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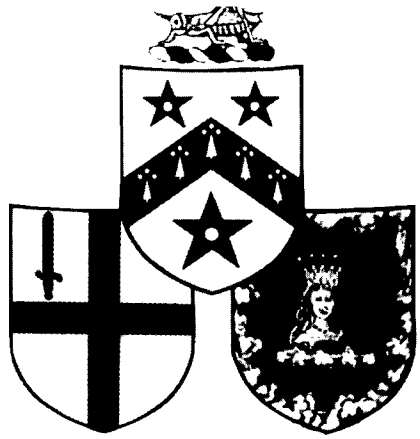

THE EDUCATION REFORM ACT, 1988, IN ITS HISTORICAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Six Lectures by

PROFESSOR J.M. RAE MA PhD
Gresham Professor of Rhetoric

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Lecture 1 - WHERE DID THE WAR-TIME DREAM GO WRONG?

Tuesday 18 October 1988

This morning I am going to speak about the promise that was unfulfilled in the Butler Education Act of 1944 and describe how in the 50's, 60's and 70's so many who had hopes of those war-time years were sadly disillusioned. But first may I make a general point about this series of lectures. The Education Reform Act of 1988, the Baker Act, is in my view the most important piece of educational legislation ever to be passed by a British Parliament, that is to say more important than the Butler Act of 1944, more important than the Education Act of 1870 when the State first decided that it should have an interest in public education. That, you may think, may be pitching the Baker Act rather high in importance, but I hope over the series of lectures to indicate why I think it is so important. To estimate it and evaluate it is very difficult, we are right up against it, we are too close in many ways. It is said that a Chinese historian visited Great Britain and was asked at a Historical Association meeting what he thought was the significance of the Battle of Hastings in 1066, and he replied "The Battle of Hastings - I think is rather too soon to tell". I suppose there are those of you who might say that you really can't estimate, evaluate, criticise the Baker Act for probably one hundred years, we won't really know what its impact is. However, it is of such an enormous importance to us, to our children, to our grandchildren, to our country, that I think it is worth having a try at that evaluation.

I am going to try to evaluate the Act by placing it in the context of history and of contemporary education systems in other parts of the world - the Soviet Union, the United States, Japan, France and so on. We are rather insular in this country and it would do no harm to see the broader contemporary spectrum. But if we are to see Baker's Act in an historical context, how far back do we go? It is said that the Baker Act is the first attempt by a British government to make the connection between education and economic prosperity. I do not think that is true, Foster tried it in 1870. But certainly the underlying truth is there, that for the first time a government has really decided that it must take greater control of the education system, particularly what is taught in schools, because this has some knock on effect, some cause or connection with our economic prosperity. But that is not a new idea and so how far back in history do you go? As a former Head Master I am tempted to give you a test. I wonder whether you could place in history or in country a statement such as this, "Statesmen in a well-run country would wish to have as teachers more masters of mechanic arts than of liberal arts". Now is that Kenneth Baker launching one of those, I think rather excellent, new concepts of the CTC or is it something a long way in the past? In fact oddly enough it is Cardinal Richelieu in the 17th century in his memoirs arguing, and I quote him again "that the commerce of letters, humanities would drive out that of goods from which the wealth of the state is derived." So the idea of a connection between economic prosperity and education goes back a long way.

In 1870, Baker's predecessor, W E Foster, the President of the Board of Education, said in introducing his Bill "It is no use trying to give technical teaching to our artisans without elementary education. Uneducated labourers (and many of our labourers are utterly uneducated) are for the most part unskilled labourers and if we have our workfolk any longer unskilled, notwithstanding their strong sinews and determined energy, they will become over matched in the competition of the world". What Foster was thinking about of course was the emerging power of Germany, that very year united into one under Bismarck and Prussia and the emerging industrial power of the United States which in the 1860's had overtaken Britain in steel production. What Foster was saying to the House of Commons in 1870 was, "look there is a connection between economic prosperity and education". Very largely the British took no notice for another 118 years, for reasons that one doesn't have time to go into. I am going to back, not to Foster and indeed not even to Richelieu, but to 1944, because in most of our memories it was Rab Butler's Education Act of 1944 that set the scene, the context, the tone of the education system in which most of us, or our parents or grandparents were brought up and educated. So I am going to start by trying to put Baker into a historical context, but ask you to remember, particularly if you have the energy and stamina to attend further lectures in this series, that underlying that is a long history of warnings to British people of the connection between economic prosperity and education.

Rab Butler produced a white paper, actually it coincided rather oddly with the 1944 Education Act, it was supposed to precede it. On the front cover he put a quotation from Disraeli, which read, "Upon the education of the people of this country, the fate of this country depends". Well admirable sentiments. What was Butler going to do about it? He was in a curious position because Churchill had asked a number of ministers to look at the question of post-war reconstruction. So Butler was looking at the development of education in the post-war world. There were idealistic views about spreading education so that it was available to everybody, not merely elementary education which had been the case beforehand, but secondary education. How should it be organised? Should children be divided into those who were more academic and those who were more practical? How were the Church Schools going to be brought into the system? All this was part of the thinking that went into that Education Act. Unfortunately nobody seems to have given serious thought to the problem of economic regeneration after the war.

The Butler Act was essentially a development of what had occurred previously, based on ideals, practical sensible considerations, and gradual development, with no radical change. Indeed that is why I described the Baker Act earlier as the most important in our history, because it is in many ways the most revolutionary and the most radical. Butler and his civil servants and fellow ministers, did not in fact go down the line that Baker went down 44 years later. Until the papers were revealed not all that long ago, nobody realised there was discussion in 1944 about a national curriculum. In other words the central government would dictate to the schools what was taught. Of course it had no hope at all of making any progress in a society which was still wedded to the idea of local government and a dislike of strong central government which associated central direction of education with foreigners, France, Germany and particularly of course with Nazi Germany who we were in the process then of fighting and defeating. So it is not surprising that

when somebody in the department suggested a national curriculum it did not get very far. But it is interesting that it was suggested 44 years ago, or interesting if you like, that it has taken so long to emerge.

The Butler Act if I may summarize it very briefly, went like this. First of all there would be no central direction of what was taught in schools, that was absolutely clear. The only compulsory subject, you may think suitably, you may think ironically, was religion. As we went into the post-war world, British school children had to learn one subject and one subject only, and that was what we at school used to call divinity, or religious education. When other countries were saying they must learn maths and science and technology and a foreign language, curiously enough, endearingly enough, you may feel, irrelevantly enough you may also feel, the British decided that the only compulsory subject should be divinity. The Act to its credit did create a secondary school system in this country, and provided that children should go to their local primary school and at the age of 11 they should pass on to one of a number of types of secondary school. The Act didn't lay down how you selected people to go to those secondary schools, nor did it lay down what types of secondary school they should be. There was an implicit understanding in the Act that some children were academic, some children were less academic, some children were technical or practical and were good at carpentry and metalwork, and that somehow nature had divided the human race into these three categories.

The Butler Act (whether intentional or not, is not at all clear either from Rab Butler's memoirs or from reading the papers at the time) provided for a selection procedure at age 11 which became known as the 11 plus exam. The results of this examination were used to sort children into groups. Those who were regarded as academic went to what were called Grammar Schools, schools as someone called them for 'swots' - rather against the British tradition. Those who were less academic went to Secondary Modern schools, the less academic end of the market. Those who were practical, who were interested in technical things went to Technical Schools - now there is a revolutionary idea for 1944, a City Technology College 44 years ago. However, very few of those Technical schools got off the ground. They were a concept which was interesting, original and owed something to our study of education systems in other countries.

The effect of the Butler Act was to gear education as far as schools were concerned, to a division at 11 between academic and less academic children: Grammar school and Secondary school via an 11 Plus exam. The other fundamental thing that the Butler Act did (it is a very long Act, almost as long as Kenneth Baker's) was to insist that education for children, secondary and primary, should be the responsibility of the Local Authority. The Minister (Secretary of State as he is now called) would have virtually no power whatsoever in what was taught in schools or indeed how the Local Authorities organised their education in that area, except you remember that all children had to learn something about religion.

How good was that Act? What were the consequences of it? Two anecdotes, if I may, just to break up the more academic content of the lecture:

In July 1945, at the end of the Summer Term, I was at a Public School in Hertfordshire and I went to the station wearing a straw hat and a blazer. It was compulsory to go home in straw hats and blazers in those days, though you took them off as soon as you got to Liverpool Street. As I got to the station and as a pretty bumptious and precocious young Public School boy of 14, I hailed a porter and asked if he would put my trunk on the London train - this was just after the Labour land-slide victory of 1945 - the porter turned to me perfectly courteously and said "No - that sort of thing is all over now". How strange it is looking back. What he meant, I am sure, is not simply that porters were not going to fetch and carry for bumptious young Public School boys. I am sure he meant that with a Labour land-slide victory, with Germany defeated, there was going to be a new society of greater opportunity, and even if public schools existed, the maintained sector would be so good that the public schools were irrelevant.

Forty years on, growing older and older, I observe that that hope, that dream, that "that sort of thing is all over now" has not been fulfilled. I do not mean that I want it to be fulfilled in the sense of private schools disappearing, they are of course flourishing more than ever before in British history. It is extraordinary, not necessarily wrong, but extraordinary, that the maintained sector (which I am going to call the state sector because I think it is easier to grasp if I do) has not fulfilled the dreams, the hopes that were made for it. Why is that? What was wrong with Butler's Act that those dreams of the War were not fulfilled? Why did we not have a better society? Why do we now in 1988 agonise about education, 44 years after it was intended to provide every boy and girl in this country with the sort of education that would satisfy them and their parents and society?

One of the curious things about the Butler Act is that it was rather vague. It had many, many sections and many, many pages, but nevertheless it left something unsaid. It is a very British way of legislating. First of all it left unsaid how you divide people at 11 plus. Well, it was inevitable that in the 50s and in the early 60s this would be a bone of contention. Our eldest daughter took the 11 plus. I can remember the awful anxiety we had as we waited for the result of that 11 plus to come through. Would she be (we were in the West Country at the time) admitted to Taunton as a Grammar School girl or would she have to go to the Secondary Modern school which we regarded as inferior. Were we right to regard it as inferior? Those who legislated in 1944 were extremely naive in many ways because what they said was "that there would be a diversity of schools but of equal status". It was the intention of Butler and his colleagues in the Ministry that whether the school was a grammar school or secondary modern school, they would have what they called "equal esteem"; that parents would regard them as equally good. I cannot imagine how any politician could be so naive as that.

Here is the second anecdote. I got to know Butler well in his later years because he became Master of Trinity and a governor of the school of which I was Headmaster. We often met and shared an interest in education and he talked about it as though this was the great moment of his life. But a certain naivety did strike me even then and I offer you the following anecdote as evidence. My wife and I went to have tea with him at his house in Saffron Walden with our twin sons and at about ten to six Rab Butler looked at his watch and said "well, I'm terribly sorry I must now go to church and support the local vicar", which was a hint for us to go of course.

So we got into the car and drove down the drive and I happened to turn around and there was Butler hiding behind a tree in the garden. It occurred to me almost characteristic of the naivety of the man, as it were, that he didn't think I would look round and see him hiding there and not supporting the local vicar.

There was something overwhelmingly naive about the idea that people would regard grammar schools and secondary modern schools as of equal esteem. They didn't and there was no way they were going to do that, many people realised it, but too late. So in the 50's there began a strong movement, not political, it wasn't from the left wing for example, among parents, among local and national politicians and eventually in the media against the concept of dividing people at 11 plus. The movement was not so much against the test itself, but the idea that it would divide into good schools, grammar schools and less good schools, secondary modern schools at that apparently tender age.

Now there were two other battles being fought in those post-war years. As the battle about the 11 plus gathered momentum people suggested that the way round it was not to have grammar schools and secondary modern schools but to have schools that comprehended the whole ability range, in other words comprehensive schools. As that concept gathered momentum another battle occurred, because it was at this time that so called progressive education was on the march and engaged with more traditional education. Underneath those two there was a third battle going on which I might describe as the battle between the utilitarians and the purists. The utilitarians were saying "Well the education system is still not geared to the economic needs of the country". The purists were saying "education is a good thing itself, we don't want it geared to the economic needs of the country". These three battles were going on simultaneously.

Let us take first of all the battle over the 11 plus. In the late 50's and early 60's there was increasing pressure to remove the 11 plus and replace it with single schools - comprehensive schools. Those in favour produced what one might call a glossy prospectus of all the virtues of comprehensive schools. I can remember the great point was made that apart from the desirable educational virtues, it would help to make England a classless society. This was a critical point, people saw it not just as an educational advance but as a social advance. I ask you to reflect on how far Britain is a classless society in 1988 after 25 years or so of comprehensive education. This battle continued until 1964, and the coming to power of a Labour government. That Labour government under Harold Wilson was committed to abolish independent schools, but that is not part of my story, largely because it didn't happen. The Government was also committed to push forward the idea of comprehensive education, to make England a land of equal opportunity, a classless society and so on. One of the most vigorous attacks on the 11 plus was made by Prime Minister who described it as a vicious system for dividing children at the tender age of 11. He was swept along on a tide of enthusiasm in the early 60's. He had once said that the Grammar schools would be abolished over his dead body. I got to know him later in years when he retired from the Premiership and lived not far away. He came to Westminster School many times, and I remember the only comments he ever made about education was to express his admiration for highly selective schools like Westminster. Nevertheless Prime Ministers have other things on their mind than education. In those years between 1964 when the Labour Party came to power and 1970 when it lost power, Tony Crossman the Education Minister and the Government rolled forward a programme of going comprehensive. A departmental circular of 1965 insisted that Local Education Authorities should submit plans for turning their grammar schools and secondary modern schools into single unit comprehensives.

I must say when I look around the world at other societies it seems to me perfectly sensible to have non-selective secondary education. I am not in any way against that. If other countries manage it so well I can't think that we make such, not such a mess of it, but such an "unsuccess" of it. I am not against the idea of non-selective education, so if I make comments on the comprehensive system it is not for that reason. I do find it curious that people didn't for example say "well now look, here is a new concept of education, should we not try it out in certain areas, monitor the results before we plunge the whole country into that particular model". What happened is that in those comprehensive schools the prospectus turned out to be quite wrong. The idea that because you had a big comprehensive school of 1,500 maybe 2,000 pupils you would have a large sixth form in which there would be an enormous choice of subjects, turned out to be exactly the opposite of what would happen in practice. The sixth forms are very small in practice and there are fewer subjects not more, available to the young people, in the sixth form. No one seems to have thought of the problems of size, you can have very big schools and they are very successful, but people didn't think about how they should be run, what pastoral care should be provided and so on. People didn't think about what the academic emphasis, what the educational programme of those schools should be. Many of them went in as academic grammar schools and simply went down hill, which is no comment on the children but simply that the original idea had gone wrong. Butler's legacy sadly, was a quarrel over the 11 plus and a plunging into comprehensive education without proper forethought, without proper preparation. Often for the wrong reasons, socio-political reasons rather than educational reasons and it caused major damage to the English education system.

At the same time, another battle started. You have to go back in history to Rousseau. As you go into the Pantheon in Paris, on the right there is a sort of box which contains Rousseau and on the left there is another box that contains Voltaire. Voltaire as the great enemy of religious bigotry, Rousseau as ..what exactly? Well among other things the father of many evil regimes, such as the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia in the 1970s and their concept of the general will. I am not sure he should be there. If I could have done I would have removed his bones and thrown them in a common grave. He is the author of totalitarian democracy, but he is also the author of what you and I would call child-centered education. One of the problems about Rousseau is that he is very difficult to understand, which is why he is so influential, he is so vague people interpret him in many ways. Basically what Rousseau argued was that childhood is an independent thing, it is not as it were, miniature adulthood. Children progress through childhood through various stages, their capacity to learn, their need for different types of learning vary with the stages they pass through. You musn't treat them as young adults who can just be dictated to. They have an evolving understanding, an evolving intelligence, and therefore your education should be progressive in that sense. Progressive doesn't mean on the side of progress I hasten to say, it means that the education should take account of the progressive development of the child. Now that particular concept is enormously powerful. What I am doing to you now is inconceivable in Rousseau's educational philosophy. I would have to say to you among other things, well here are some clues, go and find out for yourself, you must do the work yourself, you must discover for yourself, I must tell you as little as possible Now I am paraphrasing and in some ways you may think I am parodying it but I have to for the sake of speed. It is a very powerful idea in education and it means simply that the idea of the teacher who dictates,

didactically teaching, telling people what to do, what to write down, what notes to put down, what to remember, what to learn by heart is not right because that doesn't take account of the developing child, and developing intelligence. You must develop your education in a child-centred way. Forgive the parody for those who are in the business, but as I say, time doesn't allow me to go into it in greater detail. But you know, that idea in education was very slow reaching the United Kingdom.

It was only in the sixties that the education system was converted to Rousseau. After the war we emerged into a bleak post-war world in the late 40's and 50's and and then into the slightly sunnier uplands of Macmillans 50's, into the early 60's. We were more affluent, the world was a more peaceful place, more things were possible, many things were relaxed. We began to move into the so called 'permissive 60's', into the youth culture, greater financial security and better buildings. You can see why Rousseau caught on at that particular period, nothing to do with education, more to do with a feeling in society. We wanted a better society, a happier society, we wanted short cuts, 'love is all you need', the Beatles sang very optimistically.

Into that period came Rousseau's progressive education, and it hit the education system simultaneously with the movement to go comprehensive. It never gave those comprehensive schools a chance. As they became comprehensive and wrestled with all those major problems of size, of mixing together the less academic and the more academic, of adjusting teachers to the new ideas of education, like a sort of 'force ten gale' all the progressive ideas - you musn't compete in schools, in some schools no text books were used. Teachers were called by their Christian name, discipline was supposed somehow to arise from the goodwill of the pupils. It was a marvellous, heady time, many of us felt there were good and exciting things here. Many of us I may say, made mistakes over that. It was a time when, as this movement went through the education system the comprehensive schools were struggling to get a grip on their new buildings, their new ideas, their new concept. If we ask why those comprehensive schools hit such bad times, where standards appeared to fall, it wasn't necessarily because the idea was wrong, but because it was hit simultaneously by the wave of "progressive education". You might be interested to know that we are still under the influence of progressive education, and that Baker's bill is an attempt to arrest that particular movement continuing in our educational history.

In the Soviet Union the progressive education movement lasted about ten years. In Communist China it also lasted ten years. The Soviet Union got progressive education out of its system immediately after the revolution. In the early twenties the pupils in Soviet schools the pupils made decisions. The Soviet Union then rather realistically decided that wasn't quite such a good idea and brought it to an end and it is now referred to in Soviet educational history as a 'romantic episode'. Exactly, Rousseau, a romantic episode. It hit Red China in 1965. When the cultural revolution broke on China in came progressive education, all exams were abolished, children made decisions, teachers were paraded through the streets with placards on them saying what they had done wrong, not something I would have approved of! Ten

years later Ping the Chinese leader said, "right, we have had the cultural revolution, all progressive education is over". Back came exams, merit awards for teachers, selection for universities, didactic teaching, competition. The whole system was turned upside-down. In these totalitarian countries, you can deal with progressive education - in and out in ten years. We are still involved in it, because, thank goodness, we are not a totalitarian country, though we may be suffering from some of the consequences of that progressive education.

The wave of progressive education continued uncriticised until 1969. In that year a group of people, led that time by Professor Cox of Manchester University and Dr Rhodes Boyson, a young and belligerent Conservative MP said "We think this is wrong". They published in 1969 the first so called 'Black Paper'. It was greeted with howls of criticism. I want just to quote one or two of the comments that occurred at that time, because they are very revealing. Ted Short, who was Labour's Education Secretary at the time said "the publication of the Black Paper was one of the blackest days for education in the past one hundred years". The New Statesman called the authors of the Black Paper, "a decrepit bunch of educational Powellites". London's Evening Standard which is now a considerable critic of progressive education described the Black Paper as "a trivial document by a bunch of elderly reactionaries". I don't think the present editor of the Standard would say that, but nevertheless it came as such a shock. It is difficult without in some way empathising with the time to remember just how overwhelming victory of progressive education in the minds of everybody had been up to that point and how shocking it seemed to criticise progressive ideas in education. It has taken almost twenty years for those ideas in the Black Paper to have some impact on educational legislation and educational thinking.

From 1969 onwards there has been a period which I am going to call the counter revolution! To recapitulate: Butler 1944, left things open, attack on the 11 plus in the late 50's and early 60's, the comprehensive movement gathering momentum in the 60's, progressive education came in at the same time running freely right through to 1969 and then the shock of the Black Paper. I can remember at the time not having the courage to say that I approved of some things in the Black Paper even to the governors of the independent school of which I was then Headmaster because it seemed almost like admitting you were in favour of one bigoted idea or another. I can only remember one independent school headmaster who actually spoke out in favour of the Black Papers and contributed to them. That was the late Tom Howarth who was High Master of St Paul's, who had a good stringent mind and the courage to do it. The rest of us I am sorry to say were 'time-servers' and keeping quiet at that moment. In 1970 there was a Conservative victory and Heath came to power. Heath wasn't in favour of the Black Paper, but he did, by accident or by design appoint Margaret Thatcher as his Secretary of State for Education. That was the moment when the movement of the counter-revolution against comprehensive schools, against progressive education, began to assume creditability. It took a long time, but that is Margaret Thatcher's entry, if you like, into serious politics. She found she could not halt the progressive movement, (the Minister can't do that, don't forget the Minister has no power, or had no power, in British education

at that time) but she did slow it down. That government did not last, and in 1974 back came Wilson and subsequently Callaghan. The Tories had to think why this had happened.. "we had been out of power for a long time, 64-70, we came back for four years and all of a sudden we have gone again, what has gone wrong with Tory ideology?" That moment is very important in educational history because in 1974 Margaret Thatcher and Keith Joseph set up the Centre for Policy Studies to be an ideological think-tank for the Conservative party. It became enormously influencial, many of the things which are now in the 1988 Education Act have their origin in that Centre for Policy Studies. When the Labour government came back to power, the Tories were planning ahead. What needs to be done about education, how can you ensure that the damage done by comprehensive schools, by lack of competition, lack of discipline, by progressive ideas does not go unchecked?

In that brief period of Labour power between '74 and '79 the message reached the Labour party as well, because James Callaghan was told by the Department of Education and Science "the public are getting increasingly worried about education, you must do something about it". They more or less wrote for him a speech given at Ruskin College, Oxford in 1976 in which Callaghan very modestly suggested that it might be a better idea if education had some sort of control from the centre. He made a very tentative suggestion that there might be a core curriculum. Interestingly enough he wasn't quite shouted down on the subject but was attacked right, left and centre, on the very modest sort of national curriculum proposal.

The Labour Secretary of State at the time was Shirley Williams. The Conservative spokesman for education was Norman St John-Stevas, and in the great debate that followed the discussion that Callaghan had launched, those two made it quite clear, that they would not in any circumstances approve of a core curriculum or a national curriculum. I quote the Times, 'The debate showed a surprising amount of agreement between Mrs Williams and her opposition shadow Mr Norman St John-Stevas, both rejected the idea of a common core curriculum imposed on schools by central government". This was in 1977, 11 years only before the national curriculum came in. Well I think it is safe to say that Shirley Williams, and Norman St John-Stevas, whatever their other virtues, were out of touch with the tide that was running in education.

Here I must mention the utilitarians. There are two tides running in education from 1977 to 1988, one is asking 'how do we arrest progressive education, how do we restore discipline and standards? The other tide is in the Department of Education and Science, long awaiting their opportunity, the utilitarians are now pushing for a national curriculum. Proposed in 1944, mentioned tentatively by Callaghan in '77, shot down in public, but behind the scenes they had worked on it.

The Conservatives came back into power in 1979, former Education Secretary Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister, and of course keen on things educational, the counter revolution now seems likely to gather momentum. But remember there are two forces running, one is a political, counter-revolution against progressive education and comprehensive schools, the other is non-political, the utilitarians burrowing away in the Department of Education and Science in favour of a national curriculum. Those two things ran parallel during the period from 1979 to 1988. It is worth asking why it took nine

years for the Government to launch the 1988 Education Act. In neither the 1979 election nor the post Falklands 1983 election, was education a major factor in the elections. The people that Margaret Thatcher appointed as Secretaries of State for Education, like Mark Carlisle, were good straightforward middle-of-the-road Tories, but not exactly ideologically in favour of the counter-revolution. Interestingly enough, Keith Joseph became Education Secretary in due course. He was a founder of the Centre for Policy Studies but that did not open the door to those more radical right wing ideas - opting out of local authority control, allowing schools to run their own budgets, setting up City Technology Colleges. Not necessarily right-wing in a political sense, but right wing compared with what had been going on before, these ideas were developing and Keith Joseph's appointment made it possible. Interestingly enough talking in personality terms, Keith Joseph was an excellent ideas man, a marvellous staff officer, but he clearly wasn't the man to lead the counter-revolutionaries to the barricades, he wasn't that sort of leader. It was only the appointment of Kenneth Baker in 1986 that gave to the counter-revolutionaries the sort of leader who could sell the ideas of the counter-revolution to a public who was ready to hear them, to the DES and to parliament. Therefore Baker's achievement is very significant indeed, without him I am not sure that the Act would be anything like as good as subsequent lectures will suggest.

All that time since the early sixties, the progressive battle with the reactionaries, others might call the traditionalists, has been going on. The Centre for Policy Studies has proposed ideas to arrest progressive education, indeed to arrest comprehensive education as well, even perhaps to turn it backwards towards some form of selective education. Now their ideas have at last got a chance to become legislation, and so they did in the Education Reform Bill which is introduced into parliament in 1987. But don't forget there is something else going on at the same time, which is non-political and that is the long struggle of the Department of Education and Science to introduce a national curriculum, to get control of what is taught in schools, not I think to be fair to give the civil servants more power, but to make the country more responsive to the needs of the economy. (Not exclusively so, because a national curriculum for the first time in this country makes it compulsory for children to study history, it is not just to do with economic regeneration). So when that Bill, all 169 pages of it went into Parliament, it had within it these two strands, political ideological Centre for Policy Studies, Margaret Thatcher, Keith Joseph, counter-revolution against progressive education, and the comprehensive movement, and the other strand, non-political, non-party, non-ideological, long awaited development of central control over the curriculum. This explains why you have this curious fact about the Act, on one hand it decentralises and gives much more power to head teachers, to governing bodies, to parents and to schools, and on the other hand, gives much more power to the central government. If you have a Bill of a 169 pages, I assume you know what education is for, in other words, I assume that the Government and the opposition and the educationalists know why they have these things in the Act. In other words "are we clear what the aims of education should be?"

This theatre is sometimes used as a cinema. I am pleased to see as a former Head Master, that the film showing this evening, the 18 October, is called the Dictator, but like all good cinemas, I am now giving a trailer, the story will develop, on the 8 November at the same time, when I will ask 'Do the British actually know what education is for?'

Thank you very much.

Lecture 2 - DO THE BRITISH KNOW WHAT EDUCATION IS FOR ?

8 November 1988

This morning I am going to talk about the difficult subject of what the aims of education should be, and in particular whether the British have any clear idea of what they think their education system is trying to do. I use the phrase 'difficult subject', although it wouldn't be regarded as difficult in many countries of the world; the French or the Japanese, or the Russians would immediately have some definition to hand, whether good or ill. Many developing countries would have an extremely clear idea what the aims of their education system were. One of the reasons why the British have no clear idea is because for a long time it didn't really matter what their education system did anyway. Nevertheless we did spend last year over £18 billion on education and it seems therefore reasonable to ask whether we have any certainty about the purpose for which those very many billions of pounds were spent.

Rab Butler's Education Act tried to pin down some sort of definition of what education was for. "The education system (and talking of schools in particular) should contribute to the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community". A little platitudinous you might feel, though that is a little hard in retrospect, it was also idealistic. Kenneth Baker's Act curiously enough, repeats those words almost exactly, but adds, appropriately, in the present climate - "and it should also prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life". You notice that in both those statements it is the interests of the pupil which are uppermost, not the interests of the State.

My theme this morning is that the aims of education are best understood not as two alternatives, the individual or the state, but as a spectrum. On the one hand you have the extreme liberal concept of education, which is for the development of the individual and on the other hand you have the extreme totalitarian view of education, which is entirely for fulfilling the wishes of the state, whether democratic or otherwise. I am going to argue that the British have been at the liberal end of the 'education aims' spectrum and that given Britain's present situation, it has to move along the spectrum towards the state orientated education system. The problem is how far along you want to go and if you start going along, can you stop ? In other words is it as many educationalists particularly those in universities think, some sort of slippery slope such that if you go down along the spectrum from liberal education towards state orientated education there is no logical stopping place ?

First of all, why is it that we in Britain have grown up almost entirely with the concept of a liberal education system, and what does it mean anyway to talk about liberal education? The word 'liberal' in the current American election is a dirty word. It is increasingly a dirty word in Britain, and I suspect I ought to choose a different one. It means an education that is appropriate for a free man. Nothing to do with permissiveness or anything else. Why did that education tradition grow up in Great Britain, rather than a more state orientated one ?

Britain was an island, it wasn't threatened even by Philip II of Spain, or indeed anybody else very seriously, it didn't have to have cause for example to compulsory military service. It didn't have any reason to have strong centralised government as they did in France, in many continental countries, in Prussia, in Japan and so on. So that the tradition in Britain was of course to leave things to get on by themselves, whether in economics or in education. The central government (I am talking now about the 18th and 19th centuries and indeed well into the 20th century) had no particular interest in what education was for. Education was a sort of rite of passage through which young people went and with any luck acquired the trappings of a gentleman and knew how to behave without disrupting society, but in general terms there was no outcome of education that was specific interest of the central government or the state.

I mentioned in my previous lecture that when state education started in Britain in 1870 the then equivalent of Kenneth Baker, W E Foster, did draw the attention of parliament to the fact that there might be, indeed he believed there was, a connection between economic prosperity and what was taught in schools, but nobody took that seriously. That was in 1870, so it is a 118 years later that the central government for the first time in Britain actually took an interest through the national curriculum in what was taught in schools. The liberal tradition is to leave it to get on with itself, it has no particular aim, it is not vocational, you are not preparing children for some specific employment. If you are passing on skills they are of a very generalised kind, and this tradition, admirable in many ways, though of course with its weaknesses in the modern world, continued, I would argue, until almost our own time. If you tried to pin it down, and say well 'what was it trying to do ?', you need to look at the prospectuses, especially of independent schools. The tendency is for the headmasters and headmistresses to say that the aim of the school is to develop the whole personality. If you pause and think for a moment that is a rather curious concept, but nevertheless I think it means that idea of all round education not training and not vocational education, indeed with no specific goals in view. Or to coin a phrase, to give people the opportunity to have, I quote "life in all its fullness". Those are admirable aims and I am not in anyway mocking them. 'To develop also', the liberal tradition said, 'a certain independence of mind'. I feel very strongly that however far the aims of our education system may move along our spectrum I mentioned at the beginning, it is crucial in a democracy that any education system should retain the development of independence of mind as one of its aims. What does it mean exactly? Richard Busby who was Headmaster of Westminster in the seventeenth century had a pupil who much to Busby's dismay became a non-conformist. Busby asked him why he had become a non-conformist and the young man, Benjamin Henry replied "well you may be a non-conformist, because when I was your pupil you taught me those things that prevented me from conforming". I would think that that is an admirable aim and one that on the liberal end of that spectrum we must never lose sight of. One of the problems we have to address when moving along the spectrum towards a more state orientated aim of education is how you hang onto something as precious as independence of mind without which your democracy will not in fact work ?

Let us consider now the position in the late 1980's and why Britain has to move, at least I argue it has to move, from this liberal end of the spectrum and what does that mean? As we move along the spectrum from liberal to state-based or state-orientated education, who do we meet on the way? Do you immediately run into the Soviet Union or Nazi Germany and so on, or are there various degrees along that spectrum of state control or state-directed education and can we come to terms with them ? First of all, why do we need to do so? I don't want to repeat all the points I made last time, but very briefly I think there is now nobody who would seriously dispute that there is a connection between what is taught in schools and the 'health' of a society. Whether that health is expressed in its sense of cohesion or its sense of unity or in terms of its prosperity, in terms of welfare, or literally in health terms, that people are healthy and therefore need to be taught in schools to be so. Whichever way you look at it, without exaggerating the importance of education, (which is always the danger of educationalists) we do accept that there is a connection between the health, wealth, prosperity and cohesion of society and what goes on in schools and universities, but particularly what goes on in schools. Precisely how the connection works is a matter of dispute. Nobody doubts that if you insist on smoking 50 or 60 cigarettes a day your chances of getting lung cancer are much increased, but the precise nature of the cause or connection (I stand corrected perhaps by those who know better) is still uncertain. If you look at education there is a connection between what is taught in schools and the wealth and health of society even if we can't draw that line precisely. Incidentally because we can't draw it precisely there is a danger that we assume that we know what the connection is.

There are people who believe that if only all British people learnt Business Studies, British business would show a remarkable upturn in the world's markets. My suspicion is, though I couldn't prove it, that nothing is likely to be more damaging to British business than teaching children in school Business Studies. So that the idea that we know the connection I think must be greeted with some scepticism. But that connection means that we have to consider where we stand now on that spectrum. The characteristic British view is of course that we want to move as little as possible and I don't mock it although that tone may appear in my voice. It is very important that we hang onto the best of the liberal tradition in education, but there are those who believe that we should hang onto it as it were, tooth and nail, that any attempt of the state to set priorities in education is an anathema. I think we are all familiar with the reaction of the universities at the thought that the government should by funding arrangements try to direct what they taught or miss-set the priorities for the universities. What happens to those delightful esoteric rather obscure subjects ? I suppose Classics now comes into that category. Nevertheless in my view, this government is not doing it because it has a particular political favour, but because the pressures of history, as I am about to argue, and certainly economics, make it quite inevitable. The Government is facing up to, responding to, the pressure of world economic truths and certain other important aspects of our society such as the need for social cohesion. Nevertheless there are those who would wish to stay with the Butler Act and say "No, the purpose of education is to contribute to these admirable goals, the spiritual, moral, physical, and mental development of the community and anything more than that, anything to do with economics or social cohesion is going too far".

That is enough about the British context. Let me now take you a little bit further along this spectrum moving away from the 'liberal' end. You and I don't on the whole belong down there. One of the problems of British education is that it is extraordinarily insular and introvert, and nowhere is this more true in my experience than the Department of Education and Science - if they are represented here this morning, they must forgive me. When you ask them, often at quite a high level, about education in other countries their knowledge tends to be very superficial.

Let us go down this particular spectrum. I am going to start in my favourite place and that is the French revolution. The reason being that here for the first time in modern history, a state had as it were carte blanche, to do something about education. There had been a surprising amount of sophisticated education in the regions, so it is not a question of introducing education, it was much more wide-spread than the revolutionaries claimed. Nevertheless the revolutionaries had really a tabla rosa on which they could write the ideal education system, and of course they celebrate their 200th anniversary next year. So it is not inappropriate that I should start here. The extreme revolutionaries are those who have of course left democracy and gone towards what we would call totalitarian democracy of perhaps a Eastern European mould, certainly a Cambodian one under the Khmer Rouge and regard the child increasingly as the property of the state. Therefore they had no difficulty in deciding what the education system was for. I quote first of all George Danton in 1793. "I too am a father, but my son does not belong to me, he belongs to the Republic, it is for her to decide what he ought to do to serve her well." Now there is our spectrum, that must be down the end furthest from the liberal tradition. Here you have the man saying, 'My child doesn't belong to me it belongs to the state, and as it belongs to the state, the state must decide what that child must learn and what he must do to serve the state well'. If you go back a little bit into the early years of the revolution the idea was rather different. Again, they had their blank sheet, they were going to write on it for the first time in a sense in history, the aims of an education system in a comparatively free society. The mathematician, the Marquis de Condorcet, who incidentally produced the first excellent defense of private schools, produced a statement about the aims of education which is a little bit away from the British modern one, but is a long way from Danton. I find these abstractions difficult, but forgive me if I read them to you. Condorcet is defining French education in 1792. "This is the aim - to afford all members of the human race, the means of providing for their needs, of securing their welfare, of recognising and exercising their rights, of understanding and fulfilling their duties. To assure for everyone opportunities of perfecting their skills and rendering themselves capable of social duties to which they might have a right to be called. To develop to the utmost the talents with which nature has endowed them and in so doing to establish among all citizens a true equality and thus make the political equality realised by law. This should be the primary aim of a national system of education." You notice it is actually some way along the spectrum from Butler, because we are talking now about duties and social duties and developing talents that citizens may need in order to serve the state, but nevertheless there is enough of the liberal tradition there. That is just a little way along from the British left as it were.

The development of education under Napoleon was a striking example of state control. After the Battle of Freedland, in 1807 in mid-winter, sitting in his tent, having defeated the enemy Napoleon dictated a number of letters which we still have. One of them went into several pages of detail of the curriculum that should be taught to girls in French schools. Extraordinary man! Equally he concerned himself with the curriculum for boys - they were vastly different of course, with Napoleon being an extremely sexist and male chauvinist figure. What is interesting is that he had no doubt that he knew what education was for, the aim of education was to produce men and women who in their different roles would serve the state, and the Prussians having been defeated by Napoleon responded in much the same way after that year 1806.

The most interesting example of this state-directed education in the 19th century is in Japan. We tend to think today of Japan as a sort of paragon of education systems where mysteriously, certainly for the English, though not perhaps for the Scots and the Welsh, children actually work hard and long hours. We puzzle over how we can possibly compete with them. Well one of the secrets lies in the 19th century. In the 1860's Japan emerged from two and a half centuries of almost total isolation from the west and in doing so the young Samurai who took power realised that they had an enormous leap to make, to catch up with the West industrially, in terms of technology as it was then understood. So they took - these are young and in a sense revolutionary people, they are not totalitarian figures or military figures either, but young revolutionaries in Japan - control of the education system. The Education Minister in the 1880's (interestingly enough later assassinated because he was too modern for the Japanese), said that education is not for the sake of the student, it is for the sake of the state.

Where is this sort of thinking on the spectrum ? Well it is clearly down here towards Danton, and the totalitarians, a long way from Butler, and a long way from Baker, no British minister in the history of British education would make such a statement. Education is not for the sake of the student but for the sake of the state. But you see to people like that Japanese minister, in the late 1880's there was no choice. If you had been two and a half centuries in isolation, if the world had changed around you dramatically, then you must take control of the education system. It is not a question of talking about liberal traditions, you have no choice, just as many developing countries have no choice, they must take control of the education system and it ill becomes those of us in the west with our liberal traditions to argue that something is wrong with that. When they need to catch up and make a great leap forward it is inevitable that that will happen. Let us stay with Japan for a moment because the Japanese education system is very often misunderstood, but nevertheless has lessons for us. A most interesting thing occurred in 1945 because the centralised education system, had of course been perverted largely by Japanese militarists in the 20's and 30's and after the defeat in 1945 there was an impact between that centralised education system and Macarthur's democratic impositions in Japan. A strong centrally-controlled education system was told to become democratic and not elitist, which it had been. The Japanese interpreted that as meaning that everybody had to join the elite not that everybody had to sink to some lower level and so democratic education in Japan is today still centrally

controlled just as it was in the 1880's. The text books are prescribed by central government, not just the curriculum. The thing is very tightly controlled, nevertheless it is democratic in the sense that the excellence is available to everybody (no doubt supplemented by private crammers and so on). There are people who say "Once you start down this road you must inevitably reach totalitarianism, once you leave the Butler, Baker, liberal English tradition, you will inevitably slide towards Danton, and Nazism or the Khmer Rouge or whatever. That isn't true, there are a lot of countries in between, developing countries, Japan, France, West Germany, with different degrees of central interference in the education system.

Before leaving these illustrations, let me move to the Soviet Union because in many ways the Soviet Union has had a disastrous experience of education, too much beaurocracy. Regulations from Moscow still tell Head Teachers, heaven forbid, what to do in their schools, not local regulations but coming out from the Ministry of the Enlightenment, (I love the title) in Moscow. This is very much in the Soviet tradition, not actually to do with communism, it is in the Russian tradition. Ever since the beginnings of Russian Education under Peter the Great at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the state has decided what education was for. It is worth contemplating for a moment without making flip points at the Soviets' expense that although they call it the Ministry of the Enlightenment, the one tradition that is not in the aims of Russian education, is independence of mind. We prize it, but they don't. We think we are right, but we are not necessarily so. There is no tradition in Russia of that critical facility and what is more, there never has been. Peter the Great insisted that you needed education to produce engineers, artillery officers, naval officers, civil servants. Education was for a specific reason, exactly the same as Napoleon decreed one hundred years later. So when the communists took over in 1917 they didn't, as it were, introduce education at this end of the spectrum on behalf of the state, it was already there. They merely adapted it for their own purposes and therefore included, as Russian education had always included, an element of indoctrination. This is what Khruschev said about the aims of Soviet education in 1958, "All children who enter school must be trained for useful labour and participation in the construction of a communist society. The Soviet School is required to produced well-rounded people, (the whole personality echo) who know their school subjects well, but who are at the same time capable of useful labours. It must develop in young people the urge to be useful to society," how often have we said that, "and participate actively in the production of wealth which society needs." That last phrase could have been straight out of Kenneth Baker and no criticism of him that it could have been. In other words in the twentieth century Russia has realised what many other countries have realised - if you wish to have a prosperous country, the state has to express not just an interest in education but ways of controlling it.

There is your spectrum from Butler to Danton, to the Khmer Rouge and you pass through all sorts of people on the way, both democratic and totalitarian; the difference between democratic and totalitarian education is not that in democratic countries the state doesn't control education, whilst in totalitarian countries it does. The difference is that in the totalitarian countries the state controls education for doctrinal or political ends, whereas in the democratic countries it attempts to control education for the benefit of the democratic society that it is elected to serve. Particularly in education you think that any interference by the state in education is ipso facto undemocratic.

Let us now conclude with the problem of Britain. We in the late eighties are aware of two problems. One is the need to harness education partly, not totally, to the idea or the goal of economic prosperity. What does it mean, and is that a reasonable thing to do? I would suggest that there is another goal and that is the goal of social cohesion, probably much more controversial than the first. I would conclude by saying that there is still a need to have that crucial independence of mind without which democracy cannot flourish. Quite briefly if I may, let me take those three possibilities. As far as economic prosperity is concerned, (I will come back to this theme later in this series) let me make a few points which may not always be made in the public debate on this subject. There are people in the present government, in public life, in the education system itself, and indeed in all political parties who have a feeling that if only young people could be trained rather than educated then our economic prosperity would increase. The concept being that they should as soon as possible drop all this nonsense about doing history or modern languages, or classics or indeed any other minority interest and concentrate their minds on training, on links with industry, on vocational work, things that are going to lead them specifically into employment and that of course means specifically into employment at the age of sixteen. The one thing that is most striking about a country like Japan is that this does not happen. In other words the striking thing about a country such as Japan and West Germany too, is the high-level of education across the whole population. Not a high percentage leaving school at sixteen and only a minority taking 'A' levels or whatever and staying on until eighteen. If we think the connection between economic prosperity and education has something to with vocational training, I don't say it is entirely wrong, then we need to look at that particular proposition with very great care. Having said that, I don't think myself there is any doubt that in the 21st century, indeed long before the 21st century, the countries that will flourish economically are those who have a very well educated population, not a well educated elite, but a well educated population. Therefore the aim of education that it should contribute to economic prosperity does not mean everybody working at a lathe, it does not mean every boy and girl gearing themselves up to some employment at the age of sixteen, it actually means the opposite. It means every boy and girl staying in full time education or education plus training, as it is in West Germany, until the age of eighteen, a very different proposition indeed.

I am a bit worried about the emphasis on vocational training in this country and indeed about technology as if that was a short cut to economic prosperity. I would like to suggest there are good reasons for everybody doing technology and indeed for it being compulsory on the national curriculum, but the idea that if every boy and girl studies technology, Britain is going to be able to compete with Japan and South Korea, seems to be very naive indeed. There is, I hasten to say, no technology in the Japanese school curriculum, which is food for thought.

Now let me turn to a less easy and more controversial subject. I think that economic prosperity is one key aim in British education. We no longer feel so sensitive that we cannot say that and pursue it through to the end. A second aim is I think much less easy for people to agree on. I would argue that unlike fifty years ago Britain is now a much less homogeneous, more diverse country in its religions, in its culture, in its ethnic groupings, in

its languages. There are, as you know, some comprehensive schools in London where the children speak one hundred different languages. I don't mean the language teaching in that school is good. I mean that there are one hundred languages represented by the children in that school. So I would argue that another aim of British education in the 80's and 90's and beyond, ought to be social cohesion, but as soon as you say social cohesion people get up in arms and hot under the collar and they say "Look this is cultural imperialism. If you make children from ethnic minorities study British history rather than their own societies history or their own races history, if you make them study English rather than keeping their Bangladeshi dialect you are guilty of a sort of cultural imperialism, not to say racism and various other 'isms as well." Now I respect the argument, but I think it is entirely wrong. There is such a thing as British culture and the job of the education system is to see that that is passed on to each new generation of school children from wherever their ancestors may have come. That is not cultural imperialism, it is no more than giving young people a map of the country in which they find themselves. After all if you are dumped in a country, you are lost if nobody is going to tell you anything about that country. How on earth are you going to understand what is going on unless you know something of the history of the country ?

So I am arguing that one of the primary duties and aims of the education system is in fact to promote social cohesion through the compulsory teaching of culture, the cultural traditions, history, religious input, language, literature of this country, to all children. I have taught in the United States of America, where in a city like New York there is great cultural diversity. But in New York schools, all pupils read Huckleberry Finn whether they liked it or not. The trouble is they read it too many times. They all studied the revolution whether they liked it or not, and I don't mean the French revolution, I mean the American revolution and the problem is they studied it too many times. It happens in all countries except Britain where we are hyper-sensitive to this problem of diversity. We ought not to be, it is a perfectly sound and indeed desirable aim that we should promote social cohesion. Economic prosperity, social cohesion and the independence of mind that goes with it keeps democracy alive.

If I were the Marquis de Condorcet reincarnated, which I assure you I am not, and tried to state on a blank sheet of paper what the aims of British education should be in 1988 this is what I would write "The aims of British education are to develop the abilities of individual children so that they become independent minded adults. To teach all children the skills and attitudes they need to find employment and to contribute to national prosperity. To ensure that all children understand the language, history and cultural values by which our society has been formed." One day when I am feeling even more arrogant than usual I will send it to the Secretary of State for Education and Science and ask him whether they are in fact the aims that he also has in mind.

Lecture 3 - WHAT SHOULD WE TEACH THE CHILDREN ?

12 April 1989

I am going to talk about what should be taught to children in schools. The national curriculum which was introduced last year is in my view the most important single reform in the history of British education. I am going to ask whether the central government should be deciding what should be taught in schools and then expressing a personal view about what that teaching should be, in other words what should be on the curriculum.

In 1916 the British government, under Herbert Asprey, introduced compulsory military service for the first time in British history. Its critics said "This is intolerable. It is something that the Prussians do, the French do, the Russians do, but it is quite against the tradition of British liberty." But of course it wasn't. The point about compulsory military service was that the British could get away with it, or could get away without it, because there was 22 miles of Channel. It was nothing to do with liberty, it was to do with geography. Now the same is true of the central control of what people are compelled to teach and learn in schools. Until 1988 the British thought you could not have a government that lays down what is taught in schools, that is German, (or rather Prussian) or Russian, or Japanese, or French. It isn't British, and it is not to do with and not consistent with, British liberty. But ladies and gentlemen, it had nothing to do with liberty. It was because until now we have taken the view in this country that it didn't matter very much what was taught in schools, because education was not important to a powerful country that didn't need to note and act on the connection between education and prosperity. Because we were a great power, although of course that was fading fast even at the end of the last century, it didn't matter what was taught in schools. Even in 1977, eleven years before the Act, Labour and Conservative spokespersons were totally opposed to any central government control or direction of the curriculum. That is why I say that this is a great revolution. Why do I think it is important ? Why do I think it is right ? Well let me say quite simply that I think that we in this country have to understand the direct connection between what is taught in schools and universities, but particularly was is taught in schools, and the future of the country. If I say for future prosperity of the country it is not just economics I am thinking about. I am thinking about social cohesion as well. In other words I think Britain does have to care. I think Kenneth Baker and the Government are right to be concerned about was is taught in schools.

In the Independent newspaper two days ago a teacher was quoted as saying that the National Curriculum is returning to the Dark Ages, geared to producing an elite and a work force. Well it is certainly not geared to producing an elite and it not geared to producing a work force. What I hope it is geared to doing is providing a high quality work force, not an elite, but right across the board. If you look at countries which are now more successful than ourselves, West Germany, Japan, South Korea and so on, the thing they have in common is a highly educated population. Not a highly educated elite, but a highly educated population. In Japan where the school leaving age is fifteen, that is a year younger than in Britain, 95 percent of the pupils are still in school at eighteen. In Britain that figure is about 30-35 percent.

If you watched the television news recently you would have seen that two Japanese companies and one West German company are we hope and pray on our knees, on our uneducated knees, going to locate their factories in Britain in the near future. Please, well educated West Germans and Japanese, come and locate your factories here because we haven't got any jobs. The reason is, I profoundley believe that their education systems are much more efficient and they are to a greater or lesser extent centrally directed. So I would argue very strongly that the National Curriculum is a crucial, dramatic and most important reform not only in British education history, but in British history. I can think of nothing quite comparable to it in terms of a country waking up to the need to take education seriously.

One aside, if I may. It is fair to say that Baker deserves the credit for putting that curriculum on the statute book, but the idea has been around for a very long time in the Department of Education and Science but they didn't feel that the time was politically right to introduce it.

It is now compulsory for children in British schools to learn certain subjects. That is easy enough to say, but what should those subjects be ? How do you define what those subjects should be ? It seems to me that you can only define them if you are clear as to what the aims of the education system are. I defined those aims in the first lecture in this series and I will just summarise them for you. I think an education system should have three quite clear aims.

1) <u>To develop an independence of mind.</u>

   To ensure that the individual is able to think clearly, to discriminate between false word and truth and so on. An independent mind seems to be crucial if democracy is going to work. One of my predecessors in this post as Professor of Rhetoric, R.W. Jepson, took as his theme 'Clear Thinking'. Well one of the aims of education must be to help young people as they become adults learn to think clearly. In the age of media that seems more important than ever.

2) <u>A connection between the educational system and the economy.</u>

   I think it is crucial that we connect the education system to the needs of the economy. Both for the individual who needs a job and for the country which needs prosperity.

3) <u>Social Cohesion.</u>

   Thirdly and not least important, I think that given the diversity of people in the British Isles some aim to do with social cohesion, to do with passing on a common culture in literature, in history and so on is important.

Now with those three aims in mind let me outline what I think all children ought to learn in school.

As far as independence of mind is concerned I don't think there is any subject that develops it necessarily better than any other. Some like

Cardinal Newman would have said that the study of Latin and Greek classics developed independence of mind, but so may the study of history or computer science and so on. I don't think that independence of mind comes from a particular subject. I don't think in that relation to that aim that one subject is superior to another. All of us can remember teachers in school who encouraged in us independence of mind. It wasn't the subject, it was the nature of the teaching. The nature of the challenge of the teacher, the degree to which he or she encouraged us to think for ourselves, to develop opinions, to think clearly and so on. It is the nature of the teaching, not the subject that fulfils my first aim. So I am left with two aims. The individual wants to get a job, the country wants to be prosperous. Society needs to hold together, because it has some common denominator in history, in literature and in culture in the widest sense.

These aims lead me to say that the core of any curriculum, the one thing children must not leave school without, although they do, is a mastery of their own language and a mastery of at least elementary numeracy, in other words elementary mathematics. I am not in the business, of knocking the education system, far from it. I am well aware of the difficulties involved. However, let me give you two government statistics. Of all those children who leave school, forty percent have passed what was an 'O' level in English language, or its equivalent, a grade one in C.S.E. You will probably recall from your own school days, or your children's, that to pass an 'O' level in English Language (or a grade one C.S.E.) is not trivial, but nor is it any great achievement. I repeat that forty percent leave with that standard or in other words sixty percent of our young people leave school without even that fairly modest degree of mastery of the English language. You could argue all sorts of reasons why this is the case, at a later lecture I will go into the details of how you teach English. All I am saying is that no education system in this country, given our aims are concerned for the individual in society, is worth its salt, if those statistics are true. I don't want to get into the argument about whether grammar is better than creative writing. However, it is my view that the emphasis on creative writing went too far, in the dethroning of 'King Grammar'. Now Kenneth Baker is quite anxious to restore 'King Grammar' to his throne. All I would say is, that there is no divine authority in grammar, it is there to serve us. In so far as it helps us to write clear, lucid, logical English, to make our point and to understand other people's points of view clearly, then those rules of grammar are important. We should never let grammar dominate us or our teaching, nor should we throw it away altogether. As far as creative writing is concerned, it is all very well saying that it is good for children to learn to create their own writing, to express their own thoughts in their own way, regardless of the grammar and that they will pick up grammar later. The facts of the matter are that they clearly don't pick up the control of the language later. So I would be in favour of the emphasis that Kenneth Baker wishes to put on grammar.

The second heart of any curriculum must be mastery of elementary mathematics. Here the statistics are even more disturbing. Only thirty percent of children leave school with 'O' level elementary maths or a C.S.E. grade one maths equivalent. Seventy percent, after eleven years of schooling, leave school unable to pass at this level. Now don't rush out and blame the teachers or the school. It is society that hasn't taken the education of most children seriously enough. It isn't that our children are stupid compared with the Japanese or the South Koreans. It is not that they can

never do mathematics, as some people argue. It is because society has not made mastery of mathematics important. One of the facts about the 1990's is that the number of unskilled, or indeed underskilled jobs will fall fast, and the number of jobs requiring skills which are based on the mastery of language and numeracy is increasing. If we have a gap between our school leavers and the change in the job market then two things happen. Firstly, there will be more people unemployed despite the fall in the number of young people which will occur in the 1990's, they will not be employable if they are not skilled and educated. Secondly, we will lose out in any international competition, because we don't have the skilled workers that we need. It is as serious and as urgent as that. Mastery of English, mastery of mathematics, of literacy and numeracy, and I keep using the word mastery because it is no good putting these things on the curriculum if people leave school without even that elementary degree of mastery. Sixty percent don't have it in English, seventy percent don't have it in Mathematics, it is a crippling weakness for them and for us. So it is very very urgent.

What else should be compulsory ? Let's first of all talk about technology. It is one of the compulsory subjects in the National Curriculum. It is safe to say that historically we have had a tremendous bias against technology in this country. We need it in the curriculum I hasten to say, not because it will produce more engineers for us, but because our cultural bias has been for so long so much against it. It is really a pyschological thing. However, we mustn't persuade ourselves that putting technology in the curriculum will suddenly enable us to catch up with Japan or South Korea or anyone else. That I think is not the point of the exercise. It is to hit at a deep cultural bias against technology. There are no short cuts to that catching up. Again, there are people who think that one way you can catch up with the West Germans and the Japanese is to teach everybody Business Studies in school. I would have thought that there was nothing more guaranteed to undermine our manufacturing and business output that to get teachers to try and teach Business Studies to children in school. It is a silly short cut and not one I think is likely to be effective. So let technology be a compulsory subject, but let's not fool ourselves that it will necessary produce more engineers. Incidentally there is no technology at all in the Japanese school curriculum.

Science in a less obvious way is in the same position. For a long time, this country ignored the teaching of science in a serious way. Even as recently as ten years ago most pupils in schools were not studying three sciences. In other words science was on the curriculum, but often they only studied one. In the case of girls that one was Biology. Often in the past girls have been sold short by the curriculum in that way. So it must be three sciences and it must be for boys and girls equally, a point I will return to later. It is important obviously that they should learn to think scientifically, to get the sense of scientific enquiry, to have knowledge on which they can base their interest in science and so on. Again don't let persuade ourselves that that will automatically put us in the top league in the terms of manufacturing industry.

What else would I make compulsory? Well let me just give you another statistic. Fourteen percent of school leavers in Britain can pass at 'O' level in a foreign language. That language is usually French although in a sense it doesn't matter what language it is. What I would argue for particularly and not only because of 1992, but perhaps especially for that

reason, is that the time has come for the British to recognise that you have to learn a foreign language if you are to travel and trade and have an interest in being a member of something like the European Economic Community. In the National Curriculum a foreign language became compulsory, in 1988, only four years before 1992. You and I are aware of the extraordinary facility which European countries have managed to impart to their young people in English. You may say "well that is fine because everybody speaks English", but they don't and if you are trying to sell them something they like to be spoken to in their own language. We do need to make a foreign language compulsory. We need particularly to get rid of this extraordinary myth that there are lots of children who can't learn languages. You must have heard this either about your own children or been told by teachers at school that there are some people who are good at languages and some are not. Those teachers seem to forget that oddly enough everyone learns a language, their own language, and they learn it extremely successfully. They can learn other languages, and the ease with which the Swedes, or Norwegians, or Dutch learn English shows us that the idea that some of our children can never learn French or Spanish or German is nonsense. It is a matter of motivation.

What else would I put in my compulsory curriculum ? I have got so far mastery of English, mastery of numeracy or mathematics. I have technology and science and I'm aware of the danger of banking all my hopes on them. I have a compulsory foreign language, and I mean foreign language, not something that is perhaps your natural language. I would add to that two other compulsory subjects, but then much to your dismay I leave all the rest out or make them optional. I would say that physical education should be compulsory. The English are an extraordinarily unfit race. You have only got to see the shapes of people who jog round our cities compared with those who jog round New York or Boston or indeed Sydney in Australia to get the impression that the British are a shapeless race. I won't go into detail but in point of fact we are an unfit nation. Physical education, really good physical education in school is essential.

What is the last compulsory subject ? May I remind you that one of my aims was social cohesion. I feel strongly about this. I believe that all children growing up in this country regardless of their origins, regardless of their cultural loyalties which are perfectly valid must have a common denominator in an understanding of how this society developed, in other words of British history. We may argue about what parts of British history and how it is taught. If you enter a play half way through, let us say Macbeth, and you arrive at the beginning of act 3, it is quite important to know what happened in acts 1 and 2, otherwise how do you know where you are? All I am thinking of doing, to use another metaphor, is to give children in schools of a map of the country through which they are going to travel. It is not a superior map to any other, it is just a map they need in these circumstances, and part of that map must be British history, without it they are lost. How can they understand British democracy, its strengths and weaknesses, the way it operates, without some sense of how we got there via the civil war and the glorious revolution or whatever ? How can they understand the way the Monarchy relates to this particular process or the Church, or Local Authorities or Justices or the Peace, the whole government which they come into contact with ? How will they understand attitudes, British attitudes, for good or ill, if they don't have that base in British history ? Needless to say I would add a base in British literature too. I should have said that under English. I don't believe it helps children to say, as London

Examination Boards do, that the compulsory work is not Oliver Twist, it is say, the Secret Life of Adrian Mole. Much as I admire the Secret Life of Adrian Mole I want them to learn Oliver Twist and read it, because actually it is more about Britain than the other.

Are there any other subjects ? Yes there are and they should be optional, taking up 20 to 30 percent of the time. Subjects like Latin, Music, Art or Geography. I am going to offend you and say I don't think they are that important. You may be up in arms about that but I don't think they are important; let them be options by all means, but I wouldn't compel people to do them, much as I may have enjoyed them or seen the value of them myself.

I think the curriculum must be exactly the same for boys and girls. One thing that Kenneth Baker has done, which nobody seems to have noticed is to make education the same for boys and girls for the first time in British history. You cannot now timetable domestic science against technology - a common timetabling device in schools in the past. The girls did domestic science and the boys did technology. They do that in Russia still. They do that in Japan still. They don't call it technology because they don't have it, they have something called Industrial Studies. Britain leads the world in the sense that girls have the same curriculum as boys and they are not fobbed off with rural biology or domestic science in place of technology. That I think is a great advance.

A third major question is one that I can only touch on in concluding. You may say "What about all those other things schools are supposed to be teaching, where do they come in ?" I don't know the answer to it in detail but nevertheless I think is extremely important. I have talked about compulsory subjects, what schools should teach. We all know from our own experience that schools teach other things, not necessarily to be called the hidden curriculum but things other than what is on the timetable. At the moment our schools, our state schools, are expected to be responsible for the following:- religious education, sex education, moral education, health and nutrition education, road safety, racial awareness, good manners, etc. My view is that the pendulum has swung too far to the disadvantage of children, the schools and society, away from the responsibility of parents to the responsibility of school.

The time has come for a serious reappraisal of who is responsible for what. Let me give you one example, this is the one I said you would disagree with me about. I don't think it is any business of a school run by the state to teach religion. I think all state schools ought to be totally secular. I think religion is important historically because it is part of that history I was talking about, but I do not think that acts of worship or explicit religious teaching has any place in primary or secondary education. Very few people in this country would agree with me. It is simply my profound belief that parents are responsible for the religious insights in the upbringing of their children. We as a people are not very religious. That is why we want schools to do religious education for us. It saves us from having to bother with the subject. Many of the parents who say they want their children to do religion at school very seldom go near a church themselves. I want society to say to parents 'Religion is important in most peoples lives, if you want your children to grow up with religion, understanding it, perhaps embracing a particular faith that is your responsibility, not the state's responsibility.' In case you think that that is a revolutionary idea, in

many countries in the world that is the law. In the United States you may not teach religion in schools because it is laid down in the constitution that that separation is essential. In other countries, Japan and so on, all schools are secular and as a passing shock before I end, may I say that in those countries the proportion of people who take religion seriously is much higher than in this country. On that note I am going to end.

Lecture 4 - HOW SHOULD WE TEACH?

26 April 1989

I am going to talk this morning about how we should teach. Mrs. Thatcher is today chairing a conference of her ministers, on the environment. This of course raises the question of what sort of issues about the environment ought to be taught in the schools. However, when you look at it, it doesn't really matter what anyone thinks ought to be done, what actually matters is whether the man or women in the classroom can teach. All the reforms in the world will be frustrated and defeated if the teachers are not good at enthusing, inspiring, drawing out, disciplining, correcting, improving and encouraging children; all the important things which are involved in teaching.

How therefore should we teach ? You may think that this is a simple question and that there will be a simple answer. There has been however, especially since the last war, controversy on this topic so fierce that it is almost like the religious controversy of the 15th and 16th centuries. One of the joys, and one of the troubles in matters of education is that you cannot prove whether you are right or wrong. Of course people who do educational research think that you can prove whether something is right or wrong, that competition is better than no competition, that mixed ability teaching is better than streaming or that child-centred education is better that didactic education.

But I profoundly believe that you can never and will never, be able to prove that one method of teaching is better than the other. In this area education and religion have something in common and perhaps it is appropriate that I am standing here in St. Mary-le-Bow making this point. In the 1960's and 1970's there were those who were absolutely convinced that they were right over the question of mixed ability teaching being better than streaming, but the truth is that in education, as in religion, you can never prove whether you are right or wrong.

I am going to start by talking about progressive education, what it means, what is behind it, why it has caused problems and advances in education, and why we need to be clear whether we approve of its elements or not. Before I mention any detail about progressive education, may I point out that the word progressive in relation to education does not mean that it is on the side of progress. The idea is that as children grow up they progress through different stages of maturity, so that they can understand different things at different stages and they will need to be taught in different ways at different stages. Progressive education may seem to you and to me as progressive as distinct from reactionary, but that is not in fact what it means. The progressive educationalist would argue that children are not just little adults, they are people in their own right and one must take into account their maturity, their character and a range of things in deciding how one is going to teach them. Progressive education really crept in to Great Britain after the second world war, but of course it had been around for a long time. Rousseau had long before founded theories that could be argued as

being in support of child-centred education. Rousseau's idea was that in order for the child to learn, the teacher always had to put himself in the child's place and look at things from the child's point of view instead of the approach which said 'this is what you have got to learn, write it down, memorise' it and so on. Progressive education sees things from the child's point of view, so as the child grows through the different stages it has different learning possibilities.

Your attitude to this of course will affect your view on how the child be taught. Should you have competition ? Should you have mixed ability sets or should you have a streamed situation ? Should children study for themselves or should they be taught ? I want to give you one or two examples to show that progressive education is not inevitably correct. Because the word progressive is used with education in this sense, some people, especially those of course who support it, think of progressive education in terms of the progress, the onward march of democracy so there is a movement to more and more enlightenment and rejection of old style teaching. In 1917 the waves of ideals and ideas that had brought the Bolsheviks to power in Russia led to the whole education system being reorganised on progressive lines and it was decided that the children would have a say in running the schools, and there should be no exams. The teachers should be assessed by pupils and so on. It is important to understand that the schools in Russia are not like that any more. They went through a period of child-centred education and then rejected it in favour of the more traditional system that they have today. At the time of the cultural revolution in China the same thing happened. Out went the exams, out went didactic teaching, teachers were lowered in their grade and their position in society. They were often humiliated by their pupils, schools were renamed. This happened over a period of ten years. In 1975 they realised that progressive education had prevented their children from getting a good sound basic education and they decided that China had to become an economic power in the world by the year 2000. That meant a move away from progressive education, to a system of examinations and of teachers being paid by results. I mentioned those two examples simply to defuse the idea that progressive education is part of the natural progress of things that can never be reversed, and must always therefore be right. Here we have an example of two communist states which have taken on board progressive education and after a trial period have thrown it out.

In the U.K. of course where we assimilate things rather more slowly, these ideas came in much more gradually than they did in China and Russia and many of them are still here. In the 60's it was felt that the time was right to make British education more progressive and more child-centred. Why did the 60's seem to be such a good time for that? Education in the 60's became tied up, one might almost say became confused, with social and political ideals, and people, not only teachers, began to think that the way you teach must "contribute to some better form of society". In other words competition is bad, because it makes people competitive instead of co-operative, it makes them materialistic and selfish rather than compassionate. Therefore competition was often thrown out of schools, because it was thought that it was likely to produce a more competitive and therefore a less harmonious society. Mixed ability teaching was introduced in place of streaming, not just for educational reasons but because it was thought that it would produce a better society, that the brighter and not so bright could sit down together and understand each other's points of view. Prizes were abolished because

they were divisive, people thought you could almost live in an Alice-in-Wonderland world where everyone got prizes.

I put it to you that the only way of deciding how you should teach is what appears, because you can't prove it, to experienced people and to common sense to actually work. Competition is good if it works and bad if it doesn't. The idea that competition in schools makes society more competitive seems to me to be irrelevant. If you consider British society in the 1980's and reflect that most of the young people in our society have been educated in a system which is against competition, in order to produce a more civilised and compassionate society, and you look around our society, you may well ask whether those idealists have actually produced a reverse situation to the one at which they say they have been aiming. My point is that we should judge the way we should teach by common sense. In other words are our children likely to learn ?

Let us think a little bit more about this question of competition. As an ex-school master I am aware that some children are turned off by being bottom of the form whereas some children are turned on by being top of the form. So my first point is that the competition only works successfully in a good school. In other words the worse the school, the less it can afford to let the children be competitive. In a good school the children know they are valued for themselves. They are not valued because of their place in some form order. If children do value themselves, it doesn't matter how much competition they have, children do not feel rejected if they come bottom in the order. If you have a bad school which does not value the children then competition can do a great deal of harm. The second general point is that it isn't the matter of competition or no competition, it is a question of sensible teachers - sensible school masters and school mistresses and heads deciding where competition is bad and where competition is good. Let me give you an example of bad competition. A true story. A boy of eight wrote home to his parents and apologised that he had fallen from first position in form order to third and told his parents that he thought he had gone past his peak, and this is at the age of eight ! That is clearly an example of bad competition. Competition is sometimes very stimulating, and there are other times when it is not needed. A good teacher and a good head know the difference. You do not have to have some rule in the school about competition. I spoke last week about a school in Surrey that I visited, in which there was a general rule that there was no competition. Interestingly when I spoke to the groups of teachers in the small groups afterwards, many of them said 'of course we ought to have competition but it is against the general rule'. In other words there was a conflict between the general rule and what common sense requires. Competition is neither good nor bad in itself, in a good school teachers are sensible enough to know how to deal with this matter.

What about streaming or mixed ability teaching ? I don't see why there is so much fuss about this. Common sense and certainly good teaching experience should tell one about it. You can have a mixed ability set or form or group in English with no problems. The fact that they are mixed ability doesn't stop the teacher from reaching children of different abilities within that group. You can do it in history. You must set children in mathematics where the differences in ability can be enormous; it is quite possible to have a difference of four or five years either way. In the learning of foreign languages, you need to set children. So there are some areas in which mixed

ability would work quite successfully and other areas where children need to be setted for their own sake. Common sense is the answer. Not research.

Under the recent Education Act, our children will have to take tests associated with the work they have done, as part of the national curriculum, at seven, eleven and fourteen and G.C.S.E. at sixteen. There are some people who say that will ruin teaching. How can people teach if they know that in so many years time children have got to take a test ? Can I put it to you as a matter of common sense that any good teacher can approach the subject as they like, can teach around the subject, use any method that they choose. The fact that there is an examination three years away will not cause them to be inhibited in this area. There is a great virtue in children knowing that they have got to reach such a standard at a certain time, and a great virtue in teachers knowing that too. Obviously if you had an exam every week that would be ludicrous, but I have taught in schools all my life where there have been exams at the end of every term. I have never found that particularly restrictive on me in any way. I found it a very useful discipline for me and for the pupils. There was a time in the sixties when people said that you mustn't set homework, it is divisive. When one asked why is homework divisive, the reply was that some children would be disadvantaged because they came from disadvantaged homes where they didn't have the facilities, the room, the books etc., to get homework done. Other children would come from homes where their parents would help them, where there was a quiet room for them to work, where there were plenty of materials. The truth of the matter is of course, that the children who needed the homework were those who were disadvantaged and they did it perfectly well if they were made to do it, and those who didn't do it often were those from the advantaged homes.

One of the problems about knowing how we should teach and how we teach the teachers to teach is that the whole area is confused by research. I do not mean that all research is bad, I do mean that much educational research reveals what is perfectly well known already and a lot of time and money is wasted on it. I have a friend who is a headmaster of a well known and very good comprehensive school in London. Every time we talk he starts off with, 'Yes John, but research has shown', I say, 'Look, you are an experienced inner-city school headmaster of some fifteen years standing, your experience should tell you what is valuable and what is not valuable'. But his whole approach is that he must keep up with the latest research, instead of asking 'what does my own experience tell me?'. There was a recent document produced by the DES which says that research in this country showed that homework is associated with successful schools. How much money went into that research I cannot imagine, but laymen would have told them that answer without all that research and that money.

If we want teachers to be good teachers, they will use both progressive and traditional methods in the way that they teach. They should be confident to use competition when they need it, when it is useful, and not use it at other times. They need to treat children as individuals to be valued and not pampered. They need to be able to exercise good discipline without being so restrictive that children dare not raise their hand to ask a question. There is no problem for the good teacher in understanding the value of both progressive and traditional teaching methods. But how do we teach these teachers ? Because of the shortage of teachers there is a proposal to have what are called licensed teachers. Some of you who are not teachers here might like to know that you can become a teacher now without any training.

You can get a job in the school. Somebody in the school will be responsible for looking after you and guiding you. Critics of that scheme, particularly amongst the teaching profession, feel that it will produce bad teachers. However, do you train teachers in an institute to teach, or do you take somebody with skills either in qualifications, with a degree, or in experience, and put him or her in a school and let them learn on the job ? Our second daughter spent four years doing a Bachelor of Education degree, and of course I do not believe that all that she did in her training is a waste of time, but the question still remains, do we create good teachers by putting them in an institution to learn or do we produce good teachers by letting them train and learn on the job ?

Lecture 5 - HOW SHOULD WE ORGANISE THE SCHOOL SYSTEM ?

Wednesday 17 May 1989

I am going to speak today about what a school system aims to do in terms of its organisation and then about what the existing position is. Whether the latest Education Act will help us to obtain our objectives. It has been my theme during these lectures and indeed in writing the book which is based on them, that it is no good talking about education unless you are clear as to what the aim of the exercise is. As a society we are reluctant to express abstract principles. I don't think that is too much of a generalisation about our national character. Whilst that reluctance can have a very attractive side, it seems to me that in education, as in defence, you do need to know what the aims of the exercise are.

I am going to put to you some of the points that I think represent the aims of the organisation. I am not talking about what it does necessarily for individual children, but the aims of the organisation of education and particularly whether there are any principles that we ought to be following. It seems to me that the fundamental aim expressed in general terms of the organisation of the school system must be to produce a well-educated population. You may say "well, that is not exactly the most original comment of the year", but my point is that the aim of the British education system up to now, has not been to produce a well-educated population; it has been to produce a well-educated elite, a minority of well-educated people. If you want evidence of that, may I remind you that something like sixty-six percent of our children are rejected by the school system at the age of sixteen, and only thirty-three percent are in education post sixteen, certainly to the age of eighteen. In Japan it is ninety-five percent. So when I say that our school system is geared to producing an elite I mean what I say. The organisation of the school system should aim in my view, to produce a well educated population and we are not doing it. That is the aim of the exercise.

How else should we lay down any principles as far as organising the school system is concerned ? I would make two other comments. One is that there must be a pragmatic approach. In other words you don't say 'we must retain grammar schools because grammar schools are a good thing', or 'we must abolish grammar schools because grammar schools are a bad thing'. We need to make a pragmatic decision. Does the existence of grammar schools or the disappearance of grammar schools contribute most to the creation of a well-educated population ? There are no principles involved, no ideology, and in my view there should be no ideology. So when you say 'should there be City Technology Colleges or not ?', 'should all schools be selective or comprehensive ?', the answer is that it doesn't matter. The only thing that matters is whether you are going to produce what you want, which is not a well-educated elite, but a well-educated population. So I am against ideology, I am against principle, I am for pragmatism. What is good is what works. The last general comment I would make is that I do believe the school system ought to be a national system. Now, like abstract principles the British are rather uneasy with the word national. They don't mind having a national anthem, but they are not quite sure they want a national school system. They tend to think that schools ought to be run locally. They are

uneasy about the national curriculum, though happily, less uneasy than they might have been. My view is that if you have a comparatively small country, facing considerable problems, economic, social, and so on, it is crucial that your school system is a national system, i.e. that the national government elected by ourselves, has the ultimate, indeed decisive say in how that school system is both organised and what is taught within the schools in the system. Therefore I would be against it being open to local education authorities to retain grammar schools or abolish them just as they wished, contrary to national policy. I would want central government to have a national policy and that is for a national system. As I say, people are slightly uneasy with that since the tradition in British education is strictly local government. When the 1944 Education Act came in and the Labour government came to power in 1945, most of those people in different layers of government had no experience of national government. Many of them had very good experience in local government and therefore the strength of their interest was in maintaining local control of education. Now there are virtues in that, but my overall wish would be that the system was seen to be national.

Let me just give you one example if I may. I have explained what I mean by a national system and why we need a well-educated population, I didn't give you an example of what I mean by not wanting it to ideological. We are almost unique (I used to tell pupils at Westminster that you couldn't be almost unique) in having an education system over which two political ideologies quarrel as dogs over a bone. It is interesting that in many other countries it is not a political ideological issue. For example, many people on the left of politics ideologically believe that the education system should be helping, perhaps instrumentally creating a egalitarian society, however that is defined. They would therefore judge how the school system is organised, not from an educational point of view, not even from the point of view of the national aims of an education system but from that ideological point of view. Therefore of course grammar schools are bad because they do not fit in with the ideological aim of egalitarianism. On the right of politics in this country there are many people who equally sincerely believe that the best way to organise an education system is to make it subject to market forces. Therefore what fits in with the market forces idea, competition, choice and so on meets their ideological aims. Whether or not it is good for education is another matter. Therefore on both ends of the political spectrum you have ideological approaches to education and how the school system should be organised. It is my argument that you have to divest yourself of political ideology and ask, "what is going to produce what the nation needs to be produced, in terms of young people prepared to play their part in the social and economic and other aspects of our life". I realise that that in itself is a political question but I ask you to agree or at least accept that there is a case for saying that political ideologies of whatever flavour distort decisions about the school system.

What is the nature of the organisation of our school system ? What could be improved ? What is bad ? What needs to be done to make it the sort of school system that will produce a well-educated population, not just a well-educated elite and an under-educated mass which is the present situation ? I will just say a little bit about independent schools at the end. They represent a small proportion, though a significant influence, some might say for good, some might say for ill, of the general provision for education in this country.

First of all the great majority of children, something like ninety-four percent go through the maintained sector. It ought not to be called 'maintained' any more; that implies it is maintained by the local education authority. Under the recent reforms not all schools will be maintained by the local education authority, some will have "opted out" of L.E.A. control. I am going to call them state schools, some countries call them government schools, some countries call them public schools, but that raises confusions of semantics in this country. I am going to call them state schools because they are the schools funded essentially by the state taxes whether at local or national level. They educate about ninety-four percent of our children. It is normal for those children to go at the age of five to a primary school in their locality. That would be true in America and Japan, France and so on. The starting age varies. In Sweden it is later than in the U.K. Some people feel it ought to be earlier, because if you catch children early you can develop talents and cash in on their energetic learning systems at a very young age, but around five is about par for the course throughout the world. On the whole, though not universally in this country, they then change to the secondary phase at eleven, in some cases it is fourteen, in some cases it is thirteen. One of the irritating things about the independent sector is that it is different from the state sector in this case so people find it difficult to move in and out, which would be desirable.

Here comes the problem. I want there to be a national system. Now for the majority, at the age of eleven (or it may be thirteen or fourteen) there are no fewer than seven possible routes through the education system to sixteen. I defy you to name them, but when I sat down and worked out what they were there were seven of them. You might for example go at the age of eleven to the local comprehensive school still run by the local education authority. Two, you might go to the local comprehensive school which has opted out of local authority control. Three, you might in your area still have a selective grammar school and they do still exist in some areas. Four, you might in that area go to what passes as a comprehensive school but because of the existence of the selective grammar school is in effect an old style secondary modern school. Five, you might go to a City Technology College. Six, you might go to an independent school. Seven, you might go to an independent school with your fees paid by the state on what is called the Assisted Places Scheme.

The first point I would make is this, that the argument for that diversity is that choice provides competition, diversity provides the sort of ginger, if you like, the salt, the grit in the system. If you give parents the choice of different types of school, different routes through the system then the education provided will be better because market forces operate. Of course competition works, but I am not myself convinced that you need to have such a choice, such a diversity, some might say such a confusion, within your national system in order to provide excellence in the school system through competition. There is very little choice in most other countries that have better school systems than we do. I mention that because this idea that education works better on market forces isn't thought necessary to produce a good education system, whether it is in Japan, or Germany or elsewhere. That is an interesting point.

Why is it that we in this country are so obsessed in some parts of politics, not all, with the idea of choice ? Why can't you have a good school system without having so many routes ? In other countries schools may compete with one another, you may have a choice between the same type of school at the same age but there is not this confusion of so many routes. I think it is undesirable to have such confusion, such diversity, within the secondary school system in this country.

Now let me then look at the elements within this system and try and give you some honest assessment of what I think of them because the Education Reform Act, which is after all the subject of these lectures, has profoundly changed this arrangement. It has made the choice much greater, the confusion you might say, much greater. I am going to say a word about the various elements in that Act and what I think of them.

Let us first of all take the so-called 'opting-out' schools. One of the most controversial elements in Baker's Act is that secondary schools (and some primary schools, if they are big enough) can opt out of control of the local education authority. The argument is that this degree of independence will enable them to chart their own course. It will make them more autonomous, more accountable to the parents, less dependent on local education authorities for direction and less vunerable to silly local education authorities who wish to pursue policies that may not be in the best interests of the children or of education as a whole. All that argument makes a lot of sense. The problem is that I just don't see why, if you want schools to opt out of local education authority control, you don't do the whole thing that way. It seems to me an unnecessary confusion that in one area you have got some schools opting out of local control and some staying in. If it is good to opt out why not let every school be funded directly by the central government and run as a grant-maintained school ? My fear is that those that opt out might become more like the selective grammar schools of old, and I will come back to that point in a moment, and that those that don't opt out may in fact deteriorate in quality. Part of the market theory argues that they won't deteriorate because they will be shown to be so bad. But if you look at the independent sector it is curious that neither this government nor a potentially left wing government looks at the experience of the independent sector in this sense. There are bad independent schools and they aren't improved by Eton or Winchester or Westminster or St. Paul's being better. I think it is doubtful whether bad state schools will be improved by there being some better opting-out schools even in the same area. I just don't think in practice that will follow. So while I understand entirely why Kenneth Baker wishes schools to opt out, as a tactic I can see it might ginger things up in a short term, as a strategy for producing a national education system I think it is wrong.

Now let us look at the City Technology Colleges. These are independent schools, with pupils' fees funded by the central government, an independent governing body and capital costs funded by trusts, foundations, industrial concerns, individuals and so on. I like the idea of City Technology Colleges. I could have wished they could have been organised perhaps slightly differently, but I think basically it is a perfectly acceptable idea within a national education system to have some schools that specialise. It might be in science and technology, it might be in modern languages, it might be in any other subject you care to think of. It works as many of you will know, in other countries. There are such schools in places as unlike each

other as New York and Leningrad. They have schools that specialise in this way yet remain within the national system. So I see no objection to there being within the national provision, some schools that specialise, whether it is in technology or in modern languages or anything else. But you know, if it is a good idea, I could have wished the government had put their hearts into it. In other words, they had said "it is a good idea to have in London, in Birmingham, in Newcastle, in Belfast, most of the great urban centres, some super-specialist schools, let us put them up and go there". They may say "we haven't got the money, we want to bring in private money", which is fair enough. But I do think the whole City Technology thing which could have been so good and will I have no doubt be goodish, would have been better if it had been given more support. I don't mean that Kenneth Baker himself is not behind it, I am sure he is, but I don't think the thing has had enough serious thought and support behind it. I see nothing wrong with it in principle though those on the left argue that you shouldn't have some selective schools, selective by aptitude in this case, or self-selecting through parents within a non-selective system. But they have it in New York and they have it in Leningrad, and those systems are probably better than ours. We must get away from this ideological obsession that you can't have selection because it works against some egalitarian utopia or that you can't have non-selection because it doesn't work with market forces. We must get away from that ideological obsession.

Two brief words if I may, about the Assisted Places Scheme and the problem of grammar schools, and then I am going to say a word about independent schools and their role in Britain and then finish by saying what I think the ideal school system ought to be in this country and how we get there from where we are now. You may not be familiar with the Assisted Places Scheme. It was started some years ago in the seventies, really as a response to Labour's abolition of the old direct grant schools. Central government partially pay and in some cases wholly pay, depending on a means test, the fees of the children from less affluent homes to go to independent schools. I think it is a bad scheme and I have always thought it was a bad scheme. I am not against children moving around, I am not against the tax payer paying for them to move around, but it seems to me that such a scheme would only be valid if it was clear that the child needed to move. As the scheme operates, any parent can apply to send his son or daughter to an independent school under the Assisted Places Scheme and if the school accepts the boy or girl then he gets a free or subsidised place. But you see that assumes an independent school is always better than a state school and you and I know that isn't the case. As I said earlier there are good state schools and bad independent schools. Now if the scheme had been set up so that children in state schools who for example could not study Latin and Greek because they were not on the timetable, were able to move to Westminster or St. Paul's in London and have a classical curriculum or say move at the sixth form level because we can't provide it in the state sector, then that seems to me and I hope to you, perfectly logical. I am very happy that my taxes should be used in that way. What worries me about the Assisted Places Scheme is that it is unprofessional. It is amateur. There is no check that the children we are funding out of our taxes to move from say Pimlico Comprehensive to Westminster need to move. It seems to be therefore an inefficient scheme. I am inclined to think the Labour Party is right to threaten under their new policy review to abolish it. I prefer to see it reformed, but I can understand their critism of it.

What about the old grammar schools that still remain ? Some of us may regret the passing of many ancient and successful grammar schools since the end of the war and of course under the impetus particularly of the 64/79 Labour government, but incidentally also carried on by the 70/74 Conservative government. Many of us regret it because we know that some good schools disappeared and good schools aren't so common that we can afford to remove them. However if you said to me "Well in principle, Dr. Rae, are you in favour of grammar schools and secondary modern schools, in other words, in selection at eleven, across the board ?" My answer would be "no I am not, I am totally opposed to it", and that has nothing whatsoever to do with an egalitarian philosophy or ideology. You can't run a school like Westminster and believe in egalitarianism. I don't. What I am opposed to in the grammar schools is very simply that I want our nation to have a well-educated population. I believe we desperately underestimate in this country the ability of most of our children. I am sure that most of them are perfectly capable of studying mathematics, modern languages and science to the age of eighteen, but we chuck them out at sixteen. The trouble with the grammar school system is that at the age of eleven we say to our society that only a minority are worth educating in this particular way, the majority need a more general education to become unskilled workers somewhere or other. We need fewer and fewer unskilled workers, and the lesson of so many countries is that if you want to survive in a highly competitive age of high technology you must educate everybody in your society and educate them well. You won't educate them well if you divide some off at the age of eleven. That is my objection to the grammar schools system. It is to do with economic prosperity, it is nothing to do with egalitarianism. We desperately underestimate the ability of our children. Not surprisingly therefore we have something of a yob culture, since that is what we encourage in them.

Independent schools present a particular problem in English society, but not in Scottish or in Welsh incidentally. There are independent schools in Australia, North America, France, Germany, almost every free country in the world. So don't let us blame ourselves for having some peculiarly British or English phenomenon. But they have a damaging psychological effect on our society. If you want our society to be happy, if you want it to be economically prosperous, then you must make Britain a country in which people feel they have opportunity. In a way it is what the government has been trying to do, though not on this particular front of independent schools. It seems to me that the existence of the most prestigious independent schools raises serious doubts in the minds of many people, about Britain really being a land of opportunity. Those schools are very powerful and very influential, to use a sort of Olympic games metaphor, they 'psych' the opposition. They undermine the confidence of other schools. That is a very vague concept but I believe it to be true. If you are in an inner city comprehensive, either as a teacher or a pupil, do you really believe that however hard you work you are going to be working in a merchant bank round the corner here in ten or fifteen years time ? That is what they believe at Westminster and they are right. As I came to the lecture this morning I bumped into one of them looking remarkably prosperous and I made a note to tell the development officer to appeal to him for funds because he looks as if he is doing well. Good luck to him. But you know if I were at Pimlico comprehensive I don't think I would believe that. That is what I mean by psyching the opposition. I am not blaming anyone. I am saying it is a problem. I don't know how you get out of the problem because I have no doubt at all that in a free society abolishing independent schools simply isn't on the agenda. It was for the

Labour party in the past, it is not now if you have read their latest policy review. But I don't have a solution either. I just put it to you that if we are talking about organising a school system that produces a well-educated population, not a well-educated elite, we have at some time to think about the problem of the influence of those most prestigious independent schools and I am not for dodging the problem even if I don't know the answer to it.

May I conclude by saying that I would like to see the following organisation of the school system in this country. I realise that in Scotland and in Northern Ireland there is a different organisation, indeed the Secretary of State isn't directly responsible for schools there, but let us talk about Britain. I think it would be ideal for all children to go to the local elementary or primary school, I don't mind what you call it. At the age of eleven or twelve I would like there to be really three possibilities, not seven. One is that you go, as you would in the United States or in Japan or in most countries in the world, to the local high school or rather to one of the local high schools. I would like those local high schools to have the maximum autonomy, the maximum freedom to run their own affairs subject to national policy, so that they follow the national curriculum but run their own finances. That enables them to develop different characteristics. One may be more sporting, one may be more interested in academic things. In that sense they compete with each other, though they are not different types of school. They are all local high schools. It happens in many parts of the United States. That is the main route for all but a few children. Some children will go to specialist schools in ballet, in modern languages, in technology and I welcome that element of diversity. I think it adds a sort of element of excellence and specialism, which is not at all harmful to the main system. Then there will be independent schools as well. That will be the only other third possibility.

I like to think that all governments and societies really believe that the future does depend on a good education system, not just socially or idealistically, but also economically. If that is the case then in the state sector, these local high schools would be good enough to attract the great majority of parents and many independent schools would in fact wither away. I wouldn't wish them all to do so and no doubt the best would remain, but really most people, the main stream, as in most other countries, go through the national system and therefore this sense of division is very much reduced, though I appreciate not removed all together. I think we could achieve it. I think it means an end to ideological decisions whether to the left or the right. It means being pragmatic, it means committing ourselves more than we do at the moment as a society to a belief in the value of education. It means that we need to be financially committed as well as believing politically, because it is going to be an expensive business.

Last but not least, society as a whole has to raise the morale and status of the teaching profession, and that is not just to do with money. The last of these lectures will be about how we create good schools. You won't be surprised to know that I am going to put to the argument that the key to the creation of good schools is the leadership of the head.

Lecture 6 - HOW DO WE CREATE GOOD SCHOOLS ?

13 June 1989

I am going to talk this morning about how we create good schools as distinct from bad ones. This may seem a somewhat simplistic topic but everything we have been discussing over the weeks, indeed the great debate that goes on and continues about education, tends to be geared or aimed at questions of resources, of high policy, of national curriculum and so on. Yet we all know, because we have been through schools, that the thing that makes the critical difference as to whether any pupil learns or fails to learn, is the quality of the teacher standing in front of the class and of course the quality of the school. In other words, the best laid plans of Secretaries of State for Education and Science will come to nought if the schools themselves are not good enough to deliver the policy that he or she is wishing to implement. So it seemed entirely appropriate that the last of these lectures should concentrate on how you create good schools.

We don't address enough attention to the simple question of why are some schools better than others. The tendency of say, teachers' unions or opposition politicians (depending who is in office at the particular time) is to say that the crucial difference between a good and a bad school is one of resources. I don't deny that there comes a point where if a school is so badly funded it can't pay its teachers properly and cannot attract reasonable teachers, then the relationship between resources and good and bad schools becomes obvious. I am sure again we know from our experience, not from any educational research or theory, that even quite modestly funded schools, whether they are in the maintained state system or in the independent system, can in fact be very good schools, so there must be some other factor at work rather than resources. Equally it is true and was true particularly in the sixties when there was very generous funding of schools, that even if you pour money into schools and into school systems you don't necessarily get good schools. In other words more money doesn't equal good schools any more than less money equals bad schools. So let me clear that point out of the way if I may because I am not going to dwell on it or return to it but simply to say that the almost parrot cry "we need more resources" is not the whole or indeed the most important part of the answer to the question "why are some schools better than others ?". One of the answers to this question is the autonomy, the independence, in the way the school is run. I am going on to talk about the role in that autonomous school of the governing body and then finish by talking about the role of the head, which you won't be surprised to know I believe is the critical factor.

A curious characteristic of the debate on education in the last year and a half to two years was the almost total silence of the independent sector. Now that is curious because many of the things that were being proposed in the Education Reform Act, in other words greater financial autonomy for schools and the freedom to manage their own affairs, very much reflected what already happened in the independent sector. The desire to make schools more accountable to parents, to some extent, though not of course entirely, was also reflected in the independent sector. The idea that market forces could

raise the standard of schools also had its natural echoes in the independent sector. During that whole debate hardly a voice was raised by the independent sector either expressing its own experience in these matters or indeed being critical, if they thought that right, of some of the measures in relation to those policies that Kenneth Baker was going to carry out. Yet, one of the great arguments for an independent sector is that if schools are as it were 'standing on their own feet' they are more likely to be responsive to customers, be they the pupils, parents, employers, or indeed society as a whole. Parents are not the only customers I hasten to say. So it is surprising that independent schools didn't have more input in the great debate, because one of the characteristics of Kenneth Baker's approach has been to try and give greater independence to maintained or state schools.

Let me just remind you about the measures he has already taken, before I comment on them. First of all there is something I think is welcomed widely throughout the education system, not only in one particular sector, and that is that there should be delegated to individual schools the right to manage their own budget. In other words they have their budget and their governors and their heads decide how that money should be spent. Schools will not have to apply to the local education authority for a window to be mended. They decide themselves what the priorities are, whether they need more pianos for the Music Department, or an extra teacher in Special Skills, teaching slow learners how to read for example, whether they expand the Modern Languages Department or decrease another. Within a budget the schools decide what their own priorities are. The so-called opting out schools, or grant-maintained schools are another example of an attempt to give greater independence to schools because these schools not only run their own budget, they do in fact opt out of local authority control altogether and are run directly by the central government, so that is again another example of autonomy in the Act.

Now these examples of greater autonomy are really ways of saying that you will get better schools if they are free from bureaucratic interference. In the English Language, although bureaucracy is obviously a French word, the word bureaucratic is almost always used in a pejorative sense. It is never a compliment to call someone a bureaucrat, with apologies to those of you here who come under that description. The British assume that bureaucracy is a bad thing. In other words if you are running down Europe it is Brussels bureaucracy that you are in fact attacking. Never very clearly defined. The idea of this government and one that on the whole I think I support, is that you should remove the local bureaucrats as far as possible from interference in the running of schools. That is greater autonomy. Does it in fact work in the way the government has done it ? Is that the way to achieve greater autonomy ? Let me just address myself to that issue for a moment. I am personally convinced from my experience, which is entirely in the independent sector I hasten to say, that the more a school runs its own affairs, the better it is likely to be. Unfortunately it doesn't follow that it will be. Because it has to first of all be realistic, teachers tend to know the value of everything and the cost of nothing to invert Oscar Wilde for a moment. In other words they know which things are desirable, but they have very little knowledge of the actual cost of things. If schools are responsible for their

own budgets, the teachers in the class room are much closer to the point where the decisions are made. If they are not close to that point, if the decisions are made somewhere else, then it is all too easy for teachers to argue "Well we are not doing well because we do not have enough resources, we must have an extra maths' teacher, we must have more sports equipment, we must have more musical instruments", whatever it may be. If those decisions are made in the school and the Head of Sport has to argue with the Head of Music who has the limited amount of money, it introduces a sense of realism about the use of resources, which seems to me very desirable and likely to be a source of efficiency rather than otherwise. I am very much in favour of schools being able to have their own budget, as I think it will not only produce better management of money, it will produce better education, because staff, governing bodies and heads will have to sit down and say what are their priorities. Teachers will no longer be able to say that the local education authority is wrong and have got the wrong priorities, because they are making decisions on priorities themselves. So autonomy in that financial sense seems to be very desirable.

I won't spend much time on the pros and cons of opting-out schools, my own view is that the Government didn't need to take that step to get schools sufficient autonomy. You could give them greater freedom from local authorities, you could give them financial autonomy without giving them the opportunity to opt out of local authority control all together. My guess is that the Government will be disappointed in the number of schools who really will wish to opt out of local authority control. Those schools will realise they have already got through their local financial budget management enough autonomy to decide on their own priorities. So I don't believe those opting-out schools will in fact be very significant in number or in terms of policy that they will have a great impact on what goes on in our national education system.

I should mention of course that those City Technology Colleges which are being set up are also independent of any local authority and indeed they are independent schools under another name, though their pupils are funded directly by the central Government. Again they are so small in number that I doubt whether they will in fact effect the sense of independence in the system as a whole. So the key autonomy that has been given is local financial management to schools. I welcome it, I think it is entirely desirable and I quite honestly have heard very few people in the education world criticise that particular reform. If you give autonomy to schools it means more than just financial management. In what way are state schools given more autonomy under the law now and in what way does that compare with the independent sector and is that good or bad, in other words which has it right or wrong ?

One of the most significant aspects of this Government's policy and indeed it is echoed by a recent Labour party document, so it is not really a party political issue at all, is that schools should be more accountable to parents. Now this Government and the Tory party undoubtedly see that as a way of jacking up standards in schools, that the educationalists and the teachers shouldn't any longer be able to get away with low standards because parents will demand higher standards. They will want to know why their child

can't read or why she can't do mathematics at a certain age, and they will have the National Curriculum to measure those standards against. So the Tories undoubtedly see accountability to parents and parental role on governing bodies as a way of raising standards. Now I don't dissent from the principle that schools ought to be answerable to parents. It would be monstrous if they were not. Parents are always paying the fees. Whether they pay them directly or through their rates and taxes they are in fact the direct customers, although there are other customers, such as employers and society as a whole. Of course schools should be accountable to parents. Parents should be able to measure what schools are doing against some national standard. Where I dissent from this Government's policies and it is actually opposition policy as well, is in giving parents too great a role in running schools. I am probably in a minority of one here, let alone elsewhere, but I will state my case nevertheless.

Under two Education Acts, that is the '86 and '88 Education Acts, the governing bodies of state schools have been clearly defined, both in their composition and in their powers. In a typical state school of over six hundred pupils there would be five parents and six representatives of local authority, two teachers' representatives and a number, I think it is six, I am speaking from memory, of representatives of the public interest, local industry and business and so on. There is therefore a statutory right for parent representatives to be on the governing body. Again I don't dissent from that, except that I would argue that if that is the case you need to make it clear how the parents' representatives are elected. Whether they actually want to be representatives is very much in doubt in my mind. But that parents should be on the governing body doesn't seem to me a matter of great contention. Where I part company from the Government and from the Labour party as well and no doubt other political parties is that I don't think governing bodies, whether they contain parents or not, should have the power to run the school. Now you may say they don't, the head runs the school. Under the 1986 and 88 Education Acts there is no doubt, both in law and I have no doubt it will turn out in practice, though it will vary from school to school, that governors have for example, and this seems to be a critical point, the right to be involved in the appointment of members of staff. I am going to dwell on this.

If a head is going to be an effective leader of a team of teachers and non-teaching staff, but particularly teaching staff, he will have to appoint those members of staff himself. Of course he will never appoint all of them because he inherits some, and passes others on to his successor. But a key aspect of leadership is the freedom to appoint the people you want to be on your team. Whether that means appointing them in the first place as a junior maths master, or promoting them within the school from junior physicist to head physicist, head of science, whatever the particular position is. If governors get involved in that particular role two things it seems to me go badly wrong. First of all the head is not picking his team and that I think undermines his position. Secondly, I don't know what expertise and special experience governors have for appointing members of staff.

I am a director of a national newspaper and it is out of the question that I should sit with the editor when he is appointing a junior journalist or deciding who is going to be his foreign editor, or who is going to edit the magazine section on Sundays. What on earth do I know about it ? The only person who can choose a successful team as the editor of a newspaper is the editor. No doubt he will consult senior colleagues. No doubt there are very senior positions, maybe deputy editor, as deputy headmaster, where governors ought to be involved, and that I accept, but very very senior positions. But for the directors of a newspaper or indeed the governors of a school to get involved in all the appointments seems to me amateurism, British amateurism if I may say so, at its worst and I strongly oppose that particular aspect of the present situation. I entirely accept that a governing body is ultimately responsible for what goes on in the school and therefore general questions of discipline and curriculum ought to be discussed with them, either from time-to-time, or when any particular change is going to be introduced. They should not have any particular brief to interfere with or get involved in either of those issues, once again seems to me to undermine the head's position which I think is a serious mistake. I have been a headmaster for twenty years and maybe there is no other way I can look at it. I am not pretending this is the only way it can be seen.

The critical factor in the creation of a good school is the quality of the leadership of the head. There really isn't anything else that compares with that with in importance. Governors - yes, intake of pupils - yes, catchment area - yes, resources available - yes, other intangible things like tradition - yes, but the real thing that makes a difference is the quality of leadership. Surely that must be true of every other organisation under the sun. The quality of leadership, and unfortunately it comes down to one individual because schools can't be oligarchies and despite the attempts by some people to make them so, can't be democracies by the very nature of their exercise. It is a leadership role and on the quality of the leadership everything depends. What does that leadership mean in practice ? Appointing staff I have mentioned. I won't go back to that. The most important thing a head teacher does is to create, to use an old-fashioned word, the tone, the atmosphere, within a school. I expect you have all had this experience, where you visit a school, and as soon as you walk in you know it is a rather bad school. No one has told you, you haven't actually been round it yet. You could walk into another school nearby, and for some reason you know there is something, I am being slightly romantic, something intangible which tells you that it is a good school. Or to be a little more precise, as you go round the school and you see the pupils and their relationships with one another, with the staff and with the head, it becomes clear after quite a short time, whether you are in quite a good school, or in quite a bad school.

What makes the difference between two schools ? There is the intangible question of the nature of the leadership as it effects the ethos, the tone, an old fashioned word, but I still like it, of the school. How does the head do that ? They have to make the members of the staff feel valued and bring out the best in them. They have to set priorities and to set standards. A good head will create the sort of atmosphere where pupils do their best. I do not mean they are all pious swots the whole time, simply that at the moment the right thing, the right sense of lift and high standards will be

there. Good leadership affects non-teaching staff, it affects the way the buildings look, it affects tidiness, it affects discipline, it affects morale. If you have a good leader then the school will be good.

Now, if I am right in thinking that so much depends on the quality of the head, it is surprising that there is such amateurism both in the selection of heads and in their preparation for the job they are going to do. Headmasters and headmistresses are selected by committees, in other words back to your governors again. I am a governor so I am criticising myself. Governors know very little about the school, when it comes to choosing a head we like to think if we are governors that we have some special expertise. Everybody tends to think that he or she is an expert when it comes to judging character. We may be no good at anything else, but we can judge character. People on governing bodies who select heads like to think that they can judge character. Supposing you approached the appointment of the head in quite a different way, by applying some of the skills and experience and expertise of what are loosely called 'head hunting' firms. A friend of mine runs a very successful management search or head-hunting firm and said to the governing body of his old school which is an independent school, "I see you are going to advertise for a new headmaster, can I give you any help, free of charge, since I am an old boy of the school?" They said "No we don't want any of those professional techniques here thanks very much, because we know how to do it ourselves". Maybe they did, I am not commenting on the selection they made because I don't know who it was, but it did seem to me a very foolish dismissal. After all the role of a good "head hunting firm", is to provide a credible and realistic short list of people who can do the job. If you are going to appoint the head of the school, be it in a primary school in Inner London or Eton or wherever, you have still got to find the people who can do the job. There was a distinguished and well-known independent school, not one I hasten to say that I have ever had anything to do with, who were looking for a new head. They decided by looking at the applications that 'X' would be a good man, but they didn't check with the school of which he was Head already. In that school the masters and mistresses were fed up with him and regarded him as so totally incompetent that they got together a petition to the governing body asking for him to be removed. However, since the advertising school did not check with the governing body and he did not give the governing body as one of his referees, they read the other references and appointed this man who was regarded as totally incompetent in one school. Much I may say to the intense relief of everybody in the school that he was leaving. Now that maybe a slightly eccentric version, but a similar story could be told over and over again because of the amateurism of the business. I would urge that if we are going to put so much responsibility on heads then the whole business of how they are selected needs to be looked at in a more professional manner.

Lastly on this and indeed lastly before I wind up. If you are going to put all the responsibility on heads you really ought to give them some training. You wouldn't put a Colonel in charge of a regiment or a Brigadier in charge of a brigade without some training. It seems almost inconceivable that you would put somebody in charge of any organisation, particularly one which is so intensely dependent on the quality of leadership, without some form of training. In the state sector there are increasing attempts to have degrees

of training but they are very limited. Maybe a staff college for heads is what is needed. The government I know has been considering one, but it makes it extremely difficult to raise money to get it off the ground. We do tend to throw people in at the deep end in a extremely difficult and crucial job. I am going to end here by saying that I am extremely grateful to you for coming along both today and to previous lectures.

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Gresham College, Barnard's Inn Hall, Holborn, London EC1N 2HH
Tel: 0171 831 0575 Fax: 0171 831 5208
e-mail: enquiries@gresham.ac.uk