Lewes, Sussex, 1980).

much more important aspects of life.

(p.44)

Elsewhere,<sup>20</sup> he puts his viewpoint even more forthrightly, in claiming that the choices facing workers in adult education are “all political choices” and continues

The most significant educational reform to be achieved remains that of ensuring that education can make a contribution to genuine advances by working-class men and women. In sum this will depend on their gaining substantial resources of time and money and on their influencing or controlling specific aspects of education in practice. In both cases the test of success will be who controls? and in whose interests?

(p.18)

For Jackson, social and political issues loom larger than educational ones; thus, social and political goals must take priority over, and determine, educational aims.<sup>21</sup> For him, this was the lesson of the EPA initiative.

In the event, despite the successes of the EPAs and the amount of interest and enthusiasm they generated, they did not become a permanent feature of the educational landscape. Nonetheless, the influence of the experience and of the individuals involved in the Projects, was profoundly felt in adult and community education, as the plentiful references to Midwinter, Lovett and Jackson in the subsequent literature testify. The ‘community development’ or ‘community action’ model (both terms are used) owed a great deal to Liverpool 8.

#### 4.4 The New Model: Community Development

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<sup>20</sup> Foreword to Thompson, Jane (ed.), *Adult Education for a Change* (London, 1980).

<sup>21</sup> Compare the Radical position in our matrix in chapter 2.

At this point we should perhaps examine the 'new model' community education in more detail, in an attempt to determine to what extent and in what ways it actually differed from the original variety. By collating the content of the various books and articles cited above, together with other similar material published throughout the 1970s and 80s, one can arrive at a certain consensus.

#### 4.4.1 Aims

The 'new' community education was, first and foremost, principally concerned with the education of the working class, both children and adults. Its prime focus was upon the decaying inner city areas and the depressed, resource-starved rural areas where the 'cycle of deprivation' so often referred to had taken up permanent residence. In this, it departed noticeably from earlier, mainstream forms of community education, which had tended to emphasise the universal applicability of and necessity for education, regardless of age, class, degree of prosperity, or any other dividing factor. The new community educators clearly felt that the middle class had held a monopoly on education for long enough and needed little further assistance, particularly when such pressing needs existed in the poorer areas of the nation.

The new breed of community educators rejected what they saw as an increasing tendency to lay the blame for the 'cycle of deprivation' on the improvidence or incapacity of the poor themselves and made the energetic point that there was little chance of change as long as sub-standard housing, educational facilities and health care, unemployment and inadequate welfare support remained the lot of a large percentage of the population in these areas. Nor did they see

any hope of interesting the poorer working class in something as apparently irrelevant as education when such pressing and soul-destroying practical difficulties stared them daily in the face. At the same time, help in the way of greater resources from government or other agencies was unlikely to increase much, if at all, they believed. Under such circumstances, the marrying up of the two concerns - educational and social - seems inevitable. The purpose of community education, the new professionals concluded, should be to use the resources of education to help the poor ameliorate their circumstances through their own efforts, and simultaneously to use the process of self-help in the community as a vehicle for the education of those involved.

Other goals arose out of this - the strengthening of a spirit of community and co-operation; the encouragement of self-help; an increase in knowledge and the capability to deal with officialdom and decision-making bodies; a greater interest in the wider world; flexibility in coping with change; the ability to plan and carry out activities for individual, group and community improvement; personal enrichment and growth - but these too could be found in the portfolio of the older-style 'liberal' model of community education. What so distinctly separated the 'new' from the 'old' community education was the 'radical' emphasis on the struggle for social change as the overriding objective, to the pursuit of which adult and community education in working class or deprived areas should be harnessed.

As an illustration, one can look at a list of objectives for community education included in a later volume by Laurie Bidwell and Charlie McConnell (eds.), *Community education and community development*.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Dundee College of Education, 1982.

Although this is a Scottish example, it encapsulates very well the types of objectives being adopted increasingly by community educators south of the border:

- 1 To engage in an educational process aimed at increasing people's awareness of social, environmental, class and political issues.
- 2 To encourage citizen participation as a way of gaining greater control over resources and decision-making processes.
- 3 To work with people so that they can influence the course of change in ways which seem desirable to them.
- 4 To work with consumers to ensure a fuller take up of services, to press for better services delivery and more comprehensive provision.
- 5 To work with providers of services and/or to engage in inter-organisational work with a view to defining common goals, improving consultation or developing or changing policies, procedures and structures to make them more responsive to needs.
- 6 To increase people's capacity to respond positively to their life situation by working together.
- 7 To increase people's capacity to discover, define, pursue and achieve common objectives, and in the process to develop more confident relationships with one another and the outside world.<sup>23</sup>

McConnell goes on to admit that community education in Scotland

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<sup>23</sup> C. McConnell, "Definitions, Methods, Paradigms" in Bidwell, L., McConnell, C., *op.cit.*, p.9.

was still very much at the beginning of this development and that there was "much going on in the name of Community Education" that "did not yet encompass the range of processes described". However, he rebuts a claim that in fact not one but several models of community education existed by claiming that "these are not arbitrarily equally good" and that "the Developmental model allows for a more open, flexible yet systematic approach to Community Education" (p.9). This 'worthier-than-thou' attitude was not uncommon among writers on either side in a debate which, as we shall see, was to become quite bitter.

#### 4.4.2 Content

To a large extent the content of the 'new' community development model of community education was unspecified, since it was assumed that it would arise out of and be dictated by the requirements of whatever specific community action might be decided upon by the participants. Lovett, in "Liverpool - an interim report" (see above), describes how a group involved in the creation of a community centre, the Salisbury Centre, having been "engaged in running committees, meeting corporation officials and talking to the police" had begun to realise that they needed skills and information on "running committees, expressing themselves adequately and about the structure of the local authority and the various welfare agencies" (p.292). Similarly a Shelter Neighbourhood Action Project had enlisted local task forces to hold discussions with the local authority about their environment, and these too had come to realise the necessity for informal courses on committee work, communication skills and local authority structure. "Recognition of needs," he concludes, "came through involvement and motivation was heightened" (p.293).

In looking at both adult education and children's schooling, the community action wing of community education was virtually unanimous in its support for an educational content which centred around individuals or a group and their needs, rather than one determined by external factors, such as subject requirements, set curricula, examinations or qualifications. There was also a strong resistance to the maintenance of any boundaries between the various subject areas; these artificial distinctions, as they saw them, served only to seal off the subject and underline its irrelevance to any aspect of everyday life. 'Relevance' became the key-word, and the criterion by which all subject matter for learning was judged.

There were, of course, sound educational arguments which could be put forward for this anti-discipline approach, and we shall look at these in a section to follow. It is noticeable, however, that no such constraints attached to social and environmental studies, which were frequently put forward as a focus for all learning. We have already quoted Midwinter, in "The School and the Community", recommending "a strong emphasis on social environmental studies embracing other disciplines and being fed by them". Where adults are concerned, a survey of the educational demands mentioned as arising out of experience and action show surprisingly little variation, with frequent mention of communication skills, committee procedures, welfare rights and advocacy skills of the kind likely to be required for community activism. There are of course numerous examples of the community consultation process resulting in demands for cultural and recreational offerings very much along the lines of traditional community education, though usually organised on a more informal

basis.<sup>24</sup>

#### 4.4.3 Methods

Having identified their main area of concern, and being at the same time very much aware of the long-standing rejection of more formal adult education provision, it was clear to the 'new' community educators that an approach much different from the traditional adult class was required. That this must be of an informal nature and that it must be related to the immediate concerns and needs of the client population was equally obvious. How to initiate any kind of educational activity and involve the members of a community in it was a matter of much debate. In the event, the methodology settled upon, from the descriptions provided by our writers, borrowed more from the working methods of community development than from adult education. A retrospective example of this is given by Alfred in his description of Lovett's work in the Liverpool EPA Project.<sup>25</sup> He describes Lovett's approach as having had four stages "on the Freireian foundation that adult education should be a 'process whereby men not only acquire social skills but a wider consciousness of their role in an oppressed society and their ability to change it'" (p.109):

First, Lovett explored and investigated the area to get to know it, its people and their problems, by personal involvement in a wide range of social activities. Then, through informal group work and discussion, he initiated a wide range of short educational activities starting from their own experiences and concerns, wherever people felt most comfortable. The third stage was aimed at creating wider awareness of the conditions

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<sup>24</sup> See, for example, the Strone and Mauchinhill informal education project described in J. Mack, "A people's classroom", *New Society*, 3 March 1977, p.450.

<sup>25</sup> "The Relevance of the Work of Paulo Freire to Radical Community Education in Britain", p.109.

of people's lives, mainly through the use of participatory drama and local radio programmes made by the people themselves. Lastly, he tried to consolidate these advances by involving a greater number of local organizations, institutions and individuals.

(p.109)

These four stages, Alfred sees as incorporating, if not exactly paralleling, Freire's programme of conscientization, dialogue, praxis and problem-posing education.<sup>26</sup>

Three phrases recur with great regularity in all discussions of the methods of community education in its developmental mode: 'learner-centred'; 'learning from experience'; and 'problem-solving'. Once again, these are not the exclusive preserve of the 'new' community education; they had been espoused most willingly by community educators of the more traditional variety, as well as by most educators of children in schools, especially (post-Plowden) primary schools. What differentiates the two schools of thought is the greater insistence of the community development wing upon these as the *sole* methodology, coupled with an openly expressed suspicion of anything which might smack of the didactic or the prescribed.

Further insight into the characteristic approach of the 'new' community education is provided in an article by Colin Kirkwood entitled, "Adult education and the concept of community".<sup>27</sup> Kirkwood lists what he sees as the keywords of traditional adult education, "its ideological load-bearing words", as: *needs, identifying the needs, meeting the needs, provision, service, opportunities, the professional, the public, the consumer*. He argues that to centre the

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<sup>26</sup> See section 4.5.4 below.

<sup>27</sup> *Adult Education*, 51 (September 1978), pp.145-151.

theory and practice of adult education upon the concept of needs is to distort it, since human beings consist "not only of needs, but also of aspirations, interests, preoccupations, conscience, creative potential" (p.148). He sees the 'needs' approach as alienating and paternalistic, and puts forward the notion that educators should concentrate instead on people's *interests*, which leads to dialogue and mutual involvement in practical problem-solving. The alternative key words which he suggests for consideration are indicative of a quite different focus: *creativity, co-operative use and control of resources, responsibility, voluntarism, dialogue, full-timer, and people* (p.150).

One inevitable result of the different emphasis, and of the projected transfer of choice, responsibility and initiative to the members of the community, is a considerable change in the role of the community educator. Rather than supplying, out of his professional experience, advice and guidance on what is best for the community, he now becomes in effect a facilitator, whose responsibility is to help the community or groups within it diagnose both their own lacks and the potential solution to their particular problems. He then acts as a resource to provide skills and knowledge to the group if and when these might be required. This rather passive-sounding role is, however, somewhat qualified by a number of writers on the community development model, who extend it to include the role of stimulator/questioner - perhaps even devil's advocate - to set the process in motion.

Returning to the Scottish analysis quoted above,<sup>28</sup> we find the tasks of the community educator listed as:

- 1 Defining the problem/s to be addressed and the nature

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<sup>28</sup> McConnell, "Methods, Definitions, Paradigms", in Bidwell & McConnell (1982).

of the Worker's association with the social change process.

- 2 Aiding the formulation of the community group goals.
- 3 Supporting or building an organisational structure that is suitable for tackling the problems.
- 4 Aiding the Community group's selection of strategies and use of resources in implementing plans.
- 5 Monitoring and helping the community group to evaluate the impact of its activities and in the light of this, to revise plans for future action.

McConnell goes on to point out that there is not a single role, but a multiplicity of roles, "a range of different strategies to be used in operationalising their role". He amplifies this:

On some occasions a worker might act directly, he may base his actions on intuition, knowledge and experience, or on rational criteria; at one time the focus might be on the development of group processes, at another, more explicitly on facilitating task achievement; he might adopt a provocative style or move towards smoothing tensions over and resolving conflict.

The role is perhaps not quite as passive as it first appeared. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note the extent to which "education", "teacher" and "organiser" disappear from the vocabulary of the literature, and "learning situation", "resource", "facilitator" are substituted, just as "community educator" is subtly transmogrified into "community worker" - a much broader term with inbuilt connotations of social and political activism.

I have analysed at some length the characteristics of the new 'community development' model of community education. In the process of this dissection, it has, I think, become clear the extent to which it matches the descriptors for the Radical pole of the matrix delineated in chapter 2. The major clues lie in the descriptions of the respective roles of client and tutor, and the resultant shift in the balance of power and decision-making from provider to erstwhile consumer. In this case, the members of the community are co-workers - perhaps even directors - in the process of personal and community liberation. The goal of their efforts is the dismantling of a system which perpetuates inequality and disempowers sections of the population. Their concept of the community - and of society as it should be - harks back in many ways to the communitarian strivings of the early nineteenth century, in its combination of high idealism and down-to-earth pragmatism, as described in section 2.7.2. Their aims are social and political and their modus operandi the devolution of power downwards to the grass roots. Where education is concerned, it is tied very much to the particular concerns of members of the community and thus is quite open and flexible both in content and methodology. In all of these respects it plainly belongs in the Radical range of the continuum.

#### 4.5 Antecedents of the Community Development Model

At this point we must ask ourselves where the impetus for this shift in emphasis came from. As I have argued in chapters 1 and 2, the challenge of radicalism to the liberal tradition appears to be endemic in the history of adult education from the late eighteenth century throughout the nineteenth century adult education movements.

Nonetheless, we must also look at its more immediate antecedents. What were the philosophical roots of this alternative form of community education? Who were its heroes and inspiritors? In scrutinising the literature on community education produced in the 1970s and 80s, four names in particular recur - all of them philosophers and educators and each identified with a distinctive stance in relation to the education of children and adults. They are: John Dewey; R.H. Tawney; Ivan Illich; and Paulo Freire.

#### 4.5.1 John Dewey

The importance of Dewey for community education as a whole is indisputable. References to his educational thinking and practice are scattered throughout the entire literature of community education. In so many ways his whole attitude and approach are in tune with the ethos of community education: his insistence that the school should not be isolated from the world around it, but should be part of the community within which it existed; his child-centred approach to learning; his insistence upon learning by experience; his emphasis on the 'sociality' of experience (the only preparation for social life, he claimed, was to engage in social life in the school); his championing of co-operation rather than competition in the classroom; his opposition to an externally imposed curriculum; his advocacy of a problem-solving approach; and his argument for an integrated approach to subjects (often through the use of project-work).<sup>29</sup> All of these clearly appealed greatly to the more radical community educator, but of even greater importance must have been statements such as Dewey's belief that "education is the fundamental method of

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<sup>29</sup> Perhaps the best summary of Dewey's beliefs concerning education is to be found in "My Pedagogic Creed", which appeared originally in *The School Journal* of January 1897, but which is reprinted in F. W. Garforth, *John Dewey: Selected Educational Writings* (London, 1966), pp.44-59.

social progress and reform”, that “education is the regulation of the process of coming to share in the social consciousness; and that the adjustment of individual activity on the basis of this social consciousness is the only sure method of social reconstruction” (p.57).

Whether what Dewey meant by “social consciousness” and “social reconstruction” was in fact anything like the ‘new’ community education’s use of these phrases (or similar) is perhaps a debatable point. One argument which they certainly must have found some difficulty with is contained in chapter 8 of *Democracy and Education*,<sup>30</sup> entitled “Aims in Education”, where he points out that “education as such has no aims. Only persons, parents and teachers, etc., have aims, not an abstract idea like education.” Nevertheless, his overall approach to education and to the role of the school in society came to constitute part of the philosophical framework of the community development model.

#### 4.5.2 R.H. Tawney

There is a certain irony in the inclusion of Tawney, who is, after all, also regarded by many as the great defender of the liberal tradition of a humane education, and thus also a hero of the ‘liberal adult education’ wing. But what appealed to the ‘new’ community educators about Tawney, who gave a lifetime’s service and support to the Workers Educational Association, was a combination of four things: his dedication to the education of the working class; his round rejection of the idea of a different kind and degree of education for different classes; his equal hostility to the notion of education only for specific (usually vocational) ends; and his emphasis on the

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<sup>30</sup> Reprinted in Garforth (ed.), 1966, 240.

social purpose of education. As early as 1918, in an article entitled "Keep the Workers' Children in their Place"<sup>31</sup> which appeared in the *Daily News* on February 14, Tawney launched a scathing attack on the Federation of British Industries for their opposition to the proposed Education Act making education compulsory up to the age of 14. "Behind the objection based on the convenience of industry," Tawney wrote,

lies another objection based on the theory that all except a small minority of children are incapable of benefiting by education beyond the age of fourteen. It is not actually stated, indeed, that working class children, like anthropoid apes, have fewer convolutions in their brains than the children of captains of industry. But the authors of the Memorandum are evidently sceptical as to either the possibility or the desirability of offering higher education to more than a small proportion of them.

(pp.49-50)

He is equally enraged by a further caveat on the part of the Federation, to the effect that they would

very strongly advise that in selecting children for higher education, care should be taken to avoid creating, as was done, for example, in India, a large class of persons *whose education is unsuitable for the employment they eventually enter.*

(p.50 - Tawney's italics)

As we shall see subsequently in our consideration of the debate between the two camps in community education, the community development wing in the 1970s and 80s still felt that this attitude towards the education (and educability) of the working class had to be attacked and eliminated.

At the end of his career, in 1953, in a lecture delivered at the

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<sup>31</sup> Reprinted in R. H. Tawney, *The Radical Tradition* (London, 1964), pp.47-51.

University of London to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the WEA,<sup>32</sup> Tawney reiterated the sentiments contained in the quotations above and added some further thoughts on education and social change. Pointing out that the WEA was “born in the social ferment of the opening decade of the present century”, he makes the assertion that

All serious educational movements have in England been also social movements. They have been the expression in one sphere - the training of mind and character - of some distinctive conception of the life proper to man and of the kind of society in which he can best live.

(p.84)

One of the aims of the WEA, he claimed, had been to make working-class movements more aware that the promotion of adult education among their members, and of public education as a whole, was of great importance to their cause. It regarded education, he continued, neither primarily as a hobby nor as a means to individual self-advancement, but as a “social dynamic” - a phrase which he reinterprets a sentence later as “a preparation for the exercise of social rights and responsibilities” (p.86). Once again one wonders whether this clarification makes the phrase more or less acceptable to the radical wing of community education. It is a point we shall be considering when we look at the arguments on either side.

#### 4.5.3 Ivan Illich

While much of the thinking of Dewey and Tawney would have been quite acceptable to, and even heartily endorsed by, the majority of community educators, the educational philosophy of Ivan Illich comes into a rather different category. As a former vice-rector of the

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<sup>32</sup> Included in Tawney, *The Radical Tradition*, 82-93.

Catholic University of Puerto Rico and co-founder and director of the Centre for Intercultural Documentation in Cuernavaca, Mexico, Illich's interest was primarily in Latin America, but his dominant thesis was the destructive effect of the established institutions of Western society, in particular those with responsibility for health, education and welfare. During the tumultuous years from 1964 to 1976 he conducted regular research seminars on "Institutional Alternatives in a Technical Society", which were attended by a roster of eminent philosophers, educators and social scientists, including the well-known sociologist, Peter Berger, the radical educator, John Holt, and Illich's friend, Paulo Freire, all of whom are credited with contributing ideas to the formation of Illich's own philosophy.

For educators, the essence of Illich's thinking is contained in *Deschooling Society*<sup>33</sup>, which was published in 1971 and which launched a fierce attack on schools as a paradigm for the ways in which the institutions regarded as most fundamental and indispensable to society are not only utterly ineffective in achieving the objectives for which they were established but actually act negatively upon the people they were intended to help. He argues that schools have shown themselves to be quite uneconomic, that the money which has been poured into the formal education system is hugely excessive for results obtained, that schools institutionalise and reinforce inequality (since educational resources generally end up benefiting rich children rather than poor ones), that the latent functions of schools are selection, indoctrination and custodial care, that the bulk of an individual's learning in fact takes place outside of schools, and that schools and their teachers actually limit and constrict learning, rather than fostering it.

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<sup>33</sup> London, 1971.

Illich's solution is what he terms the 'de-schooling' of society. He argues that schools should be abolished and the responsibility and control of learning put in the hands of the individual learner.

Learning would then take place, at the instigation of the learner, and at the time of his choosing, through various informal routes, which Illich designates 'learning webs'. He identified four main 'channels' or 'networks' which "could contain all the resources needed for real learning". (p.76). These were:

1. Reference Services to Educational Objects (giving access to "things or processes used for formal learning");
2. Skill Exchanges (listings of individuals willing to share their skills with learners);
3. Peer-Matching (a pairing process, in which individuals with a common interest are linked up for discussion purposes);           and
4. Reference Services to Educators-at-Large (a directory of "professionals, paraprofessionals and free-lancers" available to provide particular educational inputs).           (pp.78-79)

In retrospect, these 'solutions', as advocated by Illich, beg more questions and potential problems than they claim to solve. He puts forward no suggestions, for example, as to how this draconian change was to be achieved, nor, apparently, is he aware that preparation of the population to take advantage of the new learning networks could pose an enormous educational task in itself.

In the atmosphere of the period, however, when all the institutions of

society were under scrutiny, Illich's critique of the formal educational system, and his identification of its weaknesses and failures, made a strong appeal to some educators, and in particular, as a survey of the literature shows, to a number of adult and community educators involved in working-class and deprived areas.<sup>34</sup> While few, probably, embraced wholeheartedly the disestablishment of all schools, to many the idea of informal learning networks, the opening up of the content and methodology of learning and the devolving of responsibility and choice to the learner were highly desirable changes, particularly for the purpose of attracting those most alienated by their own experiences of formal education.

There is, it is interesting to note, a paradoxical element in Illich's thought which, ironically, at times appears to align him with the right rather than with the left, in educational and social terms. His opposition to the tax-payer's heavy subsidy of state systems of education, health and welfare, his emphasis upon individual responsibility and initiative in obtaining these services, his espousal of educational credit schemes, his differentiation between 'education' and 'skill training' and his argument that the latter could be carried out most cheaply and effectively by skilled non-professional teachers after brief basic training courses, his support for opening up the educational 'market', and even his advocacy of rote learning as a teaching method particularly suitable for certain types of learning: all of these might well have come from a very conservative educational pen indeed. This ambivalence is recognised, for example, by Paula Allman in her evaluation of "Gramsci, Freire and Illich: Their

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<sup>34</sup> See, for example, the application of Illich's thinking acknowledged in P. Fordham, G. Poulton, and L. Randle, *Learning Networks in Adult Education: Non-formal education on a housing estate* (London, 1979).

Contributions to Education for Socialism”<sup>35</sup> when she singles out his contention that

Only by channelling dollars away from the institutions which now treat health, education and welfare can the further impoverishment resulting from their disabling side effects be stopped.

This, she points out, would appeal strongly to a government which promotes private investment in education, health insurance and charities (p.91).

Perhaps Illich's main contribution, in the end, was the opening up of the educational debate. The boldness of his approach, the originality of his ideas and the vitality of his presentation gained him a hearing, even though his proposals may have been greeted with horror or scorn in certain quarters and his argumentation at times deprecated even by his admirers. Certainly it provided support for promoters of informal learning approaches and the democratisation of education, and his arguments were on occasion appropriated by advocates of the community-based curriculum, both in schools and in adult education.

#### 4.5.4 Paulo Freire

If Illich's anti-institutional, de-schooling proposals prompted widely differing reactions from educators, the philosophy of Paulo Freire drove an even greater wedge. In a way, it acts as the litmus test which separates the two schools of thought in community education in the 1970s and 80s, and, by providing a much more radical ideology and methodology, helped at the time to polarise the two wings of the movement.

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<sup>35</sup> In Lovett, T. (ed.), *Radical Approaches to Adult Education: A Reader* ((London, 1988),85-113.

It is perhaps rather unexpected that a set of theories and a pattern of practice developed among an illiterate peasant population in two far from democratic South American countries (Brazil, Freire's native country, from which he was eventually expelled, and Chile, the country where he then took up residence) should have such an impact and apparently speak so tellingly to educators working within a comparatively wealthy and sophisticated north European democracy. Nonetheless, Freire's definition of oppression as a state in which one man is treated, not as a full and equal human being, but as an object or an instrument to be used, dominated or controlled by another, had sufficient resonances for individuals working with the poorest, most disadvantaged sections of the population in this country for them to identify with his concerns and emulate his solutions. With Freire's work as a model, it was easier for British adult and community educators to justify an open link between education and politics.

Slowly but surely, one finds Freire's characteristic terminology creeping into the vocabulary of writers on community education, in particular "conscientization", "praxis" and "dialogue", together with "oppression", "domestication", "cultural invasion" and "the culture of silence". These last four are concerned with identification of the state in which the poor of a country find themselves. "Oppression" we have defined in Freire's terms above. "Domestication" implies the process of using education (or its withholding) to keep people in their existing position at the bottom of society. "Cultural invasion" denotes the way in which the culture of elite groups in society drives out the culture of those whom they oppress, and so creates a "culture of silence" among those whose culture has been thus denied. The three

preceding terms are part of the process which Freire used to restore to people a belief in themselves and a rejection of their undeserved sense of inferiority. "Conscientization" is the overall term he used to describe the process by which the "silent culture" shakes off its chains and begins to affect the world around it, assert its own dignity and achieve its own destiny. "Dialogue" is the discussion technique by which this is brought about; it takes place in the local situation and generally centres around a visual image (called a 'codification') representative of some aspect of local life. From analysis of the reality which the image represents ('decodification'), the group involved reaches a much enhanced degree of understanding, can formulate specific problems, decide upon actions to tackle these problems, and subsequently reflect upon the results of their actions. This process is what Freire means by "praxis", and it is central to his whole methodology, whether applied to the teaching of literacy or to the struggle for political liberation. Also central to his pedagogy is the idea of "problem-posing" education, which assumes, in Michael Haviland's words, "that the role of education is to identify the problems which men face and to devise solutions to those problems."<sup>36</sup> The importance of this approach is usefully summarised by Haviland as follows:

The process of working out problems through dialogue, action, and reflection on that action raises the level of consciousness of the learners and instils within him (sic) the awareness of his ability to be self-determined. It stimulates the learners' powers of creativity and critical thinking. It relates them in a meaningful way to the world in which they live.

(p.285)

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<sup>36</sup> R. Michael Haviland, "An introduction to the writings of Paulo Freire", *Adult Education*, 45, 5 (January 1983), pp.280-285.

In looking at the educational thinking of Dewey, Tawney and Illich, it is clear that there is much in all of these which would appeal to community educators as a whole. What differentiates Freire's thought is its explicit linking of education to the deliberate pursuit of social change and thus to political activism, and it was this element, above all, which separated the two camps in community education in the 1970s and 80s and led to the joining of battle between them, at least on paper.

There were, of course, many other writings of the period which are quoted within the literature of community education and thus can be presumed to have had some influence on the thinking of community educators. These would include, for example, writings as diverse as those of Gramsci<sup>37</sup> and other Marxist theorists (not least Marx himself) and the Gulbenkian Report on community work,<sup>38</sup> the main premise of which is that community work

is essentially concerned with affecting the course of social change through the two processes of analysing social situations and forming relationships with different groups to bring about some desirable change.

(p.4)

However, it can, I think, be argued that none of these had quite the effect of Freire's writings in polarising the two sides of the argument within adult and community education.

In the process, the labels (or epithets?) 'liberal' and 'radical' came to be attached, if somewhat loosely, to the two sides. Let us now go on

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<sup>37</sup> See, for example, Paula Allman, "Gramsci, Freire and Illich: Their Contributions to Education for Socialism", in T. Lovett (ed.), *Radical Approaches to Adult Education: A Reader* (London, 1988).

<sup>38</sup> Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, *Community Work and Social Change: A Report on Training* (London, 1968).

to look at how these terms were interpreted, how each side perceived the other, and what arguments each put forward in support of its stance.

#### 4.6 The Response to the Community Development Model and the Emergence of Conflict

If the proponents of the new 'social action' community education were confident of a warm reception, in light of the favourable ethos of the times, they were soon to be disabused of this idea. Reactions to the new gospel were swift and outspoken, and the first volleys signalled the start of a bitter and protracted campaign.

##### 4.6.1 The Defence of the Liberal Tradition

As early as September, 1970, K.H. Lawson (then Assistant Director at the University of Nottingham Department of Adult Education) published, in the journal *Adult Education*, an article entitled "The concept of 'purpose'"<sup>39</sup>, in which he questioned the validity of objectives in adult education. An 'objective' he defined as "an aim or task that is external to the idea of adult education" (p.165), and went on to put the case that adult education could not be justified by attempting to ascribe to it certain functions which could then be assessed and their 'success' or 'failure' measured. "We need," he continues,

to distinguish between tasks and purposes that are central to our concept of education and by-products of a non-educational nature if we wish to justify adult education in terms of its educational successes rather than in terms of

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<sup>39</sup> No.43 (Sept., 1970), pp.165-170.

its success as a form of social work or the contribution it makes to economic growth

and he suggests that educators should “concentrate on the tasks and aims *within* adult education rather than on tasks and purposes *for* adult education” (p.166). Education (and, by extension, adult education), he concedes, must be defined in some way, but he admits the difficulty of attempting any kind of precision in this. Instead he puts forward “certain minimum features that are likely to be present”, including

the idea of an ordered logical study; of problems approached in a rational way; of analysis and categorisation, and of evaluation and judgment

which he describes as “surely part of what we regard as essential ingredients in our conception of a developed individual”. He argues that our concept of a civilised society is based in part on this ideal of the individual, and that the development of individuals who match (or at least aspire to) this ideal “serves the purpose of developing society, but it is a purpose internal to the concept of education and not one which is outside it” (p.169). Thus, he concludes, adult tutors are engaged in an “open-ended and non-specific” process and are not concerned with “the many possible uses to which the results of their educational encounter might be put” (*ibid.*). Therefore “their teaching has no purposes beyond those contained in their conception of education” (*ibid.*).

This short article is an important one, in the sense that it articulates a basic tenet of the philosophy underlying ‘liberal’ adult and community education, namely, the centrality of the personal development of the individual. It was at the same time one of the first shots across the bows of the ‘community action’ craft, then still

fairly newly under way. In putting forward his argument for an essentially humane form of adult education, Lawson, far from being a lone voice, was operating within the clearly-defined and long-standing tradition in adult education, referred to in previous chapters, generally known as 'liberal' or 'liberal-progressive' and based upon the even longer Western tradition of a 'liberal education'. In terms of our matrix, this is encapsulated by the Liberal model on the continuum.

In Britain, the 'liberal-progressive' movement in adult education came to the fore, as we have seen, in the earliest years of the century, when it was very much the backbone of, in particular, university extra-mural work. Significantly, in his extended article, "University Adult Education into the 1980s" (one half of a volume entitled *The Demise of the Liberal Tradition*<sup>40</sup>), Gwyn Harries-Jenkins refers back to the 1919 Report on Adult Education<sup>41</sup> as one of the documents which encapsulated (and inspired) the ethos of the movement.<sup>42</sup> The idea of 'liberal adult education', as expounded by the liberal-progressive movement, was that it should be: non-vocational in content, conducted in a humane spirit, and based upon open enquiry and rational analysis; its aims should be: the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, continuing personal growth and the encouragement of civic responsibility. It represented, in many respects, what might be seen as a rather elitist concept of "the educated man" - an ideal of education which Harries-Jenkins characterises as "gentlemanly, non-utilitarian and largely ornamental" (p.4). It did, it must be added, also conceive of education as a means of social improvement, but it

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40 A. Crombie and G. Harries-Jenkins (eds.), *The Demise of the Liberal Tradition: Two essays on the future of British university adult education* (Leeds, 1983).

41 See Chapter 3 above.

42 He also cites the domination of the tutorial class, which was the staple of the liberal-progressive approach; "this dominance," he notes, "can also be seen in its adoption for community education work" (p.11).

envisaged this as taking place through the nurture of rational, civic-minded individuals operating within and raising the standards of the existing social system, rather than through radical alteration of the system itself. This was, above all, a movement geared to the individual, and, for all its emphasis on the individual's role in society, apparently apolitical. Moreover, it was one which saw knowledge as something capable of being objectively defined and as something which must be transmitted, however informal the setting, from teacher to pupil. Thus the unique role, the specialist knowledge and the decision-making power of the tutor was seen as an essential and positive contribution to the student's progress, rather than an anti-democratic, authoritarian element in the process of the student's self-development.

It is not difficult to caricature the 'liberal adult education' ideal. In retrospect, particularly when its assumptions and claims are couched in the less restrained and cautious vocabulary of its earliest proponents, it can seem romantic and naive. This would, however, be to seriously underestimate the strength and the persistence of the concept in English adult education throughout the century. In this context, Keith Jackson's Foreword to one of the seminal publications of the 'radical' wing, *Adult Education for a Change*<sup>43</sup>, is of interest. Although his main thrust is a critique of the liberal adult education movement, nonetheless he acknowledges that he himself had come from that tradition (which, ignoring the earlier history of the movement, he describes as having dominated adult education for a quarter of a century, from 1945 to the early 1970s) and that its ideology, though since proved to be flawed, was at the time "coherent and reinforced by our experience" (p.11). He also makes the point

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<sup>43</sup> Ed. J.L. Thompson (London, 1980).

that "the different kinds of intellectual and practical experience which have followed a questioning of the liberal tradition also grew out of it" (pp.10-11) and puts forward his opinion that liberal progressives failed, not because of a lack of social purpose, but "because they reduced that purpose to a largely educational affair" (p.11).

Jackson's article would seem to indicate that by the 1970s the concepts of liberal adult education and of liberal progressivism (in which is implied a kind of unforced, evolutionary movement towards welcome change) were no longer embraced by the majority of adult and community educators, not to mention the disillusioned members of the working class who had so overwhelmingly rejected their educational offerings.

Nonetheless, some heavy guns were brought to bear in defence of the tradition throughout the decade of the '70s and into the 1980s. The two major defenders, whose writings I shall be examining, were undoubtedly Lawson and R.W.K. Paterson, the latter being at the time Staff Tutor in Philosophy at the University of Hull. Both men have had a great deal, of considerable interest, to say on adult education in general, and its underlying values and assumptions in particular, but for the purposes of our examination I shall be concentrating upon their arguments in relation to their defence of liberal adult education, their reservations concerning community education and their opposition to the melding of adult education and community action.

Returning, then, to K.H. Lawson, and following on from his article on

'purpose' in adult education, we find him raising some of the same questions as to the aims of adult education in an article entitled "The Justification of Objectives in Adult Education".<sup>44</sup> The main thrust of his argument here is summarised in the concluding paragraphs, namely that education is "made neutral relative to specific personal and social demands" because educational values are rooted in "the most general characteristics of society, knowledge and man as we understand them". The general objectives of education, he continues, "are deduced internally from the concept of education itself" (p.40). This is not to say that social purpose or personal goals are excluded, but "we are setting limits as to what sort of objectives related, eg to social purposes, would be educationally relevant" (*ibid.*).

Lawson reverts to this theme again in a subsequent book, *Philosophical Concepts and Values in Adult Education*,<sup>45</sup> and expands upon it in a way more directly relevant to our enquiry. In a chapter on "The 'Needs Meeting' Programme", he argues that definitions of 'needs', in the educational sense, are greatly influenced by the educator's own values. There is, however, "an interplay between society in general and educational providers" which also affects the identification of 'needs', and he goes on to single out two newly emerged issues in adult education: the growing concern for the 'disadvantaged' and the linking of adult education with community development. With reference to these, he points out the potential danger, as he sees it, that

the criteria which are used to identify the various forms of disadvantage will be ones more appropriate to social work, to welfare organisations and so on than to educational organisations.

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<sup>44</sup> *Studies in Adult Education*, Vol.5, No.1 (April 1973 ), pp.31-42.

<sup>45</sup> Nottingham, 1975.

(p.39)

While acknowledging that many adult educators do indeed have a valid and laudable concern for social problems, he argues that the educator can and should only deal with an *educational* need, whatever the social need from which it may arise. The meeting of the educational need may in fact have the effect of bringing about some improvement vis-à-vis the individual's social needs, but not necessarily; it is sufficient that an educational need has been addressed.

However, Lawson does admit that an educator's own values may lead him to an open pursuit of certain social concerns, in a way which he regards as legitimate. In this case, the educator

will decide, for example, to concentrate on this or that category of people, the manual worker, the physically handicapped, the unmarried mother, members of claimants' unions and so on and it is their special education needs which interest him.

There is no immediate obvious objection to this argument provided that all the cards are laid on the table and the particular values and biases are made explicit.

(p.41)

To some of Lawson's readers, particularly those involved in adult education in deprived areas, this may have seemed like the worst kind of hair-splitting; nevertheless, he is raising valid and necessary questions about (1) the priorities of the adult educator, (2) the relative importance of educational vs. social needs, and (3) the effectiveness or otherwise of educational solutions to social problems. In expressing scepticism concerning the use of education as a means of bringing about the amelioration of social conditions, he is again

questioning whether education must be justified by reference to certain goals of a social nature. His own consistent stance is that education does not need external justification, since it has its own intrinsic justification, which is implicit in the ideal of a liberal education and of the 'educated man'.

Two further propositions put forward by Lawson run counter to the trend in adult and community education at this period. In a chapter on "Educational Values and the Role of the Educator", he casts doubt upon the notion that adults can and should always determine their own learning goals, with the tutor acting as a "neutral provider of resources". He argues against those who see this an ideological issue, and points out that the possibility of choice "exists only when there are alternatives which are known to us and when there are criteria by which to judge the relative merits of the alternatives" (p.80). He goes on:

When we engage in educational activities we implicitly expect to be introduced to knowledge and skills beyond our present comprehension and except in the relatively weak sense of choosing to learn within some general area which is only partly comprehended there can be no real choice of learning goals on our part.

(pp.82-3)

It is a point of view which directly contradicts the arguments of those following in the footsteps of Dewey and embracing the ideal of a type of education directly geared to the individual learner and relying upon the methods of discovery and learning through experience.

As a corollary to this, he mounts a defence of the role of the teacher, maintaining that

only someone who has been through the territory before can know what can be learned and is in a position to suggest ways in which learning can be undertaken ..... A part of his skill consists in identifying what people do not know and in guiding them into new areas which are worthwhile.

(p.83)

In becoming a learner, the adult student "is temporarily giving up his freedom to choose in favour of being guided, criticised and tested according to the standards of a discipline of some kind beyond himself" (*ibid.*). This viewpoint depends of course, as Lawson himself points out, upon a belief that there is some kind of 'objective knowledge' which can be identified and agreed upon. Once this is accepted, the teacher's authority stems from his mastery of some area of knowledge and this gives him the right to guide, criticise and test. On the other hand, Lawson continues, if knowledge is seen as subjective, dependent upon current social norms and values (what is termed 'socially constructed knowledge'), then the authority of the teacher and respect for education itself are eroded (p.84). This, he contends, is what has happened in certain sectors of adult education, and it is evident that he deplores the trend in this direction.

That community education is one of the sectors Lawson has in mind is made clear by a subsequent article, "Community Education: a critical assessment", published in *Adult Education* some time later.<sup>46</sup> Much of the article is devoted to a questioning of the concept of 'community' and the creation of an 'ideology of community', which he sees as potentially dangerous to democracy because of its skewing of decision-making towards self-elected local groups. In addition to this, he voices a number of other concerns which relate closely to his

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<sup>46</sup> No.50 (May., 1977), pp.6-13.

previous analyses and arguments. Having initially dismissed community education as “a number of novel ways of achieving traditional educational goals” (p.6), he goes on to attack the “practical instrumentalism” of community educators such as Jackson and Lovett, with their Dewey-inspired espousal of ‘learning by experience’, their emphasis on the solving of social problems and their adoption of the aims and methods of community development (p.7). Lawson further registers his opposition to the “use of adult education as an instrument of social control” and to “the explicit involvement of the adult educator in political situations” (p.13). It is interesting to note his use of language in this respect: from the more neutral “solving of social problems” he now introduces the more pointed “social control” and “political situations”, a slight but significant shift, indicative of his own negative attitude. Finally, he raises the question of the advisability of diverting limited resources towards community education and thus away from “the more traditional role of general cultural diffusion and personal development through studies on a broad perspective” (*ibid.*). Once again we are reminded of the gulf in thinking between those who view adult education as the handmaid of social improvement and those who see adult education in the ‘liberal’ tradition of individual growth towards an intellectual and cultural ideal.

Many of the concerns voiced by Lawson are also tackled by R.W.K. Paterson. In an article entitled “Social change as an educational aim”,<sup>47</sup> he criticises the “commonplace” suggestion that the adult educator should assume responsibility for community action, which he defines as “aiding community activists to achieve their desired ends” (p.353). This view is, he claims,

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<sup>47</sup> *Adult Education*, 45, 6 (March 1973), pp.353-59.

merely a recent and extreme version of a venerable and widely-held assumption: the assumption that social change is a legitimate and central aim of adult education. It is this basic assumption which needs to be critically examined.

(*ibid.*)

In rebuttal, he points out that "social change'.....is intended to signify *desirable* social change" (p.354) but that this assumes wholesale agreement as to what changes *are* desirable - a highly debatable notion. Acceptance of social change as a principle aim of adult education would either give rise to endless contention or would result in "a sinister uniformity of social attitudes and opinions" (*ibid.*). Like Lawson, he defends the intrinsic worth of education *per se* (defined by him as the understanding of some aspect of human experience and the enhancement of some important human skill) and insists that "An adult educator who uses adult education to promote the social policies of his preference is betraying the educational engagement" (p.355). While admitting the need for general commitment to social reform, he contends that "Education ..... cannot afford to offer hospitality to social reformers *manqués*" (*ibid.*).

Paterson's definition of education centres around the concept of education as the transmission of truth i.e. cognitive knowledge which is neutral in itself, but which can then be examined, questioned, tested, argued over and applied. As such it can be used to scrutinise the institutions of society, but not used as an instrument either for change or for preservation of the status quo. He points out, moreover, the dangers, within a democratic society, of allowing any one group (be it educators, soldiers or civil servants) to make decisions concerning social change - that, he asserts, is the responsibility (and privilege) of society as a whole. Social change, he

concludes,

is, for the educator, not an aim, but simply another subject for unbiased investigation, for the development of free and critical enquiry, and for that undeviating and fearless transmission of truth which education essentially is.

(p.359)

In a subsequent article, entitled "The Concept of Deprivation",<sup>48</sup> Paterson turns his attention to yet another icon of the social action wing. Having examined the general usage of the term 'deprivation', he identifies three interpretations of educational deprivation: (1) denial of the right of every individual to what he terms a "basic general education" (i.e. one without which the individual could not function in society or participate in its democratic processes); (2) denial of the opportunity for individuals to be educated to the extent of their personal aptitudes and capacities; and (3) lack of access to continuing lifelong education. In Paterson's view, anyone who suffers from one of these lacks can be said to be 'educationally deprived', not simply those who are disadvantaged in either physical or material terms (pp.31-35). He considers the circumstances in which people may be prevented from taking advantage of educational opportunities, and discusses the evidence which could be taken into account when attempting to establish that deprivation exists in a particular case. However, he warns of the danger of confusing 'deprivation' and simple 'abstention' from the benefits of adult and continuing education. "There are very many people," he argues

of all social classes, in all age-groups, and at all educational levels, who are aware of the existence of opportunities for continuing lifelong education and are not prevented by objective causes from availing themselves of these

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<sup>48</sup> *Studies in Adult Education*, 6,1 (April 1974), pp.28-49.

opportunities, but who nevertheless demonstrate - in the most effective possible way, by total abstinence - that their rights in continuing lifelong education are a matter of complete indifference to them. Let me call these people 'the abstainers'. It is often claimed that the abstainers fall into the category of the deprived, and indeed that they may suffer from educational deprivation no whit less grievous than that suffered by the victims of more obvious physical, economic, or administrative causes.

(p.41)

He points out that proponents of this last point of view claim that the reason for the abstainers' rejection of adult education "is itself the product of disabling social, economic, or early educational causes", but dismisses this on the grounds that no causal relationship can be established, certainly not in any consistent way. (If a causal relationship did exist, he notes, the adult educator would have to admit that the indifference of the Duke and Duchess of Omnium to lifelong continuing education would also be due to their life-situation, and so they must also be regarded as 'deprived'!) The 'right' to lifelong continuing education, he claims, is a discretionary one, and to assume that all *must* take advantage of adult education opportunities he describes as a form of paternalism disguised by talk of educational 'needs' (p.45). Paterson also deplores the tendency to use the terms 'working-class' and 'deprived' as though they were synonymous and criticises the bias against middle-class participation in adult education. The idea of a policy of 'positive discrimination' against middle-class students he finds offensive and misplaced (pp.46-7),<sup>49</sup> and he maintains that while adult educators may not approve the "relatively low value" which the working class put on adult education, they must nevertheless respect that valuation (p.46).

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<sup>49</sup> See also his article, "Philosophical Aspects of Adult Education", *Studies in Adult Education*, Vol.3, No.2 (October 1971), pp.101-117.

In his concluding section he raises the question of education and social change. Although, he writes, "full and prompt" provision must be made for the educationally deprived, this must be recognised as "an exercise in educational redress, not an instrument of social change" (p.47). Like Lawson, he admits that social improvements may occur out of educational work with the deprived, but is adamant that the adult educator's duty is an *educational* one and that it "is not fulfilled by providing socially useful courses of non-educational kinds" (p.48). For both Paterson and Lawson, education needs no external justification which would tie it in to some other, over-riding social aim; its main function is to provide the opportunity for personal intellectual, moral and cultural development to individuals, enabling them to live fuller, more satisfying lives and to contribute their share of responsibility to society.

Paterson returns to these themes and deals with them at greater length in his book, *Values, Education and the Adult*.<sup>50</sup> We need not reiterate the arguments here, since they follow, and expand upon, the thinking outlined above. However, Paterson pursues in his book one or two other topics which are worth mentioning. For example, he presents a critique of the tendency to lump together all forms of adult education regardless of content, level or purpose. He (as does Lawson elsewhere) clearly distinguishes between 'education' and 'training', between 'vocational' and 'liberal' adult education, between recreational provision and education for personal growth. "Of course," he writes

we are by no means suggesting that courses which show farmers how to use animal foodstuffs more economically,

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<sup>50</sup> London, 1979.

which help young couples to manage their household budgets more skilfully, or which encourage motorists to drive more carefully, are not well worth devising and providing..... But we are certainly suggesting that the provision of courses of these kinds, with their limited and severely utilitarian terms of reference, cannot seriously be regarded as forming any significant contribution to the *education* of society's adult members.

(p.257)

So what, then, does Paterson consider adult education, and in particular, 'liberal' adult education, to be? In answer to this, it is worth quoting at greater length his own summary of his analysis:

The education of adults is the attempt to foster the development of grown men and women as persons, and this, we have argued, consists essentially in the fostering of their continued growth as centres of awareness, as conscious selves who perceive, feel, imagine, judge, appreciate, and understand more fully, more sensitively, and more profoundly than ever before. To develop a man's awareness is to put him in closer and more meaningful touch with reality, to give him a surer and more comprehensive grasp of his condition and that of his fellows, and is thus best expressed in terms of deepening and extending his *knowledge*; a man's pursuit of education, we have claimed, is his pursuit of knowledge in all its principal forms, for in building up richer and more finely wrought structures of knowledge and understanding a man is building up his very being as a centre of awareness, as a mind.

(p.155)

The high ideal of adult education delineated by both Lawson and Paterson is at one extreme of the continuum of opinion among adult educators. It has, as I have already pointed out, a most respectable pedigree. It would undoubtedly have met with the approval of the

compilers of the 1919 Report, which frequently speaks in much the same terminology, and it would have been embraced by Henry Morris, whose own commitment to the 'highest and best' concept of education was equally strong. It has great appeal, in its idealism and its wholehearted concern for the growth of the individual, and great strength, in its high standards and its clarity of purpose. However, for all the breadth of its mission, it can be seen as a narrow and exclusive approach to the education of adults. This was certainly the view of the new 'radical' approach to adult and community education, and was only one of the criticisms levelled against the 'liberal' tradition. We have already looked at the nature, aims and methods of the 'radical' model of adult and community education; we must now look in more detail at its critique of the older tradition.

#### 4.6.2 The Radical Critique of the Liberal Tradition

In 1980, a collection of articles on various aspects of adult education was published under the title, *Adult Education for a Change*, edited by Jane Thompson.<sup>51</sup> In the Preface, the editor notes that the idea for the collection came out of a conference on Non-Formal Education, during which it "became abundantly clear that any radical variation on the prevailing orthodoxy in adult education philosophy and practice was all too readily dismissed as 'unreasonably subversive' and 'misguided' by those representing the official and authoritative position". The publication of the volume, she continues, is intended, not to "present an alternative orthodoxy but to initiate a serious debate". Following the Foreword by Keith Jackson referred to in preceding sections, Thompson's Introduction is a useful

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<sup>51</sup> London, 1980.

encapsulation of the radical<sup>52</sup> perception of traditional adult education in this country and a summary of the radical criticism of what was seen as the 'liberal adult education' approach.

In the sketch drawn by Thompson, adult education is described as "dominated by the constraints of resource allocation and the need to account for the money spent to those who provide it" - thus emphasizing immediately a problem of external (implicitly political) control. It is seen as consisting largely of classes and as being institution-based. Classes are seen as "topic or subject-centred and operate on a fee-paying, enrolment economy" (p.19), as being dependent upon numbers attending ("often assumed to be more important than the quality of what is offered") and of variable standard (though "subject to occasional inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectors" - p.20). Thompson goes on to discuss recent research into the "relationship between education and society" and "the business of socialization and acculturation ..... now widely regarded as central to the process of schooling". While not claiming directly that adult education is similarly used as "a 'training ground' for capitalism", she asks

Could it be that those who have learned defeat early on in their school careers, and have come to regard education as an alienating experience, see adult education as merely the extension of this process?

(p.21)

In examining the social context of adult education, Thompson points out that in terms of "qualifications, its links with powerful academic interests and its ability to make available the knowledge required by prestigious elites, its contribution is marginal" (p.22). Its status is

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<sup>52</sup> It should be noted that this is a term which the 'radical' school of thought applies to itself in the writings which we shall be examining in this section. See further discussion below.

"small-scale and second-rate" in comparison with higher education and its offerings have a "low currency value in a meritocratic education system servicing a work-orientated society" (pp.21-2). Nor, she continues, does it serve the interests of the poor; rather its products "are consumed by a small and socially discreet (sic) section of the population" (p.22). Moreover, its ideal of "education for its own sake", deliberately encouraged by the university tradition in adult education, "has its roots in academic scholarship and the patronage of the leisured and genteel classes in the nineteenth century" (*ibid.*). Another characteristic she points out is the sharp dividing line between providers, with the university extra-mural departments and the WEA promoting the more academic form of adult education and the LEAs concentrating on "'practical', 'recreational' and 'creative' subjects ..... continuing the demarcation between 'high-status' and 'low-status' knowledge familiar in the school curriculum" (p.23). The social composition of students at all these classes, she notes, is fairly homogeneous, though LEA students tend to be slightly older and from the lower-middle rather than middle class, with women predominating in a ration of approximately 3 to 1 (p.23)..

She then goes on to look at the reasons given, she claims, by mainstream adult educators for working-class non-participation, which include unhappy memories of schooling, personal preference for beer and bingo, the formality of adult education organisation, inappropriate time scheduling, lack of crèche facilities, and feelings of inferiority and inadequacy on the part of the working class. These explanations she finds "highly unsatisfactory" (p.24). Traditional adult education, she suggests, is susceptible to the tendency to transmit the values and attitudes of the dominant groups in society

and she mentions Colin Kirkwood's<sup>53</sup> detection in Lawson's article on community education of "the kind of vagueness and arrogance which is motivated by the assumption that traditional adult education is somehow 'absolute' and 'god-given' and 'unsullied' by the prejudices and manipulations of men" (p.25). Turning to the content of LEA adult classes, she charges that, not only are they low-status but their underlying concept of their clients is "that of 'homemaker', 'consumer' and 'well rounded individual', rather than 'scholar', 'political activist', 'trade union official' or 'victim of economic and cultural oppression'" (pp.25-6). In this case, she goes on,

the provision of classes in, for example, hostess cookery, beauty and skin care, dressmaking, interior design and yoga is as likely to encourage an implicit celebration of domesticity, quietism, consumerism and sexism as anything the most coercive instruction in passive citizenship could achieve.

(p.26)

Damning indeed! In conclusion, she argues that no kind of education can ever be considered neutral, but (quoting Freire) must either be used to bring about conformity with the existing system or be used to transform it. Adult education, she claims, has been governed by "considerations closely related to the interests of dominant groups", and adds that

The selection of liberal criteria for identifying content, prescribing objectives and deciding teaching methods, for example, represents as partial and political a commitment to a non-neutral process as that of Paulo Freire in Latin America or the staff and students who removed themselves from Ruskin College in 1909.

(p.26)

Adult education, she insists, must be subjected to examination with

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<sup>53</sup> "Adult education and the concept of community", *Adult Education*, 51 (September 1978), pp.145-51.

"the insights provided by the sociology of education ..... [which] means placing adult education firmly in the context of a stratified society and within the realities of political struggle". Without this kind of understanding, and this class perspective, she concludes,

it will be impossible to radicalize adult education or to respond, with any degree of commitment, to the expansion of educational provision for working-class men and women.

(p.27)

I have quoted at some length from this introductory article, not only because it contains the major criticisms of liberal adult education from the radical side, but also because it sets the tone for and reflects the content of the succeeding articles in a volume widely read and much quoted since by adult and community educators. A survey of the articles in Part One, entitled "Perspectives", reveals the following areas of debate: an examination of the middle-class bias of adult education, in the context of current sociological theory<sup>54</sup>; a questioning of the claims of liberal adult education to distinctiveness, to student-centredness and to concern for the disadvantaged<sup>55</sup>; a defence of the theory of community education vis-à-vis the misconceptions held by traditional adult education<sup>56</sup>; and an attack on what is seen as a general acceptance of "pathological and personalized explanations of disadvantage" rather than "a more fundamental examination of the structural causes of poverty, inequality and educational divisiveness in our society".<sup>57</sup> It is evident from the congruence of the views expressed in each of the articles that

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<sup>54</sup> Sally Westwood, "Adult education and the sociology of education: an exploration", pp.31-44.

<sup>55</sup> Nell Keddie, "Adult education: an ideology of individualism", pp.45-64.

<sup>56</sup> Colin Fletcher, "The theory of community education and its relation to adult education", pp.65-82.

<sup>57</sup> Jane L. Thompson, "Adult education and the disadvantaged", pp.83-108

we have here a distinct, coherent and cogently expressed educational philosophy which in almost every respect represents the opposite end of the spectrum from that of the liberal adult education tradition.

The volume of other writings by the 'radical' wing of adult and community education, in the 1970s and early 1980s, is too great to consider in detail. In view of this, I have selected as representative two pieces which are in fact direct responses to Paterson and Lawson, published in rebuttal of articles by each. Following the publication of Paterson's "Social Change as an Educational Aim",<sup>58</sup> the journal carried a reaction by Paul Joyce, entitled "Education and Social Change".<sup>59</sup> In describing Paterson's attitude to education, Joyce uses the analogy of the wireless, with learners in the passive role of receivers. This approach, he says, has dehumanised education and alienated students. By emphasizing knowledge at the expense of "personal relationships and the understanding of human failings and feelings" (p.170), traditional adult education has ignored the growth and personal development of the individual. Education, he argues, must attempt to "realise each student in terms of his own potential, interest and aspiration" and must therefore encourage each to be "more self-operative and less teacher dictated and dominated" (p.172). The role of the teacher must change accordingly to "now one of developer". Having emphasised the necessity of student choice and control, he goes on, somewhat illogically, to assert that

Any course of community education must aspire to educate the students on the complex social, economic and political relationships and sub-systems that constitute a community.

The aim must therefore be the development of the individual's increased consciousness of the community; of his

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<sup>58</sup> See above, section 4.6.1.

<sup>59</sup> *Adult Education*, 41 (September 1973), pp.170-174.

understanding of, sense of identity with, and his sensitivity to the shortcomings of the community.

(p.172)

As a corollary to this, learning must be "at first hand by direct involvement ..... to foster the student's understanding of the issues and to develop, as a result of these experiences, the student's own values and beliefs" (p.173). If these values, he continues, "are more than simply superficial it is inevitable that the students would wish to be critical of the community and society" (*ibid.*). He attacks Paterson's contention that "we have been hired to educate our masters [i.e. the taxpayers] and not reform them" for its implication that "the teacher determines the extent and direction of social change" (*ibid.*), arguing that action for change will arise out of the student's own beliefs and values, from his "learning how to effect change [and] developing mastery over the rigid community structures". He concludes by declaring that

education must be a common enterprise with power shared by pupils and teachers, and that is why education must strive to go beyond mere knowledge and accept action to effect social change as a primary aim.

(p.174)

As a rebuttal, Joyce's article is less than effective, owing to his tendency to contradict, without actually getting to grips with, Paterson's propositions. It is, however, particularly representative of the strongly and emotionally held viewpoint which prevailed increasingly in community education circles - the deeply felt sense of frustration at the failure of liberal adult education to make contact with working-class communities and the disadvantaged in society (however one might define 'working-class', 'community' and 'disadvantaged') and the strong conviction that educational aims and

activities could not be separated off from the social factors which affected people's lives, but should be harnessed to the righting of social wrongs and the amelioration of social ills.

The second article, Colin Kirkwood's "Adult education and the concept of community"<sup>60</sup>, which has already been mentioned in a previous context, was written partially in response to K.H. Lawson's "Community education: a critical assessment".<sup>61</sup> Kirkwood's critique singles out Lawson's choice of language. The latter's use of words such as 'audience', 'offered' and 'format' indicate, in Kirkwood's view, "a consumer ideology of adult education" (p.146), while his employment of the term 'provision for' is imbued with Lawson's own value judgments. He contradicts Lawson's designation of Lovett and Jackson's approach as 'practical instrumentalism', arguing that this may be only a starting point for branching out into "matters of general significance" (p.147), and decries Lawson's attitude as a kind of "*snobbisme*". While accepting Lawson's contention that "the values implicit in any approach to education" must be brought out into the open, he advises Lawson to apply the same criterion to his own thinking. He finds Lawson's ideal of education "incredibly vague" and his espousal of professionalism suspect. "Professionalism," Kirkwood claims,

is theft - the theft of creativity, of co-operative responsibility from those who are supposedly being served with dollops of various public services. It is a concept embodied in most British public services, so it is unreasonable to blame adult educators for it. But we might reasonably hope that in adult education - of all services, that one in which people participate voluntarily - we could make moves to overcome it.

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<sup>60</sup> *Adult Education*, 51 (September 1978), pp.145-51; see also section 2.2.1 above.

<sup>61</sup> *Adult Education*, 50 (May 1977), pp.6-13; see also section 4.6.1 above.

#### 4.6.3 Community Education and the Liberal/Radical Divide

The widely divergent schools of thought illustrated by the writings discussed above represent, as I have already indicated, two of the polarised stances to be found in the philosophy of adult education. None of the writers, I would contend, is presenting an accurate picture of adult education, either as it is or as it might be; all tend to idealise their purpose, to overstate their own claims, and to caricature the other side. What we have here is not portraiture, but polemic - and very human and understandable this is, not least in practical terms. In an area of work perennially starved of resources, competition for the comparatively small amount of funding available can become fierce. To those whose life-effort had been devoted to liberal adult education, the advent of radical community education, particularly in its more militant version, must have seemed much like the sudden appearance of a very large, very loud, very hungry baby cuckoo in the nest. We shall see in the following chapter how the debate and the polemic were experienced by some of the protagonists, together with their views on the consequent effect on practice.

It is interesting to note that this particular conflict was not apparently a problem in the earlier days of community education. While Henry Morris may have struggled mightily to build a network of village colleges in Cambridgeshire, his difficulties were more often financial than ideological, and the appearance of these rural institutions was generally greeted in the adult education world with

benign parental approval.<sup>62</sup> As I have argued in the previous chapter, in the first few decades of its existence, community education was seen very much as the offspring of traditional liberal adult education. While its emphasis may have been on practical, social and recreational provision, and on school-community links, and while its client group may have expanded to include the youth sector, it still maintained its links with the Responsible Bodies. Many community schools offered a programme which covered the range from teenage discos to extra-mural university classes, and had no difficulty in accommodating such varied groups and divergent interests.

The change in atmosphere, and the increasingly open dissension, appears to emerge simultaneously with the growing interest among community educators (especially in poorer urban areas) in community development and social activism. I have already touched upon the general questioning of social institutions which was rampant in the late 1960s and early 1970s. As education in general, and adult education in particular, came under highly critical scrutiny, it was inevitable that aggressive and defensive postures would come to be adopted, resulting in a kind of battle for the soul of community education. The nub of the matter was, as has already been pointed out, the opinion of the two sides concerning the purpose of adult education. As Tom Lovett wrote, in his conclusion to *Radical*

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<sup>62</sup> See, for example, "Village Colleges" in the *Times Educational Supplement*, Oct. 2, 1927; "The Cambridgeshire Experiment" in *Country Life*, Jan. 1, 1930; H.C. Dent, *The Countryman's College* (Longmans for the British Council, 1943); H.C. Wiltshire, "Impington and Adult Education" in *Adult Education*, 18, 3 (March 1945), 125-34; R.D. Williams, "A Pilot Project in Leicestershire" in *Adult Education*, 28 (1955-6), 273-8; David Holbrooke, "Sweetness and Light for Hodge - First Months of a New Village College" in *Journal of Education*, 88 (1956), 138-42; Margaret Hunter, "Village College" in *Adult Education*, 33 (March 1961), 310-4; David Holbrooke, "Henry Morris and the Village College" in *The Guardian*, Jan. 13, 1962; and S.C. Western, "Community College and School" in *Adult Education*, 38 (November 1965), 191-7.

*Approaches to Adult Education*,<sup>63</sup>

The whole discussion about adult education and social change, about the role of adult education in popular social movements is intelligible only in relation to the question of purpose ....

(p.300)

From each side's conclusions about this purpose came, as we have seen in chapter 2, a pedagogy which embraced a certain content and certain methods, reinforced by the differing values of each camp.

Faced with two widely differing ideals, and the resultant contrast in approaches, most community educators, it would appear from the literature, sensibly chose to place themselves somewhere in the middle. In fact, it is probable that circumstances ensured that this was the most likely consequence. On the one hand, the day-to-day experience of community educators reinforced the conclusion that adult education in any of its manifestations was not reaching a sizable proportion of the population, most noticeably in the poorest urban areas; coupled with this, the mounting body of evidence (from the EPAs and other similar projects) was demonstrating that the informal, community development approach could have some effect in tackling problems of deprivation. On the other hand, the very success of the more traditional community school programmes was an argument for their continuation and even expansion; and linked to this was the whole local authority structure within which they existed, from which they derived much of their funding, and which exercised its own constraints upon their objectives and activities. As Colin Fletcher puts it in "Developments in Community Education: A Current Account",<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> London, 1988.

<sup>64</sup> C. Fletcher and N. Thompson (eds.), *Issues in Community Education* (Lewes, 1980).

Community education develops largely to the degree to which its educational and economic gains can be bought by or sold to authorities. The latter may then feel a little cheated if the expertise recruited turns out to be devoted to political activism ..... But not all community education investments proved to be hot-beds of radicalism. Some complexes are more or less thwarted by the day to day managerial issues and others are determined to settle into their neighbourhood as part-time community centres.

(p.10)

Against a background of the expansive claims made by community education in its optimistic period of rapid expansion, it was becoming clear that it might well end up falling between two stools - neither a productive educational service nor an effective community service. In the event, it was largely other circumstances - most notably the educational cutbacks of the Conservative government of the 1980s and the weakening of community education's local government base - which effectively put an end to community education as a vital and expanding sector on the educational scene. One consequence of these more pressing events was that the conflict remained unresolved; in the face of immediate threats to the existence of all adult education services, the attention of the protagonists was diverted elsewhere. More than a decade after the argument raged in the pages of the adult and community education periodicals, the issues no longer have the power, it would seem, to ignite the passion generated at the height of the debate. But how is the dispute remembered by those who took part in it? How significant was it in actuality? And how did it translate into practice? Has there been any resolution, or does the conflict rumble on underground? It is to questions such as these that we turn in the next chapter.

## Chapter 5

### THE CONFLICT IN RETROSPECT: REFLECTIONS OF THE PARTICIPANTS

#### 5.1 Introduction

So far, we have examined the conflict in adult and community education in the late 1960s and the 1970s solely as it manifested itself on paper, both in scholarly books and journals and in periodicals and other publications aimed at the practitioner. This does give rise to at least a query as to whether the putative struggle in fact took place on the ground, or whether it was confined to the ideological and theoretical level - whether the debate was purely scholarly or whether it translated into radically different approaches in practice. It is to this question that we now turn.

It is frustrating, to say the least, that the national statistics for education do not single out community education for separate consideration. In fact, an examination of the CIPFA<sup>1</sup> and DES statistics for the decade from 1970 to 1980 demonstrates the difficulty of drawing out any sensible data for adult education as a whole, so broad and uninformative are the categories under which it is subsumed. It is also outside the scope of this thesis to conduct an

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<sup>1</sup> Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting.

investigation into LEA, university extra-mural or other local sources of information from that time, though a study of these would undoubtedly be very useful in comparing rhetoric and practice.

One fruitful resource which is available to us, however, is to be found in the personal recollection and reflections of those involved, both in the debate and as practitioners in the various 'branches' of adult and community education. From these one can go some way towards discovering: firstly, whether the conflict which emerges from an examination of the literature was perceived as a significant conflict by those who contributed the books and articles; and secondly, whether the dispute was viewed by the combatants as representing merely differences in method and practice, in content and clientele, or was seen, at a deeper level, as stemming from differing beliefs, values, and objectives - in effect, as resulting from differing philosophies.<sup>2</sup>

If, as has been argued in this thesis, the latter viewpoint was confirmed, one would then want to know something of what might have given rise to the differences in the first place (the background of the individuals concerned, the people and events which influenced their thinking, as well as their own experience of adult and/or community education prior to engaging in the debate). One would wish to confirm what appear from their writings to be the grounds of their differences (for example, their definitions of what constituted community education, their conception of the purpose of education in this context, and their image of the role of the community educator, as tutor and/or organiser). One would wish to explore their perceptions of their own role in the conflict (whether they felt

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<sup>2</sup> To put it another way, was the division seen as one of function and types of activities, or one of purpose and definitions of aims?

themselves to be part of a group, or school, or movement; whom they perceived their opponents to be; how they went about the task of persuasion - through their writings only, or through their practice; what influence and/or what practical results did they feel they had achieved, as individuals or in concert with others; and what overall effect, if any, did they see as having occurred as a result of their part in the debate). Finally, and related to this last point, it would be illuminating to know what these writers and practitioners perceived the current state of community education (and of adult education as a whole) to be.

## 5.2 Research Methods and Data Collection

In order to elicit this information, detailed interviews were carried out with six individuals, all formerly (and in some cases presently) involved in adult and community education and all of whom contributed through their writings to the process of analysis and debate concerning community education detailed in chapter 4 of this thesis. The six individuals are: Dr. Andrew Fairbairn, former Chief Education Officer for Leicestershire; Professor K. H. Lawson and Professor J. E. Thomas, both of the Department of Adult Education at the University of Nottingham; Professor Colin Fletcher, Director of the Education Research Unit at the University of Wolverhampton; Professor Tom Lovett, Director of the Community Development Unit at the University of Ulster; and Mr. Ian Martin, Lecturer in Community Education at Moray House, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh.

In terms of their viewpoint and stance, Fairbairn, as a former chief

education officer, represents the mainstream of school-based, LEA-supported community education; Lawson and Thomas are predominantly in the liberal adult education tradition (though the latter has written with some sympathy on more radical approaches to adult and community education); Lovett and Fletcher are very much representative of the more radical, community activist model; and Martin (who came late to the field, but who has for some time written and taught at university level on community education) can be said to represent the point of view of the scholarly - though not disinterested - observer.

The original intention of this investigation was to circulate a questionnaire, and one was designed and produced accordingly. However, subsequent reflection, together with some difficulties in locating a sufficiently numerous and representative sample of writers on community education some twenty years after the period in question, led to the decision to concentrate in greater depth on a smaller number of those influential figures whose work is discussed at an earlier stage in this dissertation. A series of interviews was thus arranged and the questionnaire (see Appendix I), which was sent in advance to each of the participants, became the basis for in-depth (recorded) discussion with each of the six, functioning as a form of interview schedule. Two of the participants also completed the questionnaire, thus providing corroboratory material in written form.

The questionnaire/interview schedule was designed with a dual intention in mind. Its main aim was to elicit information about the circumstances of the conflict in, particularly, the early 1970s, and so asked for reflection on the years from 1970 to 1975 (though the

interviews ranged considerably more widely than this very narrow band of time). It was designed to raise the main issues of the debate, looked at from the point of view of the educational provider, and to investigate the the educational philosophies of the individuals concerned, both then and now. In addition, the schedule, though not directly tied to the elements of the matrix, was intended to illuminate the stances of the interviewees on the adult education continuum.

Interviewing is, of course, not an exact science, and the nature of recollected and anecdotal evidence, with its highly subjective selection and presentation of past events, can make it unreliable and difficult to deal with. As Cohen and Manion point out,

the direct interaction of the interview is the source of both its advantages and its disadvantages as a research technique.

One advantage, for example, is that it allows for greater depth than is the case with other methods of data collection. A disadvantage, on the other hand, is that it is prone to subjectivity and bias on the part of the interviewer.<sup>3</sup>

The principal uses of the interview they summarise as three-fold: to gather information; to test hypotheses, suggest new ones, or identify variables; and to supplement other research methods, for example, to “follow up unexpected results, ... or to validate other methods, or to go deeper into the motivations of respondents and their reasons for responding as they do” (p.309).

In the case of this particular enquiry, all three intentions (to gain information on the philosophy and practice of a number of adult/community education practitioners, to test out the researcher's hypotheses concerning the conflict of ideals in adult and community

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<sup>3</sup> Louis Cohen and Lawrence Manion, *Research Methods in Education* (London: Routledge, 1989; 3rd edn.), p. 308.

education, and to supplement and check information already derived from study of the individuals' own writings) were present. A quotation in Cohen and Manion from B. W. Tuckman encapsulates very well the intention of these particular interviews:

By providing access to what is "inside a person's head", [it] makes it possible to measure what a person knows (knowledge or information), what a person likes or dislikes (values and preferences), and what a person thinks (attitudes and beliefs).<sup>4</sup>

Much has been written concerning the pros and cons of qualitative research in education<sup>5</sup>, and much attention has been given to ways of overcoming the dangers of subjectivity, bias, observer effect, and other possible disadvantages. Nonetheless, there is general agreement that the material to be gained from interviews has an immediacy, a vividness and a depth which quantitative methods can seldom emulate, and that the various qualitative methods, whether used on their own or in tandem with quantitative approaches, have a great deal to contribute in particular to our understanding of whatever the object(s) of study may be. It is a considerable tribute to each of the individuals concerned here that so much of the material proved to be, not only interesting but relevant, enlightening and highly quotable. The following analysis is based upon the content of these recorded interviews, and deals in turn with each of the clusters of related questions outlined in section 1 above.

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<sup>4</sup> *Conducting Educational Research* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972); cited Cohen and Manion, *op. cit.*, p.309.

<sup>5</sup> Of the extensive literature available, I am particularly indebted to two works: R. C. Bogdan and S. K. Biklen, *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theory and Methods* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1992), for their setting of qualitative methods into an overall research context; and R. G. Burgess (ed.), *Strategies of Educational Research: Qualitative Methods* (London: The Falmer Press, 1985), for the perspectives provided by the contributors on the uses of qualitative methods in educational research, particularly on the combined use of documents and personal interviews.

### 5.3 The Significance of the Conflict

All six of the interviewees confirmed their awareness of the conflict as an important matter for debate and dissent in scholarly and professional journals (not surprisingly, since all had been contributors at some stage to the argument in print). In addition, however, most declared themselves to have either been involved in, or at least to have observed at first hand, confrontations between the different schools of thought. An interesting illustration of the split within adult education itself was coincidentally provided by the fact that three of the interviewees either were or had been employed at some stage by the Department of Adult Education at Nottingham. The general picture presented by all was of a rather conservative (though deeply committed) department of adult education, very much in the liberal adult education tradition, which had difficulty in coming to terms with the more activist approach of its own industrial tutors (appointed to work largely with trade union members on day release courses). Both Lawson and Thomas cited this particular example, and Thomas elaborated on it:

Oh, yes, [the conflict] existed, and a particular flash point at that time was ... the industrial tutors.... They weren't community workers, but they were doing the same sort of thing...and...that was where the conflict lay... There used to be furious arguments about it - more generally, anything about action. That was actively discussed - what the purpose was. But the truth was that most people were nearer to [R. K.] Paterson<sup>6</sup> and people like him.

Colin Fletcher, employed by the same Department to carry out an evaluation of Sutton Centre, the innovative and controversial new community school in nearby Sutton in Ashfield, admits, "I only went to Nottingham under extreme duress... There was no point in having

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<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of Paterson's contribution to the debate, see chapter 4 above.

that kind of conflict. I was a very part-time passing participant in the department, though I enjoyed the company of some of the people... I did have a sense of ally, but not a sense of friend." He regretted never having had

the circumstances... whereby [the] dialogue [could] take place constructively; it's always been competitively and potentially destructively, and therefore [some] adult educators would like to see it at arm's length, if not dumped, because it's just another damned noise...

A slightly different perspective is provided by Lovett and Fairbairn. While both recognised the existence of the conflict, neither devoted much time to discussing it in the interview, preferring to develop their own themes concerning the purpose, organisation and practice of community education. It seems likely, reviewing the discussion, that for each the over-riding concern was with the development of their own ideas, put into practice in the field, and this tended to carry them over the heat and din of the battle. Lovett, in particular, seems to have pursued his vision with a particularly consistent and single-minded energy, and although he wrote prolifically about his philosophy and practice he appears not to have been greatly troubled by the opposing factions at times arrayed against him. He does admit to some difficulties with his employing organisation in Liverpool, the WEA, not so much in terms of opposition, rather more in terms of their anxieties about his novel ways of proceeding, until they accepted "that they needed a broader definition of adult education". In the end, he concludes, he was "never sure whether the WEA took all that I said on board." He also notes, interestingly, a divergence of opinion from his colleague in the Liverpool EPA, Keith Jackson, who, in Lovett's view, "jettisoned the idea of community and went for the

concept of working class or radical education.”<sup>7</sup> Even within the different camps, it would appear, there were degrees and shades of opinion, though these may have been submerged in the larger conflict.

#### 5.4 The Grounds of the Conflict: Practice or Philosophy?

The discussions with the six interviewees left no doubt that while there were clearly differences in practice - in methods, content, organisation, client groups - these were inextricably linked with, and generally stemmed from, the underlying philosophy (the beliefs, values and intentions) of each side. Of particular importance was what each saw as the *purpose* of adult education, both within and without the community education context. As I have argued in chapter 2, a clearer understanding of the various schools of thought in adult and community education emerges when the shift is made from definition by function to definition by purpose. Once the basic purpose of adult/community education had been defined in the minds of the participants, much of the rest followed, in line with the models in our matrix. Significantly, each of the interviewees spent time illustrating and justifying certain approaches on the basis of their statements of the main aims of adult education, whether for individual development or community improvement.

Some attempted to identify the origins of the division within the history of adult education, and thereby gave support to the argument of this thesis that the struggle is endemic. For example, Thomas, considering what he defined as a longstanding conflict between liberal adult education and the more activist form of adult/community

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<sup>7</sup> For a discussion of Jackson's own thoughts on community education and the conflict between the more traditional and the radical models, see chapter 4 above.

education, noted:

They disapproved of each other, and it goes back to the early roots of university adult education. It's to do with the education of the workers, and it caused the famous split at Ruskin, because people said, "This has got to make a difference to society; the learning has got to make sense to working class people as well" - hence the breakaway. And so what you've got is that tradition of activism and the tradition of liberalism. They're not entirely exclusive, but they are separate strands and they did clash and they did disapprove of each other.

It is, of course, no accident that two of the main combatants on the side of liberal adult education were the UK's foremost philosophers of adult education, namely, Lawson and Paterson. Thomas, in the excerpt quoted above, goes on to say:

In fact, this is what prompted Paterson to write some of the stuff he did - because he disapproved of what was being done... It wasn't objective enough for him. It was too committed. It started by saying that capitalism is wrong [and] he would say, "Capitalism may be wrong but we can't judge that until we've discussed it." That was the difference.

Lawson himself, in interview, noted that his first critique of community education, in response to an article by Brian Stewart, stemmed from "a sense of unease", a feeling that this new concept of community education was too instrumental in its purpose and approach. Having himself found, in the "useful and analytical" educational philosophy of Peters and Hirst, "a new style philosophy of education ... written in the liberal mode" which entirely suited his own experience and inclinations, he admits now that at the time "anything that looked like being instrumental seemed tainted." In further reviewing his own thinking, he finds himself "now saying, to

my surprise, that all adult education - indeed all education - is irreducibly political. What I mean is, there is an ideology behind it." A somewhat similar sentiment is expressed by Fletcher, who, citing a colleague's aphorism that "Education is invasion", adds, "I think all education, in that sense, is political; whether or not it takes its politics seriously or separately is a secondary matter." Martin, however, puts forward a caveat that educational initiatives of whatever kind "are never going to change the world on their own" and warns that "I think we've always over-invested expectation in education in those terms."

While there was definite recognition on the part of the interviewees of an ideology, or philosophy, or set of beliefs underlying and powering the differing strands of adult and community education, there was not always unanimity about the common values and beliefs of each of these strands. Nor were the interviewees themselves entirely clear and unambivalent in defining their own particular educational philosophy. However, there was enough congruence of opinion to be significant, and these congruences will be highlighted in a later section. Before this, however, it is interesting to look at the self-descriptions of the individual interviewees and their identification of the influences which had moved them in particular directions, towards a particular set of educational values and beliefs.

### 5.5 The Evolution of Individual Philosophies

One of the quirkier discoveries of this enquiry is that both Lawson and Lovett, who represent almost diametrically opposite poles in thinking and practice in adult education, began their working lives as

apprentice fitters in aircraft factories, were involved in trade unionism, made their way into higher education via Ruskin College, and went on to become graduates of the University of Oxford! Is this a demonstration of nature over nurture, one is tempted to ask? In actuality, besides the fact that they followed this pattern over a decade apart, when one looks at the subsequent development of their careers and the influences they cite, the divergence becomes considerably more understandable.

Lawson, on graduation, was immediately drawn into the world of liberal adult education as Warden for three years of Wilmslow Guild Centre, an independent adult education centre, founded originally by Quakers. On leaving this, he joined the Department of Adult Education at the University of Nottingham, where he has remained for the duration of his career, though in differing capacities. He describes himself as having been "absorbed in the ethos of a liberal department", and he was responsible for developing the Nottingham Centre, which he designates "a standard example of a liberal adult education centre". Somewhat surprisingly, his original appointment was as an administrator, and he retained throughout a large amount of responsibility for departmental administration, although he soon went on to teach first economics and then philosophy under the aegis of the then Head of Department, Harold Wiltshire. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, considering this long association, that two of the figures he mentions as having been influential in the formulation of his thinking and approach were Harold Wiltshire ("He convinced me of the value of the liberal tradition") and Anthony Thompson, the latter having been for many years Deputy Head of the Department.

I have already mentioned the influence of the educational philosophers, R. S. Peters and P. H. Hirst, on Lawson's own developing philosophy of adult education. In discussion, he drew attention to the longstanding tradition of liberal education, noting that liberal adult education "has inherent in it, whether recognised or not, this implicit philosophical liberalism derived through people like Locke, Hume, [and] John Stuart Mill." More recently, he has been engaging with the philosophy of the American New Right, fearing "an excessive emphasis on individualism." He summarises his own philosophical position thus:

Quite definitely a member of the analytical school of philosophy which attempted to bring precision into our thought. Its ethos is 'liberal' in placing 'individuality' at the centre, and sees 'knowledge' as intrinsically 'good' and as the basis of rational thought. It stresses 'rights', 'equality' and 'responsibility'.

Lovett's career, on the other hand, has followed very distinctly the path of an educational activist. His renown in adult and community education undoubtedly owes much to his three years as WEA tutor/organiser and a member of the Educational Priority Area team, working with Eric Midwinter and Keith Jackson, in Liverpool. As he himself pointed out in discussion, Liverpool in the early 1970s, largely because of its great and pressing social needs, was a centre for experimentation, and so he was fortunate to find himself in a situation and climate particularly appropriate to his way of thinking and working. But it was during his first teaching experience, with building trade apprentices at a Further Education college in Belfast, that he discovered what has for him been a seminal work, S. T. Flowers' *Language in Education*. As Lovett noted in interview, "He was

using aspects of popular culture and also using students' own experiences - a thematic approach - and I attempted to utilise that." With notable consistency, Lovett, as he himself pointed out, continued to use that same approach in Liverpool and subsequently at the Institute of Continuing Education, McGee College, Derry, at the Ulster People's College which he established in Northern Ireland in 1979, and presently at the Community Resource and Development Centre at the University of Ulster.

Not surprisingly, the other influences cited by Lovett include Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich, in addition to Richard Hoggart's *Uses of Literacy*. I have already discussed Lovett's role in promulgating Freire's educational ideas in this country,<sup>8</sup> but he himself pointed out in the interview that Freire's thinking and way of working were not new to him - in fact, to a large extent they merely elaborated a method and philosophy which he had already acquired from Flowers.

What was of particular interest in Lovett's own description of influences was the significant part played by his acquaintance with two North American examples of community education and development: Highlander Folk High School in Tennessee (which he had visited and which provided the prototype for the Ulster People's College) and an earlier model - the Antigonish Movement in Nova Scotia, organised by Moses Coady in the 1930s and described in his book, *Masters of our Own Destiny*.

I have related Lawson's and Lovett's careers and their descriptions of the people and books which had influenced them in some detail because they seem to illustrate with particular clarity the divergence

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<sup>8</sup> See chapter 4.

of two individuals into very different paths, with different concerns, different ways of thinking, and different methodologies, in spite of apparent resemblances in background and education. When one looks at the careers and influences of the other interviewees, the types of experience and of intellectual inspiration described by each individual seem entirely predictive (as well as reflective) of the educational stance each has taken.

It is not surprising that Fairbairn, who stands squarely in the mainstream of traditional, school-based community education, should, after an early teaching stint, have spent his career in local education authority administration. Nor is it astonishing that his most frequent references in interview should be to Henry Morris and to Fairbairn's own predecessor in Leicestershire, Stewart Mason (a disciple of Morris, who had served under him in Cambridgeshire) and Harry Rée, a strong supporter of community education, known personally to Fairbairn, and who was Morris's biographer. In keeping too with his fund of practical experience in the field, he mentions the effect of years of "working with locally elected people at whatever level - you develop a respect for the constitutional approach." He describes himself as what could "loosely be called liberal with a small 'l'" and admits to "still an element in my thinking of the essential perfectibility of human nature".

J. E. Thomas followed a rather different route into university adult education via the colonial service in Zambia and seven years as a governor in the prison service (an area in which he still retains an interest). His initial post was in the Department of Adult Education at the University of Hull (where he was a colleague of R. K. Paterson),

and from there he moved to the Department of Adult Education at Nottingham, where he has remained, becoming Robert Peers Professor of Adult Education and serving for a period as Pro Vice-Chancellor. In common with Professor Paterson, he says, he has been much influenced by the writings of Cardinal Newman, particularly Newman's *The Idea of the University*. It is significant that Thomas made Newman's contribution to the concept of liberal education the subject of his Inaugural Lecture on appointment to his Chair. The liberal adult education tradition, Thomas argues, "derives completely from Newman because in *The Idea of the University* he is really saying that education should not be functional... What it's supposed to do is to produce someone who can think." Thomas also cites R. H. Tawney and, perhaps more surprisingly, Matthew Arnold ("although he's so elitist...because he believes in the power of education"), especially *Culture and Anarchy*.

Thomas's stance, however, is a rather complex one, since he espouses liberal adult education, and is very active in that area, but at the same time has a definite attraction to certain elements at least of the radical/activist school, occupying an admittedly awkward position between the two. He himself, in an article entitled "Adult Education and Social Change"<sup>9</sup>, has identified a continuum, encompassing four main positions (Revolution; Reform; Maintenance; and Conservation), of which the 'Revolution' stance is closest to our own 'Radical' model, the 'Conservation' one to our 'Paternalist' position, while the 'Reform' and 'Maintenance' approaches, although differing from one another, could both be described as varieties of the 'Liberal' model. His own position he has defined as closest to the 'Reformist' one, and this does much to elucidate the seeming ambiguity of his educational

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<sup>9</sup> Thomas, J.E., and Harries-Jenkins, G., *Studies in Adult Education*, 7 (1975).

thought. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that Thomas should also mention as influences the writings of Freire and Illich (though he finds "many contradictions" in the latter).

Colin Fletcher, by contrast to all of the above, has had a highly variegated career (as he himself wryly admits, "I've only had a career in retrospect"), having begun with a degree in Social Science, a Personnel Management qualification and a Ph.D. on the subject of managerial stress. A true "child of the sixties", he first became involved with community activism when he and his family were living the self-sufficient life in rural Wales, where he became Clerk to a Parish Council (an experience which considerably depleted his faith in local government<sup>10</sup>), as well as a local activist of considerable practical experience. He researched community power for British Steel and the Sutton Centre for Nottingham Adult Education Department. He supervised research for higher degrees at Cranfield for a time, working mainly with community educators, until the department was shut down, and moved eventually to Wolverhampton as Director of the Education Research Unit. His current project is entitled Black Country Institutional Strengthening, and is aimed at the resuscitation and support of a depressed and depleted area of the Midlands.

Fletcher cites among his "heroes and heroines" Tom Lovett and Jane Thompson. Not unexpectedly, too, he mentions Illich and Freire, as well as Highlander and the Antigonish Movement, as having been influences on his thinking. More than any other interviewee he shows a keen awareness of what is happening internationally, citing a

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<sup>10</sup> He quotes Tony Benn to the effect that "When you put your foot on the brake it didn't stop, and when you put your foot on the accelerator it didn't move"!

number of lesser-known Third World adult educators, as well as certain Australian and Indian projects. "You see," he explains, "I find myself recognising the potential and power of a particular project a lot, [and am] not really concerned about there being a school of [whatever]." He summarises his approach both modestly and colourfully thus:

I'm a magpie - I steal bright things from all over the place and stick them in my nest: and I gain enormous support and sustenance [from them].

In passing he indicates his admiration for the writings of Raymond Williams, particularly on organising the curriculum and on liberal education, which he describes as "wonderful pieces of writing".

Our remaining interviewee, Ian Martin, who, as I have indicated, occupies a position in this enquiry something akin to participant observer, was not active in community education until the late 1970s/early 1980s, his earlier experience following graduation from university having been in secondary school teaching and university extra-mural work in Zambia. A brief stint with the Community Education Service in the north-east of Scotland, and another period of extra-mural work in the Sudan, was followed by a post at Chester College of Higher Education, developing the Diploma in Community Education. This programme he describes as having been "inter-disciplinary [and] inter-professional" in its approach, and he also worked with local education authorities on a consultancy basis. Since then, in the Community Education Department of Edinburgh University and at the Department of Education, Moray House (part of Heriot-Watt University) he has "attempted to defend a particular critical tradition". He describes himself as

sympathetic to Lovett's work, because I think he's one of the

few people who have continued to wrestle with the sort of dialectic between class, culture and community. I think that's a very difficult thing to do, but a very important thing to do. But intellectually I always found the critique by people like Jackson and Ashcroft more convincing.

In looking back over the descriptions of the interviewees' educational and philosophical evolution, what one most notices is consistency. When one links background, influences and experience to the stance adopted by the individual, in terms both of their practice during the period in question and their debating position in the conflict over community education, there is a great deal of congruence. The least predictable is perhaps Thomas, who has a less conventional background for an adult or community educator and whose stance is the least easily defined, straddling as it does the Liberal and Radical positions.

#### 5.6 The Expression of their Differences

In addition to attempting to clarify the individual and personal philosophies of the interviewees, I was concerned in the interviews to relate these to more detailed consideration of their definitions of what constituted both adult and community education, their concept of the purpose of education in these contexts, their idea of the role of the community educator, as tutor and/or organiser, and their opinions concerning certain specific issues, such as the relationship (if any) between education and community action or community development. A great deal of the discussion, as a result, centred on these areas, and the interviewees' thoughtful analysis contributed a great deal of information and illumination.

Although the questions in the checklist were framed in the past tense ("Thinking back ... how would you have defined...?"), all of the interviewees responded in the present tense. When asked how their thinking had changed in the intervening period, only Lawson indicated that his view of community education overall had mellowed and that he had come to a recognition, as mentioned above, that all education is "irreducibly political" (compare his earlier claim, cited in chapter 4, that education must be neutral). Thomas responded to the effect that time had simply served to strengthen his "determination to maintain [his] anti-traditional stand". One must conclude that most of the interviewees perceive their thinking to be generally unchanged from twenty years before.

In looking at the expressions, both ideological and practical, of the educational philosophies of the six, it is perhaps appropriate to begin with Fairbairn, representing as he does the dominant strand of community education in this country and thus the ground, as I have argued<sup>11</sup>, over which battle was joined. Four major themes in Fairbairn's thinking emerge from discussion with him. These are: the concept of education as a lifelong activity (in the classic phrase, "from cradle to grave"); following on from this, the ideal of community education as a kind of "seamless garment" which embraces the various strands of adult and youth provision and brings them into a single integrated service; thirdly, a strong emphasis upon the democratic involvement of local people in the management of this provision; and, fourthly, a focus upon the school as the local institution most appropriate to be the locus of this important process. That all of these elements stem from (or at least coincide with) Morris's original concept, Fairbairn acknowledges, describing

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<sup>11</sup> See sections 1.2, 2.1.

community education as:

a very important resource, both vocational and non-vocational, primarily for the particular community in which it existed.....to assist everyone if they wished to take advantage of it (which was important) from cradle to grave. This was the .... Morris ideal coming into it.

This ideal he found to be “applicable to either rural or urban areas - it didn't make the slightest difference.” People were to

benefit from the gentle opening of doors according to either the recognised or unrecognised needs of individuals or groups of people... These...were the practical approaches springing out of a very simple principle - that [the community school] was a public institution there for the social development of the widest range of population that wished to use it.

Some of Fairbairn's most strongly emphasised points were to do with the notion of the responsibility of local citizens for community education in their own locality, and the resulting necessity to involve them in the management of community education centres, of whatever kind. He himself had “always pushed and pushed to put over the direction of the continuous process into the hands of the citizen, with professional direction being on hand”; and he repeated more than once his conviction that it was necessary to trust people. “You've got to take the rough with the smooth if you're going to trust people,” he remarked, “and that's the way we always operated - one of the principles underlying community education development: you've got to trust people.” Ironically, in the light of the recent devolvement of financial control to schools, his own efforts to delegate control of budgets to local management committees in the 1970s had been perpetually frustrated (“the County Treasurer wouldn't have it!”).

On the relationship between community education and community development, and the role of the community educator, he was quite clear:

It is not the prime business of this vast thing called education to develop social engineering or social development.... Of course it's interrelated but I don't see how the community educator's prime task is to assist in raising the standard of housing, social benefit, [or] employment, except in a subsidiary way. Obviously, as thinking persons, community educators should be concerned with those major issues.... but that is not their prime task. That is where a range of community educators are overstretching themselves. They are not equipped to do this work. They should collaborate with those whose task it is, but I don't see it as our task to provide the panacea for all the social ills of the country and that, I fear, is what community development is all about, and it inevitably becomes party political. Community education in the wider sense should not be that. It should be objective and concerned with that part of the quality of life which is enhanced as a result of the improvement of the learning process of all from the cradle to the grave.

It is noticeable that all of the concerns which Fairbairn enumerates in interview are touched upon in his *Leicestershire Community Colleges and Centres*, and frequently mentioned in much the same language.

Curiously, Fletcher's definition of community education, in its use of words, contains echoes of Fairbairn's, but, with his commitment to a more activist approach, he moves the concepts so much further that they become a quite different entity. Community education, he says, is about accountability, which moves towards the rights and entitlement to community action.... It is about the public

mobilisation of public resources which may or may not include schools, which may or may not include centres.

He would never, he continues,

accept an institutional definition of community education, partly because there are so many interesting projects and places without walls. But it does seem to me that the two things are: the right and entitlements to change, and learning to that effect, consciously, of the two elements.

The radical tradition, as comments such as this indicate, has never been wedded to the concept of the importance of a buildings as a physical focus for the community and for community education. This attitude contrasts markedly with the romantic attachment to ivied halls of learning found among the liberal adult educators of the university extension movement and with the significance of a purpose-built, well-designed centre for Henry Morris and his heirs in the community school boom of the 1960s and after.

Community development, Fletcher adds,

is where there is a clear wish and concern to make a difference ... which is tangible... For me, community education without community development is a fairly anodyne notion.

Despite his reservations about the 'institutionalisation' of community education, and his declaration against the centrality of buildings, there is no doubt whatsoever about his enthusiasm for the Sutton Centre and for what it represented:

I loathed my school experience ... but I was pushed completely off the fence by Sutton Centre. I felt it was a beautiful school. I felt it was defying gravity. It was a joy to go in - it was a wonderful place. No wonder they fixed it - schools should not be happy. And the disdain and distance of the adult educators was horrific. "Hang on a bit," I used to say. "You could have quite a different quality of adult in this town as a

function of this school. You are disinterested because of the school?"

And he admits further the strength and significance of the move towards school-based community education in the 1970s and the start of the '80s:

By the time you reach the peak of community education, say '79/'80, there were 53 local authorities out of 128 had community schools and community education. I mean, they were still coming on stream, as they say, until 1986/87... so there was a *huge* wave. And in many ways I think it was because of a kind of unseen Scottish influence - the Alexander Report and then the Carnegie Report. The sheer significance of that simultaneous youth and adult allied to a secondary institution (or primary as the case may be, though mostly secondary) - that is Henry Morris Mark I. ... There would be no community education without community schools. There would be community projects, and there would be some local authorities who would call their adult education community education, and some local authorities who would call their spot welders youth and community....but that wouldn't qualify as holistic.

When discussing the role of the community educator, however, his description fits much more that of community activist than of the school-based tutor. He indicates his preference for the French term "animateur" - "the person who makes things happen", "the little piece of grit which gets in the blow-hole". However, he also puts the case for a certain necessary distance from total absorption in the community, firstly as a guard against "starting to feel responsible for every bit of difference that you didn't make", and secondly (citing his own experience during the battle over Sutton Centre), because by adopting a slightly more objective stance the individual can fulfil

a distinctive role which is not perhaps as powerful and participative as you might wish or hope, but it's part of an informal division of labour and it's very helpful if you function in that form.

Like Fletcher, Lovett recognises and accepts more than one model of community education, while making clear his own preference:

I think there have actually been a couple of models of community education. The one that would seem most dominant at the moment is the one in which organisations set up outreach centres [to] run classes and courses, and that's how they define community education. Whereas for me ... that's maybe an aspect of it, but the formal end of continuing education. The more exciting and challenging aspects of community education are to do with the situation where the worker becomes more involved with the community, and in the community, and begins to try and create a learning situation out of the issues and problems that people are confronted with.

I referred in an earlier chapter<sup>12</sup> to Lovett's characteristic approach, which ties in very much with the Freirian model. He himself in interview emphasises the importance of the initial period of "exploration and investigation" as essential preparation for all future work in the community. Describing his own role in Liverpool, he says:

I saw my role in fact as exploring what [the] culture was and then again, as with Flowers and Freire, attempting to create educational and learning experiences out of material that you gained from that exploration.

However, he recognises the difficulty for many community educators in this approach, largely due to organisational constraints ("it's a bit more difficult for the adult educator or for the community educator

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<sup>12</sup> Chapter 4, section 4.3.

[whose] employing body wishes to see bums on seats”).

On the relationship between community education and community development, it is not entirely clear how Lovett distinguishes between the two, since he argues that “community educators have to be educated alongside community developers” and that “good community developers know that they’re involved in a learning process”. Perhaps because of his experience in Northern Ireland, where the community school movement was never as strong (community education coming largely under the umbrella of the Further Education colleges), he has no particular affinity for the school-based model, preferring to adopt a more diffuse and over-arching definition of community education. He indicates a preference for the concept of lifelong education, which he describes as a “very useful” one. In this respect, he might appear to be in agreement with Fairbairn’s “cradle to grave” approach, but for Lovett this translates rather differently. Rather than the Morris idea of provision through a single institution of education appropriate to the various ages and stages of an individual’s life, Lovett defines it as:

the process of getting people involved in a very rapidly changing society and attempts to tackle the range of problems that they’re confronted with at individual and community level... Learning is in effect taking place outside of formal institutions.

The challenge for institutions, he continues, is to realise “that they’re only part of the learning process and that they ought to find ways of supporting other forms of learning.” And an educator, he adds, “without dominating, has to help that learning process.”

Reminded of the frequent implication (not to say outright accusation) of meddling in politics which was levelled at the more socially active

forms of community education, Lovett suggests that this was much exaggerated. "To say that education has social, economic and cultural objectives," he points out, "is not new. The EPA team in Liverpool, he maintains, "was concerned obviously with the whole business of disadvantage, and [with] arguing for more equality and more participation and empowerment."

The emphasis on community education as being primarily concerned with situations of disadvantage owed much, as we have argued in Chapter 4, to Plowden and to *Educational Priority*. That this emphasis was consciously adopted is borne out by a number of the interviews.

Fletcher, for example, concludes that in the current situation

the only places you are allowed to do community education with any kind of effectiveness are wrong and horrible, and if you took all the locations of community education projects you would be able to find the places of deprivation.

Lawson too draws the connection between community education and disadvantage, but from a different perspective, finding this somewhat reassuring. Having initially attacked the rather woolly, regrettably instrumental approach that he detected in the early flourishing of community education, he began to realise that it was "concentrating on the disadvantaged", and so was "closer to community development". He decided that it was

a different sort of animal, doing a different sort of job. It was really...in my perspective providing various educational opportunities, defined in a very broad sense of the term, for groups of disadvantaged people.

At this point he admits to having rather lost interest, concluding that it was "worthy in its own right", but not after all, presumably, a threat to liberal adult education. (It is interesting to consider, in

retrospect, whether the division and conflict with which we are concerned were in fact unnecessary and might have been avoided, with the liberal and radical wings working to complement each other in practice.)

Lawson analyses, however, with his usual clarity, the “dual strand in community” which he himself perceived: on the one hand to be “a mechanism for helping the disadvantaged individual or the disadvantaged community”, on the other “establishments like the Nottinghamshire experiment at Sutton in Ashfield where they established a centre” intended to provide “a total system for all ages” - a concept in which Lawson, regarding it with a philosopher’s dispassion, detected an inherent tension.

Comparing adult and community education, Lawson saw adult mainly in terms of

1. personal development, education for citizenship, and education for political activism and trades union work;
2. ‘liberal’ forms of knowledge curriculum;
3. as a leisure pursuit, especially in the case of LEA provision.

Community education, by contrast, he saw as:

1. mainly in terms of community development and learning relevant to local issues;
2. an attempt to bridge the gap between school and community.

While viewing adult education as “an essential part of a democratic society”, community education seemed to Lawson a more specialised type of provision, with a more pragmatic and localised remit. Though there might be overlaps, the two things were different in kind. His description of his own role also differs greatly from that of the proponents of the community development approach. “I saw myself,”

he reflects, "as a leader, as a theorist, as a manager and a PR man, also as a politician with a small 'p' in relation to the LEAs and the WEA, with whom our Department had close relations." This is very different from the Lovett/Fletcher approach; rather, it has more in common with the Morris ideal for the village college warden, who would certainly have occupied all of these roles (though with the additional gloss of Morris's romanticism, which elevated him to a new, meritocratic squirearchy).

J. E. Thomas's position, as I have mentioned already, is more difficult to classify, combining as it does elements from both sides. "I'm a mixture of all of them," he concedes, "which is very convenient." He believes that "the traditional liberal thing is absolutely central", but describes himself as closer to Lawson than to Paterson. "What Ron Paterson objects to," he claims,

is that the purpose of the education of adults should be above all to make a difference to communities and society. It may incidentally make a difference [Paterson would allow], but that is not the prime purpose.

whereas, he continues,

the classic community educators go in ... with the specific task of making a difference to community and the society.

He himself believes that "adult education ought to make a difference to the way society is organised". His own radical streak leads him to the view that

if we had a *really* educated population ... we wouldn't put up with the absurdities that we have to put up with, with the division of wealth and so on... It's profoundly depressing that in a society like ours, which compared with many others...is ostensibly very well educated, people can allow the kinds of things which are done to them to continue to be done to

them.

He admires "people who take a given area and try to activate people - the Jacksons [and so forth]", but he finds that this "seems to be inevitably short term, and that's rather depressing really." His concept of the tutor in adult education is along distinctly traditional lines. The tutor, he believes, should make a difference; students should take away more than they came with; classes should be an intellectual activity. In this, Thomas is clearly closer to the liberal than the radical pole. Overall, his defence of the liberal position is stronger than his sympathetic leanings towards a more activist stance.

Martin, similarly, does not fit neatly into one or other camp. He admits to "deeply ambivalent feelings" about community education, but they are not of the kind expressed by Lawson and they stem from a quite different approach and point of view. He describes his own interest as being "about the way in which education potentially connects with the lived experience of people, and in that sense community is ... the locus ... where it seems to me the personal and the political come together - an intermediate level of social experience." In contrast to much formal education, which he sees as "highly individualised", community education, he believes, "potentially is concerned with how you express through education collective forms of endeavour which are based in people's real experiences." Inevitably, as with "any form of education or social intervention, there is always going to be contestation over who controls, where the power is."

Analysing the dynamics of social and educational interventions,

Martin argues that there is “a constant sort of movement generally from relatively conservative policy-orientated interventions to more radical locally-based ones.” As an example, he cites the Educational Priority Areas and the reformist interventions in the 1960s and ‘70s, where “the community school became a sort of instrument of social engineering”. In looking at Morris and the village colleges, however, he detects a different pattern, noting that

probably the village college in terms of Morris's conception was a radical intervention in its time which became much more conservative as the state, and the local state, began to sponsor that form of education.

The radicalism which he detects in Morris he defines as follows:

What seemed to me radical about [Morris] was that he was an advocate of an enormous extension of public education before the state was ready to take that on, so he was kind of on the edge of a progressive strategy. But also I think radical in the fundamental sense of being rooted in communities and in the conditions of communities. Whether you agree with Morris's analysis or not, and certainly I find his sort of vision fairly dubious, what really interests me is the way in which the village college was based on an analysis of the cultural and social and economic decline, and how it was an attempt to intervene in that. In that sense, although he was very paternalistic and patrician, it was in one respect a kind of ‘bottom-up’ [venture] - it was located, it was rooted in real material conditions. It seem to me that the later community college movements - the community school movement - were much more ‘top-down’, and of course the role of the state had changed by that time. So that ... the dialectic has moved away from the locality to the provider, the system.

By contrast, Martin deplores the huge urban community colleges as “almost the antithesis of whatever community might mean”,

describing them as having become “the tools of corporate management”.

### 5.7 Perceptions of their own role in the conflict

Either from modesty or discretion, the collated answers to the question of the interviewees' own role in the conflict, their perception as to who were their opponents, their feelings of being part of a group or movement, and their estimate of their own contribution to the debate were somewhat shorter than in response to many other questions, and several gave information on only one or two of the areas under consideration.

Fletcher was critical of the blinkered approach of liberal adult education and cheerfully admitted to having felt himself to be part of a “popular movement ... populist, popularising”. His concern, he added, had been, and was,

to recognise and to acknowledge the struggle to socialise public property, the struggle to have the right to learn and [the recognition] that learning is engaged in developing responsibilities socially and politically ... I don't have any trouble with that and I don't think adult educators have any trouble with that - they just don't like it being called adult education.

Lawson, by contrast, sees himself as having been part of a “rather conservative department” and adds that “the radical attitude didn't take root very much here”. He also admits to having become rather unpopular after the appearance of his critique of community education and to have experienced opposition, “mainly in writing,

especially [from] those who saw themselves in the radical tradition [and wanted] to change society through education.” He thinks he “influenced the way in which many people in the field thought about adult education, either by agreeing with me, or, more importantly, by reacting against my ideas.”

Thomas too defines himself vis-à-vis the community activist/radical activist groups, not because of their agenda, with which, as I have mentioned previously, he has some sympathy, but because of their internal pressures leading all too often to the disintegration of the group. He describes himself as “somewhere to the left of centre” in educational terms.

Fairbairn, interestingly, singles out both the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) and the EPAs for criticism. Of the former he says,

It calls itself adult and community education but it is still liberal adult education, very much largely dependent on the extra-mural departments, and it hasn't moved. It may touch its cap to community education in the widest sense but is has never really believed in it.

At the other end of the spectrum, he regards the EPAs as having been “tinged with a socialist outlook and approach” and as having not helped the cause of community education “one little bit”. The community development wing he sees as having been “agin whatever government” and therefore as having failed to make “a positive contribution to the development of the quality of life though better learning.”

Lovett spoke only briefly of his own influence, which he sees as having been greater internationally. Because Liverpool was known as a centre for experimentation, it became the focus of attention, he explains modestly. Martin, having come somewhat later to the field, and not having been part of the original debate, did not comment on his own role,

### 5.8 Summary

What then can be deduced from the content of these interviews, which might shed light upon the debate in which all the interviewees participated? In considering thus the answers to the questions posed in the questionnaire/interview schedule, a number of the points made in the previous chapter have, I think, been supported by the interviewees' recollections and comments. In the first place, there was unanimous agreement that a conflict had arisen during the period in question, that it was waged over the issue of community education and that it had its effect on the practice (as well as the philosophy) of adult and community education alike. The terms 'liberal' and 'radical' were used by all of the interviewees, and there appears to be a fair amount of consensus on what forms of adult and community education were represented by those titles. The characteristics of the two camps, in the descriptions of the interviewees, link them fairly closely to either the Liberal or the Radical pole on the matrix. All individually indicated recognition of their having belonged to one or other camp, and all defended the school of thought with which they had been (and still felt themselves to be) aligned. All spoke of the purpose of community education, seeing this as being pivotal to the debate, but many of the references

to this were in terms of beliefs and values (both personal and political), thus indicating deeper differences than surface disagreements over function, content and practice.

On the question of what had been achieved, however, the general feeling is perhaps best summed up by Martin's comment, sounding a cautionary note:

I think one of the lessons we've learned from all this debate in the '70s and the continuing interest in community-based adult education is that it is capable of having only fairly marginal effect on things. We have to be realistic about that. We have always been inclined to overstate our claims.

## Chapter 6

### CONCLUSION

#### 6.1 Community Education and the Conflict of Ideals: A Summary

In this thesis, I set out to examine a particular dispute concerning the nature and purpose of community education in this country from the late 1960s, through the 1970s and into the 1980s. This was, as various publications which I have cited would indicate<sup>1</sup>, a period of expansion, with the establishment of many new community schools and the reorganisation of many older institutions along community lines. From a reading of the literature of community education during this period, however, we have seen that, along with rapid growth - most noticeably in the Local Education Authority sector - came a split between those in the mainstream of both adult and community education, whose emphasis was largely educational and recreational, and those who embraced the concept and the methods of community development and whose primary agenda was social and political.

The main hypotheses of this dissertation have been three-fold. First of all, it has asserted that this division, embodied not only in a battle of words in books and periodicals but also in practice, was not merely a difference of opinion concerning organisational form, content and methodology, but emerged from two very different schools of thought and represented very different beliefs, values and attitudes on the part

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 4, section 4.1.

of the providers of adult and community education. Secondly, it has argued that the two schools of thought confronting one other in the dispute represented well-documented strands in the development of adult education and that this conflict was in fact endemic in its history. Community education, the offspring of adult education in this country, inherited a division which had been present throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and which had been accommodated but not resolved. Thirdly, the thesis has claimed that the two positions represented in the community education debate (entitled 'liberal' and 'radical', in line with their historical roots, with their mentors and sources of influence, and with the contemporary usage of these terms) are consistent, identifiable and comprehensible. Together with yet another model now no longer accepted (the 'paternalist' approach), they form a framework for the understanding, not only of the sometimes erratic development of adult and community education, but also of the serious disputes which periodically have marred this development.

Each of these three hypotheses has been examined, tested against the evidence and has been supported to a large degree by the material gained from two major sources: (1) the literature, in the form of official documentation, the work of historians of adult and community education, and, in particular, the writings of the protagonists; and (2) in-depth interviews with a number of these protagonists, which provided empirical data on the period in question, as well as the wisdom of fifteen to twenty years of subsequent experience and reflection.

The literature has provided a chronicle of the process of educational

development which resulted in community education and, through various official documents (most notably the 1919 Report) has linked mainstream community education quite firmly to the liberal adult education tradition. This is supported by the awareness shown by the protagonists, both in their writings and in the interviews, of this linkage. In addition, we have seen that the more recent literature of community education<sup>2</sup> has not only tied the 'community development' model to the social action emphasis of the 1960s and to the proponents of radical political, social and educational activism, but has referred back to the radical reformers of the earlier social movements.

Analysis of the writings of individuals prominent in the dispute, together with the subsequent interviews with a number of them, has shown that their practice was very much in line with their own expressions of their values and beliefs (though circumstances were often seen to have hampered a satisfactory working out of their ideals), and that these can to a significant degree be correlated to either the 'liberal' or 'radical' models on our matrix. This is not to say, however, that such a correlation was either clear-cut or consistent. It became apparent in the interviews that not all of the protagonists felt themselves to be on one side or the other. Some (not all) had made considerable efforts to assimilate the best of both viewpoints in their own approach. And even within the ranks of those who might be deemed to be in the same camp, there were differences of opinion and emphasis. On the whole, however, the empirical evidence gained from the interviews can be seen to be in line with the individuals' earlier writings and to provide general support for the

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<sup>2</sup> For example, Westwood and Thomas (eds.), *Radical Agendas? The Politics of Adult Education* (1991), and the various works considered in chapter 4.

dissertation's central hypotheses.

## 6.2 The Decline of Community Education

One final point emerged from the interviews which has not been dealt with so far, and that has to do with the interviewees' perceptions of the current state and future prospects of community education, and it to these questions that we now turn.

I have described community education as the child of adult education. We have seen that, in the form in which it developed in this country from the 1920s on, its values and its goals were very much those of the liberal adult education tradition, but, no doubt because it came under the aegis of the Local Education Authorities, rather than the universities, its concerns were more localised, its curriculum more practical and its approach more informal. The fact that it grew up around another institution, the school, also helped to take it in another direction. However, on the whole community education was happy to be a 'broad church', in which a variety of educational activities took place, at different levels, and generally managed to coexist without too much strain. The emphasis on the 'community', of course, added an extra dimension to the older concept of liberal adult education and opened up a whole new range of ventures, centred upon the school as the focus for a significant part of the local community's cultural and recreational life.

For much of its existence, the history of community education in this country has been of a quiet but steady growth and development. The

community school created a niche for itself in the local scene and the movement as a whole, despite the diversity of its concerns, seemed generally in agreement on its modest educational agenda. It did not attempt to emulate the more intellectual character of the Responsible Bodies' work (while continuing to work in collaboration with them) and steadfastly resisted pressures for greater commercialisation. By the 1960s, there had evolved, mostly under the aegis of the LEAs, a quite distinctive and, within its small compass, pleasingly successful addition to the educational spectrum.

Successful institutions can of course become smug and short-sighted, and in some respects the questioning and criticism, and the pressure for greater social concern which many community educators directed at their own house was potentially a very healthy thing. But rather than being provoked into a process of rethinking and gradual change, community education found itself faced with a rather sharp choice between what appeared to be two conflicting approaches.

Faced with this dilemma, many community educators, as I have pointed out above and elsewhere in this thesis, pragmatically opted for a workable combination of the two, developing on both fronts as individual circumstances permitted. However, before a more general compromise could be achieved, a number of external factors, most notably the diminishing role of the local authorities and their increasingly straitened financial circumstances, intervened, making some of the finer points of debate painfully irrelevant. The individuals interviewed continued themselves to be active during this later period up to the present, and so it seemed appropriate to add some concluding questions on the present and future state of

community education.

## 6.2 Further Reflections by the Participants

Faced with the question as to whether community education still exists in any meaningful way, the interviewees responded with varying degrees of pessimism. Fairbairn, pointing out the impossibility, during his last 10-12 years as Chief Education Officer, of providing any additional adult or youth accommodation, claims that "there is every sign that the changes brought about by the [1988 Education Reform] Act, and not least the funding, is beginning to undermine the whole approach countrywide." Fletcher agrees that "It's certainly the case that they're cutting back and back and back, bone, bone, bone - it's been cut to bits and it will take ages and ages and ages". He advocates "resurfacing through retitling" and puts forward the notion of dormant seed which must be preserved "during this period of pressure and vindictiveness."

Where others are concerned, community education has almost disappeared from their mental horizons. Lawson comments that "No one mentions the term in my circles or in the literature which I read", while Thomas adds, "I think there's much less emphasis on it ... [while] as to activist community education, I couldn't really give you an example - or [of] the commitment to it."

Martin, who still has an involvement in the training of community educators, provides a further insight on the effect of local government shrinkage:

There was a period in the '80s when community education

was used by local authorities as a way of saying, "we have a coherent and integrated education service in this area and we want to defend it against central government." So I think there was a kind of defensive politics of community built around it at one time. But of course it didn't last long.

The role of central government is generally deplored. Fairbairn refers to the "current straitjacketed mentality" where "everything is imposed from Whitehall", and Thomas indicates his opinion that "the distrust of the government for the work of FE, people have paid a terrible price for, I think."

Nor has liberal adult education escaped the axe. Lovett points out that in England "a great deal of liberal adult education has been marginalised", while others regret that there has been a decided shift in emphasis. "'Traditional' provision," Lawson states, "is becoming more consumer-orientated and I deplore this trend." Thomas also draws attention to the fact that "the whole individual process has now gone towards individual betterment - competences and trying to reparate for a system that has left people underskilled." On the future of adult education, however, Thomas sounds a cautious note of optimism:

I think it's going to be a little bit swamped by competences and post-professional training and all that, especially in the new universities, but I think the liberal tradition, the liberal style, the liberal purpose, is far from dead, actually, if you add it all up. And one of the reasons why I think the liberal bit will continue pretty strongly is that it's now developed a strong academic base. There are quite a lot of books and journals about it, much more so than before. Paradoxically, there are more chairs in adult education, more publications, more journals - it's an odd phenomenon really!

### 6.3 A Future for Adult and Community Education?

There is little doubt that the adult education and the community education (should it still exist) of the future will be considerably different from those which flourished in the decades up to the drastic changes which took place from the 1980s on. The increasing emphasis on vocationalism in further and higher education, the valuing of 'competence' over knowledge, the centralisation of control of the school curriculum, the financial stringency which is affecting every level of education - all are helping to create a climate in which it is possible that our matrix may have to accommodate yet another model (perhaps 'Functionalist' would be an appropriate term). In view of this much greater threat to both adult and community education, the conflict of ideals with which we have been concerned has to all intents and purposes disappeared from view. So strong and so persistent, however, has been the strand of conflicting idealism in English adult education that it seems certain to emerge again. In the meantime, community education, having lost the influence it once had, must look to reformulating and strengthening both its aims and its practice if it is to survive into the 21st century.

### 6.5 The Need for Further Research

If, as has been suggested above, adult and community education in their existing forms are indeed not waving but drowning, it is more important than ever that serious critical attention should be directed to, in particular, the underlying philosophies which have given rise to both the long-established and the newly emerging forms of educational provision for adults and for the community as a whole.

In particular, the appearance of a new model, with what would appear to be determinedly functional, pragmatic and short-term aims, poses many new questions. For example, one has the impression of an adult education service presently in disarray and contracting almost daily. To what extent is this a true picture of the present situation? If in fact a more tightly-controlled, qualification-led, commercially-minded type of provision is presently evolving, as some of our interviewees have suggested, then questions arise as to the effect this is having upon existing adult education provision and its commitment to the educational development of individuals and communities. In addition, the new model itself must be subjected to the kind of critical scrutiny which alone can determine the value, as well as the viability, of any form of education offered within a democracy.

This dissertation, hopefully, may have made some small contribution, through its articulation of a framework for analysis, towards the further debate which must inevitably be pursued in the next few years and into the new century.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION QUESTIONNAIRE

The following questionnaire has been designed to supplement, with information and comment from practitioners, a theoretical analysis of developments in community education (with particular reference to adult education) in the late 1960s and the 1970s. The overall study is concerned with various strands of thinking and practice which have been present in adult education throughout its history in the 19th and 20th centuries and which have also manifested themselves in the more recent history of community education. This questionnaire focuses upon one short period, from 1970 to 1975, and is aimed at producing a snapshot of the situation in community education during that time, from the point of view of those who were active in the field or in related areas. The questions have deliberately been left open, without suggested responses. This makes it more difficult and time-consuming to complete, unfortunately, but will undoubtedly enhance the freshness and individuality of your information. If there are further thoughts that you would like to add, or you feel that the questions asked do not cover the important issues, please feel free to attach additional sheets. Your participation is much appreciated.

**A. PERSONAL INFORMATION\***

1. Name (optional): .....

2. Present age range:      40-49       50-59       3. Sex: M/F  
    60-69       70+     

3. Present position: .....

4. Present company/institution/organisation: .....

5. Length of time in present post: .....

6. Positions held in adult and/or community education 1970-75:

POSITION	ORGANISATION	DATES

7. Post-school qualifications:

INSTITUTION	QUALIFICATION OBTAINED	YEAR AWARDED

8. Work background prior to 1970:

POSITION	ORGANISATION	DATES

\*NOTE: This personal information will be held in strictest confidence. Should any of it appear germane to the subsequent discussion, permission to use it would be referred to you. No use would be made of it without your agreement.

## B. PARTICIPATION IN ADULT/COMMUNITY EDUCATION 1970-1975

Thinking back to your own experience of adult and/or community education in 1970-75:

9. How would you personally have defined:

a) adult education

b) community education?

10. What would you have said were the main functions of

a) adult education?

b) community education?

11. What were your principle responsibilities/activities as an adult/community educator as they were/might have been contained in your job description?

12. How did you see your own role at this time?

13. What were your principal aims as an adult/community educator at that time?

14. Why did you personally choose to enter this field of work?

15. Who would you say was influential in forming your own thinking about adult and community education? In what respects?

16. Can you identify any events or experiences which influenced your thinking?

In what ways?

17. Did you perceive yourself as belonging at that time to a particular grouping/sector/  
philosophical school/political wing of adult or community education? Y/N

18. If so, can you describe or characterise the school of thought to which you belonged?

19. In what ways did you express your own particular perspective:  
a) in action? (please describe)

b) in writing/publications? (representative list)

c) other? (please specify)

20. Did you experience opposition to your activities or way of thinking? Y/N

21. If yes, in what ways?

22. To what extent, and in what ways, did adult and/or community education change during this period, in your opinion?

23. Do you see yourself (possibly in conjunction with colleagues or others of like mind) as having been instrumental in shaping or changing adult or community education during this period? Y/N

24. If so,

a) in what ways?

b) by what means?

c) to what extent?

25. What lessons did you yourself learn as a result of this period in your working life?

26. Has your own thinking on adult/community education altered since then? Y/N

If so,

a) in what ways?

b) for what reasons?

27. How do you think the current situation in community education compares with that of 1970-75?

28. To what do you attribute any differences?

30. What do you think the future of community education will be?

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