



# Education Politics

Journal of the Socialist Educational Association

February/March 2020, № 140

## HOLD THE TORIES TO ACCOUNT!

**James Whiting**  
General Secretary SEA

All of us on the left in education are bitterly disappointed by the result of the General Election in December. In the SEA, the policies we have won support for at Labour conference around replacing marketisation with a coherent and comprehensive National Education Service, democratically controlled by local authorities, have little chance of being implemented in the next five years.

On the surface the manifesto commitments the Tories have made are anodyne. No major shake ups have been promised. There will be no compulsory academisation for all, and no massive expansion of grammar schools appears to be on the cards. The truth is though they have already done enough in terms of legislation and power grabs to ruthlessly implement their education agenda. A combination of increasingly powerful academy chain bosses, well-funded right wing think-

tanks and pressure groups, a knowledge based national curriculum which pays lip service to the country's diversity and ignores the climate crisis, a new knowledge focused OFSTED framework, high stakes assessment throughout compulsory schooling, de-professionalisation of teachers, the threat of academisation plus underfunding, is creating a tightly controlled but fragmented education market.

In schools the Tories appear to  
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## Labour Leadership Election: SEA Nominates Long-Bailey and Burgon



The Socialist Educational Association (SEA) is delighted to nominate Rebecca Long Bailey for Labour Leader and Richard Burgon for Deputy. We are an open and democratic organisation. Our 640 members decided on the nominations through a secure online balloting app with no prior recommendation from the association's NEC. The SEA has been campaigning hard for an equitable education system in which every child goes to a great school which is embedded in its local community and democratically accountable to it.

**VOTE LONG-BAILEY AND BURGON**



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## About *Education Politics*

*Education Politics* (ISSN 1354-2028) is the journal of the Socialist Educational Association. The articles reflect the views of their authors and not the SEA unless indicated otherwise.

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have tackled their own ideological contradiction between an authoritarian right who want to dictate what is learnt and even how it is delivered in schools and their more libertarian free marketeers who want schools to succeed or fail based on their success in the market. In reality the diversity of provision which the free school programme promised, has hardly materialised. Steiner Free Schools for example have had to close. Instead the market revolves around how well providers deliver on the government's agenda to which no alternative can be contemplated. This is despite the fact that successful jurisdictions internationally have chosen radically different paths e.g. Finland which has ceased teaching subjects altogether. Interestingly whilst not as radical, governments in Scotland and Wales are developing more nuanced approaches to assessment and the curriculum, allowing us to make comparisons.

In Higher Education provision the state has applied its own templates for success in terms of the frameworks for teaching and research excellence. The market is causing havoc in allowing universities to expand as much as they like. Unconditional offers have controversially been one result of this scramble to recruit. Many institutions are now in serious deficit. A university going to the wall or having to be bailed out by the government is a strong possibility.

Early years provision is in a similar state. Closures of Sure Start Centres continue as there is no sign that the new government is going to stop the crippling austerity local authorities are experiencing. In an increasingly privatised market funding is nowhere near adequate enough to even provide a basic level of childcare let alone the foundations of an education delivered by properly qualified staff.

The impact of these policies is starting to become clear. Exclusion rates are accelerating as disadvantaged children and those with special needs in particular, struggle with the new curriculum and assessment regime. Attainment gaps have widened between disadvantaged and other pupils. Perhaps most damning of all, as mental health issues among our young people become more prevalent, the OECD reports that our children are among the least happy in the world. What a contrast the reality is with the manifesto commitments the Tories made:

‘.... we want to ensure every child has access to a great state school – that every pupil gets the qualifications they need for a prosperous future, while learning in an environment where they will be happy and fulfilled’

Our role in the SEA now is to:

1. Relentlessly expose the real impact of these policies on children and students, holding the Tories to account
2. Campaign with unions, parent groups and others to resist the damage caused by cuts and academisation
3. Continue to develop alternative policies with a wide range of like-minded partners
4. Show that another education is possible now by promoting:
  - # alternative approaches to pedagogy, the curriculum and assessment
  - # collaboration among providers rather than competition
  - # more democratic ways of organising institutions

# Campaigning for Education

## Reflections on the 2019 General Election Campaign

**Sheila Doré: former SEA Chair and currently Highams Park LP Branch Chair, with thanks to fellow former teacher Gail Williams**

The General Election of 2019 was a very frustrating and disappointing experience for Labour Party activists. Our constituency is Chingford and Woodford Green where we were campaigning to defeat Iain Duncan Smith. We had a dynamic local candidate, Faiza Shaheen, and an army of volunteers who were determined to remove Duncan Smith, the architect of Universal Credit, from his parliamentary seat.

In the event we failed. The figures were Iain Duncan Smith - 23,481 and Faiza Shaheen - 22,219. A swing to Labour and a reduction in his majority from 2,438 to 1,262. However, what emerged as one of the most positive experiences of the campaign was the NEU strategy of targeting every school with bespoke leaflets about the cuts to education funding, specifying what each school and each pupil had lost in financial terms.

I personally leafleted four primary schools, two in the north and largely Conservative part of the constituency and two in the South Labour dominated wards.

In the North we encountered opposition from the head teachers concerned. Both were very defensive about parents hearing negative information about their schools and asked us to move

away from the school gate. One insisted that the school was managing the cuts very efficiently and that the children were suffering no negative effects. We had to insist on our right to leaflet outside the school premises as long as we were calm, polite and not interfering in any way with entrances and exits, which could have been a health and safety issue with very small children, buggies and scooters going in and out. However, another head teacher, in the North of the constituency agreed to display a massive poster detailing the cuts to all schools on the outside of her school on the main road leading through the Borough. She said parents have the right to know what their children are suffering and who was responsible. What a star!

The reaction from the parents, however, was on the whole very positive. It became obvious that some parents really were unaware of the Government cuts in funding. The targeted information for each school really helped to bring home to parents just how much money their own child would be missing out on and where possible, talk about the possible effects this is having and will have for the school overall. We were able to spell out the loss of teaching assistants, the paucity of basic equipment, pencils, paper, art materials, musical instruments and support for Special Needs pupils. This particular cut has had a massive impact not only on the individual

students with SEND but also the other pupils' need to function in a classroom where their friends with SEND were made to feel comfortable and fully accommodated to ensure a constructive classroom environment.

Many parents stopped to engage and relate their own experiences. One parent refused to take a leaflet from us because it was blue and white and so she thought we were Tories. She was greatly relieved to hear that we were representing the NEU. Others asked why we were leafletting before the election and questioning what the connection was between who they voted for and the provision for their children in the school. This provided the opportunity for real discussion around cuts, the Tory austerity agenda and, crucially, to explain that the cuts were not the fault of the local Labour authority but the Conservative government. David Cameron and George Osborne have done a very effective job of making voters blame their local Labour council for the massive attack there has been on local services by passing on the responsibility for the cuts to local authorities, most of which are Labour, particularly in the seats that were lost. Voters blamed their local Labour councils for their feeling of 'loss of control' and not the Conservative government. This was an argument we should have made more explicit in our

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national election campaign.

We concluded that it's far better to leaflet in the afternoon rather than the morning. Parents were, with one or two exceptions, happy to take a leaflet but under pressure in the morning to get their children into school, whereas the afternoon afforded more time for talk and to raise awareness through directing parents to the website. With hindsight we recognised that we should, out of courtesy, inform the headteacher beforehand. We want to take action to challenge Government cuts but we also need to be sensitive to the fact that there may be other issues which head teachers, staff and parents are having to resolve as a community. We're not there to inadvertently reinforce internal division. Having had a difficult discussion, it would also help us in future if the guidelines regarding the leafleting of schools could be made absolutely clear and everyone is aware of rights and responsibilities.

Finally, it seemed to us that we should have focused much more specifically on schools in the 2019 General Election campaign. It was a really important factor in Labour's comparative success in the 2017 election and is a very real issue for voters, many of whom are parents and grandparents. Sadly, it got lost in the welter of promises that embodied the Labour manifesto and in the clamour of 'Get Brexit done!'

Overall the experience was very worthwhile. Congratulations to the NEU and School Cuts Campaign for a brilliant, detailed and effective contribution to the 2019 election.

# **Rebel without**

*'Rebel Without a Pause – There's no justice: just us and what we choose to do about it.' by Hank Roberts. Reviewed by Louise Regan*

Anyone who has been an activist in the education trade union movement over the last 40 to 50 years will, I am sure, have come across Hank. He lived in a tent in Tent City for six months to oppose the privatisation of a school, appeared before a High court judge and ensured that his previous headteacher was brought to justice over the misappropriation of £2.7million from the school budget.

He, in his absolute commitment to professional unity, joined all three teacher trade unions and for decades raised the need for unity. He was a national executive member of the NUT and ATL and ATL national president. The hard work paid off when the ATL and NUT joined forces in 2018 to become the largest education union in Europe and the fourth largest union in the TUC. I know however that Hank will not rest until we have one union for all education workers.



## **REBEL WITHOUT**

## **A PAUSE**

**THERE'S NO JUSTICE: JUST US  
AND WHAT WE CHOOSE TO DO ABOUT IT**

**Hank Roberts**



# a pause

## BOOK REVIEW



This is a story of Hank's life. It was hard to put down, at times shocking, at times hilarious and at others sad but what runs throughout is a deep sense of the need to fight for justice and to never give up.

This book is timely, we have just seen the election of a Tory majority government. We know that they are no friends of the trade unions and we also know that they will continue to privatisate and marketise our education system. They are happy to allow private business to make money at the expense of our young people and their education.

This book gives us a lesson in organising, Hank talks clearly about each of the struggles he has been involved in and analyses what has been learnt. He is clear that the only people who are going to change our society are us.

The hero that shines throughout this book for me is Jean. Her commitment to fighting for justice is clear. She never gives up and her compassion is outstanding. Someone who is prepared to risk losing their home to fight for justice for others is someone to be admired.

There will be many fights ahead and whether you are thinking of occupying a school, living in a tent or a tree to oppose attacks on our education system or simply want to hear about the possibilities that are out there then this is worth a read.

Finally, what this book shows us is that not all battles are won but if we don't fight then we can't win.

**Link to purchase the book here:**  
<http://www.amazon.co.uk/REBEL-WITHOUT-PAUSE-Theres-justice/dp/1690142278>



# The wheels fall off the Agnew-de Souza project in Norfolk

It was recently reported widely in the local press that a 'Norfolk academy trust is among the country's best for disadvantaged pupils' in the Norwich Evening News (20 December). To say that Inspiration Trust's schools are among the "best for disadvantaged pupils" based on so little and such patchy evidence was quite a claim. There is no mention in the article which of the Trust's 13 schools feature in the Sutton Trust's report. I would be surprised if all the Inspiration Trust schools are doing equally well in terms of their GCSE English and maths result, Progress 8 and Attainment 8 measures. We think now that it is safe to assume that the Great Yarmouth Primary Academy was not one of them.

Once again, Warwick Mansell, in an exclusive article, "School in minister's academy trust fails Ofsted inspection", echoed in the local press, reported on yet another scandal to hit Dame Rachel de Souza's Inspiration Trust.<sup>1</sup> A recent Ofsted report on Great Yarmouth Primary Academy (GYPA) has placed the school in special measures after finding a catalogue of problems, including pupil disruption, high levels of exclusion, and the fact that, "leaders have not demonstrated their capacity to improve the school....Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is unacceptably low. Around half of pupils leave the school ill-prepared for secondary school....Too often; teachers are ill-equipped to deliver the curriculum effectively. Their curriculum knowledge is not secure".

As noted by Mansell, this is a terrible indictment of a school operated by Inspiration Trust, a MAT that was founded by the academies minister, Lord Agnew. However, this is more than the failure of just one of the Trusts thirteen schools, since it seriously holes below the water-line a particularly important flag ship of the Agnew fleet, and is damaging to the much-touted educational ideology of the so-called "knowledge-based" curriculum and its glib imitators much favoured by MATs up and down the country.

The Inspiration Trust's curriculum model is limited at best and certainly open to dispute. There is an antidote to the knowledge-based curriculum, which has many shortcomings, but does enable control. One of the unfortunate representation or limitations of the test-oriented education is that the

student is treated as "Exam machine" rather than a humanistic approach.

Let's go back to the beginning of this school, and run through its history since it was first taken over by Agnew in August 2012.

The right-wing multi-millionaire Sir Theodore Agnew, believing that state education should be serving the interests of the capitalist employer, decided to set up IT and selected as his very first guinea-pig Greenacre Primary, which re-opened as Great Yarmouth Primary Academy in September 2012. The school, his pet project, received his personal attention, and he sponsored it to the sum of £250,000 over five years and, as he told a reporter, "he speaks at assemblies, presents awards for reading and has come to Saturday school with his own son to help with reading".<sup>2</sup> Agnew, appointed by Gove as chair of the Academies Board in the Department of Education, soon gained national publicity for his little school through successive Ministers of Education. The Daily Mail claimed that GYPA had undergone a rapid improvement that was due to the introduction of a controversial nine-hour working day, a transformation that Elizabeth Truss praised as a "brilliant" example.<sup>3</sup>

This was not the first, or last time, that the Agnew-de Souza outfit was held up by Ministers as a shining example of how things should be done. But the Yarmouth Primary was already running into problems. In August and October 2014 The Observer published articles claiming that de Souza had passed on to three schools advanced knowledge of the date of future Ofsted inspections, one of the three being Great Yarmouth Primary Academy.<sup>4</sup> Ofsted appointed the lawyer Julian Gizzi to carry out an investigation, but was unable to access de Souza's e-mails at IT since they had been "irrevocably deleted by accident in September 2014".<sup>5</sup> William Holledge, Principal of GYPA, sent an e-mail to de Souza on 2 May 2014 in which, Gizzi notes, he "correctly pinpointed" the 13-14 May as the date of the Ofsted inspection. But unfortunately, despite repeated attempts, Mr. Holledge refused to be interviewed by Gizzi.<sup>6</sup> Mary Bousted, head of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, wrote to Sir Michael Wilshaw to express the "gravest concerns" about the inadequacy of the Gizzi investigation and challenging how,

given the destruction or withholding of information, he could “on the balance of the evidence” conclude there was no advance notice of the inspection. Ofsted would come back to haunt de Souza four years later.

William Holledge was soon to be replaced as principal of GYPA by Dr Craig Avieson, one of the crew of smartly suited leaders that de Souza recruited to lead a new curriculum revolution. During this period the educational theorists of the Tory Party, among them Gove and Nick Gibbs, had shown a deepening interest in the “knowledge-based” theories of the right-wing American, Professor E.D. Hirsch. De Souza, always ready to impress her masters in Whitehall, duly fell in love with Hirsch, as did Dr Craig Avieson in Yarmouth. Early in 2015 de Souza led a party of Inspiration Trust heads, including Avieson, to New York to visit the guru and to study his methods, and in September Hirsh was feted in Norwich, backed by Agnew’s think-tank the Policy Exchange. Avieson quickly set about bringing Hirsch’s half-baked ideology of rote learning into the Great Yarmouth Primary Academy.<sup>7</sup>

It is from this general background that we can begin to see why de Souza has reacted with such fury to the blistering Ofsted report on GYPA, since far more is at stake than the fortunes of one primary school. Since 2016 de Souza has positioned herself not only as CEO of a middle-ranking MAT, but as a national-level educational expert who operates via her own Parents and Teachers for Excellence (PTE), founded on 21 September 2016, and her teacher training centre operating from the Hewett Academy. She has constantly used her insider links to the DfE to foster her claims to initiate a ground-breaking revolution in curriculum development. De Souza, for example, has since 2016 made a strong bid to grab a big part of the action of the “Opportunity Area” project set up in Norwich by Justine Greening when Education Minis-

ter, under the Chairmanship of Dr Tim Coulson, ex-Regional Commissioner and Chair of Governors at the Inspiration Charter Academy in Great Yarmouth.

The Ofsted report at GYPA is a massive indictment of all the over-inflated and bogus claims made by IT since 2013 about the superiority, over maintained schools, in terms of curriculum development and serving as the champion of the rights of pupils from a disadvantaged background. De Souza was chair of the GYPA Governing Body until November 2017, and still remains a member, and thus carries direct responsibility for the systemic failures pointed out by Ofsted inspectors, including the damning comment that the “leaders have not demonstrated their capacity to improve the school”. The opinion of the inspectors was, “that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school”.

To add to this failure of Agnew’s personal project, we can track similar problems developing at Cobholm, IT’s second primary school in Yarmouth. This school, also under the leadership of Dr Avieson, ran into major problems in June 2015 as parents began to pull their children from the school because of a rapid change-over in teaching staff and a basic failure to communicate with parents. An Ofsted inspection in September 2017 gave poor results until Inspiration Trust gained a highly unusual “second look” re-inspection that mitigated the conclusions.<sup>8</sup> Matters were not helped by the frequent changes in leadership.<sup>9</sup>

De Souza would seem to be seeking to repeat a similar Ofsted back down over its GYPA assessment. After several years of having her own way through her direct links to influential Ministers in

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# The Socialist Educational Association

**is the only educational organisation affiliated to the Labour Party**

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the Department of Education, de Souza is increasingly prepared to throw her weight around and to intimidate even the mighty Ofsted. The Ofsted report, she claims is “simply wrong” but in pointing out errors “they have refused to listen, twisting the text of the report to fit their negative narrative”. These are inspectors who “don’t understand the data, and seem to walk through the doors determined to reach a particular judgement come what may”. De Souza blusters, IT would consider court action but she was not prepared to divert the cost of £100,000 “from front line teaching”. How noble and principled.

So the placing of Great Yarmouth Primary Academy in special measures, while sad for the pupils and parents, is a strong indication that the game is finally up for the right-wing project that Agnew and de Souza have managed to impose, for far too long, and with relative impunity, on the people of Norfolk.

1. *Education Uncovered*, 28 February 2019.

2. *Eastern Daily Press*, 9 August 2013 and 15 March 2019

3. *Daily Mail*, 16 June 2014. Likewise Minister Nicky Morgan, in promoting her Education and Adoption Bill in the House of Commons on 22 June 2015, held up GYPA as a model of school improvement, a proof of how academies were outperforming maintained schools. It appears that part of Agnew’s sponsorship money had helped fund the long-day experiment.

4. During a training day as Ofsted inspector on 31 March 2014, as well as in an e-mail of 4 April, de Souza was given the date of the upcoming Ofsted inspection of GYPA, a school of which she was Chair of Governors and CEO. This was a lapse in procedure that should not have happened.

5. *Gizzi Report*, p.7.

6. William Holledge later stood down as an IT trustee, but his wife Tessa Holledge, headed another Inspiration Trust school, the Norwich Primary Academy, that went on to be rated “good” by an Ofsted inspection in mid-2015.

7. The GYPA home-page flagged up the advanced nature of the curriculum development, a project that was “heavily influenced by the thinking and writing of E.D. Hirsch”.

8. Warwick Mansell, *Education Uncovered*, 23 May 2018.

9. This was not helped by the fact that the Head of Cobholm, Kimberley Morton, was suspended after an incident in the Quay Pride bar on 8 September 2017. The landlord asked Morton, after a drink was thrown over a customer, to leave, when further drinks and a glass were thrown (EDP 12 September 2017). Morton was later reinstated, but IT refused to say what the outcome of the internal enquiry had been. Today there is a different head, Louise Scott.

# Social injustice, the



**An interview with Alyson Malach by Ian Duckett**

I met with Alyson Malach, Managing Director Equality and Diversity UK Ltd in Manchester in May and discussed the work that she had done since I last met her a decade ago when we were working together on an equality and diversity curriculum project for the Learning and Skills Development Agency.

## Beginnings

I asked Alyson, what was the single most important factor in your life that has made you the campaigner for equality and diversity that you are? She replied: “Equality and diversity is close to my heart and has been from a very young child. My father instilled values in us from a very young age about fairness. When I was 12 there was a fight between a black girl and a white girl, and the headteacher separated the black children from the white children. I went home and told my dad and he explained how wrong it was, he went to the school, education department and the Manchester Evening News. The Head was sacked as he fought it all the way. I was also a writer of poetry in the 80s about the unfairness around me.”

In terms of her greatest achievement in her professional life, her response was equally candid: “I think that my greatest achievement is bringing up my children

# Human Library and Black History Month

and foster children to understand equality, to speak up, speak out and to challenge inequality where it exists. I have shown them that regardless of your skin colour, sexuality, gender or ability you can achieve whatever you want to achieve by being yourself, educating others and standing tall. Fairness is everyone's right. All my children have successful lives and diverse friendships. They have strong voices and are advocates for equality and most importantly Human Rights."

Alyson's ambition for Equality and Diversity UK Ltd is to "reach out to employers, voluntary and community sectors, government and public sector organisation to help them to promote equality, tackle all forms of discrimination and to foster positive relationships between diverse group. To enable organisations to effectively embed equality into policies, processes, practices and people."

## Black History Month

We moved on to talk about Black History Month. I asked: "what can it achieve in the short, medium and long term?"

This is very dear to Alyson's heart. "Black History Month is important, to not only celebrate the wonderful people in history that have made an unimaginable impact on how we integrate in society nowadays but also to celebrate history that is not always mentioned, often overlooked and has helped to significantly shape all of our lives.

Black History Month isn't an exclusive month, it's for everybody. For all of us that live in Great Britain, it's a month to understand what makes Britain so great beyond the history that we've been taught in the classroom. It's about thinking of all the soldiers who fought so bravely and lost their lives during World War Two and acknowledging that over two million servicemen and woman from Africa and the Caribbean decided to selflessly travel across the globe to fight on the behalf of Britain.

It's about reflecting on the national post-war labour shortage and appreciating the kind acts of those who journeyed from the Caribbean (my father included) on The Empire Windrush to help

save our NHS.

It's about celebrating the 1968 Race Relations Act when it was finally made illegal to refuse housing, public services and employment to people based on their colour, race, ethnic or national origins in Great Britain. It also created the Community Relations Commission to promote 'harmonious community relations.

It's about highlighting the progression the UK has made and all its achievement in a month where without it we wouldn't have the opportunity to learn, celebrate and reflect.

To me, Black History month is about remembering, honouring and celebrating those who found the bravery to fight, speak out and risk their own safety for freedom

Black History month to me, is a celebration of diversity through the unity of all people.

It is to celebrate the achievements of inspirational figures in the Black Community and a reminder that our future is not defined by the actions of a misguided and nonsensical past, but in the positivity, support and love we instil in each other as a global community."

## The Human Library

Finally, I asked her about her current EDI project, The Human Library.

She told me that it was about "courageous conversations between books and their borrowers".

The Human Library Project is an international equalities movement that seeks to challenge prejudice and discrimination using the power of conversation. It connects communities and is gathering momentum across the world. There is now a Human Library in over 70 places including the US, China, Europe and the UK.

Human Libraries celebrate difference by connecting communities and encouraging a better understanding of people who come from varied cultural or lifestyle backgrounds. The initiative offers an important space for challenging implicit attitudes and unconscious bias.

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Equality and diversity driven, whether staff or student, the only qualification for participation is that you must be a human being.

The Human Library Project at EDUK during Black History Month in October 2017 as part of a wider series of EDI initiatives and events that aimed to demonstrate how to promote equality, tackle discrimination and foster good relationships between diverse groups of people.

In a library style setting, participants 'take out' a self-titled human 'book' for up to 30 minutes of respectful and courageous conversation about their experiences of prejudice, bias, stereotype, stigma or discrimination.

Participants choose to be a 'book' and are briefed and supported on their role in the Human Library by EDUK.

### **Brutality**

As I walk the streets on a rainy night  
My hands in my pocket my head held upright  
I think of my dreams of love and peace  
But the tears that I shed are of sorrow and grief  
Not of love and hope like I had dreamed  
But of fights and quarrels and of language  
obscene  
I have visions of blacks and whites  
Fighting and cursing each other with dislike  
I have illusions of a happy land  
But they are soon to change back to a stretch of  
sand  
I have stopped walking, I have reached my  
destination  
I have snapped out of my spell of meditation  
Only to come back to the life that I detest  
To see a policeman making a brutal arrest  
Beating up a man of my race  
Kicking him in his head, his face  
The trickling red blood covers the street  
Trickling, trickling, touching my feet  
I cannot keep it back any longer  
I scream to ease the strain that I am under  
What happened to the dreams, are they all  
shattered?  
They must be, for before me, likes a black man  
He has been brutally battered  
I have no faith in dreams anymore  
I am sick and tired of all this unrest  
I only hope life is better after death

## **Reflections of a**

**interview by Ian Duckett, current SEA  
NEC member**

*David Grugeon, a longstanding SEA member and famously SEA delegate to the 1963 Labour Party (LP) Conference, he worked with Michael Young and Brian Jackson to create the National Extension College (NEC) soon after Wilson had announced his proposed 'University of the Air', the NEC merged with the University Correspondence College which enabled the fledgling organisation to trial some of the delivery methods that the Open University was to develop from 1969.'*

The educational agenda for the next Labour Government is going to be vast and challenging. The destruction of much of the evidence-based achievement (between 1997 and 2010) of children's centres for early years children and their parents, the total shambles of school structures and learning opportunities for young people, the degradation of further education and adult education, the massive reduction of opportunities for mature students, all need to be tackled coherently and comprehensively. Hence, for example, Angela Rayner's commitment at the last Labour Conference to 'a new regulatory framework for schools', includes powers for fair funding and allocation, including pay and admissions. This evidence-based approach has been highly influential in a wide-range of other progressive educational developments too.

Similar challenges faced the first Wilson Government in 1964. The country needed to build on the moves to open up educational achievement through comprehensive secondary education that were starting to take place in LEAs in most parts of the UK. The previous Tory regime had set up the Plowden Committee on Primary Education, which reported in 1967, including major *r* and *d* proposals for 'Educational Priority Areas', for major expansion of preschool support, and for

# campaigner

radical involvement of parents. All this would underpin the expectations of the influential Robbins Report on Higher Education in 1963, endorsing the expansion of HE which led to 19 new institutions gaining the title of 'University' across the 1960s. The last of these was Harold Wilson and Jennie Lee's proposition for The Open University which received its Royal Charter on April 25th 1969, 50 years ago.

As a young primary school teacher in Battersea, on loan from the LCC to help on a new project in Cambridge in Autumn 1963 as the first full time worker of the National Extension College, partly setup as a pilot for Wilson's vision of a 'University of the Air', later to become The Open University, David was working for the NEC Chairman, Dr Michael Young (who had largely drafted the 1945 Labour government Manifesto 'Let us face the future') and NEC's Director Brian Jackson (co-author of 'Education and the Working Class').

David reflects that as he "was out of the classroom, the SEA (formerly the National Association of Labour Teachers), selected me as their delegate to the 1963 LP Conference in Scarborough. This entitled me to attend the compositing meeting for our motion and to second the motion on the Conference floor, following the move by Jim Cannon, General Secretary of the Engineers' Union. Our motion argued for Comprehensive Higher Education, bringing Universities, Technical Colleges, and Teacher Training Colleges into a comprehensive framework, with massive expansion. It was the old fashioned conference atmosphere, with the platform occupied mainly by old white men, lounging in a dishevelled way, chain smoking. It had not yet caught up with the television age".

Harold Wilson had already announced his plan for a 'University of the Air' in a speech in Glasgow earlier in September. He now integrated this dramatic idea for giving retrospective justice and opportunity to the adult population in his famous speech at conference on the white heat of the technological revolution. His language was urgent and powerful.

The SEA motion was overwhelmingly carried, but was subsequently totally overlooked by the incoming Labour Government with the creation of the binary HE system, with Polytechnics under

Tony Crosland, later to be nationalised, along with sixth form colleges, by Ken Clarke, as part of the major reduction of LEA support, following the introduction of the Council Tax to replace The dreaded Poll Tax which did for Margaret Thatcher.

Tony Crosland did, however, proceed with the expansion of comprehensive secondary education, which had been endorsed by LP Conference six years before returning to office. The Circular in the mid -sixties requested, but did not require, LEAs to reorganise on comprehensive lines. It listed six broad options for school structures, including three tiers, all through from eleven, sixth form colleges, tertiary, etc. It was clear that there was to be little in the way of detailed guidance and support to LEAs from central government, other than analysis, costing and approval of building plans. David remembers: "a number of us set up The Comprehensive Schools Committee, later The Campaign for Comprehensive Education. We published regular surveys, on the progress of comprehensive reorganisation across the country. We ran an advisory service, supplying speakers for public meetings, including comprehensive heads and teachers, parents and sixth formers. We set up a research panel to exchange information from the growing number of Masters and PhD students into comprehensive education throughout the UK". Crosland funded a major study through National Foundation for Education Research (NFER). By the end of the decade Caroline Benn and Brian Simon published *Half Way There*, showing the immense progress that had been achieved and the immense distance still to go.

A change of Government meant Margaret Thatcher, as Secretary of State, endorsed the absorption of four hundred grammar schools into fully comprehensive systems in LEAs across the country. A small fragment of selective grammar schools remained in recalcitrant LEA areas, to the continuing detriment of the learning opportunities of pupils in non-grammar schools in those areas. Liz Allsopp, later Grugeon, and David published a Fabian pamphlet on Direct Grant Grammar Schools which recommended the end of the Direct Grant, and encouraged those schools to join the mainstream. Forty five such schools, mainly Roman Catholic schools in working class areas, followed the invitation of Ted Short, as successor to Crosland, to do so.

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Michael Armstrong and Michael Young also brought out a Fabian pamphlet, called *The Flexible School*, illustrating the enormous changes in curriculum, pedagogy, school environment that were being engendered in very diverse models of comprehensive education.

The inevitable reaction set in, with the emergence of Black Papers attacking the progress that was being made across the decade. However, the incoming Heath Government was not deluged with requests from LEAs for permission to re-institute the eleven plus, with its separation into grammars and secondary moderns. The one authority that considered turning the clock back, Conservative, largely middle class Solihull, had a thumbs down from parents who voted against the reinvention of separation into Sheep and Goats at eleven. Until the arrival of Theresa May as PM there was no serious attempt to expand grammar school places again.

The opportunity and necessity once again exists for a genuinely radical manifesto for education. As ever those of us who count ourselves both educationalists and socialists must be vigilant to ensure that those responsible for progressive reform should be held accountable.

Among the other highlights and achievements of David's campaigning and career following an exciting year in Cambridge, where he helped to set up correspondence courses that were often linked to TV and radio and developing and delivering weekend classes for the National Extension College, he spent five years teaching English O' and A' levels through the medium of

radio, before -at the remarkably young age of 29 - being appointed the first Open University Regional Director for East Anglia. His OU career spanned 34 years, including four years as Pro-Vice Chancellor, in 1994 being a consultant for the BBC's education programmes, including the highly acclaimed 'Blithering Nonsense', a disparaging response to the OU Proposition by Iain McLeod, who became Tory Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Summer of 1970, before his early death. The TV programme and video (bought by OU students and friends across the world) was celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the OU.

David has also been a Labour Councillor for 17 years in four stints and was labour's education spokesperson for Bedfordshire between 1989 and 1993 and 2001-09.

For all his achievements what most struck me about David when I caught up with him in Beccles on a most pleasant Spring day were his unwavering dedication to equality and his overwhelming commitment to education for all. He still contributes to an impressive array of adult education courses in Suffolk, as part of a cooperative project to preserve Suffolk's Libraries, all 44 of which are still running, with paid staff and improved buildings.

**Mairead Canavan, NEU Executive and SEA member**

At the second NEU conference Cymru in November, the NEU left in Wales hosted a very successful International solidarity fringe meeting. Very few Welsh members until recently have been involved in International solidarity but that is slowly changing. Members who had recently participated in delegations to Palestine, Cuba and Calais gave accounts of their experiences and answered questions at the fringe event.

Kathleen Steelandt spoke of her trip to Cuba and started by saying that solidarity is a trade union value. She asserted that "the NEU says the promotion of international solidarity is about human rights and our shared humanity. It seeks to ensure the rights of children to education, the rights of workers to form trade unions, the rights of citizens to vote and for all people to be free of poverty." She emphasised how important it is to show solidarity with all teachers and told us what an amazing experience it was to visit an education system very different to our own. There are free uniforms, free school meals, free boarding for rural areas, free post grad education, masters and PhDs. There are lots of doctors, teachers, scientists, and 23 medical schools in Cuba. Lots of women hold high positions in Cuban society.

The US blockade imposed in 1960 has had a massive impact on lives of Cubans. They have lived with economic, financial and commercial restrictions and lack of products since then. There are many bare shelves in the shops and it has a detrimental effect on the ability to get medical and



# ional solidarity

educational equipment. Fuel shortage is a big issue, people struggle to get to work and children struggle to get to school. Kathleen was struck by the positive attitude of the Cuban people who take great pride in their education system. The literacy campaign they ran from 1960-61 took literacy down from 42% to 4% in under a year. Above all the Cubans value music, arts, dance and creativity. The delegation was treated to a range of performances which were uplifting and they saw some of the 8000 instruments being used that were donated by the NEU through the Play for Cuba appeal.

Kathleen said special education in Cuba is also very much valued and they caught a glimpse of this when visiting a school for blind and visually impaired children, they too put on a musical performance. The NEU for several years has taken over Braille machines which are no longer used here as they are mechanical, but these are perfect for Cuba as they can be repaired! The delegation again saw the machines which had been donated being used. Kathleen urged members to ask their districts to affiliate to Cuba Solidarity campaign and also to nominate an ISO to take this work forward.

Lynne Berezanski from Swansea district spoke about our first Welsh solidarity trip to Calais as part of a NEU delegation. We took supplies to Care4Calais which operates all year

round, providing clothing, bedding and food to refugees in desperate situations living in tents on the side of the road now that they have been evicted from the jungle. They have fled from some of the most dangerous countries in the world. The journeys they make are hazardous, with thousands not making it and for example drowning on the way.

On arrival, we unloaded the car, with other volunteers and set about sorting hats and scarves as warm clothing was a priority for distribution. Next day we arrived early at the warehouse and about 30 NEU members arrived from Warwickshire and London with a lot of supplies. We gathered for a briefing and were told a young Nigerian had died in the night trying to keep warm in his tent with a small gas heater. He died from Carbon monoxide poisoning.

Our focus because of the weather was to sort coats for distribution and the only way to describe the experience is heart

breaking. We distributed coats to refugees in the pouring rain and winds strong enough to knock people off balance. Many of the people we spoke to had no coats, jumpers and were wearing sandals and flip flops as they did not have any footwear. Yet, despite the hardship we were honestly astounded by how positive and generous so many of the people we helped were.

We came away with the feeling that it is completely outrageous and unacceptable that our government has sent £55m to France to fund the police that brutally and violently repress talented and caring people who want nothing more than to have a life free from persecution. It's hard to accept that we allow this to happen on our borders.

We intend to take part in Calais delegations regularly from Wales in the future and we really encourage people to volunteer time, give donations and to talk about the conditions at the camps

## Building International Solidarity within NEU CYMRU

**Saturday 9th November 1.30pm**

**Room: The Caerphilly Suite**

**Speaking about Palestine, Cuba and Calais delegations:**

**Claudia Meroli (Pembrokeshire NEU): Kathleen Steelandt**

**(Denbighshire NEU): Lynne Berezanski (Swansea NEU):**

**Sheila Jones (Caerphilly NEU)**

**Chair: Mairead Canavan (NEU CYMRU Executive)**



**Meeting hosted by  
NEULeft**

# **Socialist Educational Association Cymdeithas Addysgol Sosialaidd**

The Socialist Educational Association is a Socialist Society, affiliated to the Labour Party. It began in the '20's as the National Association of Labour Teachers. SEA was renamed and broadened to include all socialists with an interest in education. It played a major role in developing the concept of the neighbourhood comprehensive school in the '60's. The aims of the SEA are:

- To promote comprehensive education, based on equality of opportunity and lifelong access, well resourced, free and under local democratic control.
- To influence development of progressive education policies within the Labour Party and to work with other like-minded bodies.
- To promote an international and inclusive perspective to education.

We have now set up SEA Cymru, a Welsh branch, affiliated to Welsh Labour.

**Since devolution, education in Wales has diverged from that in England, in many ways (except finance) to Wales' advantage. Examples include the Foundation Phase, 14-19 education, the absence of academies, trust and 'free' schools, the Welsh baccalaureate, maintenance of an inclusive, cooperative and comprehensive ethos. We welcome the Donaldson curriculum initiative, the development of Additional Learning Needs policy, and the provision of free breakfasts in primary schools. We need to elaborate a policy for Welsh education that defends and nurtures what has been achieved, but which also specifies what further needs to be done.**

Membership is open to all who have an interest in education and are eligible for Labour Party membership. Individual members are welcome (£25 waged, £12 unwaged pa) (Couples £35 or £18). CLPs and branches, including TU branches, are welcome to affiliate (£30 pa). Membership includes the right to attend meetings and conferences in Wales and of the National SEA, and includes a free copy of the journal for analysis and debate, "Education Politics"

Please contact to Mike Newman 17 Gileston Road, Cardiff, CF119JS. We will forward membership requests to the National Membership Secretary. Or contact via [newmanmike2@aol.com](mailto:newmanmike2@aol.com) (or via 029 20 382 369)

## **Socialist Educational Association**

### **Are you interested in education? Join the SEA**

The Socialist Educational Association is a Socialist Society, affiliated to the Labour Party. It began in the '20's as the National Association of Labour Teachers. SEA was later renamed and broadened so that members now include MPs, MEPs, AMs, school governors, local councillors, teachers, lecturers, students, parents – in fact anyone with an interest in education. It played a major role in developing the concept of the neighbourhood comprehensive school in the '60's. It is concerned with all aspects of education: Foundation Phase, Primary and Secondary schooling, Further and Higher Education and Life Long Learning.

### **The aims of the SEA are:**

- To promote well-resourced and free comprehensive education, based on equality of opportunity and lifelong access.
- To oppose privatisation and the abolition of local democratic control.
- To work with the TUC affiliated Teacher Unions.
- To influence development of progressive education policies within the Labour Party and to work with other like-minded bodies to the same end.
- To promote an international and inclusive approach to education.

Membership is open to all who have an interest in education and are eligible for Labour Party membership.



# EDUCATION REIMAGINED

## For the Many not the Few

The SEA has decided to go ahead with an event to show that education in the school system does not have to be as it is under this government:-

- # a fact based national curriculum which ignores our diversity, the history of empire and a proper study of climate change
- # high stakes testing as the only means of assessment starting at age 4
- # pupils viewed as passive receivers committing knowledge to memory rather than active participants in their own learning
- # an OFSTED framework pressurising schools to conform
- # a growing prevalence of draconian behaviour policies and rising rates of exclusion.

**Our event Education Reimagined (For the Many not the Few) will take place in Birmingham on June 6th. Still in the planning stage, it will highlight alternatives to the status quo which can be campaigned for and implemented now in schools.**

The event will take the form of key note speakers, workshops and a plenary at the end. The following groups and individuals have confirmed so far:-

Kevin Courtney, Joint General Secretary NEU

Anti-Academies Alliance

Ban the Booths (campaign against isolation behaviour sanctions and for positive alternatives)  
Mantle of the Expert (pedagogy which gives pupils power over their own learning originating from the work of Dorothy Heathcote drama in education practitioner) now promoted by one of her ex students Luke Abbott

All attainment Mathematics teaching ( Why is Britain the only country which insists on setting its pupils? This workshop shows how maths can be taught to all attainment groups) led by Dr. Hilary Povey recently retired professor in Maths Education Sheffield Hallam Uni)

A climate change in education workshop led by Birmingham teachers and students active in the youth strike movement

**CONTACT THE SOCIALIST EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR MORE INFO**

**[socialisteducationalassociation.org](http://socialisteducationalassociation.org)**