Campaigning Against Neo-liberal Education in Britain

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The election of the Labour Government headed by Prime Minister Tony Blair, on the 1st May 1997 presaged changes to the world of Education in England and Wales[i] which few working inside education had anticipated. Blair, describing himself and the politics he represented as "New Labour", declared that the priority for the incoming government would be "Education, Education, Education." However his policies represented a radical departure from the traditional notions of Education as a public service, publicly funded and locally administered which had dominated Labour Party thinking since its foundation at the beginning of the twentieth century and more especially since the 1940s.

The changes to Education, and to other areas of public services such as the Health Service, embraced and built on policies introduced during the previous Conservative (Tory) administrations of Prime Ministers Margaret Thatcher (1979-90) and John Major (1990-97). Central to the strategy of Thatcher's government had been the policy of "Privatisation" – the wholesale selling off to private companies of nationalized or publicly-owned industries and utilities, coupled with the dismemberment of sections of the public services. Private companies invited to run these newly acquired services would shift the emphasis from concerns for public welfare to the imperatives of finance, management and profitability. Whilst this was driven largely by the ideologically motivated neo-liberal monetarist policies of economists like Milton Friedman, their successful introduction into Britain required the political defeat of the longstanding adherence to "welfarism" and the "Welfare State" – a concept that certain fields of economic and social activity should be informed by a desire to address people's needs rather than notions of profitability and efficiency defined in narrow capitalist economic terms. This was especially true in the arena of Education.

The Tory blueprint for this offensive which ranged from nationalized industries like water, coal, gas, steel, electricity, rail industry, telephones and others through to

Public Housing, Education and Health was drawn up by Nicholas Ridley, one of Thatcher's aides, later to hold a variety of Ministerial posts in her government. The "Ridley Plan" was put together in 1974 and spelt out a detailed strategy to achieve the objective of privatization focusing principally on the coal industry [ii]. Thatcher understood, that in order to achieve her goals, the destruction of the "Welfare State" and the denationalisation of sections of the economy, it would be necessary to take on and defeat those who were the staunchest defenders of the public services, the trade unions and especially those which organised the workers in fields she saw as her prime targets for transformation.

The objective of the Thatcher era was the introduction of "popular capitalism" based on individual consumerism and the commodification of all social provision. Margaret Thatcher once said, "There is no such thing as society: there are individual men and women, and there are families."[iii] Any collective view of the world or a sense that there could be socialised provision of welfare was anathema. Blair too exhibited a similar almost visceral hatred for the public sector, those who worked in it and the trade union organisations to which many of them belonged.[iv]

In a politically astute ideological offensive she called for greater individual choice, arguing that the free market would improve quality through competition. Competition had in the economic world, she argued, increased choice, pushed down the prices of commodities and resulted in improvements in the qualities of products and the services to the individual consumer. She extended this argument to the operations of core areas of the Welfare State putting forward the view that in the public service sector the introduction of marketisation would in addition to providing choice lead to an improvement in quality and standards of service. By opening up sections of provision to competitive bidding those who won contracts would contribute to driving up the quality of provision through their introduction of management systems; systems based on models of individualized performance management derived from the world of business and commerce. At the same time those who worked in these sectors, and especially the trade unions, were presented as the opponents of choice, denying the consumer their "rights" and the improvements which it was claimed would result from these innovations. The trade unions in particular were subjected to a relentless offensive, accused of being preoccupied with narrow self-interests to the

detriment of the users of the services thereby denying the public the opportunities and advantages which privatization would bring.

In Education the teacher trade unions were described as part of an "Educational Establishment' opposed to change, professionally complacent, unaccountable and indifferent to the concerns of parents who wanted to see their children receiving a "better" education which could only be guaranteed by creating greater choice in the system.[v] The teacher unions, and especially the largest the National Union of Teachers, were targeted as an adversary which had to be subjugated. But before addressing her ideas to the world of education she well understood that there were politically and industrially stronger opponents who stood in her way. The changes she wished to introduce, could not have been achieved without simultaneously introducing legislation which reduced the capacity of trade unions to mount effective forms of actions to defend those services and their members. The anti-trade union legislation introduced by the Thatcher Government which attacked the ability of unions to respond swiftly to threats to jobs, poor pay or the worsening of employment conditions, was a prerequisite to pushing through her agenda.[vi]

The most significant confrontation that took place during the Thatcher years was that with the National Union of Miners whose union members had won the campaign after many years to nationalise the coal industry in the late 1940s. The NUM had the reputation of being one of the best organized and most effective unions at defending the employment, terms and conditions of employment of its members. Through their successful strike actions in 1972 and 1974 the NUM had had a major influence on the downfall of the Conservative Government of Edward Heath of which she had been a Minister. To her they epitomized the problem. Thatcher viewed the NUM as the most dangerous opponent in the trade union field. Inflicting a defeat on them would send a message to every trade union, their members and anyone who might oppose the denationalization programme and the dissecting of the Welfare State.

The changes that the Conservative Government, elected in 1979 and re-elected in 1983, sought to bring in to Education accelerated rapidly after the 1984-85 miners strike and the defeat of the NUM. The NUT embarked on a pay campaign in 1985 which lasted around two years but petered out when the union leadership accepted promises of a pay review. Some in the union saw this dispute as a defining moment

which would have a major impact on the balance of influence between the neo-liberalists and their opponents which would shape the educational landscape of the future. Within the NUT there was opposition. The Socialist Teachers Alliance (STA) [vii] predicted that the acceptance of the pay offer of 5.5%, way below the pay demand of the Union, would pave the way for further attacks and in particular cuts in the education budget. An alternative perspective was visible through the initiative of the All London Parents Action Group which called a meeting of over 4,000 in central London early in 1986 to discuss the fight against the Thatcher cuts. Many Labour Party Members of Parliament however did not want to get too involved fearing that their direct association with those conducting industrial action to defend the public services would have negative consequences for their own electoral fate. Whilst the STA campaigned vigorously to build links with the parents initiative against the Tory strategy others failed to see the importance and the opportunities for building a teacher-parent alliance that could truly galvanize the campaign in education.

The left in the NUT had made progress over a number of years winning a significant base in the Inner London Teachers Association (ILTA), the largest branch of the Union, co-terminus with the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA). The branch contained over 14,000 members working for the largest Education Authority in Europe with a reputation for progressive educational policies. This combination, as events were to prove later, was one that Thatcher could not tolerate. Her supporters launched a series of attacks in the media against the ILTA and its officers the majority of whom were in the STA. Vicious personal attacks were initiated by Thatcher's supporters in papers such as the Times Educational Supplement, the Daily Mail and the Daily Express. At times these attacks were supplemented by those from aspirant Labour Members of Parliament anxious to disassociate themselves from trade union activity. The objective was to try to isolate Thatcher's most vociferous critics in education, in the most militant and arguably the best organized branch of the NUT.

Upon her re-election in 1987 Thatcher was determined to launch an offensive against Comprehensive Education and the ILEA which she saw as one of the most tenacious advocates for the system. The Education Reform Act 1988 which was at the core of her strategy introduced legislation which simultaneously increased powers at the centre whilst introducing measures which would fragment the education system,

breaking the links between schools and schools, and schools and local education authorities (LEAs)[viii]. Little wonder that that same piece of legislation specifically proposed and enacted the break-up of the ILEA which ultimately lead to the break-up of the ILTA. In response ILTA had organized and lead strike action against the Bill as a whole and a mass campaign aimed specifically at London parents which won the backing of the overwhelming majority of parents for the continuation of the authority as a single unit despite the fact that they met with indifference at first from many in the union nationally and indeed hostility from leading Labour politicians who were happy to see the back of the ILEA and the union branch which they saw as a thorn in their side.[ix]

By and large, the LEAs, like ILEA, had been responsible for the collective development of education within their local government area. Individual schools were given financial control of the running of their school through budgetary transferring of control to Headteachers and Governing Bodies through a measure entitled "Local Management of Schools". Schools could go further being given the chance to "opt out" of Local Authority control to become Grant Maintained Schools (GMS). Parents, notionally, were given a greater choice in the say as to which schools their child attended and to facilitate choice schools were required to administer tests which were then used to construct league tables indicating each school's individual "performance".

The Tories believed that "opting out" would be the automatic choice for all parents but they were in many respects proved wrong. In order to opt out there had to be a ballot of all the parents to authorize it. The battle against GMS became a major campaign to defend the integrity of Local Education Authorities as well as the comprehensive system. Conservative controlled Westminster City Council, a hotbed of Thatcherite neo-liberalism, lead at one time by Dame Shirley Porter one of her closest allies in Local government, might have been thought an ideal place to demonstrate parents' enthusiasm for these new powers. Three proposals for opting out did occurred in the city. In one, St Mary of the Angels, a Catholic primary school, the governors agreed that if the teachers were not in favour of the proposal to opt out then they would not go ahead with their suggestion. The teachers, backed by the local NUT branch voted to stay in the authority and the whole idea was dropped. In a second

example Westminster City School, a boys secondary school, the headteacher persuaded his Governing Body that the school should opt out. The NUT locally, as elsewhere when these proposals arose, challenged the advocates of opting out to a public debate in front of the parents who were to vote. As a result of this debate and a vigorous campaign lead by NUT members in the school a parent/teacher alliance was struck which resulted in an overwhelming vote by parents against the opt out proposal. Undoubtedly these results had a positive impact on the third school St Vincent de Paul's Catholic Primary School which was attended by the daughter of John Patten, the Secretary of State for Education (1992-94) in the Tory Cabinet. The vote against echoed the outcome at the other schools. Not a single school opted out of the Education Authority.

Battles of this kind took place up and down the country. It is notable that when the New Labour government introduced the idea of academies and then Trust Schools which we shall discuss later, they left out any suggestion that the decision to change the status of the school should be subject to any kind of democratic process which parents might be able to play a role in. Blair certainly learned from Thatcher. Democracy is a dangerous game.

Opting out however was not the only facet of the anti-comprehensive assault. Whilst it is true that there never has been a fully comprehensive system of education in schools in England and Wales, the majority of secondary age pupils, went to schools which were called, and operated on the general principle that they were "comprehensive". Children leaving their Primary School at the age of 11, transferred to a local comprehensive secondary school without any form of selection and followed a curriculum common to all. Pupils in comprehensive schools follow the National Curriculum which was introduced through the 1988 legislation referred to above. Although some children do go to private schools[x] and some to selective grammar schools, the overwhelming majority of children in England and Wales then attended comprehensive schools and did not go through any form of selection or testing to enter them. Pupil admissions have been for many years the result of a negotiated agreement between parents, schools and local education authorities.[xi]

This process however was anathema to the neo-liberals and the free-marketeer Tories. They argued that the existing system did not allow individual parents to "choose" the

school to which their own child went and furthermore that they needed some form of evidence on which to make their decisions. They accused schools and teachers of a lack of accountability, engaged in a process of collusion to deliberately hide the achievements or shortcomings of schools from public scrutiny. Despite the fact that David Blunkett, the incoming New Labour Education Secretary had made public declarations that he had no intentions of re-introducing selection at 11 he proceeded to attack the principles on which admissions to secondary schools had taken place by developing criteria that would allow increasing use of selective mechanisms. In what way was this to be done? Comprehensive schools were attacked for trying to provide a "one size fits all" education which failed to differentiate between children of differing abilities because, it was alleged, teachers worked on the basis that the lowest common denominator of ability defined the pace of work in an individual class and the ethos of the school.

Fighting the Tests

Whilst external selection of pupils at age 11 was largely impractical in many areas and downright impossible in some rural areas, the offensive against the comprehensive schools used the introduction of the nationally imposed Standardised Assessment Tasks, (SATs) at 7, 11 and 14 to publicise league tables which parents could then use to choose between schools. Since for many choice was an illusion the objective consequence of the introduction of the SATs was to increase internal methods of selection through the promotion of streaming and setting. The whole process imposed an inflexible conformity to the National Curriculum, increased the tendency to teach to the tests and produced a hierarchical league table that often said more about the social composition of the schools than about the teaching and learning within it.

The scores that schools achieved in the tests and in the public examinations at 16 and 18 became yardsticks to determine how "good" a school was deemed to be. The tests were criticised by many educationalists for imposing a curriculum that was narrow and inflexible and would lead to rote learning. Interestingly these criticisms echoed the arguments put forward in the 19th century by teachers opposed to the "Payment by results" system which operated for a period of time. Then the teachers called it the "Music Tax" because the emphasis of the testing was on the "Three Rs" – Reading,

Writing and Arithmetic. Music, Poetry and Art in particular had been pushed to the margins as teachers strove to ensure that pupils were well prepared for the visit of Inspectors upon whose judgement the school might pass or fail in its endeavour to win further funding.

In 1993, as a result of the Education (Schools) Act 1992, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) was established as a centralised mechanism to guarantee the implementation of the whole programme by linking school performance results produced by the SATs with the inspection of each school, its teaching methodologies and the professional performance of individual teachers. Ofsted was viewed by many teachers as the ideologically driven inquisition policing the system, demanding a rigid adherence to the whole process.

When the SATs were first introduced into state schools there was at first little public reaction in England and Wales [xii]. Even though they were piloted in 1990, modified and partially implemented in 1991, very few schools actually took part in them in 1992 and in 1993 a union backed boycott of the tests was held which revealed widespread opposition. By contrast in Scotland a substantial campaign was generated by parents who recognised their significance. They opposed the whole process whereby children were to be tested at 7, 11 and 14 and the school results ranked in league tables. They were critical of the suggestion that children at age 7 should be put through tests which might well lead to them being labelled and therefore prescribe the educational path they would take in the future. The campaign they built drew in the teacher unions and gathered momentum. South of the border, in England the campaign was largely begun by a group of teachers belonging to the London Association for the Teaching of English (LATE) and activists from the STA working together. They developed a thorough critique of the impact of the SATs on the teaching and learning of English within schools taking this through to their national organisation the National Association for the Teaching of English and importantly into the National Union of Teachers to which the majority, though not all, belonged. A ballot of teachers of English in January and February 1993 revealed a 90% support for a campaign of action against the tests. It was through the development of this critique and seeking to engage with teachers of science and mathematics that the groundswell for the campaign developed.

Whilst the National Union of Teachers (NUT) Annual Conference in 1993 agreed to call for a boycott, on educational grounds, the smaller union involved in the action, the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) took a more limited industrial approach to the question asserting that it was solely the additional workload burdens of supervising and marking the tests that they opposed. Whilst this route was taken in part to ensure that the boycott action conformed to the definition of an industrial dispute, under the terms of the Tory trade union legislation, the narrowness of the approach put constraints on the potential for building a campaign which could reach out to parents opposed to their children being put through the stresses of tests. The NASUWT withdrew from the boycott, thereby severely weakening the campaign, when the government promised external markers to undertake the additional work they had focussed on. Whilst the NUT continued to fight alone the campaign was called off when a further review was promised.

Despite the fact that the SATs had become embedded opposition to them continued leading once again in 2003 to calls for the implementation of a tests' boycott. Following a conference in June 2003 attended by teachers, parents, governors and others, the Anti-SATs Alliance was established to pursue the campaign. In addition to the alliance's work to produce masses of leaflets in English, others were produced in a variety of languages including Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, French, Serbo-Croat and Spanish to get the message over to all parents. The campaign won the support of leading children's authors including Alan Gibbons, Beverly Naidoo, Philip Pullman and any others. Postcards for MPs were prepared, speaker notes for parents, a "Frequently Asked Questions" leaflet and model letters to school governors calling on them to back their teachers in the boycott. A survey of teachers carried out for the NUT found that a massive 91 per cent of those responding said the tests placed additional workload on teachers and 93.1 per cent of primary and 85 per cent of secondary teachers said they were stressful for pupils. Some 90 per cent of teachers felt the tests diminished pupils' access to a broad and balanced curriculum. This view was strongest among primary teachers at 93.1 per cent compared with secondary teachers at 84.3 per cent. The condemnation of the tests was overwhelming.

In November 2003 the NUT launched a ballot for a boycott of SATs in Key Stage 1 and 2 and conducted a survey of its secondary members on their willingness to take

action. Whilst 86.2% voted for the boycott, the NUT decided not to go ahead with the action because the turnout of 34.05% was less than that 50% required under the rules of the Union. At the time many questioned the wisdom of balloting the primary school members separately from their secondary colleagues and especially isolated from the teachers of English the majority of whom remained strongly opposed to the tests.

The critique of the impact of SATs on the teaching and learning, which had much in common with the "Payment by Results" debate in the 19th Century, was dismissed as "patronising indulgent idealism". The neo-liberals had powerful backers in the Government and the army of Ofsted inspectors primed with the SATs evidence were prepared to go on the offensive against what they regarded as the romanticism of the "child centred" education which had been influential in the late 1960s ,70s and part of the 80s. The problem with the ideas of "child centred" education for the neo-liberals was that it actually posited the notion that a child's socio-economic, ethnic and cultural background, together with gender, were significant factors affecting a child's development. The idea that educationalists should take these factors into account to develop a pedagogical approach contradicted the need to assert the forces of the market and threatened to problematise the whole edifice of testing and ranking which had been constructed. The Educational free-marketeers believed that children should be exclusively judged by tests in schools, and the schools ranked on the basis of those test results.

The counter attack to this critique was ferocious and unremitting. David Blunkett, New Labour Secretary of State for Education speaking at an Education conference in London in October 1997 criticised research by Peter Robinson a leading educationalist at the London School of Economics (LSE) that highlighted the linkage between social disadvantage and academic achievement as "LSE silliness"[xiii]. One of Blunkett's aides, Michael Barber, weighed in with a further attack in the pages of the authoritative *Times Educational Supplement*. James Tooley, a leading neo-liberal educationalists was hired by Chris Woodhead, the Chief Inspector and head of Ofsted, appointed by Thatcher and retained by Blair, to investigate the value of educational research in liberal universities.[xiv] Whilst Boris Johnson, later to become a Conservative Member of Parliament, said of the evolution of New Labour's

educational policies that "this is nothing less than a triumph of Tory free-market ideology and, on the face of it a brutal snub to core Labour voters."[xv]

Post Comprehensive Modernism

For Blair and others the education system they wished to develop was to be a "post-comprehensive" system which needed to "differentiate provision for individual aptitudes in schools"[xvi] Blair's principal spokesperson, Alastair Campbell, put it much more bluntly when he said that "the days of the bog standard comprehensive are over"[xvii]. A "good school" was to be defined exclusively by its examination results and the grammar school and independent schools, of course without any reference to the non-school factors which might impact on children's learning, became the model to be emulated. No account was taken of the selective processes such schools employed or the real or relatively privileged socio-economic backgrounds from which the vast majority of their children came.

The neo-liberals attacked comprehensive education on the basis that there was little or no differentiation in the teaching and learning methods employed by comprehensive schools. At the core of this was an attack on the concept of Mixed Ability Teaching (MAT) which, it was claimed, resulted in learning progressing at the pace of the least academically able child in a class, thereby "holding back" the more able. The critique of MAT was backed by a major propaganda offensive to deride its achievements and to undermine its defence there was a related attack on educational research which in any way sought to defend it or even to question the assumptions and credibility of those who launched the offensive.[xviii]

Although the initial campaign against the SATs had strong backing from many teachers and notably from the National Union of Teachers there was a shortcoming in the campaign in that it failed to reach out to parents to explain the full impact of the testing regime. Whilst the parents of younger children were more hostile to the tests readily identifying the stresses that their children were put under, parents of older secondary age children were not won to the broader campaign against the tests. The situation in England and Wales was different from that in Scotland where parents had been at the forefront. That essential alliance, between teachers and parents, was evident from time to time but, apart from a few local important exceptions such as in

Harrow, never flourished into a fully-fledged united front across the whole of the country.

One other weakness of the campaign was that whilst the case against the tests was well made by teachers of English, the support amongst teachers of science and maths was less strong and less well established. The arguments were made but the critique did not have the same resonance since many teachers in these subject areas considered that the tests were value-free, had a greater degree of objectivity and were less problematic than those in English. The major weakness lay in the failure to recognise the ideological role to which such tests were to be put and the key role they played in ranking and judging schools.

Ironically it had been Margaret Thatcher, as Minister for Education in the Government of another Conservative Prime Minister, Edward Heath who, in the early 1970s, had presided over the closure of large numbers of selective grammar schools which had flourished following the 1944 Education Act.[xix] The '44 Act, introduced on a bipartisan basis by Conservative and Labour politicians, was seen as the product of a partnership agreement which incorporated the church schools and the selective grammar schools into the state system. The Act had left the privileged, private independent schools, often ironically referred to as "Public Schools", intact. In this it paralleled the legislation which introduced the National Health Service (NHS) leaving the privileges of medical consultants unchallenged, free to work in the private practice whilst undertaking work in state hospitals and indeed frequently using the publicly provided resources of the NHS to undertake their private operations.

In both instances the egalitarian, welfarist aspirations that had stimulated the momentum for changes to Education and Health were tempered by compromises made with those whose privileges might otherwise have been challenged. Nevertheless the main changes, which were introduced in both spheres, were a product of pressure resulting from a profound sense of injustice amongst wide sections of society and especially sections of the working class born out of their personal experiences.

The changing face of the economy both in Britain and internationally to a certain degree revealed, some politicians argued, inadequacies and anachronisms in the

educational system which had evolved in an economic era in which manufacturing had played a more key role. Over 25% of Britain's manufacturing base disappeared, or some might argue was destroyed, in the first four years of the 1980s. Even where manufacturing remained it was progressively being confronted by technological changes which transformed processes and rendered some skills obsolete. Those politicians who proposed educational changes often put forward the case that they were necessary to ensure that British capital maintained economic competitiveness internationally but it also reflected employers desires to introduce employee "flexibility" breaking whatever safeguards workers had won in some industries, such as print, against excessive exploitation. Whilst no substantial evidence could be produced to prove the link between education and economic progress some employers claimed, nevertheless the argument was readily appropriated by politicians and ideologues who utilized it to justify the changes they were pushing through.

From 1997, New Labour in government adapted very readily to this instrumentalist notion of education but their adoption of these views began before they were elected to office and their embrace of the concept of privatization was evident in the actions of key political figures in the years running up to the 1997 election.[xx] The significant transformation which took place was that the newly elected government made a step change to expand the use of privatization measures and neo-liberal concepts. Whilst the initial intervention was focused around questions of capital and revenue expenditure it was coupled with an ideological offensive on teaching and learning methodology.

A more cynical view of this orientation by the new government was that it was linked to the assessment made by Blair and others that to stay in government they needed to win the support of the "Thatcher generation" defined as the younger middle class who had benefited from Thatcher's economic policies and hence were driven by individualistic aspiration and absorbed by consumerist preoccupations.[xxi] This layer, New Labour politicians had assessed, was critical because, in the British political system, their votes would be key to winning marginal constituencies which would determine who would form the next Government. In the electoral system used in Britain the outcome of a General Election could depend on some hundreds of votes in a limited number of key marginal constituencies.

Education Action Zones

The neo-liberalism introduced by Thatcher into the public sector was given a broader justification by the Blair Government. This process was begun stealthily through the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998 which, amongst a number of measures, introduced the "Education Action Zone" (EAZ).[xxii] Each EAZ it was said "shall have as its main object the improvement of standards in the provision of education at each of the participating schools." The central purposes of the initiative however was to break down the public/private interface thereby legitimising the involvement of private enterprise in the public education system. This was well summed up by Graham Walker, education specialist of a company called Arthur Andersen the partner in the Newham EAZ and adviser to Department for Education and Employment, when he said in an interview "If you look at the state education system. I think there's a general recognition that it's not providing what society wants, and that many people say that there is a crisis, and I think I would agree that there is a crisis, that we have to move to another level. And a lot of solutions that are relevant to the running of our schools and our education system generally are actually already in existence in the private sector, and the Education Action Zones are one way of really softening up and getting people ready in a more sophisticated manner than they can on their own as individual schools for this new way."[xxiii]

The EAZs were to bring together a group of schools including primary and secondary schools working with a private sponsor to develop educational programmes that were designed to address problems relating especially to the level of engagement by pupils from socially disadvantaged areas with the curriculum. The government was to put in an initial £500,000 and then a further £250,000 to be matched by another £250,000 by a sponsor from the private sector. Despite the fact that employers who were part of an EAZ were meant to make a financial commitment for the 3 years of the EAZ's lifespan, very few made any contribution whatsoever. Of the first 12 established the average contribution by the private employer in their first year of operation was £11,473, the rest being an "in kind" contribution ranging from cast off computers to provision of office space and meeting rooms for the management consortium that ran the EAZ.

The bids, submitted jointly by Local Education Authorities and employers, to establish EAZs often referred to the advantages that would be gained by linking schools to the local employers. Business was not slow to appreciate the advantages that might come their way from such schemes. In Middlesbrough, a company called NTL entered a scheme with a very clear idea of their objectives. NTL's Business Director Bill Bates said, "We wanted to make sure that children had the best opportunity we could give them to access ... (new) ... technologies. They will be the technologies of the future, they need to feel fairly comfortable in using them. And after all those children today will be our subscribers tomorrow." [xxiv]

A great deal of the EAZ promotion emphasis by the government was centred on the ability of schools working within a zone to develop their own educational programme and disapply the National Curriculum. Whilst this seemed attractive to some it was criticised by others who drew attention to the tendency of the proposed schemes to adopt a narrow vocationalist curriculum. This was quite explicit in some of the proposals put forward from areas like Lambeth. The campaign against EAZs launched by the STA drew the comparison between the education practices of the zones and the "part-timers" system introduced in the early part of the twentieth century, especially in working class areas of the north of England, where children would go to work, perhaps in a cotton mill, half the week and attend school the other half. Some criticised this condemnation as over dramatic but there is no doubt that it hit home and many Government politicians were anxious to assert that there would be no "Gradgrind" curriculum in the EAZs. The critique of the EAZs was spelt out in a pamphlet called "Trojan Horses" which sold thousands of copies in NUT branches and helped consolidate opposition to the whole idea. A number of schools refused to join locally promoted EAZs, meetings were held in schools in Hackney for example and parents called on their governors not to become part of the zones. The debate was taken up in the pages of national newspapers like *The Guardian* carrying full page spreads, including an article by the author of this chapter.

Whilst it is not surprising that the curricula features of the EAZs were quietly dropped the initiative did in one important respect achieve its objective – the public/private interface was effectively established. In a sense the EAZ project was the forerunner of the City Academies scheme that was first announced in September 2000. The

Academies were surrounded by the same rhetoric that had accompanied the EAZs. In the words of the Government Education Department, "Academies are an integral part of the Government's strategy for raising standards in the most disadvantaged and challenging areas. They will raise standards by innovative approaches to management, governance, teaching and the curriculum. The involvement of sponsors from the voluntary and business sector or faith groups will allow them to bring their skills and expertise to each Academy." [xxv]

Academies

Once again private sponsors were invited to participate in the programme. Anyone wishing to become a sponsor of an Academy had only to make a contribution of £2 million and the Government would provide the rest of the money necessary to fund building where new building was deemed necessary and to pay for all the running costs. The schools would then be handed over to the sponsors. "Each Academy is set up as a company limited by guarantee with charitable status and will have a board of governors responsible for the governance and strategic leadership of the school." As with the EAZ programme however little or no money has been forthcoming from the private sector. On 3rd May 2006 *The Guardian* reported that only 4 out of 27 academies had received the full £2 million pledged by sponsors and 4 schools opened in September 2005 had received no money whatsoever.[xxvi]

Like many of the New Labour Education policies they had their origin in the United States where the Charter School had been introduced in much the same way. However in order to reinforce this policy the Government linked the whole academies programme to the *Building Schools for the Future* proposals requiring Local Authorities to consider the establishment of academies before gaining access to any funds for the rebuilding or refurbishment of schools. Whilst the Government is wielding the stick with one hand allegations have surfaced of honours being offered to induce potential sponsors to come forward. The matter has been investigated by the police although no prosecutions have followed.

Little wonder perhaps that the claims for the Academy's programme, designed to see 53 Academies established by 2007 and 200 by 2010 with 30 in London by 2008 and 60 by 2010 were met with concern by educationalists. Learning from the problems

confronted by the Tories resulting from parental ballots for Opting Out, the New Labour Government Academies programme is being rolled forward without such democratic encumbrances. Notwithstanding that there have been numerous campaigns against the proposals to take schools off Local Authorities and hand them to private sponsors.

The academies programme frequently resulted in schools deemed to be underperforming, being renamed, perhaps rebuilt and then aggressively marketed. Understandably many parents and indeed teachers, want to see children in new surroundings, however campaigners against the academies challenged the necessity for the involvement of private sponsors, many of whom had no connection with or experience of education. A vigorous campaign in Waltham Forest lead by the local NUT branch successfully opposed the proposal to replace McEntee Secondary School with an academy sponsored by the multimillionaire fashion designer Jasper Conran and dissuaded him from taking on the role. Conran's head of public relations put it somewhat diplomatically saying "We have been conducting a feasibility study and have come to the conclusion that this is not right for us. There are several reasons why but we will not be discussing them."[xxvii]

Elsewhere proposals for an academy in Doncaster, were shelved after protests against the sponsor by parents and teachers who were also uneasy about the creationist beliefs of the proposed sponsor. Public meetings took place in Newcastle bringing together local Members of Parliament, parents, teachers and trade unionists. An extremely effective local campaign, again built by teachers in the NUT was built around proposals for two Academies in Islington. In one case the sponsors, a group of hedge fund speculators, were keen to set up a 5-18 years school and parents of children at some of the local primary schools joined forces with parents of children at the nearby secondary school. Public meetings, demonstrations outside the council buildings and outside the hedge fund companies headquarters in central London all helped highlight the strong opposition to what was regarded as an outright attack on public education provision and comprehensive education.

In Brent an academy has been proposed and the local NUT occupied the land on which the building was to be erected. Within one week Andrew Rosenfeld, the

sponsor withdrew from the scene. The local council set about looking for another sponsor and the struggle was continuing at the time of publishing.

Problems of a different nature cropped up in other cases. In London, the Capital City Academy was dogged by complaints about the design of the building and ran into financial difficulties in April 2004, with the announcement of seven staff redundancies following the resignation of the headteacher after less than a year. After the sponsor of Westminster Academy, Chelsfield plc, was taken over by another company Multiplex, staff at the school remained in some doubts as to who was running things when Multiplex announced that they were no longer involved. Needless to say neither parents nor staff were informed about what was going on and the Westminster Local Authority washed its hands of the matter.

Campaigns against the Academies have sprung up almost everywhere such a proposal has been mooted. In Birmingham, Bradford, Brent, Hackney, Islington, Lambeth, Lewisham, Merton, Milton Keynes, Norwich, Oldham, Southwark, Westminster and many other towns across England parents and teachers have established campaigning groups bringing together parents, teachers, school staff, students, governors, trade unions and campaign bodies like CASE (Campaign for State Education). In some instances these campaigns have developed to embrace activity concerning other educational issues such as schools reorganisations and the introduction of Trust Schools, as an alternative to the academy.[xxviii]

The whole Academies programme has had to face a range of tribulations so much so that the government has been forced to introduce a variety of measures to positively encourage sponsors to become involved in the academies initiative. Sponsors have been made offers of “4 for the price of 3”. One sponsor, the United Learning Trust was asked to contribute £1.5 million (instead of the customary £2 million) for 8 of the 11 schools it was proposing in September 2005.[xxix] A national scandal hit the Academies supporters when Des Smith, a headteacher and council member of the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) resigned after allegations of a “cash-for-honours” offer resulting from comments he made. [xxx] Karen Buck MP, a former Labour Minister, threatened to take her child away from Paddington Academy, in Westminster, saying that she "didn't expect problems with deficits and building management before the end of the first term."

From an educational point of view many of the academy schools failed according to the Government's own criteria in terms of pupil achievement and the reports by the Ofsted Inspectors. In addition some Academies were accused of massaging their examination results by expelling pupils who might bring down their league status in comparison to neighbouring schools. One academy in Ealing in the academic year 2004-5 expelled 4 times as many pupils as other local schools. Economically there have been problems in many of the schools. The National Audit Office, an authoritative public body, reported in 2007 that 17 out of the first 26 academies were running over costs. Westminster Academy declared redundancies in 2007 within months of being opened in September 2006. Private sponsors are coming forward who have a very specific evangelising Christian agenda, promoting creationism and other bizarre ideas, without any concern for the views of the parents, pupils or staff.

It is these issues that have lead to a widespread questioning of the whole programme. It is apparent that there are a disproportionate number of religious schools being created which raises further questions relating to admissions policies which allow for selective preferences to be used which have the possibility of creating mono-ethnic schools, because of their religious character. There is a real danger of predominantly white only Christian schools being created in some communities or schools with one religious ethos which is wholly inappropriate to the catchment area in which it might be situated. There is a real apprehension that the dynamic of this process will be to encourage the creation of religiously based selective secondary schools with a mono-cultural perspective.

In response to this scenario the Anti-Academies Alliance was established following a successful conference in London.[xxxi] The Alliance brought together active local and national campaign bodies together with academics, trade unions including the National Union of Teachers and political campaigners. The intention of the Alliance is to create a broad based united front of opposition to the neo-liberal agenda embodied in the academies programme and to turn back this offensive arguing for sustained investment and support for a "good local school for every child." Whilst the alliance is still in the first stages of construction, its political framework offers the most optimistic possibility that has been available to date. The campaign is trying to make a

conscious effort to unify those local activists into a nationally focussed endeavour which is critical to halting the juggernaut of the academies programme.

Private Finance Initiative

Although the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) had been introduced some years earlier under the Conservative Government it was not until the election of the New Labour Government in 1997 that it really took off. The PFI, also called the Public Private Partnership, (PPP) initially a scheme whereby private contractors could bid for capital building programmes and then contract for the operation and maintenance of the buildings for a period up to 35 years in some cases later evolved and the capital building aspect of a contract dispensed with.

The budget for Education in Britain in 1997-98 was £39 billion. The estimated value of the replacement of the Education "estate", which included approximately 24,000 schools, was put at around £58 billion. The financial size of any single school contract and the substantial financial benefits which might be made represented a massive opportunity to any successful bidder. Whilst PFI was introduced in 1992 it didn't really take off until the election of the New Labour Government five years later. The whole PPP/PFI scheme received a massive boost in 1997 when the New Labour Government Paymaster General Geoffrey Robinson, invited Malcolm Bates, chairman of Pearl Assurance plc and Premier Farnell plc to review the operation of PFI.

Prior to the introduction of PFI a private contractor would be paid to build a new school to a Local Authority's specifications but any services or maintenance which might be needed to run the school thereafter would be provided by the Authority itself. With the introduction of PFI/PPP one contractor might build the school and then themselves operate a range of services such as heating, maintenance and school meals through a long term contract. Later the nature of PFI/PPP contracts was to change away from the requirement that they had to involve a "design" and "build" component and the contracts themselves could vary in length from relatively short term – 3 years – through to very long ones – 60 years.

One of the earliest and most sharply contested campaigns against PFI took place around proposals to rebuild Pimlico School in Westminster, London. Pimlico, a

secondary comprehensive 11-18 school was situated less than one mile from the Houses of Commons, in the City of Westminster with an Education Authority which was run by the Conservative Party. The school, which had been built in the 1960s and had won prizes for its design, stood on some of the most expensive real estate land in the whole of England, if not Europe.

The proposal to rebuild Pimlico School, first mooted in 1995 by the then Tory lead Department for Education and Science (forerunner of the DfES), was at the outset a classic PFI, a DBFO scheme – Design, Build, Finance and Operate. The intention was to pull down the school over a period of time and to replace it with a totally new one. The project had certain added attractions – selling off an acre of land and building about 200 dwellings which at 1996 at prices might well have sold in excess of £500,000 each.

It is interesting to look at how the Conservative dominated Westminster City Council dealt with this and just how the process worked out in favour of the private bidders and PFI. Normal requirements governing the use of land for building purposes were manipulated to suggest the cost to the public of building the school could be offset against the profits to be made.[xxxii]

In the Outline Business Case produced for the projected schools' PFI scheme in Haringey, another part of London, the PFI scheme costs were always being revised downwards whilst those for a public sector scheme were pushed up and up. In the case of schools in Haringey it was argued that the projected benefits of improved pupil performance in examinations guaranteed by a new school built under PFI would result in a greater degree of employability and therefore lessen the likelihood that young people would be a charge on public costs in the future. In this example as in most cases the judgements made were totally subjective and highly tendentious.

However things at Pimlico School didn't stop there - those who won the contract to build the new school would also win a contract to provide all the non-teaching services in the school.[xxxiii] They would be able to look at alternative uses for the school premises. All the existing employees, with the exception of the teachers and the office staff, would be transferred to the new company that would have the responsibility for the contract. The contract would be for a period of around 35 years.

Whilst much was made of the fact that the existing staff would be transferred with their terms and conditions protected past experience of PFI schemes often revealed this as ultimately a worthless guarantee.

An interesting feature of the Pimlico School PFI case was the role played by the then Shadow Home Secretary and New Labour leading figure and future Cabinet Member Jack Straw MP. He was absolutely committed to the PFI scheme and one of its most ardent advocates. Acting in his capacity as a member of the schools Governing Body he told everyone that "this is the only money being offered, and this is the only ship on the water. We have to go along this route". However just in case anyone was worried he also reassured them that this was nevertheless a "juggernaut that we could put the brakes on".

His and the local council's determination to push the whole thing through is reflected in this account of events by Europe Singh, the Chair of Governors.

"Between 1998 and 2000, governors agreed eight separate resolutions hostile to progressing the PFI proposals. Unfortunately, it was never made clear that governors were able to terminate the project. Indeed, in 1997 we were misinformed that we had no such powers."

"For stakeholders, the sticking point turned on the feasibility of alternatives: ... (for example one report said that) refurbishment was 30% cheaper, and did not require us to sacrifice a quarter of our playgrounds for housing."[xxxiv]

Whilst Westminster City Council wanted to enter into a deal which would have got them a £25 million subsidy to start a PFI project it was known at the time that a refurbishment programme would cost a fraction of this. In the Asset Management Plan which Westminster City Council Local Education Authority had to draw up to identify their priorities for rebuilding and refurbishment programmes, the City Council projected, in 2001, that a mere £2.3 million should be spent on Pimlico School. This figure contrasts with the £2.5 million the Tory Government thought necessary to deal with problems in 1995. Pimlico was being punished for its resistance to PFI.

The principle way in which profits are garnered is through cuts that are made to the quality and cost of existing provision. [xxxv] Although the PFI proposal in the case of Pimlico School excluded teaching and office staff from the transfer to the new private company that would take over the school, the rest of the school staff would be transferred across and face pressure that would result in the worsening of their pay and conditions of employment. School staff, teachers and parents were well aware of the implications of what was being proposed.

This experience is the same as that in the United States. The Massachusetts Education Association teachers' union found that when companies took over a school and it became a Charter Schools, staff who had been long term employees of the school were sacked in a very short space of time. Whilst in Britain the legal requirements of the Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment (TUPE) legislation was meant to give protection to staff transferred from one employer to another, in practice in did not. In Tower Hamlets, London, Babcock and Brown, the bidding company, said TUPE would operate for 5 years but evidence from elsewhere suggest that even these promises are fairly meaningless assurances. New staff are generally recruited on new contracts, whilst existing staff transferred over are pressurised to change from their old contracts or face the rest of their careers standing still in the same post.

Those who wanted the PFI scheme to be pushed through at Pimlico School did not have their own way however. In order to push the project through the government and the local City Council had to win the backing of the Governing Body of the School and it was right there that they began to run up against questioning which developed into opposition. The Governing Body, comprised of representatives of the Local Education Authority, Parents and Teachers took their responsibilities to the school extremely seriously. They were concerned to know: What the cost of the proposal would be? What would happen to the children in the school whilst the new school was being built alongside the existing one? What would be the costs of a refurbishment as opposed to a complete replacement? They interrogated these issues in some detail, inviting the original school architect to make a report, inviting appropriate engineers to estimate the costs, requiring clear and specific answers as to what would happen to the existing building and the children in it whilst all the replacement work was going on.

PFI – The Human Costs

Alongside the Governors, staff at the school, though wishing to see improvements to their school buildings, recognised that the PFI proposal was about much more than its structure. They themselves would face a whole period of disruption whilst classrooms were pulled down and new ones went up right alongside. Given the likely levels of chaos staff might well start to look for posts elsewhere whilst new staff might be reluctant to apply for jobs in what many foresaw as a grand building site for several years. There was a concern at the proposed reductions in the play space available to the pupils in an inner London school with few outdoor amenities. The majority of the non-teaching staff in the main faced the prospect of being transferred to a new employer without any certain guarantees that their jobs, their pay or pensions would remain the same in the future. New non-teaching staff might be hired on quite different contracts, paid less, required to work longer hours and be exploited as a wedge to oust more longstanding staff who had some element of protection in their contracts.

One of the key factors which none of the outside agents appreciated was just what those who worked in the school thought about it. In fact the staff, both teaching and non-teaching, had a loyalty to the school and a commitment to the community they belonged to. They were not opposed to changes, indeed they had for many years complained about the need for a better level of maintenance to the building and sought support for capital investment in it but without the Government or the Local Authority responding.

The anxieties of the parents were also evident and they were ready allies of the staff and those governors opposed to the plan. However the parents, staff and Governors were not alone. The school sat in the middle of a rectangle of buildings in one of the most densely populated areas of London. It provided an open space for the residents with trees and a variation in the skyline from that of neighbouring buildings, allowing in more light than might otherwise have been there. At the weekends, during the holidays and outside of school hours the space of the school provided relative quiet in comparison with the busy traffic of the nearby streets. The local residents took up the campaign worried that their neighbourhood would become one grand building site.

Eventually the Government and the local Westminster City Council conceded defeat but only after a prolonged period of campaigning which had fought them to a standstill. This was an outstanding victory for all concerned against a powerful array of opponents. This defeat of the PFI proposal was achieved in the end because the campaigners had been successful in bringing together a wide coalition consisting of parents, Governors, staff, local residents, trade unions and students. The campaign was successful because of its imaginative use of a variety of tactics to challenge the proposal at every stage and because of the tenacity of those involved.[xxxvi] It revealed a potential which has inspired other campaigns that have faced the relentless march of privatisation.

Inevitably because each and every PFI proposal was different the conditions that applied in the Pimlico School case were not replicated in subsequent PFI schemes. There were, and remain, many schools which are old and dilapidated and need to be replaced. The argument that PFI is the "only show in town" has become very powerful as central government quickly learned the lesson that it needed to impress schools' governing bodies that they had to go down that route. The Government changed the ground rules of the PFI no longer tying it to a building programme or to whole school projects. In the London Borough of Tower Hamlets the PFI contract covered the management of the schools premises and involved a cluster of schools.[xxxvii] In this case each individual school governing body had to make a decision to be part of the process. Although in the end sufficient numbers did opt in to the process to make it commercially worthwhile, its viability was in some doubt at various stages because the company involved were concerned that the scale of the venture should, from their point of view, be profitable.

In this case the campaign against the PFI was able to take on a broader local character, linking schools together and bringing the collective energies and strength to the benefit of the individual institutions. The persistent dilemma in this and other similar examples which were to follow was that the opposition to the proposed privatisation of the services had some difficulty in providing evidence of convincing alternatives to what was on offer. In her years in office Margaret Thatcher had coined the expression "TINA" – there is no alternative – and this was how the PFI schemes were presented to parents, pupils, governors, staff and often the local education authority itself. The

long period of underinvestment in Education throughout the Thatcher years had built up significant problems which needed to be addressed. The New Labour Government presented the PFI route as the only way that this could be carried out.

In the view of many of the Pimlico governors however the school paid a price for this absolutely time consuming process with hours and hours of meetings and incredible amounts of energy diverted to this whole process. The ideological obsessiveness of the Government and the inflexibility of the City Council took its toll on staff, students, parents and governors. The price of privatisation is not simply the financial – it is a human cost too.

The neo-liberal agenda of the Blair Government was not confined of course to the essential infrastructure of education – it was never exclusively about the capital expenditure needed to replace the building stock, nor about its running, nor about the non-teaching staff, nor even about the "non-educational" aspects of the Education system. The essence of neo-liberalism is a belief that the market should be the ultimate regulator of anything and everything – all aspects of life should be viewed as commodities and their worth determined by the choices that the consumers make. This would be as true for Education and Health as it might be for buying a washing powder or a car. All constraints which might interfere with the free and unfettered processes of "production", in its broadest sense, or with the consumers "choice" have to be removed. The distribution of the end product would be entirely determined by the ability of the consumer to pay the price in the market place.

Performance Related Pay

The campaign against the SATs was however not over. It resurfaced as a matter of concern in the early 2000s with many of the same arguments prevailing. The Anti-SATs Alliance attempted to build the kind of links that would take the campaign out to a wider parental audience and address some of the weaknesses identified in the earlier campaign. However whilst the critiques were as sharp and articulate as before the SATs were now embedded in schools practice and were for younger teachers perhaps viewed in the same critical light. The changes that had taken place in education were now being transmitted to a new generation of teachers through the Educational Institutions of the universities and were becoming the norm.

This process was complimented by the introduction of new forms of pay arrangements backed by performance management mechanisms for teachers which gave greater power to individual schools and especially headteachers, to determine the salaries of individual teachers. Performance Related Pay was introduced which required the production of evidence which headteachers and governing bodies were encouraged to use to determine a teachers progress across the "Threshold" and on up through the Upper Pay Scales. The government has insisted on stronger forms of Performance Management designed to monitor the performance of each individual teacher in the most minute detail.

These changes are under challenge by some teacher organisations, not out of a fear of teacher accountability, but because the whole process robs teachers of the capacity to be innovative or to have any professional control over their practice as teachers.

Whilst the EAZ was tackled by campaigners at a local level, the Academies programme, though still fought by parents and teachers at the grass roots, has made tentative steps towards the development of a national campaigning strategy. In 2006 the Anti-Academy Alliance with its roots connected to activists in the National Union of Teachers linking up with educational campaign bodies like CASE (Campaign for State Education) and others in an attempt to develop a broad based strategy in response to the government's programme.

Notes

[i] Most of the references in this chapter are to Education in England and Wales. Education in Scotland has always had a degree of independence and during the period discussed was not under the control of the Secretary of State for Education and some of the features referred to are not applicable. Education in Wales has also, especially since the establishment of the National Assembly for Wales (1998), developed a degree of autonomy.

[ii] The Ridley Plan was leaked to *The Economist* in 1978 and was implemented by Thatcher – coal stocks were built up, power stations converted from coal to oil use and she appointed Ian McGregor as Chairman of the Coal Board to employ his US union-busting managerial techniques. She was determined to even the score for the

defeat the Tories experienced in 1972 and 1974, described by one historian, A.J.P. Taylor as the miners' revenge for their "defeats of 1921 and 1926".

McGregor provoked the NUM to strike in 1984 by announcing cuts at Cortonwood Colliery in Yorkshire, whilst Thatcher organised the Civil Contingencies Unit to coordinate the state's response and through a variety of connections an alternative employer-friendly body called the Union of Democratic Miners was established based on the Nottingham coalfield to split the action of the NUM.

[iii] *Woman's Own* Interview *"Aids, education and the year 2000!"* published 31 October 1987

[iv] Tony Blair, Prime Minister speaking to British Venture Capital Conference 6/7/1999 said, "You try getting changes in the public sector and the public services. I bear the scars on my back after two years in government and heaven knows what it will be like after a bit longer."

[v] The selective grammar school was the paradigm which was used as the referent for "better education" by both the Conservative and Labour Governments.

[vi] From 1979 to 1996 no less than 11 pieces of anti-trade union legislation were introduced by the Conservative Governments covering issues such as: industrial action, balloting, picketing, secondary action, removal of recognition rights, restriction on definition of industrial dispute, restrictions on area of dispute to 'own' employer, intervention in union internal democracy, attack on employee rights. Employment Act (1980), Employment Act (1982), Trade Union Act (1984), Public Order Act (1986),Employment Act (1988), Employment Act (1989), Employment Act (1990), Trade Union & Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act (1992), Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act (1993), Employment Rights Act (1996), Employment Tribunals Act (1996).

[vii] Socialist Teachers Alliance (STA) is an alliance of left activists which was formed in 1976 in response to the attacks on educational spending that had begun from the early 1970s onwards.

[viii] The most notable attack on Local Education Authority control was the break-up of the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) which was at the time the largest education authority in Europe known for its championing of comprehensive education.

The ILEA had, frequently with the encouragement of the Inner London Teachers Association (ILTA – the Inner London branch of the NUT representing over 14,000 teachers in the authority) developed polices on racism, sexism and conducted wide ranging reviews of primary, secondary, special education provision and the tertiary sector. The ILEA was eventually broken up in 1990.

[ix] Almost the whole of the ILTA Council were suspended by the Officers of the Union for organizing a one day strike against the Bill. The ILTA Officers received widespread backing from activists across the country. Although they were reinstated as a result of the decision by the lay Disciplinary Committee of the Union , the National Executive, upon appeal by the Officers of the national union, suspended some of the ILTA Officers for one year, banned them from office and expelled others. However the ILTA 8 were eventually exonerated by the fact that the National Executive itself subsequently called strike action and a judicial review reinstated them and criticised the actions of the National Officers.

[x] Elite private schools in Britain are often confusingly called “public schools” having originally been founded to provide education for the “deserving poor”. In March 2007 the Independent schools estimated 7% of school age children went to the 2,500 private schools in the United Kingdom. In London the percentage rises to 13% of school age children.

[xi] Forms of selection are being reintroduced progressively – “postcode” selection (buying homes in a specific school’s catchment area); faith based schools; specialist schools; academies.

[xii] SATs, and the National Curriculum to which they were tied, were never made compulsory for private schools.

[xiii] Peter Robinson *"Literacy, Numeracy and Economic Performance*" (1997) and personal contemporaneous note.

[xiv] *The Observer* Nick Cohen 5/4/98

[xv] *Daily Telegraph* 12/1/98

[xvi] *The Times* 14/2/2001

[xvii] *The Mirror* 13/02/2001

[xviii] Socialist Teacher No. 65 1998 Jo Boaler (For a cogent defence of MAT:" Research studies in the UK ... have shown that setted and streamed systems result in:

a) disproportionate numbers of students who are working class, black or male being allocated to low sets and streams which do not reflect their ability. This seems to occur because it is difficult for teachers to make decisions about ability that are not influenced by such factors as behaviour, language, appearance, sex, ethnicity or social class

b) the polarisation of students into pro and anti-school factions corresponding to their placement into high or low sets and the development of anti-school values amongst students in low sets

c) the labelling of students in low sets which causes students to regard themselves as low attainers and perform at a level than is lower than their potential.

[Sources: Abraham (1995); Ball (1981); Tomlinson (1987); Lacey (1970); Hargreaves (1967)]

[xix] The Labour Government policy decision to promote comprehensive education in 1965 was implemented by Circular 10/65, an instruction to local education authorities to plan for conversion.

In 1970 the Conservative party re-entered government. Margaret Thatcher became secretary of state for education and ended the compulsion on local authorities to convert. However, many local authorities were so far down the path that it would have

been prohibitively expensive to attempt to reverse the process, and more comprehensive schools were established under Mrs Thatcher than any other education secretary.

[xx] See Ken Jones "Education in Britain 1944 to Present" and the references to the speech by Labour Prime Minister James Callaghan at Ruskin College , Oxford in October 1976.

[xxi] NOP (National Opinion Poll) surveys identified the switch in votes by so-called C1 (non-managerial office workers) and C2 (skilled manual workers) as critical to the election victory in 1997. C1 voting Labour: 32% (1992) 47% (1997). C2 35% (1992) 54% (1997)

[xxii] See Bernard Regan "Trojan Horses – Education Action Zones" *Socialist Teachers Alliance* pamphlet 1998. The pamphlet pointed out the origins of the policy lay in United States education initiative around "Charter Schools" and that it constituted the thin end of the wedge.

[xxiii] BBC *File on Four* (7/2/99)

[xxiv] *ibid.*

[xxv] *The Standards Site*: www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/academies/faq/?version=1

[xxvi] *Yorkshire Post* , James Reed, Education Correspondent "Tony Blair's flagship academies are built with the help of sponsors who are supposed to provide around 10 per cent of the starting costs – usually £2m – and operate them once they open. But a letter seen by the Yorkshire Post shows that the Emmanuel Schools Foundation, which is supported by millionaire Sir Peter Vardy, was told last year it would only have to pay £2m towards its first three academies and £1.5m for each one after that." (4/10/2005)

[xxvii] *The Guardian* 3/12/2004

[xxviii] Although a Trust school does not require a private sponsor it still becomes a school independent of a Local Authority.

[xxix] *The Guardian* 16/09/2005 A DfES spokesman confirmed the strategy: "Multiple sponsors have already demonstrated their commitment to the programme and have made a major financial contribution. Where a sponsor has already invested £6m across three academy projects, we allow them to commit £1.5m to the fourth and subsequent projects. £1.5m is a significant further investment, and given the commitment the sponsors have demonstrated to the programme, we consider this approach reasonable."

[xxx] *The Guardian* 16/01/2006 The Sunday Times reported that Mr Smith told a journalist posing as a potential donor's PR assistant that "the prime minister's office would recommend someone like [the donor] for an OBE, a CBE or a knighthood".

Asked if this would be just for getting involved in the academies, he responded: "Yes ... they call them services to education. I would say to Cyril's office that we've got to start writing to the prime minister's office." For a donation of £10m, "you could go to the House of Lords".

[xxxi] Anti-Academies Alliance. www.antiacademies.org.uk/

[xxxii] *Public Finance* 4/11/1999 . Many commentators in the field pointed out the hypocrisy of the systems used. As Jean Shaoul and Pam Edwards writing in *Public Finance* pointed out "While the Public Sector Comparator (for Pimlico School prepared by Westminster), assumes compliance with local authority guidelines for housing density and 25% social housing, the PFI consortium can ignore both. Hence it is able to put a higher value on the 'surplus' land, £10 million more, which swings the deal."

[xxxiii] Much of the information on Pimlico School is drawn from a number of committed campaigners, teachers and governors at the school who worked tirelessly over many years and from my own involvement as the local NUT Secretary in Westminster.

[xxxiv] Bernard Regan "Education Not for Sale" *Socialist Teachers Alliance* 2001.

[xxxv] In studies undertaken for the public sector union UNISON the profits of the private companies are typically made by a reduction in the staffing costs – there

would be fewer employees or the same staff paid at lower rates or indeed a combination of both. To quote one example from a study of a privatisation in the then publicly run prison service: "A security officer in a Securicor prison gets £14,000 per year for a 44 hour week whilst an HMP prison officer is paid £20,000 for a 39 hour week." (Margie Jaffe of UNISON May 1999)

[xxxvi] Pimlico school now (April 2007) faces the prospect of being turned into an Academy at the behest of Lord Adonis, one of Prime Minister Blair's education advisors.

[xxxvii] Evidence concerning Tower Hamlets was gathered from the East London Teachers Association (NUT) and activists involved locally.

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Since joining the National Union of Teachers in 1966 he has spoken on and contributed to the development of Union policies and campaigns on a wide variety of topics including for example: comprehensive education, anti-racism, equality concerns, anti-privatisation, special educational needs, teachers rights, internationalism and many others.

He was one of the founding members of the Socialist Teachers Alliance in 1976