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*The manpower services commission and further education or "I think the term 'takeover bid' is emotional and misleading. What is your second question?" (chief executive of TSD/MSC to parliamentary committee.)\**

J. Sansick

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Department of Sociology, University of Durham

M.A. (By Thesis)

The Manpower Services Commission and Further Education or "I think the term 'takeover bid' is emotional and misleading. What is your second question?" (Chief Executive of TSD/MSD to Parliamentary Committee.)\*

J. Sansick

1981

\*Evidence to Committee on "Overlapping Interest between DES and DOE in Training and Manpower Planning" 5th April, 1976.

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SYNOPSIS:

This study examines in detail one particular MSC course (TOPS Preparatory) in a North Eastern College of Further Education. The day to day running of the course is contrasted with expectations and pronouncements of both the MSC/TSD and the college hierarchy. A consequence of the study is to extrapolate from policy and practice some examinations of how Further Education is to be effected by the growing involvement of MSC in its affairs.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

D.E.S.	Department of Education and Science
E.S.D.	Employment Services Division
M.S.C.	Manpower Services Commission
S.T.P.	Special Training Programme
TOPS PREP	TOPS Preparatory Course
T.O.P.S.	Training Opportunity Programme
T.S.D.	Training Services Division
W.E.E.P.	Work Experience on Employers Premises
W.E.P.	Work Experience Programme
Y.O.P.	Youth Opportunity Programme

"It's a good thing to make mistakes  
so long as you are found out quickly"

J. Maynard Keynes

Any government might choose to regard unemployment as a constituent of its overall economic strategy, but in doing so it takes risks.

When unemployment rises the risks increase; such a situation faces the present administration. In May, 1980 the registered unemployed reached 1,509,191; by August over two million (see opposite for figures 1970-80). These figures are still rising and no predictions claim a decrease in the foreseeable future. Opinions differ as to the causes for long dole queues, but the agency which directly confronts the fact of unemployment is the Manpower Services Commission.

Created as part of the Employment and Training Act (1973) MSC has become the sharp end of government policy on employment. It works through two Agencies (later Divisions); the Employment Services Division (ESD) and Training Services Division (TSD); these were joined in 1978 by a third, the Special Programme Division (SPD). Whilst the ESD concerns itself with guiding people towards employment and TSD in training for employment, the SPD - which arose out of the 1975 Job Creation Programme - attempts to create employment.

The public face of the MSC is the Jobcentre. These replaced the old Employment Exchanges who were thought to reflect the dole queue image and not in keeping with the planned changes in employment strategy. Centrally situated, often in shopping precincts, and with shopfront glass and bright colours they resemble the surrounding shops rather than the sometimes dour buildings so familiar as Employment Exchanges. This change in image is significant in that it

reflects a general tendency within MSC towards innovatory practice; whilst such a tendency in itself is not unwelcome, it must be seen against results for proper perspective, but more of this later. The Jobcentre took as its model the private employment agencies and it was hoped they would become self-financing, but the extent of unemployment has prevented this. Apart from advising applicants about vacancies the Centres have a back-up service which advises on the need for re-training to hopefully increase job chances. As this usually involves some form of training the applicant is passed to the TSD.

The TSD has tried a number of schemes for re-training, but the main effort has been based around three agencies: Youth Opportunity Programme (YOPS), Special Temporary Programme (STP), and the Training Opportunity Schemes (TOPS). It is with TOPS and one of its courses in a northern college that this study takes as its focus.

There has been a significant growth in TOPS since its inception - in 1972 those receiving training were 29,019, but by 1978 the number had increased to 109,382. ("TOPS Review 1978" pub. MSC). In a sense this increase in TOPS provision reflects the rapid growth and development of MSC, a growth which, in the form of TSD, has spread over much established educational provision. In a sense the very rapid growth of the MSC has created problems in that its intentions have not always matched the consequences. There is, for instance, much public disquiet about the YOPS programme and the disillusionment of many of the young involved. One other area of concern is how MSC regards training within the context of education. In a real sense the growth of MSC in training raises some fundamental questions about the idea of education in our society. These questions are clearly

raised in a variety of functions and areas of experience, for although the bulk of re-training under TOPS is not too different from early government re-training schemes there are some areas where there is quite considerable confusion; one such area is the TOPS PREPARATORY Course. It is in this Course that the most fundamental contradiction is found, that of the distinction between training and education.

Few writers on education care to draw a sharp distinction between education and training. The exceptions are, in general, the philosophers of education: in a sense being philosophers they have little choice but to make such distinctions. Hirst and Peters offer a short etymology of the terms 'education' and 'training' - at the same time remarking that "arguments from etymology, of course, establish very little" ('Logic of Education' Hirst and Peters p23). They tell us that the Latin 'educere' was primarily of physical development and that the later 'educare' was used indiscriminately of plants, animals and children. As late as the nineteenth century it was considered appropriate to talk of the education of silkworms. They do, with more relevance, continue however:

We distinguish now between 'training' and 'education' whereas previously people did not. We would not now naturally speak of educating animals and we would never speak in this way of plants. But we do speak of training animals and of training roses and other sorts of plants.

(ibid)

Other clues to a distinction are furnished:

Witness, for instance, the change in nomenclature, following the Robbins Report, from Training Colleges to Colleges of Education. Witness too, the change from Physical Training to Physical Education.

(Op. cit. p24.)

These brief examples (together with such as 'toilet training', 'trained soldier', 'weapon training' etc.) suggest not only that most people do in fact differentiate between the two terms, but also that the distinction is hierarchical - a line drawn between the higher and the lower. Broadly speaking, training is on a lower plane of activity than is education. Animals and plants are trained; also babies and the lower military ranks. Education is concerned with higher matters, with considerations that pretend to moralities and such debates as the philosophical distinction between education and training. Indeed a simplistic definition could be that the ideal of education is to make the whole person aware of such distinctions whilst training is usually employed to improve on a particular skill or ability.

It is easy to see how the distinction can cause some disquiet, particularly in the world of education where a notional equalitarianism is still preserved. If it is accepted that education, in some sense or other, is superior to training then the educator is superior to the trainer; and further, that the educated are superior to the trained. There is an escape route from this position and that is to follow the behaviorists and deny the distinction exists. They would argue that the work of the teacher can be defined as the induction of certain behavior - the setting and achieving of observable and measurable 'behaviourable objectives' - then any qualitative difference between

training and education vanishes, to be replaced by quantitative difference. The distinction between the child's toilet training and education of the graduate simply becomes a question of degree; the latter's behavior being modified in a more elaborate and complex way than that of the child. ("Verbal Behavior" Skinner or "Taxonomy of Educational Objectives" B.S. Bloom et al).

This reductionism can place the educator with the circus trainer, the educated with performing seals and yet still not avoid accusations of elitism. The 'trainer' is still a member of an elite and the qualitative difference between education and training has now become, however covertly, a qualitative difference between trainer and trained.

There is a third alternative to either denying the distinction or elevating that distinction to a hierarchy of values. That is to concede that, in many areas of learning, no practical differences do exist, whilst continuing to insist that to be educated means something other than to be trained. To define training as 'knowing how to' and education as 'knowing what' may blur the edges, but comes closer to a workable distinction. Toilet training is not merely that; an important fact about the lore civilisation has been learned. This learning is qualitatively different from a circus animal's tricks. Similarly the graduate cannot acquire an education without engaging in some 'training'. In short where humans are concerned, there is no concept as 'pure training' and 'pure education'. We cannot educate without training; we cannot train without educating. If this brings attacks of elitism; the trainer/educator is superior to the trained/educated then perhaps we should simply admit it boldly whilst denying its gravity. All teachers inculcate basic discipline. Social and

Life Skill lecturers attempt to imbue confidence and self-reliance; university lecturers insist on rigorous research methods; all work on a tacit assumption that, for certain purposes, they know best.

While the distinction remains within a recognizable educational context it represents questions of subtle interpretation, but once it leaves that context and becomes a general policy making fact then complications will occur - especially where the distinction is not even acknowledged as a possibility.

What we want from the TOPS PREPARATORY Course is not some literacy course - that takes too much time and we understand that - but just to teach them (the students) to be able to read instructions in a factory like 'no smoking' or 'wear protective clothing'. No more than that. Just be able to understand any signs like that, not to be able read as in school. Its training, not school.

#### Training Officer Adviser (TSD)

The gulf of understanding between that officer and someone used to educational practice and theory is, to say the least, wide. Yet such an officer will form part of the administration of a TOPS PREP Course, will interview potential students, will advise further training. It is pointless to level any criticism at such officers - they are fulfilling their expected role, they were trained for that and no more than that. What is open to doubt is the role of that officer in an area where educational concepts determine decision and administrative practice. Whilst this may seem a small contradiction this study will argue that it is a symptom of a general trend within MSC vis a vis training and education of the unemployed - especially the young.

The TOPS PREPARATORY Course is directly concerned with remedial education, indeed it is normally the case that a student must have failed some test or examination to become eligible. If an applicant is unable to fill in a form at a Jobcentre - unable to write name and address - not understand the form otherwise TOPS PREPRATORY would be filled to overflowing in a week, then he/she is considered for a TOPS PREP Course. So, someone sitting in a Jobcentre makes a mess of his/her form filling, this alerts the interviewing clerk and more information is elicited as to the candidate's level of literacy. Whilst at first glance this seems a relatively simple operation it nevertheless can raise more problems than it hopes to solve. For example, the interviewer in the Jobcentre is now concerning him/herself no longer with specific employability considerations, but is directly involved in the educational process, so too are the TSD officials who subsequently participate. It is these officials who must initiate a procedure which will eventually lead to a college interview for the TOPS PREP Course and they must clearly use educational criteria as guidelines in that process. Thus almost at the beginning of the chain of circumstances leading to the operation of a TOPS PREP course state employment officials are involved in decisions related to the education and educability of those subject to their recommendations, as a consequence of this contradictions begin to appear. The official in making his/her decision assumes illiteracy will deter a future employer, but it is far beyond that immediate concern that the difficulties occur. The official understands illiteracy as a factor in employability, he/she does not always appreciate that illiteracy often displays a much more elemental truth; that the individual concerned does not perhaps comprehend any

of the norms and issues constituting that official's idea of a normal day's procedure. The candidate is demonstrating a greater deficiency than simply illiteracy, he/she physically represents the failure of our educational system to prepare many (most?) of our young people for many of the functions, decisions, and practices that pass for common social intercourse. This study will argue that the presence of illiteracy - or near illiteracy - displays more than simple language deficiency. Students on TOPS PREP Courses are not that far removed from a significant percentage of day release students in learning ability and general educational attainment. Link that weak educational standard to the more general understanding - or lack of understanding - of society's every day procedure and the failure becomes startling.

The problems, confusions, and potential contradictions briefly referred to above can best be illustrated by close reference to the operation of a TOPS PREPARATORY Course. In doing so it is useful to distinguish between four groups of people occupying different positions within the running of such a course. These are:

Government through the Training Services Division (TSD)

Colleges of Further Education (at the administrative level)

Lecturers working on the TOPS PREPARATORY Course

Students on the course

In the preparation of this study it became clear that each saw the course differently. Each tended to expect different results from variously their money, effort, or time. The TSD expected an improvement in the employability of its client and the client/student expected 'a second chance to improve my education'. These aims are not contradictory, but do ask rather a lot of a TOPS PREPARATORY course

however it be run. Neither TSD or the student seemed aware of the other's misconception. To be fair the Training Officer Adviser (TOA) stressed in interviews that the course was for training and aimed at improving the candidate's chance of a job, but as this itself was based on a misunderstanding of the problems confronting both student and TOA then it is not surprising that all remained unclear. The student almost always saw the course as "the most important thing in my life, like getting married or having your first child ... a second chance to improve yourself". This inevitably clashed with TSD expectations of having the student read factory "no smoking" signs and no more. The student was expected to understand his future college as an extension of a training centre and was encouraged to regard the whole exercise as skill training while all around him/her suggested otherwise. The college lecturers knew they were engaged in teaching concepts, that unless they break through the student's former 'educational block' the whole exercise was meaningless, the student, although not always able to express it, would know this. The TSD would, in most cases, see little point in such deliberation seeing it as irrelevant to the problem posed - how to get the candidate a job?

The confusion that exists between expectation of student and TSD pales into insignificance compared with the confusion between TSD and the Department of Education and Science. The former pays the bills and relies on the latter to provide the expertise. This apparently simple process conceals yet more contradiction. Each expects common agreement about what each intends and yet on close examination there is little common agreement about aims and purposes. There cannot be given the magnitude of the task confronting both. TSD wants training

to reflect the 'job market' and cater for its needs, the DES hopes to prepare pupils for 'life'. These aims are not complementary in that they ignore the total dependence on each other; they cannot be separated. That there are two separate aims indicates a total misunderstanding of what is wrong with both strategies. It is probably true that in the past DES saw its function as separate from direct job market, it could do this because there was no need to justify its practice. With an abundance of unskilled and semi-skilled jobs around it could practice how it wished with no concentrated public debate as to the wisdom of such policy. The fact that our secondary educational system is failing to prepare for unemployment among the young is a recent phenomenon. Like the TSD the DES has been caught out by the size and speed of recent events. That it still reacts to these events indicates its failure. The TSD asks of the educational system that it become more aware of its, the TSD's, needs and then at the same time disclaims any responsibility towards that task. Whilst the two stand off from each and request that the other recognise how difficult it is the situation grows more critical. Nowhere is this seen more clearly than in TOPS PREP. For in the TOPS PREP Course the contradiction is seen directly at work. Almost everyone involved misunderstands everyone else. As will be shown later the interview of a prospective student illustrates how three people can sit in a room together and discuss in detail a common topic with apparent satisfaction and yet all three be talking about different problems and differing solutions; each will leave the interview with totally separate ideas of what has taken place.

The most significant trend to emerge from the above 'co-operation' between the MSC and DES is the tendency for further education colleges

to become extensions of MSC, or more particularly TSD. That they are extensions rather than mere servicing agencies can be seen when it is noticed that colleges increasingly take for their total budget very large sums of money from TSD. One north eastern college as much as 53%, others in the region range from 33% to 47%. (Consett, Bishop Auckland, Darlington, Monkwearmouth etc. - figures for 1979/80; since this year all figures have risen in percentage terms). This involvement of local techs in unemployment re-training schemes - be they YOPS, TOPS, or whatever - means a part of the education system is directly concerned in MSC strategy. The appropriateness of this cannot be doubted. There are many areas ready for development by some intermediary between the youngster leaving school and entering work and further education could easily provide the proper base for such development, but that it should be part of a properly planned operation and not some ad hoc development to meet local changing circumstances seems obvious. As yet there is little evidence of such overall planning. Each college decides whether it will participate and to what extent that participation will remain large or a negligible response to the pressing unemployment re-training policy. It is significant that the college studied here saw itself torn between two future trends; greater involvement in degree course through CNAA or deeper commitment to TSD. The present college is an amalgam of a former technical college with a threatened college of education. Consequently the tech section became somewhat mesmerised by degree status and can be seen to have rather allowed MSC to find other colleges more amenable to its deliberations; more of this later.

This therefore is the context of the study of a TOPS training scheme. While it raises questions which relate to the broader problems

of education/training/unemployment in our society the study is primarily of a specific area. It is based upon the everyday routine of a course in a northern college. In writing about this course, and attempting to simplify the complexity of MSC's involvement in education I have divided the dissertation into four main sections. Section one will describe the DES and MSC's growing involvement in each others' affairs. Here government intention and college actuality will be contrasted through committee and reportage of government documents and transcripts of recorded interviews with staff in the college. Section two will examine how status and the distribution of money within college affects the course; how it is regarded by the hierarchy money spinner or educational necessity? As a corollary of this the interview procedure for acceptance on the course is shown in detail. Section three will examine the students on the course and try to discover why they need literacy and numeracy teaching so long after their formal schooling; what went wrong first time around? Also in this section I will try to assess both the student's attitude to their college and education in general and how staff see the students. Section four will draw upon the above and develop the discussion by reference to the four levels of involvement mentioned earlier; government, college administration, lecturers, and students. Here their conflicting aspirations and misconceptions will be described illustrating the contradictions existing in colleges faced with MSC commitments. It will summarise some of the criticisms of MSC's work and point to the basis for such criticism.

A final point on research method. The college concerned is situated in the north east of England. As mentioned above it is one

of the largest in the region being an amalgam of a technical college and a college of education. The two site campus resulting from this merger presents certain restraints on the fact of a merger and in many ways the colleges continue to run as separate entities with a nominal regard for each others' daily routine. I work as a drama lecturer on the former tech site and although my duties are now exclusively concerned with drama I worked initially as a general studies lecturer for three years before taking over the drama department. During this period on general studies I became familiar with the college policy and treatment of both day-release students and those in need of remedial teaching. I shared an office with the lecturer responsible for running the TOPS PREP and consequently became closely involved with its daily routine from its inception, and taught on the course for one year as social and life skills lecturer.

The method of interview and research vis a vis the students and staff was by notebook and tape-recorded interview. The former was continually in use as a daily record of comments, criticisms, and 'asides' from both. The tape-recorded interviews were conducted over several days - in some cases a continual process in others more intermittent. With the students on the course, although very keen to help with the research - "anything I can do to help others is worth it" - it was necessary to conduct long interviews in order to overcome initial nervousness. In almost all cases these students had suffered some sort of an educational disaster in their past and consequently viewed college and the staff with a multiplicity of emotions and preconceptions, from quite strongly expressed dislike to abject gratitude. The students interviewed were not those taught by me during the year I worked on the course, and where it was possible

I remained totally separate from the course - this extended to moving my office. It was thought sensible that this happen otherwise comments by students about lecturers on the course might have been even more inhibited than is normal in such circumstances. The college hierarchy, in the main, supported my research. Those responsible for the course helped almost in direct ratio to their degree of involvement as administrators; closest to the course, the most helpful, the concern diminishing as direct contact with the daily tribulations and rewards of course work faded. I have referred to any reluctance to comment on college policy in the text.

It is hoped that while addressing the problem of TOPS PREP the flavour and style of the college comes through. Colleges of Further Education are an expanding feature of the educational establishment and have their own peculiarities and foibles; this study hopefully demonstrates one such college facing one particular social problem; the educational equivalent of the 'poverty trap'.

## S E C T I O N   O N E

"Section One will describe the DES and MSC's growing involvement in each others' affairs. Here government intention and college actuality will be contrasted through committee and reportage of government documents and transcripts of recorded interviews with staff in the College."

One of the provisions of the 1973 Employment and Training Act was that MSC would operate through the TOPS programme a wide variety of vocational training courses both in TSD centres and increasingly in colleges of further education. As further education was a DES responsibility it was agreed that where the two departments had similar interests MSC and DES would have to closely co-ordinate planning and practice. In a Memorandum from the Department of Employment presented in April, 1976 to the Expenditure Committee on Policy Making in the Department of DES 1975/76 (Note 1 - Overlapping Interests between DES and DE in Training and Manpower planning) a suggestion surfaced that all was not well between the two departments. It argued that most of the co-operation and involvement between the departments was of an advisory and verbal nature and thus if it were thought expedient easily discounted. A former secretary to the Association of Education Committee, Lord Alexander of Potterhill seemed particularly apprehensive:

... the Training Services Agency seems to me to be making a takeover bid for a substantial part of the education system.

Later in evidence to the Committee Lord Alexander was more specific:

The Training Services Agency gets money more readily than the Department of Education. They go directly to technical colleges and say: "If you put on a training course we will pay for it." This is not the way to do it.

The main fear expressed here was that the TSD was by-passing formerly agreed administrative procedures. One such was the Training Boards which had representatives both of DES and DE, but Lord Alexander argued

that these Boards were being ignored by the MSC's agencies TSD and ESD:

Now the ESD is not even going through the Training Boards, but directly, and the Training Boards and the local authorities are equally wondering what is happening.

Co-operation between the DES and DE was thought by Lord Alexander to have been put in jeopardy and that instead of co-operation TSD was establishing its own independent administrative machinery. Linked with this is the fact that under the system at that time the DES worked through the local education authorities and as a result had to move more slowly in initiating any new policy. Whereas TSD by nature of moving nationally could cut through administrative delay and operate more quickly on policy decisions. This was raised by Brian Davies, a committee member, in a question to Lord Alexander:

On the issue of the Training Services Divisions is there not a problem presented for central government by the division of power that exists between the Department and the local authorities when it wants to deal with the pressing unemployment problems? Is it the fact that where the government is seeking a rapid response to a very clearly expressed need that the DES might look as if its procedures are somewhat limited in scope as you have described them this afternoon? - (Lord Alexander) I think that is manifest nonsense frankly. The TOPS scheme which was done through normal channels developed just as rapidly as is happening now. In fact, what is happening now in my opinion includes a substantial waste of money because of the lack of understanding of what in fact young people leaving

schools are to gain from this experience. Further education has co-operated in the employment situation for very many years in developing courses with them for this purpose. All I am suggesting is that establishing this new instrument, which I accept is desirable in a situation where unemployment is pressing very heavily, would be very much more effective if it worked in co-operation with the DES and local authorities who are only too anxious to co-operate in helping them to fulfil their proper function, rather than their (MSC's Agencies) proceeding directly and establishing almost a new chain of command.

Such fears as expressed above are typical of attitudes among a significant proportion of those seeking to plan an educational system that properly responded to situations, such as unemployment. Not so much a feeling of resentment at the intrusion of a new boy to the game, but rather that the new boy was making up his own rules and ignoring former administrative procedures. Maybe that is all to the good. Maybe the new rules are better, more appropriate, maybe someone new to the field has avoided the pitfalls of a ponderous bureaucracy. But all this cannot be assumed. One of the dangers of quick moves is that they often ignore some fundamental principles which have long been assumed by those more experienced in the subject. Maybe in their drive to "solve the problem" of the unemployed, the MSC were opening up the prospect of other unidentified problems?

The MSC is concerned through its special programmes with maintaining and developing the employability of the unemployed and its educational involvement is part of a strategy to achieve this aim. It seems unlikely to want to concern itself educationally beyond that

point and therefore regards courses initiated and paid for by its own funds as being necessarily complementary to such aims. Whether colleges acting as the means to these ends always realise quite what it is they are party to is perhaps another matter. They may, for instance, recognise the need for some preparation for the unemployed to better deal with their problems, but whether they would see that preparation as training or more as a general educational undertaking is open to question. What is certain is that MSC does regard it as training. They are quite specific in many of their publications, especially when discussing the young.

"The success of the Youth Opportunities Programme requires that:

- 9.1 Young people should be considered as trainees and opportunities should be tailored to their needs.
- 9.2 Young people should have the chance to acquire skills which (a) are relevant to a developing labour market and are not confined to the practices of an individual employer, (b) help them in their search for work, and (c) help them in meeting the wider demands of adult life.

If these principles are accepted, it becomes clear that the Youth Opportunities Programme brings many adults in new sets of relationships with a major group of young adults - relationships for which their previous experience is of limited relevance. It places a new obligation on employers and trade unions, educators and trainers ... to assess their attitudes and find approaches which are adapted to the new circumstances." (My emphasis)

(Making Experience Work-Principles and guidelines for providing work experience. A profile publication of the MSC 1978)

While allowing for the point that this profile publication is a first draft of a working paper trying to tackle unemployment in the young, it is still curious that 'educators and trainers' be bracketed together in so careless a manner. Furthermore there is the almost casual disregard of 'previous experience' with a suggestion that it was a waste of young people's time.

It would be wrong for the educational establishment to overreact to such admonitions, but it would be sensible for it to be properly aware that such attitudes could overlay the planning of policy for the foreseeable future at least. The lumping together in so simplistic a way of all aspects of a young persons education and subsequent industrial training (if he or she is lucky enough to find a job in the first place) betrays either innocence of what is really involved or a calculated indifference towards most educational research and debate over the last twenty five years. It also denies a new interpretation of the form of unemployment - that of a structural rather than a cyclical pattern. The latter presupposes a return to the sorts of employment present before the recent economic decline and most, if not all, MSC strategy plans and trains for that return. If predictions are true that our high unemployment is the result of far more wide-reaching changes in our economic structure and that these changes are permanent then we are faced with a colossal misunderstanding by MSC of what it should be doing vis a vis the young unemployed. If MSC is basing its strategy on a return of jobs similar to those that have recently disappeared from the economy - the semi and unskilled work most commonly found in factory and light engineering - and if those jobs are not coming back then all the effort and industry implied by the above working party documents will be at best a nonsense, at worst

a tragedy of misdirected effort towards no purpose.

Such employment changes are realities in many areas and although MSC sees its task as one of responding to those changes, it as yet indicates little awareness of the complexity of that response. The need is for close consultation at all levels. Yet ...

If the relationship between education, economic and manpower planning are inadequate at national level, they are even less effective at regional level (Policy Making in DES Expenditure Committee 1975/76. pxxv11) (ibid)

And little seems to have changed since this committee reviewed progress. Much has happened, but it has been more of the same rather than development structured through detailed co-operation between interested parties. The 'sign of strain' acknowledged in the report is still there:

Clearly no sharp distinction can be drawn between training and education; much vocational preparation must take place within the education system. Therefore DES and DE are, in a sense, competing for resources and liable to be judged, one against the other, by results. TSD has moved at a tempo which the DES could not (and, indeed, should not try) emulate. Equally clearly it had trodden on some corns in the education service. (ibid)

One particular corn is this distinction between training and education. At all levels problems abound, but nowhere is this more so than for the lecturer.

We've dropped some big clangers I know. The staff couldn't understand what was needed, y'know, they cringe at the name 'training course', but in a sense its right. We're about

training them (TOPS PREP Course) certain techniques they've lost, or never had. These people want to see they've learnt things. They want hard facts. (Arthur Brown)

This lecturer in a north east college of further education runs a TOPS PREP Course and has to make sense of what his masters plan. The masters are DES and DE and both have a stake in what that lecturer does with his course. And he, and the many like him, has to continually resolve the contradictions implicit in the system as it stands. How, for instance, to satisfy the TSD demands for quite exact prediction of learning rates.

The TSD expect us to say one, two, or three terms because that's the way they work the other courses, and so they want to run the PREP Course that way ... But it's a chancy business. One term is realistic for maybe the bloke with a bit of numeracy problem, but illiteracy is a very sticky ground, I may be sticking my neck out but I can see an illiteracy problem usefully taught anything in just a term ... But I don't blame TSD for their attitude because they were set up as a training body and they're concerned to make people welders, typists, or whatave you ... They've found themselves with something they've no terms of reference for. We're dealing with the people who've failed an entry test for TSD courses and TSD want them to pass next time. So give 'em the education they need in either one, two, or three terms. We're talking about what they've done in all those years at school. (Brown)

What happened in 'all those years at school' is that people were allowed to rot at the back of the class providing they didn't cause any disturbance. As will be shown later many people in need of

further schooling have , instead of benefitting from our educational system, become its victims.

I could write me' name when I left school. I learnt that, but I couldn't write me' address.

This man, aged 47, married with two children was so relieved to get his 'slip of paper' saying he had completed his schooling that he ran from the school in case 'they changed their minds'. (see page 91) How does it happen that this man must wait until he is 47 before he can learn to write his address? Such questions pose problems far beyond the immediate concern of this study, but if MSC and the DES are to begin to deal with such people it will need to demonstrate a much more subtle understanding of what is implied than has been indicated in its publications and public statements.

For instance, in the TOPS PREP we have a training scheme that is hopeful of making him and others like him able to write his address. A worthwhile aim you might think - for trainers and educators alike. However before the process can begin the TSD demands that it be clearly informed how long such a process will take. If a mistake is made and the college needs more time there will be dispute between TSD and college. TSD will believe the college has been too casual or careless in its assessment, the college will argue that such considerations as to how long it will take to make the man able to write his address do not depend on easily determined timetables. Both sides in the minor conflict believe themselves justified in their attitudes. TSD want to know as precisely as possible how long to train this man up to normal standards, the college lecturer understands that need, but asserts that the educational problems involved in questions of literacy are so complex as to make such calculations very

difficult. How to resolve the conflict between education and training here? It is left with the lecturer to trim and adapt his understanding to accommodate TSD reality with educational theory. Perfectly normal if it was not for the assumption that the procedure was unnecessary, and TSD seems, as yet to show little awareness of what such procedure implies.

Studies and reports on working parties proliferate, but nowhere is there a significant discussion of why MSC should be concerning itself with the education of the young. It is not that MSC should be excluded from what has, hitherto, been DES concern, but to take for granted that a MSC is properly briefed to take responsibility for moulding young people in whatever image it thinks suitable seems strange. It suggests two related facts, one that there is need for a different educational response to cope with economic changes occurring in this later part of the twentieth century, and secondly that the response to that need has, almost by default, surfaced initially outside the DES and therefore outside all those traditionally charged with education. Perhaps this is as it should be. With such a significant growth in unemployment, particularly among the young, it perhaps is time for a new approach outside existing agencies. That is a separate argument and one referred to later, but if MSC is to enter the educational field then account of what it intends must be sought.

An indication of the extent to which MSC is involved in education is shown in a survey of north eastern colleges of further education in 1980 where an average of 25% of colleges income came from MSC and in one college (53%). In effect that last college is now as much an adjunct of the Department of Employment as it is a college of further education.

The TSD gets money more readily than the DES. They go direct to the technical college and say 'If you put on a training course we will pay for it.' This is not the way to do it. The strongest possible representations have already been made to the Department on that particular issue.

(Exp. Committee p270 - Alexander)

Any course run in a college of further education which is part of a TOPS, YOPS scheme will be directly funded by MSC. An established sum is allowable per student which will incorporate salary of lecturer, equipment needed, and a small sum left over can be said to act as rent or for use of facilities. A breakdown of how that money was spent in a college is as follows:

TOPS PREPARATORY COURSE at North College 1978/79 - Finances

£1.40 is allowed per student for one hours teaching. Ten students therefore £14.00 per hour. College runs a six hour day, five day week. Thus £84 per day leaves us with £420 per week. There are 37 weeks in the teaching year, thus = £15,540, for running a TOPS PREP Course in that year. Salaries, both full-time staff and part-time approx. £10,000 and the rest is divided into equipment £2,000 with £3,000 being used at discretion of Principal. Here lies one of the attractions of running TOPS Courses in colleges. The sums involved are paid in block and distribution is at the discretion of the college. In this college the head of the section dealing with TOPS PREP had to request money for his course in the normal manner and would be told before TSD money for the course had run out that he had used up his finance for that year. The rest is pooled into college income. To be fair to the college there was ample equipment and teaching aids and in no sense could the college be accused of syphoning money directly from TOPS PREP to the

detriment of that course. What did occur was that little account was taken of poor working conditions for lecturers and staff and it seemed to some of the staff that money apportioned by TSD could have been used to improve those conditions.

The above is one small course in relation to the whole amount of TOPS work being done in the college. In a sense it is an expensive course for college to run because it requires specialised equipment, but where the course is centred in workshops or a typing pool the only real draw on finance is salary and the rest can be used up in the pool.

In the context of current economic cutbacks colleges will clearly be keen to take advantage of this apparent windfall. However the wisdom of becoming too reliant on such incomes must be questioned. The MSC has no long term commitment to any colleges, the funds are allocated to specific courses and programmes all of which can be assessed and administered in the context of MSC policy. This policy can change very quickly indeed. For instance should MSC policy change and the YOPS scheme be abandoned, what is to happen to any lecturers employed exclusively for MSC work? Will the colleges concerned have to absorb them or do they become redundant? If they become redundant who pays redundancy pay? Obviously the local authority employs and pays, but as an agent for MSC.

Is it the case that the educational service ... has taken sufficient account of the increasing significance of the role which the Department of Employment plays in relation to training and education?

Well, it is a fact that we have been expanding our training activities in the last couple of years much more rapidly

than educational activity has been expanding. Indeed it has not been expanding. Down at ground level no doubt individuals who are concerned ... colleges of further education are made aware at first hand that the training content of colleges and places like this is increasing, whereas the purely educational part is not increasing as fast. If you are saying, do we adequately prepare people's minds for these changes, well, I do not know what the answer to that is, perhaps not. (MSC questioned by Exp. Committee p11)

(Memo from D.O.E. April, 1976 to Expenditure Committee on Policy Making in the D.E.S. 1975/76 p11)

It would be foolish to say there has been no attempt since to find answers, but whether the questions were properly discussed is in doubt. Nowhere is there any detailed discussion on the long term implications of MSC involvement in colleges hitherto the sole responsibility of LEA's and the DES. The involvement grows apace. In one college on Merseyside there is developing a twin set of facilities which extends to separate workshops and technicians, one for college and one for MSC courses. It would be surprising if this turned out to be the only example in the country. Given the present economic cuts on colleges of further education is it not surprising that many are grabbing MSC money to prevent being overwhelmed. What is also happening is that colleges will compete for that money.

The college I worked at last year has had all its courses (MSC) cut and they've been moved to this college I'm in now. Your bloke at this place is a bit of a whiz kid. When he had problems with their not letting his YOPS kids use the

workshops he said sod it I'll employ my own bloody welder.  
Its all on the MSC ain't it? He's a good kidder and can  
raise the courses.

(Part-time lecturer Merseyside, Life and Social Skills)

... Managers in those agencies (TSD) have measures of  
discretion to carry those programmes through which have not  
been altogether traditional in the public service ... if  
that could lead us to getting mud on our boots in the sense  
that we are very much concerned with service to the people  
in the market place and we try to make the measure of what  
we do the effectiveness of that service. So that I think  
as a result ... there is a measure of urgency perhaps  
unconventionality. The MSC can express views if it wishes  
which are not those of Ministers and do not commit Ministers;  
this is a novel situation.

(MSC evidence to Exp. Committee p403)

It is novel. A form of power without full responsibility. It is the  
long term implications of this change of provision for the young that  
needs consideration. Whilst the novel situation continues to exist,  
and it has not changed yet (1981), much confusion will probably result.  
If a separate 'chain of command' continues to grow at what point will  
the partnership become takeover?

It has been done on the basis of partnership. It may be that  
some of the contacts forged have been rather crude under  
pressure of events. In no sense have we been able to buy our  
way into colleges without authority or leave of the principal.

(ibid p405-406)

A principal faced with possible cutback in funds, or even closure,

would have to resist considerable pressure from his colleagues if he chose to decline MSC funding. In a sense the fact that MSC finance is available adds to any difficulties facing a college.

I think we approach the question of need from different points of view and I think that tension is there and no sort of exclusive definitions of training or education whatever will exclude it. The tension is there really because, on the one hand, education starts from the viewpoint that you are training the whole man and, on the other hand, training is concerned with training people for jobs which you can identify in industry and, apart from that training does not have much meaning.

(ibid p408)

That seems logical and even proper, but since that committee report in 1976 there has grown another structure of MSC training, the Social and Life Skill courses. These were designed as part of the 'Wider Opportunities Courses' run by MSC from 1977 and are still run at e.g. Durham Skillcentre Annexe at Dragonville. As the name suggests these courses are very similar to many general/liberal study centres in the further education colleges and some colleges of further education have begun to use the MSC style course in place of the old. This fits neatly into the new TEC and BEC course structures (TEC - Technical Education Council; BEC - Business Educational Council) in that it has greater apparent relevance to technical courses run in further education. The Further Education Curriculum Review and Development Unit published 'Developing Social and Life Skills' in January, 1980 re-affirms this belief and sees the new courses as replacing 'social education' and 'social studies'. What is

slightly confusing is that in any one college there may be courses in Social and Life Skills which are college initiated run side by side with MSC initiated courses. The former financed by college, the latter by MSC; the only difference being the title - MSC have re-named their courses 'Training for Life'. It would be quite wrong to suggest that 'when in doubt change thy name' is policy, but the proliferation of course titles and acronyms does promote no small confusion in the mind of some who have to teach the courses - or seek to make sense of MSC strategy since formation.

Now these new courses go further than training both in their aims and practice. It is in these courses and in TOPS PREP Courses that the distinction between training and education becomes blurred.

'Training for Life' as a course name does not re-assure critics who see such MSC courses as part of a considered plan to produce a malleable, obedient, and politically defused work force for the future. How far it is permissible to get caught up in a conspiracy theory surrounding comment on MSC schemes is difficult to judge, but that such fears are being voiced is significant.

I think the buggers are out to politically control, or at least make the kids conform totally to their (MSC) idea of what it is to be on the labour market. And I think that's dangerous.

(Senior Careers Officer in North East)

One such examination of this is 'In Whose Interests?' published by the National Youth Bureau in August, 1979. Written by Bernard Davies it is very critical of much of the activity of MSC in the training of the young, at least where that training comes under some umbrella of social training. He questions the assumption for instance, that there is

little difference between 'social education' and 'social and life skills training' and goes on to suggest that those approached by MSC as having expertise in these fields (Youth Workers etc.) should be acutely aware of what they are becoming party to.

The notion of social and life skills training seems repeatedly to represent a significant shift, in both conception and practice, away from some of social education's most important commitments and opportunities. Moreover, although those involved are not conspiring darkly in smoke-filled rooms to bring about the shift, it cannot just be put down to 'historical accident'. Rather, it represents an often un-thought-out and gradual ... response to wider and economic and political pressures and collective anxieties which are especially characteristic of our society in the later 1970.

These same 'pressures' are precisely the same as those which make uneasy principals 'take the money' rather than 'open the box'. They are caught in a double-bind in that they must somehow make their respective colleges resistant to severe cuts and yet if they allow too much MSC finance to dominate their budgets they risk long term financial insecurity.

Davies traces the origins of social and life training to work with the mentally handicapped and prisoners. Here training is seen as a strategy undergone to overcome some personal incapacity.

It has, therefore, also been possible to act as if their 'problems' could be defined 'objectively' and as if their 'treatment' were entirely a 'technical' matter calling for no important ethical choices. That is it has been assumed

that those being 'trained' have few, if any, rights to define their 'problems' in their own way, or to decide for themselves if and how they wish to be 'trained'.

(In Whose Interests)

This last comment is particularly interesting when related to TOPS PREP courses and TSD's attitude to the college decision as to how long a student needs to overcome literacy and/or numeracy problems.

Davies goes on to question much else about YOPS courses and in particular wonders if they are 'entirely and self evidently benign'.

In private life. In this aspect of life, the skills needed are those of making friends, resisting provocation and making conversation. A satisfactory private life can contribute to a person's work motivation.

(Instructional Guide to Social and Life Skills Training.

MSC 1973 para. 1.1.2) (My emphasis)

There is just a suggestion of blame in many attitudes towards young unemployed. Even parents become irritated and find themselves believing that the scrounger myth applies to their child despite daily evidence of that same youngsters efforts to find a job so small wonder officials fall easily into the same patterns of thinking. Consequently much of life and social skills literature seems designed to change attitudes to work by changing attitudes towards such as discipline, authority, and obedience. Not a bad thing in itself perhaps, but it would be a very enlightened state indeed that didn't take advantage of such teaching to inculcate routine obedience in place of proper and cautious acknowledgement of social responsibilities.

Just what is meant for instance by 'resisting provocation' is not made clear. To be fair it seems to be part of a general concern that

the young person be able to converse intelligently without recourse to outrage and generalisation; it is a part of the course which seeks to help students formulate ideas and then express them. That is one interpretation, but there are others, and the type of person most likely to be on such courses usually come from the lower stream of comprehensive education and will have left school without any GCE qualifications. They will, in a sense, having survived rather than benefitted from secondary education and consequently will be unlikely to radically change their views of themselves and society through promptings on a life and social skill course.

To try and cope with such a backlog of anti-education prejudice by offering a social and life skills course as present designed is to indicate how over-simplified such matters are to MSC.

To suggest that if the youngsters involved were to wear ties and clean their shoes a magical transformation would occur and jobs again become plentiful is bordering on the absurd, and yet such attitudes do underpin much of the effort on social and life skills. There is small reference to the fact that the reason the kids are out of work is because there are no jobs or likely to be in the foreseeable future. Instead youngsters are encouraged to believe that a basic change in themselves will make improvement. This is official lunacy, almost laughable, but the seriousness of what happens when you disillusion the young a second time makes for small humour. Education has failed them and now the new courses appear to offer a way out - when they don't the reaction could be bitter and socially damaging for all involved.

There is constant discussion of 'work preparation' or 'work experience' yet almost no comment on what that actually means. The vagueness of aims and objectives is blandness itself.

3.14 The programme we propose would consist of two kinds of opportunities: courses designed to prepare young people for work and different kinds of work experience. Each of the forms of work experience might lead directly to normal employment (and we would expect this to be usual progression), to a full-time work preparation course, or to full-time further education.

"Young People and Work" (Holland Report) pub MSC 1977  
page 34.

Nowhere in this report (admittedly since it was published in 1977 there have been changes in that unemployment has drastically risen but as this itself betrays a lack of foresight it remains relevant) is there comment about the lack of jobs. The implication everywhere in the report is that with the proper preparation the young will fit the jobs. What jobs? On the latter there is no debate offered. The underlying assumption throughout is that most of MSC work is a holding device until things will improve. In the meantime encourage the kids in patterns of behaviour which will help them get a job, not help them understand what happens when there is massive unemployment, but how they might attract the passing notice of an employer.

In May, 1981 the MSC published "A New Training Initiative" and therefore it must stand as current MSC thinking on the above. In this document there is great stress on the development of a 'range of related jobs or skills rather than being limited to the ability to perform one task in one context' (para. 29) 'The compelling need .... to acquire a basic range of skills, in the modern world' (para. 26) 'the employer needs people ... with ... knowledge of a range of tasks' (para. 27). What exactly is meant by range other than a catch-all

phrase is never quite made clear.

The desire for a labour force that can adapt to any and every demand is understandable, but what is needed to make that dream even remotely possible is never fully explored beyond general comments about re-training (or further training). There is a curious lack of specific examples to illustrate the general argument. For instance:

'Youth Opportunities Programme has demonstrated that work can be the mainspring for motivating many young people towards learning and that learning takes place through a combination of work and work related training and education.'

Put this alongside the most common experience of young people on YOPS and the above becomes a nonsense. Work related training, in fact can mean anything from sweeping up, stacking cans of peas in supermarkets, or tidying up beaches in Sunderland. There is very little hard evidence to suggest that YOPS provides anything other than a short time off the dole register for most young people. Now a recognition that such criticism might have some relevance to any new initiative by MSC is totally ignored. It is undeniably true that a small minority of YOPS youngsters gain from their course either through getting a job or being better prepared for any jobs going in their area, but for the majority YOPS has failed on almost all counts. Perhaps it was an honourable failure and the NEW Training Initiative is the beginnings of a new attempt, but nowhere in the new document is there acknowledgement that there is much wrong with MSC strategy so far. Instead it appears to base its new strategy on existing schemes.

To be fair the scale of the problem is staggering. MSC was never initially designed for so monumental a task as re-structuring the

modern industrial response to the changes implied by the current economic recession. It came into being when our economic position appeared more stable, but events have far outstripped its original points of reference.

Much of the New Training Initiative document predicts changes in our industrial work force. That that is inevitable is taken for granted. But nowhere is there any recognition or debate as to what should be done with those people traditionally occupying semi and unskilled jobs. These will not simply become computer operatives or electronic engineers after attendance on a course. Their whole education and industrial experience will act against that possibility. Some, a small minority, will perhaps be able to make the change, but most will not. New Training Initiative does not begin to suggest what will happen with those who will not be able to make the move across from unskilled labouring to high technology. It is here that MSC fails. Without proper regard for what is really happening in our educational system - and after - MSC can only be dealing with spot symptoms of a general disease. Proper critical debate on the practicalities of what society means by training and education is urgently needed and until that debate is started as part of a radical change in our education and industrial system almost all effort will be wasted.

This short introduction to my consideration on TOPS PREPARATORY Courses and one TOPS PREP course in particular has attempted to suggest some of the difficulties facing all working any MSC course in further education. I have sketched out some of the areas which cause misgivings both for DES and for MSC. It would be quite wrong to suggest that all in MSC are totally unaware of many of the contradictions hinted at above. It would also be foolish to over-simplify the

complexity of college response to MSC. Each region reacts differently and most of the data here refers to the north east. It is however significant that unemployment is very high in that area and consequently there is considerable activity on the part of MSC to meet that fact. I would suggest that what is happening in the north east is already happening elsewhere for I see little evidence to suggest that MSC policy changes significantly from region to region. That the north east suffers from high unemployment merely means it leads where others are likely soon to go.

This unfortunate fact makes what is happening in the north doubly important, for lessons are being learned (or at least it is hoped they are being learned) which will inform on policy decisions which in turn will determine our educational system throughout the 1980's.

In order to try and test theory against actuality I intend that the next section closely examine one TOPS course in particular. By doing so I hope to illustrate some of the points mentioned above. The TOPS PREP course sits neatly astride the distinctions between training and education, between social education and social training, between teaching specific skills and recapturing a person's whole educational experience. It seeks to take the man who couldn't write his address, only his name, and turn him into a suitable case for training. By transposed interview I hope to express the opinions of those teaching and those being taught. The difficulties both groups experience will, I suggest, make sense of the disquiet voiced by some about the Training Services Division.

SECTION TWO

"Section two will examine how status and the distribution of money within college affects the course; how it is regarded by the hierarchy - money spinner or educational necessity? As a corollary of this the interview procedure for acceptance on the course is shown in detail."

MONEY: A Power Base?

The college is situated in the North of England. The amalgam of a technical college and a college of education came when the latter was threatened with closure and took the option of a merger as the lesser of two evils. There is little contact between the two and most staff work exclusive to their site. Administration is on a faculty basis. There are four faculties, each with a Dean, Assistant Dean and then Heads of Schools.

The building most concerned here is the former technical college. Built in 1958 it was enlarged in 1969. Brick built and rather austere in character it resembles, certainly in the old section, a municipal public baths that has fallen on hard times. The newer section is 1960's square block style with an abundance of panelling. It has a flat roof which leaks and therefore most of the building has a faded, stained look. Many of the faults are attributed to the fact that the architect in charge of the extension was 'that man Poulson'. Because of piecemeal development there is a confusion of rooms and corridors. Most corridors have small flights of staircases at frequent intervals and one section of college is not connected, except by a large detour, with another. It also poses problems for other students in that confusion of where and when a class is being held - there are frequent room changes - makes those unused to education especially nervous - an important point when regarding TOPS PREP. Since the merger it has become the largest in its county with a teaching staff of approximately 300 supported by an administration staff of approximately 300. In a sense it is seen by many as a sort of flagship of the LEA, this is certainly true for many of the former technical college staff. The TOPS PREP course is in the Faculty of Science, Humanities and Community Studies. There are four Schools and the School concerned here is

## Communication.

The course began in 1976 and arose out of a project to teach craft apprentices some remedial English. Many students attend on a day-release basis and have, as part of their time in college, to attend general studies and communications. These courses vary depending on the parent department, for a secretary might need extensive English teaching whereas welders less. The teaching of English often means remedial English for a not inconsiderable proportion of craft students. The lecturer most concerned with this remedial work at the time was Arthur Brown.

I think it was meant really as a sort of nice gesture. We were given a room in the old students union, but in college terms it was a very isolated thing. No one in college showed the slightest interest in it. They still don't now its TOPS PREP.

Brown saw there was need of extending the remedial work and approached his Principal. It was suggested a report be written and subsequently a post concentrating solely on remedial work was established for Brown. With this as a power base it became possible to plan more carefully for remedial provision.

In 1975 the availability of TOPS PREP courses was made known and Brown submitted a syllabus to TSD. As a result 14 students started their course in September, 1976. This meant that Brown now had his own course, and furthermore that he could finance it himself, at least technically speaking (although there were to be problems there) and thus had 'clout' in college politics. He had undoubtedly made a success of attracting a TOPS PREP course and in doing so had improved his own position. Previously he was one of many English lecturers,

now he was identifiably MR TOPS for his school. With this new identity came considerable personal control over his hours of working and general conditions due to the financial input TOPS work brought into college. Before he would have his timetable slotted with everyone else in the English department. Now he had total control over his timetable in that he had responsibility for his own course. Other lecturers in the department mainly serviced other courses - except those on GCE work - and were consequently subject to those courses overall requirements. Arthur Brown was running his own course therefore within the limitations of college, his own master. In terms of his career it seemed that he had made a good move. Within two years of running the course he was promoted from Lecturer I to Lecturer II. If TSD work was to continue in college his was the first foot in the door. It is not sure whether Brown properly realised his improved position, at least in the earlier period of the course. As subsequent events showed his transfer to almost exclusively TSD work had its dangers, but more of that later. However, it appeared that his earlier concern for craft students language difficulties had grown into a small college industry and had lifted him out of the common pool of general teachers.

College disinterest in remedial work still largely continued, but Brown could act independently of much of college hierarchy because of his outside funding. His particular concern for the less able student meant he was well suited to develop a TOPS PREP course. An immediate problem was finding suitable staff.

Finding part-timers to teach (Brown was the only full-time lecturer until April, 1979) was selected purely on the grapevine. Someone would know someone who'd be interested and I'd see them. We pulled a few bummers and we made some good choices. You make

mistakes. I monitored them, still do. You can detect strain in a class ... I know who made a balls of it and they are not on the teaching next time. If it happens they have to go.

(Brown)

Brown's immediate superior Gregory Mann (Head of Communications) had to protect the course within the politics of the college and it was upon his ability to do this that much depended. He chose from the beginning to delegate the actual running of the course to Brown. It was not immediately clear where the course should exist in an administrative sense. Was it an adjunct of the English department? General Studies? Mann realised that there would be some anomalies but resolved to deal with them as they occurred.

Further education provides a 'peoples university'. I think it does anyway. We don't deal with the top 10% but the next 40% down the scale. It's not in the tradition of the English department to cope with the unemployed, but then where else should a literacy course be but in the English department? But then Maths department isn't involved in the numeracy work despite repeated approaches from me. It's not easy to know where and who is responsible for such as TOPS PREP.

(Mann)

The selection of staff for the course had evolved around Brown and Mann was satisfied with his choice.

I rely on Arthur as the local expert. I could sack him, but haven't, therefore, I suppose that indicates good ability. I trust him and other members of the English department are not involved, not yet anyway, although they may try later.

(Mann)

Mann with Brown was well aware that should the course become fashionable within college and attract career enhancing attention then others would move to be associated with it.

Brown tended to work in jeans and casual sweater, was in a local rock group, jokingly complained of the odd hangover, and was openly contemptuous of some of his colleagues. He had a political commitment to TOPS PREP students identifying them as:

that part of the community which is eternally bloody ignored, y'know. No one is sodding interested in them and I'm quite proud that I am involved in helping them, or trying to anyway ... that's what it all comes down to. Most of 'em here (the college) don't give a fart for the sort of people on TOPS PREP.

Brown tended to see his interests and concern as being tangential to most of his college colleagues. He appeared to adopt a deliberate image of non-conformist challenge although this sometimes collapsed under pressure. He belonged to the more radical element in his professional union and supported left-wing activities, Anti-Nazi league, Nuclear Disarmament, etc. This, to a certain extent, informed his colleagues on attitudes to TOPS PREP and they saw the course as an extension of his political philosophy. In a sense Brown was better suited to work with TSD because of the fact that he did not subscribe to many of the assumptions surrounding him at college. Their idea of education and whether college was a 'peoples university' did not greatly concern him. This had given rise to some misgivings in college about Brown's abilities.

Arthur Brown's been a bit of an outsider. Seems to dress as scruffy as he can. I thought he was a bloody cleaner

when I first met him.

Although a university graduate and skilled linguistic scholar Brown saw much of college philosophy as being quite irrelevant to the outside world. He had a pragmatic approach to helping his students and this made accommodating TSD more possible. To Mann's credit he recognised this in Brown and gave him his head. Mann saw that Brown worked well with TSD's local officials. Brown seemed to speak the same language. Occasionally, however, there was a breakdown of agreements between the two interests.

I noticed a change in Frank Hughes' attitude (field officer for TSD). He started to lay things on us. We had to predict more accurately what a particular student needed. Brown realised TSD saw things differently. It blew over. They (TSD) saw it as a joint responsibility to make the student understand that he is entering employment. Employment rather than college. TSD wanted us to make them aware of that. The TSD ethos is employment and the disciplines connected with employment. That was crucial to TSD's attitude to us. I think Brown saw that and acted accordingly.

(Mann)

It would not be right to imply that Brown totally agreed with TSD's views on the rights and needs of TOPS PREP students. He was not unaware of the implications implicit in this attitude and tensions between Frank (TSD) and Brown were to continue. They negotiate from differing assumptions, but certainly in Brown's case there is at least an awareness that the other's assumptions might have some credibility. That TSD concerns itself at grassroots with making the unemployed employable and no more is acceptable to Brown because that is his aim.

Given a perfect world Brown would approach this task very differently, but if he can use the TSD, as it uses him, then in the short term he will. He saw the situation as a partnership of common interest and agreed ends rather than one of shared identity.

Mann is less sure of whether all is right and proper. He can be said to represent the traditional liberal humanistic viewpoint. Education for him is about curiosity, it should foster inquiry and enlightenment. It must have at its centre a liberating influence which allows the individual to develop a proper set of values, values which are seen as benign and supportive of a caring society. It is a view of the world as seen through the leader columns of the "Guardian". This viewpoint can clash with the more thrusting demands of TSD.

We must try to improve their understanding of what is around them and we will do that, hopefully, through education, through their being in a college. College is a microcosm of society and as teachers we must explain that. It is our duty to help them, I think so. As teachers we have that responsibility.

(Mann)

It is unlikely that anyone would quarrel with the above and yet it does imply an educational rather than a training training. Mann then goes on:

Whether training happens informally or not is not known.

I mean training in socialisation rather than just literary and so forth. Could it be done better, I don't know? Brown selects those who are to do that work.

Should we protect them (students on course) is more questionable. They must use the canteen. They must mix

with other students. I'd say we should protect, but that is probably seeing their problems from a middle class viewpoint and wouldn't it be easier then because we could more easily recognise their deficiencies. I honestly don't know. You see I think improvement in social training would improve basic learning. I'm not sure TSD is aware of the social needs in training. I've not pressed this at executive level, I've not been pressing enough. They (TSD) are very rigid in their framework and it is not easy. But then I ask myself is that framework an excuse for me not to forward a real educational breakthrough. About that I'm not so sure.

The use of the word 'training' without qualification by so experienced a teacher as Mann perhaps indicates the extent to which TSD's attitudes has permeated college thinking. With regards to 'socialisation' on the TOPS PREP Brown used this in two ways. Firstly to try and acquaint the students with basic information that might support them outside, i.e. an explanation of social security rights, citizen advice bureaux, battered wives refuge, etc. etc. Secondly, some relaxation through art work. The latter was seen by Brown as a way of giving students a chance to work together without the pressure of educational achievement creating tensions. Mostly this worked although there were complaints.

Contact with career guidance is very haphazard and I think that is a serious weakness. I'd like to see us do more in that area.

(Mann)

Brown saw the rightness of this criticism and had begun to take more

account of end-of-course preparation in the academic years of 1979/80 and 1980/81. In some ways this had to be sold to the students who often saw the course in a far more pragmatic way as a means to get certain skills and that's all.

I didn't come here for a bloody holiday you know. I've come to learn and get myself a job. That's all I'm interested in, not all this about society and all that.

(Student on course)

The student here saw anything other than strictly literacy and numeracy work as being irrelevant and something of a waste. Some students were so anxious that they should not fail during this 'second chance' at education that they almost feared any apparent outside immediate course work. They felt they knew better than most what the outside world was about and wanted to 'get down to proper work'. That they did not always know what the 'outside world was about' was partly proved by their unawareness of the wider implications of why they were on the course in the first place. Some saw this relationship between their educational 'failure' and what the course stood for. They understood what was happening and reacted accordingly - these reactions ranging from bitterness to resignation - but most did not always understand the point of course teaching other than straight forward literacy/numeracy work.

Accommodation for the course was initially in one room. Being a combined classroom and office for Brown measuring 14 metres by five, it was a cramped working area. It was a second floor room which looked out over the main entrance and forecourt and was consequently well lit and airy. Perhaps too airy in that whenever there was heavy rain all the windows leaked and rain spoiled any books left near the

windows, but it served the needs of the course as well as any single room would in college. The main difficulty was around the fact that the room was a combined office and classroom. The telephone would be constantly ringing (Brown was a local organiser for the Adult Literacy programme and would be in daily contact with tutors and their pupils) and would thus easily distract students already nervous of education.

Pressure for rooms, not uncommon in any large organisation, was a constant problem. There was considerable rivalry between departments and Heads of Schools would quite often roam the corridors looking for empty rooms to colonise for some class or other. Groups of students could often be seen drifting around college with their lecturer leading them like some latter-day Moses looking for the Promised Room. In this sort of climate a course of low status like TOPS PREP would soon have gone under had not one factor stood as its defence - money. The low grade of work meant TOPS PREP was regarded by those in authority as of small consequence except for its ability to bring in money to college. To be sure they would mouth the usual platitudes

I feel the course is an important part of college and would want to see it remain here.

(Long - Assistant Dean of Faculty)

But in reality it was regarded as very much the poor relation in an institution seeking high grade work to match its new status as a combined Tech and college of education. It came down to Mann's ability to wage war on behalf of the course.

Poor old Gregory ... he gets a lot of aggro about us and sometimes I think he's a bit of a paper tiger. Mind it's hard because they (Dean and Resource Committee) are pushing all the time.

(Brown)

The only real argument Mann could use - after everyone had made the right noises about helping the under-privileged etc. - was that the course helped to finance other parts of college work. Beyond that there seemed little support.

I'm always slightly defensive about the course. The vibrations that I get from the hierarchy is that whatever they might tell you in interviews they regard this course with utmost contempt. They don't think there's a place for it in college. And if it weren't for the money they'd be just as happy getting rid of it.

(Brown)

The students felt they were simply shoved into space after decisions as to the suitability of that space for other purposes had been made. This was a fairly accurate assessment of what had happened as we shall see when moves were made to get a second room for the course.

As the course began to expand so the pressure for a larger working area grew, but with that increase in student numbers there was a consequent increase in funding.

The funds for the course will depend on numbers. For 1979/80 I've worked out a total of £25,000 for the year. £10,500 will go on salaries, then Head of School will have £5,000 to spend on equipment. The excess (£10,000) goes to the Principal for ... well wear and tear on college, that sort of thing, rent for the fabric. What's left goes to the local authority.

(Long - Assistant Dean)

Pressure continued to build up until a second room was found. It had

been a storeroom recently vacated by the drama department with the express purpose of giving Brown space. Within hours of it becoming known that drama had moved out of the room the mining engineering department had made ready to move in. Brown protested, but was ignored. The head of mining had higher status (temporary deputy principal at one time - and on the Resources Committee) and could easily outgun Brown in any confrontation. Finally Brown decided to bring in TSD to complain on TOPS PREP's behalf.

TSD visited the college and hinted that they were not satisfied with college accommodation and might take the course elsewhere. The room was immediately assigned to the TOPS PREP and head of mining lost his room. Thus once financial pressure was exerted by TSD college quickly capitulated. Considering the sums of money involved it is not surprising, but whether Brown fully realised his power - or even TSD for that matter - is less in doubt. It is a curious fact that TSD, in a nationwide survey conducted by NATFE (National Union of Teachers in Further Education), often showed little interest in where its funding in colleges was finally spent.

So the saga of the second room serves to illustrate one small part of the balance between college's desire for TSD money and inner politicking.

The second room proved to be less attractive for teaching. It had no windows and consequently soon became very stuffy. Despite college rules TOPS PREP students were allowed to smoke, Brown never made this a direct challenge but simply turned a blind eye to the infringement. He argued that the students were mostly in their thirties and forties and not used to no smoking restrictions in workplaces and that it would, therefore, be an additional barrier to their being able to relax and work.

He was supported in this by Mann. Another problem that followed the use of this second room was the question of group antagonism. Each room tended to retain the same group of students for the whole week. Brown had divided the students into those needing mostly literacy and those numeracy and apportioned the rooms accordingly. This seemed a sensible use of facilities and book/equipment storage. However it was not that simple. Each group became suspicious of the other and each regarded the other as a 'thicky' group and themselves as the 'elite' (sometimes this attitude was reversed to even worse effect).

Them's in a room with windows. They get Mr. Brown all the time and we get all the odds and sods down here ('odds and sods' being part-time lecturers)

(Downstairs student)

That telephone drives me mad all the time. I cannot think straight with it gangling on. They're much better off downstairs. I mean Mr. Brown is always off on some business and we're left on our own

(Upstairs student)

The rooms were at a distance from each other, but this was unavoidable given the circumstances and this worried Mann.

TSD funds are generous but there's not enough room. We should have an inter-connecting classroom with a store in between. We could avoid the stigma associated with this work if we had the right accommodation.

Eventually the course rooms were situated almost adjacent on the second floor, but by this time the course was under a further threat and this time from a far more troublesome quarter; the TSD itself. The nature of this last threat will be dealt with in the final section,

but the attitude of TSD was partly formed by college policy over such as room availability and thus TOPS PREP can be seen as forever between the uncertainty of internal weakness and external policy changes in MSC - the latter often quick and apparently with small regard to its consequences.

The self-financing aspect of the course meant that as long as TSD remained interested it would run. College might have mixed feelings about how exactly it should function within a climate of increasing its higher education role, but nevertheless its finances made too strong a point for retention and could thus overcome any internal attack. Brown saw, however, the need to consolidate by involving the sort of work associated with TOPS PREP in other areas of college.

Many students attending college are day-release apprentices and regular surveys indicate that some 15-20% of these need remedial English. Yet despite TOPS PREP and the consequent links with Job Centres (where some of these less fortunate lads are quite likely to end up) there is no co-ordination in college to practice help for such students.

The last time I saw the Dean I tried to bring up the business that what we have really here is the nucleus of an adult basic education unit within college on all fronts and that really it could benefit much more than just TOPS PREP. Maybe I was empire-building a bit, but I've taught some of those apprentices and the poor buggers have come from school with little better ability than those on TOPS PREP. We could have remedial work done through a central point. She wouldn't have it. She thinks that's not on and said she doesn't want that kind of thing. That attitude is there. (Brown)

STATUS - CNAAs meet third year welders

The Dean mentioned by Brown had formerly been vice principal of the college of education merged to form North College. She freely confessed much confusion when dealing with matters normally met in a tech. That she had been made Dean of a Faculty which now had little dealings with higher education is perhaps worth pondering, but the fact remains that she seemed, at face value, poorly equipped to understand the complex orderings of further education.

Further education - especially where GCE examinations are involved - exists largely as a sort of remedial service. People attending these courses have, by definition, done badly at school. Most techs survive on a mixture of day-release engineering or building students and catering and business studies courses. For 'business studies' read secretarial courses and for 'secretarial courses' read typists. True there is always a sprinkling of Higher National Diploma and the occasional course for Teachers of the Mentally Handicapped etc., but these are the exception rather than the rule. Most work, therefore, compared to higher education, carries low educational status. Money is one thing, but status is another and although the two normally go closely together it is true that how a person is regarded will be riveted to the status and prestige of what that person teaches. Status depends on the level and grade then of what one does in the classroom so small wonder staff view TOPS PREP with caution. It is true for instance that the TOPS PREP money and gathering expertise could have been used as a base for both an adult literacy programme in the college, and as a research base for teaching remedial courses. There seemed perfect opportunity for those training to be teachers to work part of their studies with TOPS PREP people. This never happened

despite many attempts by Brown to make the conjunction.

The college had been saddled with a mixed staff from the two ends of the educational spectrum. At one end there was the hunt for degree status (and survival in CNAAs terms) and at the other the struggle to make the third year welder consider reading a daily newspaper as part of his climb out of semi-literacy. Those normally occupying the high table looked with scant concern upon those a long way down past the salt and usually did not much like what they saw. It is in this atmosphere that Brown worked to protect and foster his course.

The wider issue of why the students were in need of TOPS PREP received little attention from the Dean, or others descending in rank to shop floor practice at Brown's level.

To take a student from no skill in reading to literacy was a tall order in more ways than one. It needed careful examination of what had gone so wrong before with that student's education and this could only be satisfactorily done if there was to be total co-operation between the LEA, TSD and college. Added to which it would imply extensive testing and interviewing to determine a cause for problems and this would take time and perhaps an expertise which Brown lacked. He had had no formal training in literacy teaching - this is not uncommon, most tutors in ALU are basically untrained apart from some in-service training. Apart from his interest in linguistics, not unimportant in the context but hardly sufficient in itself, his teaching of literacy had been largely a case of learning on the job. This is not to say he had been unsuccessful, on the contrary, his 'success' rate was relatively high in that he helped many students begin to make their way into literacy both as an ALU tutor and latterly on TOPS PREP.

If he was to take on the role of extensively re-thinking a

student's education, much more than just supervising the TOPS PREP course would be involved. In an interview with the Dean of his faculty he had raised this very point as part of his scheme to make TOPS PREP a basis for a larger remedial unit.

She wouldn't have it. She gave the distinct impression she thought it was easy work. Wouldn't even allow me a tutorial hour. Said my teaching timetable was very favourable and that was that. No consideration of what else we could do. Not interested. Without her support there's little I can do. TSD are not much use in this. They are very hierarchical minded and wouldn't like to take on our hierarchy. We have to work off the top of our particular pyramids and then work back down again. It all takes time.

(Brown)

Consequently Brown could only do what he thought was best in short term and anything else would have to muddle on as before. At no point could it be said that college had taken more than a passing interest in TOPS PREP.

It was not surprising to hear, for example a graduate lecturer in English remark that the course was for 'life's boring failures and who wants to have to deal with them everyday'. Brown saw the need to protect his students from such teachers but there is a limit to what he could do from a relatively isolated position with the structure of college. He has TSD, and its money, but ultimately must rely on Mann to protect his position in the committees and machinations that make any institution work.

Perhaps we need more research into the whole area. Time for

interested teachers throughout college to think and talk, but I'm not sure how far you could push that and not sure how highly they'd rate it in real terms. The paradox is that those teaching in the English department are graduates who are not really into teaching speech and language. They see it as something else that doesn't really interest them.

(Mann)

Not an unfamiliar conclusion. It could - as mentioned above - be argued that a study of illiteracy could inform on the understanding of language itself and the process whereby people learn or unlearn in the state education system. Sufficient to say that the challenges were not thought worth the bother in North College. These problems were totally ignored by the education department of the former college of education and only one member of staff (a redundant lecturer from another closed college of education) took seriously the work of teaching and helping TOPS PREP students. From its earlier days the course remained as a separate unit and in a sense this was a consequence of TSD attitudes. There was no real reference point in college because TSD itself was unsure - or reluctant to pursue inquiries - as to how the course functioned in college. As the programme was devised the colleges were responsible for the teaching, they had the expertise. As a consequence staff had to train on the job. No one, apart from Brown, was interested how this happened.

One teacher we had for instance didn't have a clue about teaching adults. It's a difference concept. To be fair she tried, but it was a junior school approach. A lot of aggro quickly built up and I had to get her off the course.

(Brown)

Apart from Brown all teachers on the course were part-time (another full-time member was appointed in the third year of the course). It is policy in the LEA in which North College functioned to hire and fire part-time lecturers without much ceremony. Indeed this practice is widespread throughout most LEA's when considering their further education part-time staff.

At meetings the various Deans would express concern for their part-time lecturers and ask that the hiring Heads of Sections show proper regard for the tenuous nature of part-time employment, but in reality it was often the Deans who would be responsible for the arbitrarily sacking of a part-timer to balance the salary budget. In the college hierarchy the part-timer is the lowest form of animal; yet does a very significant part of the teaching. Before the drastic cuts of 1980/81 part-time teaching accounted for a third of total teaching in North College. This system operated because it was cheap. A part-time lecturer receives no holiday pay, no sick pay, and is salaried on an hourly basis. Their contract is short term and can be cancelled without much fuss. They are almost totally dependent on the Section Head and have no rights unless that Head cares to construct some.

Until the above appointment of a full-time lecturer (and that appointment originally intended that the teaching by half TOPS PREP and half general English teaching) TOPS PREP was mostly run by part-time lecturers.

I think it was because college was reluctant to commit someone onto the establishment as a lecturer solely for remedial work. They were probably cautious about employing someone for TOPS work only.

(Brown)

Most of these part-time lecturers were women. Over a three year period a total of seven women were involved. Mostly married. those employed on the TSD course seemed merely grateful for being given any work and tended to be wives of university lecturers, who sympathised with the students and expressed an almost missionary zeal towards their work.

I think it is right that I help those less fortunate than myself. There but for the grace and all that. Anyway its better than teaching boring 'O' level English Language to secretaries.

(Part-time lecturer on TOPS PREP)

Part-time lecturers are particularly vulnerable when scrambling for facilities in college. A common battle, almost a daily one for some, was finding somewhere to teach. The part-timer is at a disadvantage in this. Firstly he/she has little status and experience when dealing with full-time staff. She (for it is usually a 'she') will not so quickly distinguish the 'room bully' from the helpful fellow sufferers. Changes will have been made to timetables between her visits to college and the consequent room changes will confuse. TOPS PREP, having so little status, suffered more than most. Apart from Brown's room in the early days other space had to be 'fought for'.

Most of the time we had to scratch around for rooms.

Towards the end of the first year we were given the snooker room down in the Gym. The Head of PE made waves and anyway it was most unsuitable. There was a lot of snide comments about the group. Y'know, 'they're thickys ... We don't want 'em.' They got a lecture from George (Head of PE) about not touching snooker table and

all that crap as if they were kids. It was very embarrassing.

(Brown)

One part-timer found an empty room, occupied it and started to teach. Minutes later the door burst open and in walked a lecturer with a dozen young hairdressing apprentice girls. "What are you doing in here? This is my room. Is this the illiterate class?" The lecturer concerned stood her ground and after a short row was left to continue.

You could feel the anger in that group. You could taste it. Some were upset and some were almost crying with rage. You see those young girls, the hairdressers would be in the canteen at break and here was this group being labelled the 'illiterates'. All the self-confidence, all the work I put in to get them relaxed, all their feeling of, pride almost, went in a moment. I could have killed that bastard.

(Part-time lecturer TOPS PREP)

The member of staff involved in this particular incident was made to apologise to the group by Mann. But the damage had been done, and for some the apology was treated with contempt.

And he's supposed to be an educated man. Don't he know how insulting that was. How can such a rude person be a teacher I don't know. That man was nothing more than a pig. If he were teaching my bairns I'd have something to say.

(Student on TOPS PREP)

For some TOPS PREP students college sadly reinforced their already

strong prejudice against education and all things connected with it. The very reason they were on the course was through some educational breakdown and here they were appearing to tread the same dismal path again. An incident like this one made Brown work harder. It confirmed an opinion held by many students on the course that they were some sort of reject. That education, school, indeed their very concept of literacy, represented a threat. Feeling threatened they reacted either with quiet resignation or truculent suspicion. What was particularly noticeable, however, was the lack of verbal abuse or shrill outrage. Some of the students, especially the men, came from work backgrounds where swearing was commonplace and yet no one swore or betrayed a lack of control. They were, in a sense, on their 'best behaviour' and they tried to behave almost as guests in unfamiliar surroundings. Unfortunately, as we have seen, not all lecturers followed their lead. The feeling of being an outsider prevailed, still does. Not one of the TOPS PREP students interviewed (total entry over three years) expressed any confidence in the college as a whole, considerable gratitude to individuals but "North College" remained something else, something which at best provided desk and chairs and at worst used the students as a kind of social conscience. These people were acutely aware of their position in the pecking order. If any were ignorant other students would remind them.

I used to travel here on the bus wi' a girl from our village. We'd known each other since we were bairns. D'yaa knaa when she found out I was on this course y'kna for writing and spelling like, she wouldn't talk to us. She wouldn't. She bloody ignored me. Would ya credit that eh?

(TOPS PREP student)

THE INTERVIEW - A careful balance between college expertise and TSD experience

Because the course was staffed largely by part-timers Brown had to make decisions on his own. He had little idea at first of how he should, for instance, select students. The criteria was that they were 'trainable' in the sense that given at most three terms some significant progress towards literacy and numeracy could be achieved. This precluded those who were totally illiterate. Such students were referred to the local Adult Literary Unit for one-to-one teaching. Beyond that it 'was all here there by bloody dragons'. TSD gave little guidance as to actual acceptance although they did have an officer attending interviews.

We accepted students in that year (first) who we shouldn't have. I had to ask one woman to leave after the first few weeks because her attitude was wrong. She seemed incapable of learning and her attitude was upsetting the other students. Argued all the time and didn't seem to know why she wanted to be on the course. We should have picked that up at the interview.

(Brown)

The TSD officer selected to attend interviews at college was Frank. A Civil Service man with a strong respect for rules and regulations, Frank's background was Industrial Training Schools where specific skills were taught. He confessed to having little experience of literacy and numeracy work. A practical and unromantic man he had few illusions about the inequalities of life. Although primarily a bureaucrat he retained sympathy for his 'class'. In many ways he was unusual combination of a quite militant leftwinger and government official. Totally pragmatic he sometimes allowed his pragmatism to

overrule his deeper conviction as if he were nervous that any weakness on his part would make his decisions less practical. He knew he was merely helping TOPS PREP to survive what he regarded as a largely 'hostile' world, but seemed, at times, to lose patience at their idealistic views on 'education' and 'bettering yourself'. In some ways Frank was closer to the realities of the industrial work than Brown, and because of this sometimes became dismissive of any talk of general aims and purposes on the course. Where Brown would justify an action by long term hope for a change in personality Frank would want to see if it would bring a job in the near future, if it didn't fit that then it was irrelevant. In private Frank would be almost despairing and angry at the treatment allotted to many applicants for such as TOPS PREP, but once on view in an official situation he would harden up and appear almost too calculating. He approached interviewees for TOPS PREP with a clear-cut idea of what they required. He felt that he had to protect them from idealistic college academics. He saw himself as representing their interests in an unfamiliar world, a world he understood but they did not. Although the depth of his own understanding is questionable his intention was to make them face the fact that the course would not greatly alter their lives. One of the most regular criticisms of TOPS PREP by its ex-students was that it raised hopes that were almost always unfulfilled. To make students see this was sensible, but not before they had had some chance at the course. Before they had made the first step towards trusting education again. The enormity of that first step was not appreciated by Frank. It is curious that this was the case, but not uncommon in 'self-educated' men. They see themselves as living proof of what personal industry can achieve. They quickly forget the enormous

effort required to break out of the mould formed by a proscriptive educational system which decides failure and success and then nails it into the child's head. To take on established wisdom and prove it wrong takes considerable effort, a kind of cultural bravery. Frank could not see this in that he could not understand its processes and that everyone trying to 'better themselves' had to be treated differently. There was no set patterns. Frank had developed his own disciplines for achievement and saw them as a blueprint for everyone else.

Brown's relationship with Frank is not perhaps as good as both would have wished but it did reflect most of the confusions and problems likely to happen when two differing practices of teaching have to work in close co-operation.

Frank reflects his background which is training schools for engineering. Brown comes from a university based culture for although he claims working class background his education from eleven will have been evaluated from the standpoint of middle class excellence and despite strong concern that this does not destroy class allegiances it is a fact that Brown has not worked for long periods outside the academic world.

It is almost axiomatic that work experience determines one's respect, or lack of respect, for the power of the industrial process. It is necessary to work in a factory, for a significant period - say months - before knowing what makes a factory so powerful a background to a persons waking life. To work in the noise and discipline of industry and believe that that is where you will work for the rest of your life is to know what concerns most working people. Therefore, it is likely that those experienced in such work will feel with their

bones the restraints a working life imposes. For the 'grammar school' lad from a working class home there is always that lack of this experience to stand between him and the rest of the working family. He/she may work 'during the vacations from university' in the family industry, be it car manufactory, or farm labouring, but that it is a vacation job changes the whole experience. However awful the experience, its end is in sight. That is not the case for the worker fixed by education and rent to that labour for the rest of his working life. It is not unusual for the student vacation worker to want to do well and work hard, if only to prevent the boredom from becoming too crushing. Small wonder this infuriates his fellow full-time workers who have his workrate as a foremans example of what 'can be done if you want to'. Consequently the working experience of the academic from the working classes will always be different from that of his class. Many have made the imaginative leap back into that experience, but it is their imagination and can never be with their backmuscles. This applies mainly to hard manual labour, but the monotony of most work is almost as crippling. The mind eroding banality of repeating the same basic task from aged fifteen until redundancy - or a move onto something similar - is unimaginable unless experienced. It is not sufficient to observe these matters, but necessary to work at them believing them to be all that is meant by 'work'. To think, as many do, that this is all that constitutes the end of childhood and school, for women before marriage, for men before they win the pools. Unless a close awareness of this grey bleak existence is remembered and constantly referred to it becomes too easy to mistake attitudes and comments made by working people. They regard work as the enemy of their time and see no satisfaction in its demands.

With the growth of computerised industry this attitude will itself grow and feed upon the awfulness of a silicone chip run factory. Frank both understands this and yet rejects it. Brown understands it but cannot always remember it. Frank knows why some are 'workshy' and reluctant to go to some work because his role is that of a foreman pushing people to a task they would normally, if they had a choice in the matter, reject. He also realises the day of the unskilled, or semi skilled labourer is ending and therefore views those on TOPS PREP with a mixture of hopelessness and even deep down perhaps contempt. Brown knows from the position of someone seeing education as having some liberating effect, however slight that education may be. He sees his students as people outside of work, as social beings whose job is secondary. In this he and Frank can never properly work out student need in agreement. Their basic points of reference are too diverse.

Both men function in an institution. Frank's is an office in the TSD, Brown in college. They are thus restricted by the two bureaucracies in the sense that any institution imposes itself upon those it uses. The decisions concerning TOPS PREP students inevitably range far beyond education. Many of the students have considerable personal problems. Brown and his staff, in a sense, become social workers and marriage guidance counsellors as much as they become teachers. They deal daily with life's casualties, people who are demonstrably unable to cope. Apart from whether they should be thus involved it confirms how difficult it is to turn an applicant away as not suitable for the course. Or decide that he/she should finish and go back onto the dole when perhaps a few months might make so much difference. And yet these decisions

are forced upon Brown and Frank, because of the nature of their work place. It is this contradiction which can create the most tension. Ostensibly helping people the TOPS PREP so often promises far more than it can give. It ends in giving a small respite to an otherwise hopeless pursuit for purpose in a student's life. It is about far more than whether the student can read or write and yet TSD and college are reluctant to recognise this. TSD because it already senses involvement in education is more complicated than was first realised and college because the awareness of how large the problem really is makes it cautious of how to start proposing a remedy. In a sense it is the distinction between short term expediency and long term ideological prescription.

The interviewing procedure was very simple. It attempted to be as uncomplicated as possible. Potential students were summoned in groups of half a dozen or so to prevent the lonely ordeal for an individual. Brown used his office/classroom. Initially just Brown and Frank sat at a desk and the applicant in front. The questioning was gentle and conversational. Brown led and Frank tended to only come in if requested. This did not prevent Frank from tapping papers or sighing with exasperation if irritated. An atmosphere could develop quite quickly between Brown and Frank once they had recognised they were to differ on often quite essential points.

In the early days each had tended to let the other have his way. Frank, for all his assurance was a little out of his depth in college matters and submitted to Brown's judgement, but as requests for extended teaching came in so Frank's respect for educationalists and their ways lessened. These requests arose out of the difficulty of selecting students long term needs. What might appear a relatively easy student

with perhaps a small numeracy problem could, as a result of careful teaching, prove to be much more complicated, thus the request for another term (or terms) work. These requests were to prove a most contentious issue. They were eventually to result in Frank no longer being at the interviews. But this did not happen without a minor confrontation between Brown, Mann and Frank.

Frank, and he was supported in this by fellow TSD officers, could not see why college was unable to properly predict the needs of applicants. For him a term, two terms, or three were simple statements of fact. They represented periods of measurable time available for teaching. You chose your teaching period and filled it accordingly and if at the end of a period you found you needed more then this was a confession of failure and incompetence on the part of the timekeeper - the teacher. Brown saw matters differently because he had been trained to think beyond statements of fact. His academic background meant that 'fact' was a challengeable concept. Frank, however, did not allow himself this luxury of doubt, at least when acting as an official. As mentioned earlier there was within Frank a strong sense of disquiet about much of his work, but he could quite ruthlessly reject this once he began wearing his official TSD hat.

Dispute over the interviews and time allotted for students had continued since the course began, but their growing significance began to sour relationships between Brown and Frank. Brown's strategy for dealing with TSD was to estimate then allow a term more for safety's sake. The reason for this was simple.

Few students were 'trainable' in only one term, the two term student being most at risk over TSD intransigence it was easier to extend and save quarrels. This ploy did not last long. It went wrong when students

came for interview early in the academic year. TSD was not prepared to pay students during long holidays, and as such the summer break could not be allowed within a student's study period. Here was the problem of a student coming for interview in late December. If Brown decided he/she needed two terms he would advise three terms and this would mean that the student could not start studies until the next September. So a student who was borderline two terms - even in some cases one term - would be put back to waiting nine months before starting the course. Although this was done in the interest of the student, Frank and the student would appeal against so long a wait. Frank, because places for the next year's course were disappearing too quickly; the student because he/she saw that apparent progress was being arbitrarily delayed beyond patience. For the students, incorrectly or not, acceptance onto the course was always to mean a major step towards a 'new life', hence their reluctance to delay that beginning. Consequently Brown had to 'fight off' two dissenters in any interview where this issue was raised. As interviews continued over the academic year it meant a lot of 'fighting' in the early part of that year.

As the dispute grew so various strategies developed. Brown brought Mann into the interviews and although this could have been seen as quite normal procedure Frank, perhaps correctly, identified it as 'ganging up'. Both sides tended to over-react as their confidence in each other lessened. Eventually, during an interviewing morning, both sides lost their tempers and a heated argument ensued. All through the morning it had become clear that Frank was not happy with procedure. At the beginning there had been a brief comment from Brown about the need to extend teaching for three women students already on the course. At the mention of this Frank had shook his head and said it 'was not on'. The

matter was to be decided after the interviews, but throughout the rest of the morning both sides knew what was to come. Everything said was affected by that fact.

First to be interviewed was a Chilean refugee. A former actor with his own company the applicant saw the course as a means of improving his English. He had been on a B.Ed. course but had to leave because of poor English. It was obvious he wanted to rejoin the acting profession and this fact irritated Frank.

This is not a course for teaching English to foreign students. That's the LEA's responsibility, not ours (TSD). Strikes me you need that sort of course lad.

(Frank)

Brown points out that most of the work is around written English and applicant is more in need of oral tuition. Both Brown and Frank suggested the course was not suitable and applicant agreed. Although on balance everything that had been decided was reasonable there was an edgy feeling. The man's former profession of acting had received scant regard from Frank. Not obvious enough to be remarked on, but an irritation to Brown who was quite openly in political sympathy with the Chilean. The man was already a member of the 'professional class' to Frank and had no proper place on a TOPS PREP course.

Some places in the country its all foreigners. Black, yellow, brown. It's not on. I've nothing against it in principle, but we're not in that sort of business.

(Frank)

To be fair to Frank he seemed quite sympathetic towards the refugee, as a refugee, but did not intend the course to be used in that way. It was more a bureaucratic attitude than a prejudice against the

man's background.

The next applicant was a woman in her early twenties. An unemployed machinist she sat nervously on the edge of her seat and waited. Brown was first to speak and outlined the course details. When asked what she thought was her big problem she hesitated before replying and when she spoke was barely audible. She was petrified by the ordeal. Bob tried to relax her with a joke, but apart from a weak smile she remained apprehensive. 'How had she heard of the course?' 'Through a poster in the Job Centre'. Another long silence. Suddenly the woman volunteered 'I lack confidence', and retreated into silence. After much probing and gentle leading she started to soften a little, even giggled at a recollection about school.

It's me maths really. Always bad at school, drove the teachers mad it did. I went for a job in the Scout and Guide shop but I couldn't measure and ran out, crying I was.

Because of a fairly good written English test this student was accepted for two terms. Frank wanted Brown to consider one term, but Brown refused.

The next applicant was a jockey. Lost a leg six years previous through accident on a horse when only in his second English season. Born in Dublin and had left school at thirteen with 'virtually nil' education. Almost as he came through the door he demanded some 're-education'. Full of bounce and confidence he was philosophical about his injury. He had got some compensation, but not very much. 'It was a test case and others afterwards got the benefit more than me, but that's how it goes ain't it'. Keen to show independence because perhaps he rather resented the interview procedure he suddenly declared

'If I get a job mind I'm off. You won't see me again'. When asked what he hoped to do after the course said he'd like 'to get back into racing, maybe something in the stable, book-keeping like'. Brown decided to take him for three full terms.

The jockey's ebullient personality had relaxed the tension between Brown and Frank. Both, it seemed, were betting men, and they jokingly agreed to have the jockey on the course as a possible source for tips.

The next applicant couldn't have been more different. Aged nineteen but dressed in a style more appropriate to an elderly man he moved slowly and thought long before speaking. He had a high pitched squeaky voice although he was a tall and heavily built man and the whole effect was strange and slightly disconcerting. His skin was very soft, almost like a baby's. He had not been in work at all since leaving school. His reaction to any question about his schooling was to become very irritated but rather in the manner of an elderly man who saw little point in such modern ways. Impatient and at the same time appearing to be tired he resembled nothing more than an old age pensioner being questioned by Age Concern. The more impatient or nervous he became the higher his voice rose. He had tried the 'railways', but wouldn't elucidate further than 'just the railways'. His father had said 'I ought to try one of these courses, general maintenance course, but I didn't pass the test'. An only son he was obviously a cause of concern for his father. Their relationship was undoubtedly close, the father had accompanied his son to college, and perhaps this was a clue to his aged manner. It seemed likely that there was more wrong with this student than a TOPS PREP course could be expected to cope with. Something about his manner and gaze suggested mental illness, whether past or present it was impossible to say, and Frank asked for further

time before a decision could be made. When the man had left the room Frank explained that he thought it sensible to find out more about the applicant before making any decision as to what sort of course he would be suitable for.

Next was a woman in her mid-thirties. Smartly dressed and confident she seemed sure of where she wanted to go.

I can read a bit. I read Catherine Cookson, Y'know and I can read that except for some words. Wi' me maths I can't do multiplication. I can't write at all, well not as you be able to read it and understand. My bairns can write better an' their in infants.

Her lack of education did not greatly seem to bother her except that it prevented her from getting a job.

Had a job with Jacksons as a presser. I was there for nearly eighteen years. I felt safe there. Knew everyone and didn't have any problems, but then they went (Jackson factory closed down as part of a rationalisation plan) and that was it. I knew I needed educating and so I'm here.

It was decided to take her on for three terms and she left. Two other applicants followed. Both had similar stories to tell. Both were women and had spent their years after school in similar jobs to the woman who had been a presser for Jacksons. Unskilled factory work with bouts as cleaners and in one case kitchen hand in hotel. Reasons for their being in need of further education were also familiar. Either sickness as a child, indifference of parents towards school or both seems to be the main cause, but more of this later. These applicants were given three terms each and that ended the interview.

By the time the last applicant had been seen Frank had become almost a spectator taking little part in the proceedings. Once the interviewing was seen to be finished Brown brought up the problem of the three women already on the course and in need of further time. Frank's reaction was swift and highly critical.

We can't go on like this you know. It must be put on a proper base with proper tests. You've got to be able to predict better than this lad.

Frank related everything to do with TOPS PREP to a test of some sort or other and thought all problems and confusion would be avoided if everyone simply applied the proper tests.

We can't change once we've made a decision. We do it together like today and that's it. We see the people and decide. I can't change after that otherwise we won't know where we are. It'd be all sixes and sevens lad.

(Frank)

Brown's answer to this was to refuse to commit college to that sort of prediction.

It's not on. We can't tell at this sort of interview whether someone needs two or three terms. It's not being realistic.

(Brown)

Frank shrugged this aside with a comment that other colleges could. You've got to improve on your testing procedure that's all. Other colleges test throughout the course and that brings greater control.

(Frank)

It seemed that Brown was now unwilling to consider a change and the two were at an impasse. Mann, who had been present, but almost

deliberately silent, joined in. He could see that if this dispute was not settled quickly perhaps TSD would take the course elsewhere, he was not prepared to allow that to happen.

Mann's suggestion was that maybe the interviewing procedure could be improved but he didn't suggest how.

There must be a way. I think we've got to keep our cool and work together on this ... (interruptions from others) wait a minute, just a minute, couldn't we have a longer interview, with more information to back up our decision?

(Mann)

Initially TSD had sent documents to college which related to each student, but this bad practice stopped and was not to be resumed. Why this happened TSD were reluctant to explain. So Mann did have a point, but Frank didn't seem impressed.

You both don't appreciate my position. My bosses come down on me for agreeing to your requests for more time. My hands are tied by those above me. And are we to pay them for a day, your screen test? That would be doubtful. Fares, expenses yes, but a days pay means more. A lot of paper work there.

(Frank)

Frank's position was much dependent on bureaucracy as was Brown's and Mann. Brown and Mann realised the constraints and probably could have solved their problem, but Frank was nervous of those in authority above him. Eventually Brown agreed that he would take more care in selection but as this implied past carelessness he was not particularly satisfied with the outcome.

The three women were, as a concession from Frank, to be allowed to

stay on for another term. Frank no doubt felt that he had won his point and could afford to be magnanimous. He left and after a brief mutually consoling few words Brown and Mann parted.

There was little either side could do other than radically change the entrance procedure. Frank had almost certainly passed on to college some of the irritation and complaint directed towards him in TSD. It was as if both sides needed to clear the air, but at the same time were well aware that little could be done. On leaving Frank did ask that more counselling be incorporated into the course to avoid perhaps the difficulties facing students about to leave college. This proved to be an important point but more of this later.

The above interview procedure in fact changed little following this difference of opinion. Brown did take longer on the interview and a simple written and maths test was expected by each applicant. Whether this changed much is doubtful but TSD did not complain again about entrance procedure, although friction over allotment of terms continued.

### SECTION THREE

"Section three will examine the students on the course and try to discover why they need literacy and numeracy teaching so long after their formal schooling; what went wrong first time around? Also in this section I will try to assess both the student's attitude to their college and education in general and how staff see the students."

## TOPS PREPARATORY - The Students

Until now this has concerned itself with those either administrating or teaching the course. What follows is an attempt to discover what the students think of the course. This was conducted through long tape-recorded interviews. Some did not want to be interviewed, feeling that the whole process would exacerbate their feelings of being at odds with other people. It would select and appear to categorise them as curiosities; curiosities in their eyes for they mostly could not see the process as being more than repeating self-evident truths. They did not resent the intrusion because it pried, but more because they felt its conclusions would be obvious.

All this finding out about folk, all this ferreting around to find out what makes us tick, its no use to us like. Its helping the middle class find out what us knows already.

(Course student)

Some who initially declined to be interviewed then decided to volunteer. Eventually all one course year agreed with the exception of one student; a middle aged woman who rarely agreed to anything on the course and appeared to be the main object of complaint for the rest of the students. In a sense this woman was not typical of the course and her attitude was more a general resentment against the college, the students, her son-in-law, her neighbours and the weather.

After the interviewing of one year's intake a second year was interviewed and it is from this selection of a total of twenty two students that the following have been taken. The ratio of women to men roughly equate with the course; a preponderance of women is a feature of the course and this is true of other colleges of further education surveyed in the north east.

In the first year interviewed there were a few Chilean refugees - most of the men - and consequently this presented language problems. These refugees were mostly middle class in that they were professionally trained as engineers, actors, businessmen, etc. in Chile, and as such were not particularly relevant to this study which, as far as the students on the course is concerned - is attempting to find out why they should need the course at all. The presence of the Chileans largely depended on Brown's sympathy with their political position (he would accept this, but argued that there were pedagogic reasons as important) and an agreement from the local TSD to allow them course places.

TSD's position on Chilean students, or any ethnic minority taking a TOPS PREP course, is that it is the responsibility of the LEA to teach English as a Foreign Language. This was certainly the immediate reaction of Frank Hughes, but there has been some change in TSD policy. In London a number of remedial courses, EFL courses, and social training schemes have been financed by MSC and run in further education colleges. This is particularly true of areas of London where there is a large immigrant community.

### The Students

#### Edith

Age: 19 Married No children

School: left school at 16 No GCE or CSE qualifications  
did not attend any remedial or special schools

Jobs:	cosmetic factory	Six months - redundant
	dole	Six months
	Plastic factory	One year - resigned
	dole	Six months
	TOPS PREP	Three terms

Reason for applying: wanted to get office work, fed-up with factories

Edith, an attractive blonde, came from the usual school background with little apparent indication of why she should now be in need of remedial education.

My infants school got demolished, there were only seven in our class, and I got moved to Houghton. Didn't like it there. I was quite canny at English but it was my Maths that let me down ... there were a few like that and the teachers just left us. There was 'A', 'B' and 'C' and an Alpha form. I was in 'C' but I did Alpha work, Religious Knowledge and that but they found out and took the books from us. It was alright really except they didn't guide you or anything. That's the secondary mind.

Edith didn't distinguish much between her primary school and secondary school. She tended, not unlike other students interviewed, to regard schooling in a block, as something which occupied her time before starting work. It had little relationship to anything that she could contribute to or manipulate. It was seen as some arbitrary parcelling of her time which operated according to rules outside her control or interest. It represented not a threatening environment so much as a period of her life which had to be tolerated with as much good grace as one could muster. She did not resent its failures nor condemn it for her present place on the TOPS PREP. Although possessing a shrewd and perceptive mind towards people and her surroundings she did not resent her education, she attached no blame for its inability to prevent her being a 'thicky'. The rules and ways of education are regarded with an almost amused bewilderment.

School put us in for two CSE's but they didn't give us a

choice of what to do ... we did a mock and I went in for English Language and English Oral and I passed grade four and five ... I could've done Domestic Science like but they didn't bother. I was alright sometimes ... it all depended on what we did. A lot of it was the same really. Like in Art where they give you some tracing paper and that was it, it was very boring. I suppose it was alright like. When I left junior they said I should've gone into 'B' but I didn't. We was lined up in the yard and told to go to different teachers and there was some in our class who could do the work easy and some who couldn't, but we never moved up or down ... I wasn't bothered much.

Part of Edith's reaction to school was repeated when she attended TOPS PREP. She complied with the regulations, made herself agreeable with the other students and caused no fuss. A rather sleepy languorous sort of girl she remained apart from the more vociferous students. Some of the women were jealous of her looks and privately accused her of 'getting on because Brown fancies you'. She remained indifferent to this accusation as she did to anything that might lead to dissension. She saw no need to get 'steamed up about things because that's life ain't it?'

One of a family of seven she is alone in needing further basic education.

None of the others can't read. One of my brothers can't read his writing like and he has to study what he's put down, but that's all. He's that bad at writing, you canna read it. I'm the only 'thicky'.

She would smile when she mentioned herself as a 'thicky' as if

to both accept that nomenclature and yet be scornful of its oversimplification. It is difficult to determine why exactly she did not progress further than she did at school. She rapidly mastered the work on TOPS PREP and passed her entrance examination for a basic office work TOPS course in her second term thus leaving before the three term allotment thought necessary by Brown at interview. If Edith is to be believed, and her story is so familiar it must at least be regarded as very likely the truth, her schooling was largely a process of waiting for time to leave.

You see the lads carried on so that the teacher who taught us refused to have anything to do wi' us ... he said they carried on like and he wasn't going to put up wi' it. Can't really blame him can you? I wouldn't have either. And our Maths teacher spent more time down in the greenhouse than wi' us. In the fifth year we didn't do nothing. We built this greenhouse, us in 'C' form that is. We was down there every day. You see we did what we wanted and so the lads built this greenhouse but the Alpha got the credit. I would've liked to have left at fifteen because we only got a couple of lessons and that was it. We just sat there and I was bored like ... we'd be left in the room by ourselves for a lot and we just sat around and talked. Then our careers teacher took us around a make-up factory and that was it. That's how I got into a make-up factory, till it was closed then I was made redundant. I think they used to let you do too much of what you wanted. They should have been more strict. It all passed by and not really made much impression like ... there was this girl and the

teachers didn't give us some work and then go over and help her, they just gave her her books and left her. She just sat there because she couldn't do it.

It is of course possible that 'this girl' was Edith.

In my form there were fifteen and nearly all of them was poor in English, poor in Arithmetic, poor in everything ... only four of us went in for CSE and the teachers didn't reckon any of the others should bother.

Her weak academic record did not prevent her getting a job and consequently she regarded the whole exercise as over and done with.

Then I started courting. He was the manager of a department in Deggarts (small department store in Durham County). He'd use big words like and I'd feel ignorant. Before I'd met him I just worked in the factory and you didn't need English there ... they just talk the same as me y'know ... they didn't have these big words and intellectual talk and all that.

Once Edith started to distance herself from school it appeared less benign and more blameworthy.

When I look back on the schooling I used to feel cheated, but I don't now. I mean if they'd just had a bit more patience wi' us we'd have come out with more. It was their attitude. They'd throw things at you, blackboard rubber, chalk, or hit you with a book on the head. One boy came into the Geography teacher without knocking and he grabbed this boy by the collar and held him up against the wall wi' his feet not touching the floor and he was only a second year boy, just a bairn really ... held him

at arms length and the boy was terrified like. I nearly got the stick once for piercing ears ... they treated you like bairns. If you wanted to go to the toilet in the fifth year you still had to put your hand up and one used to call you 'pigs' and 'swines' and that's not half the things she called us either. When I was in junior I got hit on the knuckles wi' a ruler and me mum went up the school because they were black and blue and she got wrong for going ... the Head wouldn't let her see the teacher. I mean I was only eight like and anyway the Head warned the teacher but she did it again and got fired. I was terrified of her, we all was.

At first Edith had been reluctant to comment extensively on her schooling beyond the casual passing observation, 'it were alright' or 'didn't mind it really' and then quite suddenly whilst talking about 'courting' she began to remember details and then it became difficult to move the discussion from school.

I was terrified a lot of the time really. I mean I went to secondary school and we were all lined up in the playground and it felt like Colditz man. There were three teachers on the top steps and they blew a whistle and shouted that them that were already in the school should go to their classes and them that were new had to line up against the wall, and that was the first morning in the school and we didn't know what was going to happen like. Then they marched us off to the prefab, in single line. The prefab was where the 'C's' and some of the 'B's' went and the 'A's' into the hall ... I didn't go into the school until the third year, not into the

actual building ... it felt a bit like a prison at times. You had to be quiet when you walked along the corridors, and if you were caught in a corridor by the Head and you couldn't explain why you were there you got the cane for being out ... they treated you like bairns. I was glad to leave. I've never been back, except once for a Christmas party with the fifth year.

On leaving school Edith worked in local factories. The work was repetitive and undemanding and as she was made redundant so she would move to another similar job without noticing much change in the daily routine. She then started work in a plastics factory and enjoyed the friendship on the shopfloor. That is until she was about to get married when an incident concerning stolen money created tensions.

I had £41 stolen from my purse two days before I got married. They were doing my coat, y'know string through the sleeves and all that for a bit laugh then they said they'd do me bag. It were all a bit of a laugh and then I found I'd got £41 pinched out o' me' bag, I had £10 left, but the rest gone. The police had to come and they all agreed, but they didn't like it though. Well I had to find out who'd taken it. Never did though. Anyway it got difficult after that and I had to leave.

Edith remained on the dole for six months after leaving the plastics factory and then, on the suggestion of her husband decided to try the TOPS PREP course. She wanted a better job than the factory and hoped to train for office work.

She attended an interview and was accepted onto the course for three terms.

I was very nervous. I kept mesell to mesell at first, till I got used to them, the other students like. It were a bit strange, but I didn't mind that. I knew I'd have to put up wi' it if I was to better me'self. I've enjoyed it really, except for Mrs. Lewis because she treats you like bairns and none of us liked that.

Mrs. Lewis was an early mistake on Brown's part and he replaced her once this had been discovered. She had worked primarily with small children before TOPS PREP and consequently was unused to adult teaching. Whilst her speciality was remedial work her ability to adapt to differing students made it impossible for her to continue. This was to be - still is - a constant problem for Brown in that expertise in this area of education is rare.

She wouldn't let you talk or anything. Bit daft really.

But I supposed she had her ways. You see we were upstairs in Brown's room and we didn't get any time off because he was always there. Well whereas the others in the downstairs room did. They'd come in and say 'we've just had ten minutes off' and we didn't get that.

Her relationship with the other students was generally good. Apart from some resentment by the older women and a few minor irritations with one or two of the men Edith progressed well.

Some people get up your back. Ronnie for instance keeps telling lies. He buys a car on Friday and it goes into the canal on Saturday. He comes in with a crash helmet and he hasn't got a motorbike, well that's daft ain't it? He just sits there and puts the helmet on. There was a bit of a carry on when I got the results of my test.

(Pre-TOPS Clerical course entrance test) Isabella was bit needled because I'd got my results first, bit catty like. But then you're bound to get that in a group of people. We just had to take it in our stride, I mean the teacher had to learn us and we had to put up wi' it. Most of us did, but some get real uptight.

A competitive atmosphere soon develops on the course and many students become addicted to tests. They see each result as a palpable example of education at work. It appears to confirm that they are working, that they are making progress, that something's happening.

They get that worried about their results. Heather couldn't sleep at nights worrying. She passed, but she got that worried. Now she's passed and she's a different woman. She's achieved something like.

The competition is mostly good humoured and rarely spills over into jealousy. Occasionally a result is thought unfair but it is more likely to upset the group as a group. The students, under pressure or seeming threat, are quick to combine. Although they may sometimes quarrel and even have 'flaming rows and shouting matches' they unite against the college. They will recognise Brown and his staff's concern for their progress and understand that this is genuine. They perceive the college attitude to their presence and will even connive with Brown to thwart a college threat to the course, but if pressed they identify as a group against all including Brown. He will finally belong to 'them', to 'this lot here', he is a teacher and therefore a bit apart from the normal restraints of working life. Whether this is a fair assessment of Brown is superfluous, he for instance, regards himself as untypical of the teaching profession,

and consciously cultivates that image, but this does not impinge on the students because he is ultimately a teacher and to them that says everything. It says that Brown and all like him have not really left school and endured what they have endured. They over-simplify the teachers' job and find difficulty in distinguishing between school teaching and further education lecturing; the former working within clearly recognised guidelines, the latter involved in a patchwork of roles and functions which can never be properly codified and made simple. This simple distinction is lost on most TOPS PREP students. They will allow there is a change on the course from that which they had experienced at school. If there had been no change it is fairly certain most would have left in the first few weeks such is their distaste for what went for their schooling. Beyond that few will go. They are strangers in a foreign place and as such regard their surroundings with a mixture of amusement and suspicion. To Brown's credit he recognises this and manages his work accordingly.

All too typically Edith tends to blame herself for any deficiencies in her education. The fact that she has to attend a TOPS PREP course is not a reason for bitterness. Any criticism she has for her school is linked with the idea that this is the 'way things are' and is not used to explain her lack of academic ability. She accepts the role of a 'thicky' in relation to her family and society at large. Her acquiescence borders almost on an indifference - laziness even. At one time she complains about the strictness of school and at another blames it for not giving her enough discipline - she has been more confused than helped by her schooling. She looks forward almost childishly to time off (stolen, cheated, etc.) from college work and yet does not relate this either back to her school or her present

predicament. She collaborates in the 'thicky' joke to avoid the conflict that would arise from her contradicting that slander. She has accepted the verdict of her school and is either unable, or more likely, unwilling to recognise that that opinion could be in error. For Edith to deny the school's attitude would be to shatter most of her assumptions about herself and her position in society. She has been conditioned from early childhood towards acceptance; acceptance of the authority of others to decide upon her abilities. To doubt the 'experts' is asking too much of Edith at present, but the very fact of her being on TOPS PREP indicates a growing awareness that might lead for her to an eventual rejection of the degrading calumny of the 'thicky' joke.

I'm quite canny like, but I'll always be a bit thick

I suppose.

Perhaps for not much longer.

(Postscript) (A recurring nightmare for Edith is being in a narrow passageway and being pursued by a giant ball which threatens to catch and crush her, she thinks to duck into a side alley and thus escape it but finds it turns the corner and continues to terrorise her.)

Fred

Age: 46 Married Four children - girl 19 with 4 'O' levels  
girl 13 'not too bright'  
boy 16 'alright'  
boy 9 very active and good  
at education

School: Left at fifteen, no special remedial schooling

Jobs: Miner 1 year  
General labourer in power station 2 years  
Army 9 years  
Operating Theatre Technician 5 years  
Building Technician in Tech. Coll. 2 years  
and various labouring jobs

Reason for applying: Basic literacy problem. Unable to read and write from school

Fred is a thick-set, slightly balding and often found frowning at those around him. He has a strong forthright personality and suffers fools badly. His relationship with some of the women on the course is not a good one. They regard him as a 'bloody moaner' and he them as 'alwas' obsessed wi' their stomach, their head, their aches and pains.' Rather prone to depression if his progress on the course seems poor he resorts to sulks and accusations of neglect against those around him. Capable of losing his temper and 'storming out' of a class he will disappear for hours. His overriding obsession is to make progress with his literacy. He constantly refers to this deficiency and sees its cure as the most important concern of his life.

This course is our second chance. Its our only chance to better ourselves. There'll be nowt else after this will there but the scrap heap.

Being so concerned that he progress he sets himself very high standards and expects much of the course. Any moment which is not furthering this ambition is regarded as a total waste of his time. He, for instance, enjoyed the Art work on the course and produced some fine small pieces of sculpture, but still regarded this as an improper waste of his studying time. He could, or would, not see the possible therapeutic intent of such class activity and wanted always to be 'getting on with lessons'.

His strong physical presence belied his underlying nervousness. His reaction to questioning about his past was, at first, very guarded. It constituted another period off his studies and thus irritated him. He did, however, warm to the idea once over the initial suspicion and subsequently looked to spend as long as possible going over his background and experiences in interview. But this was true of nearly

all students interviewed - once they began to delve back into their schooling and work experience they rapidly grew a preparedness to explain and remember; 'if it helps others I <sup>1.5</sup>disen't mind' was the commonest expression following an explanation of why their co-operation was being sought.

Fred's experience and recollections ran almost chronologically and are repeated here more or less as they were recorded. Little editing, except for repeats and gossip about life in general, was needed and it could be argued that this interview exists as a single statement of educational and social deprivation. As such it uniquely represents the experiences endured by nearly all those designated as TOPS PREP students.

I've got three brothers and two sisters. My father died when I was three year old (subsequently this was revealed by Fred to have been suicide). My mother remarried when I was seventeen. My father was in the First World War and badly injured. He couldn't pick up his job as a deputy afterwards. He was forty three when he died. I was youngest in the family. When I was very young I used to have great trouble with my ears, right up till I was twelve. I missed a lot of schooling because of that and in those days if you missed schooling and fell behind then they just looked at you as if you were just a body ... the teachers did. I got that I hated school, just hated it. I knew the teachers didn't care for us because they thought I was bit thick and that was it. You see I couldn't hear very well so I didn't know what was going on. I couldn't concentrate because I couldn't hear. He used to say 'you boy, you just sit at the back and I'll see to you

later', but later never came and I hated school that much that when they gave me the pink slip to say I'd left school I ran out in case they'd change their mind ... I'll never forget it, I hated it ... I went into the Army at seventeen and a half. That was after the working down the mines. I went into the DLI and went to Korea, Cyprus and Aden. They sent me on a shoe makers course. So I got me trade and got my higher pay and a tape. They didn't do anything about my education ... When I left school I couldn't read at all and sums, I couldn't do them. I could write my name, I learnt that at school, but I couldn't write my address. My mother couldn't read or write ... all my brothers and sisters could read ...

The brothers and sisters went variously into mining, catering, and general office work.

My mother couldn't write her name. I looked it up one day and saw it on the marriage certificate, just a cross where her name was ... I was very close to my mother ... I was off a lot from school with my ears and then there was truant when I got older, I learnt that like ... used to get the school board man though and you used to get fined ... I didn't get into any trouble at school, I just sat at the back. I was frightened, really absolutely scared of the teacher ... I was frightened of everything really. Frightened of the teachers, of the other kids, of everything. I think that's why I played truant ... well it was ... I was that nervous man. Then after school at fifteen I went into the pit. But going down that cage was

terrible, like going down to hell that was. So I packed it in and worked at the power station ... I earnt well there labouring but worked from eight in the morning till eight at night, shovelling coal ... then called up into the Army, National Service y'know ... still couldn't read but I could bluff around it ... you practice not letting on like and you get good at it ... you biggest difficulty is filling forms in, when you're going for a job anyway ... I couldn't bluff my wife though, I had the patter when we were courting but she found me out ... she was the one that got me out of the Army, she didn't like the life ... I got a job in a hospital as a porter and then I became a theatre technician ... I used to stay in and watch the operations, I did that for five and a half years, I loved it ... I mean the word technician was fancy for labouring really, sort of attendant ... sometimes it came up that I couldn't read, but I'd make out I didn't have time to read whatever and then I'd bluff it out and that way I got through quite alright ... I left because I wasn't earning enough ... so it was factories and I worked for Mullards as a quality inspector for television tubes, bluff again ... they didn't know I couldn't read ... you examined for chips on the screens and scratches like ... then I got fed up with that and got a job in college as a glorified labourer in the building school ... I did that for a bit but I fell out with this lecturer and so I left ... then onto the dole and then ... you see I'd met Mr. Brown before

through the Adult Literacy Scheme ... my first meeting was to be this Monday night at half past seven and no one came, I stood and stood ... you know I'd felt bit daft coming anyway and I stood there waiting, but no one came ... in the end I'd stood there for so long someone came up and I had to show her this letter and later I found out Mr. Brown hadn't sent the letter to the woman only me so she didn't know I was there waiting ... so I was home and frustrated with the whole waste of time ... then another letter ... and she was an hour late with trouble with her car and it sort of knocked my confidence out ... I lost that keenness ... then I tried a couple more times but I felt ashamed and embarrassed so I didn't bother coming anymore ... then I applied for this course and got a letter saying I was accepted.

Fred's difficulties with the Adult Literacy Scheme are not typical, at least within the area responsible for his case. Teachers on the scheme are voluntary and unpaid. Recruitment tends to concentrate where possible on trained teachers, but there is quite a number of volunteers who are not specifically trained for remedial work. The work is demanding and most people on the scheme are conscientious and reliable, Fred's experience being fairly rare.

... You see this course is alright for those with a bit of education but for me with no education its different ... you see you don't get enough time, you have to have more people teaching you ... the groups are too big because one's learning the alphabet and the other buggers knows it so he's getting frustrated ... and you feel I can't catch

up with them ... you feel it's hopeless ... I got some dictation from Mr. Mann for instance and I'd never heard of most of the words, he didn't know what the hell I was like, he couldn't have and he'd been teaching us for a few weeks like ... then the next time he does the same ... dictation for me and I cannot even spell the simple words, it was useless, he hadn't prepared man ... then there was a mess up with the lessons with Arthur because he wasn't there ... he'd either be late or not turn up for the lesson ... sometimes he'd sit there reading a newspaper and that made me wonder if he was interested ... he was, to be fair, too busy with his office work and it got to the stage where I've lost interest ... I really expected to come here and be told, to be taught, you look around the system and I think I shouldn't have been here, I'd been better off somewhere different ... its seems to have been a total waste of time ... it's not possible to put ten years of schooling into one year ... my wife has seen I've made no progress and she's got a great education, she was even advised to go for 'A' levels ... my wife is interested in education, she's been to the childrens school, I've got four children and one of the girls is really far behind ... it's the same as me she very nervous, she's frightened of school ... and my wife's been to the school and she's now getting special attention for her English ... you see four kids, two good at school and two not, there's no logic is there? ... I mean with me its being deaf I'm sure ... but they should have worked it out shouldn't they?

... mind when our kids were young we had a very hard time and maybe that was a reason for their difference ... they'll survive though ... I mean I can look after myself so what's the use of education? I can get by can't I? ...

Fred's views on education tend, not surprisingly, to be rather contradictory. He argues that there is not enough discipline in the present schools and feels there should be a return to the old days of the cane such as he experienced. However, he recognises that his fear at school was an important factor in his not being able to cope with his hearing defect and school work. He acknowledges that with a more understanding and perhaps tolerant 'modern' teacher he might have had better treatment and, therefore, been in less need of a TOPS PREP type course.

... We had big lads who used to fight the teachers ... that was the system and for most it worked ... mind it was a disaster for me because I couldn't cope ... all my life I've been trying to make up for it... I've been nervous all my life ... maybe it was my father ... he died from the effects of the war, but what I didn't tell you was he killed himself ... terrible pain ... he did himself in because he knew his life was finished ... in pain and in bed ... I can't tell you ... I found out about it later, but it had an effect ... my mother said I was only the one who would go in there (in his father's room) because the others couldn't get with it ... the smell. I was very small and it didn't bother me ... he saved up his shillings (for the meter) and then got a rubber pipe and that was it ... he didn't do any good because he left my mother in a hell of a situation ... I remember

waiting for the assistance when I was a bairn ... we was always somehow worrying ... we were left destitute ... mind although I was very nervous I'm not now ... as far as nerves go I'm frightened of no one ... but it had an effect.

**Fred's opinion of the course is a rather bleak one.**

When I leave here to be honest I'm back to square one again ... my meaning after this course was to go on for cooking, I enjoy cooking ... but I'd be wasting my time and I'd be making a fool of myself at the same time (this was concerning the possibility of a cookery course in college following TOPS) ... you see I've learnt ... well something, let's say I'm back where I was when I left the Army, but with a bit more attention I think I'd have learnt a lot more ... I mean it's quite easy to know if someone's interested in you or not ... now Mr. Brown is interested, but he's always got something to distract him ... he doesn't concentrate on us ... you can't run a bloody office and teach someone else at the same time ... there's nothing wrong with the course but I think they should have one lot for English and the other for Maths; Maths is useful but you should be able to read and write ... a two level really ... let's face it this is the only opportunity we've got, the only one ... levels of different students would make it easier ... one lot are trying to catch up and the others are sick of waiting ... it gets that the lecturers don't bother or forget ... and some get tired, there's one who is terrible, she can't teach, she shouts at

you like and gets that annoyed with you ... she gives you sweets if your good for God's sake ... she making me like when I was young because I'm getting frightened ... well not that but I'll just go away ... I've just got to get out ... I've been off mostly because of my knee but a bit of it was all this, I'm sick and frustrated and I feel I'm wasting my time here ... I'm going back into the one-to-one literacy scheme and I'll say this the course has given me the confidence to cope with that ...

But it wasn't what it seemed to promise ... I mean that business of being in the room with Arthur and that bloody 'phone ... it's not fair because as I said this is the only chance we'll get and it's being spoiled because of the room, the facilities ... it's not fair ... I mean the college doesn't bother me ... I'm not worried about the other people here ... we're no different to anyone else ... what's the difference? ... but this is the only chance we'll get ... that's all I can say ...

On leaving college Fred applied for a job as a caretaker in the town hall of his local town. He got the job and is now combining his caretaking duties with being a guide to tourists. "I'm still at the bluffing you see." He looks back on the course as being largely a waste of his time, but now shows no bitterness about this. Again, like so many students on TOPS PREP, he seems easily to accept the role of being an educational deserving poor with few rights and little expectation that things will ever be any different.

Laura

Age: 21 Unmarried

School: Left at 16. No GCE or CSE  
Attended various special schools and hospitals

Jobs: Mostly unemployed with short periods in factories  
doing basic repetitive bench work requiring no  
literacy

Reason for applying: To overcome education deficiencies.

Laura is a plump lively girl with a good sense of humour. Her background had made her suspicious of any authority, especially educational authority, but she worked hard to overcome her unease.

When I came for the interview I was terrified ... felt like walking straight out again ... the size of the place ... and you felt someone was going to say 'look she can't read' ... there were others there for interview but we never spoke, we just sat there in silence, we were all scared I expect ... I thought I was going to get two year out of it (the course) ...

The confusion as to what the course is and how long it might last remains with quite a number of students right through until their last day. This is not always the fault of either TSD or the college because at all interviews the facts are very carefully explained and often repeated during the course. Perhaps it is a symptom of the bewilderment felt by many who need TOPS PREP; an inability to relate relatively complex arrangements and procedures to their own everyday routines. Laura was told at the interview (verified, because it was recorded as part of this study) that she could either wait until September and start a full year or start at the Christmas of the preceding academic year and have only two terms. The choice was hers, but she continues to misunderstand the implications of her choice.

... Naturally I wanted to start straight away while I had the courage up to go through with it, it wasn't long enough ... I started at the Christmas and finished at the Easter ...

In fact Laura started at Christmas, but did not leave the course until the end of the academic year in July. The confusion may stem from the fact that the interview was recorded eight months after she had left college, but despite some careful prompting to help her recall the details she continued to believe she had only one term at college. In every respect Laura seems a bright, aware, and responsible person.

... I was just beginning to learn and it was closed ... and that was maddening... I mean you can't cram a whole life's learning in six months, that's all I had six months ... It just canna sink in.

When Laura was three she scalded herself and was in hospital for a year.

I tried to pinch a Yorkshire pudding and the fat came over me face.

In the following year she fell down and badly injured her head. These injuries made her miss much of her early schooling. There appeared to be no immediate evidence of child battering, but this obviously remains a possibility as the injuries seem to have been considerable and always to the head.

Her parents moved to Wales when she was five. Here she was taught mainly in Welsh. She remained in Wales for five years and during that time the family moved a number of times.

My father was a miner. He can't read. My mother can but she doesn't bother with us much. In school they used to hit you

if you couldn't do the work. I didn't like it much. My father told us the other day that when he were a bairn he had to go for his catechism (family are Catholics) and because he couldn't read they made him stand in the corner on a box. They put a pointed hat on him with dunce on it and he always hated reading.

When she was ten the family moved to Yorkshire. On arrival in the new authority Laura was sent to an educational psychologist for tests.

That stuck in my mind for ages. He gives you these funny cards and you've got to make something of them. Well sometimes you went along with him because you felt that if you didn't he'd certify you as crackers. "What do you see in that card?" and sometimes you saw nothing in it like but a black dot and you said anything. Then there was a tuning fork he used to bang on your ears. This frightened me because I thought they were trying to say I was mad. I was ten and you are frightened at that age.

Laura, it seems, did not like either of her parents and this estrangement appears to have started when she was around ten.

I blame them for not being able to read. My father couldn't read and I thought it is heredity. It's the feeling that you're never going to get on and its pointless trying. You'll just end up in the looney bin. I still feel that sometimes, even now.

Following the psychologist test Laura was sent to a special school for backward children.

When I went there they (the others) started calling me

looney. I mean in a normal school I'd be a lot better off because I'd not be noticed. I hated the special school, everything about it I hated. The first day I had to be dragged in from the playground.

At eleven she went to a secondary modern school although she claims that she left the special school unable to read and write her own name.

The teacher was canny like, she'd say 'if you can't do it don't worry.' So I'd just sit and do nothing. I could never understand what was going on. I was glad though to be out of the special school. You used to wait for the bus (for the special school) and the other kids waiting for their bus used to say 'she's a looney waiting for the looney bus' and I didn't like it. All day from the school next door they'd get at you. In the end you'd believe them. I was very unhappy as a child. I remember one time when I was happy. One Christmas at me Grans. I was seven and my mum had left my dad. That was the only time I can remember being happy. Didn't have friends because they were too ashamed to stand next to you. Games teachers was the only one who used to bring you on and include you like. I liked that.

At fourteen Laura's family returned to the north east and she attended the local secondary school.

I was fourteen so it was really do what you want really. I did start to pick up and then I left at sixteen. With a struggle I could read things like 'Lanchester' or 'Consett'.

On leaving school she went into general factory work. At this point Laura started trying to hide her illiteracy. This was to

prove difficult.

During interviews most TOPS PREP students with reading problems described ingenious ways of hiding their illiteracy. Faced with a literate society they became like spies in a foreign land. They could not relax their 'cover' for an instance. The 'glasses left at home' or spectacles with plain glass that had been mislaid was one common ploy.

Lasses would bring jokes for me to read. I used to go to the toilet or say I'd read it later. My sister would read my payslip for me. And I'd listen to the news so that I had something to talk about next morning, it was something you knew about and could put your comments to. If you told a younger person she'd shy off but an older person would treat you right and understand.

Laura went from one factory job to another without much change until she learnt of the TOPS PREP course and applied.

I thought they wouldn't let us leave until we could read.

Then they said we were to leave and it was a terrible shock.

In a sense Laura's shock was the greater because of the effort and embarrassment of 'coming out' and admitting she was illiterate. All her life she had been drilled to think that her inabilities were her fault and suddenly she thought she saw the TOPS PREP as a way out of this impasse. She had responded to college, after initial nerves, and now it was all over.

The college was fine. I really felt as if I was getting on although I'd have liked more reading practice. Some of the lecturers treat you like children, but you get

used to that. It was good and I felt I was getting somewhere. If you did get treated bad then you just didn't intend to learn.

Laura, like others, quickly sensed if they were being patronised. Although the lecturers concerned intended the best the result proved to be counter-productive in that it tended to confirm deep prejudices against all things associated with teachers and learning in many students on the course.

I didn't think the other things we did on the course were useful. Like general studies and that. We went there to learn to read and that was it.

This utilitarian approach towards the course is constantly re-affirmed in interviews with other students. They believe the sole purpose of the course is to improve their basic learning skills in literacy and numeracy. They fail, perhaps with justification, to see the relevance of other parts of the course; this is especially so with General Studies although it must be said that General Studies often has problems justifying itself in any course curriculum.

The TOPS PREP student sees his or her disabilities as part of a general breakdown in Social Skills. They regard learning to read and write as almost magical keys to success in all things. It is as if once able to read they will solve all their problems and that understanding of matters dealt with in General Studies sessions will automatically follow. They see the learning process as being solely concerned with absorbing skills and not as enriching an understanding of the ideas which depend on these skills. In this particular they remain confined in an intellectual cul de sac.

I sometimes think it would help if we could sort of sit

around and discuss our problems and maybe help each other.

You wouldn't feel so alone then.

Laura now works in a night cleaning job and proposes to try and continue her reading learning through a day session with someone from the Adult Literacy Scheme (voluntary teaching scheme).

Vicky

Age: 24 Married One child (girl 4½)  
School: Left at 16. No GCE or CSE certificates  
Did not attend any State remedial school or hospital  
Jobs: Factory Six months  
Private college for secretarial work Six months  
Unemployed Six months  
Shoe shop assistant eight months

Reason for applying: To 'move up' the job market

Vicky was a small bird like woman, with dyed blonde hair. She had a rather frightened look and smoked almost continuously. Probably had been attractive, but was now rather worn down by early motherhood and bad marriage. (Subsequent to the interviews Vicky was badly beaten up by husband - a regular occurrence - and left home to live in battered wives refuge.) Slightly above average intelligence for TOPS PREP and able to clearly see her position vis a vis course and possible prospects.

Her main difficulty was her English; Maths above average.

At the school, the teacher I had just hated me. Just wouldn't be bothered with me. I loved my primary school, but it had to close and I got moved on ... he just couldn't stand us you know, I'd have to stay behind to do lines. I was very quiet at school and maybe that irritated him. He was our class teacher so we saw him a lot.

Although Vicky went on to describe what can only have been gross bullying from her teacher it was impossible to discover what the motive

might have been for such treatment. Therefore, either Vicky was lying or she had been curiously chosen as a scapegoat for the class. Either explanation would suffice, but given the circumstances it was impossible to accurately decide whether it was bullying or a misrepresentation of Vicky's schooling. Her experience of primary school was a happier one with the exception of one incident when she was six.

My mother always said I was born in a cabbage field and I told them. She took me around the whole school into all the classrooms and told everyone. I'll never forget that because I felt that ashamed. From then on I was always scared that if I did something wrong she'd do it again. Now I think she meant it as a joke, but you know what bairns say and how you tell everyone and the bairn feels rotten and it stuck in my mind. I was always petrified she'd do it again and I couldn't learn off her.

Vicky's attitude to schooling is one of deep suspicion and it was only after her husband had attended a TOPS PREP course and described how it worked that she was prepared to give the course a try.

I thought it'd be a big class with lots of desks and you'd be left alone if you got stuck ...

When Vicky left school her first job was stacking shelves in a factory and she remained in that work for six months. Then she attended a private college for six months (£200) to learn comptometer work, but left before the course finished. She had failed the English exam. Her father is a welder and Vicky seems to have a good relationship with him, but she disliked her mother. She regarded her father as weak when dealing with her mother.

She used to beat me a lot. I think she hated me because she's German and I made her come here.

Vicky's mother arrived in England three months before Vicky's birth as the wife of a soldier. It appears the mother has not completely reconciled herself to living in England.

She never liked anyone I knew. They had to get married and they've never forgiving me for that. I was the scapegoat for the family really because my mother used to buy clothes for my sister and brother and not for me ... we don't see each other much. She'll come up to the house and leave a note like saying 'your windows need washing' or something like that, that's all.

At nineteen Vicky was attacked and raped. This obviously had a bad effect on an already shaky relationship with her mother because she was blamed by her mother for supposedly provoking the rape by 'loose' behaviour. She went to live with her grandmother (father's mother).

I had to go to me grans or I'd have committed suicide ... everyone was looking at me ... I felt like a leper.

Vicky left the area and worked in Oxford in a shoe shop. Eventually she married - her main reason for going to Oxford was to join her boyfriend - and returned to the north east. She learned about the TOPS PREP through her husband's attendance on the course. He had been advised to try for the course whilst on the dole. Vicky joined the course in the following year. She claims being sent directly from the Job Centre, but as this is impossible = she would have had a TSD interview first - it again shows how confusing many people on TOPS PREP find the process of arriving on the course. This confusion continues throughout as to what the course intends and what might follow; a

continual problem of a misunderstanding of educational practice and its consequences. What is regarded as normal administrative procedure both in TSD and FE remains, for most people on TOPS PREP, a bewildering mixture of arbitrary decision and subjective - almost accidental - changes of direction and attitude. They view the course 'officials' as people who can dictate their futures without regard to anyone or anything. They rarely seem able to distinguish between the possible and the impractical; between what social bureaucracy understands as its duty and what they see as obvious outcomes to expressed needs. This breakdown in understanding seems constant between almost everyone interviewed for this study and happens in spite of considerable effort by those directly responsible for the running of the TOPS PREP course to explain its main function. It is as if the students revert to a passive acceptance of their schooling, they may regard it with more confidence because they are older and more used to defending themselves against unpleasantness, but behind all there is that misunderstanding of what education sees as its function and what they see as their needs; the two seem rarely to coincide.

For the interview I expected a stiff shirt and tie like, but it was much more relaxed. I was given two terms as what I needed. I was asked about my jobs... and that was it. I was nervous, I always am. I felt at home here though, not like school.

The fact that there are a number of people on the course together in their difficulties helps overcome any feeling of inferiority.

... They don't like us around here. They think we're freaks. One girl was going to give me a lift here, but then she found out what course I was on and she said she

wouldn't bother. (Impossible to check this as Vicky was unable to remember the girl). They also resent us getting paid and they snigger behind your back.

Vicky seemed aware of the limitations of the course and yet criticised it for doing little for her husband.

He still can't read. He should have had longer on the course, it didn't do much for him. He should have started with three terms but no one was leaving till January so he only got two terms. He's still the same as he was before the course.

An understanding of the need for basic grammar makes Vicky a case apart from most on the course.

I can't understand when its 'ponies' and 'ponys'. I know you put 'ies' instead of 'y', but I was never told when or why. How to use the plural.

This ability to discern the underlying structure of language is unusual for students on TOPS PREP.

We did a mock test and I got them all wrong so she does a bit now (grammatical theory).

Vicky passed her test in basic Maths and English at the end of the course.

I would like to get a job in a newspaper, like when they type down the stories from the reporter over the 'phone. Something that would make me think and be interesting.

When Vicky left the battered wives refuge she was given job as a factory cleaner.

Christine

Age: 46 Divorced Two children (boy 25; girl 18)

Schools Left at 15. No special school or hospitals

Jobs: A variety of factory jobs  
Interspersed with long periods as housewife

Reason for applying: Now divorced and children older wanted to improve 'my chances in life'

Christine was a small dark haired woman, almost gypsy like in appearance with swarthy features and long black hair. Although in her 40's tended to dress younger in jeans and high heels with plenty of make-up. Came from a big family - seven - of which four were boys. She missed a lot of her early education because mother needed help in the home.

She kept me at home because she didn't think education was as important for girls as for boys.

Her elder sister was given support from the family, books bought etc. when she passed her eleven plus, but when this sister left college (technical college) and entered a factory the parents decided spending money on education for girls was a waste.

They said that's the finish, no one else is going to sit any exams. I cried my eyes out but that was it.

Christine couldn't explain which exams she was referring to and seemed to imply they were perhaps eleven plus - again the confusion when confronted by education about what exams were and where they fitted in the education process. She was kept at home to help.

The school board man used to come but she still kept me off. She thought school wasn't that important because she was all that mattered ... It was because of that that I reasoned out that you should put the next generation on a

bit better step, bit higher up the ladder and I tried to do that to my children.

Two brothers died in infancy of pneumonia.

My mother took him to the hospital but they told her to take it home because it was dying and they couldn't do anything for it.

She left school at fifteen. Her experience of careers guidance was very typical for the period in the secondary school system.

They came to the school and said 'what you want to do? Do you want tailoring and machinist?' And all that, but I had no interest for that. I was interested in painting and English and I always loved Drama even at school. But they weren't interested in that and it was machinist or factory. I had no feeling for any kind of job that I'd done. My sisters did well with their jobs. You see I respected my parents and they said my sisters came first and if they said that that was it. Its always been the same. Them first, my parents I mean. My two sisters moved away and I'm looking after them (parents), but I don't mind. It's my duty.

Christine adopts the attitude of gratitude throughout most of her interview. Talking about the TOPS PREP she is 'thrilled to be on it'.

It's a second chance. A fantastic opportunity to do it all again.

Christine's main interest at school was English and in particular composition.

I meet a teacher long while after I'd left and she asked if I still wrote stories and I said no and she was cross

and said I should, but I never bothered. With my parents not being interested I didn't bother. It got that I wasn't interested really. I mean no one seemed interested in me so I wasn't interested in anything if you know what I mean. I used to have bicycle and I'd go all over and go to dances. I'd daydream a lot and use my imagination.

The family was very poor with the father more out of work than in.

At Christmas my dad used to make us things. Like a monkey that'd come down the slope and jump. He had to make them because we didn't have any money. Mind we were happy then. They're always bored today. My son is eighteen and he's sitting for a degree and he doesn't seem happy. I think he was lost because we couldn't talk to each other and he didn't have any friends. He's taking Sociology and English. At his 'O' levels he could still enjoy the simple things but now he seems unhappy.

Christine had her son before she was married. She was put into a home for unmarried mothers in Scotswood Road, Newcastle.

At first I thought it was the worst thing in the world to happen, but once there I liked it because everyone there was in the same boat. In the end I didn't want to leave because I felt so safe there.

She met her husband when her son was five. The son was adopted by his step father.

He was a bricklayer, he had a trade which is important.

We lived with his mother. But they used to hide (Paul) the son. The insurance man would come and they keep him in bed so awkward questions wouldn't be asked ...

Eventually he would beat Paul and when the girl arrived it got worse. So eventually we broke up.

Following the breakdown in the marriage there was a period when she had to seek treatment for depression. Also at this time there was a threat that her children would be placed into care. She began taking anti-depressants and as is usual in these cases examined here when the tablets seemed not to work the dosage was merely increased. Christine was eventually quite ill. She recovered sufficiently to resume care for her children, but she did not go back into any sort of job. It was only when she decided that the children were now of an age that freed her for outside interests and some form of employment that she contemplated some sort of re-training and as a consequence of that began the TOPS PREP course. Her main educational needs are centred around a lack of numeracy and her literacy is well above average for anyone of her age; she took and passed 'O' level English Language.

It was like a dream come true, (when she was accepted for college). I'd always dreamt of going to a college to learn. I mean for years I'd just been a housewife, I took Avon the cosmetics around, but that was all. Now I was free to go out. You see I used to stand looking out of the window and walk around the house crying without realising it. The doctor said take some more tablets.

Christine was frightened, perhaps naturally, when attending her interview. She had poor memories of schooling and institutions in general.

I just sat there waiting. I saw this man going up and down the corridor, but he was in jeans and a sweater so I didn't realise it was Mr. Brown. I nearly died when he said who he

was. I expected to see someone in a suit sort of formal and removed. I think it's hard to have so much knowledge and be natural, I mean when you talk you're bound to use some of that knowledge.

She joined the course provisionally for only two terms, but finally stayed for the full academic year. Towards the end of the year she seemed to view her leaving with some alarm. It appeared to resemble her earlier feelings of being safe within an institution (unmarried mother's home) and showing reluctance towards leaving.

I asked Mr. Brown what happens when you leave here? Then Mr. Hughes from the TSD came to interview us. He went on about my age. He said I'd not get a job because I was not young. When I said I had an English 'O' he said it'd been better if had been a Maths 'O' level. He was very discouraging. I said I'd like to try a travel agency and he said that was ridiculous because I didn't have a language. It's up to the TSD to do something with us when we leave here otherwise what's the point. I mean I've benefitted here, but now I'm dreading leaving. I have to have someone to mark my work so I can't learn on my own. I want confidence. If you go into a room where there is well educated people you feel panicky, stupid. I mean someone could come into my home and ask about a picture on my walls, 'where does this come from?' and I'd not know and I'd feel small, stupid because I didn't know about pictures.

This constant feeling of shame was reflected in her comments about the way college labelled the course.

Why do they have to call our courses TOPS PREPARATORY and

have the sign on the door (this is a notice for evening adult literacy students which is designed to be recognisable to those unable to read). Everyone knows my course, they know I'm not intelligent. I don't like when the lecturers calls us 'them' either. I've enjoyed the course mind. It's just what do I do when I leave?

Christine has remained unemployed since leaving college and has returned to being a housewife. Recently she wrote to say she was back on her tablets.

The preceding illustrates the sort of student usually found on TOPS PREP. Further details would become repetitive and merely confirm what is already apparent; that there is a need for a kind of remedial education for adults and that the state, as yet, is only half-heartedly meeting that need. More can be construed from the continual sense of bewilderment in the students. It is clear they regard 'education' as a matter of consequence - even to the extent of according an almost mystical significance to college and 'being a student' as in the case of Christine - and think they see how it could regulate their lives. That they may have misunderstood their schooling, or better understood it but been unable to believe what they found, is very possible. They almost all regard themselves as being to blame for their poor educational prowess.

In interview they initially outlined their failure in terms of absence through illness or parental disinterest; they saw themselves and their families as the aberrant force in a benevolent society. Only as they discussed and remembered did they begin to pose any criticism of what had gone for their days at school, and even then with a

nervousness which betrayed and embedded sense of guilt. But once they had made the criticism and, in a sense, admitted to the fact that maybe they need not share the total blame for their predicament then their criticism turned to bitterness and anger. They had allowed themselves to be designated as educational failures by a system they only barely understood. Now as they proceeded through college and saw that system working again it was not as nervous children frightened of what was to come next. They saw, perhaps, that in some cases the Emperor really did not have clothes. As they had repeated the indignities of childhood, the labelling and refinement of the 'thicky' joke, and the sense of social isolation they found themselves faced with no alternative but to challenge their position in the educational pecking order. Once that challenge was posed then there could only follow a rejection of their position as beggar at the door. They changed from asking to demanding help.

The course was seen almost exclusively as the 'second chance', as the moment when 'everything could change', as the lucky break in what was usually a fairly dismal catalogue of deprivation and social mismanagement. Here and now they would be taken from their second class status and be given respectability. It was as if they had been suffering from an apartheid of pass laws and degradation and now they were to be allowed 'white' club membership. It is not too strong a conclusion to see the course as representing one of the most important events in their lives, to see it alongside the birth of a much loved child, marriage, death of parent. For most the course was to act as a parole board and their interviews for acceptance were often regarded as just that. In almost all cases what followed was disappointment and disillusion.

## S E C T I O N   F O U R

"Section four will draw upon the above and develop the discussion by reference to the four levels of involvement mentioned earlier: government, college administration, lecturers and students. Here their conflicting aspirations and misconceptions will be described illustrating the contradictions existing in colleges faced with MSC commitments. It will summarise some of the criticisms of MSC's work and point to the basis for such criticism."

Student disappointment in their course is not unusual. Indeed it is almost normal, but the disappointment of the TOPS PREP student is linked to matters more serious than general unease that more work might have produced more success. The TOPS PREP students do not blame their lecturers for any failure or take sole credit for any success, in this they are very different from most other students in schools, further education colleges or universities. The effectiveness of social conditioning has convinced them it is their fault if they fail. In this they neatly echo the attitude of many who observe the unemployed and plan for its alleviation.

After training (YOPS) a third get jobs straightaway, a third get one after a couple of months and the other third ... well they're mostly ESN (Educationally Subnormal) ... wouldn't have got a job anyway.

(Spokesman for MSC discussing YOPS on radio - BBC Radio four 0835 hours 15.2.81)

This sort of comment is so familiar it almost becomes a kind of truism, something so self-evident as to need no qualification. The plethora of courses and schemes that pour from MSC each year - be they new names for old or variations on a theme - all imply that proper training and a positive attitude towards work will eventually triumph. If the chance is given and there is still no job then it is almost certainly the fault of the individual concerned.

What this attitude chooses to ignore is that a fundamental change in the pattern of unemployment has occurred; that it has become not cyclical but structural. In the past, so it is argued, unemployment was a corollary of economic depression and when the latter ended so unemployment declined - the jobs lost during the slump were replaced in the new period of economic growth. This is no longer happening

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(if it ever happened given that war usually created any economic 'recovery' in the past). The residual lost jobs during a period of economic stagnation is greater than the number of new jobs created when the depression lifts. Thus, with each succeeding year of low growth, the unemployment figures rise and these unemployed will remain unemployed despite any economic recovery. Remembering that the whole strategy of MSC is to train people for jobs that will return given past patterns of employment it becomes clear that if those jobs do not return most of MSC's training becomes redundant. Thus unemployment is not the fault of the feckless unemployed, but the consequence of mismanaged labour policy of recent governments. The TOPS PREP student then can be seen as the grassroot victim of that attitude. An attitude which vastly over-simplifies the whole concept of a re-trained workforce. The course perfectly represents the confusion and the reaction to that confusion; withdraw and hope someone else will come along with solutions. As policy is made piecemeal and in reaction to events so the confusion grows.

This fourth section will describe that confusion in practice. It will show how practice denies the validity of theory and the policy based on that theory. It will try to show that confusion and disillusionment is inevitable given the misconceptions of what the course is about. TSD wants its unemployed employable, its concern ends there. Lecturers on the course know that what they do, whilst important in the development of self confidence for each individual, is not going to make them anything like suitable for jobs other than the most mundane. The tension between these two positions reflects most situations where MSC employs re-training (or introduction to work) as something manipulatively creative in curing unemployment.

That tension is present in almost all areas of TSD work, be it YOPS, TOPS, or any of the schemes practiced since 1973.

### Daily Routine

Each college of further education will run its course according to TSD guidelines, but the day-to-day running will evolve around the personalities and tempers of the teachers. It is they who must devise a scheme which will take account of whether the student is mostly illiterate or innumerate - or both - and this means using considerable ingenuity in timetabling. In North College the weeks teaching is divided between two groups.

The sessions are three hours with a break for lunch. During these a student will be taught in a group of no more than ten. This means that the teaching can be almost on a one-to-one basis which is obviously the most effective given the work being tackled. If a student needs literacy teaching then he will stay with that group longer - each group being literacy and numeracy based in its teaching.

There are three periods in the week when the students will involve themselves in different work. Two one hour sessions of General Studies and one whole morning of Art. The Art work is seen largely as a form of relaxation by Brown and was introduced very early in the course. It was taught by a part-time lecturer from the Art Department and sought to develop any skills latent, or otherwise, in the students. The lecturer concerned believed that the ability to draw, model, or paint would not be affected by other educationally defined deficiencies. A few students on the course showed considerable skill in their Art work and obviously enjoyed this break in the pedagogic routine. A few resented the time and thought it not much use to them or the course,

but generally Brown's idea in conjunction with the lecturer's abilities seemed to have worked.

The General Studies sessions were slightly different in both operation and intent.

It was hoped, in the early days, that the hours could be divided so that one hour was spent on specific problems like Social Security and claiming procedures and the other on a more general level dealing with larger concepts such as government, nuclear power, etc. This has changed slightly although the hours remain basically the same. What has changed is the style of teaching.

Brown came to the conclusion that more could be done by the group working as a group than could be taught in a formal General Studies lecture. Also the difficulties tended to arise and needed attention then, they wouldn't wait until the specific day and hour and Brown tried to work on demand rather than in a more formal sense. Consequently, although most of one hour is still used to tackle the larger issues of the day the rest of General Studies time is used for quite differing sorts of teaching. Brown feels that his students fall into three groups and each will need special attention in this General Studies session.

The first category is the odd lad who is reasonably competent and only needs a term, second is a group who are mainly female and who want to get out of the factory and into an office but their English isn't good enough, but thirdly is a different kettle of fish altogether. Occasionally they leave the course because they just can't cope with it. They are just socially, psychologically incapable of coping with ... well anything. These people

have crying needs, especially with literacy and distinct social problems because of these needs. They are the ones I tend to aim the General Studies session at. To try and make them see things.

A student who was of the third category recently married and Brown, with other students, devised a few shopping trips to help her buy groceries. Her husband had done this for her and intended to continue thus, but Brown made the girl face a supermarket. It worked, but not without problems. She would be taken into the shop by a member of staff and another student and together they would purchase making an attempt at budgeting and taking account of 'offers' and whether they were useful or not. Not an easy task for the 'normal' shopper, but necessary experience for this girl who admitted fear of such shops. Such fears are not uncommon, but Brown felt that they were compounded - or caused in many cases - by a feeling of inadequacy with language and 'sums'. An obvious point maybe but unless some attempt at dealing with it in the context of TOPS PREP course and all that implied the 'feeling of being alienated' would continue.

She couldn't cook. Her husband does it but he gets a bit exasperated at times and then there's trouble. The whole marriage bit is going through a very rough passage, really severe problems which affected the group. We tried to help, we even got a member of staff to show her some cooking, how to make a Yorkshire pudding would you believe. Sounds a bit funny but we try to cope with problems as they arise. Another one didn't have a clue about bank accounts so we spent a couple of hours with her on that. You've got to be sensitive to their needs and have an eye open all the time for the need to

Change. It's no good keeping rigidly to the timetable if something comes up which needs dealing with straight away.

(Brown)

### Commitment and Bureaucracy

That the lecturers should be prepared to involve themselves beyond straightforward skill teaching is obvious and no teacher lasts long on the course who shows any reluctance to move off the set work should the need arise. Therefore, the course tends to be self-selecting in that those staff who are working on it are totally committed to its students. To say such commitment is absent in other teachers would be ridiculous, but that it is not quite so critical is certainly true. Whether such commitment by teachers across the whole spectrum of teaching would obviate the need for so many TOPS PREP courses is another and much more complicated issue and beyond the brief of this study. The rewards of teaching the course are mostly 'job satisfaction' rather than career. Brown eventually was promoted from Lecturer I to Lecturer II but whether this was as a result of time served or his work is difficult to assess. Certainly Mann's support for the course will have had much to do with this promotion and in that sense Brown perhaps earned his second stripe, but he had been teaching with the college for ten years and it is not unusual for promotion after that length of service.

Innovation and flexibility is then at the root of the course teaching and yet it is always questionable how far a large organisation will tolerate innovation. How much effort needed to justify the innovation begins to weigh in the minds of those having to defend their methods. It could outweigh the benefits and become pointless. Often it is the attitude towards "bureaucracy" which fixes the strategy.

Often the students on the course are timid and nervous of authority and this can 'infect' the staff.

Maybe I'm wrong in that I blame Gregory (Mann) for being timid when I'm as bad ... I sometimes wonder if I pick up some of this from the students. I remember we had a notice on the door of their room saying Remedial English course or something like that and they wanted it off.

'People'll laugh at us'. They wanted to keep a low profile. I wonder if I've picked up that attitude.

(Brown)

Whilst it is not surprising that the students wanted the sign down it does betray a feeling of shame. The students feel they are the 'underdogs' and staff have to combat this.

I'm aware a percentage of them are very upset. Some show it, others don't. But they do get very uptight at times.

(Part-time lecturer)

The identifying with the students often puts the staff at a remove from their colleagues. The nature of the course with its own style and practice makes the staff identify themselves as colleagues with the students rather than with other college staff. This shouldn't be taken too far, but it is a fact that staff on the course see themselves as working according to quite different criteria from the rest of college.

In no case is their (the other staff in college) attitude malicious, more pointless. And it's not a case of me protecting them from that attitude. The best thing I can do is say 'look I'm with you most of the time and I don't think you're stupid so get out and tell them to bugger off, don't take anything you don't want to take from anyone here'.

Once you get a group together there's always this sort of problem. I feel at times its like a bleeding mental hospital, or a prison! They've got to cope. And so have I.

The whole process of teaching on the course has to take into account the numbing effect their very presence at the front of class will have on many students. These people will have regarded education with a mixture of awe and dread. Their experiences during schooling will have often been traumatic and consequently they have, in a sense, been immunised by short careless contact against all that is implied by sitting in a class and listening to a teacher. This suspicion has to be overcome and quickly if any progress is to be made. In some instances the resentment - the immunisation - has become so embedded that the student, after what is usually a very disruptive period, has to leave. These are always regarded as failures by staff on the course, and no blame is aimed at the student. An example: a man in his early twenties attended at the beginning of the second year of the running of the course. Brown and his staff had learnt from the first year and saw what was coming. The student seemed to be variously the clown of the group or a rejected outsider. One moment he was 'fooling on' the next sitting alone in a corner glaring at everyone over his 'tab end'. He would go missing for long periods, sometimes days and then suddenly turn up as if nothing was amiss. TSD will not tolerate absence without good reason and so Brown was forced to warn the offender that if his erratic attendance continued he'd have to leave. This admonition brought forth tears and regret. The student became 'babyish' and dependent on the older women on the course. He followed them around like a lost child. Then he vanished again. Turned up a couple of days later and appeared very animated and giggly. Brown then learned that

the student had forged his Social Security in a most amateur way and was about to be caught. The lad protested his innocence despite obvious evidence to the contrary. By now this had become a matter of debate and concern for the course as a whole, not just the staff. The students were not 'butting in' because they were nosey, but because they wanted to help the lad ward off authority and perhaps the police. Suddenly the man admitted his forgery and sought protection from the same older women. Brown managed to extricate him from criminal proceedings and all seemed to have calmed down when the man again vanished. He did not return despite many attempts by Brown to coax him back. Brown regarded this incident as a failure. He felt he should have somehow managed to keep that student on the course long enough to overcome his resentment and confusion at being 'back to school'. The lad had found discipline difficult, had too many memories of bad schooling to be able to so easily forget and start again. This suspicion is present in a very large percentage of course students, but they are just better at concealing it. The daily routine of the course constantly expresses this attitude to the staff. The students in their turn become aware of the inconsistencies that have regulated their lives and with that awareness begin to react against the seeming inevitability that they remain at the 'bottom of the heap', they begin to see they have been encouraged to see themselves as failures by a system which itself has apparently failed.

When you really look at the people on the dole and why a lot are there and how many of them could benefit from the course ... it's bloody frightening. I mean how do you start educating people in those numbers? The implications of this are tremendous. Look 70% of what goes to this college is

bullshit. Grading a lot of staff 'A' level and using a lot of staff to run the department on that basis, a paper basis, it's a waste of time. We've a crying need out there for something to be done about a large percentage of the population but all we do is create jobs for the boys which go nowhere and mean very little. But then that's the system. If we're not careful its a pandora's box we've opened up with this TOPS PREP course. And that's where I sense the most frustration. Not with the TSD, but with this place, with the hierarchy here. They say it's a good thing but underneath their attitudes stink. Like the bit about I've got nothing against black men, some of best friends ... that's it its educational racism. That's life though ain't it?

(Brown)

#### No one's interested

It is natural that Arthur Brown will feel aggrieved by the seeming indifference of those who dictate college policy. The college is peculiar in that it is no longer a typical college for further education following its merger with the college of education. The presence of degree work excites those who see their future in higher education and this tends to produce an atmosphere of seeking academic excellence wherever it may be found, or promoted. As a consequence the separation between what is usually called 'low grade work', i.e. most of the teaching in courses like, nursery nurses, welders, etc. and that of 'high grade work', i.e. Bachelor of Education courses in French, Art, Drama. etc. is great. As career prospects tend to be seen in terms of

teaching higher grade work the capturing of the teaching of these courses becomes the preoccupation of many staff. Whether the definitions of 'high' or 'low' grade work have any real meaning is irrelevant. The establishment of promotion usually favours those teaching small degree classes rather than those teaching larger less academic orientated work and that is all that is important.

Recognition of the difficulties facing such as Mr. Brown et al are not infrequently voiced, but the promotions, allowances, and kudos goes elsewhere. Maybe, as Arthur Brown remarked, 'that's life', but it doesn't lessen the tendency to resent the validity of that cliché.

It is obviously difficult to divorce the subjective means about the system and life in general from informed comment on particulars. Brown does feel aggrieved about treatment towards himself and the course, that is obvious. Some of this though maybe due to personality clashes with others in college, to feeling that promotion was slow in coming, to a general feeling of *angst* brought on by overdrafts and a leaky roof. To separate jaded prejudice from proper complaint is not easy.

In the third year of the course a new full-time member was appointed and although her initial contact with college was naturally Brown she reinforced some of his arguments. She had been appointed because of her interest in remedial teaching. She had taught in school remedial units and subsequently in a college of education specialising in remedial training.

The first impression of the facilities was that they were appalling. No windows in one room and at the day you came out feeling as if you'd got a brick on the top of your head. But then that's true of remedial teaching anywhere, it's

always the dog end of everything.

(King)

With this new member of staff coming from higher education, and consequently used to spending money, Brown became aware of the new technology on the market for remedial work.

The work is boring if you're not careful. You've got to present it in as interesting a way as possible. Something like a Bell and Howell Language Master, another Synchrofax, things like that.

(King)

But a further indication of how the college regarded the course was seen in the appointment of King.

The job was only advertised in the Local Paper. In other words they weren't a bit bothered about who they got, what standard of person, what calibre. And in the interview they didn't seem to know what they wanted. They were not looking for someone with the sensitivity needed for this work, it was obvious in the interview. They said things like 'if you're teaching English to electricians late on a Friday night and they don't want to know what would you do?' That's got sweet nothing to do with the TOPS PREP. They didn't seem to know much about the course.

(King)

It's not our policy to direct the running of the course but leave that to the colleges. They are the experts and we rely on that.

(Senior TSD official - Washington Div. Headquarters)

I feel very isolated, and apart from Brown, I don't know

anyone or seem likely to ever get to know anyone. Maybe that's the course or maybe it's just the college I don't know. I just get the feeling no one's very interested in what I'm doing.

(King)

### The system

Whether anyone is interested in that lecturer's work will depend on its importance to the college. It is reasonable to suggest that educational attitudes are largely determined by reference to the relative power base of individuals concerned. As mentioned above status and money combine to give authority. If a lecturer can bring 'in trade' in the sense that students are attracted to a college then he/she has power. If success rates in examinations creates that attraction so much the better, but although this is usually concomitant with good publicity it is not axiomatic that the 'good' lecturer is necessarily the best. It may simply be the result of good selling technique. In further education most courses are one year and consequently complaint cannot accumulate thus there is space for encyclopedia salesman style of education - surface brilliance belying irrelevant and useless teaching. The 'package' can look good, but the quality can sometimes disappoint. The transitory nature of much further education work and its dependence on outside criteria - TEC/BEC, CNAAB, various examining bodies for specialist training (nursery nursing etc.), and largest and rapidly becoming most powerful of them all MSC - means quick response to the 'market' is needed. At times this can create practice which borders on quackery, as this discussion between two members of North College staff shows;

Q. Can you teach educational psychology to my group leaders?

A. I haven't done any psychology for eleven years.

Q. I'm not interested in that. We've got to have a psychological input to run the course. Teach them anything you like. You must know more than them and who's to know anyway. Long as we can run the course. Will you do it?

Such conversation may be deplorable, but not unusual. Whether the nature of further education determines this approach or whether the quality of some of those teaching in further education - not necessarily the same thing - is to blame it is hard to say. Perhaps, as Brown says, its 'the system'. What is clear is that TOPS PREP has poor chance of survival without, in such situations, the power of TSD money behind it. The reality of college practice is quite ruthless. In this sense further education, especially in its dealings with MSC, more closely represents private industry than traditional educational establishments.

Here the language of hire and fire, of cost effectiveness, of inputs and outputs has found an unlikely resting place.

The recent growth of posts for lecturers to teach Social and Life Skills for YOPS courses prompted a query as to what contingency plans had been made should the courses close.

Well I suppose they hope it'll not happen. If it does well they'll sack them. Nothing else to do.

(Principal of College of Further Education)

The Principal was referring to another college and the comment was part of a general statement of unease as to the way MSC was affecting further education, but in one sense his statement had sympathy for those other Principals faced with the alternative of taking MSC courses (with the related risks) or slowly becoming rundown and a suitable target for

financial sanction and closure. The neurosis, almost dog eat dog atmosphere, engendered by the current economic blight on education from primary to university level means that all caught in its effects must become practitioners of a real-politik. Heads of faculties, whilst mouthing educational platitudes at Academic Board meetings are at other meetings plotting their very survival in circumstances which can alter from term to term. This situation is new in that it is no longer promotion that is at stake but survival; whether ones job will still be around next year. Add to this the realisation that those teaching on such as TOPS PREP are acutely aware that they are tackling the symptoms of a problem so large as to begger imagination it is small wonder these same lecturers begin to wonder whether anyone cares about their work or is prepared to admit its implications.

A further tension imposed on TOPS PREP lecturers is student expectation of the course and its relationship to the above circumstances. The staff know how limited is the course in its effect and purpose, the students:

... see the course in an almost melodramatic way, as something final. I can't say it's the fault of TSD ... more something built into them. You hear them say 'education is a wonderful thing'. Or worse, and more worrying 'right now I'm getting some education, I'm getting a chance'. And I know fine it is, well really their last chance. You end up being cruel to be kind. To tell them that after this there'll be, if they are lucky, another training course and they'll still end up without a job. Out of fifteen TOPS typists, a course here, one ended up getting a job. It's bloody sad really.

(Brown)

Student expectation of the course is high because they have no yardstick to judge education by. They almost all failed their schooling through illness or bad teaching - the latter compounding the former in most cases - and quite often regard the whole process as having some mystical significance. It must be remembered that these students are usually highly motivated in that they welcomed their selection rather than saw it as a sign of social inadequacy; despite their weaknesses they paradoxically represent the cream that has risen to the top of the educationally weak majority. They have accepted their need for some 'education' but regard it rather as something concrete like getting vaccinated, thus they are both aware and yet hopelessly naive at the same time. The staff teaching them know this and try to disabuse them of any false hopes, but the practice of their teaching makes it dangerous to damn false hopes. To steer someone from dark illiteracy to sufficient self-confidence to overcome this is difficult enough without at the same time inculcating them with ideas on their hopelessness. The latter is a social consequence far beyond simple educational disability. Their illiteracy depended (depends) on an indifferent educational system, their economic plight is merely part of a more general philosophy that vaunts competition above care - that legitimises greed at the expense of most of the wealth producing class. They have almost no hope of removing themselves from total dependency on the state beneficence - the lecturers deep down know this. The contradictions of a welfare state run as a business, abound nowhere more so than in TOPS PREP.

"Second Son of YOPS is W.E.E.P."

TSD works on the assumption that jobs will result from its efforts. Whether they do or not is a separate issue. There is

considerable evidence to suggest they do not, but for the moment the above assumption underpins TSD strategy (see Sinfield & Showler, 1981). Thus the Frank's of TSD have to make sense of that assertion in their daily routines, they then also have to merge phantasy with fact. They are aware of the shortcomings of such as TOPS PREP for job enhancement, but continue to work the system until told to do otherwise. They are asked to be more cost effective and so attempt to cut provision. They are issued with new guidelines and these are implemented. At the sharp end it is the people like Frank who are seen in colleges as hatchet men and yet they are just as subject to the vagaries and confusion as anyone else. They must make sense of their own employer before passing on any advice or instruction.

We originally had two departments (TSD and ESD) who worked independently. Two empires. We (TSD) had to go cap in hand to ESD and they'd say nothing to do with us, we're employment. Making them Divisions instead of Agencies was supposed to bring them together, maybe it did but then another pillar of control came along called Special Programme Division and we're back to breaking into that one now.

(TSD official, Northern Division)

Add to that the development of courses by MSC since 1975 and the extent to which these are supposed to answer particular needs:

We started with IAC (Industrial Appreciation Courses) which then changed to STC (Short Industrial Courses).

Don't take too much notice of the names, changing titles, content remains the same and the change basically looked good, as if something was happening. Anyway, meanwhile

in 1976 we got the Job Creation Programme for those under 19, but this had a bad press so in Christmas 1978 it was stopped dead. It was thought that it didn't provide jobs, no skills were being taught, sort of clearing stones off beach as at Sunderland ... yes actually moving stones around the beach. Then we got WEP (Work Experience Programme) in March, 1977. This lasts a year and is replaced by YOP (Youth Opportunity Programme). We also have Work Preparation Courses which (a) run Work Introduction Courses and (b) Employment Introduction Courses. Second son of YOP is WEEP (Work Experience on Employers Premises).

(Careers Officer responsible for youth in region affected by this study)

The bewildering profusion of acronyms continue. There is now STEP (Special Temporary Employment Programme) which extends its concern up to the 24 age range and in March, 1981 CEP (Community Enterprise Programme) also came into the lists. As difficult to follow is the sudden death of some of the above. All points to a pattern of MSC policy being made piecemeal and in reaction to local or newly expressed national needs.

Take the new proposals just announced (August, 1981) following Toxteth/Brixton riots. If you hold them up to the light and compare them with what existed in 1976, when this lot took over (Conservative replaced Labour Government) they're bloody identical. They (Conservative) came along and scrapped the Temporary Employment subsidy, small firms employment subsidy, youth employment subsidy, and now

they've introduced something very much the same and hail it as being new ... it's the kind of things that happens ... all based on the philosophy that unemployment is cyclical and soon it'll all go away so just keep it going till then. But it won't go away.

(ibid)

The disquiet expressed here is widely echoed wherever practical grassroot experience conditions policy, what is less sure is whether the London based policy makers in MSC have the same necessary caution when planning overall strategy.

This report is the result of a review of the YOPs started in May, 1980. For the first few months, the Working Group collected evidence. By August, they had become convinced that YOP would collapse unless its quality was greatly improved. The Working Group agreed that its conclusions should be placed before the MSC and Department of Employment, and should also be put to Ministers. Whilst we were conscious that a major review of services to the unemployed was underway, we wished to ensure that the outcome of our review was taken into account before some conclusions were reached.

("Quantity or Collapse" pub by Youth Aid-Report of Youthaid Review of YOPs programme January, 1981.)

One result of the MSC re-assessment mentioned above was the announcement in the House of Commons by Jim Prior (21st November, 1980) that YOPs was to be expanded to cater for 40,000 entrants in 1981/82 and that the guarantee to offer every unemployed school leaver a place on the programme would be retained and improved.

The emphasis in the Programme will increasingly be placed on good quality training for work ... We are trying as resources permit, to work towards the point where every 16 and 17 year old not in education or a job will be assured of vocational preparation lasting as necessary up to his or her 18th birthday ... We see this development of YOP in the wider context of improving preparation for and training in work for all young people, and not just the unemployed.

(Jim Prior, Minister - 21st November House of Commons - Hansard)

Whilst the above, if implemented, would begin to compare to our partners in the EEC in regard to youth training it must be noticed that such policy means excluding the increasing number of young unemployed from the monthly unemployment statistics - something any politician would welcome.

MSC was not brought into being to create jobs, directly manipulate the labour market, or do anything other than provide a service for industry and work people. Traditionally government unemployment policy claimed to respond to "market forces". It was supposed to remain apart from factors determining the state of the labour market (trade unions) and provision for the market (labour exchanges). This conformed with the 'natural' view of unemployment in its relationship to supply and demand. The whole process would regulate itself to the benefit of all if left unfettered by government interference; governments should only ensure the supply/demand mechanism was not impeded.

This view of unemployment as the result of 'natural' laws is beginning to look a little shaky. If it could ever be said to have

worked the 1980's will prove it works no longer. Since the latter part of the 1970's unemployment has ceased to be part of the classical, if simplistic, supply and demand theory and has developed as a social phenomenon which presses hard on any government intent on re-election. Coupled with this there is the growing social unrest in inner urban areas. There are many reasons for the latter, but gross unemployment certainly contributes to the tensions that precede public disorder. (See The Times 23.11.81 for percentage of unemployed in those arrested for street violence.) Any democratic government which allows large scale unemployment will be unlikely to remain long in office. Thus MSC's initial purpose of being an agent between labour and jobs is changing to that of being - in part at least the job itself; or at least a major factor in providing the job.

MSC, because of its rather ill-defined nature, is particularly vulnerable to quick bursts of political windowdressing. It can be fashioned into almost any shape providing it appears to deal with employment (or the lack of employment) and thus perfectly suits governments wanting to appear busy with a recession and its consequence. In this it resembles Further Education which also has a multitude of roles and functions and in a sense they seem almost made for each other. Whether this is a good thing for Further Education is a much more debatable point.

It is certainly true that MSC should concern itself with more than finding (or creating) jobs. In any sort of humane society it is necessary to protect those unable to protect themselves and the unemployed certainly fall within that category.

Manpower policy need not, however, be examined in terms of its contribution either to economic efficiency or to full

employment. It may be evaluated in terms of its contributions to the relief of the suffering experienced by the casualties of the economic system ... Its role may not merely be to ensure that unemployment is not experienced disproportionately by a limited number of individuals, but also to help those who tend to secure the worst jobs to advance up the economic ladder ... One of the major debating points about contemporary manpower policy concerns the extent to which goals of this kind can be achieved even in the absence of full employment.

("The Workless State" ed. Showler & Sinfield pub. 1981 p91)

It is most probable that unemployment on the scale now experienced did come as a surprise to government. Whether this should have happened is a separate issue, that it has happened is evident. Policy adapts, trims and changes, and the most significant change is seen in growing sense of frustration that money is being spent to train people for jobs that are unlikely to return. This awareness at grassroots makes for dissatisfied TSD. Throughout the various schemes there seems to be more and more emphasis on training in a job rather than for a job. Work Experience rather than Job Creation. A corollary of this is an increasing resentment amongst young people to work in jobs which are short-term and even in some cases cheap labour. So unless proper development of long term employment can happen money will cease to flow and many schemes fold. The emphasis will be on a return from investment - whether a course is cost-effective.

If out of ten people on a TOPS PREP course only one gets a job at the end then we've (TSD) had to spend something like

£25,000 for that job. It's not on lad.

(Training Officer Advisor - Northern Division of TSD)

An example of a change and reaction which reflects the above is seen in the 'guidelines' issued in 1980 on the running of TOPS PREP. It soon becomes clear that TSD is intent on a retreat from so close an involvement in remedial education.

We're not in the business of education, of doing the LEA's job for them. That's not what the money is for.

(TOA - Northern Division of TSD)

The main responsibility for adult basic education lies with the LEA. As the MSC does not have a general responsibility for this kind of training, the provision of preparatory courses should be restricted to those areas where there is a large potential demand from people in the local labour market catchment area which the LEA is unable to meet.

(TOPS Memo 3.1/14 Training in state and private educational establishments - TOPS Preparatory p.2)

A not unreasonable requirement, but within it is concealed the main thrust of the memo that only where there is a chance for improved employability will the course be operated. That is the sole criteria; will an unemployed person be better able to get a job at the end not whether they are now able to read and count. The length of the course is radically shortened from a possible three terms to 13 weeks with proviso that in exceptional cases this be extended to 18/26. Closer co-operation and liaison between college tutors and TOA's will happen. A more stringent analysis of progress and job prospects enhancement will determine content and style of teaching. The Memo refers to

'job interview rehearsals', to industrial visits and practical experience in possible jobs during that short 13 weeks. If time is taken out for such 'rehearsals' then it is unlikely that much can be done to overcome the literacy deficiencies so apparent in the case studies seen here so what must happen is that such people will not be accepted onto TOPS PREP. The course will increasingly be a short sharp attack on minor educational weaknesses and only then if there is any real chance of a job at the end. TSD has seen itself become saddled with a problem too huge to even contemplate and it has opted for a simpler more job orientated approach. This was almost inevitable. What comes next for TOPS PREP is less sure. If the 'guidelines' prove too severe then the course could collapse by default - perhaps that is the underlying reason for the memo?

I sometimes feel the whole MSC is about to collapse. That it's some vast cosmetic exercise. I hope I'm wrong.

(London based career lecturer in Further Education)

It's unlikely that MSC will collapse, but TOPS PREP could. As cost effectiveness becomes a tighter rein on the spending of TSD so closer internal examination of its courses will become not a reappraisal but a threat.

A threat which brings us back to the central issue of what is training and what is education? It is impossible to quantify education beyond expressing the obvious that education creates its own energy and perceptions which in turn might be useful in work, but it is not realistic to cost the learning process in the same way we check conveyor belt production totals. Thus the basic confusion between TSD and FE of what each intends and expects of the other. The longer FE clings to its role as part of our educating provision the more chance

there is that it will provide balance against the simplistic concepts of success or failure as judged by the TSD. Thus the crucial point is whether FE will continue to educate in the broadest sense of the word or whether it will become an adjunct of a training process inculcating employers opinion of what is needed to get a job. MSC has largely opted for schemes which uncritically relay employers opinions as received truths and models on which to base whole training practices. Whilst it is sensible to closely co-ordinate any training programmes with industry it is not so sensible to believe that that is the end of the matter. There is more involved and those in FE responsible for planning a response to MSC should know this.

The thrust of MSC initiatives in the area of youth unemployment and vocational preparation is not simple to ensure the transmission of "objective skills" or to respond to the real needs of individuals but primarily to promote "work socialisation" and the formation of a work force appropriate to the "needs" of the labour market. Thus the truly Orwellian-sounding "Social and Life Skills" modules which pepper MSC courses ... with their numbing vocabulary of "coping", "resisting provocation" and "taking orders" effectively strip the notion of skills training of any meaning it may traditionally have had.

("The Best Years of Their Lives" Graham Markall pub.

William Temple Foundation 1978 p.35)

TOPS PREP labours on in a very much truncated form. It became perhaps too successful for its own good. It also posed, in a quite unique way, the dilemma facing TSD and FE when they choose to combine; the dilemma that if they are not careful will end in Milton's "ruin upon ruin, rout on rout, confusion worse confounded."

## CONCLUSION

One Thursday morning in May (7.5.81) Arthur Brown returned from his morning coffee break to receive a telephone call informing him that the TOPS PREP course in Northern College was to close at the end of the academic year 1980/81. Thus ended Northern College's involvement with the TOPS PREP programme. It would be fair to say that this closure was more probably a part of a general withdrawing of TOPS PREP provision throughout the country than any particular problems with the Northern College course. But earlier disagreements between TSD and Northern College staff over the aims and purpose of the course could well have been an affecting factor in any decision about closure. Other colleges in the region retained their much truncated TOPS PREP courses when this closure was announced for Northern College.

So Arthur Brown's brief period of autonomy ended almost as suddenly as it began and with it his relative 'power' and influence in college. A good example of the transitory nature of teaching TSD courses for career teachers. Brown was given a year's sabbatical for a research project into reading difficulties and the rest of the staff were either sacked (if part-timers) or redeployed in other college departments.

I suppose I'm insulated at the moment ... but when I get back it'll really hit me, I'll have to try and avoid getting too depressed about the decision.

(Arthur Brown)

This dissertation has sought to show the background detail of such decisions. To examine staff motives and student expectations in the context of a large organisation. It has tried to detail what happens(ed) in one FE college when TSD and the educational establishment tried to

work together on the same problem; illiteracy and numeracy. As it was written changes occurred (and continue to occur) which confirms the main point of the debate; that the MSC through TSD is firmly planted into educational practice and yet unable (or unwilling) to recognise this fact. The continuing development of YOPS as the short term answer to youth unemployment continues that debate. In almost all senses YOP schemes combine work experience with some form of education be it "social and life skills" or whatever the new names will be. In Work Introduction Schemes (WIC) for instance there is a quite deliberate educational input which is designed for the less able youth, the ESN, therefore the course is fulfilling an educational role. TOPS PREP was doing the same thing, but for adults and adult is the key word as far as MSC is concerned. In every other sense MSC is taking on, via WIC, the 'general responsibility' of 'this kind of training'.

MSC could argue that if it starts trying to educate all the adults the education system has failed as well as all the young people it would be tackling too great a task. Perhaps this is being realistic, but how else is its training schemes to work other than in some educative process involving further education? This poses an important question, what does TSD intend for FE?

We simply do not know enough about such intentions. The speed with which Brown and his colleagues lost their course shows the dangers for those working on MSC funded work in Further Education. Taken at this example TSD resembles more an educational Damocletian sword rather than a partner in any educative process. If there is little protection for staff then consider how students must suffer as expediency and fad combine to create 'instant' solutions to whatever

is politically necessary for the day.

Much has been written about under-achievement of working class youngsters and critiques of our secondary school system abound. Entering into that debate would take time, but it is a fact that a significant number of our present school leavers no longer have the semi and unskilled work once fairly common in industry. These trends will not go away, if anything they will worsen, and thus MSC will be faced with having to devise further schemes to deal with this growing number of young employed. Any part of such a strategy will place FE at the centre of policy - how else could anything realistically be achieved? - and consequently FE will have to respond with clear guidelines on what it is able to do towards helping the young unemployed. Thus it will be necessary to examine, in considerable detail, what the response to present trends FE should adopt. It could be educationally irresponsible to always react to pressure; FE must decide a policy which defends its past commitment to education if it is not to become mere 'trainers' for whatever government scheme is current.

There has been little study of FE and especially where it becomes part of any re-training process. Much is mentioned about re-training for new skills, 'transferable skills' but close questioning of those teaching these reveals much misunderstanding of what such 'skills' actually mean. If those practicing the teaching have poor understanding of what is going on then the student must suffer. Staff express such misgivings, but generally to their immediate colleagues and meanwhile the money continues to flow in for those further up the hierarchy intent on financing and maintaining their particular FE college.

Expediency rules, but it is not O.K.

It is necessary to understand more clearly how FE is to tackle this changing role. As it moves to the centre of government policy for the unemployed (and not just the young) it takes with it a whole ragbag of roles and functions. From 'A' levels to Chiropody, you name it FE will somewhere be providing it. With none of the strong professional holds found in polytechnics and universities it has to be everything to everyone. It can move quickly into any demand and therein lies its vulnerability. That same quick response can expose FE to passing political fashion. The 'solution of the month' type of education fits neatly into such a system but at a cost. Mistakes are being made and given the speed and scale of economic disruption this is inevitable, but these mistakes should form part of a learning process rather than an embarrassment to those caught facing the wrong direction at the wrong time. Government does appear to 'doing something' but it is what it is doing that must be closely studied.

Thus two fundamental points are raised. Firstly, if our secondary system is inadequate for the changing demands of industry then a proper regard should be made for the casualties of such changes. Within that there are many nuances. For instance, it is a possibility perhaps unpalatable for some, that a significant number of those deemed educationally weak will always, like the poor, be with us. If this is so then if they are to be denied equal opportunity then let them not be denied equal consideration. Such people should not be made further casualties by being exposed to ill-considered schemes shuffling through the system most clearly seen at work in FE. This leads to the second consideration: FE needs to develop a co-ordinated policy which proposes its strategy for the next decade instead of waiting for MSC to buy in its various ideas and renovations.

A recurring criticism of MSC is that it seems to have no proper sense of purpose. It resembles a bureaucracy waiting for a programme. Its early recruitment was within the Civil Service and in a sense it remains trapped by such beginnings. It did not emerge from the promptings of a professional need, but was instead created as if to pre-empt that need.

It seems to function independently of any clear *raison d'etre*. Some study of why this happened and where it might lead is necessary. It is perhaps a truism to state that governments prefer to work with what is extant rather than attempt new ideas and so MSC probably will continue to be more a delaying mechanism than source of radical re-thinking of what is really implied in the planning of a late 20th century manpower policy.

What is certain is that if the problems hinted at here continue to be ignored then any caution or timidity towards real change will be likely overtaken by a breakdown of existing social constraint. Whether this seems an overstatement or not will probably depend on whether one lives in Hampstead or Brixton.

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In trying to detail the TOPS PREP in Northern College from the students and staff point of view I have attempted to describe as closely as possible, given the usual restraints, the routine as it evolved day by day. I chose this method because I did not intend that the study be prescriptive, but descriptive. I feel much more research needs to be done before prescriptions can be attempted. In this way it falls into an established methodologies tradition within sociology and I have listed, in section three, books which illustrate this approach.

First Section: MSC and Associated Organisation reports and surveys

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Instructional Guide to Social and Life Skills pub. MSC

Into the Eighties pub. Labour Party and T.U.C. July, 1978

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