

THE  
STRUGGLE  
IN  
EDUCATION

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE  
DISCUSSION IN

RANK AND FILE

INTERNATIONAL MARXIST GROUP 5P

# 1. FRESH FORCES: FRESH DEBATES

In the Fifties and Sixties, the British labour movement was more or less permanently active on the question of liquidating the grammar school in favour of the comprehensive. This is not to say of course that there was universal antagonism in the labour movement to the grammar schools. Clearly, the working class intake to grammar and technical schools as well as the universities, had risen during this period, and this was reflected in working class opinion. Nonetheless, this broad movement of opposition to the grammar schools took place. The post-war stabilisation of British capitalism and the absence of mass unemployment, created a situation in which the working class was able to make steady gains on the economic front and achieve a gradual rise in its real standard of living. There arose a mood of cautious optimism which spilt over into the educational question, on which the working class movement had suffered a defeat in the Twenties. As a result of this optimism, the working class, through a struggle in the unions and more especially the constituency labour party organisations, strived to bring about a situation whereby their sons and daughters could have greater individual occupational mobility via education than they themselves had experienced in the past. This tactic was expressed under the slogan of 'equality of opportunity' in education.

The more farsighted members of the ruling class were not unsympathetic to organisational changes in secondary education through which access to higher education for larger numbers of working class pupils could be eased. The technical schools, which were intended to meet the demand for skilled engineers, technicians and so forth, never accounted for more than 5% of the secondary school population at any time since they were created by the 1944 Act. The grammar schools had conspicuously failed to create the number of science graduates required for the university expansion of the Sixties, partly owing to their failure to adjust their curriculum. To some members of the industrial bourgeoisie, the grammar schools were anachronisms, hangovers from the period in which British capitalism had been top-heavy with financial operations requiring thousands of clerkly employees. The Newsom Report discovered pools of "wasted ability" languishing in the secondary moderns and urged reform. Thus the period of post-war economic growth came into conflict with the previous organisational structure of secondary education, and the bourgeoisie demanded a more flexible system offering greater upward mobility. But the tripartite system had always been subject to erosion. In the late Forties for example, despite Ministry prohibition, many secondary moderns were training their pupils for O Levels; in areas of expanding population the construction of segregated schools implied high cost and unnecessary duplication; and in areas which had suffered heavy wartime damage, the opportunity to rebuild afresh conflicted with the clumsy tripartite blueprint of 1944. By the Sixties, the abolition of selection at 11 years of age was under way. Today, possibly half of the school population experience non-selective secondary education.

By a long process therefore, the ruling class, which in the Thirties had been opposed to children of the masses having significant access to white collar, managerial and technical posts by way of education, had come to the view that precisely this type of mobility was essential for British capitalism. For its

part, the working class believed that by way of organisational changes in education, it had increased its occupational mobility. Wilsonism exemplified this happy conjuncture between the classes on the question of education. The 'white heat of technological revolution' and 'equality of opportunity' seemed to coincide. But the picture has changed since then. Technological change increases the productivity of labour and therefore brings about redundancy and the growth of a permanent pool of unemployed. Furthermore it increases the skill content for a limited proportion of the labour force while reducing it for the remainder (although this effect is partially offset by 'career de-escalation'). British capital therefore feels content at the moment to retard the rate at which selection in secondary education is abolished. The university expansion is falling off and rationalisation of higher education (e.g. James Report) is under way. Finally of course, the electoral strength of the present Conservative Government has to be maintained if it is to do its job on the trade unions, and this implies certain concessions to the rump of its social base, who also happen to be staunch defenders of the grammar schools.

From the point of view of the working class also, conditions now look rather different to those of the mid-Sixties. The idea that equality of educational opportunity leads to better occupational opportunities for individual members of their class, is only credible when conditions on the general economic front appear favourable to social advance. When significant unemployment begins to appear in areas like Coventry for the first time since the War, optimism tends to wane. This situation plays havoc with social expectations just as it does with the planning operations of Ministry departments. To some extent, the social-democratic ideology of the working class means they attribute unemployment to the Tory administration rather than to the structural crisis of British capital. With the return of the Labour administration, this explanation will wear thin. But even now the prospects on the economic front can no longer generate the previous optimism and this implies a falling away of hopes concerning education. The constituency labour parties no longer hum with debate about comprehensives, although the trade unions are now passing resolutions about cuts in school provisions. The chief preoccupations of the working class at present are with the independence of the unions from the state, wage battles, prices, redundancies and the effects of the EEC. Reflecting this turn, the Labour Party no longer makes persistent noises on the need for educational reform, although the completion of the comprehensive reform remains in its programme.

This generalisation about the working class and its changed relation to the education question remains true despite episodic local battles on cuts in social expenditure in this or that school or on a Thatcher prohibition etc. British secondary education is chaotically uneven. In some areas, the debate is about the horrific practices of sex-educationalists, the significance of common course studies etc. In others, it is still about 'protecting standards' or the inborn character of 'intelligence'; in yet others local attention is focused on the physical condition of slum schools. But, with the exception of straightforward cuts in items like school provisions, these debates do not have deep impact on the organisations in which the mass of the workers are at present struggling - by and large the trade unions. Yet simultaneously

with this decline in working class activism on the question of education, teachers themselves are becoming more preoccupied with all these various items. This is clear from both NUT conferences and the rapid growth of Rank & File itself. Many more teachers are now prepared to struggle, often in one school or one borough, on a whole range of issues from expenditure, conditions, reorganisation, to the victimisation of radical teachers by the LEAs. Symptomatic of this changed relationship is the fact that very often in these intense local battles, the forces most easily mobilised in support of the teachers are the pupils, rather than the organisations of the labour movement.

This is very important. In the Fifties teachers seldom stuck their necks out in this way. The most politically conscious teachers were active in the constituency organisations. Seldom were struggles conducted directly within the schools themselves, although no doubt cases of this can be found. This issue in the constituencies was how to bring about comprehensives and this required a change in the government. To do this it was not necessary to struggle in the schools at all but merely to mobilise support via the constituency organisations and the trade unions for the educational part of the electoral programme of the Labour Party. Among the best representatives of this layer of teachers were the many Communist Party and Labour Party members who entered the teaching profession via the Emergency Training Scheme during the Forties, and who today occupy many leading positions in the NUT. As an organisation, the NUT played a supporting role in this struggle to change the government. But in regard to teachers as employees, and therefore to the great mass of teachers, the NUT was a weak trade union and was unable to pursue the economic struggle of teachers with much vigour. Only very recently, following a severe defeat on the economic front in the early Sixties, has the NUT waged a big fight which involved the mass of teachers. The strike of 1970, subsequent affiliation to the TUC and the growth in NUT membership, are signs of a new economic militancy.

The decline of working class involvement, the lifelessness of the constituency labour parties, and the worsening of teachers' living standards and working conditions - all these long-term processes have served to regroup the political vanguard of the teaching profession alongside the mass of teachers for a struggle within and through the NUT and in the schools themselves, in three main areas: reorganisational questions, expenditure, and their own wages and conditions.

The previous passivity of the mass of teachers flowed from the relative security they enjoyed in the Thirties, along with other white-collar state employees, during the years of mass unemployment. But the post-war period has seen their wage levels well overtaken by millions of manual workers, and teachers no longer constitute a 'privileged' group. The present rate of inflation brings their accumulated grievances to the surface. This occurs at a time when there is a permanent crisis of social expenditure in British society. In order to struggle effectively therefore it is necessary for teachers to break from the notion that their ideals of public service imply an identity of interests between themselves and the state. Indeed, the state's actions in dismantling certain features of the social services, makes this difference of interest apparent. This conflict

between the ideals of public service and the material reality of decaying capitalism is not of course specific to teachers. Local government workers for example, find themselves enforcing an end to state subsidised housing for many working class families by being forced to implement 'fair' rents, rather than serving the 'public' by increasing this subsidisation in line with the ideology of welfare capitalism. Other examples could be found. But the new militancy, and the accompanying ideological crisis among state employees, is peculiarly deep among teachers, partly because the teaching profession has been heavily reinforced in recent years by a fresh generation of teachers from the universities and training colleges. These fresh forces are not burdened down by the defeats of the past, and experience the gap between the ideal and the real much more sharply than the older vanguard elements in the NUT. For these young teachers there is no question that teachers suffer from low pay and that welfare capitalism is in essence hypocrisy.

But the radicalisation among younger teachers brought about by these general processes, are further deepened by the fact that we are now at the end of a period of structural reform in primary and secondary education and entering a period of rationalisation. Even among the old guard itself, there has been a reappraisal. They see that the coming of comprehensives has not necessarily increased the economic prospects of the working class. Of course, many of them will continue to campaign for comprehensives, and the return of the Labour Party to government is seen as the next step on the road. But at the same time, many of them now see that 'equality of opportunity' is not necessarily achieved by reorganisation or the ending of selection at 11 years of age. This explains the popularity of theorists like Bernstein who have evolved other explanations as to why equality of opportunity is not a reality ('language codes' and so on). Bernstein himself is symptomatic of the marked growth of liberal critiques over the last few years. Many among the old guard have moved on from urging simply changes in organisational form to changes in teaching technique and generally humanising the pupil-teacher relationship. But this resurrection of liberalism still remains within the general problematic of 'equality of opportunity' i.e. how can we end discrimination against children of the working class so that they can all have the chance of getting into higher education and from there into white-collar occupations.

This shift of emphasis within the general debate about education, from organisational form to changing the pupil-teacher relationship and teaching technique in general, is encouraged by many of the younger teachers coming into the profession from the colleges. Many of them have never been in the organisations of the labour movement and are not so deeply influenced by the old slogans. They easily break out of the problematic of 'equality of opportunity' and have a different conception of their role in education to that of the older generation of militants. They see reforms in teaching technique as a means of launching an assault on the "values" of society as a whole. This is the result of a confluence between its generalised anti-authoritarian and anti-bureaucratic ideology and the various material changes in the schools consequent upon comprehensive reorganisation. It is this which has given Rank & File its dynamic. What are these material changes?

The transition from the tripartite system of secondary education to the comprehensive, has very important effects on the consciousness of those involved. The three-tier system tried to create a broad one-to-one correspondence between type of school, type of curriculum, and type of occupation. But the comprehensive school breaks down this correspondence in its quest for greater flexibility and upward mobility. But the concentration of many social destinies, several curriculums and several layers of teachers, under the one roof - this creates an immediate pedagogic (not to say administrative) crisis. This pedagogical crisis is important, for it lays the material foundation for the type of conceptions expressed in Rank & File. To take an example of this crisis. If the selection at 11 years of age is abolished in a certain area, the type of teaching methods and curriculum, the grading and streaming practices etc, relative to the 9-11 age group of the primary school, are made redundant. The solution adopted is to concentrate grading, streaming and even course differentiation further up the age range of the school. In some areas therefore, we discover all-through comprehensives which stream, grade and differentiate their pupils only in the last three years or so of their schooling. The distinction between primary and secondary itself breaks down. A plethora of experiments at the level of teaching technique have arisen as a result. One of the most significant developments has been the initiation of common-courses and the break-up of the traditional curriculum in many regions of the school.

Of course, the break-up of traditional curricula does not flow solely from the crisis of reorganisation. The rapidly changing body of knowledge in capitalist society makes flexibility and adaptability among certain layers of workers, of key importance, since investment in too narrowly specialised categories of labour can be a liability. There has also been the need for specific types of labour which involve complex decision making (social workers for example). Finally, within the secondary moderns, experimentation along precisely the same lines has been motivated by rather different considerations: how to keep the proverbial "D" streams preoccupied with activities which, although having no value on the labour market, at least prevent the pupils from tearing the school apart. The need for this sort of 'social engineering' by no means disappears in the comprehensive, where the ex-patriates from grammar and secondary modern sit side by side under the one roof.

But for those teachers most concerned with extending this type of reform, a material contradiction opens up. While it is clearly possible to eliminate grading, streaming and course differentiation from certain regions of the school as a result of reorganisation, it is equally apparent that these phenomena cannot be removed altogether. Indeed, they are pushed further up the school into a more intense concentration. The relationship between education and occupation therefore comes into question for these teachers in a way not experienced by the older political elements in the profession. On the one hand, it appears as though it would be possible to sever the link between education and occupation in this or that region of the school, while on the other hand this link is simultaneously strengthened. Those areas of teaching practice immediately free from occupational considerations become a 'symbol' for a new educational principle, one which is opposed to the "rat race" of the competitive education system. The reason these conclusions are drawn is because the material contradiction facing

these teachers is refracted through the prism of political ideologies which are outside of social-democracy, although they are partial and confused. The old radical-tradition of the university has therefore by a curious process migrated to the secondary school. Education, it is re-asserted, should be a "value in itself", not a functional requirement of occupation. Between exploratory learning and expository teaching, a debate about educational technique with political overtones has arisen.

It is interesting to note another side to this transition. One of the cardinal features of the education system in Britain has been the exclusion of contemporary social life from the school curriculum. In those countries where bourgeois political parties need to do everything possible to broaden their social and political base, party-political rituals are introduced into the schools. In Britain this has not been the case, although big battles were once fought by the labour movement over the principle of church-control of education. Neither political ritual, nor contemporary social life in the schools: this has been a silent social pact between the classes in Britain. But the new "exploratory learning" techniques and a topic-orientated curriculum, have resulted in a big intrusion of the contemporary world into the schools. All manner of social, sexual, racial and political questions now form the subject-matter of topics and projects. For traditional liberalism, the world is simply material on which the teeth of 'reason' are cut and over which reason arbitrates in non-partisan fashion. But this neutrality is impossible to sustain in the school. The fact that many young teachers are forced in practice to take up partisan positions on a whole range of social questions, is a sign of a very dangerous process for the ruling class, especially in the present period of intensified class struggle in British society.

Of course, these processes drive only a small minority to take radical positions, and this minority is by and large drawn from the new members of the profession. Vast masses of teachers however do not show any dramatic political signs of having been affected by these changes, although many older teachers experience insecurities of status as a result of them. Coupled with the administrative problems of large comprehensives, this creates a situation in which there is often no consensus in the school staff room on any issue whatsoever, and a breakdown of administration is common in many schools.

The effects of reorganisation on the pupils is equally important. Although there was some change in the Twenties and Thirties, the structure of secondary education was essentially simple in this period. The fee-paying grammar schools taught what was then called 'secondary' education (referring to a type of education rather than an age group) to children of many ages from those social backgrounds which enabled parents to finance them privately. On the other hand, the state provided universal 'elementary' education for the children of the broad masses up to 13 or 14 years of age. The classical curriculum as well as the internal regime of the grammar school, were functionally related to the requirements of state and company administration, bureaucratic posts of one kind or another. The 'elementary' schools on the other hand taught an elementary curriculum

of literacy, numeracy and sometimes simple technical skills, and the regime in these schools was extremely severe, arising from both the general conditions of mass education carried out with low expenditure and the fact that in the last quarter of the nineteenth century the board school teacher was paid on the basis of how many half-starved pupils attended school and were passed as literate and numerate by the travelling Inspectors.

The socialist movement before the First World War had fought for the 'common school' in which all pupils would have equal education regardless of social background, and the labour aristocracy in particular had fought for the extension of technical education in the board schools and freelance institutes which sprang up in areas such as the Midlands. The depression years put an end to the first of these hopes, and the bi-partite system remained intact. Nonetheless, the bourgeoisie at the same time decided to allow a small number of working class pupils into the grammar schools while technical education more or less stagnated. If the working class wanted 'secondary' education let them fight among themselves for a few miserable scholarship places in the grammar schools. Precise administrative measures (the scholarship system) were installed for this purpose, and the resulting competition between pupils in the upper reaches of the elementary school gave rise to extensive theorising about the inborn character of intelligence, notions which were to receive considerable amplification following the Second World War. The economic growth which began once again in the later Thirties and continued to the late Sixties, brought about the introduction of selection at 11, the birth of a new school known as 'technical', and brought the grammar schools into the overall state system. The increasing need for certain categories of skilled labour in which the distinction between manual and intellectual competence was no longer clearly drawn, led to the installation of a formidable system of mobility channels both between schools and within each category of school. The comprehensive school represents a rationalisation and consolidation of entire education system into one ascending competitive ladder.

From a historical and theoretical point of view there is little difference in principle between an education system organised around the idea of strict segregation and one organised around the idea of segregation through competition. But there is a distinctive difference as far as the consciousness of the pupils is concerned. For the pupils of the old elementary school, the school was simply a prison, and one's experience in school had little bearing on social destiny. But the appearance of the single ascending competitive ladder, making it appear possible for all pupils to travel from one type of school to another (and to different levels within the one school) - this process creates an important feature of the pupils' consciousness. Indeed, it could even be said to structure it. On the one hand, the state system announces to the pupils the possibility of all pupils acquiring a full and rounded education and an 'open' social destiny; yet on the other hand, the competitive system has been designed to ensure precisely the opposite effect - a division between intellectual and manual training and success-failure differentiation both between these categories and within these categories as well; This contradiction has come to increasingly govern the way in which pupils

relate to their educational circumstances and indeed through them to the world in general. From the point of view of the ruling class, who are responsible for financing education, grading, streaming and examinations provide a more or less efficient complex of selection mechanisms through which it is possible to achieve the correct 'spread' of social expenditure. After all, the creation of a scientist and the creation of a manual worker require different magnitudes of capital expenditure from the ruling class. They are prepared to invest no more and no less than is strictly necessary for the reproduction of these different labour powers, and therefore the right number of pupils have to be nominated to redeive these different levels of expenditure. Competition within the entire school population is the best means of achieving this, given that it is impossible today for the ruling class to provide sufficient numbers of intellectual workers from its own ranks (of course this competition will never be perfect competition for a whole variety of reasons from the continued existence of the private sector to language codes etc.) But from the point of view of the pupils, things look very different. All circumstances now insist that social destiny is not determined by objective social processes, but by the quantum of brain matter, or the "type" of brain matter, they bring to school - some pupils seeming to be more fortunate in this respect than others. The natural theory of intelligence is not only one of the components of working class ideology but it also forms the fundamental premise of bourgeois educational theory.

It is this contradiction between what the education system announces and proclaims and what its material reality insists, which generates the tremendous anger and frustration of the working class youth in the schools. Post-war working class youth has not been able to find an expression for this by joining the traditional organisations of the working class - either the social-democracy or the bureaucratised trade unions. The gang culture of urban youth has to be seen against this background (although not reduced to it). But all the processes of change going on in the schools which we have just noted, provide a framework in which this revolt can find an organised expression within the schools themselves. The breakdown in administration, the rise of new pedagogic principles which are incompatible with rigid authority, and the lack of any clearly defined ethos within the comprehensive, all create a framework in which organisation and expression can take place more easily. The beginnings of organisation among school pupils have been made by the SAU and the NUSS. Struggles against discipline, political repression, school uniform and so on, have emerged. This development takes place, it should be remembered, against a background of big social battles going on between the unions and government, in which the parents of many pupils are obviously involved. The recent pupil strikes, in which pupils from grammar, secondary modern and comprehensive schools, participated, illustrate the influence of the student movement on the one hand (transmitted via the sixth-forms) and the imprint of the workers movement on the other. Equal important are those scattered struggles undertaken by pupils in support of victimised teachers. These movements have laid the material foundations for future struggles by both teachers and pupils against the authorities, and even solidarity

between the school population and workers. This becomes even more likely when it is remembered that the high rate of youth unemployment has effects within the schools. The impossibility of school-leavers finding work further undermines the credibility of the official ideology concerning the nature of the schools. The raising of the school leaving age by the present government in order to evade the problem of youth unemployment financially, is a cynically obvious move, which at the same time ensures that this explosive material explodes in the school and not the labour exchange.

the present perspective of RLF actually give several different answers to this question, answers which tend to tug and pull in different directions. Each of them represent different social forces and different political ideologies, and each of them appear to give the WUT a dominant strategic line. But in our view none of them provide a correct answer to the question on seriously deal with the problems involved in being teachers and society as a whole and present this in a confused and distorted form. The way in which each of them seeks to become dominant threatens to disintegrate RLF in the long run and renders it blind in the meantime to the real political meaning which its activities have in this or that set of political circumstances. What are these answers and political ideologies underlying them?

The first answer to the question is provided by the 'trade unionist' wing. The working class is organized in trade unions, teachers are organized in trade unions. Therefore, more militant trade unionism among teachers on wages and conditions will win teachers to the working class movement by creating a sense of solidarity in parallel struggles. Of course, even were this view definitively correct (after all, the trade union struggle of the manual workers has just as well be experienced by teachers as a threat because they are unable to keep up with manual workers and the inflation they appear to cause), this is hardly an adequate answer to a political question, since it reduces the working class to one of the organizations of struggle. "working class struggle" comes to denote "trade union struggle".

Like all movements among teachers, RLF expresses the dual character of teachers both as employees and educators. It takes up positions, like WUT itself, on issues relating to wages and conditions as well as general educational issues. The rationale for RLF's existence must be to change the politics and leadership of the WUT in both these respects. The question is however what sort of programs and policies should the WUT have? This can only be answered by asking ourselves another question: what role should teachers play in the struggle for socialism in the present political and economic circumstances?

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## 2. POLITICAL CURRENTS

There are very favourable circumstances for the growth of Rank & File in the National Union of Teachers. On the wages front the NUT has been through a period of weakness while the most conscious and politicised elements conducted the bulk of their activity in the constituency parties. These twin factors created a low level of rank and file activity in the union. The present turn in the situation - the decline of constituency organisation as the centre of political activity for the working class, the growth of economic militancy among state employees, and the changing social composition of the membership - all this has meant a rebirth of rank and file activity. Rank & File therefore expresses the spontaneous needs of the most active teachers in the union and creates the necessary precondition for struggle against a leadership which has been free from rank and file pressure for a whole period. Many of the best elements in the profession today are organised in Rank & File.

Like all movements among teachers, R&F expresses the dual character of teachers both as employees and educators. It takes up positions, like NUT itself, on issues relating to wages and conditions as well as general educational issues. The rationale for Rank & File's existence must be to change the policies and leadership of the NUT in both these respects. The question is however what sort of programme and policies should the NUT have? This can only be answered by asking ourselves another question: what role should teachers play in the struggle for socialism in the present political and economic circumstances?

The present perspectives of R&F actually give several different answers to this question, answers which tend to tug and pull in different directions. Each of them represent different social forces and different political ideologies, and each of them aspire to give the NUT a dominant strategic line. But in our view none of them provide a correct answer to the question or seriously deal with the problems involved in doing so. Each of them seizes on some partial aspect of the relationship between teachers and society as a whole and present this in a confused and distorted form. The way in which each of them seeks to become dominant threatens to disintegrate R&F in the long run and renders it blind in the meantime to the real political meaning which its activities have in this or that set of political circumstances. What are these answers and political ideologies underlying them?

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This line is inadequate as an answer to the question. It simply leaves out of account the dual character of teachers as both educators and employees. It forgets that teachers relate to the working class movement just as much through their struggles on educational issues and their ideological outlook on these matters, as they do when struggling on the sort of things which the working class happens to be preoccupied with at the present time. This tendency thinks of an 'alliance' between teachers and the working class in terms of physical masses marching side by side, and not in political terms. The fact is that there is already a political alliance between the most active section of teachers and the working class. But it is based on social-democratic ideas, objectives and methods of struggle. The problem therefore is to change the political character of this alliance. Of course, additional links with the trade unions, mutual solidarity and parallel economic struggle are extremely important, perhaps even the dominant element at the present time given the pay freeze, the Industrial Relations Act, etc. But this in no way constitutes a strategy for Rank & File. This line also has certain dangers for R&F because some individuals in the 'trade unionist' wing clearly experience a certain hostility to the debate about educational questions going on in R&F, seeing this as a 'diversion' from the main business of getting on with the "struggle" (in the union).

On the other extreme, there is the libertarian answer to our central problem. The libertarian element situates itself very firmly within the debate about the educational issues. For them, the conditioning factor if not the actual cause of problems in education, are the relations of authority within the schools, specifically the relationship between the Headmaster and the staff, and the staff and pupils. An authoritarian relationship between pupil and teacher, a 'dictatorial' Head, school discipline, regimentation of pupils, repression of spontaneity - this complex of observations about the schools serves as an explanation of the educational malaise under capitalism. These authority relationships are interpreted as "the power structure", and the specific 'power structure' of the schools is parallel to and extension of the "power structure" of society as a whole which is characterised as bureaucratic or authoritarian. This trend of thought is not peculiar to the teaching field. It tends to see all industrial societies as automatically and inevitably bureaucratic, and this reflects the historical impasse of the working class movement, caught between monopoly capitalism on the one hand and the stalinist degeneration of the workers states on the other. It also expresses quite directly the disorientation and proletarianisation of white-collar workers in the vast bureaucracies of capitalist state and firm. It also emerges in the student milieu and has done so in an organised form. Once having taken a position on the educational issues, the libertarian wing of Rank & File proposes a strategic line for teachers which corresponds to its own political outlook and objectives. It does not think in terms of the struggle for socialism, rather the struggle for what is called "democracy in society" (Democracy in Schools - see below). As part of this struggle it wishes to introduce "democracy" into the schools and bring about a new involvement of the "community at large" in democratically reformed institutions in general. It is the bureaucratic mismanagement of institutions which is the central problem in modern society. The strategic line flowing from this type of analysis is dominant in R&F at the moment.

This wing does not draw an implicit relationship between the fight in the schools and the struggle of the working class. Nonetheless, various answers to our question have been generalised out of the libertarian strategy. This has been done by members of the International Socialism group who have considerable influence in R&F. These answers are very curious, and this is bound to be the case given the way in which IS have adapted themselves to this political current - but more of this later on. In the pamphlet, Democracy in Schools, a number of remarks are made for example to the effect that if schools could be turned into "democratic communities", this would give the future generation of workers a more anti-bureaucratic consciousness. This would conflict with the realities of capitalist society and generate a revolutionary struggle. This view is put forward in the context of a discussion in that pamphlet about a speech of Mr Short which sounded remarkably like a more democratic society; the authors protest that 'real' democracy in schools would result in the parliamentary system to which Mr Short is so attached being swept away! Underlying this there is a certain analysis of the character of education. The various features of the school are explained in terms of an alleged 'need' of the capitalists to have "docile" workers who don't cause much trouble to the bosses. The schools are therefore institutions which discipline the workers before they go into the factories. A variant of the argument is that the content of education itself is something called "bourgeois ideology", and the education system little more than a means by which "middle-class ideas" are pushed down the throats of "working class" pupils. The general idea underlying this whole mode of argumentation is that the working class can be made more militant, even revolutionary, as a result of change in the relations of authority within the schools.

We will have to deal with these ideas in more detail later on because although they represent a refreshing break from social-democratic sterilities about occupation, they are incorrect. As a strategic line for R&F they treat only one side of the picture - teachers' role as educators. But as far as their economic struggle is concerned, it says very little. Indeed, the scheme for our democratic community in the school put forward in the pamphlet actually compromises these struggles as we will show. But even in relation to the educational questions which it considers to be its property, the libertarian current often takes up a position of childish leftism. In so far as it takes on an overtly political colouration, the only ideas readily available are those which regard education as 'really' "middle-class" or 'really' "ideology". This leads it to reject the historical gains made by the labour movement in education, and can even lead to the attitude that teachers are 'really' "agents of the ruling class" (this is actually put forward in an IS document written by Chanie Rosenberg for the Birmingham R&F conference in the Spring of 1972). These ideas of course simply reinforce the prejudices of the "free"-schoolers and induce a guilty paralysis in those teachers remaining in the state system. Of course, the NUT should defend those free schools which exist in so far as they are subject to repression by the state, but it should not put forward the idea of "free" schools, since this amounts in practice to an evasion of the problems facing the vast majority of the school population. "Free" schools do not constitute a strategic line for the NUT, much less give an answer to the problems we have posed.

The debate about "free" schools illustrates the weaknesses of libertarian methodology. Its central flaw lies in reducing the entire system of social relationships in the education system to one of its aspects: the relations of authority between Head, teachers and pupils. The ideal conditions under which generous educational ideals can be put into practice can therefore only be created by destroying these relations of authority. From this position several paths of development are possible. The one which is dominant in R&F at the moment is the view that by "democratising" the authority relationships some sort of improvement in education will take place. The flip side of this coin is the view that this is not possible and "humanised" conditions for educational activity can only be created outside the state system - the "free" schools. Both of these views are incorrect. We shall examine the first in detail in a moment. As far as "free" schools are concerned however, it must surely be clear that the general social conditions under which education takes place outside the state system are not radically different from those within the state system. The significance of the educational process for the pupils is not governed by whether it occurs under "humanised" conditions or not, but the fact that it is bound up with social destiny. Clearly the social destiny of those educated within the free schools is just as much the key factor determining their world outlook (and therefore the way they relate to their education) as it is in the state school. In other words these pupils and teachers cannot escape the generalised social relations of capitalism, even though they may escape some of their authoritarian features.

In addition to these two currents in Rank & File, it is possible to find a sprinkling of those who believe in the need to reform education but who protest that this has nothing to do with politics at all. They see increases in expenditure, end of selection at 11 years of age, new teaching techniques and so on, as simply 'good things' in themselves. Having no conscious relation to politics, educational liberals do not propose any strategy for implementing these things other than changing (bourgeois) "public opinion" - the opinions of teachers, Heads, psychologists etc. Many of the new ideas they propose and advocate are of course extremely valuable in themselves. The "new mathematics" for example offers a much easier way of teaching mathematics, by utilising the physical sense of relationships between objects rather than the memorisation of formulae. However it is impossible to teach the entire school population equally and effectively for reasons which are precisely to do with politics.

Finally, there is a distinct social-democratic current in Rank & File which represents the sort of political alliance between teachers and the working class which has been dominant in the past. The social-democratic tactic of reforming education in order to increase the occupational prospects of individual members of the working class, has a contradictory political meaning. It comes to the surface among teachers because it corresponds to the actual practice of the working class movement in relation to education during those historical periods when it has been strongly organised - from the late 1890's to the early 1920's, and from the end of World War Two to the late Sixties. The struggle of the great mass of the working class for a unified system of free comprehensive education (the common school as it was once called), was in one sense, an extension the principles governing struggle on the economic front. This struggle has been conducted sector by sector, trade by trade and

region by region. The mass of workers saw the fight in education in similar terms, particularly since the War: in order that their individual offspring could get into those trades, sectors or regions which had better conditions for the sale of labour power than their own. Equality of educational opportunity meant the opportunity for individuals to travel up the occupational scale. The social-democratic vanguard of the working class was therefore fighting for something which was a contradiction in terms from a formal point of view. Nonetheless, these struggles are contradictory because the corollary of a unified education system is the abolition of those privileged and private sectors of education which were (and are) the exclusive preserve of the ruling classes. This fight therefore took on the character of an overt struggle against some of the rights which the ruling class reserved for itself, such as the right to educate its children in the lavish way it does without reference to the state or to society in general. This fight in education therefore took on a very overt class meaning and to this extent a unifying agent on the working class. This struggle has at times taken on even revolutionary overtones for it represents an attack on the privileges of the ruling class and therefore its structural position in society in a way that the trade union struggle seldom does. This overall conflict between the classes on the educational terrain provides the material basis for the millenarian vision of education under socialism which the intellectuals of the labour movement (prior to the First World War especially) have held. In so far as teachers have allied themselves with the working class movement in the past therefore, they have retained these visions (in a more shadowy form) despite the ups and downs in the involvement and interest of the working class in the educational question.

At the present time however, the social-democratic current is suffering a crisis of forces for the reasons outlined in Chapter One. The old objectives remain: "a vast increase in educational expenditure", "abolition of all privileged sectors and the creation of compulsory comprehensive education for all" (from the "immediate aims" of the present programme of Rank & File). It has no social forces of sufficient weight to achieve this vision, once the working class, who adopted these aims for their own reasons, diverts its attention to other fronts. This current can therefore propose no strategy for realising these "immediate aims". Their millenarian content has been inherited by the libertarian wing of the teaching profession. The shell of the social-democratic forces among teachers can propose little more at the present time than the return of a Labour administration pledged to fulfil the old dreams. In so far as these social forces exist, and in so far as they are replenished by the anti-Tory campaigns of organisations like International Socialism, the spontaneous strategy which they adopt holds considerable dangers for Rank & File. For example, the return of a Labour administration may well make it easier to push forward a few more steps in the direction of completing the comprehensive revolution, improving school buildings etc. On the other hand, one of the first moves of a new Labour administration will be to try to get a voluntary incomes policy with the trade unions. Since this social-democratic current has no mass base for its struggle in education, it inevitably ties itself to the labour bureaucracies. The return of Labour may mean a temporary paralysis of the militants in the unions, cowed by the argument that to push forward with wage claims and defy the voluntary policy would bring down the government and result in the return of the dreaded Tories. In the NUT, this debate

could take a specific form: to push ahead with salary increases when the new Labour government is kind enough to throw a few sops of educational reform, would be treachery, the right wing will argue. Of course from the point of view of the class struggle there is no necessary contradiction between these things. The confusion might arise however from the fact that for social-democratic ideology, the key precondition for social advance of any kind is to change the government. Having changed the government, the superiority of the "political" struggle (for comprehensives) over the "economic" struggle (in the unions) becomes an argument for tying the organisations of the working class closely to the government and therefore to the bourgeois state. One of the tasks of Rank & File in the coming period is therefore to recast its arguments in favour of comprehensives and educational reform on a non-social-democratic basis: that is on grounds of the class struggle, not on the grounds that this will lead to changes in occupational opportunity. We can return to resolve this question in the final chapter of the pamphlet.

The absence of any correct overall framework in which all the various struggles of teachers (and pupils) can be placed, leaves Rank & File victim to the constant struggle between these various currents. At the present time, the libertarian wing is dominant, and the existing programme of Rank & File shows a marked tendency to motivate all its various demands for education reform in educational terms rather than from an overall conception of the class struggle. As a consequence, the number one demand is for "control of the school to be in the hands of staff, pupils, parents, local community organisations and the Local Education Authority". We must now see where this would lead Rank & File.

True to their promise to make "detailed organizational proposals for our schools", the authors consider the following scheme. In broad outline, it means that parents, pupils, teachers and the local Education Authorities are each to have their own representatives (in the first three cases elected from Councils) on the governing body. The governing body is to be renovated so that each of the three councils, "the electoral bodies of the school", are represented alongside the LEA. In order to make this four-party "government" democratic:

We recommend therefore that the three associations and representatives of the LEA shall have numerically equal representation on the governing body.

If we understand the authors correctly, each of these bodies is to have 25% representation on the governing body and therefore presumably 25% of the vote. The Headmaster has been deprived of all legislative rights and these

### 3. "DEMOCRACY"

The libertarian current announces itself very clearly in the opening lines of the pamphlet:

True democracy means the real involvement of all the members of a community in all the decisions that affect that community. And by real involvement we do not simply mean the right to vote but the right to participate in an informed way during all stages of discussion and to have the absolute certainty that once a decision is made it will be carried out promptly and efficiently by those entrusted by the community with this responsibility.

This pamphlet is concerned with precisely this alternative in one area of society - in our schools. Although we are aware that such a change cannot be considered in isolation from changes in society as a whole, we believe that our demands and changes in attitude that will arise from the struggle to implement them, will form a part of the struggle for democracy in society...

This current is fighting for "democracy in society", and proposing precise means for implementing it in our schools as part of their struggle. Well let us see where this takes us.

The pamphlet locates the immediate if not the main enemy in the education system as the Headmaster in the school. The pamphlet notes, correctly, that he has very extensive powers over teachers, pupils and other workers in the school: powers to fire teachers, exclude pupils from the school, determine curriculum, carry out punishment, dictate this or that teaching method and so on. These powers are described as "dictatorial" and the Head the "last vestiges of the idea of absolute monarchy". The pamphlet then goes on to suggest he be deposed. But this immediately raises the problem of what we are going to put into his place. The authors propose that the vacuum be filled by a new reformed governing body, to which the Head will be electorally responsible.

True to their promise to make "detailed organisational proposals for our schools", the authors construct the following scheme. In broad outline, it seems that parents, pupils, teachers and the Local Education Authorities are each to have their own representatives (in the first three cases elected from Councils) on the governing body. The Governing Body is to be renovated so that each of the three councils, "basic electoral bodies of the school", are represented alongside the LEA. In order to make this four-party government "democratic":

We recommend therefore that the three associations and representatives of the LEA shall have numerically equal representation on the Governing Body.

If we understand the writers correctly, each of these bodies is to have 25% representation on the Governing Body, and therefore presumably 25% of the vote. The Headmaster has been deprived of all legislative rights and these

passed to the reformed Governing Body:

There can be no half-way house on policy-making; either it is the responsibility of the Head, as at present, or it is transferred to Constituent Associations of the Governing Body, of which the Staff Council is one.

The job of the various Councils is to make "recommendations" to the Governing Body whose representatives then collectively make the final decisions. Quite obviously then, not only the Head, but also the LEA can no longer be the legislative body in the schools, since the Head has no power at all and the LEA have only 25% of the power in each of the schools in their area under this arrangement. But then a curious thing happens in the argument:

The essential ingredient for democratic control is that the major recommendations of staff concerning organisation, curriculum and finance should be taken by the staff as a whole, within the framework laid down by the Governing Body, the LEA, and national educational policy. (p.11)

This is a bit puzzling. On the one hand, the LEA have 25% of the votes, yet they retain the right to lay down the "framework" within which all decisions and recommendations must be made! Furthermore, a fifth party has entered in to the picture rather unobtrusively, and this party does not seem to have any representatives at all on the democratic Governing Body: "national educational policy". But who determines this? Why, the Government of course. What is actually being proposed therefore is that parents, teachers and pupils should elect representatives who will collectively implement the national educational policy laid down by the Government and the LEA, a policy over which teachers have no "democratic control" at all. Well, certainly we could change the Government every five years by voting it out. But the authors don't regard this as "democracy" at all. As they say, they want "not simply the right to vote, but the right to participate in an informed way during all stages of discussion". This could hardly describe the relationship between the DES and the Cabinet in bourgeois society. Clearly, there is something phoney about this scheme.

The authors have made a big mistake here. Possibly their error flows from laying so much stress on the Head's activities being arbitrary. Of course if one makes facetious, though colourful, parallels between Heads and Monarchs, this notion could easily result. But in fact the Head is no more than an extension of the state bureaucracy. He is directly responsible to it. He may appear to be arbitrary in his actions, but this is perhaps detailed policy is not laid down for every aspect of school life by the DES or because the administrative chaos of the school is so intense. But he is no less an extension of the state bureaucracy for that. Therefore, eliminating the Head in no way alters the functions which the Head previously discharged. Any new body which took his place would carry out the same functions and have the same responsibilities. Any new body would in fact be responsible to the same state bureaucracy. Our authors implicitly admit this when they talk about recommendations being within national educational policy. The collective which is to replace the Head would therefore differ in no essential way from the Head himself, since they would occupy the same social relationship to the state.

The notion that the LEA could ever consent to having a mere 25% of the power by sitting on our reformed Governing Body is in curious contradiction with what our authors say about the LEAs:

As we have said, schools are a reflection (?) of society. The LEA is the agency which translates this reflection into policies. As selection and examination are necessary in our present society, to sift out those few who will 'make it', this is reflected through the policies of the LEA. As society's priorities are so distorted as to place defence on a par with education, and profit above need, this too must be reflected, and is, in the shoestring budgeting forced on LEAs. As society's hierarchical, the LEA will almost always uphold the hierarchy in schools, in siding with the Head teacher against those who fight for democracy.

The authors have hit a snag. It is easy to eliminate Headmasters, in theory at least, and replace him with a clique of representatives. But this new body is still faced with the problem of its relationship to the LEA. Initially the authors tried to reassure us on this by implying the LEA only had 25% of the votes. But when the authors take a closer look at it, it is perfectly clear to them that the LEA is an agent of "society's priorities", and it is within these priorities that our recommendations must be made. This is a bit disappointing since we had been led to believe that we were actually going to get some power by reforming the Governing Body. Not only is the Head an instrument of the LEA, the LEA itself is the instrument of farther and farther removed levels of the state bureaucracy. What is more, in this light the Head's decisions are no more arbitrary than those of the LEA, and the LEA no more "dictatorial" than the head. Rather their decisions flow from national policy which is based on the priorities of bourgeois society, which these reforms do nothing to change. This is all very disappointing so our authors try to reassure us in another way:

A more democratic society would have LEAs that reflected very different policies. In our fight for democracy we must therefore understand the limitations imposed on us by the system and work to change that as well.

Ah! If we fight for more democracy in society, i.e. struggle elsewhere, then the policy priorities of the state bureaucracy will change. Presumably once LEAs have had their policies changed by the "democratic" refreshment of society, all will be well. This is a very convenient argument. Because then you see, it wouldn't matter if the LEA had more power than everybody else on the Governing Body, because their policies and ours will correspond anyway! With logic like this we must look a bit more carefully at what our authors are offering us with their "democracy". While the authors are busy in the 'elsewhere' introducing more democracy in society, and thereby through some unexplained process changing the policies of the LEA, let us see what happens in the meantime to our teachers sitting on the new Governing Body.

Our friends are proposing that we take "corporate legal responsibility" (it must be all or nothing!) for the schools, but nevertheless within the framework laid down by the Government and the LEA. We are now to administer the prevailing policies of the government. But what happens if we disagree with any given policy? We could "recommend" of course that this or that policy

not be implemented. But this would be out of order since we have accepted as a condition of our democratic scheme, to make recommendations within the national policy. Of course the authors could drop this little proviso from their text, but this would alter nothing of substance since the real problem would still remain. Regardless of whether or not our new representatives swore an oath to abide by national policy, they would occupy the same position as the Head. It would then be our very own representatives who implement national policy. It is we who have to implement the cuts in school milk, justify the Government's decisions on local reorganisation schemes etc. The only recommendations we could make would be to recommend on which heads a given burden should fall. Of course, looked at in this way, it is perfectly clear under what conditions the LEM would agree to have 25% of the votes. These would be that teachers had been stupid enough to fall for all this talk about "democracy" and agreed to help the LEM implement unpopular policies, thus shifting the onus of responsibility away from the LEM to the teachers. 25% would not represent their real power in any case since they lay down the "framework".

Now, except for Labour MPs and union bureaucrats, it is logically impossible both to implement and oppose a policy. This means that our democratic power structure could only survive when we were obeying state policy, but we would have to abandon it altogether when we wanted to oppose that policy. Or to put it another way, we can only have our democratic school, as defined by our authors, on condition that we agree to state policies. Put more bluntly still, this means we can only have our scheme if we agree to be the lackeys of the state and government. The minute we are asked to take responsibility for controversial, i.e. significant, decisions, we would have to abandon the whole business and organise separately, possibly building alliances of teachers, pupils, parents and workers against the LEM, Ministry of Education and the Government.

In practice this scheme would mean that if we wanted to oppose national policy we could only do this outside the schools themselves. It would be entirely "undemocratic" to call a strike in the school for example in opposition to the Government or the LEM. Having fought to introduce more "democracy" into the schools, we now find that we can only exercise our 'democratic right' to oppose the government outside the school. And the more forces, such as pupils, parents and others whose representatives became legally and corporately responsible alongside us, the fewer and fewer forces there would be to mobilise for struggle.

This is the logic of any participation scheme under capitalism, whether in factory or school. It always results in a situation where the representatives of the masses implement and window dress the policies of the employers and the state under the hypocritical mask of "democracy", the "common interests of the community" and so on.

Not satisfied with having eliminated our right to fight the state in the schools, the authors then go on to emasculate the trade unions. On page 21:

We do not see in our proposals any suggestion of a diminution of the role of the NUT within schools. There will be a continuing and increasing need for struggle to defend and improve the working conditions of teachers and children.

Nor do we see the Union abdicating its role in determining national and local conditions of employment - indeed we believe this role should be extended. It must also be prepared to support members in schools where Staff Councils take decisions contrary to union policy (e.g. compulsory dinner duty).

The authors seem to be saying that if the Staff Council takes decisions about working conditions with which we don't agree, we must take it to the Union. But who is "we" in this context? If "we" are the minority on a certain issue, an issue already decided by the majority of the Staff Council, then the only role the Union plays here is in fighting on behalf of minorities against the majority wishes of its membership which have been expressed on the democratic staff council. The union is therefore fighting against the decisions its own members take. And how could this be otherwise once you sacrifice the principle of the independence of any section of workers from the state upon which an effective trade union practice is based? To take it to its final absurd conclusion, to whom does the Union appeal on behalf of its minority? Why, to the L.E.M. The union would then have to call on the L.E.M. to reverse decisions which the majority of its own members were asking the L.E.M. to help implement! Maybe this is not unlike the present situation. But to move on.

The disastrous character of this scheme could be endlessly documented. For example, if it is national educational policy to sack militants, sex educationalists and communists from the schools, and if - horro - local parents decided this was the correct policy, the "democratic" Governing Body would have to endorse this policy. Little further comment is necessary at this point. But an even more pernicious idea is put forward by the writers. In the section on the Staff Council we are told that non-teaching workers in the schools should have their own "sub-committees" of the Staff Council, "because their work situation is vitally affected by educational and organisational decisions of the staff council". The hours and conditions of non-teaching workers are not to be decided by a management (we are now 25% our own managers) but by the decisions of the Staff Council taken in accordance with educational criteria. In other words, teachers are now going to dictate to non-teaching workers in accordance with their own, educational and professional, conveniences. This is not the best way to make Rank & File popular in the trade union movement. The concept of class struggle and class solidarity has disappeared altogether. Finally, the scheme is not at all unfavourable to the Government, especially at the present time. Teachers could be made to appear responsible for the worsening conditions of the schools, they could save the government money by administering the schools for little or no extra cost, and deprive us of the right to struggle in the schools, leaving only the lobbies of Parliament open to us where of course all politics is supposed to occur in bourgeois society. One of the great dangers of the democracy scheme in the present circumstances is that with the return of Labour, there will be an extension of this type of collaboration, and Rank & File will find itself proclaiming it "progressive".

What reasons do the authors give for advocating the scheme? What analysis of education underlies their proposals? This is not spelt out in the pamphlet. Indeed there is little serious analysis of anything at all, but the authors do hint at various grievances they think their scheme might resolve and they

couch these grievances in terms which suggest an implicit analysis. For example:

- 1. Many teachers arrive at school accepting that they will not be expected to play a part in the running of the school; they feel no involvement and eventually do not even (apparently) wish to take part, especially if they feel that anything they have to say will have no impact anyway.
- 2. In an educational community where the emphasis should be on positive co-operation, such a situation is disastrous...
- 3. ...and the heavy weight of authority which daily cramps our educational ideals and violates our sensibilities, encourage rebellion against our undemocratic environment.

This may be a good description of the subjective experience of a certain layer of teachers. But the implicit assumptions in these passages are totally inadequate to the task of developing a strategy. For example, is it the "authority" of the Head which cramps the educational ideals of teachers? This might appear to be the case, but is it really true? Furthermore, the character of these "ideals" is simply taken for granted without any analysis of the premises on which these ideals are based. The massive reorganisation of secondary education over the last few years does of course create a crisis at the level of teaching technique which we have already sketched. For many teachers the task of changing these techniques is seen as a means of fulfilling their (often ill-defined) ideals. From another point of view of course, this struggle amounts to little more than clearing up the anomalies and resolving the irregularities left behind by bourgeois reorganisation. The material practice of resolving these anomalies does of course give rise to the notion that it is possible to remove grading, streaming, and traditional curricula altogether from the schools. But it is simultaneously apparent that this does not take place; rather the same essentials reappear in a more concentrated form in other regions of the school. Who is responsible? As a result of this contradiction, various spontaneous confusions take place in order to find a way out. The most readily available confusion is that made between the entire complex of social relationships of the school and the few individuals in authority who are their agents. It is the "dictatorial" Head who is responsible for the evils of the education system, the failure to eliminate grading, streaming and so forth from the school. Only by destroying these relations of authority will it be possible to put into effect an educational technique freed from occupational considerations. Such are the conclusions flowing from this line of thought.

But of course, this view flatly contradicts experience. In some schools, Heads are the most progressive figures in matters relating to educational methods, and they may often have to conduct a fight against 'backward' teachers. This is implicitly recognised by our authors:

In spheres peripheral to the power structure and unlikely by themselves to rock it, such as teaching method, occasionally curriculum content, or (powerless) school councils, a progressive Head might endeavour to practice ideals he held as a teacher and will consult with the staff. But in matters directly affecting the power structure, heads almost without exception approach any murmur of discontent from below with fear and extreme caution.

In this passage the authors inadvertently make a distinction between the position of the Head as an extension of the state bureaucracy, the guardian of the "power structure", and his relationship to the debate about education to which it seems his attitude can vary. But of course, once this distinction is made the previous argument of the authors falls apart. For it seems that it is not necessary at all to change "the power structure" in order for the 'progressive' teachers to win the debate about how teaching should be carried out. It also follows from this therefore, that it is not at all necessary to change the "legal position of the Head" and introduce "democracy" in order to win a battle which has general social dimensions. Even a successful fight over the power structure would still leave the task of implementing new teaching techniques unresolved. Teachers would still have to convince LEAs, parents, government departments etc. of their ideas.

The relationships of authority are therefore not the key to this problem of new teaching technique. Furthermore, even the application of "progressive ideas" is no guarantee that the "educational ideals" of teachers will be fulfilled. The "educational apathy" of the pupils, upon which our authors touch in the pamphlet, is not primarily the result of 'bad' teaching methods. Such an explanation leaves out of account the way in which the pupils relate to the educational process. This sort of explanation is an answer to a question the teacher asks of his activity, a question which has an ideological basis: "Why is it that despite my efforts, these pupils will not learn, or not learn equally?" For some, the answer is ready-made: some pupils are "naturally" more competent than others. For other teachers (the "progressive" wing of this particular debate) the answer lies in humanising the teacher-pupil relationship or in evolving mutual-learning techniques. Although this is preferable to the reactionary explanations, it is not adequate. It forgets that for the pupils, educational activity has a social meaning. Their individual social destinies are refracted through it. This relationship is made explicit for the pupils via a highly structured system of grades, streams, exams etc. For the ruling class, these are administrative measures through which the necessarily unequal amounts of social capital are distributed in the correct proportions, just sufficient to produce the various labour-powers which they require. For the pupils, however, this competitive process to which they are subjected, manifests the contradictory (hypocritical) character of the education system, as we described in the first chapter. Hence, while it is not impossible to limit the impact of this on the pupils experience, it is not possible to remove it because it constitutes the bedrock of their experience and structures the way in which they relate to the schools. How could it be otherwise? Under capitalism, labour is a commodity. The labourer's wage represents his value, the cost of reproducing him. So it is with the capital spent on creating his skills. The general and specific characteristics of labour power are therefore reproduced under the constraints of the law of value. The law of value is the governing principle of social development under capitalism and therefore also of the education system. The law of value can only be destroyed on the basis of a workers state.

How should Rank & File deal with this problem? Formally speaking, Rank & File is committed to socialism. But this commitment will remain purely formal, if Rank & File is led by forces who believe that it is possible to alter the fundamental character of education under capitalism - to bring about a change "in the nature of our schools" as the pamphlet has it. Of course, if the nature

of the schools continues to be interpreted in terms of the authority relations within them, then a strategy for changing the nature of education under capitalism is possible. But a strategy based on this confusion does not necessarily and automatically lead in the direction of socialism. On the contrary, it reinforces de-schooling on the one hand and leads Rank & File in the direction of collaboration with the capitalist state on the other. At the present, this is only an incipient tendency. The final destiny of Rank & File in the class struggle is by no means decided. But strategies based on this particular confusion do not lead to an increase in the class conscious forces in society, but swell the ranks of those forces of 'radical', but nonetheless, bourgeois professionalism. Of course, every member of Rank & File should seize every opportunity to struggle against grading, streaming, competitive exams etc. But this is not the real point. The dividing line is drawn between those who argue for these things on the basis that they bring about some fundamental change or 'improvement' and those who see the value of these struggles in the fact that they are potentially capable of strengthening the consciousness and organisation of those involved. In an organisation like Rank & File this dividing line can never be drawn absolutely. But the question remains: can Rank & File carry out an education of those forces thrown up by all the changes we have described, can it carry out the crystallisation of class-conscious vanguard for the NUT, or will its general tendency be in the direction of bourgeois professionalism and reformism? It is this to which we must return later on.

To return once again to the pamphlet. There are a couple of other reasons the authors give for justifying an assault on "the power structure" in the name of democracy. The first is that the "present authoritarian system" is responsible for the "wastage" of pupils and teachers aspirations. This is simply the argument, already implicit in the first motivation, made explicit. When they talk about the present system being "wasteful" and "inefficient", they use the same language as many a government report on the "pools of wasted ability" in the secondary moderns. This is simply an argument in favour of liberalising the schools to create more upward mobility. This view takes us into the camp of the ruling class, the only problem being perhaps that the bourgeoisie are no longer so interested in upward mobility as they were in the Sixties. Indeed, a general feature of the pamphlet is the failure to situate arguments within the framework of any class analysis - we are always referred to the "community" or to "everybody" or to "parents" etc.

Another argument is that the question of salaries is "closely linked" to the "structure of authority inside the school". This is a reference to the salary scales which teachers have to endure. The nature of this link is not made explicit: "Side by side with our demands for democracy in schools, we must demand a salary structure which reflects this democratic control". In what does this "side by side" consist? The implication is that we can resolve the problem of the salary scales more easily if we "democratise" the structure of authority. Over the years, governments have persuaded teachers to accept positions of administrative responsibility in the schools by offering bonuses, in the form of scales, over and above their basic, and then abolishing the basic rate altogether. The NUT has been wrong here. It has allowed the the government to undermine union solidarity by creating a conservative stratum of teachers who identify their interests with those of the administration. It has allowed management to tie arguments in favour of higher wages to the

amount of work done, and not based it on the imperatives of the standard of living. This has allowed a considerable problem of low-pay among teachers to arise. But to argue that we can get around all this by telling all teachers to become part of the administration (the new "democratic administration") is extremely dangerous. This is supposed to disarm the government in its attempts to extend the scales, but in reality it falls into the government's hands. The authors should be clarifying this question for Rank & File, not confusing it further. The only principled way to deal with the salary issue is to argue from the point of view of a struggle which tackles the real problem while preserving the unity of the NUT in struggle. Arguing for a single salary scale now does not produce unity because the higher paid are being asked to struggle along side others without any benefit accruing to themselves. The problem must be confronted as one of low pay. Across the board increases should be the principle governing salary policy. Increases of this sort would reduce real differentials without impairing the unity of the membership in struggle. This would not exclude the possibility of abolishing the scales in the long term, but this is dependent on the level of class consciousness among the membership, and the best way of raising this is to fight against the political problem of low pay. But to link opposition to the scales with the idea of turning all teachers into administrators is suicidal since it completely accepts the government's frame of reference.

It is important to clear up a couple of objections here. Are we in favour of the Head having so much power? No, obviously not. But what is the form and content of struggles involving opposition to the Head? We should be opposed to the Head making changes in teaching methods, curriculum or the general division of labour among the teaching staff without consultation. If we disagree with his policies then we should also stress the need to organise in the school - possibly some form of cross-union staff association in the school - to fight for specific demands. Such a development may or may not revise his legal position. His structural position of course will remain as it is. Success in achieving specific demands is not achieved of course by eliminating him or stepping into his shoes. In so far as the Head takes decisions to ban pupils or teachers from the school, we should oppose such decisions not because the Head is "dictatorial" or because we are opposed to the "vestiges of monarchy", but because we object to any part of the state bureaucracy victimising either teacher or pupil as a result of the conflicts arising from the social relations of capitalism. These positions are simple and obvious and do not require homilies to "democracy" to fight for them.

In practice therefore, our authors scheme fails to solve anybody's problems, and at worst actually emasculates the very instruments which we are still able at present to use in fighting for our demands. Our authors are blind to this. Even more dangerously, they seem unaware of the fact that their ideas are not unacceptable to some local administrators. Some members of LEAs for example, are in favour of softening the powers of Headmasters, if not removing them altogether, either because he is incapable of resolving the many problems arising in large urban schools or because he actually makes them worse by provoking unnecessary strife. Even some Tory MPs see the need for this, as our authors actually admit. This emerges in a section of the pamphlet where it is explained that the present (authoritarian) system

is breaking down and generating conflicts in the schools. For this reason they are certain that nobody will raise any objections to the practicability or desirability of their scheme. The only opposition, we are told, is likely to come from "groups within society whose opposition to the idea goes far beyond doubts as the practicability of such demands... (they) are implacably opposed to any form of democracy". Yet on the very same page, it is the representatives of these reactionary elements, like Timothy Raison MP, who are proposing to eliminate our Headmaster and implement a "managerial revolution" in our schools! This is no more than a "clever and subtle scheme" an example of "pseudo-democratic reform" intended to divert us from our true aim. Timothy Raison no doubt must be one of those really right-wing reactionaries who are opposed to any form of democracy (even parliamentary democracy?). Yet here he is embracing the ultimate in modernism - the 'managerial revolution'. But, needless to say, modernism is only the new clothes of the same old reaction. The way we should deal with this threat, suggest the authors, is that the new team of managers must be elected! This makes all the difference! It does not occur to the writers that their proposals could be fundamentally in line with the more farsighted members of the state who are concerned with the crisis in the schools. The only difference is no doubt a real difference for the authors, but of course the managerial team of the school, whether elected or not, would not be responsible to the teachers, but responsible to the bureaucracy of the state and instruments of its policies. In order to make this clearer, we must now make a few remarks about "democracy" as it is clearly all things to all men.

Many of the problems in the pamphlet flow from a false political analysis of capitalist society. Returning to the quotation at the beginning of the chapter and adding a third, we can see that what at first sight could be dismissed as loose formulation, adds up to a theoretical model of society:

This is not the way our society is run (a participatory democracy) at best ours is a partial democracy. Economic and therefore political power is still effectively in the hands of a small elite. So, in spite of some measure of democratic control over the purely legislative institutions, the majority of the people have little opportunity to participate in vital decisions which affect their everyday lives. This is most true in our places of work. As Bertrand Russell wrote in 'Political Ideals': 'Our administration is still purely bureaucratic and our economic organisations are monarchical or oligarchic'. These words were written in 1917 but they remain an accurate description of the social order. Russell went on to suggest an alternative 'There can be no real freedom or democracy until the men who do the work in a business also control its management'.

It is from this theoretical model of society that the confusions over the meaning of the word "democracy" flow. This passage sounds very radical, like much of the printed material distributed in the name of Rank & File, but it is very difficult indeed to resist pointing out the context in which the acclaimed words of Bertrand Russell were written. Far from being an accurate description of the social order, Russell's conceptions of 1917 were a response to the threat to capitalist society which was posed by the effect of the Russian Revolution of that year on the European working class. Russell was saying that after sending millions of workers to slaughter one another in

the trenches of Europe, the European bourgeoisie had better make the social order more responsive to their demands if socialist revolution was to be averted. In line with this, many participation schemes were put forward in industry, side by side of course with counter-revolutionary repression, so that the labour movement (more accurately its bureaucracy) could "participate in vital decisions which affect their everyday lives". Mondism in England was an example of this movement by the ruling class. It served to confuse the labour movement. Instead of 'workers control' retaining the original meaning given it by Lenin for example, that is the control by one class over another class in matters relating to the distribution and accounting of goods, it acquired the opposite implication: workers participating with management in their own exploitation. The view of society presented in the quotation is in fact a systematic falsification of Marxism while employing radical sounding phrases, the better to confuse Marxism in the workers movement at the time.

The secret of the technique lies in eliminating from the analysis the concept of a specific mode of production, e.g. capitalism, by seeming to take it for granted in the descriptive rhetoric. But the existence of a mode of production automatically implies the social dictatorship of a certain class in this case the capitalist class. By forgetting this, by leaving it out of the analysis, it becomes possible to talk about the "decision making processes" of society, that is the character of the state, in isolation from the question of which class possesses and exercises the social dictatorship by means of the state. Concepts related to the problem of political power, such as "democracy", are then emptied of all meaning, and given a purely administrative meaning. Our authors define it as a "set of rules" at one point in their text. But for the workers movement there is no such thing as pure democracy. It is always a question of democracy for which class. On the basis of their social dictatorship, the bourgeoisie frequently deal with the important questions concerning their class interests in a parliamentary arena, an arena open to those forces in the workers movement who accept the capitalist order and who wish to form parties (e.g. the Labour Party) which operates within this framework and explicitly accept the legitimacy of the state's monopoly of violence. The evolution of parliamentary democracy in no way threatens the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie; on the contrary it strengthens it. This in no way means that the masses have any "democratic control" over the ruling class by means of its state - on the contrary as Lenin expresses it, there is a diaphragm between the masses and politics. When we refer to the parliamentary state we must therefore refer to it not as "democracy", but as bourgeois democracy. If, on the other hand, it becomes necessary to violently increase the rate of economic exploitation of the working class, as in the case of Germany in the early Thirties for example, then the bourgeoisie have to dispense with these trappings, conduct all their business in private as it were, deny all rights of organisation to the working class, and thereby bring about a change in the form of the state - e.g. fascism. Of course, from the point of view of revolutionary strategy, the difference between a bourgeois democratic state and a fascist state is of some importance. But both these forms of state nonetheless express the social dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Both express this dictatorship by preventing the class antagonisms in society from fulfilling their tendency to destroy the social order. To talk about "decision-making processes" in isolation from these facts is to finish up in the trap of social-democracy.

Having eliminated the notion of a mode of production, and the accompanying idea of the social dictatorship of a class, from the analysis, it then becomes possible to collapse one's theoretical model of society into a number of institutions, or "areas" which can then be lined up side by side for a comparative analysis to see whether they contain any pure "democracy", that is equitable "sets of rules". On the basis of this method, the authors conclude that parliament is subject to a "measure of democratic control" (wise caution here), but the administration (i.e. the state apparatus) and our economic organisations, are not. These various institutions are described as being in the hands, not of a class, but of "elites". Control of the population through these institutions is no longer understood as being exercised in a more or less co-ordinated fashion by a class, but appears as the entirely fortuitous activities of separate elites within each of these institutions. From this position it then becomes (logically) possible to subject these various elites to the control of a new set of rules within each institution, thereby eliminating the elite-mass dichotomy until "authoritarianism" disappears altogether from society. Everything is much more civilised and gentlemanly once we change the "rules". For the authors, history has been kind enough to give us a "democratic" parliament - that venerable institution - and so the most lucid possible description of British Imperialism and all its totems that our authors can make is that it is still only "a partial democracy". If we give another turn to the wheel of good fortune, surely we can get a "full participatory democracy". All that is necessary is to pour the democratic wine into each of the bottles. It is precisely on this basis that the authors give us our democratic alternative in schools, as part of their historic struggle for "democracy in society". Lets hope that when all the bottles are finally full, some of the good cheer will spill over on to the Irish people or our 'under-developed brothers' in the colonial and semi-colonial enclaves of British imperialism.

Are we in favour of democracy in the schools? Yes. But what does this mean? Democracy is not a set of rules, but one of the forms of state, specifically the proletarian state. We should be opposed to a clique of "representatives" running the schools on behalf of the existing state apparatus, because we should be opposed to the entire bureaucratic apparatus of the bourgeois state. We are in favour of direct democracy, but this must be understood as a form of state, in other words another, different state, running the schools. Direct democracy can only mean the majority class of society organised as the state establishing its own dictatorship over the remnants of the minority class, the bourgeoisie. Such a thing involves the destruction and break up of the bourgeois state apparatus, which is necessarily bureaucratic in form because it expresses the dictatorship of a minority class. The demand for "democracy in schools" is therefore highly ambiguous. It can mean at least three quite distinct things. It can mean that pupils and teachers wish to fight to place limits on the rule of bourgeois right in the schools through their struggles. It can mean a clique of representatives helping the bourgeoisie to run the schools more effectively and exercise its rights more efficiently. Or it can mean placing the school under the control of a state which is democratic in form - the proletarian state.

The fight to place limits on bourgeois right in the schools can form a part of the struggle of the proletariat. Under specific conditions, which cannot always be predicted, the struggle of the pupils, teachers and students to limit

the rights of the bourgeois state over them, preventing the state carrying out victimisations and so on, can even become an important contributory factor in bringing about the possibility of dual power, e.g. in France 68. The general strike opened up the possibility of dual power coming into being and this in turn had important effects on content of the struggle to limit bourgeois right in the schools. Our authors' scheme has nothing in common with this of course, but since they try to use May 68 and its prestige to give credibility to their own scheme, we must look at this briefly:

Here pupils and progressive teachers formed a living alliance, Pupils took the initiative in starting the sit-in of schools, were backed by left-wing teachers in large numbers, and together they discussed everything that affected their lives: curriculum content, teaching methods, discipline, school institutions for democratic pupil and teacher expressions, down to the dinner menus and broader issues such as vandalism and delinquency.

Exactly so. But in so far as they did this before May 68, they did it in order to formulate things to demand from the education authorities. The authorities in turn were busy suppressing such discussions and alliances. In so far as this occurred on a mass scale, this was possible because a general strike had temporarily paralysed the state machine. The discussions then began to take on different meanings for different forces involved. For some, the general strike provided the opportunity to thrash out a fuller programme of demands which they conceived as being implemented once capitalism returned to 'normal'. Possibly, there was even a strand in this which considered it possible to participate in the administration of the schools with the return of the government. But for another current, the frame of reference was different. A general strike implicitly places the question of socialism or capitalism on the agenda. The content was not how to have better schools within capitalism, but how to reconstruct education in a workers state. The material logic of the general strike situation gave rise to this question. Throughout this entire period, the population in the schools was exercising proletarian democracy - indeed to such a level that the possibility of proletarian democracy growing over into a proletarian state arose. All this has absolutely nothing in common with what the authors of the pamphlet propose.

of state, in other words another, proletarian state, which is the only one that can only mean the majority class of society organized as the state, establishing its own dictatorship over the remnants of the minority class, the bourgeoisie. Such a thing involves the destruction and break up of the bourgeois state apparatus, which is necessary but not sufficient in form because it expresses the dictatorship of a minority class. The demand for "democracy in schools" is therefore in itself empty. It can mean at least three quite distinct things. It can mean that pupils and teachers wish to fight to place limits on the rights of bourgeois right in the schools through their struggle. It can mean a clique of rebellious pupils holding the bourgeois state to run the schools more effectively and exercise its rights in a state which is democratic in form - the proletarian state.

The right to place limits on bourgeois right in the schools can form a part of the struggle of the proletarian, under specific conditions, which cannot always be restricted, the struggle of the pupils, teachers and students to limit

# 4. PROGRAMME

The present programme of Rank & File makes it explicit that education is linked to, and determined by, the mode of production, ie capitalism. It constantly reiterates this:

We are under no illusions that the fundamental changes in education which we seek can be achieved without a total change of society as a whole.

Rank & File does not regard these things as accidental or "the way things go". We believe that they arise from the very nature of the present education system...

any struggle to change education must be seen as a small part of the struggle to change society...

But what is the connection between these struggles in education and the socialist revolution? What does it mean to say that the struggle to change education "must be seen as a small part" of the struggle of change society? These questions remain unanswered in the programme. The working class itself is barely mentioned. No suggestion is given as to why a struggle on the various features of the education system should make the working class see its historical tasks more clearly. Instead, a series of "immediate aims" is put forward. This includes, as the number one demand, the sort of democracy in the schools we have just examined. Other demands include "a vast increase in educational expenditure", "immediate implementation of a programme of new building to replace all out of date schools"; a "speedy and substantial reduction in the size of classes"; "the abolition of all privileged sectors of education and the creation of a unified system of free and compulsory comprehensive education". These demands are not politically motivated in any way. Since the opening paragraphs of the programme describe a whole range of grievances arising out of teachers working conditions and their general objections to authority, competition and examinations etc., it seems as if these demands are put forward as a programme of improvements, first steps in the general elevation of education. What we would do after these had been achieved is not spelt out. Presumably another programme of improvements would be posed. The result of this procedure is that the socialist revolution recedes into the distant future and the working class disappears altogether from the picture, making their appearance merely as our brothers out there in the trade unions. The programme therefore cuts in two directions. On the one hand it says that these demands are (a) unachievable (?), and (b) would make no difference anyway - yet on the other hand it insists on the need for a total change in society. How are these two things tied together? The fact is that they must be tied together or else Rank & File would simply finish up being a movement for educational reform and not an organisation for fighting the ruling class in education. The trend from the one position to the other is clearly apparent in the whole oeuvre of Rank & File over the past period, but as yet no definitive judgement can be passed on this. The situation is not irretrievable. In the meantime, those forces in Rank & File trying to tie the struggle in education to the struggle for the socialist revolution are by and large the International Socialism group. We must now look at the way they do it.

A PROGRAMME

Broadly speaking the way the IS resolve the problem is to pretend that struggles for various reforms in education are really revolutionary if taken to a certain extreme. The various "immediate aims" are actually revolutionary demands. They are blows against the system, they undermine the structure of capitalist society. There are definite traces of this in the programme:

We believe that the education system perpetuates the class divisions in society: a few are prepared for positions of privilege and power while the many are taught not to criticise their circumstances. It proves no escape for the working class child - bar a handful - because the economic realities of society demand that the great majority do a boring and badly paid job on someone else's orders. The power and the profits lie elsewhere.

If this is true, then how do we motivate the demand for comprehensives. Clearly comprehensives can't alter the structure of capitalist society described here. Or at least so you would have thought. But look at the following extract from the paper by Chanie Rosenberg produced for the Birmingham conference:

It is a really massive input (of funds) - the present expenditure multiplied a few times - that alone can make any change, sufficient to deal not only with a great improvement in school standards, but also with nurseries for the under-5s, adult education for the parents and university education for all - i.e. raising the 10 year working class schooling to the 20 year middle class schooling. Without this, discrimination will continue, and the class structure reproduce itself.

Now it is quite clear that no amount of change will stop "the class structure from reproducing itself" for the simple reason that the class structure is formed as a result of property relations, not educational experience. This point is forgotten by comrade Rosenberg when she talks about "the way classes reproduce themselves in the labour market". This is a nonsense. Those who have to sell their labour power in the labour market are by definition the proletariat, and those who own means of production, distribution or exchange, are by definition the bourgeoisie, and they don't encounter the labour market at all. There are other curiosities in the text like "the occupational class structure" and so on. What she might really be talking about in her paper is not class at all - but occupation. But if she had said: "Unless x, y and z are achieved, the occupational structure of the working class will reproduce itself", this would amount to nothing more than banal reformism. It wouldn't even be true: university expansion has not produced more jobs for graduates, rather more jobs for graduates has produced university expansion, and a fall in their rate of increase has produced more graduate bus-conductors. Rosenberg is simply confusing occupation and class. This functions in the following way: instead of trying to change the political basis on which people struggle for let us say comprehensives or increases in expenditure, it is much easier to tell them that when they think they are increasing the occupational prospects of the working class they are really undermining the class structure, i.e. changing the mode of production. Their demands are 'really' revolutionary after all. In other words, reformism is given a 'left' gloss. The Labour

Party left has of course always confused occupation and class in order to drum up forces for all sorts of reforms. But this is no reason for the IS group to do the same. After all, IS are supposed to be revolutionary marxists and not social-democrats.

A similar mistake, flowing from the same procedure, is made in relation to the libertarian wing of Rank & File. The confusion that is made here is over the question of "ideology", and the confusions made function in exactly the same way as those made over class and occupation: that is to avoid changing the political basis on which people struggle by telling people that they are really undermining the structure of capitalism. In the same document, Rosenberg tells us that education in capitalist society has two "aims". The first is "practical", that is giving the work force different levels of numeracy and literacy etc. Incidentally, in relation to the first "aim" the document shows a reluctance to indicate that the children of the working class have in fact enjoyed increased access to higher education over the last couple of decades. The description of the system she gives is one of the tripartite system. The comprehensive revolution is not discussed, yet the paper was written in 1972. The reason for this of course is that if you wish to spur people on to believe that comprehensives will abolish the "class structure" it is necessary to studiously avoid any discussion of those comprehensives which actually exist. But the second "aim" for Rosenberg is what she calls "ideological":

to maintain class rule by instilling the prevailing culture and the attitudes which prop it up into the young. The prevailing culture and attitudes are those in which the ruling class calls the tune.

There is an element of conspiracy in education. She goes on to discuss how exams and selection are "insidious methods for instilling the required class attitudes". Now quite clearly the fact that all pupils have to go through the competitive system does produce an ideological effect on those involved, and this ideology may or may not function as a barrier to the working class seeing its historical tasks. But can these various phenomena be seen as deliberately installed for this purpose. Is this really an "aim" of the ruling class? We have already explained that these phenomena arise from the fact that labour under capitalism is a commodity and that its reproduction takes place according to the law of value. Therefore these various phenomena are in fact administrative measures which are necessary for the ruling class. But no indoctrination purposes can be read into them. Rosenberg goes on:

the ground is now fertile (after the examinations and streaming) for instilling attitudes of submissiveness and obedience to oppressive authority, and belief that their inferiority is due to a lack in themselves which justifies their subordination and exploitation.

Unfortunately, the question of ideology is not so simple for marxists. Take the question of exploitation which she mentions. Marx spends a great deal of time explaining in Capital for example, how the wage form obscures the character of exploitation of labour under capitalism. He explains that the worker is paid let us say for 8 hours of his labour time, and therefore it appears (the term belongs to Marx) as though he is remunerated for the

full value of the product he produces during that 8 hour period. Marx then explains that this is not so, and that only a proportion of his labour time is necessary to produce the value represented in his wage. Exploitation is thereby concealed. Profit appears (Marx) as an addition made by the capitalist to the price of the product, the resulting marginal difference being his reward. For the working class, the exploitative nature as a social system, based on the extraction of surplus value, is not at all obvious. The word itself denotes for the worker 'excessive' additions to the price of the product or 'excessively' low wages etc. On the basis of the way the world appears, the working class spontaneously conclude that it is individual capitalists who deviate from some 'norm' who are the exploiters. On the basis of this, the desire of the working class to increase its standard of living tends to take the form of asking how the gross social product can be increased, thereby increasing the absolute volume of goods which its share of the national income represents. For Rosenberg however, the working class is spontaneously aware that it is exploited, but it has somehow become convinced otherwise by some process or other. That process is the education system, and teachers are described as "the agents of the ruling class". Linked to this general idea in Rosenberg's mind, is another: that in addition to being ideologically mystified in the education system by the ruling class, they are disciplined as well. They are taught "submission" because of course if they weren't then the working class would throw off its intimidation and throw the bosses of the factories into the river. What Rosenberg is actually doing here therefore is telling those who see everything in terms of the authority relationships in the schools, that their struggle too is really revolutionary because it helps create workers who are 'more prepared to stand up to authority' as it were. This is the origin of that curiosity in the Democracy pamphlet we mentioned earlier, that a more democratic school would produce workers who would no longer tolerate the institutions of bourgeois democracy.

As a result of this general line of argument, we get some really backward arguments in the Birmingham paper. Rosenberg describes in detail some very cruel attacks by certain pupils on teachers. These little anecdotes are then acclaimed by Rosenberg as examples of the class struggle. She finds them analogous to the struggle of workers in a factory who attack the foremen and the bosses, and announces with some profundity that both the trade union struggle and the struggle to persecute teachers both "push the struggle against the system forward and bring nearer the day of its downfall". This flows quite logically from her analysis: "in the school we are used as the agents of the ruling class for the transmission of their aims". All this is the product of the sheerest opportunism towards the libertarians, adapting their world view to her own (or at least the one she proclaims). As a result she fails to see the essential point that the conflicts going on in the school between pupils and teachers are conflicts within the forces of the proletariat as a whole (perfectly possible you know); they are not a class struggle. These conflicts are the expressions of the way in which teachers and pupils attempt to solve their mutual problems at each others expense, and this is premised on their failure to conduct a struggle against their real enemy, the ruling class.

Rosenberg's ideas rest on the notion that ideology is something which one class does to another, not as something which arises from the way the world

appears. The working class spontaneously sees its historic mission, but is inhibited from carrying this out by virtue of its being confused by the ruling class propaganda machine. Revolutionary consciousness is some sort of "essence" in the masses, an increase in the level of physical struggle, on no matter what basis, will bring this out. In the meantime it is unnecessary to propagate any scientific understanding among the masses of their predicament. After all, Rosenberg forgets that in so far as the working class aspires toward socialism, in so far as this objective is implanted in its consciousness, it is not at all some spontaneous essence but the result of the patient work of socialists over decades who have taught the working class to generalise from their experience on the basis of science.

Education cannot meaningfully be described as "ideological" in intention. This simply leads to rejecting the historical gains made by the working class. Certainly "bourgeois ideology" can be found in education - whether in religious assembly with all its bigoted national chauvinism and drum banging or inscribed into the content of the history lesson. But it would be rash to reduce this to some plot by the ruling class. Ideology is not so simple. Ideology is not "bourgeois ideology" because it is supposedly produced in the heads of the ruling class and grafted on to the heads of the workers. All manner of ideas are produced by the social formation as a whole, which can be characterised as "bourgeois" because they explain or describe the world on the premise that bourgeois society is natural or cannot be historically surpassed. The working class is therefore as much a producer of bourgeois ideology as the bourgeoisie, and how can it be otherwise since it does not have some inborn revolutionary consciousness? Furthermore, ideology circulates throughout the entire social formation and there is no special institution for transmitting it. In so far as a highly articulated body of ideas about history or social life are taught in the history class which has bourgeois-ideological concepts at its roots, this cannot be construed as a plot. Of course it is perfectly possible to carry out a struggle against bourgeois ideology in any area of society, the schools included. But, it does not involve at all the conclusion that education, or any other institution, has the transmission of ideology as its aim.

The function of all this confusion is to give a 'revolutionary' gloss to the various currents in Rank & File who have grown up outside of social-democracy. The way IS have operated in relation to both these political currents however reveals an underlying similarity, and their method flows from a particular theory of the revolutionary process and therefore of the party. There is not space here to take this up in a comprehensive manner. Possibly that debate will follow the publication of this pamphlet. Nonetheless, its kernel can be illustrated by the above examples. The idea seems to be that it is simply a question of increasing the level of physical struggle. The result of this will be to unleash the physical force of the masses in a way which automatically brings them face to face with 'reality' and the result of this in turn will be that the masses will draw revolutionary conclusions and throw off the ideology imposed on it by the ruling class. In the meantime it is not necessary for the party to do anything more than co-ordinate the various struggles and increase their intensity. It is not necessary for the party to explain for example that it is impossible to change the social relations of education without a workers state and thereby change the way people see and understand their struggles. Once people learn that capitalism won't give them what they demand, they draw the conclusion

that it is capitalism which must go. In fact of course they more often than not draw the conclusion that they are simply not strong enough to win their demands at the present time. Furthermore those who believe for example that a struggle at the level of teaching technique or to eliminate grading, streaming and so on, is an assault on the "values" of society or the values of education in some sense, do not draw revolutionary conclusions when they find the same phenomena arising in some other region of the school. Rather, they make a confusion between the social relations and these who are their agents, or conclude that education can only take place outside of the state system altogether, in order to find a way out of the dilemma. It is no use repeating that these struggles are revolutionary if only taken a little further. These forces arrive at the conclusion that it is necessary to evade the state rather than to smash it! They remain trapped within educational reformism, so what other conclusion can they draw? The purpose of the intervention of revolutionary marxists is precisely to break those forces who are thrown into struggle by social processes out of the ideological problematic in which they are trapped. This does not occur as the result of a physical struggle between these elements and the authorities in any spontaneous fashion; it occurs only as the result of the political struggle conducted with these elements by the revolutionaries.

The consequences of opportunism for the revolutionary group are equally severe. Stepping into other people's ideological clothes on the grounds that this eases acceptance by the mass movements and currents around it, simply leads to confusion with the organisation itself. The party comes to adopt the ideological premises of those surrounding it and confuses them with its own scientific premises. The end result is that such an organisation degenerates into a left-demagogic formation.

It is not possible to carry out a struggle in any form or society, the school is included. But it does not involve all the conditions that education or any other institution has, the transmission of ideology as its aim.

The function of all this education is to give a 'revolutionary' gloss to the various currents in rank & file who have grown up outside of school democracy. The way is paved in relation to both these objectives, currents however reveals an underlying similarity, and their method flows from a particular theory of the revolutionary process and therefore the party. There is not space here to take this up in a comprehensive manner. Possibly that debate will follow the publication of this pamphlet. Nonetheless, its kernel can be illustrated by the above example. The idea seems to be that if it is simply a question of increasing the level of physical struggle, the result of this will be to witness the physical force of the masses in a way which automatically brings them face to face with 'reality' and the result of this in turn will be that the masses will draw revolutionary conclusions and throw off the ideology in which they are caught up. In the meantime it is not necessary for the party to do anything more than co-ordinate the various struggles and increase their intensity. It is not necessary for the party to explain for example that it is impossible to change the social relations of education without a workers state and thereby change the way people see and understand their struggles. Once people learn that capitalism won't give them what they demand, they draw the conclusion

# 5. WHICH WAY?

A rank and file organisation exists to change the leadership and its policies of the NUT. Why is this necessary? Because the existing leadership accepts the continued existence of bourgeois class power as the framework in which it operates. The result is a failure to lead any effective struggle at all on wages and conditions or on educational questions, and a consequent bureaucratisation of the union. The basis for a rank and file group should not therefore be simple opposition to the executive. It must seek to commit the union, not just to a harder or more consistent struggle, but to a struggle premised on a different political basis. There are of course only two such organising principles available: a struggle on the basis of and within bourgeois class power and struggle on the basis of contesting this power.

We have studied Rank & File, dissecting the various currents within it, not for the sake of anatomy, but to try and show that in fact Rank & File is a united front of different political and social forces. This question is therefore on what basis these forces come together. Clearly this has nothing to do with whether we are all in favour of this or that reform. It is perfectly possible to get unity for this or that reform with all manner of social forces - even parties of the bourgeoisie in some cases. What makes Rank & File a principled or an unprincipled united front is whether, in all the struggles to which it participates, it defines the enemy correctly: bourgeois class power. This not only has immense consequences for the effectiveness<sup>and success</sup> of any given struggle, it also determines whether or not that organisation finishes up in the camp of the ruling class or in the camp of the proletariat.

It is not enough to be against "capitalism". This is not an accurate description of the enemy. For example, if Rank & File agrees that it is necessary to struggle for comprehensives because the tripartite system is the product of capitalism, this is not at all sufficient. As we have seen it is perfectly possible for certain forces to agree to this and to agree that they are opposed to "capitalism", yet at the same time propose that we elect representatives to become part of the bourgeois state: in other words they seek to fight "capitalism" by using bourgeois class power. What they are saying is that it is possible to use the bourgeois state against capitalism, implicitly making the assumption that bits and pieces of the bourgeois state can be 'won over'. The Communist Party for example is opposed to the Common Market because it is "capitalist". Yet it proposes to fight capitalism on this occasion by urging the defence of the British nation state: that is to fight against "capitalism" on the basis of bourgeois power, firmly within the framework of bourgeois politics. The real question for Rank & File is on the basis of what class power is change possible. If Rank & File fudges this question, or poses things in terms of this or that change being against the "system", a step in the direction of "socialism" some day, then inevitably it will stand between the two political camps, ambiguously at first but then more and more fully in the enemy camp. The first step of this is its claim for the managerial revolution in the schools (although in a 'left' and 'democratic' form of course).

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It is therefore not a question of a fight against "the system", "capitalism" etc, but a fight against the ruling class on the terrain of the education system. This conceptual realignment now makes it possible to integrate all the various questions preoccupying teachers in a principled way. To illustrate this, we can, for the sake of convenience, divide them into three categories.

Bourgeois Reorganisation in Primary & Secondary Education.

There has been a prolonged period of organisational change in education. There is a contradiction for the ruling class in this. On the one hand, because it has needed to increase upward mobility through the schools, it has had to give support to the gradual break-up of the tripartite system of secondary education. Yet on the other hand, this has aroused the aspirations of large sections of the population - pupils, teachers and sections of the working class. The struggle of the working class to push these changes forward in a rapid manner did not lead to revolutionary upsurges even though they have raised once again some of the privileges of the ruling class - their right to organise education for their own members without reference to society as a whole. But since for the great mass of the working class, the struggle for comprehensives was seen as a natural accompaniment to a more or less successful advance on the trade union front, and because the (implicit) fight against private education was conducted on the social-democratic basis of changing the government, no violent upsurges took place on the question which could have led to the class power of the bourgeoisie being challenged. At the same time, despite the containment of the working class mobilisation which bourgeois reorganisation called into being, the mobilisation among teachers has been more continuous and is now reaching a head. We have already discussed in some detail earlier on, the way in which new layers of teachers see the significance of educational change: for them it represents a potential change in the "values" of society or an attack on the "competitive system". For pupils, change in education, particularly the pedagogic changes, have resulted in a much more favourable framework in which to conduct their own struggles.

Rank & File must be in favour of all struggles against 11 plus, grammar schools, grading, streaming, etc. Not only do the changes made in this respect represent a historic advance for society in education, they also eliminate to some degree a source of division in the forces of the working class. Intentionally or otherwise, grading, streaming and competitive examinations create material and ideological division in the working class. Rank & File must be wholeheartedly in favour of all changes. But at the same time it must make it absolutely clear that it has no confidence in the ability of the ruling class to see them through, nor any confidence in the promises of bourgeois parties (e.g. the Labour Party) to see them through if only people would stop fighting now and elect them to power, nor any confidence in other methods of struggle which utilise the class power of the bourgeoisie ("democracy" in schools of the type we have criticised). Historic steps forward can only be made on the basis of utilising the class power of the proletariat, which can carry these changes through against the ruling class, logically involving the proletariat in becoming the leading class in society by means of creating its own state power.

The reasons why the bourgeoisie cannot carry them through become clear every day. From their point of view, grading, streaming, etc. and competitive examinations,

(and increasingly the retention of selection in many areas) must be retained in the schools (and between different types of school) even though their distribution has changed for the purpose of facilitating upward social mobility. For them, the law of value must continue to rule the development of society. This must be explained in the programmatic basis of Rank & File. The alternative is that forces within Rank & File draw false conclusions from their experience. As we described earlier they tend, as a way out of their dilemma, to confuse the general social relations of education with the relationships of authority ("democracy" in schools) or the general conditions under which education occurs with education itself (the "ideology" problematic). The mere fact that reorganisation has 'exposed' the links between education and capitalism in no way automatically results in forces being won to socialism. The enemy must be correctly defined. It is not grading, streaming etc which are the enemies in the first instance. If these things are defined as the enemy, a blow against which weakens "the system", then it is quite possible, as we have seen, to develop strategies for attacking these things on the basis of bourgeois class power. The only result can be that teachers interests are compromised through participation schemes. The enemy in education is the ruling class and its state. It is perfectly possible for the ruling class to see its chance to absorb those who place confidence in their power, offering them the prospect of a few changes in return for the emasculation of their organisations.

#### Expenditure Cuts & Rationalisation.

The clearest expression that the ruling class is incapable of developing education is that, once the rate of company profit suffers decline, it cuts back on its expenditure in the social services and education. It is quite clear that the bourgeoisie, despite its pious pretensions, is prepared to sacrifice the education of the population to rescue its own profits. No longer can the professionalism of teachers be exercised so easily within the framework of welfare-state ideology, since the bourgeoisie is forced to dismantle and impoverish wide areas of the welfare state. It is no longer so easy for bourgeois politicians to pretend that the slow development of the social services is due to 'administrative difficulties'. It becomes clear, once all development ceases, that other considerations are afoot. The question which Rank & File must pose to teachers therefore is into whose hands does the future of education lie? Is it with the ruling class and its state, or is there another social class capable of leading society? This is the correct way to pose the question of socialism to teachers - not as the final culmination of a series of reforms, but with which class does the future of their professionalism lie? Rank & File should not approach teachers and tell them that they should see themselves as boilermakers or else they are "agents of the ruling class". The question is under what form of society can their professional skills be best utilised. In other words what Rank & File must do is change the political class meaning their professionalism has acquired.

#### Salaries

We have already discussed how this question should be approached. Those who argue for reforms on the basis of bourgeois power would have us all become administrators in order to get rid of the scales. This is disastrous. The struggle for improvements in teachers pay can only be carried out on the

that there is a problem of low pay among teachers, and therefore teachers must unite with other sections of workers to fight against this generalised problem. To argue on the basis of their sectoral professionalism, their ability to offer administrative services to the state etc, is to lead teachers into defeat. This needs to be explained in the programme of Rank & File because it draws the dividing line between those who argue in favour of higher wages on the basis of bourgeois class power and those who do not.

Clearly, the salary question and the issue of rationalisation of expenditure are interlinked. Clearly, if it is believed that the bourgeoisie is capable of educating the population (in whatever sense this is understood), then to strike is to damage the education of the pupils. This feeling is widespread among teachers, and because of their implicit confidence in the bourgeoisie they are easily subject to pressure from the mass media and the government to stop fighting. But once it is understood that the bourgeoisie is not only incapable of educating the population, but actually impoverishing their education, these inhibitions can be destroyed. This too much be explained in the programme of Rank & File. The fact that the state is prepared to tolerate a long strike rather than pay a wage increase to teachers, is proof of its priorities.

Teachers face a crisis of forces for their struggles. It is quite clear that the working class interest in education has declined, because the political basis of its previous involvement has been eroded. Yet it is equally clear that teachers cannot win on their own. On what political basis therefore can they involve other forces?

The working class is jealous of its previous gains in education. However, it is not organised in such a way that it becomes immediately aware that its previous social gains in education are being eroded. This only becomes apparent to the mass of workers when there are cuts in provisions. When teachers (and often pupils) struggle in education however, this raises the question for the workers as to whether these struggles also undermine and erode its previous gains. Again, this is because the working class itself has a certain confidence in the ability of the bourgeoisie to develop its educational facilities. They do not automatically see teachers as their immediate allies. The bourgeoisie are well aware of this of course. Its overall strategy at the present time is to carry out a rationalisation of education, but at the same time avoid the responsibility for this. It does this by pointing to deviant teachers, 'violent' pupils, experimental teaching methods (which are supposed to result in a decline of literacy etc). It also seizes on the golden opportunity presented whenever pupils and teachers engage in struggle. Whenever there is a strike, the press make a good deal of the "damage" being done to the pupils. If teachers are to win the working class to their side therefore they must carry out a programme of explanation to the labour movement. How does the existing leadership of NUT explain what is going on? More often than not by accepting the arguments put forward by the bourgeoisie! Rank & File, as an alternative leadership for the union, can therefore only carry out these struggles effectively by explaining to the working class precisely the ideas discussed above. The working class must defend those teachers and pupils who are

prepared to stop the bourgeoisie from solving the crisis of British capital by taking back the previous gains won by the labour movement in the social services.

It is equally important for teachers to defend pupils organisations. Pupils are often the most readily available forces for a struggle. This is why Rank & File must win the NUT to defend and encourage these organisations. It should also fight against such things as corporal punishment in the schools because it prevents teachers and pupils seeing their mutual interests (not on the grounds of being opposed to "authority" or something of this kind). The workers should defend these organisations also. Not only are the pupils often allies against the capitalists, but they are also prepared to develop militant forms of struggle which serve to bring forward a new cadre for the organisations of the workers. In order to explain such an idea, it is also of course necessary for forces in the NUT to explain the contradictory nature of education under capitalism. Will Johnny's "intelligence" suffer etc...? In other words it is important that Rank & File conducts a political struggle with the working class in order to win forces from the labour movement for the fights which take place in the schools. The crisis concerning education among teachers must be spilt over into the working class. It is on these lines that a meaningful alliance with the working class can be built. Needless to add, of course, if teachers seek a way out by "democratising" the state administration, this can only result in their taking responsibility for the policies of capitalism in education and compromising themselves in the eyes of the working class. The distinction between being against "capitalism" and against bourgeois class power is therefore of some importance to the struggle to reconstruct the programmatic basis of Rank & File in a principled way.

Finally, the struggle for democracy in the union should be seen in this context. There is no space here to give an account of the evolution of the trade union bureaucracy. But the relationship between the leadership and the membership of a trade union is governed by its politics. Administrative problems flow from political ones, not the other way round. The unions are bureaucratic because the dominant forces leading the unions wish to do so within the framework of bourgeois power. The resulting contradictions between their activities and the aspirations of the membership are then 'resolved' by placing a diaphragm of bureaucracy between the leadership and the membership. The struggle to democratise the union therefore involves questions of programme from the very beginning and cannot be regarded as simply a matter of introducing a more "democratic set of rules". This administrative, a-political thinking is a mirror of the bureaucracy. The fight for democracy in the unions can only be conducted successfully if the need for more democracy flows logically from the need to fight the ruling class.

D. B.

We can encapsulate these points in order to arrive at the sort of formula which would provide a principled platform for Rank & File.

Rank & File: An Alternative Programme for the NUT

The capitalists are unable to develop the education system further or in such a way as to alter the fundamental conditions under which the population are educated. In particular, they have always sought to develop education at the minimum possible cost. To do this, they have developed numerous administrative measures for the purpose of carrying out unequal distribution of expenditure, since to them the working population are no more than commodities to be reproduced at minimum expense. Such techniques include segregation into different types of school, grading and streaming, and "intelligence" testing. These practices have been justified by the theory that the working population possesses unequal capabilities from birth, which they bring to the education system. Education under these conditions results in the ideological disunity of the working class, and demoralises the working class (intentionally or otherwise) as to its own practical and historical capabilities. For this reason, the NUT is in favour of all reforms, such as comprehensives, non-streaming, etc which limit these practices. The NUT will support any pupils, teachers or workers organisations which undertake a struggle against them.

In order to revive the competitiveness of British capital, the current policies of state in education are organised around the idea of carrying out rationalisation and reorganisation in order to further minimise its expenditure. This results in outright cuts in many schools. This policy is being carried out regardless of the existing gains of the labour movement and the conditions under which teachers work. We are opposed to capital solving its problems at the expense of any sector of the working population, including teachers and pupils, and the NUT resolves to fight against cuts in expenditure. In addition, the NUT opposes any of the effects of rationalisation which teachers, pupils or workers organisations consider to be counter to their interests. The Union should therefore:

- a) avoid taking responsibility in the eyes of the labour movement for the policies of the state in education. Therefore no member of the NUT should sit on bodies of state, including School Governing Bodies, which formulate or implement state policy, except for the sole purpose of stating the positions of the Union.
- b) to make every attempt to involve other organisations of the labour movement in the fight against the state and government in the schools. It is also indispensable for the union to carry out a programme of explanation to the labour movement of the significance of these struggles.
- c) to defend and encourage the independent organisations of school pupils, in view of the fact that pupils have often proved in the past to be the allies of teachers and the labour movement in struggle. For this reason the NUT is opposed to corporal punishment because it divides pupils and teachers.

The state has two objectives in relation to teachers salaries. First, to cut the cost of administration in schools by persuading teachers to accept administrative duties as a condition for increases in pay, thereby introducing broad differentials and weakening union solidarity. Secondly, to take advantage of their lack of economic power, to hold down their pay. To counter this, the Union should:

- a) refuse to accept administrative posts as a substitute for a fight to increase wages. No extension of the scales.
- b) to alleviate the plight of the low paid teacher, to fight for straight across the board increases for all grades. No more percentage increases, which increase real differentials.
- c) through unity in the fight against low pay, to fight for a longer-term abolition of the scales.
- d) all claims to include built-in cost of living increases; the cost of living index to be decided by the unions.
- e) Full wage for all unemployed teachers.
- f) An end to the Teachers Remuneration Act. No compulsory arbitration
- g) An end to the Industrial Relations Act. No registration, collaboration or recognition.
- h) No collaboration with any form of Incomes Policy, whether statutory or voluntary, Labour or Tory.
- h) Solidarity action with any member of the trade union movement who defies the freeze or the National Industrial Relations Court. Immediate strike action in support of any worker threatened with imprisonment.

In order to fight for the above positions, the NUT representatives must be firmly under democratic control.

- a) No secret negotiations. Union officials to consult at every turn in any negotiations with the elected representatives for their decision on actions necessary to pursue union demands. Where possible, mass meetings should be held in school time. Executive members must be bound by this discipline.
- b) All paid officials to be subject to election and both officials and representatives to be subject to immediate recall.
- c) No official to be paid more than the average teaching salary.

The struggle for socialism in this country will ultimately be determined by the balance of forces on a world scale. Specifically this struggle cannot be separated from the struggles against imperialism throughout the world. The NUT should therefore support all anti-imperialist struggles. In particular, Rank & File undertakes to commit NUT and local units to solidarity with 1) those forces fighting British imperialism in Ireland 2) those forces fighting American imperialism in Vietnam.

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If you would like to be put in touch with IMG militants active in the NUT write to: Jim Donoghue, c/o 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1.