Political education and democratic values: a study of the current debate on political education and possible developments

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POLITICAL EDUCATION AND DEMOCRATIC VALUES

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Thesis submitted January 1980 for the Degree of Master of Arts

in

Department of Sociology and Social Administration
University of Durham

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Synopsis

The first chapter examines the nature of politics and the role of the citizen in a democratic society. It reaches conclusions which are used to evaluate political education. These are that politics is essentially about conflict, and that a political education programme should have a positive commitment to participation and the essentially worthwhile nature of politics.

The second chapter examines the current debate about political education noting two different emphases; that political education should aim to produce an informed and critical electorate, and that politics is best learnt through active participation. The third chapter looks at the literature on political socialisation to evaluate the effectiveness of political education in schools.

Chapter Four looks at textbooks and finds a tendency to play down conflict and not to deal with the practicalities of political involvement. Chapter Five summarises discussions with teachers, and identifies a strong and a weak view of political education. This reflects the literature: the first has a commitment to participation, the second is concerned primarily with promoting understanding and a critical awareness.

The final chapter summarises the arguments, and explores what a commitment to participation will mean in practice. It concludes that for most people participation will be in terms of ensuring the accountability of their representatives. Such active participation is necessary if citizens are to contribute to policy rather than simply keep a check on their rulers.

C O N T E N T S

CHAPTER I

Political Values

The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it.

Karl Marx

All politics are based on the indifference of the majority.

J. Reston

What we understand Politics to be

Before considering the development of Political Education, it is necessary to consider the subject which is being taught - Politics. It is easy for educators if there is an accepted body of facts about which there is no dispute. These can be taught without any problems of misrepresentation or bias. If politics concerned itself simply with the institutions of government at both a national and a local level, then this could be done. But there is more to Politics than that. Politics involves different interests and different values. Professor Crick states 'Politics is the creative conciliation of differing interests, whether interests are seen as primarily material or moral. In practice they are usually a blend of both.'[1] It is essential to emphasise the moral element. Politics is not simply about the material interests of different groups. It is also about the moral judgements as to which interests should predominate in a particular situation.

In his Inaugural Lecture at Durham University, A.J.M. Milne disstinguished between conflict and controversy.[2] Conflict is usually over something tangible, but controversy will be over values. It is not always easy for many to accept the necessity of conflict or controversy. It implies unpleasantness, and an inability to sink differences and agree. There is a tendency by many to try and sink political differences and produce a 'consensus' approach. Admittedly for many politics will not be considered important, and it is possible to adopt a consensus attitude on many issues. But encouraging such an attitude does not help or improve the political life of the community. The reverse is true; a consensus approach implies a lack of interest and commitment to politics. Bernard Crick comments: 'the opposite to an oppressive society .... is not the absence of values, but a plurality of values'. Consensus is something which is experienced, not imposed.[3] There

will be basic values about living together in the community which will be accepted by all, but attempting to find a 'consensus' solution to all political problems is to impoverish political life by taking away its moral element.

A.J.M. Milne distinguishes between two types of controversy, the dialectical and the eristic. The first implies genuine attempts to arrive at a solution, the second an attempt to defeat your opponent at all costs, or 'adversary politics'.[4] Professional politicians will go in for the latter, but the majority of citizens will treat politics in the former way, making a judgement after considering opposing arguments. Bernard Crick lays stress on the 'creative conciliation' of different interests, although he accepts that 'To say 'creative conciliation' is to try to convey that in a political tradition we try to resolve disputes as well as possible, and as far as possible, but that we never hope to resolve or solve them all.'[5] Conflict and controversy do not mean permanent discord, or an encouragement of it, on particular issues - in many cases it will be possible to find a solution. But is is wrong to try and pretend that the conflit does not exist in the first place. As the Hansard Society Report states, 'It would be both intellectually and morally wrong to assume that there is a 'consensus' in our society about political values, even though there may be a consensus about procedures.'[6](a)

In 'The American Science of Politics'[7] Crick attacks those American Political Scientists who have tried to develop a 'value-free' science of Politics. Politics is about moral judgements, and there is no overall scientific theory which will explain and determine all political activity, and prevent the individual from having to make continual moral judgements. This social determination of truth is also the premise of totalitarian

ideology' he says on page 224. There are no 'obvious answers' which everyone will agree on, if simply the facts are produced, which seemed to be the rationale behind the 'social survey' approach to politics of many American Social Scientists. Many of those who claim to be pursuing a 'value-free' science are in fact taking certain basic American values and beliefs as given, and seeing the task of the politician as simply to work out, scientifically, better ways of achieving them. This is the antithesis of Crick's view that politics is a moral and creative activity.

Such a view of politics includes the Marxist view, which sees conflict as being essentially a class phenomenon. Some Marxists would assert that what is essentially class conflict, or the domination of one class by another is often misrepresented by the media of a capitalist state to be other forms of conflict which disguise the basic class nature of society. There will continue to be conflict within society until the dominant position of one class has been removed. The view of politics set out here can include class conflict without asserting that all conflict in society must be represented in that light. (b)

Politics is essentially about controversy and conflict, the counter-position of different ideas, values and interests. It is not simply about material interests, but includes values too. The inevitability of conflict does not mean that resolution cannot be achieved, although such resolution is not automatic. In many cases the conflict will be creative. Attempts to impose consensus will take away that creativity, and deprive politics of the moral commitment which is an important part of it.

Politics and The Citizen

Milne's distinction between the attitude of the political professional and the ordinary citizen to political controversy has already been noted. Is it desirable that all citizens be involved in political activity, or is

interest enough? Would greater involvement necessarily lead to a better society? All these questions are extremely important for Political Education.

Pericles, the best known spokesman of the classical Athenians, had this to say about the role of the individual citizen in a democracy:

> 'Here each individual is interested not only in his own affairs, but in the affairs of the state as well: even those who are mostly occupied with their own business are extremely well-informed on general politics - this is a peculiarity of ours: we do not say that a man who takes no interest in politics is a man who minds his own business; we say that he has no business here at all!'[8]

It is easy to over romanticise Athenian democracy. It had many faults. It operated within a value-system which few would accept today, according second-class status to women, and treating foreigners with contempt. There were large class differences, and the Athenians subjugated other states in the name of freedom. But it had two basic values which are important: firstly it was considered desirable that everyone participate directly in the process of government, and non-participation was frowned upon; secondly, active participation in office was considered within the ability of any male citizen, and was considered positively good for him. There was no bar on holding office because of education or property.

Although Athenian ideas have had considerable influence, this is not the political tradition which has developed in this country. Our type of democracy rests on two basic ideas. One is representative government, and the other is the stress of freedom from government, and the protection of the rights of the citizen. Although the people influence their government, they do not participate directly in it, and freedom is thought to be best assured if government activity is minimised. John Stuart Mill, for example, championed democracy, because he thought it released the energy and intelligence of the people, but he was very worried about the dominance of the 'second rate'.

'The idea of a rational democracy' he wrote in 1835, 'is not that the people themselves govern, but that they have security for good government.'[9] 'The people ought to be the masters, but they are masters who must employ servants more skillful than themselves; like a ministry when they employ a military commander, or the military commander when he employs an army surgeon.' Political matters are extremely difficult to grasp, and the majority are unlikely to properly appreciate them unless informed by an 'expert'. 'Everyone who has crossed the threshold of political philosophy knows, that on many of its questions the false view is greatly the most plausible; and a large portion of its truths are, and must always remain, to all but those who have specially studied them, paradoxes; as contrary, in appearance, to common sense as the proposition that the earth moves round the sun. The multitude will never believe those truths, until tendered to them from an authority in which they have as unlimited confidence as they have in the unanimous voice of astronomers on a question of astronomy.'[10]

In chapters on Socialism, written much later in 1879, Mill dwells again on the problems of involving the majority directly in government. 'Plans for the regeneration of society must consider average human beings, and not only them but the large residuum of persons greatly below the average in the personal and social virtues.'[11] Socialism and Communism require a much higher standard from the people than Mill felt existed. 'The one certainty is, that Communism, to be successful, requires a high standard of both moral and intellectual education in all members of the community .... Now I reject altogether the notion that it is impossible for education and cultivation such as is implied in these things to be made the inheritance of every person in the nation; but I am convinced that it is very difficult, and that the passage to it from our present condition can only be slow.'[12] He warns against initiating a system which will involve 'all the malefactors,

all the idlest and most vicious, the most incapable of steady industry, fore-thought or self-control' in the administration of society.[13] In the opinion of Mill, therefore, it is possible to advance from a situation where the majority give the responsibility for government to a few to a situation where all are involved, but such a process would be extremely difficult, and in Mill's opinion, should be gradualist, so that it can prove itself by results. If society did want to advance in that direction, the role of education would be very important.

F.R. Leavis, in 'Elites Oligarchies, and an Educated Public'[14] states quite unequivocally that 'executive authority and power and the final process of decision can't but be vested in a few.' There has to be an 'educated public' to keep the few in check; it is the function of the now marked plurality of universities to create an educated public that politicians have to fear and respect.'[15] Such an educated public may be 'moved to indignation, protest and resistence by one of those casual threats to human life which characterize our age of accelerating progress,'[16], and its effectiveness is the more because 'it so clearly transcends sectional interest or bias'. The educated public has its nucleus in the universities, but should transcend class. Leavis was afraid of ephemeral values, and wanted the educated public to be based on a tradition of 'cultural continuity'.

Several distinct points emerge from these writers which run very deep in the British tradition of political thinking. Firstly, politics require special expertise, and is therefore likely to be the business of a skilled minority. Secondly the role of the public is to exercise vigilance to prevent the abuse of power, and lastly it needs educating about politics, particularly if there is to be social advance, but also if it is to keep an effective check on is rulers. This leaves open the question of whether the citizen should actively involve himself in politics, or be encouraged to do

so, or whether he should reserve his activity for particular crises. Bernard Crick, who is one of the leading figures in the political education debate, has written extensively about the role of the 'politically educated citizen', and his views must be considered at some length.

The Argument of Professor Crick

Bernard Crick has strong views on the importance of politics. In a lecture delivered in 1966, entitled 'Freedom as Politics' he stresses the importance of political activity in preserving freedom[17]. Freedom is not defined as being 'freedom from things' but as 'the act of an individual making choices among all such (political) relationships and activities'[18]. Politics and freedom are linked together 'not merely in civil wedlock, but in permanent progenitive embrace.'[19] Again the stress is on acting freely, not simply being free. 'Freedom does not consist in being able to chose between pushpin and poetry, but in actually choosing.'[20] 'Freedom depends on people continuing to act freely in public affairs' and 'participation and action are part of freedom' all emphasise the point. People are not free if they escape from politics, but rather active politics guarantees their freedom.

In a later essay, however, Crick criticises participation as an end in itself. In the 'Introducing of Politics in School', written in 1969,[21] he writes 'Another common disguise or perversion of a study of politics is 'good citizenship': the use of Civics or Liberal Studies classes to urge participation in this and that.'[22] and on the next page, 'Governing authorities of all kinds are more apt to urge participation, because they know that in a widespread manner it is impractical, than they are to study how to make themselves govern more openly and less secretively.' And, 'Governments are fundamentally restrained and directed in societies such as ours not by participant-representatives (who are mainly the recruiting ground for members

of the government), but by their knowledge that nearly everything they do may become a matter of public knowledge.'[23]

This point of view is further elaborated in 'Them and Us - Public Impotence and Government Power', The Gaitskell Memorial Lecture given at Nottingham University in 1968[24]. Here Crick deals with the ways in which governments can secure compliance without the direct use of coercion, and concludes that all industrialised societies, including ones not usually thought of as democratic, are able to do this to some degree. Machiavelli said that the state had far more power if it was also popular. Nevertheless the power of the state is limited. Crick gives the example of how it finds it extremely difficult to gain acceptance of an incomes policy. A wider discussion of issues, and less obsession with secrecy would benefit the government as much as the governed, in that if policies were explained and talked through, there would be more chance of people accepting them. Samuel Beer, an American political scientist, has noted that Parliament is not used for 'mobilising consent' as much as it could be, and Crick states : 'Few civil servants have realised that 'thinking out loud' from the earliest stages is a way of gaining support for policies which may prove completely ineffective if hidden from public view until the triumphant day of unveiling in the First Reading, firm, unalterable, erect, but often strangely impotent'.[25] Thus greater openness will lead to more effective government as well as acting as the restraint to improper action by governments as noted earlier.

Bernard Crick's view seems to be that in a democracy the majority of the population must know sufficient about politics to be able to understand what is going on. This will not only prevent governments 'getting away' with things, but it will also make policy more effective if it has been publicly debated first, so that people know exactly what is happening.

There seem to be two problems with this argument. The first is that Governments show little willingness to be less secretive of their own accord. Although the 1974 Labour Party Manifesto contained a commitment to reform the Official Secrets Act, little was done about it, and the present Government has shown no enthusiasm for the idea. Secondly there is no clear explanation of how individuals should influence the Government. Is this to be done simply through public opinion polls, or even referenda, or is the public to play a more positive role of actually formulating policy? If this is to be the case, then they will have to be involved in political machinery of some sort to do so. If there is some way that individuals can directly influence government other than through the intermediaries of pressure groups and political parties, it would be interesting to know what it is. The reference to wholesale, but vague, participation is a criticism of some American work, so it would be worthwhile to briefly consider the influential work of the American Educationalist, John Dewey.

John Dewey on Education and Democracy

John Dewey wrote specifically about 'Education and Democracy', and his ideas about what democracy meant for the individual citizen, and the education he would need to fulfil his obligations, would seem to be relevant to the discussion here. As several observers have pointed out, however, Dewey did not talk very explicitly about what he meant by democracy in a political sense. He was concerned that education in America should be relevant to the society around it. The rapid development of America Westwards and the growth of large cities in the East had put considerable strains on the school system at the end of the nineteenth century when he formed his ideas. Much of what was called 'culture' in the schools was remote from the lives of many of the children, and consequently ignored. At the same time

Americans were very concerned that children should be taught about democracy in the land which was at that time in the forefront of democratic practice. Thus Dewey was really concerned about teaching children to live in a democratic society, rather than about what democracy was. He wanted children to concern themselves with the 'social', and be able to do things collectively with others. He was very much against a concentration on individualism, and stated that 'what one is as a person is what one is as associated with others, in a free give and take of intercourse.'[26] This might seem at first sight to be a collectivist philosophy, but it makes no observations about the actual structure of society. It does, however, have a direct bearing on an approach to politics. Dewey felt that learning should be directly related to the experience of children, and that children should be encouraged to interact with one another and do things together. At one point he suggested that if children gained experience of how to elect a class president, it would be natural for them to enquire how a city elected its mayor.[27] The implication is that the best way to find out about politics is to actually experience it, and that the citizen should be encouraged to be involved. This participatory tradition has persisted in American education, and is presumably what is criticised by Bernard Crick. The fact that there has been other criticism as well of the effectiveness of American 'Civic Education' in encouraging a proper understanding of, and interest in, politics by young Americans[28] should not mean that the underlying 'participatory' ethic is necessarily worthless. It is more likely that it has not been thought out in precise political terms.

Attitudes to Politcs

There seem to be three points on which any attempt to construct a Political Education programme must have a clear position. Firstly as to what politics is, secondly what should the role of the ordinary citizen be, and thirdly

how important it is as a human activity. There are different views on all three, and any Political Education programme must either state clearly its own position, or attempt to present all points of view equally well. (Something which is very difficult to do.)

Firstly, the essentially conflictive nature of politics cannot be ignored. This may appear unpleasant, but it should be made clear that political conflict is not necessarily about interests or personalities, but often about ideals. As such politics is an essentially moral activity. Conflict in the political sphere does not necessarily mean conflict in other spheres of human activity. Different views must be presented as fairly as is humanly possible. To do this necessarily involves trying to understand why a particular group holds the views it does. Such a consideration will involve knowledge of the history of that group, and who its supporters and members are. Simply presenting a view without trying to understand why or how it was arrived at does not always give a fair representation of a political position. Attempts to produce a 'consensus' view can only confine themselves to describing political institutions, and as such will give an inadequate picture of what politics is alike. Trying to avoid or hide the conflict aspect of politics robs it of its vitality and of its essentially moral nature.

Secondly, many writers agree that in a democracy the citizen must be informed and alert. He will then be able to keep check on his representatives, and call them to account if they overstep the mark. Ellen Meiksins Wood recognises that there will be problems of authority and subordination, and of representation in a Marxist state. 'In a class society, such a humane and 'unpolitical' public power would be impossible; but if it becomes possible only in a classless society, it does not become inevitable.'[29] There will

still need to be institutions, and also vigilance by the citizenry, to protect them from abuses of power. But is the role of the citizen only to act when an abuse has taken place, and simply by threatening to act to prevent them? This is the view of Almond and Verba in The Civic Culture. In practice the individual citizen is not highly involved in political activity. 'The comparative infrequency of political participation, its relative lack of importance for the individual, and the objective weakness of the ordinary man allow governmental elites to act.'[30] Yet the average citizen believes he can act politically. 'He is not the active citizen: he is the potentially active citizen.'[31] This 'reserve of influence' acts as a check upon the activities of elites, particularly, if as Almond and Verba assert, the decision-makers share in the 'democratic myth' as well. 'On the one hand, he (the decision-maker) is free to act as he thinks best because the ordinary citizen is not pounding his door with demands for action. He is insulated by the inactivity of the ordinary man. But if he shares the belief in the influence potential of the ordinary man, his freedom to act is limited by the fact that he believes there will be pounding on his door if he does not act in ways that are responsive. Furthermore, if he shares the view that the ordinary man ought to participate in decisions, he is under pressure to act responsively because he believes that such citizen influence is legitimate and justified. Though our data cannot demonstrate this, there is reason to believe that political elites share the culture of the non-elite; that in a society with a civic culture they, as well as non-elites, hold the attitudes associated with it.'[32](c)

Such a view assumes the acceptance by elites of the legitimacy of criticism. What happens if the elites prevent knowledge of their activities from becoming public, of else falsify what they are doing by means of propaganda? Such a view is put forward by Ralph Miliband, in the 'State

in Capitalist Society' 'The prevelant view of the state in these (advanced capitalist) societies, can be and indeed mostly is the agent of a 'democratic' social order, with no inherent bias towards any class or group; and that its occasional lapse from 'impartiality' must be ascribed to some accidental factor external to its 'real' nature. But this too is a fundamental misconception: the state in these class societies is primarily and inevitably the guardian and protector of the economic interests which are dominant in them.'[33] The whole nature of the state is to protect the existing economic order, and it will not seriously consider the interests of other groups. It is not necessary to accept all of Miliband's analysis to realise that political elites will not always respond to the wishes of the citizenry, and that political elites have substantial power and influence at their disposal to maintain their own power and position.

But even assuming that citizens have access to the information they need and are prepared to accept criticism, the idea of the 'alert citizen' implies merely a reaction to events, rather than of having a positive say in influencing them. Bernard Crick sees the role of the citizen as being more than simply reacting to events, in that he feels informed discussion between government and people will produce policies which are more acceptable. But how is this discussion to take place? The normal way in which policy is formulated in this country is through discussion within political parties, trade unions, pressure groups and other organisations, and if the citizen wants to have a more positive rulein the shaping of policy, this is how it will have to be done. There is no way that a Government can effectively and meaningfully discuss policy with the electorate without some intermediary mechanism. The experience of referenda is this country, where people were asked to give a clear response to a question which might not have been the one they wanted to answer, does not seem to indicate that this is a satisfactory alternative to the more traditional way of evolving policy through organisations for presentation to governments.

If our objective is to ensure a closer link between the citizen and the government, both in helping determine what the government does and in ensuring that it does not do things it should not, producing a more educated and alert citizenry is by itself not enough. They must also become more involved in the political process. A political education programme must explain the realities of how policy is formulated, and how parties and pressure groups function. The myth should not be fostered that the individual has some sort of direct rapport with government without the need for intermediary organisations.

It may be objected, as it is by Milne, that to encourage greater involvement in partisan political activity, would be to stimulate the 'eristic' rather than the 'dialectic' approach to controversy. 'Without party activists there can be no party politics, and a party activist cannot be an electic voter.'[34] Milne points to Northern Ireland. 'Northern Ireland is a gloomy example, so far as party politics is concerned, of what happens when the dialectical attitude is altogether lost and there is nothing to moderate the eristic attitude .... In Northern Ireland, non-agreement has congealed into disagreement.'[35] But to encourage greater involvement in political activity is not necessarily to simply ask people to join political parties. There are other organisations which can be involved in the formulation of policy and make their influence felt on governments. Opportunities exist for playing a part in community organisations which can be influential politically at a local level, and developments are afoot which may eventually lead to greater participation by the general public in organisations such as schools and also at their place of work.

But partisan controversy is not the only form of conflict and dispute which we have witnessed in recent years. Bernard Crick has already pointed to the impotence of governments if they are unable to carry the people with

them. Attempts to promote particular economic policies in recent years have produced intense conflict which has certainly not been simply of a partisan nature. It is possible that a greater involvement by the citizenry in the process of actually formulating policy might have led to a situation where these disputes did not take place. Thus a commitment to greater involvement in political activity does not necessarily simply lead to more eristic controversy. It could lead to a greater public involvement in formulating policies which would then be accepted with less conflict.

Thirdly, a Political Education programme has to consider the attitude to the importance of politics itself. To some extent the mere fact of embarking on a programme implies an acknowledgement of the value of politics - otherwise there would not be any point in spending time teaching it. But it has to be recognised that there are widespread feelings that politics is somehow a disreputable business, to be avoided by honest people. There is often widespread cynicism about the motives and intentions of politicians. Should an attempt to provide political education try to counter this?

If it is to encourage greater interest and participation in politics it must. Politics should not be portrayed as neceassarily a noble or superior activity suitable only for an elite, as this will not encourage the objectives set out above. It must, however, be presented as being worthwhile. The point about conflict and controversy not being simply about self-interest, but also about moral positions, should be stressed. The emphasis on involvement with concrete results will stress that there is some point in politics. It must not be seen as an activity with no relevance to the ordinary person. Skilled teachers will be able to present politics in all sorts of exciting and interesting ways, but it is difficult to see how they can handle the subject effectively if they do not have some commitment to the essentially worthwhile nature of politics itself. (d)

Conclusion: Values in Political Education

From this discussion of the nature of politics and the attitude of the citizen towards it, it is possible to formulate a set of values which a successful Political Education programme should have.

Firstly, a Political Education programme must recognise the element of conflict inherent in Politics. The understandable desire of educators to teach an accepted body of knowledge will result in the subject either only being partly dealt with or misrepresented. Consensus in Politics is the exception rather than the rule, and to assume it is the norm takes out of the subject it moral essence, the problem of the coexistence of conflicting but sincerely held moral principles. How to present different views equally validly will present problems for educators, but they are problems which must be faced, not avoided.

Secondly, a Political Education programme must aim at producing an informed citizenry who are both able to act as an effective check on the elites which a representative system has, but are also able to participate in a meaningful way in the formulation of policy, so that they are not simply reacting to the ideas of others. Participation by a large number of citizens in the political machinery is the only way in practice that citizens can keep an effective check on the governing elites, since direct communication between the elites and the people is both impractical and probably undesirable. Thus a programme must consider whether it should include skills as well as simply knowledge about politics. The majority of the population are not used to, or equipped for, political activity. Stress should be put on the fact about that political activity does not simply involve political parties. There are many other organisations which are able to play an important role in political activity, both at a local and a national level.

Finally, a Political Education programme must, if it is to fulfil the second objective, have an overall commitment to the essentially worthwhile nature of politics as a human activity. Although most of those who will be interested in teaching politics in schools will probably have such a commitment, there are many in society who do not, and much literature and other material will reflect attitudes antagonistic to politics as such. The teacher will have to counter such attitudes without dismissing them out of hand.

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Footnotes

(a) Teachers may be understandably reluctant to appear to be creating discord where none seems to exist already, and this could discourage the establishment of politics in many schools. It is important to stress, for this reason, that conflict can be about values, not simply about individuals or groups having their own way. It is a point made strongly by Milne and Crick, but perhaps not in every-day discussion of politics.

(b) Many Marxists see their position as an alternative to the 'liberal-capitalist' view. Discussion on Political Education has often been sidetracked by those who try and identify it with either a Marxist or non-Marxist approach. What is important to stress is what the two approaches have in common.

(c) This was written in 1963. More recent experiences of the activities of elites in American government may have cast doubts on whether they do in fact believe that 'the ordinary man ought to participate in decisions'.

(d) This may seem to imply a rather 'holy' approach which might be the first thing to put young people off. What is necessary is to convince young people that politics has any point for them. All kinds of different teaching approaches may be appropriate, so long as this point comes across. It may well be the opposite to that which they are accustomed to at home and in their peer group. This point is pursued further in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER II

The Current Political Education Debate

It is evident that the state is a creation of nature, and that man is by nature a political animal.

Aristotle - The Politics

I could not be leading a religious life unless I identified myself with the whole of mankind, and that I could not do unless I took part in politics.

Gandhi

The Political Education Debate

Deliberate Political Education is not a new idea. Plato put forward the idea of the Republic, and the deliberate training of small elites to take part in political activity has been one task of many historical educational systems. In the past 100 years the idea that the majority of the population should have some deliberate education to enable them to participate effectively in the political process has gathered strength. Robert Lowe made the famous remark that 'We must educate our masters' after the Bill had been passed in 1866 to extend the Parliamentary franchise to a large section of the male working class, and one of the arguments put forward by opponents of reform was that the new electorate would be an easy prey for demagogues. John Stuart Mill stressed the need for education for the masses if there was to be political advance.[1] It was not until the ninteen-thirties, however, that moves were made to institute specific education about politics as distinct from a general education for the electorate.

The country where most activity took place was the United States of America. It is often forgotten today that in the nineteenth century American ideas of democracy and liberty were very radical and their democratic practice in advance of anything in the rest of the world. In the late ninteenth century, with massive immigration into the country, many became concerned that the democratic values of America should be deliberately propagated through the education system. Thus, in 1915 the Committee on Social Studies of the National Education Association prepared, and the United States Bureau of Education published, a report which advocated the training of citizens for 'good citizenship',(a) and a survey in 1963 showed that 47 states had made provision for instruction in citizenship[2]. Much

has been written about the success or otherwise of these programmes, and the influence of American practice and ideas has been considerable. It is interesting that, as Tapper points out, 'It is a fair, although rough-and-ready generalisation, that American academics have since 1959 concentrated on political socialisation while their British equivalents have passed the time examining political education.'[3] Tapper suggests that this is because of the concern of American Social Scientists to use large-scale or survey techniques in order to try and achieve certainty, but it may also be a general concern about the effectiveness of deliberate political education in maintaining American political values, when these are being questioned. The American literature will be more fully considered below; suffice it to say at this stage that there has been concern about teaching young Americans about their political system for some time.

Tapper and Salter[4] point out that in America there was concern about teaching the majority of the population to be 'good citizens', whereas in this country the education system was concerned more with producing people who would fit easily into their allotted place in a class-stratified society. There somehow seems to be more self-confidence in the British approach, that the democratic policy would somehow continue to flourish without deliberate political education, while at the same time people would accept as 'legitimate' their place in it. There was none of the American concern that democratic values would not continue without a deliberate attempt to teach them. The first sign of nervousness in Britain was a reaction to the emergence of totalitarian regimes overseas, and this resulted in the Association for Education in Citizenship in the 1930's. This tried to promote British political values, and had the support of many leading politicians. Salter and Trapper consider it as really a device for legitimating the status quo[5],

but perhaps more important is the fact that it did not make much headway. Two important reports on education, the Spens Report in 1938 and the Norwood Report of 1943 did not give much encouragement. The Norwood Report, for example, when discussing the teaching of politics in schools stated:

> 'Nothing but harm can result, in our opinion, from attempts to interest pupils prematurely in matters which imply the experience of an adult.'

The work of the Education Corps in the army during the War certainly heightened political awareness, and is thought by many to have been responsible for the success of the Labour Party in 1945. Certainly after the War Social Studies, and other courses with a political or quasi-political content received a new impetus. Many of them had very high ideals about what could be achieved for the children.(b) In the 1950's these courses were joined by an 'A' level in British Constitution. Nevertheless, many teachers were unhappy with what was going on. The Chairman of the Politics Association, formed in 1969, commented:

> 'Where Political Education has occurred at all, it has been in one or two forms:
>
> a) Civics
> ..... such courses are concerned with a description of the mechanics of central and local government and prescriptive of the conformist and deferential participation of the good citizen as voter ....
>
> b) British Constitution
> ..... The nature of the syllabuses offered has not been dissimilar to the Civics approach already described. Too often the syllabuses and the examination papers reflected a concern with procedural minutiae and institutional description which were far removed from the real world of politics.'[6]

At the same time interest outside the teaching profession began to emerge. Was this because of nervousness about the state of the polity? The late 1960's were times of student unrest and also of concern about the activities of extremist groups, both of the right and the left. Ian Lister has written that 'some even think that the legitimating institutions, such as parliament, are threatened by mass ignorance which leaves people vunerable to the appeals of demagogues or to the appeal of extreme, simplistic

solutions of political problems.'[7] Youthful rebellion had subsided by the 1970's, but the interest in Political Education did not. Salter and Tapper comment, 'the spectre of youthful rebellion seems to have faded somewhat in the 1970's. Does the need for political education recede along with it?'[8] It would seem not. The interest in the teaching profession has been encouraged by the support given by both the major political parties and the D.E.S. Although in the present economic climate there seems little prospect of a new subject emerging, teachers are very anxious to attend courses and conferences and interest shows no sight of abating. The current debate will now be looked at in more detail.

The Current Political Education Debate in Britain

1969 seems to be an important date in the recent debate for several important events took place in that year. G. Whitty, writing in 1979[9] states that 'There can be no denying that, after a decade of quiet gestation, the political education movement has now become a force to be reckoned with.' In that year the Politics Association for teachers of politics was established, with the help of the much older Hansard Society for Parliamentary Government. A prominent member was Derek Heater. In the same year Derek Heater produced a book in conjunction with Bernard Crick called 'Teaching Politics'[10] which put forward the case for Political Education in schools. The Politics Association felt that politics had been taught badly, and wanted to both improve the way it was taught, and expand the extent of its teaching. In 1972 it produced its own journal, Teaching Politics, and in the first editorial Derek Heater talked of 'an educational climate in which the vital necessity of social education is becoming recognised with increasing clarity.'[11] Presumably 'social education' referred to a wider approach to politics than heretofore.

The following year the Politics Association and the Hansard Society held a conference to discuss priorities for research and development in political education. A proposal was subsequently made to the Nuffield Foundation for a research programme to enhance 'Political Literacy' in Secondary, Further, and Higher Education. A Research Unit was established under Professor Lister at York University, and various papers were produced by it and the Hansard Society in London. The final report was produced in 1978. It is edited by Bernard Crick and Alex Porter, a Lecturer at the University of London Institute of Education. It is well to remember, however, that the report is a composite view including the contributions of Ian Lister and Robert Stradling; it should not simply be seen as the 'Crick and Porter view' as often seems to happen. The report has been extremely influential, and much subsequent debate has been reactions to it. It certainly seems to have overshadowed other contributions, such as that of Harold Entwistle in 1971[12]. In order to properly understand the current debate, the Report will be examined in some detail.

The Hansard Society Report

The Hansard Society Report is fully entitled Political Education and Political Literacy. Political Literacy is defined as 'the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to make a man or a woman infomed about politics; able to participate in public life and groups of all kinds both occupational and voluntary, and to recognise and tolerate diversities of political and social values.'[13] Three aims are identified for Political Education:

a) The purely and properly conserving level of knowing how our present system of government works, and knowing the beliefs that are thought to be part of it.

b) The liberal or participatory level of the development of the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary for an active citizenship.

c) Beyond both of these there lies the more contentious area of considering possible changes of direction of government or of alternative systems.[14]

The Report is quite clear on the question of conflict in politics. As quoted in Chapter One the authors feel it 'would be both intellectually and morally wrong to assume that there is a consensus in our society about political values', and an attempt must be made to portray as well as possible different points of view. Pupils must be able to appreciate that there are other points of view and to tolerate them. 'Tolerance in part depends on knowledge of the behaviour and beliefs associated with other viewpoints; this knowledge should be taught and the pupil should be tested in his powers of empathy.'[15] The Report feels that it is possible to establish consensus on procedures, and lists a set of 'procedural values', to which all democrats can subscribe. The chapter explaining these is by Bernard Crick, and he describe the idea of procedural values as follows:

> 'If there is a genuine political education, certain values are presupposed. I will call these procedural values, for they are not substantive values like various justifications of authority, like equality or types of justice, but rather presuppositions of any kind of genuine political education or free political activity. For one thing, the politically literate person cannot just accept one set of values as correct; he will see that the very nature of politics lies in there being a plurality of values and interests, of which he must have at least some minimal understanding.'[16]

The values themselves are freedom, toleration, fairness, respect for truth and respect for reasoning.

On the question of whether a Political Education programme should actually encourage political activity the Report is more equivocal. In a Chapter written jointly by Bernard Crick and Ian Lister the following statements appear: 'The real difficulties of political eduacation are likely to lie not in areas of bias or indoctrination but in its encouragement of action.' and 'The ultimate test of political literacy lies in creating a proclivity to action, not in achieving more theoretical analysis.'[17]

At the beginning of the Report, however, the following statement is made, which is worth quoting at some length:

> 'But it remains true that we think less of a person who either has no public spirit or is so fastidious that he will not take part in all those jostlings of interests and ideals that constitute politics. There are no clear grounds for saying that society would be better if everyone took part in politics. However there are overwhelmingly clear grounds for saying that societies are bad which prevent or merely discourage popular participation, and there are reasonably clear grounds for thinking that distate for or distrust of politics can threaten any kind of just and tolerant life.'[18]

A subsequent article by Alex Porter, one of the authors of the Report, identifies ten 'skills' required for Political Education , and draws particular attention to two; how to participate in group decisions-making and how to effectively influence and or change political situations. He comments 'Without the last two action skills political literacy would be limited to a solitary intellectual exercise; the politically literate person would merely be capable of well-informed observation and analysis. The ultimate test of effective political education lies in creating a proclivity to action.'[19] Thus there seems to be a difference of opinion amongst the authors as to whether a Political Education programme should simply admit of the possibility of political activity or positively encourage it.

The latter part of the Report is empirical work done by Alex Porter in a range of schools testing to what extent courses taught in schools adhere to the 'procedural values' outlined above. The general conclusions are that they are more likely to if the course is specifically designed to encourage political literacy rather than to 'infuse' it into other subjects, and that success will also depend on attitudes of staff and relationships within the school. It is no good encouraging the procedural values if these are manifestly not observed in relationships between staff or between teachers and taught. Thus political education is likely to have an effect on the whole way the school is run.

The influence of the Hansard Society Report has been substantial. In 1977 a collection of working papers was produced entitled The Curriculum 11-16 by members of the Inspectorate.[20] This contained a paper by two HMI's entitled 'Political Competence' which clearly shows the influence of the Hansard Society Report. That HMI's should have written publicly about such a subject is significant. This was the first time that political education had been recognised officially by the DES. The paper sets out as its aim 'to give pupils knowledge and tools for informed and responsible political participation.', and also expresses the hope that 'Political Educational might also do something to restore a respect for political activity and attitudes, and rescue them from the worrying trend of current cynicism about the place of politics in society'. There is stress on 'not only the acceptance, but the welcoming, of diversity in society.', and the need to stress toleration. Where the paper differs from the Hansard Society Report, however, is its emphasis on opportunities for participation in political activity within the everyday experience of young people. 'Wherever there is disagreement, there lies a potential for politics; for aggregating issues, organising support, arguing, propagating, settling difficulties.' The paper also suggests that arrangements within schools be considered in a political light - 'For example, do we train young people to live in a democracy by talking to them excessively rather than inviting their views? ... Do such arrangements as few prefects but many non-prefects, or the employment of corporal punishment, prepare pupils for life in a democracy?'(c) The Conservative Party endorsed the ideas of the Hansard Society Report in a pamphlet 'A Time for Youth' produced in 1978, and Neil Kinnock M.P. has shown enthusiasm for them. The DES has also funded a project for the National Association of Youth Clubs which shows the influence of the Report.

Harold Entwistle's Ideas

Although the influence of the Hansard Society Report has been substantial, the earlier ideas of Harold Entwistle on Political Education, which have a different approach, should be considered. His book, Political Education in a Democracy, was produced in 1971[21]. He sees the strength of Western-style democracy in small voluntary groups, and argues 'that voluntary association is the most appropriate vehicle for full, active and continuous participation in government'. Because of this a 'macro-orientation' in political education is inadequate.[22] Political education should be aimed at encouraging participation in such groups, and the best way this can be done is by encouraging them at school. 'The model of the school as a complex of voluntary groups seems more accurately to mirror the polity outside the school than does a conception of school government at the macro-level through a representative school council.'[23] The kind of activities Entwistle has in mind are as follows: 'Some of the school's constituent groups (class groupings for example) are closely related to the central purposes of the school. Others parallel the cultural and recreational groupings in the wider community, which exist to further the idiosyncratic interests of their members and which only enter into active relationship with the state when pressing for legislative or executive action presumed crucial to their proper functioning. Some of the parallels between school and adult associations are quite close. Dramatic societies, football clubs and learned societies perform the same function within the school as in the community outside. There are even school parallels of the so-called attitude groups noted above. Some school societies work on behalf of charitable associations, like OXFAM, or promote the ideals of the United Nations' Association. More rarely, but not unknown, there are school branches of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.'[24]

These latter groups will also encourage feelings of fraternity, which Entwistle thinks are very important for democracy. He concludes 'The encouragement of societies of adolescents in voluntary association within the school could be a more productive source of pratical training in democratic citizenship than other exercises in school democracy, whether of a 'mock' or representative nature.'[25]

Entwistle is aware of the problems facing his ideas, that in practice the kind of participation for young people are allowed to do will be ineffectual. He notes that 'We seem to be saying to the young, prepare yourself for active, democratic, adult citizenship, but be deferential and obedient as children.' The basic approach, however, is clear: that children and young people learn best about politics by practicing it. Lawrence Freedman, of Nuffield College, Oxford, draws on Entwistle's ideas.[26] He supports them, but makes the obvious criticism: 'The basic difficulty with this approach has often been identified. For reasons of power and vested interests only derisory participation will probably be permitted. The political phenomena most readily identified in schools are best described, if we are to use the language of political theory, with words like 'totalitarianism' or 'despotism', benevolent or otherwise.'[27] Education faces a dilemma in the author's view, for 'Our democratic political theory encourages us, through education, to instill a sense of the worth of, and develop the requisite capabilities for, active participation as citizens. However, the realities of central and local government, and the distribution of power within society, militate against the possibility of most citizens exercising effective influence over the events and institutions that shape their lives,'[28] Thus Freedman does not think a 'realistic' approach, as he describes the ideas of Crick, will necessarily make politics more relevant to school students, since they will only

realise how little they can do. The answer is to stress the profound importance of politics to 'their present and future life-situations whether they care to acknowledge this or not.' Politics should be about events and conflicts within the direct experience of the young people concerned. Freedman cites examples of housing developments, and concludes his article by stating 'It has been my aim in this paper to try to outline and justify an approach to Political Studies that takes the student's own life-experience and life-situation (the community) as the centre of gravity for the curriculum.'[29]

Although Entwistle and Freedman's ideas are not identical, it is possible to identify in them a rather different approach to that of the Hansard Society Report, and perhaps in line with some of the points raised in the HMI's paper. The stress is on practical involvement in political activity by young people, whether in the school or the community outside. Politics is seen as something directly relevant to their lives, and learning best done by actual practice. Such an approach inevitably contains a commitment to participation and action by young people.

Criticisms of Political Education

The success of the Political Education movement has been due to some extent to the skill of its advocates, particularly Bernard Crick. Its support by parts of 'the Establishment' have led, however, to criticisms. Thus Salter and Tapper see it as performing the function of legitimating inequality by socialising young people to readily accept their place in the economic and social order.[30] The authors have doubts, however, about its ability to achieve this end, since they are unconvinced about the ability of formal education to be an effective means of political control. 'It (political education) represents a reaffirmation of the traditional faith in the power of formal schooling to mould man and society in a decade of

challenge to that faith.'[31] Tapper states elsewhere that 'only in very peculiar circumstances is formal education a viable instrument of political control and change, and even in those circumstances its influence is subject to severe constraints.'[32] G. Whitty is worried by the very success of political education, attributing this to the fact that it is 'in tune with the general reactionary thrust of current educational thinking.'[33] He feels that 'the association between political education and the uncritical defence of established institutions poses a far greater threat to the sort of open and critical enquiry to which most social science teachers at least pay lip-service (than the activities of extremists).', and that political education should be part of 'broader social, political and economic education programmes in order to prevent the fragmentation and limitation of pupils' understanding of the social world.'[34]

It is perhaps natural that those who want young people to be aware of radical and alternative views of society will be suspicious of a programme which seems to have official backing. Whitty sees one of the main reasons for official support for political education as fear of extremists. 'There is little doubt that the immediate stimulus for the emergence of political education onto the political agenda, so soon after the Green Paper had made only a passing reference to it, lay in official anxiety about the activities of the National Front and the Socialist Workers Party in Lewisham in the summer of 1977.'[35] He does allow, however, that 'there are features of an essentially ractionary initiative which can be turned to radical ends.' Thus the force of the criticisms of political education seem to be not whether it should take place, but that teachers must be wary of the motives of those promoting it and ensure that genuine alternatives are presented to young people. At the same time there is some scepticism about its effectiveness.

The Present Position in Britain

At the time of writing the economic situation and government policy are limiting the resources available for educational innovation. Nevertheless interest in political education within the teaching profession continues to grow. D.E.S. courses are being organised, and several institutions of higher education are establishing courses for intending teachers in the subject. Teesside Polytechnic has just announced its intention to do so (July 1979). An adviser with specific responsibility for political education has been appointed at Sheffield. In April 1979 the Association for the Teaching of the Social Sciences and the Politics Association held a conference at Ruskin College, Oxford on Social Science and Political Education. The conference was over-subscribed, and several regional ones are also to be held. All the contributors to the Hansard Society Report were present, along with their critics, and one of the HMI's who contributed to the DES working paper. There seemed to be a cleavage at the conference between those who wanted politics taught specifically and those who preferred it to be, as G. Whitty suggested above, part of a broader social studies programme ' to avoid the fragmentation and limitation of the pupils' understanding of the social world.' It could be argued that this divergence represents the different professional interests of those involved, rather than any fundamental difference or philosophy. There did seem to be agreement, however, that the immediate future was not likely to see a new subject called 'political education', but rather that teachers would pay more attention to the political aspects of existing subjects. This was certainly the view of the one LEA adviser who was present. Although this goes against the recommendations of the Hansard Society Report, that a clearly identified separate subject is better than infusion, but it is probably a recognition of economic reality. There was certainly a feeling at the conference of impatience with further discussion, and a desire to begin the practical work. This was reflected

in the demand for mateiral and for the discussion of the actual skills required for classroom work. The argument about whether political education should take place had been won. What was important now was how it should be done.

Conclusion

Discussion of political education in this country has been dominated by the Hansard Report. This emphasises the essentially conflictive nature of politics, and the need to consider with as much empathy as possible different points of view. Democrats can agree, however, on certain procedural values which should underlie all political education. The Report leaves open the question as to whether political education should actively encourage political participation, rather than simply equip people to do it. The impact of the Hansard Society Report has rather overshadowed the earlier work of Entwistle who stressed that young people could best learn about politics through actual experience of it. This approach would involve participation in voluntary bodies, both inside and outside school. The paper by the HMI's, although strongly influenced by the Hansard Society Report, does emphasise the essentially political nature of everyday life, and the need to both raise the reputation of politics and encourage more active participation in it.

Criticism of the political education movement seems to be suspicion that because it has received support from various influential quarters it must necessarily support the status quo and inhibit genuinely free enquiry. The critics do not maintain what political education should not take place, but rather that teachers should be wary of the motives of those promoting it. It seems clear that there is considerable support for the idea within the teaching profession, despite the current restriction of resources. Because of this it is likely that teaching about politics will take place

although there may not be something explicitly called 'political education' on the timetable. There does seem to be a division amongst practising teachers between those who see political education as essentially an academic activity, involving knowledge about the political structures, ideas and parties of this country, and those who see it more as equipping young people for effective action within the community, and encouraging them to take a more active political role. This division is reflected by the writers on the subject - whether political education should equip young people to better understand politics, leaving the decision whether to participate up to them, or should actually encourage participation in political activity.

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Footnotes

(a) Political education of one sort or another had been going on in America much earlier than this. Both voting and public education were in advance of Britain.

(b) For example, in 1949 J. Hemming wrote that Social Studies should be taught to:

> "Foster the development of spontaneity, self-reliance, flexibility of mind, clear thinking, tolerance initiative, articulateness, adventurousness of outlook, courage in the face of new problems, enjoyment of creative activity, sound standards of action and appreciation, world-mindedness, a sense of purpose and a philosophy of life".

So this could well be a complete education!

(c) The authors note, with some amusement that their paper on political education was the only one in the collection which mentioned corporal punishment.

CHAPTER III

Possibilities for Political Education - the Sociological Background

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky:
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man;
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die!
The child is father of the man;

William Wordsworth

It is men that change circumstances and
the educator himself needs educating.

Karl Marx

Education is an admirable thing, but it is
well to remember from time to time that
nothing that is worth knowing can be taught.

Oscar Wilde

This chapter looks at the evidence available to us about how people actually do learn about politics, and in consequence how effective a Political Education programme is likely to be. In particular it is necessary to know in what ways an educator can be effective. Rather than discuss what we ought to do, but unfortunately cannot, it is more useful to consider what can be done and then think about how it can be done best.

The chapter is subdivided as follows: firstly there is a brief description of the evidence about the learning process itself; secondly there is a discussion of what socialisation means, and what it comprises; thirdly there is a consideration of three agencies of socialisation, the family, the peer group, and the wider society, fourthly there is a more detailed consideration of the agency of socialisation this thesis is most concerned with, the education system, and finally a discussion of what a political education programme could be expected to do, given the influence of the other agencies.

How Young People Learn about Politics

Although 'Political Education' is not necessarily confined to the period in which a person is in formal education, it is useful to consider the kind of political education which is appropriate at different levels of development.

An important influence has been Piaget, and his work may be applied to learning about politics. He discovered that children could think in different ways at different stages of their development, and it was not useful to introduce them to things before they were ready for them.

Initially children can only think in terms of themselves. Next they are able to relate to the world about them, but to think in 'concrete' rather than in 'abstract' terms. It is not until early adolescence that they are able to think in an abstract way about principles. Not all children develop at the same speed, and it is possible to speed up the development process by certain styles of teaching. Goldmann has applied Piaget's ideas to the teaching of religion in his book 'Readiness for Religion'[1] saying that the more difficult abstract ideas about religion should be deferred until children are ready to understand them. Work has been done on children's different perspectives of international affairs as they grow older by Adelson[2] and class consciousness by Simmons and Rosenberg.[3] There is also the work of Merelman[4] on how children develop their abilities to learn. He found there was a 'spurt' in thinking about policy during the teens. It seems from the work done that the child does not really develop an ability to understand politics properly until the early teens, particularly the ability to understand the other person's point of view. At the same time the researchers find an interest in politics developing among young people.

Hess and Torney conducted a large scale survey on how children learn about politics in the United States in 1967.[5] It was conducted in eight cities in different regions of the country, and in each city four schools were chosen, two from a middle class area and two from a working class one. In each school two classrooms were tested at each grade. In all 12,000 white children were involved. The attitudes of young children to authority figures such as the president, or policemen, were essentially benign, and it is only in the teens that more sceptical attitudes develop. The basic loyalty to country, and to a lesser extent party, is formed at a very early age, and this seems to survive the more sceptical attitudes that will

develop towards individual politicians later on. (This seems to be demonstrated by the willingness of Americans to support 'the President' almost as an institution, even though they dislike him as an individual and dislike his politics.) Greenstein[6] corroborates Hess and Torney's findings. He notes that young people tend to develop a more sceptical attitude towards politicans and political institutions as they approach adolescence. These findings would seem to correspond to the general ideas of Piaget and those of Goldmann about religious education.

How Political Education should actually be organised in schools will be discussed in greater detail below, but it is worth noting a point made by Hess and Torney here. They note that most teaching about politics in American secondary schools tends to be conducted in a way which would be more appropriate to a junior school. Because young children tend to want harmony, and be against division, schools, Hess and Torney note, tend 'not to deal with partisanship or to discuss the importance of conflict in the operation of the system'. The rights and obligations of the citizen to participate are minimised, and as a result 'it leaves the elementary school child with inadequate information at a time when he is becoming orientated towards the importance of political participation'.[7] John Patrick also points out[8] that the 'political clout' of the individual is emphasised, as if he had a form of direct access to the government without the necessity of party conflict and debate. 'Most middle-school youths do not understand that conflicts, competitions and compromises are essential to the political process in our country.' (This point is illustrated very clearly in the following chapter, when textbooks in use in the U.K. are analysed. Exactly the same point seems to emerge.)

Most American schools stress loyalty to country far more emphatically than British ones, and the impression given is that these basic feelings are heavily reinforced, but that a more sophisticated understanding of the political process, as well as a learning of the skills necessary to participate in it, are neglected. An idealised, unrealistic, picture of the political world is presented. Harmon Zeigler observes: 'American high schools do not inform their students of the realities of the political process. Believing, as most of them do, that all is right with the world students exposed in college to a more realistic interpretation of American politics are sometimes shocked into an unnecessarily extreme pessimism. Many students have said that college courses in American government have so shaken their idealism that they no longer think political participation is necessary or desirable.'[9]

These points will be considered further when the contribution the school can make is examined in detail. It is worth pointing out, however, that political education may have results contrary to what its proponents want simply because they take little account of the ability of young people to understand it. There is probably as much danger from incompetent political education as there is from bias or indoctrination.

Political Socialisation

Political Socialisation is the process whereby political attitudes are formed by the various pressures and influences on an individual. Sociologists often refer to these different influences as the 'agencies of socialisation'. For the purpose of analysis these agencies can be considered separately, but in practice they usually act together, and it is not always easy to distinguish the precise influence of each one.

The impression is sometimes also given that a young person's political views are formed early in life, and then remain unchanged for the rest of it. What is probably more likely is that they continue to be surrounded by the same influences which shaped their views in the first place. Dowse and Hughes point out: 'In more complex, faster changing industrial societies other institutions, groups and organisations intervene between early socialisation experiences and adult life. This fact alone increases the possibility that attitudes and values formed early in life may be modified at stages throughout the life cycle. Such changes need not be cataclysmic and it may be that in relatively stable political societies, complex or otherwise, early political learning is subject to little modification.'[10] Gramsci made the same point in a different way, when he emphasised that political learning had to be connected to experience, and could only effectively begin when someone experienced the work situation.[11]

In most societies the socialisation process is cumulative. The family, peer group, school and the wider social system all reinforce each other so that the general values of that society are passed on. It may not always be that the agency does it consciously. In schools for example, what may be passed on is not what an individual teacher says, but general attitudes about authority and work. Children may not understand an individual's views, but they remember whether he or she was strict, allowed discussion and other aspects of the teacher and his situation which he might have thought unimportant. Edgar Litt shows what happens when one agency of socialisation, the school, tries to counter attitudes which are firmly entrenched in society and the family. He conducted a survey of three major secondary schools in different parts of Boston in 1963.[12] The schools, designated Alpha, Beta and Gamma

were in upper, middle and lower class areas respectively. Classes doing a Civic Education programme were compared with those who were not. The course stressed democratic norms of citizen competence and the desirability of participation. Civic leaders from all three communities were involved. The author examined whether attitudes towards politics changed as a result of exposure to the course, which was the same in all three communities. Only in Alpha was there a small positive increase in attitudes towards participation. In the other two there was no marked difference. The attitudes towards politics were reflected by the teachers and civic leaders involved in the course. In Alpha they felt a greater sense of civic competence than Beta, and Beta was correspondingly higher than Gamma. In Gamma the citizen was seen as having a subordinate role, with little opportunity to influence political activity. The author concludes that 'Apparently attitudes towards political activity are so strongly channelled through other agencies in each community that the civic education programme's efforts have little independent effect.' It was only in the fertile soil of Alpha, where young people are used to seeing authority as working in their interests, and responsive to what they want, that there was some small bloom. The children of Gamma were probably used to seeing authority in the community as something which neglected or positively worked against them, and no amount of teaching could counter this experience. The author concludes gloomily 'The school alone cannot fight other factors.'

The same point is made in a different context in 'Knuckle Sandwich' by Robins and Cohen.[13] Here the authors have a partisan perspective - they describe themselves as 'socialist educationalists', but they are aware of the problems that outsiders, such as themselves, can encounter when trying to work with working-class youth, and why such attempts can easily fail.

They advocate working outside school with volunteer groups, but emphasise that 'The teacher's whole strategy was designed to avoid placing them in situations where they had to choose between their allegiances to the parents and their culture and involvement in the educational group.'[14] Learning to Labour, by Paul Willis[15] makes this point also. The children, or more properly adolescents, whom the teacher with radical sympathies most wants to help are those he is least able to. They have a pretty shrewd idea of what school is like, and see it as part of a system they reject. Thus the school is trying to make them something which conflicts with their own family and peer group culture, and should be opposed in every way possible. This is epitomised by their attitude to 'time':

> "The self-directing and thwarting of formal organisational aims is also an assault on official notions of time..... The common complaint about 'the lads' (the non-conformists) from staff and the 'ear-oles' (school conformists) is that they waste valuable time. Time for the 'lads' is not something you carefully husband and thoughtfully spend on the achievement of desired objectives in the future. For the 'lads' time is something they want to claim for themselves now as an aspect of their immediate identity and self-direction. Time is used for the preservation of a state-being with the 'lads' - not for the achievement of a goal - qualifications.'[16]

Their project is unproductive because when they leave school they quite happily accept jobs within the system, and adopt the same attitude towards authority there as they did at school. It does not seriously 'challenge' the system or seek to provide any alternative. (This of course was written several years ago when jobs were easier to obtain. Their attitudes could change with permanent unemployment).

> "Most work - or the 'grafting' they accept they will face - is equilibrated by the overwhelming need for instant money, the assumption that all work is unpleasant and that what really matters is the potential particular work situations hold for self and particularly masculine expression, diversions and 'laffs' as learnt creatively in the counter-school culture. These things are quite separate from the intrinsic nature of any task.'[17]

These attitudes will have been passed on by family and peer group. To the cynical teacher they will simply give weight to the argument that it is not worth 'bothering' with such young people. The situation will be particularly distressing to those who actually want to help them escape from their situation of no hope and no prospects. Their creativity is certainly there, but it is channelled into simply preserving their own 'identity', not into either creative work or changing the system.

In the next sections agencies of socialisation will be considered separately, giving particular attention to the school as the main thrust of this thesis is educational. Before this, however, some brief consideration must be given to what are known as the 'personality theories' of political behaviour.

'Personality theories' were first developed to explain authoritarian regimes, after these had flourished in Europe. They attempt to explain the existence of particular political systems by the dominance within them of individuals with particular personality types. In 1950 a book was published by Adorno and others[18] which explained fascism and anti-semitism in terms of 'authoritarian personalities'. This idea was later used to develop a concept of 'working class authoritariansim' in America, as distinct from 'middle class liberalism.' These authoritarian members of the working class were assumed to be the main supporters of American involvement in Vietnam. This view is attacked by Stacey[19] who points out that many upper and middle class Americans supported the war, and that exposure to higher education does not necessarily produce more 'liberal' attitudes as some theorists had suggested. The 'personality' theory of political development has been widely criticised because although it shows why certain individuals acted the way they did, it is not a very useful theory to explain why those sort of individuals might go into politics

at a certain time rather than do other things. Dowse and Hughes comment as follows:

> "The weakness of such studies is that whilst they are useful in highlighting a mechanism behind political involvement, they do not tell us much about the distribution of such types in terms useful to political sociology. We know a great deal about family background, education, marital status and so on, but we do not know whether the type is systematically produced in one structual location rather than another.'[20]

Robert Lane also explored 'personality' theories of politics by investigating the effect relationships between children and their fathers had on political attitudes.[21] Four whose relationships with their fathers were not good showed poor attitudes to politics in general. The author points out that all (four) expressed anxiety, but do not necessarily channel this into politics. He then observes that 'generally in the American political culture the anxious man does not employ politics as a defence against his conflicts. One of the little appreciated benefits of such a culture is the low premium on politics for the anxious and the neurotic.' Lane concludes that those who had bad relationships with their fathers are likely to be authoritarian, but they are also unlikely to go into politics when there are other openings for them. This highlights the weakness of 'personality' theories in trying to formulate general theories of political development. The approach is useful in explaining the political behaviour (or non-behaviour) of individuals, but it does not explain why certain political beliefs predominate in a particular society. It is not therefore very useful in a study of political socialisation.

The Family

A considerable amount of work has been done on the importance of the family in shaping political attitudes. The work by Hess and Torney has already been mentioned. This indicated that basic 'gut reactions' such as feelings of patriotism and partisan loyalty we implanted in the early

formative years in the family. Beck states that 'Partisanship has consistently emerged as the political view most influenced by parents'[22] He draws on the work of Jennings and Niemi[23] which shows that in most families politics is of low salience, and unlikely to be discussed in depth. Nevertheless a broad party identification is passed on.

Butler and Stokes have analysed the influences of the family in this country. In their book, 'Political Change in Britain'[24] they analyse voting behaviour over several generations. The various influences on voting behaviour are considered, and they construct a 'generational' theory of political change. This assumes that party loyalties are internalised at an early age, and are conditioned by the family and important political events in the early life of the person. This theory was also put forward in America in the 1960's by a group of American sociologists who established the 'Michigan' model of electoral behaviour. Butler and Stokes see substantial shifts to political parties being perpetuated by generations which were young when that particular political party was in the ascendancy. Young people form a strong party loyalty which lasts all their lives.

Dowes and Hughes have challenged this theory in that it tends to imply that political learning cannot continue beyond youth (see above). It is important to appreciate, however, that what Butler and Stokes are talking about is a gut-feeling, akin to patriotism, which people will usually stick to regardless of the shifts in party ideology. (Witness the way party allegiances tend to stay constant at general elections although individuals will abstain or even desert their normal party in bye-elections.) Nor does the theory imply that the family is the only agent of socialisation. The family is reinforced by events in the political arena and the general climate of the times. Such political watersheds do not occur at every election - 1945 might be a good example.

Thus the family has a strong influence on basic political attitudes. This is not to say that this influence may not be countered later on. In most cases, however, young people are unlikely to encounter ideas which contradict what they learnt at home. In their mammoth work, which will be considered in more depth later, Almond and Verba point out that most primary groups of families, friendship groups and work-place groups tend to be homogeneous in the partisan sense, and will tend to reinforce basic attitudes.[25] Loyalty to party, which is very strong, is really a feeling, or affective orientation, just as patriotism is, rather than something which has been intellectually learnt in the cognitive sense. These feelings are likely to persist even when a young person is in a position to consider politics much more deeply.

The Peer Group

The other main influence on a young person, apart from the family and school, is the peer group. A study by Newcomb[26] in 1943 looked at how students at Bennington College were influenced in their political attitudes by their contemporaries, and whether these infleunces persisted after leaving college. Students from families of conservative disposition and social position deserted these views to take up liberal viewpoints. What is more important, they still retained these views twenty-five years later when many members of the original panel were interviewed again. Beck comments: 'Not only does this study demonstrate that peer groups can play a major role in the political socialisation process, but it highlights the possibilities of political learning beyond childhood.' It is important to remember that college students live in a very enclosed world, usually living away from home and cut off from outside influences. The influence of their peers is much greater than it might be elsewhere. Beck[27] attaches considerable importance to peer groups, and points out that they are more

important in modern industrial societies than in more traditional ones where powerful kinship networks prevail. That they are important seems to be attested by the fact that certain regimes have used the peer group to undermine the traditional influences of the family. George Orwell imagines such a situation in 1984, with children being encouraged to spy on their parents, and Geiger in 1956 (not a novel!) used data from Russian emigrés to show how the proregime peer group inhibited the influences of parents after the Russian Revolution. Hess and Torney show that students who are involved in groups show a greater tendency to express interest in politics, but feel that there is no evidence that social participation has any influences on basic attitudes to the system.

Paul Willis' work, Learning to Labour, has already been mentioned. This shows what a powerful force the peer group is. The study is set in a secondary school in the Midlands, and shows how a group called the 'lads' successfully challenge the culture of the school, which is supported by the conformists (the 'ear-oles'). They reject everything the school stands for, and are at best uncooperative, at worst disruptive. Willis sees their protest, for all its sexist and racist overtones, as being fundamentally against capitalism itself. 'The counter-school culture helps to liberate its members from the burden of conformism and conventional achievement.' They recognise that despite the promises of careers teachers there is little prospect of any sort of satisfying job available for them. Whatever work they do they will be treated as a 'commodity', working hours and paid for what they do rather than what they are. They reject all attempts at school to organise them, but they willingly enter work and accept its authority, although they will still get up to tricks (laffs) to make a fool of that authority. The peer group here reinforces the strong cultural and family background which sees the school as an alien culture, and prevents it

submerging and overcoming their own. What is tragic about their protest is that it does not lead anywhere.

The Wider Society

So far two agents of socialisation, the family and the peer group have been considered, and the education system will be dealt with last. None of these influences, however, can be considered in isolation, apart from the wider society of which they are a part. Two general views of political socialisation, and their consequences for political education, will now be examined. The two are what are generally known as the 'hegemony' and 'civic culture' perspectives.

Hegemony Theory is generally associated with the Italian Marxist Gramsci. Gramsci was an Italian socialist who briefly sat in the Italian parliament before the fascist seizure of power. He formed many of his ideas through his work with car workers in Turin, and later wrote them down when in prison. He was concerned with the problem of how a ruling class managed to maintain its position without the overt use of violence and repression, and also tried to formulate a strategy of how the working class could effectively challenge that domination. Hegemony theory has been summarised as follows: 'applied to political socialisation the ideas of hegemony refer to the way that groups with political power manipulate symbols and use propaganda and censorship to consolidate their rule.'[28] Education plays a big part in maintaining hegemonic power. If the working class is to challenge it, it must master the education system, not ignore it. This has considerable consequences for political education. What should the reaction of an educator be who is conviced that the formal system is despensing a 'dominant ideology'? Gramsci is clear. The working class must master the culture of the rulers, not despite it.

> "One of Gramsci's persistent themes is that one must learn from one's adversary whom one should be careful not to belittle. How, he asked, if you are superior to him 'did he succeed in dominating you?'[29]

Gramsci's ideas have profound consequences for political education, which will be considered later. The most powerful protagonist of the hegemony theory in contemporary Britain in Ralph Miliband, who describes the situation as follows:

> "In the exploitation of national sentiments, conservative parties are powerfully helped by innumerable agencies of civil society which are, to a greater or lesser degree, involved in the propagation of a 'national view' and a 'national interest' defined in conservative terms - the press and other mass media, educational institutions, youth organisations, ex-soldiers' associations and leagues, specifically nationalist organisations, the Churches, business, its associations and lobbies etc. Nor certainly is the conservative drift of the propaganda for which these agencies are variously responsible less pronounced because so many of them claim to be 'non-partisan' and 'non-political'.[30]

Parkin supports this view, pointing out that in a society which is predominantly conservative, voting Labour can be regarded as almost deviant.[31] Stacey draws on the work of Parkin and Miliband to conclude that the neglect of political education in schools in the United Kingdom is a deliberate policy by the ruling elite to prevent any challenge to their rule. 'After 100 years of public education in Britain the aim of a large body of administrators, educationalists and teachers seems to be to produce a large mass of passive political semi-literates.'[32] He then quotes similar conclusions for America by Zeigler and Peak. Tapper and Salter see the situation somewhat differently.[33] They see the education system as various elites trying to legitimise their own position, or more generally to 'legitimate inequality'. Political Education is seen as part of this, but they are sceptical about its efficacy. 'It represents a reaffirmation of the traditional faith in the power of formal schooling to mould a man and society in a decade of challenge to that faith'.

Ted Tapper writes elsewhere that'Only in very peculiar circumstances is formal

education a viable instrument of political control and change, and even in those circumstances its influence is subject to severe constraints'.[34] Thus acceptance of the hegemony theory in varying degrees does not bring about any consensus about the role of education in both supporting or challenging hegemony. Gramsci himself did not think school education as such could be very effective in promoting political awareness, which had to be rooted in practical experience. This issue will be discussed further when the socialising effects of the education system and its potential for political education are discussed.(a)

An alternative perspective on how society reproduces its political values is given by Almond and Verba in their large study, the Civic Culture. The basic idea behind Almond and Verba's work is that there is more than one elite in society, rather than domination by a single elite. Different elites are responsive to popular pressure, and can be called to account by the population. Such a 'pluralistic' situation prevents the domination and exploitation of the people by any one group. Miliband's book is a critique of this perspective on society. Almond and Verba set out to find out what the preconditions were for a democratic polity. They examined five countries, all with governments normally regarded as 'democratic' - The United States, The United Kingdom, Italy, Germany and Mexico (although some might have their doubts about the last one!). The authors feel that a special type of political culture, which they call the 'Civic Culture', is essential for democracy. They define culture as 'the psychological orientation towards social objects. When we speak of the political culture of a society we refer to the political system as internalised in the cognition, feelings and evaluations of its population.'[35] The way individuals feel towards their political system will be determined by their experience of relationships and values within society generally. They

outline three types of political culture, the parochial, the subject and the participant. In the stable Civic Culture, which is necessary for a democracy, elements of all three will be present. Citizens will retain strong parochial links, and at the same time be effectively subjects for most of the time so that the government can run the country effectively. They will have a strong belief in their competence to participate and effect the government, even if in practice they seldom do. Almond and Verba maintain that this 'potentiality of citizens for infleunce and activity' keeps a 'reserve of infleunce' which is sufficient to keep governmental elites in check. Of the five countries studied, Britain and the United States approximate most closely to the Civic Culture, although in the USA the participant element is stronger than in Britain, and these two countries have the most stable democracies. The authors stress the importance of 'system affect', or positive feelings towards the government, together with strong feelings of political competence, both as regards influencing government action (political input) and dealing with the subsequent activities of government (political output). The authors divide the process of learning about politics into three parts, the affective, or feelings, the cognitive, where facts and information are learnt, and the evaluational, when judgements are made. For there to be a strong Civic Culture, members of the society must not only have strong cognitive and evaluational orientations towards the government, but they must also have a strong attachment, or affective orientation towards it as well (system affect). In Germany they identify the former without the latter. Conversely in Mexico system affect is high, but political skills and cognition low. Neither country is deemed to have a successful Civic Culture, and Italy, where both cognitive and affective orientations are low has the worst of them all.

Almond and Verba examine the influence of the family, the school and the job situation in contributing to the development of the Civic Culture. In all cases experiences of participating effectively in decision-making increased later feelings of political competence, and in America manifest teaching about politics also enhanced these feelings. The Civic Culture, however, is seen as something over and above individual agents of socialisation. Feelings of trust are important, as is an overriding confidence in the political system itself, which can overcome partisan differences.

The Civic Culture shows that there is more to the socialisation process than the work of individual agencies. This external factor is not something deliberately imposed, as some hegemony theorists imply, but a culture which has grown up gradually over time, and includes contradictory elements. The values which an individual acquires about the political system are not specifically taught, but acquired gradually through experience of normal social relationships. The distinction between affective and cognitive learning is also important for a discussion of political education.

As noted earlier, Almond and Verba have a particular concept of what democracy is. In particular they feel that it is maintained by individual citizens having a 'reserve of competence' to call their leaders to account, even if they seldom do so, and also by the leaders in the elites themselves believing in democracy. Almond and Verba assert that this is a belief, which cannot necessarily be empirically proved. This point is discussed in Chapter I, where they state 'although our data cannot demonstrate this, there is reason to believe that political elites share the culture of the non-elite.' In fact there is considerable argument amongst political sociologists as to whether rival elites give people a meaningful

choice at all, and to what extent elites are in touch with those they represent. Almond and Verba's views seem to be rather over-sanguine in view of the ability of elites to cover up their mistakes, and the experience of elites, particularly when in governemnt, losing touch with their rank and file supporters.

Although the hegemoney viewpoint and the pluralist analysis which Almond and Verba represent have radical differences, they do have some similarities which are important for an analysis of Political Education. Firstly, they both maintain that in a stable democracy there is a system of political values which necessarily underpin that stability, and that these emanate from an elite or elites, whether one sees those elites as benign or deliberately trying to maintain their position in any way they can. Whatever may be thought about the ideas of 'reserves of competence', it is not part of that culture that the citizen participate actively in politics. The reason is that he believes the existing elites are serving him well enough as it is, and there is no reason why he should. Whether this belief is well-founded is open to debate. He also seems to basically trust the system. Whether he is right to do so is again a matter of conjecture. This 'Political Culture' is going to have a direct influence on a political education programme, particularly if that programme promotes an active and participatory attitude towards politics.

The Educational System

Although politics is taught in various ways in British schools, there has been no organised attempt here to teach politics to everyone as there has been in America. This does not mean, however, that British schools do not convey particular attitudes about politics. They can do this through their structure and through their social attitudes in general. Gramsci's

ideas on the actual content of school curricula were educationally conservative, because he believed that hegemony was maintained not by the curricula or 'hidden curricula' of schools, but by the way schools were organised.

> "The traditional school was oligarchic because it was intended for the new generation of the ruling class, destined to rule in its turn: but it was not in fact oligarchic in its mode of teaching. It is not the fact that pupils learn how to rule there, nor the fact that it tends to produce gifted men, which gives a particular school its social character. This social character is determined by the fact that each social group has its own type of school, intended to perpetuate a specific traditional function, ruling or subordinate. If one wishes to break this pattern one needs, instead of multiplying and grading different types of vocational schools, to create a single type of formative school (primary-secondary) which would take the child up to the threshold of his choice of job, forming him during this time as a person capable of thinking, studying and ruling - or controlling those who rule.'[36]

This view would have clear implications for the organisation of secondary education, and the existence of a private sector catering for the needs mainly of an elite. Other writers, however, feel that the reorganisation of schools alone does not necessarily ensure that all young people receive a genuinely 'open' education where particular value systems do not dominate. Perhaps it is impossible to achieve such an 'open' system in practice, but a consideration of the factors operating against it, and being able to ascertain exactly what they are can make a system more rather than less 'open'. Much has been written recently about the actual 'control' of knowledge, and who decides what pupils actually learn. Egglestone discusses different approaches to the curriculum in The Sociology of the School Curriculum[37]. He constructs a curriculum model with two poles - the received and reflexive. The received curriculum is the traditional one handed down to the school and sustained by the demands of employers, universities and examination boards, whereas the reflexive model is a direct response to the needs of the pupils. This latter one is not always easy to achieve, and in many cases the needs of the pupils may be to

succeed in the conventional terms prescribed by outside factors. It does represent, however, a shift in power to teachers and pupils, away from outside agencies. In practice, Egglestone, argues, what emerges is not so much a 'reflexive' curriculum as a 'restructuring' one, responsive to teachers, rather than controlled by them:

> "There are no clear indications that the majority of teachers are endeavouring to change the definition, evaluation or distribution of knowledge, still less to modify 'the distribution of power and the principles of social control'. Changes that are occurring in the social structure of modern societies only infrequently seem to spring from the school curriculum. Teachers' powers in curriculum decisions commonly seems to be exercised to reinforce consensus orientations in society rather than to challenge them.'[38]

Although Egglestone thinks that teachers are unlikely to initiate radical change in the curriculum, he does think that in a 'restructuring' situation they have a position of 'potential power'. The other influence is the one first defined by Jackson, the 'Hidden Curriculum'. This is the unofficial curriculum which is how the school really operates, whatever its official aims may be. Jackson defines it as follows:

> "(there is) a hidden curriculum which each student and teacher must master if he is to make his way satisfactorily through the school. The demands created by these features of classroom life may be contrasted with the academic demands - the 'official' curriculum, so to speak - to which educators have traditionally paid most attention. As might be expected, the two curriculums are related to each other in several important ways .... Indeed, many of the rewards and punishments that sound as if they are being dispensed on the basis of academic success and failure are really more closely related to the mastery of the hidden curriculum.'[39]

Thus the actual structure of the curriculum is important in selecting what pupils actually learn, and in many cases is influenced by tradition and outside agencies. Teachers have shown a reluctance in practice to take more control over curricula. But curriculum is about more than simply the organisation of timetables. It is also about relationships within the school. As Jackson has pointed out there are a set of values and power relationships which effectively operate in schools, regardless of what the official 'norms' may be, and pupils in particular are very

aware of them, often pointing out the difference between what they are told in assembly and other places and what actually happens to them. Teaching presupposes a relationship between teachers and taught, which Willis refers to as the 'teaching paradigm', and this effectively teaches ideas about authority regardless of what may be actually said. This is particularly pertinent for political education, where thinking about such relationships may be one of the questions on the agenda. This presents a problem, but it is no use saying it is an insoluble one. 'If we have nothing to say about what to do on Monday morning everything is yielded to a purist structuralist immobilising reductionalist tautology: nothing can be done until the basic structures of society are changed but the basic structures prevent us making any changes.'[40] Willis goes on to say that people working in education have to work on two levels - having to do the best for individuals within the existing system, and thus to some extent perpetuating it, and at the same time trying to change it in the long term.

In a very interesting book, Chanan and Gilchrist try to work out exactly what a school can and should do in our existing society[41]. They point out that the main aim of education should be to enable young people to establish their own values in a world which is permanently changing. Conflict is an essential part of that process - 'conflict, in oneself and between self and others, is one of the most fundamental human experiences - the very one, indeed, that makes values necessary.' (p.122) Culture is also something which pupils themselves should have a part in structuring, not something which is handed down from elsewhere. Their final paragraph reads:

> "The values by which we must live in the last quarter of the twentieth century do not exist, then, as a secure body of doctrine which schools can simply hand on, nor will they arrive automatically through some evolutionary adaption to conditions created by our own technology. They must be consciously created, and are now in the process of creation throughout society; a process in which, if they can rise to it, schools have a vital part to play."[42]

Douglas Holly, in Beyond Curriculum[43] makes the point that in the past education has been concerned with adapting individuals to certain pre-defined roles in society which were determined by an elite, but that it should really be about liberation.

> "Education should be about development, about the realisation of human potential in whatever circumstances. Where there is no possibility of development there is no education, only 'socialisation' or 'conditioning', according to whichever positivistic type of explanation is employed." (p.86)

> "Liberation, if it means anything, and isn't simply an empty word, means more therefore than freeing people from the yoke of school authorities and the subtle curb of intellectual elitism. It means giving people the real possibility of changing things, of continuing, beyond school, to take part in the determination of their own affairs.' (p.168)

The aim of thinking freely about society, which is really political education, unconstrained by either the traditional curriculum or by the authority relationships implict in education as it has been traditionally practised, poses problems for the educator. Gramsci saw political education as being essentially an adult process which would be aided by the experience of the worker. He saw counter hegemonic activity as educational, which would be carried on in workers' associations and other organisations independent of the state. This idea was based on his own practical experience in Turin. The school should provide a broad, humanistic education. Entwhistle summarises Gramsci's position as follows:

> "I have tried to show that a proper inference to be drawn from the work of Gramsci is that it is unrealistic to look to schools for a radical, counter-hegemonic education: the burden of such an enterprise lies squarely in institutions for adult education, especially in those political associations dedicated to social change and in economic associations where workers are involved in productive relationships which have their own educational imperatives. The conclusion is in sympathy with Marx's assumption that 'truths which are partisan, dependent upon 'party prejudices', should not be taught in schools: it should be left to adults to form their own opinions on these matters 'about which instruction should be given in the lecture hall, not in the schools' (Shore, 1947, pp.84-5, quoting statement to the General Council of the International, 1869)"[44]

Egglestone sees the best avenue for social or political education which encourages genuine independence by the pupil as being informal projects in the Youth Service. He quotes the Schools Council Social Education Project, where relationships between teacher and taught attempt to be democratic.[45]

> "Basically social education of this type is dependent upon a relationship between pupil and teacher which is democratic. They are colleagues jointly seeking answers to questions about the problems and challenges of the immediate school and community. Responsibility for control in the classroom is shifted gradually from being that of the teacher to a joint responsibility of teacher and children."[46]

Such a project will be likely to counter problems in a traditionally organised school, and could function better in a less formal setting. Willis and Robins and Cohen both see the best approach in less formal groups where the teacher's role can be less authoritarian, a resource for the group rather than someone who controls it. Willis also recognises that many teachers have to work within the formal educational system, and there they could aim to achieve working with groups, rather than the conventional stress on individual success. (The social, rather than the individual, power of knowledge.) In such a way the teacher could try and relate to the group feeling and background of the pupils, rather than unwittingly oppose it, and produce the reaction of the counter-school culture. In such a way knowledge could be seen as more relevant to the pupils, and not as an instrument of an alien culture.

All these ideas have profound consequences for any attempt to construct a political education programme, and will be further dealt with in the conclusion below. Before that, however, current educational practice in the U.K. will be briefly examined.

The last major survey of secondary schools in England and Wales was completed by the HMI's in 1979.[47] This covered approximately 10% of the schools in the state system, 384 in all. By far the most common arrangement for teaching was to give all pupils roughly the same curriculum up to the end of the third year. After this in the majority of schools there was a choice, although this was restricted so that all pupils continued to study 'core' subjects.

> "Though there is great diversity between schools it may be said that in general about two-fifths of each pupil's timetable in both fourth and fifth years is devoted to 'core' subjects; these are normally limited to English, mathematics, physical education, and games as far as most pupils are concerned. Religious and careers education as timetabled separate subjects are not always included in the 'core'."

The HMI's ask whether choice is in fact too wide, and whether there is 'insufficient breadth' in some individual pupils' programmes. They also ask whether the curriculum should not include 'some understanding of the society in which they will soon have adult responsibilities', and note that 'Teachers generally acknowledged the need to provide more personal education in the curriculum of all pupils, by including careers education, health education and political education, and by stimulating awareness of economic realities and social obligations.' This, incidentally, is the only specific reference to political education, which had merited a whole section in the earlier report on the Curriculum, 11 to 16.[49]

Thus although they recognise the existence of a 'Common Core', the HMI's do not feel that this really provides an adequate education for 'life', or what could reasonably be described as 'political education'.

Conclusions - what can Political Education do?

The ideas put forwards in this chapter could lead to extreme pessimism. The evidence seems to suggest that a school by itself cannot work against other agencies of socialisation, and that the overall political culture of this country does not encourage political participation and activity. Furthermore formal education itself is criticised as having an effect of socialising young people to accept certain roles and attitudes simply by virtue of the 'teaching paradigm', regardless of what is taught. Even if a school does not set out to do this, it ends up having this effect. The result will be either conformity to the norms of 'getting on' in society, which is done by accepting the status quo, or else a negative reaction to those norms which will not produce any alternative. There will not be an opportunity to look at society in an 'open' way, without any preconditions.

Perhaps Political Education will fail if it is treated as simply another subject, taught in the same way as the existing curriculum. It will be seen as something to be learnt or not learnt depending on the pupils' view of education itself, and not as something directly relevant to the pupils themselves. If it is to be done at all, it must recognise that it will probably have to be done in another way than traditional subjects. Political Education is learning how to deal with issues which confront the pupil in daily life, not something remote and distant. Thus the teacher will have to see it as a 'method' rather than a body of knowledge to be dispensed. The issues which are chosen will have to be

ones which have a direct bearing on the experience of the young people themselves, and this means finding things in the community in which they live.

Thus is not to argue that there is no place for an academic study of politics in school curricula. It is just that we cannot reasonably expect any promotion of it to change young peoples' attitudes to political activity. What a political educator should be teaching is how to deal with a situation and find a solution, not necessarily what that solution should be. Thus there is an implicit assumption that it is desirable to try and tackle problems, rather than just accept them as inevitable. What is classified as a problem, of course, may not be the same from the point of view of young people and teacher, and the teacher must show flexibility in trying to see the viewpoint of the pupils. If he does not, however, the enterprise will be doomed to failure, because even if the teacher is successful in ensuring that the pupils study a particular 'problem', and even do something about it, he will not have succeeded in enabling young people themselves to confront and tackle an issue which they see as 'problematic'.

A successful political education programme will provide problems for the school. It will firstly need to link up with the culture and background of young people in a way that teachers may find unusual, and perhaps difficult. Secondly it will necessitate an ability to try and see the world through young people's eyes, and sympathise, even if it is not possible to agree, with their point of view. Thirdly it will require a good deal of confidence and commitment from the teacher to sustain projects in the face of opposition and when the enthusiasm of the young people wanes. A teacher who genuinely wants to embark on political education must be prepared to face a good deal of setbacks, but it will

probably help him (or her) to have some awareness of the societal pressures and constraints acting upon him. If he or she does not, even the most enthusiastic could easily despair and give up.

This chapter has not presented an easy picture for the would-be political educator. A course of lessons about politics could form a worthwhile part of any school curriculum, but in view of all the pressures on pupils both by society as a whole and from the education system itself, it is unlikely that it would radically change attitudes to politics or stimulate political activity. If Political Education is to do these things it requires a very unconventional approach from the school, and would be very demanding on teachers. It is the views of teachers, particularly on this question as to whether Political Education is in any way different from other school subjects, that the next chapter seeks to ascertain.

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Footnotes

(a) There is considerable scope for discussion as to the extent and effect of a cultural 'hegemony' by a ruling class in Britain, and the subject deserves much fuller treatment than it is possible to afford it here. What is important to note here is that education can, both knowingly and unknowingly, support a dominant culture of a ruling group. It can also challenge that hegemony. The education system is not automatically part of the cultural hegamony in any society, but if other factors are acting to reinforce hegemony the education system will find it difficult to challenge it. In any case it is unlikely that the whole system will be organised with this in mind. Such an enterprise would be left to a few individuals.

CHAPTER IV

Underlying bias - An analysis of textbooks in current use

The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,
But swoll'n with wind, and the rank mist they draw,
Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread:

Milton. Lycidas

Of making many books there is no end, and
much study is a weariness of the flesh.

Ecclesiastes 12, v. 12.

Underlying Bias - An analysis of Textbooks in Current Use

This and the following chapter look at the practice of political education in schools, identifying the values about politics which are being propagated, whether implicitly or explicitly. Textbooks will be considered first. Although many teachers do not rely on textbooks, the ideas put forward in them will have some influence. This is probably most noticeable when new courses are being planned, and teachers who may not be very familiar with a new subject, which political education might well be, can easily adopt the general approach of a particular book, and accept the values without realising it. All the books concerned are in current use, the majority being taken from schools which were involved in the research. Two are very recent, and their use may not be widespread.

Definitions of Bias

Bias, in a political context, is normally assumed to be partisan. Most authors of school textbooks do their utmost to avoid any suggestion of this. Thus, in Understanding Politics in Modern Britain, the author J.S. Sutton, states,

> 'We must now turn to a very sensitive subject, political parties. It is a very sensitive subject because there are many people who have a very strong loyalty to one party or another, and are very suspicious of young people being taught in such a way as to make them biased towards a party which they dislike. Such people will read this chapter very carefully to make sure I am not leading you astray! So, just to be on the safe side, I had better declare my bias before we start. I am strongly biased in favour of your having the right to make up your own mind about political parties. I believe that you should have sufficient information to do so sensibly, and sufficient skill to see when your support is being bought with half-truths, soft talk, or advertisers' gimmicks.' (p.62)

Such a bias, which is explicitly stated, demonstrates an attitude about or towards politics. In the first chapter certain values about politics which a political education programme should adopt were identified. These

were that conflict is an essential part of politics, and political education must recognise this and present different points of view equally well, but not attempt to provide a 'consensus' view where none exists. Secondly political education must provide adequate skills and information to enable young people to be able to participate in the political process, and opportunities for participation, which are not necessarily simply through the political parties, should be clearly explained. Thirdly the essentially worthwhile nature of politics as a human activity should be emphasised. These values can be identified in books without there being a partisan bias at all, and the book can still be said to have a biased position about politics. That it should do so is not necessarily wrong, provided that the bias is made explicit. The problems arise when the authors do not appreciate that their views are not universally accepted, and alternatives are possible.

In order to identify bias, therefore, certain indices of bias have been defined, against which the books will be measured. They are:

Partisan Bias Although most of the books will strive to avoid it, it may still emerge in various ways. It may appear in misunderstandings of the nature of political groups, or in plain inaccuracies.

A View of Society Different aspects of society will have greater or lesser importance and prominence according to the general perspective of the author. The author may not appreciate that he has a particular view, but it may well influence his representation of political positions.

Emphasis A particular group may be overemphasised or belittled, and its importance in the community misrepresented.

Attitudes to Participation This goes beyond whether the book says participation is desirable or not. Is politics represented as something directly relevant to the people reading it, or as some esoteric art, divorced from them? Is there an accurate description of how politics actually

operates, particularly at the grassroots, so that the reader has some idea of what participation actually involves? Are the actual skills required for political participation included?

Attitudes to Politics itself The impression the book gives of politics as an activity. Is it portrayed as interesting and exciting or boring? Is it regarded as worthwhile or disreputable, serious or frivolous?

Books Selected

British Politics Today, edited by Bill Jones and Dennis Kavanagh. Recently published in 1979. Aiming at the 'A' level or first-year university student. (Manchester University Press)

Understanding Politics in Modern Britain by J.S. Sutton, Chairman of the Politics Association. Published recently in 1979. Aimed at CSE or 'O' level students. (Harrap)

Local and Central Government, by Kathleen Allsop. First published in 1976, but subsequently revised. Described as a 'Basic text for Politics or Civics at CSE level.' (Hutchinson, London)

Inside Local Government by Nancy MacKinnon. Published in 1973. Aimed at CSE students (Cassell, London.)

The State; the facts by M.W. Thomas. Published in 1974. Part of a series aimed at the 'less able' (Nelson).

People, Power and Politics by Richard Tames. Published in 1978. Does not say which group it is aimed at, but is part of a 'General Studies' series. Probably intended for Liberal Studies at Tech level, or sixth form general studies. (Nelson)

Life in Our Society, Books 1 and 2, by K. Lambert, published first in 1969 and revised in 1974. This book, according to its preface, is aimed at 'Environmental Studies, Integrated Studies, Social Studies, Sociology and allied subjects at GCE 'O' level and CSE. This book will also be found useful for work with non-examination groups, especially in the fourth and fifth years.' (Nelson)

Sociology by J. Nobbs, R. Hine and M. Flemming. First published in 1975 and aimed at 'O' level students of sociology. (Macmillan)

Modern Society by Jack Nobbs, described specifically as 'Social Studies for CSE.' First published in 1976 (George, Allen and Unwin)

Understanding Industrial Society by A.P. Sanday and P.A. Birch. First published in 1976. This book has separate 'O' level and CSE sections. (Hodder and Stoughton)

People and Politics by Peter Moss, first published in 1976. Does not specify a target audience but seems to be aimed mainly at CSE and other non-examination courses. (Harrap)

This selection includes only one 'A' level book, and there is a preponderance of those aimed at CSE and non-examination groups. This reflects the fact that although there may be more pupils doing academic politics at 'A' level than at other levels within schools, wider 'political education' is aimed at much larger numbers of younger children, many of whom will not take any public examinations at all. Because of recent interest many books aimed at this group have appeared recently. They face the problem of how to simplify without misrepresentation.

This book will now be analysed under the indices given below.

1. Partisan Bias

As expected all of the books were very anxious to avoid overt partisan bias. One way of doing this is to avoid using party labels at all. Thus in People, Power and Politics by Richard Tames parties are hardly mentioned, although political situations are. For example, the political situation is an imaginary town is described as follows; (p.60)

> 'The rapid pace of change in the life of the community has created fears and tensions among the inhabitants. Politically the situation is fluid; no single group or party has clear control of the Council. Nor is there any general agreement about what the most important problems are and how they should be dealt with:' The views of different members of the community are then represented. One local government candidate states: 'People are in for a bit of a surprise round here. I'll get things moving. Set up a few Tenants' Associations for a start. They'll nag the council about the buses and put me in touch with the sort of people who'll get the vote out at elections.

> The old council will be wiped out. They call themselves different things - Conservatives, Liberals, Ratepayers, Independents - but they're all the same really. Their trouble is they don't recognise it, so they'll just get in each other's way. Mind you, it might pay us tactically to put up a few 'independents' in some of the wards. Anyway, that's a detail. But, mark my words, we'll get things humming around here.' (p.62)

This candidate is described as a Bolshevik by one of the other characters, and this is the nearest he comes to having a political label. This is part of a general aversion to parties in local government which all the books seem to have to a greater or lesser degree.

Again, in Inside Local Government by Nancy MacKinnon, political parties do not figure very largely in the life of the imaginary town of Rilmere. They exist, but their importance is minimised. There is a description of how policy is carried out (pp.15 to 16) but nothing about how it is worked out, and what different approaches might be. 'The major parties were fairly evenly matched as there were quite a few councillors possessed of independent views to keep the balance. Of course there were times when tempers were raised even in Rilmere, but as a whole everyone worked together for the good of the community' (pp.16 to 17) The stress is on agreement, and the fact that there will be differences of interest and values is played down. The fact that everyone worked together for the good of the community does not mean that they might not have fundamentally different ideas about what that good is. There is only one example in the whole book when it is admitted that there are differences of party approach to local government issues, and this is on page 46, where one of the characters in an imaginary conversation says that the 'Labour Government was too cautios in laying down rules for the establishment of such (comprehensive) schools.'

Kathleen Allsop, in Local and Central Government, states that in big cities local elections have been fought on party lines for over fifty years, and there 'is certainly a strong tendency for political parties to play an increasing role in local government.' (p.35) Since the reorganisation of local government in 1974, nearly all authorities in the country have been run on party lines, partly because with larger wards it is difficult for genuine independents to organise their supporters effectively without a party machine behind them. There are parts of the country, outside the large towns, where independents still play a major part in local government, but they are a small minority. For most people who want to influence council policy, or become a councillor, some involvement with a political party is necessary. There will also be differences of ideology between parties at a local level, such as comprehensive education which has been referred to. It may be less easy to identify these differences locally than nationally, but the nature of politics will be the same at a local as a national level. There will be genuine differences of interest and principle, and not always a common agreement about what is 'best for the community'. A discussion of local politics therefore, which minimises conflict and the role of the parties in local government gives both inadequate factual information about how local politics operates and also creates a false impression about what politics is like. Such an account will certainly void partisan bias, but in doing so it exhibits bias towards a 'consensus' view of political life and leaves out important information about the nature of political parties at a local level which is important for an understanding of local politics.

When the national political scene is considered, it is impossible to conceal the importance of political parties. Many of the books give synopses of what each one stands for. Thus in Nobbs et al, Sociology for

'O' level, the Conservative Party has as its basic philosophy ' to support business, and to keep state interference to a minimum in economic matters.' (p.189) The Labour Party is described as follows:

> 'The Labour Party's philosophy differs from the Conservatives in its belief in more state intervention to alleviate any stress caused by the economic system. Socialists believe that the wealth of the nation should be distributed more evenly among all sections of the population through a progressive taxation system and the nationalisation of certain major industries. Clause Four of the Labour Party's constitution perhaps best sums this up:
>
> > To secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible, upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service.' (p.189)

The book gives more space to the Labour Party than the Conservatives, and no mention of disputes within the parties about their positions. The Labour Party's position is both more ideological and clear cut. There are more practical examples (progressive taxation, nationalisation) of what its policies mean in practice. Thus the Conservatives' position is under-represented. At this stage there is no mention of who the members and supporters of the parties are, and how this might relate to their approach to political matters. This information is given later, in a separate section dealing with 'membership of political parties' (p.190). Later again the statement is made that 'rightly or wrongly the parties are identified with self and class interest' (p.193). No clear attempt seems to be made to try and link up why the parties do take particular positions, bringing in their history and membership. Most of the information is there, but it is not linked together to give an overall picture of the parties. Policy seems to be presented as something separate from the membership, and not directly connected with it.

It should be remembered that this book is directed at above-average students who are considering 'O' level. The same author has written a book aimed at CSE students, Modern Society - Social Studies for CSE. There is no attempt in this book to set out the ideas of the political parties systematically, although the political nature of some issues is made clear. For example, on page 148, he states that: 'since 1945 most key industries in the British Economy have been nationalised'. Later on the same page he refers to 'backdoor nationalisation', and then poses the question 'One of the problems of a mixed economy is the proportion of the mixture. Should the state control 20 per cent, 25 per cent or 50 per cent?' The argument is not pursued. Some of the words used provoke argument themselves - what is a key industry, and is there something wrong with 'backdoor' nationalisation? Nobbs does not avoid a contentious issue, but he does not relate it to political debate. The positions of the parties are not set out, and although the arguments for and against nationalisation are set out in panel form (see p.149) these are not related to the attitudes taken by political parties and other organisations in the political arena. This approach to politics does not try to avoid conflict, but it departisanises, and thus probably also to some extent depoliticises argument.

Local and Central Government by Kathleen Allsop has a more detailed description of what a 'mixed economy' means that simply saying 'key industries are nationalised'. She also takes into account the position of the British economy in the international order.

> 'Britain has a mixed economy. Well over half our industries are privately owned by over two and a half million shareholders and by large financial organisations such as insurance companies. Less than half our industries are owned by public corporations. In addition, certain firms, such as Rolls Royce, have been wholly or partly nationalised. In recent years many of the private sector companies have merged into huge groups such as Imperial Chemical Industries. Some of them are 'conglomerates', and own firms in several industries. The largest and most powerful groups

> are 'multinationals' which own factories and so on all over the world. Is it possible for governments to control these economic giants? They have tried to do so, but with little effect on the distribution of wealth. The lion's share continues to go to the people who own the companies. Few people imagine that it is possible (or desirable?) to share out wealth equally at so much per head. But we shall go on arguing for a long time about the fairness of distribution and how to achieve it.' (p.69)

This analysis indicates where real power lies in the modern world, and puts the debate about the mixed economy in context. The references to the international dimensions of industry, and the constraints these put upon governments, are here put succinctly. This is something few of the other books seem to do. The large-scale nature of investors in the private sector are also described. Many of the books still give the impression that the primary unit of production is the small firm.

Chapter 10 of the book describes the problems facing the country under the title 'What is Central Government About?' (pp.64-69) This includes the piece quoted at length above, and also has sections on Rising Prices, Rising Incomes, Unemployment, Balance of Payments, Economic Growth, Distribution of Wealth, Industrial Relations, Social Security and Poverty, Housing, Education and Health, Rich and Poor Nations, Race and Colour, War and Peace and the EEC. These are dealth with thoroughly, although Housing, Education and Health are looked at in more detail in chapters on Local Government. This chapter precedes the one, however, which deals with the political parties (Chapter 11, pp.76-88) Thus there is little attempt to link up the positions of the parties with actual issues. The actual positions of the parties are described as follows:

> For the Conservatives, a quotation by Quinton Hogg is followed by 'Conservatives emphasise individual initiative and freedom from government interference. They believe in capitalism - the private ownership of industry run at a profit for the shareholders. 'What we must continue to ensure is that any sacrifices are shared equitably and that hardship does not fall on those least able to bear it' (Conservative Manifesto, February 1974) (p.78)

> The Labour Party section is taken up mainly by Clause Four, followed by
> 'Socialists believe that a fair distribution of wealth cannot be achieved without a large measure of public ownership and control of industry.'
>
> The Liberals also have a quote from their manifesto, followed by 'Liberals believe in a capitalist economic system and a fairer society within that system. They emphasise decentralisation of power and greater participation by the people.' (p.78)

Ms Allsop advises readers to look at party manifestoes, and to compare these with what the parties have actually done. Finding out what the two major parties have actually done when in power 'is much more difficult than reading manifestoes. Most people form a general impression of Governments and rapidly forget the details.' The author does not attempt to do this herself. Thus as pointed out above, there is little guidance for the reader on how political policies are actually translated into practice.

In Understanding Politics in Modern Britain, J.S. Sutton describes the ideologies of the parties as follows:

> 'The Labour Party advocates socialist policies which are similar to communist policies in that they favour state control of major industries and the state provision of many social services; but very different from communism in that they believe that they should work through the sort of democratic system which is operated in this country. The Conservative Party opposes the idea of any extension of state control of industry and tends to favour private enterprise and individual initiative.' (p.63-64)

There is no attempt to relate these ideas to the actual policies which the parties advocate and implement. There is a section which describes how the parties work. The relationship between the Labour Party Conference and the Parliamentary Party is discussed as follows: 'However, because the conference is not accurately representative of all members of the party, the leaders of the party have not accepted that the conference can dictate to the Prime Minister or Labour M.P.s, who make their own decisions, taking into account the views expressed at the conference.' (p.69) It could be argued that these matters are ones about which there is genuine debate within the

Labour Party, and it is unwise to state them as facts, using emotive words like 'dictate'. Equally, the word 'Communist' will create certain impressions in the mind of a reader not familiar with political terminology, and a better impression of the Labour Party could be given by explaining what its policies actually are, and how these link up with its basic values and ideology. Sutton has little to say also about who the members and supporters of the parties are, and how this effects their outlook. When fund-raising is discussed the link between the Conservative Party and business is mentioned. 'Many companies make donations of this kind, especially to the Conservative Party, which, it is thought, looks after business interests better than other parties.' (p.71), but specific examples are not given. Similarly the links between the Trade Unions and Coops and the Labour Party are mentioned, but no examples as to how they effect Labour Party policy. (p.72)

One book, People and Politics, by Peter Moss, does attempt to define specific policies rather than an overall position for political parties. Thus on page 8 the positions of the major parties on foreign affairs, nationalisation, union power, state controls, medicine and education, social welfare and pensions, housing and distribution of incomes are set out, by showing the differences of emphasis on a chart. This is followed by the 'positions' of extremists and moderates. Their views are as follows:

Labour Party Left-winger

More nationalisation. No private education or medicine. Worker control of industry. More state housing. 'Soft' penal code. Attack wealth.

Labour Party Moderate

Enough nationalisation, worker control and state housing for the time being. Private education and medicine to remain for the present. Some control of wealth through taxation.

Conservative Moderate

No more nationalisation. Private industry encouraged to expand. Wealth as incentive - less tax to encourage work and effort. State and private medicine, education and housing to give people choice. Competition and freedom in all fields provided adequate safeguards and provision for less able.

Conservative Right-winger

Minimum of nationalisation. De-nationalisation in some areas, and return to private enterprise. Strict control of unions and immigration. Competition, freedom, effort and ability as driving force in the economy. Strict penal code.

There is no explanation as to why particular parties hold the views they do. The extremists of both left and right are caricatured, one looking 'wild' and the other like a nineteenth century mill-owner, so it is less easy to take their views seriously. The one who puts forward the most positive viewpoint is the Conservative moderate, who has clear views and reasons for them. The Labour Party moderate, on the other hand, seems to have little justification for his opinions other than an acceptance of the status quo because it is convenient and expedient. He is represented as the most complacent-looking of all four, so perhaps this is the impression which is meant to be created. Certainly the Conservative moderate is the one who would seem to have the most clearly thought-out position to the reader unfamiliar with political debate. The book does attempt, however, to show what political positions are on specific issues, which is something the others do not try to do very seriously at all, and the problems which arise show how difficult it is to do this in an unbiased way. Perhaps this is why most of the others avoid it.

British Politics Today, by Jones and Kavanagh, is perhaps the most sophisticated of the books considered. It does not have a specific section on the political parties and their views. The book is organised into contributions on specific topics by different authors, and several pieces show clear views about the political parties. It is aimed at people who already have some knowledge of politics, so the provocative line taken by some authors can possibly be justified as being designed to stimulate discussion. Nevertheless some statements are made which could be queried as not necessarily partisan in their bias, but in giving a wrong impression of political activity.

Chapter Five gives the clear impression that partisan conflict has produced an undesirable situation in British politics, and is not producing creative political ideas, and Chapter Six adds to this the clear view that partisan loyalties are declining. This does not give a very accurate picture of the actual practice of politics in this country. The two main political parties still maintain very different bases of support and different outlooks or ideologies. These will explain their different policies and approaches to situations, even if they are somteimes forced by events to behave in what appears to be a similar way. Kavanagh also has a definite view what consenses should be encouraged. This is a biased view in that sense that there is no undisputed evidence for it, and many would take

issue with such a suggestion. It also shows a misunderstanding of politics according to the definition accepted at the beginning of this thesis that conflicts of ideas and interests are inevitable in political life. Whatever the current situation in voting behaviour a textbook about politics is not explaining the British political scene accurately to its readers if it does not explain the different attitudes and approaches of the political parties, and why these have developed. Stressing the similarities and urging consensus is both biased and inaccurate.

As expected, it was difficult to find clear exaples of partisan bias, except the example of bias towards consensus in the last book considered. There was a tendency to avoid mention of political parties at all when local government was being dicussed, and to minimise the extent to which political conflict occurred. There was no attempt to describe different party attitudes to local government problems. Such a view assumes a particular idea of the nature of politics, denying the conflict of ideas and interest which is an essential part of it. Although it may succeed in avoiding party bias it errs in other ways by producing a view of politics which would be disputed by many, and is therefore biased, without admitting it.

On national issues the books summarised the basic outlooks of the different political parties in ways which did not show any bias towards a particular political party. The only case where this might be alleged was in J.S. Sutton's book where words with all sorts of associations, such as 'communist' were used to describe the Labour Party. Only one book, however,

tried to make a link between general statements of ideas and policies on specific issues. There was no attempt in any of the books to give an 'overall' picture of what a political party was like, who its members were, why it adopted particular positions, and what its history was. Such an approach would enable the reader to understand political activity, and perhaps appreciate what position political parties were likely to take on issues in the future better. Different part of this approach appear in all the books, but they are nowhere all put together. Thus there was no clear evidence of bias in the presentation of the national parties' positions; rather their positions were presented inadequately.

2. A View of Society

It is already evident that the general view an author has of society will influence the attitude he or she has towards politics. Attitudes towards consensus and conflict are already apparent. Many social studies textbooks strive to give an explanation for all aspects of human activity, and this results in an impression that everything has a predetermined place and raison d'etre. In Life in Our Society, by K. Lambert, the author describes the functions of the foreman in his section on Trade Unions. This is followed by the functions of the Shop Steward. (p.86-87) Strikes are caused by clear reasons,

(i) wage disputes when the negotiating machinery breaks down and the unions and management fail to reach an agreement;

(ii) disputes over hours or conditions of work;

(iii) demarcation disputes, i.e. when there is disagreement about which workers have the right to do certain jobs;

(iv) closed shops (p.89, Book One)

Such a description, with its emphasis on functions, and clearly accepted reasons, implies a measure of consensus and agreement about industrial relations. It does not present different views of management and workers.

Although it may be a fairly accurate description of what does in practice happen in industrial relations, it implies a consensus which may not actually exist.

Extended to politics, such a consensus view of society will put the stress on agreement, and minimise disagreement. This problem is particularly acute when discussing political matters, because of the important role of conflict in politics. If it is left out an important aspect of the subject is lost. The consensus approach taken to its logical conclusion produces the bland statement in 'Inside Local Government' by Nancy Mackinnon that in the imaginary town of Rilmere 'as a whole everybody worked very well together for the good of the community', and the sensible independents keep the parties in check. (pp.16-17)

The presentation of conflict presents a problem for the school textbook. If it tries to explain all the sides to a conflict, and give reasons for it, it may end up taking a 'consensus' independent view. If it simply tries to explain how things work, without any comment, the impression given may be rather bland, that everything works rather well and there are no problems. This is the approach adopted in The State, The Facts by M.W. Thomas. It gives a very clear and simple description about how the British state works. The Civil Service is described as follows:

> 'The work of running the country is carried out by Government Departments, each of which does a special range of jobs. The minister in charge decides how his department shall be run and what it shall do. The day-to-day work, which can be very complicated indeed, is done by civil servants. The chief civil servant in each department (the Permanent Secretary, or the Permanent Undersecretary of State, as he is usually known,) is in constant touch with the minister. He takes his orders from the minister, and gives him advice. It is his duty to see that the minister's wishes are carried out as far as possible, whatever he himself may think about them privately. When a new government comes into power the civil servants continue to serve the new minister just as loyally as they served the previous one.' (p.13)

Such a view simply sounds too good to be true. It does not take into account the large size of the public sector, including the nationalized industries, and the problems of ensuring effective control over them (if this is desirable) by politicians. It does not consider either the problem of a difference between the minister and the civil servants about what is practical and what is not. It is known that such differences do occur, and that the relationship between politicians and civil servants is not without problems. To ignore these problems gives a rather rose-tinted and unrealistic view of the political process. This may not be the intention of the author, but it illustrates the problems oversimplification brings. What tries to be a simple but impartial view ends up accepting the 'coventional wisdom'.

An altenative approach is to state explicitly what you think the major problems facing your country, or the world are, and then discuss how they can be dealth with. In Understanding Industrial Society, Sanday and Birch see the following as the major problems facing the world today:

(i) natural resourses are being consumed at an ever-increasing rate;

(ii) present methods of disposal are inadequate or unsafe to cope with the amounts of waste now being produced;

(iii) the population is out-growing its means of support with a marked and inequitable distribution of wealth, especially between those nations that have and those that have not. (p.153)

The authors recognise that dealing with these problems would only be possible through 'some sort of agreement among the wealthy industrialised nations', and then go on to explore how a decision could be made within the confines of a nation-state. Three major decisions reached in this country in recent years are outlined - the abolition of the death penalty, the introduction of decimal currency, and the joining of the EEC, and the question is asked whether these decisions had the support of the majority of the electors in Britain (p.154) All this highlights the problems of

dealing with important problems, and making decisions in a democratic way. Not only is it admitted that there are problems - this is done explicitily - but the problem of dealing with them is also admitted. The work of the Civil Service is seen in a similar light. It is admitted that 'The volume of work of each ministerial department has grown so enormously in the twentieth century that ministers can no longer be acquainted with every important issue' (p.155) and that both the civil service and pressure groups play an important part in decision-making. (p.156) The account generally does not fall into blandness, indicating both the strengths and the weaknesses of the decision-making system.

Nobbs considers industrial disputes in Modern Society. He states that 'There is a great need to improve industrial relations in Britain' (p.151) and that 'It is vital for wage increases to be kept within certain guidelines' (p.152). Having explicitly stated what he thinks the problems are, he then describes a case study of an industrial dispute, taking care to show the views of both sides. (p.152) Students are then invited to offer their own ideas, both how disputes can be resolved on the union side, and how management can be made to invest more money. The approach does not try to infer that there is an agreed solution, and certainly not that the situation is problem free.

Both these books have a common approach in that they identify what the authors see as problems, but then indicate that there are not necessarily agreed solutions, and that problems may arise in the implementation once a solution has been agreed on. Politics is seen as something where there are conflicting views and values, and also practical problems of getting things done. Such a view emphasises practicality as well as theoretical and moral argument. Other books state what they see as problems facing our society too. Thus in Nobbs, Hine and Fleming, Sociology, the authors feel that 'the

principal difficulty of maintaining democracy in our country is to ensure participation through the existing system and to enable the public to make its voice heard.' (p.198) There is no further discussion, however, about ways this might be done, or the practical problems involved in any solutions. Similarly J.S. Sutton in Understanding Politics in Modern Britain expresses concern about the maintenance of free political parties which are 'a vital part of a democratic system which could not last long without them' (p.72) But here the discussion ends. Much could have been added indicating ways in which parties could be helped, and the practical problems involved.

People, Power and Politics by Richard Tames takes a different approach from the books considered so far. He makes no attempt to describe the existing political system, and thus avoids the problem of the extent to which it should be criticised. Instead he tries to describe what politics is actually like, by describing political situations and techniques. The first is the issue of political education in school. The essentially political nature of education is recognised (pp. 19-20) The author admits that there will be diversity of views about how a school should be run. 'This is not an easy question to answer, and there is probably no one right answer.' (p.22) He then goes on to identify principles which should govern a democratic school as they should a democratic state. 'A democratic school and a democratic state need not have the same institutions, but their basic values and characteristics should not be in conflict and should include:

- concern for the welfare of the whole community
- respect for the rights of individuals
- tolerance for minority views
- opportunities for members to develop skills and acquire knowledge, which will enable them to lead a fuller life
- absence of arbitrary power and dispensation of justice according to rules which are known, fixed and clear.' (pp.22-23)

Politics is made to seem part of the immediate experience of young people, and about basic principles which they can apply to their everyday life. It is not seen as something remote and outside their immediate experience. Arguments for and against politics in schools are set out for the reader's consideration (pp. 24-24). This is the approach followed in later chapters on communication, propaganda, leadership and participation. There are two features of Tames' approach which are immediately evident. Firstly, politics is essentially about different views which must be considered, and secondly it is directly related to everyday life, not something remote.

Two different approaches to conflict appear in the books. One is to try and ignore it, and adopt a purely descriptive approach. Two books (McKinnon and Thomas) simply describe political institutions and activity without admitting that there are different views about how they should be run, or practical problems in running them, about which there may not be agreed solutions. It may be the intention of the authors to be impartial by adopting this approach, but the overall impression is one of blandness and that everything is working as well as possible. (See Nancy McKinnon's description of the Welfare State in Inside Local Government, pp. 64-72) Lambert does not adopt this bland approach, but tries to explain all conflict and in doing so gives the strong impression that there are agreed views and procedures - a consensus view. This probably comes from an attempt both to explain and to be fair.

The alternative approach is to take a clear position on a specific issue, and argue it through. Three books (Nobbs, Sanday and Birch, and Tames) did this. The argument highlights other views, and also deals with the practical problems of implementing a particular policy. This approach gives a clear impression of the conflict of ideas and values in politics, and also of the practical problems involved in implementing a course of

action once it has been agreed upon. Two other books (Nobbs on Sociology and Sutton) stated positions, but did not argue through the consequences.

3. Emphasis

A book can give a distorted picture of political reality without actually saying anything which is untrue by giving undue prominence to some facts and playing others down. A good example is contained in 'The State, the Facts,' by M.W. Thomas. In the section on Parliament, (Chapter One) almost as much space is given to the House of Lords as to the House of Commons, and it is not until Chapter Five (p.25) that it is pointed out that the powers of the House of Lords are limited. The budget is being discussed, and the author states 'This is because in 1911 the Parliament Act laid it down that if the Lords had not accepted a 'money' bill within a month, it could receive the Royal Assent anyway'. The other limitations on the Lords' powers are not mentioned.

Other cases of emphasis are less obvious. Should multinational companies, which today wield considerable power, be given more or less prominence than Trade Unions? In Understanding Industrial Society, by Sanday and Birch, international companies have one page, (p.112) whereas trade unions have a whole chapter. (pp. 68-82) The authors do not make any comments about their relative power and importance, but clearly trade unions are more obvious to the reader. In Nobbs' Modern Society the author says 'perhaps trade unions do have too much say in a modern community, but remember that before trade unions became so powerful working people were very badly off indeed.' (p.151) Yet the power of multinational companies is not mentioned at all. The section in Kathleen Allsop's book, Local and Central Government, where she states that multinational companies can have more power than individual governments (p.69) stands out because

it is the only attempt by any of the textbooks to draw attention to what could be a major political problem.

Another point already metnioned is the tendency to avoid, or at least discuss only superficially, the political arguemtns about nationalisation. Public ownership is usually considered from an economic standpoint, and the political arguments about naitonalisation, and the problems of the extent of political control over nationalised industries are given scant attention. As had already been mentioned, M.W. Thomas in The State, the Facts, does not mention the nationalised industries as being one of the responsibilities of government. Modern Society, by Jack Nobbs, volunteers the 'capitalism and communism are forms of economic organisation', and although there is considerable discussion of public ownership from an economic point of view, there is no discussion of the political arguments, (see pp. 148-149) Again, nationalised industries only receive a page in Kathleen Allsop's book, and although political control is mentioned, the whole area is not dealt with in much depth. (See Local and Central Government, pp. 59-60). Lambert does not mention the nationalised industries, although he has sections on the responsibilities of government. Sanday and Birch, in Understanding Industrial Society, have two short chapters on the subject, one for 'O' level and one for C.S.E. pupils. The main argument is conducted in terms of what is efficient and economic. Little emphasis is put on the political aspects of nationalisation. In this respect Sanday and Birch's work does not differ from the others. In today's state the question of public ownership is surely a major issue in public debate. It certainly receives very little emphasis as a political issue in the textbooks considered.

To conclude, one book overemphasises the dignified rather than the efficient parts of the constitution. Otherwise the power and scope of multinational companies receive very little attention, while the power of the trade unions is given considerable emphasis. The responsibilities of Government vis-a-vis nationalised industries are played down to the extent of being ignored in some cases, and the political arguments about nationalisation are hardly mentioned at all.

Attitudes to Participation

As indicated in previous chapters, a key issue in the political education debate is whether it should actually include a commitment to active participation in politics rather than simply an understanding of it. A textbook may make statements about whether political participation is desirable or not, but whether it is actually encouraging participation in a practical way will be determined by the amount of material it contains explaining what politics is like at a grass-roots level, and how an individual can become involved.

Nearly all the books thought that insufficient participation was a 'problem', or contained direct admonitions to participate. There was often also an emphasis on the direct effect government has on all of us. Thus the final paragraph of People and Politics by Moss reads:

> 'We have been discussing how and why people vote. Do you think having a vote is the most important thing in making your individual feelings known? Do you think people should work within the system to try and change things - i.e. at the local level through contact with your M.P., by becoming a party member and giving strong election support for your chosen party? Or is it better to join and work through an outside group such as a strong union of lobby, in order to promote change? (p.52)

Kathleen Allsop has an imaginary family, 'who play a bigger part in government than they realise. They certainly use their right of free speech and their freedom to join organisations - which contribute something to the

community and quite often influence local councils and the government.' (see Local and Central Government, p.125) Ms Allsop also mentioned the possibilities of extending democracy into industry so they can become more involved still. This is something the other books do not do.

In Inside Local Government by Nancy McKinnon, one of the characters in an imaginary dialogue says:

> 'It's up to the electors of the town to keep the Council on their toes. Some of your parents should stand for election and themselves take part in the civic life of Rilmere.' (p.3)

There is no explanations of how they should go about it, however.

In Understanding Politics in Modern Britain, J.S. Sutton says in the preface that the book 'tries to describe government and politics not as matters remote and irrelevant to everyday life, but as vital human activities.' (p.6) Although the book has chapters on 'Access to Government' and 'Pressure and Protest' it does not deal with how the individual can become involved in political activity. There is no attempt to relate politics to an issue which might be directly connected to the 'everyday life' of the reader, Lambert, in Life in Our Society, confines himself to urging people to vote, which is the 'chief way in which we can exercise this responsibility as citizens.' (Book I, p.61).

Other books see participation, or the lack of it, as a 'problem'. Kavanagh states that the 'two main parties now attract fewer members.

voters and supporters (i.e. strong party identifiers)' (see British Politics Today, p.45). As indicated in an earler section, he sees the solution in measures to strengthen consensus, although no explanation is given as to why this should necessarily be so. Nobbs, Hine and Fleming, in Sociology see ensuring participation as one 'of the principal difficulties in maintaining democracy in a country of 56 million people with only 635 representatives.' (see p.198). They do not give any suggestions, however, as to how it should be done.

Three books contain descriptions of the actual operation of politics at a grass-roots level, and some indication of how the individual might become involved. People, Power and Politics by Richard Tames has a section on the politics of the school (see above) and the sort of principles a school should be run on. A section on pressure groups follows, including a list of what factors led to success in a campaign to improve educational provision.

This is followed by a description of a dispute within a community described above in the section on 'Partisan Bias', where various protagonists put their points of view. All this shows what political activity is like at a level easily understood by the reader, and also gives some idea about how it become involved in it.

In Local and Central Government Kathleen Allsop describes the actual life of a councillor, and the problems he is likely to face. She mentions the link with party organisation, something the other books do not do. Thus 'We always hold our Party Group meeting in the evening before full council meetings. We thrash out any differences of opinion and decide who will speak for the party on each committee report.' (p.37) Links with the rank and file are also described 'I attend as many constituency party meetings as I can, and keep in close touch with my ward party (the area I represent). They're not slow to tell me what's wrong and ask what the council's doing about it.' (p.38) This shows the connection between the ordinary member of the political party and his representative in a way that the other books do not. It shows how an individual who wants to influence local councillors can do so through the party machinery. Sanday and Birch, in Understanding Industrial Society have a section on how to influence national government. They invite their readers to 'Make out a plan of campaign which you would use to give your proposal the greatest chance of acceptance by the govenment, clearly indicating the four or five steps it would be necessary to take. In addition, make a list of those influences and activities which appear to have little effect on government legislation.' (p.156) They do not deal, however, with local government and how to become involved in political activity at a local level.

It is interesting that the three books which contained most about how politics functioned, and how to get involved in it, also contained the least amount of concern about participation and admonitions to become involved. None of the books considered was actually against participation, although one, Thomas, made no comment on the subject at all. Except for the three mentioned above, however, there was little practical guidance

about how an individual could become involved in political activity, or much description of what it was actually like. The idea was conveyed that participation somehow involved a direct relationship with the government, whether at a local or national level, without any intermediate machinery of political party or pressure group. Only one book, Tames, had any consideration of the skills and tactics required for political activity, and this was in his section on pressure groups.

Thus at one level all the books, except one, contained a bias towards participation in politics. This was louldy proclaimed in statements of concern about lack of participation, and in encouragement for individuals to become 'involved'. In practical terms, however, few of the books gave practical information or advice about how to effect this involvement. Their attitude to participation remains therefore problematic, in the sense that in the majority of cases the textbook authors have not thought out what it involves in educational terms.

5. Attitudes to Politics itself

For a reader unfamiliar with politics, the general impression given by a book may be important in influencing his or her attitude towards it. Earlier preconceptions that politics is boring, or disreputable, or both, can be easily reinforced.

The Chairman of the Politics Association, writing in 1969, described much existing teaching of politics as 'concerned with procedural minutiae and institutional description which were far removed from the real world of politics.' (See J. Sutton, in Political Education and Political Literacy, edited by Crick and Porter, Longmans 1978, p.245) Is the alternative to make it entertaining? In People and Politics, Peter Moss treats politicians as at times comic figures. This may make the subject more interesting for

young people, but there is a danger of stereotyping and trivialisation through caricature. The Labour supporters are shown as wearing cloth caps, while the Tories have toppers on several occasions (pp. 28, 32, 37 etc.) Perhaps this is normal cartoon practice, although how many Labour and Tory supporters do in practice wear the headgear mentioned, particularly amongst younger people? M.P.'s do not escape ridicule, either. On page 44 one is shown as flagrantly promoting the interests of his own brewery, while another receives a large bag of money from a Trade Union for supporting their wage claim. The other members of the House seem to be little interested in what is going on. Most of them are asleep.

Moss's technique is to advance a variety of opinions, many of which are backed up with cartoons. These are designed to stimulate discussion amongst the readers. On the role of women in politics, for example, the following opinion is vouchsafed:

> 'Women are too emotional and temperamentally unsuitable for the responsibilities of power and decision-making in politics. This may be because they see more clearly than men all sides of a problem and realise the impossibility of simple, clear-cut solutions which politics demands.' (p.24)

Other opinions such as "Women are not interested in politics' are included on the page, together with a picture of a woman doing the housework while her husband thinks of political matters.

On the reasons why few manual workers are active in politics, Moss has the opinion 'Manual workers do not have the education or the training for political work. Many too have chosen manual jobs because of the relative amount of leisure and freedom from responsibility they offer. They do not want the heavy duties and restricitions of a career in Parliament, and would not be suited to it anyway.' (p.46)

Although these opinions are offered as one of many for discussion, no evidence is given to support them, and they could have the effect of

strengthening existing prejudices about the time-serving nature of M.P.s, the unsuitability of women for political life, and the inability of the working class to take part in government. It must be remembered that many of those reading them will already have strong prejudices about politics; should a school textbook reinforce them?

Jones and Kavanagh seem to have a cynical view of politicians in British Politics Today. When facilities for M.P.s are discussed, Jones comments:

> 'Facilities have improved substantially in recent years, but progress in this area is impeded by the tacit agreement that is said to exist between government and ambitious M.P.s; one day the latter hope to be ministers, and when the day comes they do not want to face too much interference from Parliament.' (see British Politics Today, p.76)

Jones sees politics as a career, with the only motivation for entering it to be 'rewarded' with junior ministerial office. There are hints that politicians do things for less than honourable motives. In Chapter Five Kavanagh states: 'Some observers think that this provided Mr. Callaghan with a convenient pretext for not introducing more left-wing measures.' (p.42)

Nancy KcKinnon has a completely different approach. In Inside Local Government, she presents a politician as a very distinguished man to whom much deference is due. (p26) Kathleen Allsop conducts imaginary interviews with councillors and members of parliament. This way the characters seem more human. The M.P. talks about the pressure of his work (see p.54) and the councillor admits 'It's a very full life and I couldn't manage without my wife's support.' (p.38)

Tames admits that there is a popular lack of respect for, and distrust of, politicians in his introduction to People, Power and Politics. He quotes Mark Twain who said 'Reader, suppose you were an idiot; and suppose you were

a member of Congress; but I repeat myself.' (p.9) How is a textbook, designed to make politics appear interesting and important to young people, to cope with it? Some seem to go along with it, repeating prejudices, while others treat politicians as an almost olympian race apart. Only one book, Kathleen Allsop's tries to depict them as fairly normal people. There is no one clear tendency which can be identified in a majority of the books. The opposite extremes which have been described seem to indicate that there is a middle way which can make politics entertaining without trivialising it, and serious without being remote and boring. Only two books, Tames and Allsop approach this golden mean. The others all exhibit biases to a greater or a lesser degree which could make politics seem something both irrelevant and not demanding serious attention.

Conclusion

The following biases were identified in the books considered, although not every bias appeared in each one. Overt partisan bias was not evident, perhaps because authors are so concerned about it, and take great pains to avoid it. The following are more subtle, and less likely to be noticed.

a) A functionalist or consensus view of society. Each political organisation has a role to play and a task to perform as part of a wider plan.

b) A tendency to discount 'extremist' views without consideration, and to emphasise 'consensus' approaches.

c) An unwillingness to consider the importance of political parties, what their overall views are, who supports them, and why they take the positions they do.

d) Too much emphasis on the 'problem' of the trade unions, with little consideration of the equally important problems of multinational companies, control and effectiveness of the Civil Service and the debate about nationalisation.

e) An unwilliness to consider politicians as ordinary people, and the sort of everyday problems they face. They are either treated with derision and contempt, or undue awe and deference.

f) Not enough consideration of how politics relates to everyday life at a grass-roots level. It is still thought of as an activity which has little bearing on the average reader, and this approach will discourage participation.

g) A tendency to emphasise the traditional aspects of the constitution rather than the more modern problems faced by the political system.

What should the attitude of a school textbook towards bias be? Firstly, it must recognise that politics is about conflict and controversy between a diversity of values and interests. If a book attempts to avoid this conflict by describing contentious issues, and implying that consensus is the norm, it is giving an inadequate description of politics. Simply stating that there are differences of view, however, without showing how they are resolved (or not resolved) in practice is also not showing how politics actually works. Stating a point of view, or a problem , and then showing how it is formulated into a practical policy, with opposition to it and practical problems in its implementation describes the political process at work. It probably does not matter what the issue is, provided that the author makes clear that there are alternative views about it. Several of the authors have adopted this approach, but none seem to relate the overall ideologies of the parties, which they describe, to practical policies and show how they work out in practice when faced with opposition and practical difficulties. If this was done it would show why politicians behave in the way they do, making compromises and sometimes U-turns. It would also enable the reader to <u>understand</u> political activity.

Secondly, there are two clear value positions where the books do adopt biased positions, although perhaps not always realising it. The first is attitudes to participation and the second is attitudes to politics generally. It could be argued that to adopt an unbiased approach books should adopt a neutral stance but present all sides of the case. In the first case there seem to be a surfeit of admonitions that participation is

desirable, but little practical advice and information on how to go about it. In particular there is little description of how politics actually works, including the party machines, at a local level. On the second different books take markedly opposite stands, depicting politics as something to be ridiculed and also as something remote and awesome. A neutral book should present both, and other, points of view.

It is perhaps difficult for textbooks to be completely unbiased on these last two matters because they represent overall attitudes which will show through the writers general approach. It is the view of this thesis (see Chapter One) that a political education programme must necessarily have a commitment to political participation and to the essentially worthwhile nature of politics. Such a position should be stated, and be consistent throughout the book, while admitting alternatives. The problem of some of the textbooks considered is not that they have a value position, but that they do not seem to realise it, and that it is inconsistent. If their position was clearly stated it would be easier for young people to appreciate it and to consider alternatives; if it is not clearly stated they may not realise it is a position which can be questioned at all, but simply the 'accepted wisdom'. This might be the case very easily with ideas which already have wide currency, such as politicians tend to be devious and dishonest.

Partisan bias is not a major problem in textbooks which might be used for political education. A more important problem is the unwillingness to accept conflict and show how politics actually functions. It is probably difficult to write a book which can be neutral in its attitudes towards participation and the standing of politics generally. What is more important is that the fact that there are clear value positions on these issues should be stated so that young people may be aware of them and recognise that there are alternatives. Otherwise they may continue to accept uncritically the attitudes of their peers.

Although the textbooks chosen represented as wide a range of teaching levels as possible, it was not possible to work out, in the time available, the frequency of their use. In any case the actual influence of a textbook varies with the style of a teacher. The object of the analysis was to show how easily value positions can be assumed by both teachers and writers of textbooks because they have never been questioned before. No doubt other books could be found where very different values are propagated. The important point is that any teacher involved in political education must be very careful to define what are value judgements, and make it clear that alternatives exist.

CHAPTER V

Political Education in practice - the views and ideas of serving teachers in County Durham

What did you learn in school today,
Dear little child of mine?
I learnt that Washington never told a lie,
I learnt that soldiers seldom die;
Our leaders are the finest men,
And we elect them again and again.
That's what I learnt in school today,
That's what I learnt in school.

Tom Paxton

Politics is perhaps the only profession
for which no preparation is thought
necessary.

R.L. Stephenson

The views of Serving Teachers in County Durham on Political Education

Introduction

The survey is somewhat limited. There are 55 secondary schools in County Durham, and nine were involved with this survey. The objective, however, was not to find out how much 'political' education was already going on, but to try and ascertain why people are interested, and what they are trying to achieve. This can be compared with the problems and possibilities outlined in Chapter III and the ideas and values considered in Chapter I. An analysis of aims and values will hopefully produce some conclusions which will be useful for those who have not yet embarked upon political education as such.

The teachers who took part were interested in the idea of political education, and in most cases already engaged in teaching something which had a political content or dimension. They had all thought a good deal about the question of the teaching of politics in schools. The results of this survey therefore, do not contain any valid consideration of the state of the debate in the County about political education or the extent of its practice. They are concerned with the problems it faces, the possibilities which exist for it, and the values it should profess. A wider sample might have included a greater variety of views, but the conclusions drawn from this somewhat limited sample are still valid as contributions to the current political education debate which are based in practice, rather than theory. Knowing the impatience of some teachers with theory not grounded in practice the author hopes their value will be the greater.

All schools in the County were approached initially, and those selected were ones which indicated interest. Many more than the nine initially showed interest, but some were later unable to participate in the project, and others could not be included because of lack of time and resources. The nine selected represent a good cross-section of secondary schools in the county, and are widely distributed geographically. They have widely different histories and pupil backgrounds. The aim was to tap as wide a diversity of educational experience as possible, and there are no other motives than that to indicate why particular schools have been selected and others not, other than the unwillingness of the schools themselves.

The nine schools may be briefly described as follows:

School A Comprehensive 11 to 18 school drawing on an area containing a large number of pit villages. The Senior Mistress at the school teaches Current Affairs to pupils in the fifth year as a non-exam subject. Not a great deal of interest by other members of staff.

School B 11 to 16 Comprehensive School with a good academic tradition and catchment area. All children in their fourth and fifth year do a course including economics, commerce and politics, which can lead to a CSE examination. The course is 'team taught' and has the enthusiastic backing of the Headmaster. Two members of the staff took part in the survey.

School C A large comprehensive school with 1600 pupils in it, based on an established grammar school with a sixth form of 100. The school also has a youth wing, and a strong connection with the local community. The school has a substantial commitment to teaching about politics. Apart from a flourishing community service programme there were 'O' level courses in Economics and Public Affairs and Industrial Society, and a substantial

CSE Social Studies programme. In the sixth form were History, Economics, Politics and Sociology courses, all with a political content, together with a general studies programme.

School D A Roman Catholic Comprehensive School. Political Education is organised for less able children by the Deputy Head, who has a considerable personal commitment, but there did not seem to be much interest by other members of staff.

School E Another large school based on an old grammar school with a substantial sixth form. There is an enthusiastic head of social studies who organises an 'O' level in Social Studies and Sociology in the sixth form. Not a great deal of enthusiasm from other members of staff.

School F A new, purpose-built comprehensive school, which is only three years 'old'. The school is trying to develop on democratic lines, with pupils involved in decision-making as far as possible, and organising their own activities. The school also has strong links with the local community.

School G Large comprehensive school (1300 to 1400 pupils) based on a secondary modern school, but trying to develop a sixth form. A strong tradition of community service, for which the school has won awards. No explicit political education as such, but the school has a general studies programme for sixth formers which includes a political content.

School H Developing Comprehensive School based on old secondary modern. As yet small sixth form. Social Studies for less able, but an attempt to integrate humanities, which has a political content. No encouragement for Political Education from Head or Deputies.

School I Based on old secondary modern school, with no explicit political teaching as such. Three members of staff were involved in the survey, explaining the political aspects of what they were doing.

Since attitudes in a school towards a subject will tend to be strongly influenced by the sernior members of staff, an attempt was made to

interview the Headmaster where ever possible. When this was not possible, his deputy was seen, or another senior member of staff. (In modern large schools, senior posts seem to proliferate.) Considerable teaching experience is also valuable in this survey, for its helps to see recent developments in political education in some sort of perspective. The final sample is therefore weighted towards senior members of the profession in positions of influence and with considerable experience. The following were interviewed:

Headteachers in four schools

Deputy Heads (or equivalent) in four schools

Heads of Departments in four schools

Two teachers, without post of responsibility

Method of Analysis

The questionnaire, and shortened versions of the answers are included in the appendix to this chapter. It is split into three parts, Ideas, Aims and Methods. These will first be analysed horizontally, to see if there are convergence of views and clearly identifiable schools of thought as to what Political Education should be. The questionnaires are then looked at vertically, to see if there is a definable link between the answers given by respondents, views on one aspect necessarily corresponding to those on another.

The need for Political Education

All the respondents thought it desirable that young people of school age should receive some education about politics, although there were reservations about how and when it should be done. The reservations were chiefly about age (two respondents said it was not very useful below the age of 16) and whether it should be made a specific subject. (This will automatically put young people off simply because it is on the timetable.)

There was strong feeling that the impetus for Political Education was coming from outside the schools. Concern about extremists was mentioned by four respondents, and the general welfare of our political system by three more. The political ignorance of young people was also mentioned. The overall impression given was that although the respondents themselves were interested in Political Education, and wanted to see it flourish, they did not feel there was much support amongst their colleagues, and most of the pressure for change was coming from 'outside'.

Young People and Politics

There were several cynical answers that young people under the age of 16 would never be interested in politics anyway, but the majority seem to feel that although there was more knowledge of politics today, largely because of the mass media, than there had been in the past, there was certainly less commitment, and probably less interest. Two respondents distinguished a general interest in political matters from an interest in the political parties. Two respondents were worried about the situation, one speaking of a 'disturbing cynicism', and another describing how there seemed to have been little interest when a large factory in the town had been closed. All thought that it would be desirable if more young people participated in the political process, and there was a substantial majority who thought that the way politics was organised today did not encourage such participation. All the respondents wanted the involvement of young people to be through the traditional political system. There was no outright opposition to young people becoming involved in politics outside the traditional process, but no great enthusiasm for it either. Answers were vague, and only one respondent was able to give specific answers about ways in which it could be done, mentioning 'Resident Action Groups, the Anti-Nazi League, and Shelter',

but stressing also that such groups were complementary, rather than antipathetic, to the more traditional forms of political involvement. The main reservation about involvement by young people in political activity was that they should be critical, and not simply follow the majority. One teacher said that young people should not be 'like sheep'. The general remoteness of politics from young people in particular, but also from the majority of the population was dwelt on by several teachers. One stated that because a tremendous amount of time-serving was required to get anywhere, a young politician, such as Trudeau or Kennedy was regarded as an oddity, and attracted considerable attention for this reason. Another thought the media deliberately discouraged participation by the majority, ensuring that politics became an 'elite' activity. There was a general impression that politics had an 'old', tired image, and this put off many people, in particular the young.

There was a very strong consensus that this involvement by young people in politics should be in the accepted political system. When an allusion was made to the current programme by the National Association of Youth Clubs to introduce Political Education into youth clubs, there was a negative response by five respondents, and a lack of enthusiasm by the others. Possible bias was mentioned, one respondent mentioning the Hitler Youth. Others pointed out that youth clubs and organisations were often run by bodies with particular ideologies, even if they were not aware of these themselves, and it would be very difficult to have unbiased discussion of politics. The strong impression comes over that what was wanted is more involvement in our existing political system, rather than trying to give a 'political' dimension to other forms of community activity. Although existing political institutions and practices are strongly criticised, the remedy is seen as more involvement by young

people which will hopefully change them, rather than alternative approaches to politics. In this the views of the teachers would seem to correspond with those outside teaching who want political education to encourage more support for, and involvement in, our political system. Such a view should not be dismissed, as some critics of Political Education have done, that teachers simply want to socialise young people into the 'status quo'. There was a genuine concern by nearly all the teachers interviewed that young people should think for themselves and not unquestioningly follow others. There was also a genuine feeling by most of them that our political system was out of touch and not functioning properly, and that greater involvement by young people could change this. There was optimism that the present system can be not so much reformed as rejuvenated. Forms of political activity outside the accepted system were not disapproved of, but not seen as very important.

There was a strong professional feeling that Political Education must be strictly controlled. There was suspicion of the motives of outside organisations which wanted to do political education and strong feeling about question 9 in the first section. All the respondents except one thought that there was a danger of exploitation and misleading of young people by political groups. The one that did not thought it was a possibility, but not an immediate danger. There was also a strong feeling that Political Education must explain alternatives, and consider them, and that if it did not it was indoctrination. Although teachers would probably not admit to bias, they had a strong influence on young people, and if they were enthusiastic about the subject, their particular enthusiasm would rub off onto those they taught. The need to make the children able to discriminate was mentioned by more than one teacher, and one said they should be encouraged to make decisions. Political Education was a necessary weapon to help children resist attempts to indoctrinate them.

The danger of political groups influencing young people, and it was usually 'extremist' groups which were referred to, was thought of as extremely grave by several of the teachers. One said 'There is a great danger of political exploitation by both the extreme right and the extreme left which is going on at present and is considered by many, myself one of them, to be one of the greatest problems in this country at present'. Another said that racist or fascist dogmas could have considerable appeal to the immature mind. The groups referred to were usually the National Front and the Socialist Workers Party, and possibly some of the fears of their activities came from what had been seen on television, rather than through actual encounters with them. Several teachers did admit that extremism was a relative term.(a) There seemed to be a general feeling, however, that young people were particularly vunerable to the appeals of these groups, and that Political Education was one way of resisting this. Some had high hopes for the subject; here are some of their comments:

> 'Political Education is not simply a body of knowledge, nor a view or attitude, but an ability to select and discriminate, and to resist indoctrination and propaganda. Political Education is also an ability to re-act sensitivity to people and affairs.'
>
> 'It must perpetuate democracy, and the acceptance of majority decisions. Children must be made aware that decisions affect their lives, that they have to be made, and must be made on the basis of information. They must also accept the consequences of their decisions. The School must involve pupils of every single level.'
>
> 'Political Education should make children critical, and able to make their own judgement when presented with as many sides of the problem as possible. Judgement should be based on informed criticism. Propaganda and indoctrination do not admit of other views.'

Great hope then, is placed on the potential of young people to revivify our political system by the teachers, but at the same time a great fear of indoctrination by extremist groups. Given these hopes and fears the survey next investigated the actual way in which the teachers thought

politics should be taught. Teachers were asked to state their aims first, including the values a Political Education programme ought to contain, and then describe the method they thought appropriate.

The Actual Content of Political Education

Teachers were asked to rate in order of priority what they thought the cognitive content of a Political Education programme should be. The three which gained first preferences were the 'The national political structure', 'Political Ideas and ideologies' and 'How to analyse Political Propaganda'. The third one is not surprising, in view of the comments listed above. At the bottom of the list came 'political skills', such as how to address a meeting. Next from the bottom, perhaps surprisingly, was 'Current Political issues'. The 'local political structure' and the 'Organisation of Political Parties and other political organisations' came next after the first three, with 'Terms currently used in political discussion' next before the bottom two.

There was a clear recognition that knowledge of the political system and of political ideas and ideologies was a central part of political education. Certainly being able to analyse political propaganda was thought important, in view of the fears expressed by the teachers earlier. What is interesting is that teachers do not give discussion of current political issues a very high priority. This, along with the low importance given to the actual skills of how to be active in politics, seems to stress an 'academic' approach to politics, rather than one which relates it to everyday life. This will be returned to later when the views on the actual values political education should have are considered.

The Values Political Education should have

Many are concerned that Political Education cannot help but be biased, and, as the discussion in Chapter III indicated, the values it has about

politics are perhaps more important than whether it puts forward a particular party view point. For this reason a considerable part of the investigation was devoted to values, or the affective content of a Political Education programme. (b)

There was agreement that Political Education should not profess an uncritical support for the present political system of this country, but on the other hand there was concern that it should not produce contempt for it. The value which was most mentioned was 'support for democracy'. This, was put by one respondent who said 'democracy yes, everything else no'. Only one respondent gave an outright 'no' to this question, and he was the one who also rejected the 'procedural values' of Crick and Porter as 'meaningless'. All the others accepted to a greater or lesser degree the procedural values. For most of them it was the first time they had heard of them, so perhaps it was unfair to expect the more considered analysis which appears in learned journals. The value which seemed to stand out most was 'respect for reasoning', which could be linked in with the earlier stress on making young people able to 'analyse critically' political propaganda. Incidentally, the one respondent who rejected Crick, and Porter's values thought 'knowledge with ability to appraise 'opposing' political viewpoints' was important.

A majority of the teachers did not think it was possible for Political Education not to have bias, but they saw this as an occupational hazard which could be overcome by alerting pupils to counter it. Only a minority, however, (5 out of 13) thought it would definitely challenge the status quo, and these were firm in their views. Of the remainder, one thought it could actually cement the status quo, whereas the others were equivocal, giving answers such as 'not necessarily', and 'to some extent', with only one clear no. There is thus a firm school of thought that political education

will challenge the status quo, without any correspondinly firm view that it will not. On the important point about whether Political Education should have any commitment to involvement and action, a majority were in favour, but there was no consensus as to what form it should take. Three definitely did not see any need for such a commitment, and a further three did not think it was necessary. The remainder thought there should be a commitment, but not necessarily to political activity as such. The answer that 'political education should be a motivator to getting people involved in something' seemed to sum up the feelings. The majority wanted involvement in principle, but were not clear what it would mean in practice.

By the way the answers were expressed, and the importance they had for the respondents, it seems that Political Education is not seen as an activity which will either produce reactions within the school, or activity in the community outside. Both are counternanced, but do not seem to be so important in the minds of the teachers concerned as the ability to consider things critically, and to make informed decisions. The answers come back to these objectives again and again. If a programme was successful in achieving these aims then bias, which most assumed would exist, would not be a problem. Consequences in terms of changes in the school, or actual political action, were seen as secondary. This was particularly true for the crucial value of the extent of Political Education's commitment to action. Although a majority supported this commitment, there was not a clearly discernable idea as to what its consequences would be, nor a feeling that it was very important. Political Education is perceived as essentially a class-room activity, with the emphasis on creating critical awareness.

How it should be taught

The last section of the questionnaire was about 'method', and this gave respondents an opportunity to expand on the questions of the challenge Political Education might pose to the status quo and on whether it should have a commitment to involvement and action in the community outside the school. In particular the relevance, if any, to community service programmes, which flourished in many of the schools considered, was investigated.

The majority of the teachers thought that Political Education was essentially something for the upper part of the secondary school. Two did not want it as a specific subject, and another wanted it 'little and often' in the sense of involving children in real decision-making at all levels in the school. A sizeable proportion, however, thought it should wait until the sixth form (three out of the total). There did not seem to be strong opinions about whether it should be a separate subject or not, although a sizeable proportion thought it was better treated through other subjects or as part of the general ethos of the school. One teacher pointed out that if it was put on the timetable it would automatically become boring, 'just as reading the Beano would become boring if it was on the timetable' (Whether there is empirical evidence for this statement was not made clear). The general impression, however, was the 'infusion' versus 'specificity' was not an important issue. Similarly, most teachers when pressed, admitted that virtually every subject could be political, but in practice it was arts subjects which were more likely to be so. Most found it easier to identify those subject which were not political rather than those that were. The following were identified as not have a political content: P.E. (five times), Crafts (five times), Maths (three times), Science (three times), Language (three times) and Physical Geography (once). The preference was for teaching

about politics at the senior level of the secondary school, but it did not have to be a separate subject. In fact there was a strong group who thought that it was better if it was not, greater than those who thought it should be. All the teachers thought that lack of interest could be a problem, but that it would not necessarily be worse than any other subject. Those who did not want it, as a separate subject reiterated the point that it might simply become 'another subject' which the children had to slog away at. The solution to boredom and lack of interest was seen in the skill of the teacher, and also to some extent by the use of 'contemporary' material and audio-visual aids. The words 'passion' and 'enthusiasm' were used more than once. That such enthusiasm, and necessarily commitment (c) could possibly lead to bias was admitted by many of the respondents. Few, however, saw the resulting bias as a problem. They were confident that the critical faculties developed by the Political Education programme would successfully counter it. No respondent saw bias as the major problem. One in fact thought a cure for bias could be worse than the disease in that it could lead to teachers having to agree to an accepted code of values for teaching Political Education. An educational 'berufsverbot' was how it might develop.

So far political education does not present problems which are new to teachers, in that they have to be dealt with in subjects already taught. Making children interested in Political Education is seen as a greater problem than possible bias. But where Political Education will present new problems is if there is any commitment to action, and the practical consequences of such a commitment will now be considered. Teachers were asked to expand on the practical ways such a commitment could be fulfilled, if they thought it should be fulfilled at all.

Practical Political Education

These questions followed directly those considered earlier, in the answers to section B of the questionnaire. In that section there had been a marginal majority for a commitment to involvement and action. There was a greater majority for a 'practical content' of a Political Education course, but little clear idea as to what it should be. Several mentioned Community Service as being desirable, but not necessarily connected with Political Education. All respondents were pressed on this point in a question specifically about Community Service, since nearly all the schools had some sort of community involvement, and at three it was substantial. All thought it desirable, but having no connection with Political Education, except in so far as pupils could use the experience so gained in lessons. Some conceded that there could be a connection, but it was not a necessary one. One respondent thought that Community Service was a useful corrective to the 'elitism' of the sixth form, but no more political than that. Thus there seemed to be very little enthusiasm for developing a political dimension to the form of involvement with the community which most schools already have.

Alternatives were not easily found. There was certainly a definite commitment by three of the respondents, but no clear idea what it would entail. One wanted 'an opportunity to apply skills', another to see 'how the political parties matched their practice with their ideas', and the third wanted to instill 'selflessness, or enlightened self-interest'. Several expressed scepticism about school councils, and on several occasions the view was expressed that they were unlikely to have real power anyway, so long as the Head was responsible for the school. One respondent thought that young children were unsuited to representative democracy, and that 'direct democracy' in the class room was best. Another thought a debating society was a good idea, and had successfully organised one.

Thus the only arena where definite suggestions for the practical application of Political Education were made, albeit rather scantily, was the school itself. This was followed up by inquiring what effects, if any, Political Education was likely to have on the way the school was run. As with the earlier question of whether it would challenge the status quo, there was a minority who thought it would clearly have some effect, no definite feeling that it would not, and the remainder of the answers being somewhat equivocal, admitting of possibilities, but not certain whether they would happen. Two answers were very similar, saying that pupils already have a strong sense of their rights. All seemed to feel that there would be pressure for consultation and some questioning of authority where such consultation did not occur. Thus one Headmaster said 'Political education would be an influence in terms of pressure for consultation and participation, and in this school this is positively encouraged anyway'. Another teacher admitted that there would be pressure for change, but rather gloomily said it would not get anywhere if the 'Head was against it'. Another stressed that teachers would have to stop imposing their own ideas and values, and listen to the needs and wants of the pupils. There seemed to be a strong feeling that such pressure would not necessarily lead to changes in the structure of the school, but rather changes in the teaching <u>style</u>. Teachers would have to be able to accept criticism and discuss things without feeling it as a threat to their authority. As one said 'The teacher must be good enough to allow criticism without losing his status. Similarly a school must <u>allow</u> a school council to function positively, and not simply as a forum for negative criticism.'

The practical application of Political Education is seen more clearly in school terms than in the community outside. Although several teachers have a strong commitment to there being a practical dimension to the subject,

no clear ideas emerge as to what this should be outside the school. Any attempt to make Community Service more political seems to be ruled out. In the school the likely result as perceived by the teachers talked to is seen to be a change of style, and a willingness to allow pupils to enter more into decision making, rather than in any more radical changes in the school structure. The majority of teachers see the problems of Political Education as ones to be resolved in terms of teaching methods and classroom practice, rather than having wider implications.

Vertical Analysis of the Questionnaire, Sections B and C

The answers for each respondent were looked at together to see what links there were between them, and if a clearly identifiable 'view' of Political Education existed in each case. There was a division into two camps, and it seemed to hinge round question B2 iv, whether Political Education should have a positive commitment to involvement and action. Those who saw no commitment to involvement and action also did not think Political Education would have much effect on the way the school was run, and did not think any form of practical content was necessary. They did, however, think political education was desirable. Those who stressed a commitment to involvement and action also thought political education would have an effect on the way the school was run. Is it possible to establish a strong and weak view of political education here? On the one had young people doing something, and this will clearly have an effect on the way the school is run. On the other there is no such commitment, and the subject is unlikely to have much effect on the school. Of thirteen respondents, one did not have a clear view, and the remaining answers were balanced six each way.

Conclusions

There was a strong feeling that political education in schools was desirable. The main reason seemed to be that it was desirable for more

people to participate in our political system. Politics was perceived to be at a low ebb, and in need of more enthusiastic people to raise it in popular esteem. There were frequent reference to extremists, and there seemed to be a fear that these groups would be able to capitalise on disillusionment with our existing system. Nearly all the respondents saw a need to make the existing system more attractive to counter this. Although they stressed involvement in and support for traditional political institutions, the respondents were also concerned that young people be critical of ideas and ideologies, and not follow leaders unquestioningly. 'Do not be a sheep' was a phrase repeated on several occasions. One of the major aims of a Political Education programme was to develop citizens who would not be easily 'taken in'. The possible contradiction between being critical and supporting the existing system if it was not prepared to change its ways was not counternanced.

The major problems perceived by the teachers were in terms of educational effectiveness - how to secure interest, how to change teaching styles to encourage more effective decision making by pupils, and how to secure ways in which pupils could have a part in running the school. The subject was not seen to have a major impact on the world outside the school, and all the teachers were confident that the effects of bias could be dealt with.

The fact that most teachers saw the consequences of Political Education within the school does not mean that a strong view did not exist that it should have commitment to action outside the school. No clear views were given as to what this might be. It was clear that no political aspect was seen for Community Service programmes, and teachers were unhappy about other organisations taking over a Political Education role. There was fear of bias, and of the activities of the extremists. The teachers interviewed

could be divided into two groups, those who wanted a strong view of political education, as a subject necessarily leading to action, and having an effect on the way the school was run. If there was not a commitment to action, the subject would simply be 'an intellectual exercise' as one respondent put it. This contrasted to a weak view that there should be no commitment to action, and consequently no effect on the way the school was run. Political Education should be essentially a 'cerebral' activity as one of theteachers of this persuasion commented. It should be stressed that neither had a greater or lesser commitment to political education as such - simply different approaches to it.

There are many imperfections in this survey, and it would be wrong to draw too precise conclusions from it. The sample is based on the availability of teachers who were prepared to answer, and is heavily biased towards senior members of the profession. Nevertheless it is possible to define two different perceptions of what political education means. The 'weak' approach will have very little effect on schools, since the subject will be treated like most others. The 'strong' approach will have consequences in terms of attitudes and the way the school is run. It should be stressed, however, that most of the teachers see political education as being something done within the schools, and not linked up with organisations and activities outside. Presumably the effect will not beseen until young people reach the age of majority and are able to participate in politics on their own account.

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Interview Schedule on Political Education

On the accompanying sheets are some questions I should like to discuss with you about Political Education in schools. Some of the answers might require a bit of thought, so I am sending the schedule in advance. Please write your answers on the sheet if you want to, but if you would prefer we can deal with the points in discussion. If there are further points not mentioned in the questions which you feel should be discussed then we can do this when we meet.

There is no fixed limit on the answers, so please add further points on extra sheets if you want to.

I have divided the discussion into three parts:

a) Ideas About the reasons for, and beliefs behind, Political Education.

b) Aims What it should be trying to achieve.

c) Method How it should be done.

It may be that you feel that Political Education is not a very good idea at all, but even if this is so it would be extremely helpful to hear your comments and views.

Thank you very much for your help and encouragement.

David Taylor-Gooby

(a) IDEAS

1. There is a good deal of concern and discussion about Political Education in schools at the moment. Why do you think this is?

2. Do you think that children of school age should be taught about politics?

3. In your teaching experience, do you feel that young people are any more or less interested in politics today than they used to be? (Please indicate the length and nature of your experience).

4. Do you think the way the political system is organised in this country encourages or discourages young people to become involved in political activity?

5. Do you think it would be generally beneficial to the political process if young people did become more involved?

6. Should young people be encouraged to become involved in the traditional forms of political activity (e.g. political parties, trade unions)?

7. Are there ways that young people can become involved in political matters other than through the traditional organisations? If so please give suggestions or examples.

8. There are very many community organisations which young people can become involved in which are not normally regarded as political. Do you think it desirable that young people should be given some form of political education by these organisations?

9. Do you think there is a danger of the exploitation or misleading of young people by political groups?

10. How do you see Political Education as being different from Political Propaganda and Political Indoctrination?

(b) AIMS

Educationalists divide teaching into cognitive (putting over knowledge and skills) and affective (promoting particular attitudes and values). For example, in their book Political Education and Political Literacy, Crick and Porter define 'Political Literacy' as 'the knowledge skills and attitudes needed to make a man or woman informed about politics; able to participate in public life and groups of all kinds, both occupational and voluntary; and to recognise and tolerate diversities of political and social values'. Since 'knowledge, skills and attitudes' are covered by the categories I have outlined I shall divide this part of the questionnaire into two parts.

1. Cognitive

Which of the following areas of knowledge and skills do you think Political Education should concern itself with? If you feel there are others, please add them to the list. Could you then rate them in order of importance (i.e. 1, 2, 3, etc.)?

(i) The national political structure

(ii) The local political structure

(iii) The organisation of Political parties and other political organisations

(iv) Political ideas and ideologies

(v) Terms currently used in political discussion (e.g. right-wing, left-wing)

(vi) Current political issues

(vii) Political skills (e.g. how to speak at a meeting).

(viii) How to analyse political propaganda

2. Affective

(i) Should Political Education encourage support for the political system of this country?

(ii) Crick and Porter have suggested the following 'Procedural Values':

Freedom

Toleration

Fairness

Respect for truth

Respect for Reasoning

What values do you think a Political Education programme ought to put forward?

(iii) It has been argued that by its very nature Political Education must challenge the status quo. Do you think this is true?

(iv) Should Political Education have a positive commitment to involvement and action?

(v) Do you think it is possible for Political Education not to have Political bias?

(c) METHOD

1. At what level do you think Political Education can most usefully be introduced into the curriculum?

2. Should Political Education be a separate subject, or should it merely be an aspect of other subjects?

3. What subjects in your opinion have a political content?

4. Which subjects definitely do not?

5. Should Political Education contain a practical content - e.g. a school council, work in the community outside? If so, what?

6. It has been suggested that a programme of Political Education is a school would have repercussions on the way the school is run and the way teaching is done. Do you think this is true? What might the repercussions be?

7. Should young people be encouraged to become involved in community activity outside the school? If so, how?
Do you think this should have any connection with Political Education?

8. A practical problem of a Political Education programme might be lack of interest on the part of the pupils. Do you think this is likely, and if so, how can it be overcome?

9. Do you think bias by teachers and textbooks will be a major problem?

Chapter V Appendix II

Answers to the Questionnaire

Section A - Ideas

1. There is a good deal of concern and discussion about Political Education is schools at the moment. Why do you think this is?

School A — All educational matters much discussed at the moment - concern about weakness of the political system.

School B
(i) Extent of Political ignorance, and growth of social studies in schools.
(ii) Interest because of large number of elections and other political activity. Conservatives afraid of indoctrination by Left, and Left afraid that their views did not get a fair hearing.

School C
(i) Concern outside education with politically-motivated teachers indoctrinating pupils. Concern within education about political naivete of 18 year olds.
(ii) Disillusionment and lack of respect for politicians. People only respond to politics when directly affected by it.

School D — Not everyone is concerned. Those that are worried about extreme polarisation, and lack of moral values through media.

School E — Most of the concern expressed by those who are outside the education system.

School F — Interest due to groups anxious to indoctrinate

School G — No answer.

School H — Not much concern in schools themselves. Fear by political leadership that system 'under threat'.

School I
(i) People feel that shortcomings in society can be remedied through the schools.
(ii) Concern in press about indoctrination by left-wing teachers, unlikely to amount to much.
(iii) Genuine educational concern - people worried about extremes.

2. Do you think children of school age should be taught about politics?

School A — Yes

School B
(i) Yes
(ii) Yes, but must be handled carefully.

School C
(i) Yes
(ii) Doubtful about school - should be taught in the family.

School D Yes

School E Yes

School F It already is, (e.g. History). Danger of political activists wanting to teach it if separate subject.

School G Yes, if possible without bias.

School H No answer

School I (i) Yes
(ii) Will not mean much to most children under 16, since it does not concern them.
(iii) For majority not below 16.

3. In your experience, do you feel that young people are any more or less interested in politics today than they used to be?

School A (Teaching 27 years) Yes - more awareness of current affairs due to T.V. and radio.

School B (i) (Teaching 13 years) More interest in general issues, less in political parties.
(ii) (10 years) Disturbing cynicism amongst young people.

School C (i) Interest peaked 1945-50, with slight revival beginning of Wilson era. Present-day sixth form somewhat cynical.
(ii) (24 years) Young people feel less able to influence things. Less radical, more conservative than used to be.

School D (14 years) Used to be interested in local issues - not so now. General interest in 'how things work'.

School E Most young people not interested, but mass media do not encourage participation.

School F More knowledge, through media, but not necessarily concern.

School G No answer.

School H (10 years) No difference.

School I (i) (30 years) Under 16's never very interested.
(ii) (25 years) Not much difference.
(iii) Majority may be less interested - feel it is less relevant.

4. Do you think the way the political system is organised in this country encourages or discourages young people to become involved in political activity?

School A Organisation does not discourage, but practice does.

School B (i) Discourages - Political parties too institutionalised. Pressure groups more attractive.
(ii) System does neither. Politics does not seem relevant to young people.

School C (i) Political leaders have little rapport with the young. Young leaders the exception.
(ii) System does discourage people - difficult to become involved. Can put people off.

School D Yes it does. Youth organisations do not try hard enough.

School E Yes, both mass media and political system discourage involvement.

School F Yes, political organisations are like school councils in children's eyes - they can be vetoed from above.

School G No answer.

School H Way politics is structured is not encouraging to most people, young and old.

School I (i) Not significant
(ii) System neither encourages or discourages
(iii) Political parties do not try hard enough to involve young people

5. Do you think it would be generally beneficial to the political process if young people did become more involved?

School A Yes

School B (i) Yes
(ii) Yes much talent wasted at the moment.

School C (i) Yes
(ii) Yes, so long as 'wisdom of experience' is not removed.

School D Yes but would not make much difference. More people generally should be involved.

School E Yes more people, young and old should be involved.

School F People must be involved in a meaningful way - not simply follow majority

School G Yes, provided they thought for themselves.

School H Yes - political parties would have to change their ways.

School I (i) Perhaps, but only likely to concern us when we are grown up.
(ii) Beneficial to young people, but no effect on the political process.
(iii) Yes, provided not too young.

6. Should young people be encouraged to become involved in the traditional forms of political activity (e.g. political parties, trade unions?)

School A Yes

School B (i) Yes
(ii) Yes, provided they examined them in a critical way.

School C (i) Possibly, but impractical in school situation
(ii) Yes

School D Yes

School E Yes, but they presented difficulties for the young people

School F Yes, provided they are critical of them.

School G Desire more participatory citizens, so yes.

School H No answer.

School I (i) Yes, when they are reasonably mature.
(ii) Not strong encouragement, but orientation towards traditional system.
(iii) Yes - knowledge of Trade Unions is necessary. New blood is a good thing.

7. Are there ways that young people can become involved in political matters other than through the traditional organisations? If so please give suggestions or examples.

School A Foreign travel, student contacts abroad.

School B (i) Ad hoc pressure groups, resident action groups, anti-Nazi league. Semi-Charitable organisations such as Shelter.
(ii) Yes, provided they are critical.

School C (i) In any area where interests have to be represented. School Council and pupil representation on Governing Body.
(ii) No - other methods are not alternatives.

School D Local community activities - charity work.

School E Running of school and school clubs. These possibilities limited.

School F Not enthusiastic. Possibilities for involvement in the community.

School G Stressed importance of young people becoming involved in the community.

School H Yes there are ways, but not specific as to what.

School I (i) No ways that would have any real purpose.
(ii) Everything is political.
(iii) No - do not want extreme organisations.

8. There are many community organisations which young people can become involved in which are not normally regarded as political. Do you think it desirable that young people should be given some form of political education by these organisations?

School A Dubious about other organisations doing political education

School B (i) Other groups, such as Church groups can be biased. Therefore no.
(ii) Yes if there is a suitable atmosphere. Leader must see both sides.

School C (i) Yes - pupils are able to be represented on the management committee of the school, which contains community groups, and again practice in 'a-political' organisation.
(ii) Yes

School D Not happy about youth clubs - not aware of their ideology.

School E Possibilities limited. Sceptical about creating 'artificial' political situations.

School F Not happy about this.

School G Did not comment.

School H No objection to youth club having more 'academic' role, but thought it unlikely in practice. Propaganda must be explicit.

School I (i) Depends on nature of organisation and doctrine.
(ii) Unenthusiastic.
(iii) Youth Clubs worse than school. No control over bias.

9. Do you think there is a danger of the exploitation or misleading of young people by political groups?

School A Yes

School B (i) Yes on the extremes of political activity e.g. N.F.
(ii) Yes. Young people are very impressionable, and take notice of adults.

School C (i) Yes, although political parties sensitive about it, which is adequate protection at present.
(ii) Yes

School D A danger, but unlikely at present. Effective political education should help people cope with it.

School E Exploitation doubtful - misleading possible.

School F Yes 'and is considered by many, myself one of them to be one of the greatest problems in this country at present.'

School G No comment.

School H Yes - can be subtle.

School I (i) Yes - racist or fascist type dogma can have considerable appeal to the immature mind.
(ii) Obviously
(iii) Yes, there is a danger. It can be done with the best of

10. How do you see political education as being different from political propaganda and political indoctrination?

School A Education seeks to offer and explain alternatives, whereas the other two do not.

School B (i) Political education should teach how to recognise propaganda and indoctrination. It should be value-orientated towards democracy, and against totalitarian ideologies. It should also give straightforward information about the political system.
(ii) Political Education should make children critical, and able to make their own judgement when presented with as many sides of a problem as possible. Judgement should be based on informed criticism. Propaganda and indoctrination do not admit of other views.

School C (i) Yes in kind, but can be different in degree only, unless there is extreme care. Teachers can exercise 'unconscious influence'.
(ii) Political Education must be unbiased, and admit of alternatives.

School D Political education not simply a body of knowledge, nor a view or attitude. Ability to select and discriminate - resists indoctrination and propaganda.

School E Must present all views as neutrally as possible, and the possibility of alternatives. Danger that authority of teacher might exercise unconscious influence.

School F Political education must present 'broadest spectrum'. Desirable that children make decisions.

School G Thought unbiased political education desirable, but unlikely.

School H Children must be made aware that decisions effect their lives, that decisions have to be made, and made on the basis of information. Must also accept consequences of their decisions.

School I (i) It is different.
(ii) Must try to make it different.
(iii) Should be different. Danger that people who go in for it may be biased, and indoctrination will creep in.

Section B - Aims

1. Cognitive The following were to be rated in order of importance:

(i) The national political structure 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 2, 2, 3, 5,,6.

(ii) The local political structure 2, 2, 3, 3, 4, 4, 6, 7, 8.

(iii) The organisation of Political Parties and other political organisations 2, 2, 3, 3, 4, 4, 4, 5, 6.

(iv) Political ideas and ideologies 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 5, 6.

(v) Terms currently used in political discussion, e.g. right-wing, left-wing 2, 3, 4, 4, 5, 6, 6, 7.

(vi) Current political issues 3. 3. 3. 3. 4. 4. 6. 7.

(vii) Political skills e.g. how to speak at a meeting 4, 6, 8, 8, 8, 8.

(viii) How to analyse political propaganda 1, 1, 1, 2, 5, 5, 6, 7.

2. Affective

(i) Should Political Education encourage support for the political system of this country?

School A Not of necessity.

School B (i) Not unquestioningly - should support democracy.
(ii) 'Constructively critical' attitude.

School C (i) Yes, but only by implication.
(ii) Should be supported, and compared with others.

School D Should be able to change and support it. Should not encourage contempt for it.

School E No

School F Should not support it if it prevents free discussion.

School G No answer

School H Democracy yes, everything else no. Nothing should be sacrosanct.

School I (i) Yes
(ii) In general yes - support democracy
(iii) Should in some measure support the political system of this country.

(ii) Crick and Porter have suggested the following 'Political Values": Freedom, Toleration, Fairness, Respect for Truth, Respect for Reasoning. What values do you think a Political Education programme ought to put forward?

School A Should not put forward values as such.

School B (i) Agree with above, although freedom may have more than one meaning.
(ii) Support values, but think freedom and fairness the most important.

School C (i) Respect for absolute truth and tolerance. All others follow.
(ii) Values as above, but truth can present problems.

School D Respect for reasoning most important. Must be respect for human situation, as in all subjects.

School E Crick and Porter values vague. Knowledge with ability to appriase 'opposing' political viewpoints important.

School F Accepted Crick and Porter.

School G Basic value was to think things out for yourself, 'do not be a sheep'.

School H As Crick and Porter, but people should also be aware of their own self-interest.

School I (i) As Crick and Porter
(ii) People are not means, but ends in themselves.
(iii) Most important respect for reasoning. Also great believer in fairness.

(iii) It has been argued that by its very nature Political Education must challenge the status quo. Do you think this is true?

School A No

School B (i) Only after basic standard of education, i.e. Knowledge of the system is imparted. Then can at least discuss status quo.
(ii) Not necessarily.

School C (i) Yes - status quo must be questioned.
(ii) Can cement status quo by reinforcing prejudices.

School D Not necessarily so - young people tend to follow parents.

School E Yes - that is part of the job of Political Education.

School F Yes - politics challenges the status quo.

School G No specific answer.

School H Should not do so if school run on democratic lines, but likely to in normal school, or society outside.

School I (i) No
(ii) If it presents a variety of ideas of course.
(iii) To some extent there will be questioning of the status quo.

(iv) Should Political Education have a positive commitment to involvement and action?

School A No

School B (i) Yes - we needed an 'informed democracy'.
(ii) Yes, otherwise an 'intellectual exercise'. All action should be peaceful.

School C (i) Not necessarily.
(ii) Should be a motivator to getting people involved in something.

School D Not necessarily. Main aim for children to understand what politics is about.

School E Yes, but action should not be 'forced'. Students to decide themselves on commitment.

School F Not necessarily. Children should not just do what they are told, but learn how to have an influence.

School G School should encourage young people to become involved in the community.

School H Yes, although not necessarily in political structure. Involvement in day to day choices in school.

School I (i) No
(ii) The educator will encourage pupils to eventually vote, and take an interest.
(iii) No

(v) Do you think it is possible for Political Education not to have Political bias?

School A Yes

School B (i) Not party-political bias, but more subtle forms.
(ii) Desirable, but in practice people are likely to have strong view-points.

School C (i) Yes, 'at the end of the day'.
(ii) No. Must allow criticism and questioning.

School D As a purely intellectual thing, politics can be free from bias. Bias of teachers likely to be whether politics a good thing or not.

School E No - but can be admitted and questioned by the students.

School F Not easy. Teachers likely to have a political interest.

School G Not possible.

School H Yes. What the choice is not so important as actually making a choice.

School I (i) No; slanting inevitable.
(ii) Possible, but very difficult
(iii))Difficult not to have bias.

Section C - Method

1. At what level do you think Political Education can most usefully be introduced into the curriculum?

School A At any level.

School B (i) 4th and 5th year secondary
(ii) 4th and 5th year secondary

School C (i) 5th and 6th years
(ii) For most children not until 6th form

School D Fourth year secondary

School E As a subject in its own right 3rd year, in Social Studies.

School F Not at all on the timetable

School G Not specifically on the timetable

School H As early as possible in a general sense - 'small and often'. Academic political training as late as possible.

School I (i) Not before 14+
(ii) 6th form. 16 year old leavers will be little interested.
(iii) Structure before 16, ideas after 16.

2. Should Political Education be a separate subject, or merely an aspect of other subjects?

School A Can be either.

School B (i) Effective as both
(ii) Should be made explicit, and best if a separate subject, although difficult to keep it out of other subjects.

School C (i) Both
(ii) Should be part of already existing subjects - e.g. History.

School D Important enough to warrant being a separate subject.

School E Depends on type of school. Both approaches can be successful.

School F Through all subjects, and the ethos of the school.

School G Through general ethos of the school.

School H Ideally should run through whole idea of school.

School I (i) Should be an aspect of other subjects.
(ii) Probably an aspect of all subjects anyway.
(iii) Should be an aspect of other subjects.

3. What subjects in your opinion have a political content?

4. Which subjects definitely do not?

Answers to both questions can be considered together.

School A History, Economics, Literature, Art, Ecology do. Languages, Pure Science, Mathematics, Design, Home Economics and other practical crafts are not likely to.

School B (i) Most subjects can, but History, P.E. and English are most likely to. P.E. probably does not.
(ii) Most subjects can have a political content. In practice Maths, P.E., Physical Geography and Sciences unlikely to.

School C (i) Economics, Sociology, Modern History do. Maths, Languages, Handicraft and P.E. do not.
(ii) Traditionally arts subjects more likely to be political. All subjects can be, but in practice science does not tend to.

School D Most subjects do to some extent, but practical subjects not at lower level.

School E Practically all subjects can have a political content, but in practice most do not.

School F All subjects can have a political content.

School G No specific answer

School H Most do. Maths, Crafts, P.E., Languages do not.

School I (i) History and R.E. are political. Mathematics not.
(ii) Everything is political.
(iii) History, Humanities, R.K., English all the time. Most subjects could have a political content.

5. Should Political Education contain a practical content - e.g. a school council, work in the community outside. If so, what?

School A This sort of thing can be part of general school programme.

School B (i) School Council could bring disillusionment. Debating Society a good idea.
(ii) Yes. Children should have an opportunity to apply skills.

School C (i) Yes - should instill selflessness, or enlightened self-interest.
(ii) Observation yes, but activism presents problems. Unenthusiastic about school councils.

School D Political Education essentially a cerebral activity. Not essential to have activity of a practical nature.

School E Yes, provided students wanted it. Should have an opportunity to see how political groups match their deeds with their theories in practice.

School F Yes. Sceptical about the value of school council.

School G Should be community involvement, but not necessarily connected with Political Education.

School H Yes, preferably within the school. Direct democracy better than representative for school children.

School I
(i) Community work non-political. School council and all forms of self-expression in school are valuable.
(ii) If you wish
(iii) Community work not linked to political education. School Council does not create much interest.

6. It has been suggested that a programme of Political Education in a school would have repercussions on the way the school is run, and the way teaching is done. Do you think this is true? What might the repercussions be?

School A Could have, but pupils much concerned about their 'rights' and authority is questioned in any case.

School B
(i) Unlikely to be subversive. May encourage questioning.
(ii) Teacher and school must be able to allow criticism and questioning without losing their authority.

School C
(i) Pressure for consultation and participation. This already encouraged at school.
(ii) Young people get enough sense of their rights from parents. Political Education will not have much effect.

School D Would not if Head against it. Must be an opportunity for real decisions to be made.

School E There would probably be some questioning of authority. Hopefully teachers would be ready to allow questioning and discussion.

School F There would be likely to be objections. Children must learn self-discipline, but not be denied the possibility of self-interest.

School G No answer.

School H Teachers would have to stop imposing their views, and listen to needs and wants of pupils. Pupils must be allowed to make real choices.

School I
(i) Doubtful
(ii) Lead must come from the top. School children very immature.
(iii) Should not be taught as a subject. Repercussions amongst staff if it was.

7. Should young people be encouraged to become involved in community activity outside the school? If so, how?
Do you think this should have any connection with political education?

School A Yes: it depends on locality and the staff. No necessary connection with political education.

School B (i) Yes: but Community Service not connected with Political Education. Children should be encouraged to take an interest in local political issues which concern them.
(ii) Yes: not a necessary link with Political Education, although it should encourage it.

School C (i) Community Service encouraged - to counter 'elitism' of Sixth Form. Not necesssarily political.
(ii) Young people should be encouraged to become involved in Community activity. Not necessarily political.

School D No answer

School E No fixed connection, although opportunities should exist, and experience gained could be used in Political Education lesson.

School F Pupils should be encouraged to do Community Service. They will gradually assimilate an awareness of social problems.

School G No connection. Community Service highly desirable.

School H No necessary connection.

School I (i) Yes. No necessary connection with Political Education.
(ii) Yes not a necessary connection.
(iii) Community Work should be encouraged, but has no necessary connection with political education.

8. A practical problem of a Political Education programme might be lack of interest on the part of the pupils. Do you think this is likely, and if so, how can it be overcome?

School A As in any subject by lively teaching.

School B (i) Yes likely, but boredom due to ignorance. Once this dealt with less likely to be a problem.
(ii) Depends on ability of teacher. Hostility of pupils may be because subject is non-exam. Good teacher should be able to overcome problems.

School C (i) Boredom quite usual. Mock election and involvement through School Council, together with examination of real political issues should counter it.
(ii) All things become boring in the eyes of the pupils if they are put on the timetable. Passion and interest of teacher must counter this.

School D Yes, boredom likely. Use audio-visiual aids. Stress it is part of growing up.

School E Extremely likely that there would be lack of interest. Must break down 'traditional' image of politics.

School F Danger that becomes 'just another subject'. Must overcome boredom the way we do in other subjects.

School G No answer.

School H Yes, likely to be boredom in terms of national scene.

School I (i) Yes. Wil be overcome in some cases by maturity - otherwise never.
(ii) Yes, likely under age of 17. Indoctrination will work (?)
(iii) Lack of interest is likely. Should not be a separate subject.

9. Do you think bias by teachers and textbooks will be a major problem?

School A Textbooks date very quickly - better to use tapes and other audio-visual equipment. Teacher bias a problem in any subject.

School B (i) No
(ii) Bias will be a problem. Children must be trained to recognise bias.

School C (i) No pupils will compensate for any which emerges.
(ii) Yes, because of the subjective nature of the subject. Must make people critically minded.

School D Textbooks not so likely to be biased as teachers. People needed to be able to recognise bias.

School E Bias a problem because those opposed to political education would use it as an excuse not to have the subject. Not really a teaching problem.

School F Yes.

School G Yes, does not think it possible to teach without bias.

School H Teacher tends to be biased in favour of certain values. No free choice.

School I (i) Not really.
(ii) Of course. Nationalistic bias.
(iii) Yes.

Footnotes

(a) There appeared to be an assumption that greater political knowledge would encourage support for traditional political viewpoints and discourage extremism. This is widespread throughout society, but is by no means proven. Would a more critical awareness by young people make them more willing to listen to extremist views? This is something which the respondents probably need to think out more fully.

(b) Learning about politics was split into two categories in the questionnaire, cognitive and affective following the ideas of Almond and Verba in the Civic Culture. 'Cognitive' referred to political facts and skills, whereas 'affective' was concerned with the feeling and values about politics the programme should put forward.

(c) 'Passion' and 'enthusiasm' are not usually associated with moderation in British Politics. Given the concern about extremism, which might have an exciting appeal, this need to make politics lively seems to be a major problem.

CHAPTER VI

Conclusions

The Possibilities and the Prospects

How can I, that girl standing there,
My attention fix
On Roman or on Russian
Or on Spanish politics?
Yet here's a travelled man that knows
What he talks about
And there's a politician
That has read and thought,
And maybe what they say is true
Of war and war's alarms,
But O that I were young again
And held her in my arms!

W.B. Yeats

The friend of humanity cannot recognise a distinction between what is political and what is not. There is nothing that is not political.

Thomas Mann

CONCLUSION

Attitudes to politics

Political education has to deal with problems of value and definition. What should our attitude to politics be, and what precisely is politics? Both will influence each other. Because there are different viewpoints a political education programme must make its position clear. Many of the difficulties of textbooks on the subject seem to stem from a reluctance to think out a clear position, or an uncritical acceptance of one without appreciating that it can be validly criticised.

The ancient greek idea of democracy saw active participation by all citizens (or at least all male freemen) as not only permissible but positively desirable. This sytem of direct democracy has been much praised since, but at the time was often criticised, and produced problems when the people changed their minds after committing the state to a particular course of action. (a) The tradition in this country is representative democracy, where the people select someone with political expertise to represent them, but gives him a reasonably free hand during his term of office. Such a system sees wholesale public pariticpation as both impractical and undesirable. Continuious consultation of everyone about everything would lead to weak and indecisive government. A representative government, while it does not require or even want its citizens to actively participate in the actual running of the state, does require its citizens to be well informed to keep check on what the government is doing, and to make sure it does not overstep the mark. John Stuart Mill stressed the need for the education of the electorate if there was to be political advance, and F.R. Leavis wanted the universities to create an 'educated public' to keep an eye on

politicians. Almond and Verba see the 'political competence' of the citizens as being necessary in a democracy if elites are to be kept in check. Bernard Crick extends the role of the public further - not only should they keep a check on government, but government will be able to implement policies more effectively if these are discussed with the people first. Knowledge of politics is necessary both for the public to control the government and for the government to do its job more effectively.

There could be a clear role for political education in making the public better able to choose competent politicians and to make sure that they do what they have promised to. How exactly the citizen should influence his government is not made clear by some of the theorists of representative democracy. In a modern state government elites, however benign, have considerable resources available to strengthen their position, and the influence of the individual citizen is not going to be very substantial. If he does want to influence the government he will have to work through a political party or other organisation. To do this may not be easy, and if political education wants to encourage the citizen to do it effectively it will have to teach skills as well as facts about politics. If a political education programme is seen, therefore, as strengthening the role of the citizen in a modern democracy so that he can have more influence on the ruling elites it must extend beyond simply conveying knowledge about politics to containing a direct commitment to political participation. Only if it does this can it claim to be strengthening representative democracy.

This then is a clear value which the author feels a political education programme should have if it is going to strengthen democracy. A second follows from it. Politics must be a worthwhile activity. Although it

is likely that those anxious to teach it will think it worthwhile, there exists a strong popular feeling that politics is a dishonourable activity, and not something which honest people ought to be involved in. This seems to be reflected in some of the books on the subject. Although cynicism about politicians may be a perfectly understandable view, and one which has to be taken into account in any discussion of politics, a political education programme which seems to encourage political participation has to convey that politics is an essentially worthwhile activity. Doing this without making it sound excessively moral, or boring is difficult, and will require considerable educational skill.

There must be agreement too on what politics is. Crick and Milne stress that politics is essentially about conflict, both of interests and values. Any attempt to minimise or eliminate this conflict will deprive politics of an essential component. Crick, has written extensively about American attempts to make politics into a 'science', which have removed its essential moral content. Teaching about conflict, and presenting different viewpoints equally validly creates considerable educational problems, but they cannot be solved simply by eliminating conflict altogether because to do so would not only inadequately present the subject, but also deprive it of a considerable amount of its interest.

There statements of values and definition may be disputed, but it is the opinion of the author that only if they are subscribed to can a full programme of political education succeed. Such a programme should aim at strengthening the political effectiveness of a citizen in a democracy.

The Current Political Education Debate

The current political education debate has been going for about ten years, although there was an attempt before the war, through the Association for Education in Citizenship, to encourage political education

in schools. This was not successful, and although the introduction of social studies after the war encouraged the discussion of political topics, many teachers still felt that the subject was dealt with inadequately. Initially interest was stimulated by the foundation of the Politics Association in 1969, but subsequent discussion has been dominated by the Hansard Society Report published in 1978. Many of its ideas had wide currency, however, before the final Report came out. The general association of political education with the Hansard Society Report has tended to give the impression that this is 'the view' on political education, and has overshadowed the contributions of others such as Entwistle in 1971.

The Hansard Society Report has influenced parts of the educational 'establishment'. Both the Conservative and Labour Parties have expressed interest, and a report by two HMI's was strongly influenced by the Report's ideas. This support by the establishment has led to critics of the report asserting that it must necessarily put forward values supportive of the status quo, and that political education supported by such people will not allow views critical of the established order to flourish.

The Report states that politics is about conflict, and that political education must recognise this, and put alternative views with empathy so that students will appreciate why people hold them. It also states that there are certain 'procedural values' which can be accepted by all sides in a democracy. These are freedom, toleration, fairness, respect for truth and respect for reasoning. It is these that the critics have seized on as implying tacit, if not overt, support for the existing order. Their reasons seem to be that because members of the current establishment endorse these values, they must necessarily support their existence. They fail to prove convincingly why this should necessarily be so, but their suspicion of political education because of its endorsement by establishment

figures is understandable. It may well be likely that in practice political education will not give a fair representation to radical views, but this is not something which is yet proven, and is not a criticism of the Hansard Society Report as such.

On the question of a commitment to participation the Report is equivocal. This perhaps reflects the different positions of the authors. There seems to be much more stress on understanding politics than on actually becoming involved in it. Although the need to learn political skills is mentioned, it is not pursued. The Report certainly does not positively encourage political participation as an essential part of political education.

Entwistle, writing earlier, put forward the view that Western-style democracy was based on the activities of voluntary groups, to which many members of the population belong. He thought that the best way for young people to learn about democracy was to become involved in such groups, both inside and outside school. He has been criticised that in practice the sort of groups which young people can become involved in will have no power, and acknowledged the validity of this criticism himself. His approach remains, however, that politics is best learnt through active involvement, and that young people should be encouraged to become involved. There thus seems to be two approaches to political education, which need not necessarily, or course, be separate. One puts the stress on learning about and understanding politics without necessarily becoming involved in it. The other puts the stress much more on learning through experience, and thus requires a commitment to active participation.

Although there is no reason why a political education programme should not include both approaches, this divide seems to have been reflected in

subsequent debate. At the recent ATSS/Hansard Society Conference and other meetings which the author has attended teachers seem to have divided into groups stressing the proper understanding of politics in an academic sense as contrasted to those who want to encourage active involvement and put the emphasis on learning skills.

Political Education in Practice

Teachers involved with teaching politics in different ways were interviewed to see what issues they thought were important in political education. They all thought it was desirable, but different over whether a political education programme should contain a commitment to action. Many were concerned about the dangers of extremism, and were concerned that political education should make young people critically aware so that they would not be deceived by such people. For this reason they were all firmly of the opinion that political education should be in the hands of professional educators. There was little enthusiasm for action outside the accepted political system. This could perhaps be interpreted as a desire that political education should be about the status quo, but there was a strong genuine commitment by all teachers that although they might want the present political system to continue, they did want young people to be genuinely critical, and not follow others unthinkingly. There was probably an assumption that if young people were critical they would not listen to extremists, which may not necessarily be justified, but the commitment to developing a critical awareness by teachers was genuine enough. The divide came on the question of action. Some thought that political education should enable young people to understand politics better, particularly so they would not be misled, whereas others thought it must necessarily lead to some form of action. The division was slightly more in favour of action than against. There was little clear view, however,

as to what form action should take. One respondent was honest when he admitted that he did not mind, so long as political education led to 'doing something'. Given this concern for action it was perhaps rather surprising that none of the respondents thought that political skills should have a high priority in a political education programme. It seemed clear that what a commitment to action meant had not been clearly thought out. Certainly it was not seen as being through school councils or other forms of involvement within the school. Nor did the teachers see community service as having any political overtones.

Few saw bias as a major problem which could not be handled by skilled teachers. The major divide in their views was on the question already highlighted in the debate on the subject, about whether political education was about understanding politics or encouraging action. It seemed possible from this to identify a 'weak' and a 'strong' view of political education in schools. The first sees it as a subject not much different from others, trying to develop an understanding of politics so that young people will be able to make mature judgements and not be misled. The latter sees it as encouraging political activity. As such it would be rather difficult from existing subjects on the timetable, and could present problems which will need further thought.

The textbooks which were analysed showed some confusion in their ideas about politics. It is not useful to try and quantify the numbers and extent of those taking particular views since such an exercise is beyond the scope of this thesis. Rather it is to highlight problems which some of them unwittingly encounter, and to point to examples of where these problems seem to have been solved.

Many of the books found it very difficult to deal with the essential conflict in politics. Some tried to ignore it altogether, producing a 'consensus' view which misrepresented what politics is actually like. Others seemed to fail to connect ideologies with action on particular issues. In particular the overall approach of the different political parties was dealt with inadequately, in that it was not made clear why they adopted particular approaches and took the attitudes they did. The approach of identifying a particular issue, and then showing how a policy would be developed on this in accordance with certain principles, and the problems involved in its implementation (including conflicts with other groups) was developed in several books, but not applied to political parties. The reasons for playing down political parties were probably that the authors were very sensitive to possible accusations of bias, but they play such an important role in our democracy at both a national and a local level that political education cannot be complete without a proper consideration of them. This can only be done by showing how they actually operate; how principles are put into practice, difficulties encountered, and opposition coped with.

The lack of emphasis on political parties also left the books with little practical advice about how to actually become involved in politics. One book did describe pressure groups, but few showed how organisations actually functioned at a grass-roots level. There seemed to be an assumption that participation was somehow a direct relationship between the citizen and the governed - the overemphasis on the 'personal clout' of the individual which some commentators have noted in America. Becoming involved in political activity is sometimes quite difficult - it is not a case of simply saying 'I participate'. More stress on how it is actually done, including problems involved, would seem necessary in a political education programme. Otherwise, whatever statements may be made , in practice it is biased against active participation.

Much thought then seems to be necessary about what active participation in politics actually means for young people. Although there is a strong body of opinion which thinks this is the way political education should go, there are not many actual suggestions as to what it means in practice. Nor are there many teaching aids which give a clear idea of how one actually becomes involved in political activity. This was a very apparent feeling at the recent A.T.S.S./Hansard Society Conference. Many teachers felt they had had enough of theoretical debate, and accepted that political education should have a commitment to political action. What they wanted to know was what did this mean in practice?

Political Education - the possibilities

The evidence reviewed in Chapter III shows that the school is only one of a number of factors influencing young people, and that in many ways by what has been called 'the education paradigm' it reinforces attitudes and values of society outside without necessarily explicitly teaching them. If a teacher wants to teach politics seriously, he or she will have to do two things - firstly capture interest that the subject is meaningful and worthwhile, and secondly perhaps cultivate attitudes and values which may be in conflict with those prevailing in the rest of the school. The problems of the latter are obvious, but those of the former no less important. If a political education programme encourages participation only to give young people the actual experience that in practice no-one wants them to participate in a meaningful way it is doomed to failure. Many teachers will in practice subscribe to the 'weak' view of political education because the consequences of the strong view have such widespread ramifications that they simply make life too complicated for one teacher.

Crick and Porter touch on these problems in the Hansard Society Report when they acknowledge that how the school is run will have an influence on the success or otherwise of a political education programme. Simply affording opportunities for participation in schools will not be enough by itself. If society really wants its citizens to be more effective democrats it will have to give them an opportunity to take part in the management of those things in society which directly effect them. This will involve actual shifts of power. Those who are asked to participate will be only too aware of the futility of participating in something on the terms of an authority which has a final veto on anything they may wish to decide.

In the short term this may mean working outside the classroom situation. Philips and Cohen and Egglestone both point to the advantages of working in less formal settings outside the school. Such a project could well be organised from a school, but it would have to entail young people organising themselves and if necessary confronting other groups or authority in the community if this proved necessary. The relationship with a teacher could prove difficult. He would need to advise, encourage and cajole in order to prevent young people becoming disheartened, but his official position could put him in difficulties if the project came into contact with a local authority.

The individual teacher working on his own in such a situation could well feel isolated and vunerable. There is a strong case for teachers who feel the same say about teaching political education seriously to work together so that they can help each other if a difficult situation arises. The most desirable situation would be if an individual could encourage colleagues to 'team teach' in the same school, but if this is not possible, informal contacts could be made between schools.

Where will this activity lead to when pupils have left school, As Entwhistle has pointed out, one of the strengths of British Society is the large number of informal voluntary groups which individuals can become involved in. These range from the respectable to the subversive. There is also scope for extending formal means of participation through more neighbourhood councils on the lines of exisitng Parish Councils, but this time in the urban areas, through widening the membership of school governors, and through more participation in industry. All these measrues are being actively discussed at the moment. They are not going to change the balance of power in society by themselves, but they could involve more people in the machinery of government, and thereby give them more experience. In particular the Parish

Council seems to be a neglected part of the political structure in this country, and one which could certainly be usefully extended.

None of these organisations, however, are going to have real influence on major centres of power. Many decisions in our society are taken by unaccountable people whom it is not always easy for outsiders to identify, let alone influence. The senior politicians, however, must be representatives, and it is generally agreed that they should be accountable to those they represent. It has been the constant theme of many writers on political education that one of its objectives should be to improve this accountability. At the moment the machinery is often very clumsy. The electorate can vote a member of parliament or councillor out if they are dissatisfied with him, but this is a major step. Communicating views and exchanging opinions are not always easy things to do. Many other representatives to public bodies are not elected directly by the public, but from organisations, usually political parties. In industry the only effective representatives which the workers have are elected through the trade unions. The only effective way that members of the public are going to be able to communicate with their representatives is through the machinery of the organisation which put them forward in the first place, and that means by and large through political parties, or in industry, trade unions.

It is not suggested that young people still at school should be encouraged to become involved in political parties or trade unions. This is not practical, and probably not desirable. There are other ways of influencing elected representatives other than simply through the organisations which elected them in the first place. Single-issue groups have a long and honourable tradition in British politics, ranging from the Campaign against the Corn Laws to CND. There are also much less influential, but probably just as important in their immediate neighbourhood, action groups, such as those

set up to save a particular school from closure. All these have an important and worthwhile part to play in the political process, and if political education led to more involvement in them it will have been a success. It nevertheless remains true that if we want a representative democracy in a large-scale society to function effectively, then we must encourage greater involvement in, and activity by, the organisations which select the representatives, and to whom they are accountable.

Assuming that this is a desirable objective, is it feasible? If political education had been taken seriously in school, then hopefully young people would have had some experience of political ideas and perhaps even activity in the community. Then they would gain some practical experience in the world before they contemplated joining a political party. (Gramsci's ideas about political education coming through experience are relevant here.) The important question now is will they be able to become involved in political activity even if they want to be? There could be two problems.

The first might be that the majority of the population do not seem to want to be involved in partisan activity. As has already been seen in the textbooks there seems to be a desire for consensus which plays down party differences and emphasises the important of a 'middle way'. To such people encouraging political activity could be seen to be encouraging the 'eristic' conflict described by A.J.M. Milne which is ultimately sterile. This point can be answered in several ways. Firstly it is not the object of a political education programme that <u>everybody</u> should join a political party, but rather that political activity should be encouraged. Secondly the consensus view is a legitimate political position, but whether it is a very realistic one is open to doubt (in the opinion of the author). Finally it would be hoped that a successful political education programme would propagate the idea

that conflict of ideas and values in a society is productive, and not necessarily damaging to the welfare of that society. In fact it is only through such conflict that new ideas emerge in a democracy and that democracy maintains its vitality.

The second problem might well be the attitude of the political parties themselves. All pay lip-service to the idea that it is desirable to increase membership, and a large membership would prevent the charge, often levelled at the political parties, that activists are out of touch with their supporters and voters. A larger membership might well change some policy positions and attitudes. But it would be unrealistic to expect that those who already hold positions of influence within political party machines would automatically welcome enthusiastic newcomers, particularly if those newcomers had been encouraged to put their ideas forward purposefully and to question authority by the kind of teaching they had received in school. Older members might well be suspciious, and at best indifferent at worst hostile. There would also be the problem of finding activities for a larger membership to do, in an organisation which has been used to functioning with a small number of people. If these problems are not solved it would easily discourage new members.

These problems are not insurmountable. The political parties on the continent generally have a much larger active membership than their British counterparts. What is needed is a genuine commitment to political education amongst their leaders of the political parties. It is no good them expecting political education to lead to an influx of new members who will automatically support the status quo, but on the other hand there is no reason why a properly organised political education programme in schools should necessarily produce people which a fair-minded person would describe as 'destructive' or 'extremist'. Rather the danger is that political parties with very small

active memberships are in danger of being taken over by extremists of one sort or another.

The main conclusion of this thesis is clear. A successful political education programme must contain a firm commitment to political activity. If it does not it may be an interesting subject on the timetable, but it is not going to lead to any change, or better still, improvement in the political life of this country, which prides itself on being one of the finest democracies in the world, but in which direct political participation is in fact at a fairly low level. The teaching of a set of attitudes that it is desirable to organise and participate in activity to change situations is going to create problems in schools where such attitudes are discouraged, either direclty or indirectly, in other aspects of school life. Much of the actual activity will probably have to go on outside the school, and this could create an uneasy relationship between the school and outside bodies, particularly if problems or confrontations arose.

'Direct action' in the community, at whatever level, is unlikely to be political in a partisan sense. It is only when he or she has gained more experience that the one-time school pupil may join a political party. Many will not want to do this, but will still remain political in the community in other ways. If our political system is to be made more effectively representative, and genuinely participatory, then the membership of the political parties and other organisations directly involved in the political process needs to increase. Hopefully pressure from more young people concerned about politics will 'open up' and expand the political parties, but there needs also to be a genuine commitment to recruit more members from the leaders themselves.

The immediate prospects

Despite the successful campaign by the Hansard Society, and the obvious enthusiasm of many teachers, other events seem to have overtaken the more ambitious plans of those wanting to introduce political education as a new subject onto the school timetable. Government expenditure cuts and falling rolls have meant that many in education are fighting hard to preserve what they have, and have little enthusiasm or energy left for new subjects. Thus although there may be courses and conferences it is unlikely that there will be much resources left for new courses in schools.

But is this necessarily a bad thing as far as political education is concerned? If the enthusiasm for it had coincided with a period of plentiful resources it might have become a 'vogue' subject in the way that social studies did in many cases. Many teachers might have taught it without having either a strong commitment to it, or an understanding of what it really involved. Because of the difficulties of adopting a 'strong' approach, or one stressing political invovlement, it is unlikely that many teachers would have pursued such a method. The result might well have been many courses adopting the 'weak' approach, or simply treating politics as another academic subject. The overall view of this thesis is that such an approach would do little to actually increase the amount of political activity in this country. The result would probably be disillusionment and the abandoning of such courses after a few years because they had not 'worked'.

Much more practical work needs to be done in exploring how the problems faced within the school by teaching political education with the 'strong' approach can be overcome. Those teachers who are already trying to teach political education, whether explicitly or as part of another subject, need to find ways of resolving the contradiction of encouraging young people to

question their situation and to do something about it within an institution whose norms probably emphasise conformity and obedience. At the same time the young need to learn how to be tolerant, and how to compromise when necessary, and probably most important of all, not to lose heart in the face of opposition. Resolving these problems is difficult, and needs both patience and commitment on the part of teachers.

The teacher working in isolation will sometimes become discouraged. There needs to be communication between teachers with similar approaches and ideas to build up experience and exchange ideas. It is important that practical ideas and advice are available for other teachers who might want to take up 'political education'.

At the same time the lobbying and campaigning needs to go on. Political education enthusiasts need to work at two levels. On the one hand a reserve of experience needs to be built up at the classroom level, and practice needs to be extended as far as possible. At the same time those in authority in the political system need to be won over to the logical consequence of a political education programme - that more young people will want to become involved in the political system.

There needs to be a much more genuine belief, as distinct from lip-service, that large political parties are desirable, and a willingness not only to encourage young people to join, but also to find them something meaningful to do when they have. This is not so that young people will find it necessarily easy to become directly involved in political activity - they will still find opposition and difficulties. But they will appreciate help and encouragement where it can be found.

Thus although the immediate prospects for political education might seem gloomy because of the present political climate towards education in general, this does not mean that they are non-existent. Advance may be slow, but if it is based on sound foundations, the work will last. The political education enthusiast has much to do, both in developing his pedagogy, and also convincing political leaders of the value of his work.

Footnotes

(a) The most famous case was that of Mytilene, where the Assembly ordered the death of the whole population because they had revolted, but subsequently changed its mind. Fortunately, the order had not been carried out, and it was possible to countermand it in time.

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