

Britain at Work

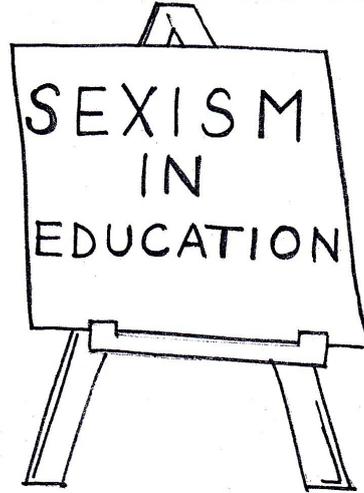
London project newsletter issue 2 May 2013



COMBATING RACISM IN SCHOOLS

**A Union policy statement:
guidance for members**

W.T.A. meeting for
women members



THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8th 5-7pm
ESSENDINE SCHOOL, Essendine Rd.
W9

An open discussion meeting
with speakers: Celia Greenwood
(on the curriculum) and
Jan Pollock (from Women in the
NUT Group)

Education, Education, Education!!!

In this issue, we feature articles and interviews on secondary and adult/further education, with a focus on the comprehensive school which has been under attack by governments for over 30 years. Former teacher and Women in the NUT Group activist Jan Pollock recalls late 20th century class war, with James Bromwich and Colin Waugh interview extracts. We also include the second part of John O'Mahony's 'Football and Work'.

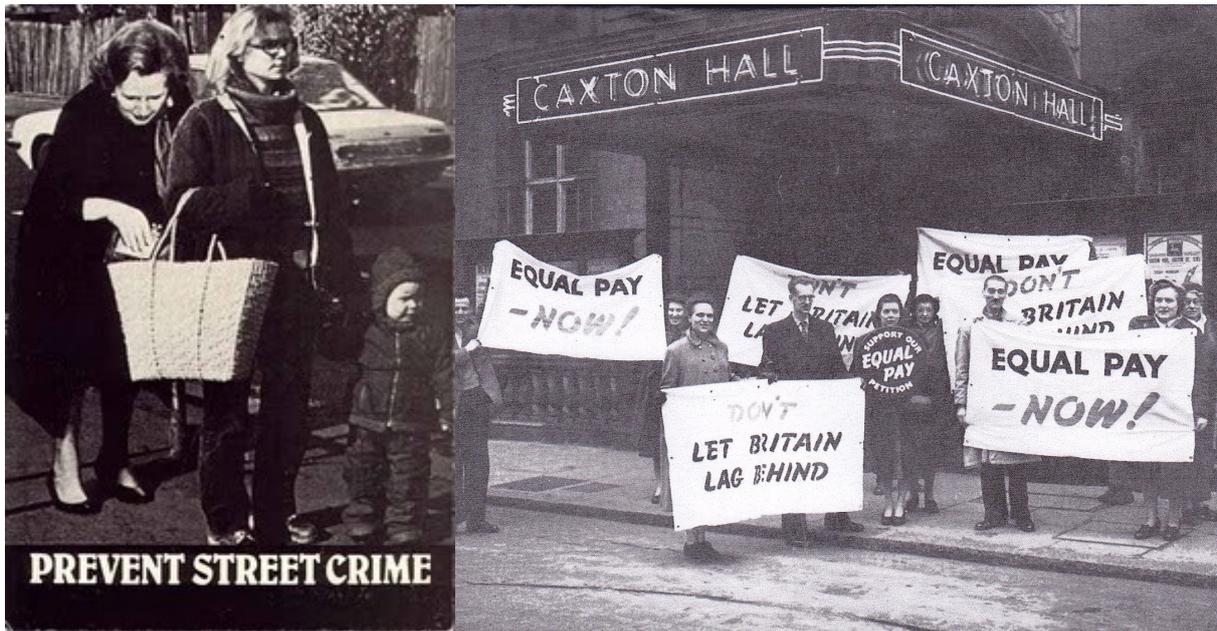
Margaret Thatcher abolished free school milk for children in 1971, earning the nickname 'Maggie Thatcher-Milk Snatcher'. Thatcher was secretary for education in Edward Heath's short-lived Conservative government

(1970-74), the only cabinet position she held before becoming prime minister in 1979. Thatcher also withdrew the 1965 Labour circular requiring local councils to submit plans for comprehensives, but did not block plans already in the pipeline because the 11 plus was unpopular with middle-class parents. Under Thatcher's governments, comprehensive schools were ruthlessly undermined with a series of measures including opting out of local authority control, local management and open enrolment, and schools were forced to operate in a quasi-market system. Today, Gove's academies and free schools are a further attempt to destroy the comprehensive idea.

Britain at Work London Group www.unionhistory.info/britainatwork
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Education: All Change, Then Reverse by Jan Pollock



Between 1945 and '95 the entire structure of education (and much curriculum content) changed dramatically. In 1944 secondary education for all was enacted by the war-time government. However, the type of secondary education was determined by the results of the 11 plus exam. Most children failed the 11 plus and went to secondary modern schools while less than 20% passed and got to grammar school where academic subjects were studied for exams; secondary modern schools focused on vocational and practical subjects. A tiny minority attended technical schools (hence the term tri-partite system.) So where you fitted into the workforce was determined from an early age.

The General Certificate of Education (GCE) was introduced in 1951, allowing all children to be entered for the same exam. Together with the Crowther Report in 1959 and the Robbins Report in 1963, this questioned and rejected the idea that a high standard of education was only for a select few. A government circular in the 1960s advised all education authorities to set up comprehensive schools where all post-11 year old pupils could be offered a wide-ranging education for cultural enrichment, personal leisure and citizenship as well as vocational training for work. The creation of new schools with this new ethos found wide support in London where comprehensive flagships like Holland Park were built. By the late 70s, 80% of secondary school pupils were in comprehensives—though grant-maintained, religious and grammar schools were not abolished and continued to cream off an elite. With the need for more higher education, five new universities were opened in the 1960s, with increased access for women and mature students, and a full grant encouraged some working class candidates into higher education.

The introduction of secondary education for all required more teachers. Men who'd been conscripted could apply for a shortened form of teachers' training immediately after the war; women were still expected to leave teaching on their marriage. And equal pay, though NUT policy since 1919, was not campaigned for by the union till sufficient post-war female members insisted on implementing it. (Teachers' Equal Pay was agreed in 1953. The NAS/UWT had split from the NUT in 1919 as they were against equal pay on principle.)

The second wave of the Women's Movement (the first being the the campaign for the vote) combined with some of the ripples from the Shop Stewards' Movement so that many feminist issues were raised in those years—though some left-wing males needed much persuading. Educational as well as employment issues were also raised—against sexism, racism, homophobia and eventually, disabilism. In the 70s and 80s the Inner London Education Authority benefited from many policies and ideas developed by rank and file teachers organising in London. School students also organised—especially against racism.

Most of this progressive policy in education was halted by Tory governments' anti-union policy combined with public sector cuts ("Thatcher, Thatcher, Milk-snatcher!") and ideological attacks. Increasing teacher workloads—especially quantities of paperwork, was continued by Labour who also undermined comprehensives, introducing academies, and building schools with the Private Finance Initiative. They declared university a choice for 50% of youth whilst cutting grants/developing loans. The ConDem Government has nurtured such anti-comprehensive principles—and added a few of their own, cutting pay and pensions.

Education: James Bromwich and Colin Waugh interviews



James Bromwich *How did you get into teaching?* I was born in Nottingham but came to live in London in Notting Hill Gate in 1949, so I spent up until 1957 largely living in Notting Hill Gate where my father was working for the Ballet Rambert. After university I went into teaching and taught in a couple of comprehensives in London: Woodberry Down in north London and then Kingsdale in south London, both for a couple of years before getting a job at Rutherford School, just by the Edgware Road, in 1967. Rutherford School, five form entry, about 700 pupils at the time I was there.

What was the comprehensive idea? It was the idea that all children of a full range of ability, a full range of social backgrounds, could all be taught in—and not only could but should all be taught in a common school. The idea was that this—you could not segregate children at 11 and say that there is a group who are intellectually and socially superior and therefore deserve a specialist Education—a special education—and the rest will go to a so-called 'modern' school and be taught 'non-academic' subjects. That was anathema and I think both of us came into schools at that time in the early 60s absolutely committed to this ideal that all children deserve the best education that they can take advantage of and develop within a school.

Why did you join a trade union? I was in the NUT. Well, I joined a trade union because I thought it was what you did. My family were both—both parents were left wing, middle class but left wing. Therefore it seemed to me to be natural. And the school I started in at Woodberry Down, my Head of Department was CP (Communist Party) and was a leading figure in London NUT and became president of the union in the 1970s. He was a great intellect, a wonderful person and on the first day he said, "Are you a member of the union? You must come along as a young teacher" and helped activate me in that sense and I became a regular attendee of branch union meetings. Later, in the local association, typically a meeting would have 20 to 30 people attending, representing therefore all the schools in the whole of Westminster.



Colin Waugh *When and where did you start in Further Education?* I entered in 1969 as an hourly-paid lecturer at what was then Brixton College and is now part of Lambeth College in Brixton Hill. Since I had a young family and was looking for employment, I took teaching hours in Liberal Studies and General Studies. That was basically the period of General Education that was attached to mainly the day or block release time in Further Education of industrial apprentices or similar students. So they had a day of technical education and or training, but within that they had an hour and a half of General Education. The nearest surviving remnant of it today is either Functional Skills or Key Skills Communication. When I went there in 1970, there was class upon class of industrial, male apprentices in mechanical engineering, in fabrication engineering, in electrical installation, in electrical and engineering welding.

How did this develop? I got a full-time post, after a year at Brixton, basically of hourly pay, I got a full-time job at the then Tottenham Technical College, which is now College of Haringey, Enfield and North-East London. At Brixton I was based in the Engineering Department and I did 22 hours a week there for 21 years through until 1991. *What about General Education?* I was involved in my union, NATFHE's General Studies section and was secretary of it from 1980. I was later the secretary of a free-standing journal called *General Educator* (now *Post 16 Educator*) from 1991. I moved to what is now the College of North-East London, close to Acton the biggest industrial estate in Europe, according to Wal Hannington's book *Unemployed Struggles*.

And the Plebs? I became aware of the Plebs and the National Council of Labour Colleges. It's not about the past, it's about the future—what we ought to do now. You can't find anything more instructive about what we should do now (in education) than what they did in 1909, I think (the Ruskin College strike). Education would be brought under democratic control and control from the inside, a kind of workers' control with a valid rank and file or from below type of organisation within the union. Copies of Colin Waugh's pamphlet *Plebs* are available from 221 Firth Park Road, Sheffield S5 6WW

Football and Work by John O'Mahony Part 2

Although the maximum wage had been abolished, the fight to abolish the detested 'retain and transfer' system, which had begun in earnest in the 50s, continued. Jimmy Guthrie, the chairman of the then Players' Union, had rather melodramatically made his members' case for reform at the TUC conference in Stockport in 1955: "Mr Chairman and delegates, I stand here as a representative of the last bonded men in Britain—the professional footballers. We seek your help to smash a system under which now, in this year of 1955, human beings are being bought and sold like cattle. A system which, as in feudal times, binds a man to one master or, if he rebels, stops him getting another job. The conditions of the professional footballer's employment are akin to slavery."



George Eastham, an England international, went on strike in the 1959/60 season after being refused a transfer from Newcastle when his contract was on the point of expiring. Eastham got his wish and transferred to Arsenal in October 1960—having gone to work for several months in a friend's shop prior to the eventual transfer, as Newcastle had refused to pay him because he had asked for a transfer as his contract was about to expire. However, despite eventually getting his wish, Eastham decided, on a point of principle, to take his case to court in 1963, with the PFA footing the bill for the £15,000 expenses. The court found the system to be a 'restraint of trade' and, although it would be many years

before it was completely abolished, the ruling enabled players to renegotiate fairer terms in re-signing for their clubs, and also facilitated the setting up of transfer tribunals for disputes. Eastham's reflections on the 'retain and transfer' conditions are most instructive:

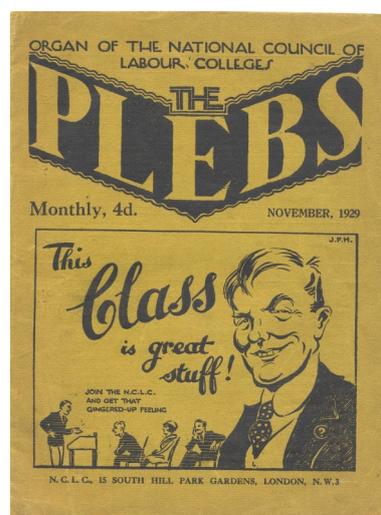
"Our contract could bind us to a club for life. Most people called it the 'slavery contract'. We had virtually no rights at all. It was then often the case that the guy on the terraces not only earned more than us—though there's nothing wrong with that—he had more freedom of movement than us. People in business and teaching were able to hand their notice in and move on. We weren't and that was wrong." pictures Joe Richardson and Jimmy Hill the PFA chairman. Cliff Lloyd and George Eastham arriving at court

IWCE Plebs London Meeting June 1

The IWCE Independent Working Class Education Project London meeting on June 1 12-4pm at London Metropolitan University, The Learning Centre, Room LCG-07, 236-250 Holloway Road, London N7 6PP (opposite Holloway Road tube station, entrance in Hornsey Road). Speakers include Stan Newens, Christine Coates and Colin Waugh. All welcome. For more info contact Plebs post16educator@runbox.com

Britain at Work London Group secretary Dave Welsh/ chair John O'Mahony/treasurer Jan Pollock/outreach/IT Rima Joebear/newsletter editor Tom Vague/other contributors James Bromwich/Colin Waugh

The League of the Plebs formed in 1908 after a strike at Ruskin College Oxford. It became a national movement providing what was called IWCE, and the NCLC National Council of Labour Colleges.



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