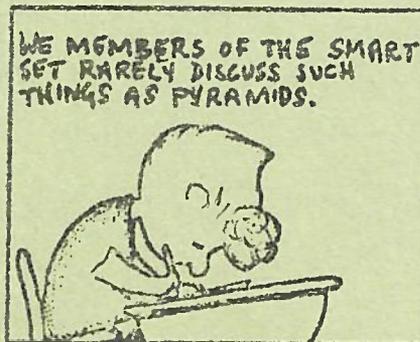
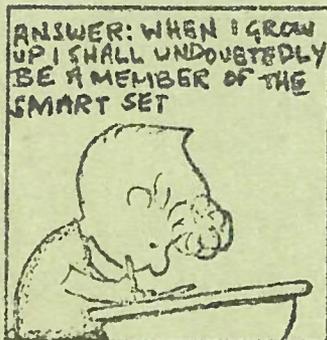
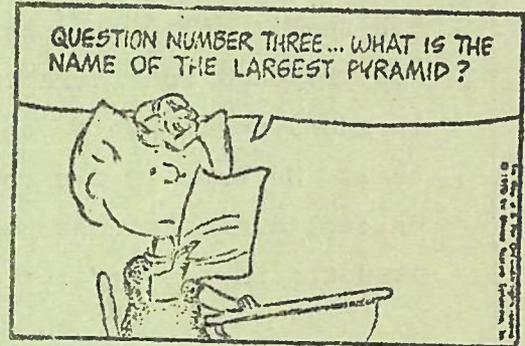
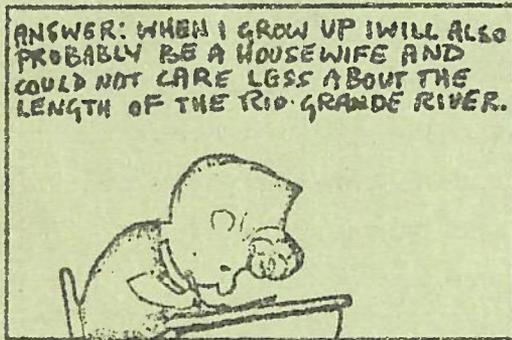
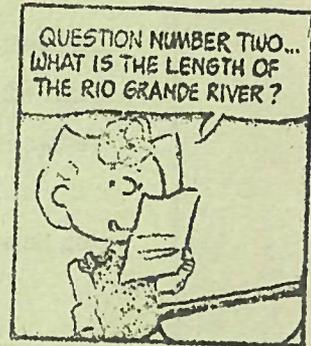
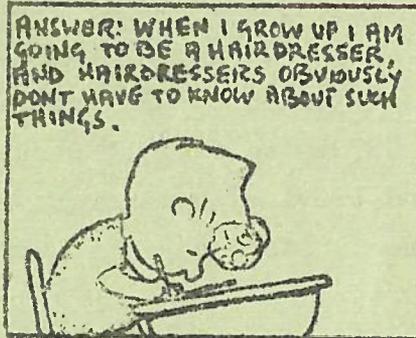
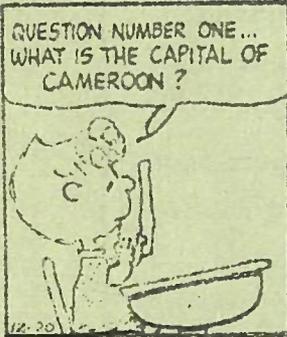


LSE: a question of degree

by bob dent



This pamphlet is published by SOLIDARITY (London) on behalf of Bob Dent. It is an account by a student of his expectations, experiences and activities at L.S.E. between 1969 and 1972. We feel it describes an experience of real events and provides an insight into the nature of contemporary dissent. As such it is worth recording.

We are not publishing it as a SOLIDARITY pamphlet, as this might be taken to imply a full endorsement of Bob Dent's political attitudes and actions. The text has provoked considerable argument within SOLIDARITY (London) about Bob's conceptions and what he did about them. We hope in due course to produce our own pamphlet on capitalist 'higher' education and on the role of students in the revolutionary movement.

LSE 1969-72

THREE YEARS FOR WHAT?

INTRODUCTION

"The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time the ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production." (Marx: The German Ideology)

There are two versions of all institutions in society, two perspectives of their reality - the official "front-office" view, and the unofficial "shop-floor" view. The former is maintained and paraded by headmasters' reports, college prospectuses, by ministerial broadcasts and managerial forecasts. The latter, unofficial, version is felt and experienced by the rank-and-file, the people at the bottom. Their version of reality is concrete in that it is generally unclouded by misty or mystifying wishful-thinking. The unofficial version, however, is felt rather than perceived; it is life itself rather than data about life. Its mode of expression is equally unofficial: the workbench humour, the playground chatter, the toilet scrawl. Yet in the contrast of these two perspectives lies the social divisions between men, between, on the one hand, those who rule and manage, and on the other, those who are ruled and are managed. If these two groups have a different view of reality, it is because for them reality is different.

The following is one person's unofficial view of the London School of Economics, for the LSE is no different from any other institution. On the one hand stands the prospectus, the Director's Report, the freshers' conference, the "international reputation", the publications and all the paraphernalia associated with "one of the foremost centres of social science in the world". And on the other? A few odd political pamphlets, a couple of paperback books, a record somewhere of a union notion? No. The real record is unspoken, buried deep in the experiences of the thousands who pass through - to what? A few "make it", of course, a prime minister here, a big-shot civil servant there, an academic who reaches the heights of specialisation in trivia. But the rest, what of them? The intellectual proletariat who sell their mental labour power for a mess of pottage (large helping), and a collar and tie. How did they

experience the reality of LSE? Who knows? All we can do is to reconstruct our own experience and share it with others. The following is my own attempt to do just that. After 17 years of "success" in the schooling system, it is very difficult to genuinely express one's own experience and relate to it. After all, the whole of 'education' has been relating to other people's experience, to other people's view of reality!

It is fitting, albeit accidental, that my first two experiences of LSE expressed this official-unofficial split. The first time I set foot through the glass doors of the School I was greeted by a large banner which proclaimed that "Adams" had closed "it" and that "we" had opened "it". "It" was of course the school buildings and the occasion was the weekend of the Vietnam occupation in October 1968. Inside, the atmosphere was electric; groups selling their literature; people dashing around checking food, security and accommodation. The Old Theatre became a permanent debating chamber where the division between politics and education was at last being overcome. I remember Robin Blackburn saying that, although he had heard Lipsey and many other bourgeois economists speak from this same platform, he had never heard such good sense as had been given by the trade unionist who had just spoken. It was very euphoric. But it was all good stuff. I remember sleeping in the corridor just outside the Robinson Room, and in the morning eating jam sandwiches prepared by the LSE War on Want Society. Very uncomfortable, but who cared? As I wrote in a report on the weekend a few weeks after:

"In the lecture theatre impromptu teach-ins on wages, prices and profits were given to packed, attentive audiences. At night, corridors became bedrooms, tables became beds. There was no fuss, no fights, no damage, no questions. Here was a building being used for people, and it was open to all."

It has never been the same since.

Nothing could be more in contrast to this experience than my second visit to LSE - an interview. And this time I got the official version. I was interviewed by three academics: Prof. Northedge, Peter Meddaway, and a third whom I cannot recall. I sat there opposite the desk, wearing my collar and tie (it's just like looking for a job!) trying to give convincing answers as to why I really wanted to come to LSE. On reflection, I can remember actually working out reasons before the interview in anticipation of the line of questioning. Which shows how for many of us the process of getting to university has not been one of conscious determination but of blindly running the race and leaping the hurdles

simply because they are there. The image I would use today is one of the escalator. At age eleven we get on the bottom step, and if we are fortunate enough to get into the 'A' stream, we get carried along and up without question. However, my interviewers were quite pleasant, they asked me about nothing much: I can only remember one question clearly - what did I think of Enoch Powell? I gave some noncommittal reply so that I couldn't be made out to be either a racist or a raving lefty. This game of question and answer foreshadowed many games I would play in the next three years. Most classes and tutorials are games in that everyone pretends to be interested in the topic under discussion, when clearly these meetings are never genuinely voluntary associations. The game-playing helps obscure this contradiction.

What was most absurd about the interview was that my 'interrogators' said that the whole thing need not have taken place! There had been a mistake in the Admissions Department. I had **already** been accepted, and should never have been called to an interview. It cost me £6 on train fares to experience my first taste of university bureaucracy. (Whether there genuinely had been a mistake, or whether they wanted an interview to test my political views, I wouldn't like to say.)

EDUCATION FOR WHAT?

"All objections urged against the Communistic mode of producing and appropriating material products, have, in the same way, been urged against the Communistic modes of producing and appropriating intellectual products. Just as, to the bourgeois, the disappearance of class property is the disappearance of production itself, so the disappearance of class culture is to him identical with the disappearance of all culture.

That culture, the loss of which he laments, is, for the enormous majority, a mere training to act as a machine." (Marx: The Communist Manifesto)

Year I: Education v. Examination

When I came to LSE I suffered from several illusions. The **main** one was believing that it would be possible to get an education by following my course. I soon discovered that I was wrong. Beginning my first year course (B.Sc. Unemployment) in the manner that I had been used to, I attended most scheduled lectures and classes. I duly took notes and read the relevant books. Gradually throughout the first term two things dawned on me. What I had thought

sociology, politics and economics to be - or at least those aspects in which I was interested - was not being referred to in these lectures. In other words, the content bored me. Secondly, the way in which I was trying to learn things, note-taking and revising, forcing myself to read books simply because they were on the course, feigning interest in uninteresting classroom conversations, became increasingly absurd, if not impossible, for me. By Christmas time then, I had been thoroughly turned off 'education' at LSE.

But these general tendencies were not the only things which contributed to my growing critical consciousness. I can remember specific instances which seemed to typify the overall irrationality of the teaching and learning process. Two in particular stick in my mind. One occurred during a government class. The teacher was Mrs. Pickles, and the subject was "the House of Lords". Someone began a paper with the obvious remark that the House of Lords was not a democratic institution. At this point the class teacher interrupted saying that students had a bad habit of misusing the term 'democracy' and that really as there was no overt opposition movement to the Lords then people implicitly supported its existence, and hence it was a democratic institution" This is the crazy sort of logic that many academics still adhere to. (Note: Mrs. Pickles has since written a textbook on democracy!)

However, it wasn't only reactionary or conservative academics who left a bad impression. My first-year economics class was taken by M. Desai (a self-professed Marxist). Great, I thought to myself, at least this should be better. But what a comedown to discover that the things he was teaching were no different either in form or content from the weekly combination of American folklore and marginal analysis delivered by wonder-boy Max Steuer in his lectures. His argument was the stock-in-trade "if you don't learn this you'll never be able to criticise it". I myself was not particularly interested in making critiques of Lipsey or Alchan and Allen. I simply wanted to understand about unemployment, bad housing, income distribution, etc. But ask any economist about these and he looks at you as if you've come from another planet. And, in any case, they are not on the syllabus!

When I came to LSE I was interested in economics, but the result of my trying to follow the first year course was to turn me off the subject completely. It is only now, after two years of avoiding the subject, that I am beginning, of my own volition, to take it up again.

By Christmas, then, I had come to realise that I was not going to gain much by blindly following my course and reading the required books. Over the vacation, I thought about these negative experiences and tried to piece them together. There was something at the bottom of all this, the examination system. The more I

thought about it, the more it became clear. It was the examination syllabus which determined the content of teaching and the fact that we all studied the same thing, regardless of our individual interests. It was the exam which introduced the irrational element of competition into the learning process. Irrational, that is, because true learning is a social, co-operative activity. It was the exam system, in fact, which explained everything, even the power structure. For, in the last analysis, the power of the authorities over the students rests upon their ability to manipulate and manage the examination; (and, of course, the acceptance by the student himself of the legitimacy of this manipulation). In short, from the authorities' point of view, everything can be justified by the examination. Rationality need not be adhered to - if its on the syllabus, then what further argument can there be? After all, we did come to university to get a degree didn't we?

This wasn't the first time I had thought along these lines. When taking A-levels I had been struck by the absurdity of the whole thing. In those days we weren't studying English Literature, we were memorising six books. I had often complained about this test-mentality, and had argued that the abolition of examinations would greatly benefit the education system. It hadn't yet struck me how necessary and efficient (in the sense that the criterion of 'intelligence' was accepted by almost everybody) exams were, if society was to divide its growing population into the different categories of labour power. Neither had I contemplated not taking any exams, though after one term at LSE it became increasingly clear that I could not return and study either willingly or otherwise and take the Part I exam without protest. This wasn't a question of ideological persuasion but almost of necessity in the sense that my experience of university 'education' was becoming increasingly intolerable.

Returning after Christmas, I shared my experience with several friends, and discovered that they too were bored and uninterested in their courses. It seemed to us that the examination syllabus stood in opposition to us like an alien force somehow dominating our lives and restricting any genuine desire to make exciting discoveries. We resolved to contest this situation. About five of us began what we called the 'Examination Statement Campaign'.

The idea of the campaign was simplicity itself. We would try to organise a boycott of the Part I exam by getting as many students as possible to sign a joint statement declaring their intention to boycott the exam provided that the number of signatures equalled half of the total number of students registered for the exam. In short, we were campaigning for a majority boycott. The campaign was centred around collecting these signatures, which was no easy task as this was not the usual petition but a commitment

albeit conditional, to action. The point was not missed by anyone.

The beauty of the campaign was that we were not demanding anything from the authorities. We weren't asking for any reform, however radical. This was planning for direct action in its purest sense - demands upon ourselves. It's very much easier to make demands upon other people: upon the system, or to support other people's struggles, but committing oneself to activity is much more profoundly subversive to the system. By the end of two terms' agitation and propaganda, we had obtained about sixty signatures or so, with the result, of course, that the boycott did not come off; it would have needed at least 150 signatures to proceed. However 60 was quite a large number considering that no-one signed without thought or before much debate and discussion.

We discovered an interesting phenomenon in our agitational work; what I like to call 'dual consciousness'. I have since discovered that this concept can be applied to all other social groups as well as to students and its implications are profound.¹ What we discovered was that our fellow students were both for and against the examination system at the same time. Our propaganda against the examination system and its irrationality, competitiveness, etc., fell on fertile soil. Most people agreed with us. They saw through the poverty of everyday 'education' in LSE. And yet at the same time they justified its 'necessity'. Our activities were not enough to overcome this attitude - which was not surprising since what we were asking them to do was to reject the very means by which they had got to LSE, through examinations: we were asking them to tear up their recipe for "success"! Secondly, there was fear of the authorities - "they'll kick you out", "they'll not allow it". Complementary to fear was the feeling of resignation to the situation: self-determination, self-activity, is completely at odds with the way children are brought up, schoolkids are taught, the system of 'representative' democracy works, etc. Collective direct action as a conscious activity is difficult to achieve; it goes against the whole tide of society and officialdom.² It was these ingrained tendencies we were up against.

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1. With reference to the problem of "revolutionary consciousness" cf. article 'Apathy and the Left' in Agitator (vol. 6 No. 5, March 1971).
 2. Perhaps only in a revolution can it be genuinely achieved. "A revolution is necessary, therefore, not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way but also because the class overthrowing it can succeed only by revolution in getting rid of all the traditional muck and become capable of establishing society anew." - Marx: The German Ideology.

This concentration of activity around the examination question may seem a bit misplaced. After all, students are concerned and involved in other questions such as the power of the administration and the role of the university at large. But what had struck me in coming to LSE was that the lack of school discipline - length of hair, uniform, attendance at classes - and greater 'freedoms' laid bare the fundamental issue, the cornerstone, the very foundation as it were of bourgeois education: the examination system. Our boycott campaign confirmed this view. For our criticism of exams freed us, through the dialectic of debate, to a criticism not only of bourgeois education as such but to a criticism of bourgeois society at large. For what else is the examination system but the actual technique of accomplishing the division of labour.

After all this, it was a great contradiction for me to take the exam at the end of the first year. Many people asked me why I did it and my answer (although it may not sound convincing) was perfectly genuine. I took the exam from a purely instrumentalist point of view. I did not want to get kicked out after one year and be deprived of the chance of two years in which I could experiment and try to really educate myself for once. I had already decided that I wasn't interested in a degree. After all, one year of exam-orientated study was enough. Two more would be too much!

Thus it was that I trooped into the New Board Room with all the others on those sunny summer days (it always seems to be sunny on examination days) and sat the exam. But what an exam! It was probably the worst set of papers I'd ever seen - that is from the psychological point of view. In my state of mind every question seemed more absurd than the last, every detail of instructions more petty and bureaucratic. The silence and nonco-operation with people sitting only a yard away seemed like something out of a Kafkaesque nightmare. Those diligent academics, in their black gowns, pompously walking up and down seemed to crystallise in themselves the whole of the schooling system's authority and power. And, of course, from an objective point of view, they did.

But the worst aspect was the artificiality of the whole thing, in writing what I did not believe about economics, politics, history - I simply scribbled down what I knew the examiners were wanting to hear. The game had moved from the classroom into the examination room. The rules were the same - answer other people's questions, quote other people's ideas - no matter whether its right or wrong, relevant or otherwise, whether you agree or disagree, what counts in the exam is marks not truth. To be honest, some questions did interest me. I remember one especially on Stalin. But here again, how can anyone write about Bolshevism meaningfully

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1. Karl Marx wrote in 1843 that the criticism of religion was the starting point of all criticism. Today, in conditions of well-integrated, bureaucratic capitalism, the criticism of almost any aspect of society can lead to a criticism of society as a whole.

under pressure and in the time allotted. As Tom Fawthrop once wrote: "If a question is worth doing it can't be done in forty minutes; if it can be done in forty minutes then its not worth doing."

The papers were collected and whisked away, presumably to be marked by some bored academic, and never to be seen again. In the middle of the summer vacation, I received a list of names with mine among them. I had passed. Gloria in Excelsis Deo!!

Year Two: No Man's Land

By and large, the teaching ability of the staff at LSC can be summed up by one word - abysmal. Of all the lecturers that I've listened to, only four could be described as worthy of attention: John Griffiths (Law), Allan Swingewood (Social Philosophy), Ralph Milliband (Marxism), and Peter Loizos (Anthropology). Each in their different ways showed two essential qualities. Firstly, an interest in their subject, and second, an interest in communicating that interest to other people. The latter quality is the most important and the one most lacking among other staff members. Needless to say, I haven't attended every available lecture, but of those that I have, the overwhelming majority are conducted by apparently bored lecturers reciting old notes to an equally bored audience, which forces itself to listen in the hope it might pick up something useful for the exam.

The absurdity of the lecturing process is self-evident. What could be more irrational than two hundred people listening every week to the same person, whose only qualification is that he has read a few more books on the subject, and when diverted slightly off the syllabus proves to be just as ignorant (or intelligent) as the rest of us? Yet another reason why academics are reluctant to wander off the syllabus is that the basis of their authority, superior knowledge over a minute area, would be exposed.

The system, however, has its own dynamic of self-perpetuation. During the recent miners strike, when the first power cut hit the school, Dr. Seely was lecturing on psychology in the Old Theatre. The theatre was plunged into darkness, there being no windows to let in natural light. Unperturbed by this intrusion of outside reality, the good Dr. Seely continued his lecture. Looking inside from the back door one could see absolutely nothing. But from the gloom rose the dull voice of a lecturer, determined to carry on regardless. It could have been a tape-recorder speaking. There might have been nobody listening. But no matter, the lecture must go on. Abstract knowledge surrounded by obscurity - this little

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1. Except perhaps in the case of victimisation. Charges against Dr. Craig at Lancaster resulted partly from an analysis of past examination papers of his students.

incident seemed to typify much that passes for education at LSE.

During the second year I gradually stopped going to all lectures and classes. This was partly due to increased political activity, but mainly because of my complete alienation from the 'education' process. I can remember the last class I attended quite clearly. It was on political thought. Somebody began by reading a prepared paper on Plato. They sounded as uninterested in Plato as I was. Afterwards the teacher spent the remaining forty minutes telling us how he viewed Plato and what he thought his significance was. When there was just ten minutes to go, he asked whether anyone had any questions. Nobody spoke. So he covered up the embarrassed silence by arranging the forthcoming classes. The only response to a class that had been a complete flop was to arrange more classes! This was the straw that broke the camel's back: I had finished with classes for good.

Although in this case it was the teacher who was unconsciously acting as an agent of repression, the most serious problem lies in the students themselves. Many times it is the students who prevent discussion which is not on the syllabus for fear that it might not help them in their exam. This self-policing aspect of student consciousness is in some ways the basis of student 'freedoms'. After 12 years of succeeding in the schooling system, we have deeply internalised the authority relations of the classroom. Hence it is 'safe' for the authorities to allow a little relaxation in control because the student has learnt to control himself. When this begins to break down, however, discipline will begin to tighten up.

My second year at LSE was a sort of no-man's land between my 'official' and 'unofficial' education. At the same time as breaking away from my lectures and classes, I was groping for new methods of learning based on my own interests. I had started the year determined to study a particular topic which I had chosen for myself, and one which I wanted to learn more about. I chose the General Strike of 1926 as this combined politics, history, and economics, and was supremely relevant to the contemporary industrial scene.

Choosing a subject and studying it may sound quite simple, but in practice it is not so easy. We have been brought up to study what other people told us to study, to learn answers to other people's questions. To study freely, then, is the negation of our past experience. However, like the German revolutionaries of 1918 who, when charging through the Tiergarten, were careful not to step on the grass, old methods are buried deep inside our consciousness.

Free learning, reading what we want to, taking notes of what we find significant involves a whole new approach to education. It is a traumatic experience, and one in which I cannot say I succeeded at first go. There were many difficulties - it was still an individual activity, a purely intellectual one, and therefore one-sided as it did not relate to any practical activity on my part.

Many people argue for examinations on the grounds that, if this external compulsion is removed, then students will do no work. In the short term this is true. At Neil's Summerhill, new kids spend about two years running wild before deciding to join any class. But then, so what? Why should anyone freely choose to do alienating work? (As a miner shouted at Lord Robens when he asked a pit-head meeting why they only worked four out of five days: "Because we can't live off three!") If we remove the compulsion of examinations, in the short-term students will not do any work. But this is not a condemnation of students (naturally lazy, etc.) rather it is a condemnation of a structure which relies on compulsion to function at all. In this way, it becomes clear that what universities produce is not so much 'intellectuals' as 'anti-intellectuals', unable to work freely in a non-alienated way, unable to relate to knowledge and each other in an emancipatory fashion.

This was the basis of my difficulty. In order to engage in the free learning process, I had to struggle against, and overcome, the traces of bourgeois ideology and practice in my own self.

However, there were some positive aspects. I was interested in the work, I was free to choose what books to read and how to read them. (Reading a book for living emancipatory knowledge is a dialectical process, slowly acquired after years of searching for dead knowledge - knowledge for examinations). I began to use the library with interest, and discovered the immense collection of revolutionary literature hidden in the vaults. I was beginning to rediscover education.

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1. (a) I was once surprised to learn that many third-year students didn't know how to get a book from Room R. It's not necessary, of course - most of the 'official' literature is on the open shelves or in the teaching library. All the interesting stuff is naturally locked away underground. (b) The library also has its own mystique. Watching students in there is an education in itself. Some seem to stare at the same page hours on end. Others take newspapers with them to have something interesting to read. Yet others manufacture breaks by regularly going for coffee. (I'm reminded in this connection of a story related to me by a fellow student: Two friends would regularly get up simultaneously from their tables and go for coffee. After a while they informally, and without plan, began a system whereby one would get up and ask the other to go for a coffee. A short while after returning, it would be the turn of the other to initiate the move. In this way they were able to get away from their alienating studies for an even greater length of time!)

Year 3 - Rediscovering Education

Tutorials have always been somewhat of a farce. More personal than classes, it is less possible to escape the absurdity amidst the anonymity of fellow students. I had been assigned to a graduate-tutor in my second year. Politically sympathetic, he had turned a blind eye to my lack of orthodox work. However, caught between his supervisor, Mrs. Scharf on the one hand, and my free-lance activities on the other, he was in a difficult situation. When the pressure came from above, he started applying it on me. Would I please produce some written work just to satisfy the authorities. (Academics seem to believe that the production of essays is the one and only proof that a student has been working. Of course, they never ask what kind of work, or for what purpose.)

Eventually, I was called to see Mrs. Scharf to explain why I wasn't doing enough work. I argued my case honestly in the sense that I said what I felt about the course. This sort of talking seemed to upset the game she was used to. (We usually dodge the main issues and make excuses promising to do better in the future.) We didn't get into a discussion about education and learning. All she could offer to induce me to follow the official course was the spectre of the examination. We parted, agreeing on nothing.

I knew that this conversation would be recorded on my secret file. (Every student has an academic file containing remarks by his tutor and classteachers on the student's academic progress! The contents of these files (the green ones kept in room H310) are kept a secret from the student, presumably in the belief that the less the student knows about his own progress the better!).

At the beginning of the third year, I was determined to take this matter up with my tutor - Mr. Hillbourne. When I went to see him the first time I was prepared to demand to see my secret file. I need not have bothered. The first thing he said was that there were some strange remarks in my file which needed explaining. I asked him to let me see the file in front of him so I could read what had been written about me and reply to it. (Even at the Old Bailey the accused is allowed to hear the evidence against him!) He refused, justifying himself by asserting that he could not reveal statements which had been made "in confidence". It would be a betrayal of his colleagues. (It often seems that the schooling system exists to serve the interests of everyone but those being taught! This incident typified that approach.) After much argument and no agreement, we decided that the best thing was for me to try to obtain another tutor. Believing that the only good tutor is no tutor, I searched out an 'official' tutor who was sympathetic to my views. He agreed to 'take me on' provided that he never saw me throughout the year - an admirable arrangement!

Unfortunately, at this point bureaucracy intervened in the form of the departmental secretary who maintained that I could not be Mr. X's tutee since he had too many already. I was assigned to Dr. Peel, who to me was an unknown quantity. At our first meeting, we argued. He was interested in laying out a whole course of tutorials, essays to be handed in every... etc., etc. I wanted to begin to discuss what we hoped to achieve, and to what purpose. Tutorials are like guerilla attacks and should be treated as such. We should adopt the tactics of the claimant's unions and take our friends in with us to help us fight for what we want.

I missed my second appointment, just after Christmas, partly because I wasn't interested in going, and partly because I was heavily involved in other activities at the time. Shortly afterwards I got a letter from Dr. Peel threatening that if I didn't show up on the following Friday he would take it that I wasn't interested in attending any tutorials, and would inform the Convenor accordingly. I did not show up. And I am still waiting to hear from the Convenor! Thus ended these tutorial escapades, which were my only contact with 'official' education throughout my third year.

Unofficially, I was discovering a whole new world. Slowly I was beginning to sort out for myself themes and categories of study based on my chosen subject. Those who say that to start from one's own interest is narrow-minded and who justify compulsion on the grounds that it broadens the area of study forget that starting from our own interests we will be led almost inevitably into other fields by the very nature of free learning. In fact, it is the strict compartmentalisation of the 'official' structure which imposes restrictions on understanding. Life is not divided into economics, government and history, so why should learning about life be?

Alongside my own individual activity, there was a new departure - collective work and alternative classes. Partly through the efforts of the Education Study Group (see below), and partly influenced by the collective work campaign at Brunel University which had met with some success, several groups of students set up 'alternative classes' - political sociology, philosophy, religion and politics, economics, libertarian socialism.

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1. "People learn complex skills best if this process of learning affords the learner an opportunity to give clear shape to feelings of images that already exist in his heart. Only he who discovers the help of written words in order to face his fears and make them fade, and the power of words to seize his feelings and give them form, will want to dig deeper into other people's writings" - Ivan Illich, Celebration of Awareness; cf. similar conclusions reached in Carl Rogers' On Becoming a Person.

Collective work is the negation of bourgeois education at its very foundation. The laissez-faire values of rampant individualism and competition survive in few places these days. Education, however, is one of their last remaining bastions. It is seen most clearly in the exam room itself where to co-operate is defined as 'cheating'. The competitive ethic turns knowledge into a private property which is jealously guarded - for to share one's knowledge is held to lessen one's own chance of success. Co-operative work shatters these values and practices and hence any development along these lines is to be welcomed. Of course, co-operative work in itself does not and has not solved all our problems. It is merely a starting point. We then have to answer - and the different groups answered them in different ways - all sorts of questions: Why form an alternative class? How do we get together to study? Is common interest or common politics the starting point? How do we really learn things - from books, conversation, novels, films, 'experience', or what? Should we progress by constructing an alternative syllabus or by ad-hoc arrangements? What is the relation between our thinking and our actions? Such questions, obviously crucial to an educative process, are normally answered for us by the dual authority of staff and syllabus. Our free associations of collective work faced these questions for the first time. We have not yet found all the answers but the experiments are worth trying.

Many readers will no doubt think that the three years spent as I have described have been a "waste of tax-payers money", to use the most common expression. Let us look at this complaint for what it is. The accusation implies that students who revolt, drop out, etc., are somehow doing things against the general good. It presupposes that the financing of what normally goes on in universities is money well spent. However, I would argue that the 'normal' functioning of the university is in every way socially harmful. Furthermore, I would contest that as long as we accept this 'normality', as long as we fail to revolt, drop out, contest, etc., then we are wasting tax-payers' money. Every day that LSE is not on strike, occupied, or in other ways disrupted, tax-payers' money is definitely being wasted. Put like this, it is clear that the question of wasted resources is a political question and must be answered politically. The whole content of this essay, if you like, is my answer to this charge.

POLITICS FOR WHAT?

"The traditions of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living"

Karl Marx: Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte

Year 1: Living in the Past

"How many students supported taking down the gates?" "How could Blackburn and Bateson be dismissed so easily?" "What made the Vietnam occupation so successful?" "Who was Paul Hoch?" These were the sort of questions which abounded on the left at LSE during my first year. They reflected the issues and crises of the previous year. This is hardly surprising. 1968/9 had been a year combining more crises, confrontation, and direct action than any other, at LSE or elsewhere: occupations, sit-ins, a three-week lock out, sackings, strikes, destruction of property. The events have been well documented elsewhere and need not be repeated. What was significant, however, was that the after-effects of these events dominated the left for a whole year afterwards. Naturally, two-thirds of the student population had been through the experience, an experience which had been, in the short-term, one of failure. After all, Adams was still here, two lecturers had been sacked, the distribution of power was unchanged. Of course, the long-term effects of 'politicisation' and increased awareness were positive, but what counted immediately was the amount of disillusion and gloom. Many first year students who were catapulted into the events of that fateful October, and who became heavily involved for the rest of the year, completely lost interest in political activity for the remainder of their stay at LSE. Others who remained provided the main influences in SocSoc and consistently looked at the situation in terms of the previous year, consistently posed the old questions in the new situation.

SocSoc had previously been dominated by the IS group. Many of the IS leading figures today received their political baptism in the heady days of the "troubles" - Chris Harman, Martin Tomkinson, John Rose, Hazel French, Martin Shaw, Andreas Nagliatti - the 'left heavies' as they were called. This IS faction had its own policy which, although I myself think is inadequate, gave a certain amount of coherence to the left. With the new year, however, most of these IS figures had departed leaving an assortment of different ideas and some with none.

1. cf. Hoch and Schoenbach: LSE, the Natives are Restless
2. A glance through the files of Agitator in the LSE library gives a good picture of the early days of SocSoc and the subsequent changes which have taken place. (These files are kept in the strong room of the library and can only be read in the Special Reading Room under supervision!)

The issues which had galvanised LSE in the past: Vietnam, Rhodesia, the failure of the Labour government, had now died down externally and, because they were essentially external issues, left nothing in their place. Of course, there were some 'actions' in my first year - disruption of the Oration Day speech, protests at the selection of the Vice-Chairman of the Court of Governors (Morris Finer), a half-hearted attempt at occupation in solidarity with Warwick students over the 'files' issue, and in protest over the treatment of Hoch. But nothing was achieved because they were isolated activities unconnected by any coherent strategy.

Significantly, no-one in SocSoc, except a few first-year students, took any part, or indeed any interest, in the Examination Statement Campaign (see above). The politics of the left bore absolutely no relation to the day-to-day experience of student life. Our politics and our education were separate compartments. We were still living in the past.

The most tragic expression of this divorce between politics and education had been in 1969 when, after three weeks of struggle to reopen the LSE, and the doors were eventually unlocked, students walked inside and continued to study the same things in the old way. This divorce was a result of the way in which the British student movement had evolved. Unlike continental movements, the British wing had been a response dominated almost entirely by international events, specifically American imperialism. (Tom Fawthrop's destruction of examination papers at Hull, and the six-week occupation of Hornsey College of Art in 1968 were two notable exceptions. Though, generally speaking, orthodox politicians looked down on both these actions as 'unpolitical'!) Hence there had been no initial critique of the structure of education as had appeared in Germany and France. This is not to say that the underlying causes of the movement did not lie in dissatisfaction with the education process. However, in the early days, the ways in which this was expressed were more 'political' in the traditional sense of the word, i.e. over big issues.

Year Two: Bringing the War Home

My second year opened with a factional debate on the role and purpose of student politics. Two contending groups rapidly formed, those who were called 'Althusserians' (the individuals concerned are now centred round the journal 'Theoretical Practice') and those called 'libertarians'. The issues were many and varied: the nature of revolutionary organisation, the role of leadership, the relation between theory and practice. The form in which the disagreement expressed itself was over the role of 'Agitator', SocSoc's magazine, which was being revived. One side claimed that there should be an editorial board, separate from those who produced the paper, laying down a strict editorial policy and using

the magazine as a propaganda weapon. The rest stuck to the view that there should be no division of labour between those who wrote and those who produced the paper, and that as many people as possible should be encouraged to write articles, thus making the magazine more of a forum for debate. The issue was not settled by agreement but because the 'libertarian' view was more popular and eventually the 'Althusserians' withdrew from SocSoc activities. Perhaps the only significance of this skirmish was that a theoretically libertarian tendency was in a majority in SocSoc for the first time.

In the middle of the debate, several of us wrote and published 'positional statements' to clarify the different tendencies. I suddenly discovered how difficult it was to state my political views coherently on paper, and relate them to my activity. Consciousness develops fragmentarily, and at any time is partial. Contradictions in our own thinking, lack of understanding, and traces of bourgeois ideology are present in all of us. Sorting out our own ideas is difficult, but nevertheless is a precondition for all revolutionary activity.

Apart from this initial dispute, the two main events of my second-year were the 'Houghton Street Affair' and the Senior Common Room campaign. Late one Wednesday afternoon in early December, after a teach-in on Anarchism, about twelve students, moving from theory to practice, decided to block the street to traffic as our 'urban environment' protest. A few cars, including Robert McKenzie's taxi, were held up for about half an hour. The following day at 1 p.m., at a given signal, about twenty of us began building a barricade of chairs, ladders, bricks and stone. Spontaneously, and within about ten minutes, about four hundred people were blocking the street behind the barricades. The police began to arrive in large numbers. The then President of the Union, Gareth Pryce, appealed through a police loudspeaker for the barricade to be removed. The police charged twice and dismantled the barricade. Twice it was reassembled. Hundreds of students worked like beavers (!) excitedly securing material from anywhere they could lay their hands on it. At 5 p.m. we dismantled the barricade and opened the street ourselves.

The following day, both police and students were amassed in large numbers. It was impossible to construct a barricade. However, traffic and police were hassled throughout the day. Ent's P.A. system was rigged up from a window in Clare Market building playing music and passing information along about police manoeuvres. Students with cars drove then slowly through the street or pretended a breakdown. Some said that even secretaries from Connaught House threw water at the police. The police themselves overacted and were very vicious. Over the two days they arrested more than twenty of us, mostly on the usual trumped up charges.

On the Friday afternoon at a general assembly, I myself made a bad tactical blunder. I attempted to draw in a wider perspective by referring to recent actions against the building of Westway and to community action in general. It was certainly the wrong way of going about it. I was shouted down; many people obviously feared that the issue would be taken over by SocSoc when, and this was true, the people heavily involved in building the barricade, fighting the police, were, by and large, not members of SocSoc.

The issue died down as fast as it had flared up. It had certainly made an impact. It had certainly mobilised both action and support. Even Walter Adams could not deny that direct action had been effective in this case. Yet the 'spontaneous' nature of the affair and its sudden demise seemed to defy all analysis: Although it is true that dissatisfaction with the amount of traffic in the street had always been widespread.

A few months later, in an Agitator article on an entirely different topic, an anonymous author provided what, for me, has been the only real explanation:

"The fact that such a large crowd of previously 'unpolitical' people could be drawn to participate in the closing of Houghton Street would also seem to indicate that alienated students will grab at the opportunity to work collectively. Those who sneered at the incident as "just a game" raised an important point. Deprived of real enjoyment in their lives at college, students who took part found pleasure in behaving as part of a community."

Where the Houghton Street Affair bypassed all official channels and involved the direct participation of the mass of students, the campaign to democratise the Senior Common Room¹ followed all the normal channels and did not involve any direct action at all, (unless we regard the takeover of the SCR during the constitution occupation a year later as a kind of delayed action). On February 12th, Union passed a motion requesting the SCR facilities to be made available to all. Two weeks later, five students, including myself, were elected to discuss the issue with the SCR committee. It was the first time I had been elected to any Union post.

The meeting with the SCR committee was totally unfruitful. Their arguments in favour of staff privileges ranged from the crude

1. A full report is contained in 'Education and Privilege', Agitator Vol. 6 No. 6, May 1971. For the street affair, see 'Houghton Street for the People', Agitator Vol. 6 No. 4, Dec. 1970.

(human nature/necessity of elites/inevitability of hierarchy, etc.) to the more sophisticated: the SCR is a place where informal contacts are made and maintained between staff and also with influential people outside (examiners, businessmen, government officials, etc.) What is discussed is by nature confidential, and must be kept secret from students, particularly when what was discussed concerned students! We pointed out that the staff had plenty of space for genuine privacy if need be. But the real difference lay in our assumptions. Theirs was the ideology of exclusiveness, hierarchy and secrecy; ours of openness and egalitarianism.

The Committee (Olive Stone (Law), Alan Stuart (Stats), E.A. French (Admin), Harrison Church (Geog), C.G. Allen (Library)), had refused to call a staff meeting to discuss the issue, so we were driven to obtaining twelve staff signatures which obliged the Committee to call a general meeting of the SCR. This meeting, on May 5th, was the largest in living memory - over 180 present - which shows just how seriously the academics take a threat to their privileges. Jonathan Rosenhead and Hilary Rose proposed the notion which would make all students members of the SCR. They found little support. Prof. Lakatos (Phil) said food in the refectory was good and cheap. Peter Wiles (Econ) thought that staff and students found close proximity 'unnatural'. Terence Morris (Sociology) maintained that students were uncivilised and would turn the SCR into a pigsty. Prof. Grunfeld (Law) asked that the names of the staff who had requested the meeting be published! Ex-Tory candidate, John Barnes (Government) suggested a secret ballot among all staff would be better than a vote of those who had bothered to turn up. This proposal, the equivalent of a cooling-off period, was carried by 125 votes to 52, just getting the two-thirds majority necessary. The SCR Committee, obviously afraid that an adverse result might spark off direct action, dragged out the issue so that polling didn't take place until late in the summer. The notion was then overwhelmingly defeated by over 200 votes to 70.

Where the 'Street Affair' had revealed much about students, it was the staff who were exposed during the SCR campaign. Let nobody deny that the LSE staff are a reactionary bunch. Their resistance to the most 'liberal' attack on their privileges shows that when it comes to a more serious challenge to their authority in the classroom, lecture hall, or examination room, we can expect wholesale reaction to emerge. The idea that students who go to LSE are subject to left-wing influence is a complete illusion.

The SCR campaign also revealed the inadequacies of a 'demand' campaign, especially when conducted through 'normal' channels. 'Normal channels' is a synonym for backroom negotiations and horse-trading which leaves the mass of students uninvolved. It

1. See Appendix I at end.

rules out direct action which is generally the only way to bring issues out into the open and prevent the authorities from using delaying tactics and underhand manoeuvres.

The Senior Common Room and the 'Street' campaign both reflected the changing nature of left politics at LSE. Essentially local campaigns, they aimed to highlight the contradictions as we experienced them. This shift in practice was linked in an overall shift in theory throughout the year. It was reflected also in the contents of Agitator, which had been revived and published in a new printed form. Articles centred on such issues as 'Education and Privilege', 'Students and Apathy', 'Community Power', and examinations. This new thinking was crystallised after Easter in what became known as the 'May Group Statement'. Originally the product of twelve students, it was later adopted as the SocSoc programme.¹

The 'May Group Statement' was based upon the idea that the most effective place for students to engage in political activity was in their own colleges, at the point of mental production, as it were. Thus theory had turned a full 180 degrees from the earlier 'traditional Marxist' position which had always tended to slant student activity away from educational and local issues to the 'reality' outside - especially 'working-class struggle'.

The May Group programme combined socialist education with specific aims for political activity. These were divided into four areas: union, machinery of government, academic affairs, and environment and community. The basic theme was the democratisation of all aspects of college life.

The programme also contained organisational proposals for SocSoc, which has always been a thorny problem as there has never been any overall political unity of the left. However, the production of the May Group Statement was an achievement in itself and, to my mind, is still the most relevant programme for left activity at LSE, although further discussion and development is always necessary.

1. For the 'May Group Statement' see Agitator (Vol 7 No.1 Sept 1971)

Year Three: Politics and Education - A New Synthesis?

The Political programme of the May Group Statement did not become the guiding thread of unity that we had hoped for. Throughout this last year we have been dominated by a campaign to achieve only one of its stated aims - 'Union to be financially, politically and constitutionally autonomous'. Without doubt this campaign has absorbed much, if not too much, of our collective energy. A full assessment of the campaign is impossible here. Indeed the issue is still not decided. To make a premature judgement on what is, I believe, the longest single issue campaign to have been waged at LSE, would be unwise. Events later this year (Summer 1972) or even at the beginning of the next academic year may radically alter the course of things. However, at the present stage of deadlock and stagnation, it might be useful to construct a balance sheet of our activities. Firstly, what was the positive side of the campaign; why were we correct on embarking on it?

- (a) The issue was clear and we were asking the right sort of questions - Who should control the Union?
- (b) It was a student issue, our struggle, i.e. much nearer to the students' own situation than support for an external struggle.
- (c) We concluded that both (a) and (b) would readily lead to support among the students. The fantastic election results and the amount of mobilisation for the December 8th 'Day of Action' seemed to confirm this.
- (d) The national situation lent a topicality and significance to the LSE struggle. After all, what we were fighting actually was the Thatcher proposals as these were what we already had at LSE.

1. Background information: In October 1971, the Students Union voted a new constitution making the union independent of the LSE authorities. The following month, the Socialist Society stood candidates in the annual union elections advocating unilateral action if the authorities refused to accept the new constitution. They won all posts in a landslide victory.

In December, the School Governors refused to ratify the new constitution. After Christmas the Union Council resigned en masse, and the Union declared independence unilaterally. An occupation was scheduled to coincide with the mass NUS demonstration on January 23rd. Immediately Adams induced the bank to freeze Union funds and he had the telephones cut off. The occupation was only partially successful, attracting few LSE students.

The second and third terms dragged on inconclusively, with much legal and political wrangling. Negotiations became deadlocked.

- (e) SocSoc was united on the issue (quite an achievement) and gave an air of aggressiveness to the campaign, particularly over such things as conduct of negotiations - always an area in which 'moderates' are at home and have a tendency to 'sell-out'.

However, on the negative side were the following points, which have emerged more clearly as the struggle continued:

- (a) Although the question of control is clear cut, the background to this particular issue is extremely complex. In the beginning, nobody knew the actual situation as regards finance, constitution, law, etc. These have had to be learnt through struggle. (Which is a side-remark on education and learning!)
- (b) It was still essentially a 'demand' campaign and therefore tended to leave people uninvolved. Aggressive tendencies to direct action (UDI, etc.) helped to overcome this.
- (c) We overestimated the interest and commitment among students to the Union. It was perhaps here that we made our most serious error. While the Union question is nearer to students than, say, workers' struggles or racism, it is still not a permanent or even relevant question to many students. The alienation of student life may be expressed through the aspect of dissatisfaction with the Union, but this is not the cause of that alienation. Hence whatever happens to the union will not affect fundamental problems. (see below, Education Study Group).
- (d) We underestimated the reactionary nature of the Adams/Finer gang. Hence, even when we changed our demands from 'total autonomy' to 'full autonomy allowed by law', insistence on total, almost totalitarian, powers left us a little stranded.
- (e) We never came fully to grips with certain basic questions, eg. the relation between political and financial autonomy; and also the wider questions of the role and general function of an independent union.

Although the issue is still in deadlock, certain favourable gains can be discerned:

- (i) Our political position has been, on the whole, unchallenged. No right-wing or 'moderate' element has gained enough support for ideas of a 'sell-out'. The collapse of the LSE 'Moderates' has perhaps been an unnoticed but decisive phenomenon in the past two years. It has contributed to

the change in nature of Union meetings and polarised the political camps thus laying bare more clearly the fundamental issues.

- (ii) The Adams/Finer clique have been exposed for what they are.
- (iii) The old ways of the union have, hopefully, been destroyed forever, eg. it should now be impossible to return to the almost total domination of the presidential office and the practice of a rotating chairman has now become accepted.
- (iv) We have not been smashed. Although this is mainly because we never launched into an all-out confrontation, it is still true that the left (despite differences over the occupation) is not bitterly divided and crushed as it was after 1968/9. There is still energy left to manoeuvre and, hopefully, positive lessons will be drawn for next year.

It is clear that these are all essentially negative gains, and that the basic issue of union autonomy has yet to be won. However, it is necessary to take into account all aspects of the struggle and that has been the purpose of the above balance sheet. That is all I would like to say about the constitution campaign. A detailed description and full analysis will have to be done elsewhere.

Parallel to the constitution campaign there has been a growth of other activities which seem encouraging: the women's liberation group, the education study group, and developments in the departments, eg. the Soc-Admin Co-op and within the Law Society. For me the activities of the education study group have been the most interesting and significant.

The group was started in the first term by four students somewhat dissatisfied by the conventional left critique of education. The fact that the group got off the ground was an indication of a change in SocSoc, for during the past two years attempts had been made to start an education group, and these had collapsed. The traditional response of socialists to the education question has been that a change in education has to be coupled to a change in society at large. Far from being a conclusion to anything, this was only a starting point for us. At the core of our ideas was that we should begin our critique of society, both theoretical and practical, here in the university because that was where we were. Links with other struggles, although necessary, would have to come later, otherwise there would be nothing here to link with!

The group has met fairly regularly throughout the year, attracting a nucleus of about 5 to 15 people. We have discussed many topics - authority in the classroom, the role of the 'left' teacher, the ideas of Ivan Illich, free schools, the connection between schooling and the labour market among many others. Slowly, and with

the help of people outside LSE, we have built up a coherent theory of education in capitalist society centering around the key concept of the split in the category of labour into mental and manual workers (this division of mental and manual work will probably be the last and most difficult alienation that socialism will have to overcome).

But our activities have not been confined to the development of ideas. After Christmas we began a 'cheating campaign' to encourage co-operative work. The idea was to collect a library of past tutorial and class essays which students could borrow and use. After all, why should we care about the same old questions which are handed out year after year? Somebody else has answered the question before, so why waste our time copying out answers from standard text-books? (This point of duplication was brought home by the collection of sociology essays we received - over 20 were on the same question!) Our scheme was aimed at undermining the essay-treadmill and to encourage co-operation. Students would also be left with more 'free' time to follow their own interests.

Secondly, we have intervened in the constitution campaign. We tried, both before and during the occupation, to bring out the educational nature of this tactic. In occupying, we were not only striking a blow at Adams, but were challenging what normally went on in the building day by day. The 'take over' would give us an opportunity to learn new things in a new way. Although this always happened in occupations, we were trying to give this implicit aspect an explicit expression. In connection with this, we arranged a large meeting/discussion on education and capitalism during the occupation, which proved very successful - never before had 300 people managed to conduct a three-hour discussion in the New Theatre without a chairman. Traditional groups like the IMG (see Red Mole, No. 36) criticised us for holding meetings on education instead of on 'politics'. (Note for traditional Marxists: the relation between education and politics may be expressed in traditional categories in the following way - the change in the organic composition of capital since the war has increased the demand for mental labour relative to manual labour both to manage the production process itself and to manage the increased consumption and leisure time of the labour force outside production, eg. education, advertising, state apparatus, etc. The increasing integration of work and school, and the increased domination of mental labour by capital (and the subsequent 'proletarianisation' of intellectual work) is experienced by the student through the aspect of authority. Struggle against the authoritarian relations and functions of the school system is, then, at the same time part of the struggle for the general emancipation of labour: "fighting the class war on the education front" as it were.)

Members of the education study group also co-operated with Oxford Solidarity in the production of a leaflet 'Who Controls

Whom?', widely distributed at the NUS demonstration on January 23rd. The theme of the leaflet was that, while the campaign for union autonomy raised the correct questions, questions of power and control, the area of student unions was not the most important area for struggle. Only by raising the question of 'autonomy in the classroom' could we make our critique both permanent and relevant to all students.

The group did not restrict itself to criticism, however. Many members were instrumental in forming alternative classes and attempting to put our ideas about collective learning into practice. Much experimentation remains to be done in this field (see above), although the very existence of these classes is again something new to LSE.

Hence, for me, 'politics' and 'education' have been synthesised throughout my third year. My elemental dissatisfaction with the examination system, and my ideas about alternative learning, has been complemented by a development of my political ideas. I also detect a general change in this direction, certainly at LSE, but also over the whole country: although how far this is correct, and to what extent my experiences are not just an isolated phenomenon, can only be judged by those who read this essay.

* * * * *

'Only the truth in your own fist will
make you master of this earth.'

Wilhelm Reich.

This has been a personal account, and the conclusions drawn are inevitably also personal ones. Hence my interpretation of events, even my memory of events, will certainly clash with others who have been at LSE over the same period of time. However, because our experiences are social as well as individual, a relating of one person's experience may 'tune in' with other people's, and hence may help to raise understanding all round.

A P P E N D I X

NOTES ON THE LEFT-WING IMAGE OF LSE

- A. Somehow, LSE has gained the reputation of being left-wing. While this may be true insofar as some of the students are concerned, it is totally false as regards the staff. Not only were few academics prepared to contest the dismissal of Blackburn and Bateson, but most of them shudder just at the thought that their Senior Common Room might really become common. The prevailing ideology of the staff seems to be liberal-bureaucratic, with a tendency to Fabianism. Fabianism is simply a British soft version of Stalinism. Both have an undying attachment to 'The Plan', and both abhor the self-activity of the masses. It is no accident that Beatrice and Sidney Webb (LSE's founders) did much to popularise and defend Stalinism in their book: Soviet Russia, A New Civilisation.
- B. LSE academics who have testified against students in court include: Kenneth Bowne, Roy Bridge, Percy Cohen, Harold Edey, Charles Jackson, Alan Musgrove, Samuel Panter-Brick, Geoffrey Stern, John Watkins, Peter Wiles, Michael Bronwich, and Bernard Donoughee.
- C. For details of all past directors of LSE see 'Sociology of the LSE' in the Agitator files in the LSE library.
- D. The most recent example of academic hypocrisy occurred during the constitution campaign. LSE staff persistently claim to believe in communication and consultation as a panacea for all ills. But when the union council circulated all members of staff several days before the occupation, inviting them to attend a meeting to discuss the crisis, only twelve bothered to turn up! (Similar invitations to library and secretarial staff produced enthusiastic responses.)
- E. What they said:
- (1) "We can justify paternalism if it can generally be said to be a preparation for freedom" - Lord Robbins (Chairman of the Court of Governors) Freedom and Order.
 - (2) It is childish to expect an institution such as the LSE to jeopardise its long-term course of consistent progress, based on years of remarkable intellectual effort and achievement, by indefinitely tolerating the mean anarchy of those not even remotely connected with its internationally recognised contribution to mankind." N.E. Devletoglou (Economics Department), Times, October 1968.

- (3) "On May 1st, 1969, LSE's criminology professor, Terence Morris, told the Commons Select Committee that LSE rebels exhibited mental disturbances characteristic of 'anal fixation'" - Paul Hoch, Academic Freedom in Action.
- (4) ".....in their power relations with each other British dons do set the world a shining example.....we shall hardly find a more perfectly governed society than a British university". Peter Wiles (Economics Dept), Anarchy and Culture.
- (5) "Students have no experience of life or of the precarious basis of such civilisation as we have. They are supported in conceptual luxury.....And it is even odder that the most chronic moralisers should be sociologists, because their sense of outrage can only be based on an incapacity to understand any sociology. That is why they turn sociology into ideology, and justify themselves." David Martin (Sociology Dept) Anarchy and Culture.

Note:

The above quotation is reproduced exactly as it appeared in the first edition of this pamphlet. A few weeks after it was published, I received a letter from Prof. Martin. After comparing me to the Swiss Anabaptists (in some ways a healthy compliment!) he continued: "I wish your hostility to the printed word did not extend to misquoting me. I am not the author of the mangled nonsense I am credited with in your account of your scholarly travail at the School. I notice you also complain that I haven't written to you. I'm afraid there seemed little point in doing so. The Catholic Church has a category of persons described as 'invincibly ignorant' and against such the persistent use of rational suasion is regarded as a work of supererogation."

The ignorance is the professor's. The words quoted above stand. They can be found in his essay "The Dissolution of the Monasteries" on pages 5-6 of the book he edited, Anarchy and Culture (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969).

Prof. Martin can, however, take consolation in the knowledge that the Catholic Church would regard his mistake only as a venial sin!

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

B.Sc. (Unemployment) Examination 1972

PART II

C O M M O N S E N S E

Monday 24th May, 2.30 to 2.45

Answer FOUR questions, at least TWO of which are on the paper

1. 'If a question is worth doing, it can't be done in forty minutes. If it can be done in forty minutes, then it's not worth doing.' Consider.
2. Either (a) Assess the contribution of Victor Serge and Margaret Mead to education theory,* or (b) 'In examiners' hands students cease to be historical actors in their own right.' Discuss.
3. How valid is the concept of failure?
4. What evidence does recent survey research provide regarding the reasons why a paper would be considered a first at one university and a failure at another?
5. 'Education is the opiate of the middle classes'. Compare and contrast this concept to the one of 'equal opportunity in education': which of these two concepts can better explain present conditions?
6. What do you understand by the term 'understand'?
7. 'The seeds of Fascism are to be found, not in the organisation of force but in the organisation of the school'. Discuss with reference to the works of Wilhelm Reich.
8. How far does the fact that one never sees an examination paper after one has written it contribute to the interest of the activity?
9. Discuss the role of creativity in the examination room.
10. Who determines the syllabus? To what extent can one satisfactorily answer this question at either the local or the national level? Discuss with reference to any one socio-economic system.
11. 'Success is a nineteenth century invention'. Discuss.
12. Outline the functionalist nature of present education. Why is knowledge of the functional nature of education not conducive to the control and manipulation of students?
13. When did you first realise that you were superior to 96% of the rest of the population?

* Neither Victor Serge nor Margaret Mead ever went to school.

FURTHER SOLIDARITY PAMPHLETS

THE GREAT FLINT SIT-DOWN STRIKE AGAINST GENERAL MOTORS 1936-7 by W.Linder.
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