

# Editorial Comments

THE Communist Party in its evidence to the Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth established by the Labour Government, provides an impressive array of facts, figures and arguments disproving the propaganda that the distribution of wealth and of income in Great Britain has become more equal in recent years.<sup>1</sup>

It emphasises on the contrary that:

“The outstanding characteristic of wealth distribution (in this country) this century is its stability—in spite of a wide range of apparently progressive tax changes which began with the reform of estate duty in 1909....”

It exposes the ways in which the real amount of wealth in the possession of the very rich is “dispersed” thus reducing the amount paid in tax:

“... Much of the dispersion of wealth actually assessed for tax is simply the consequence of tax avoidance with estates being put into ‘discretionary’ trusts or seemingly split up within families to minimise tax liability....”

Over the last 60 odd years:

“... the proportion of the nation’s wealth represented by equity shares has greatly increased and the market value of these shares increasingly understates the net worth of the company sector.... According to J. R. S. Revell (an expert in this field) the richest one per cent of wealth holders own 81 per cent of personally held stocks and shares in companies....”

Statistics seeking to prove greater equality of wealth distribution are often misleading, it is argued, because two sorts of asset are confused and regarded as equal variants of “wealth”. On the one hand there are the homes, pensions and improved economic position of limited numbers of better off workers and “on the other hand, the wealth which confers economic power and permits the exploitation of other people’s labour, that is, the ownership of the various production resources”. This latter has, if anything, “become more concentrated”.

Facts about the distribution of income tell the same story. Even if it is correct that there has been a change in the distribution of income towards greater equality there is

considerable doubt about the persistence of the ameliorative trend in recent years.

“Writing in 1967, R. J. Nicholson found that equalisation of incomes came to an end in the mid-fifties which he attributed to rapidly rising unearned incomes and the end of a decline in salary incomes relative to wages. Six years later Professor Atkinson confirms that no further gains by the poorer half of income recipients occurred in the 1960s. Between 1957 and 1967 the share of the poorest 60 per cent of recipients in total pre-tax income fell from 34 per cent to 33 per cent; their share in post-tax income... from 37 per cent to 36 per cent”.

## FROM THE “BLACK PAPER” STABLE

One hundred years ago Robert Lowe was fighting his last ditch stand against the extension of the franchise. Nothing could be worse, he said, than by this means “to subvert the existing order of things, and to transfer power from the hands of property and intelligence, and so to place it in the hands of men whose whole life is necessarily occupied in the daily struggle for existence”. A conspiracy of the “unfit” would “swamp and obliterate not only property but intelligence, culture, toleration, patriotism”.

This identification of culture, intelligence, the whole of civilised values with the middle class (“property”) is the keynote of the latest publication from the “Black Paper” stable—a book entitled *Education, Equality and Society*<sup>2</sup> edited by Bryan Wilson, with long contributions from Wilson himself (a sociologist from All Souls College, Oxford), G. H. Bantock, the late Cyril Burt and the egregious Rhodes Boyson. But times have changed, universal suffrage long conceded; it is the drive to equality in educational provision which, in the editor’s view, now threatens “educational and social diversity, the maintenance of excellence, and the persistence of climates within which sensitivity, creativity, civic concern and intellect can flourish”. In fact all civilised values are once more under threat—in particular from the move towards comprehensive education, the establishment of a common curriculum for all, and the abolition of streaming and other forms of differentiation between children.

The whole book presents typically conservative arguments, but as the product of

<sup>1</sup> We hope to publish the full 5,000-word text of the evidence in our August issue.

<sup>2</sup> Bryan Wilson (editor)—*Education, Equality and Society*, Allen & Unwin, £4.25.

leading conservative ideologists in education it is worth serious attention. Like many statements of this kind the authors tend to support *past* reforms ("In some earlier age it is conceivable that all the writers in this volume might have campaigned for a greater measure of equality in education, and that all might have supported a variety of educational reforms"—Bryan Wilson), but all without exception hold up their hands in horror at what is happening today—and indeed demand that the clock be turned back some 20 to 30 years, selection and internal school differentiation reintroduced and, where possible, reinforced. The elitist system must be retained at all costs.

#### DOCTRINE OF INNATE INFERIORITY

As for the quality of the arguments presented, Marxists will take a particular interest in the late Cyril Burt's attempt to provide an historical interpretation of the fact that, on average, a much higher proportion of middle class children have higher IQs than working-class children. This is not due to the way the tests are constructed, the kind of questions set, etc. as Marxists and others have argued. On the contrary it is the inevitable result of centuries of social mobility. "Ever since the days of the legendary Dick Whittington", writes Burt, "and indeed long before his time, bright and energetic youngsters from the poorest homes have steadily worked their way up to the merchant of professional classes, while the duller and lazier children of the middle and upper classes have tended to drift downwards". So "with the free social mobility which has obtained in England", Burt concludes, "the emergence of distinct social classes, *based largely on differences of innate capacity*, was a natural consequence" (my italics, ed.).

There we have the doctrine that informs all these essays. The working class of this country is innately inferior—just as Jensen argues the Blacks are in the United States. The defence of civilisation requires the dominance of the middle class who monopolise (as Lowe claimed) both property and intelligence (culture); while allowing a limited degree of social mobility. It is clear that this theory, derived from the interpretation of the results of mental testing, insistently requires such an historical support. So (since historians could not conceivably supply it) the psychologist turns historian in his spare time to dredge up plausible data. So much for the "standards of excellence" that this movement

claims to defend. It is a shoddy rationale on which to base a whole educational programme designed to preserve existing elitist procedures.

The two essays by Wilson and Bantock—and another by Lucas, an Oxford philosopher—are worth study as expressing conservative political ideology, rather in the tradition of Michael Oakeshott. Thus Wilson decries "the contemporary rejection of categories and boundaries", arguing that, with the abolition of streaming and the development of interdisciplinary studies, schools "have lost their old structure and stability".

Lucas is prepared to countenance the idea of equality of educational opportunity as a goal, but not equality as such—that is, the deliberate channelling of resources to the disadvantaged rather than (as at present) to the advantaged.

Rhodes Boyson believes that equality of opportunity is anyway a chimera and that "the stability and security of society is equally important". This country, he adds, is "a strange but potent mixture of aristocracy plutocracy and meritocracy", and long may it so remain. "A large private sector of grammar type schools" maintained by the voucher system and by fee-payers must be developed to support the existing system.

Though crudely expressed and ill thought out, Boyson's concluding essay reveals clearly where all this conservative ideological theorising would lead us. On the principle of "know your enemy" this book is worth study as the most comprehensive recent statement of reactionary educational theory.

#### PLANNING CITIES

Lawrence and Wishart enter what is for them a new field with the publication of *Planning Cities* by W. Houghton Evans<sup>3</sup>. For the first time in any language the book brings together essential texts and illustrations necessary for an understanding of town planning, drawing on material from early origins in classical times right through to the architectural theory of today.

Whilst the book will be valuable to the specialist and the student, it will be especially helpful to the citizen who feels he must challenge much of what is being perpetrated today in the name of planning, and who wants to play an informed part in shaping the future of his town.

<sup>3</sup> W. Houghton Evans—*Planning Cities*, Lawrence & Wishart, £7.00.

Analysing conflicting contemporary tendencies, the author attacks the current vogue for "trend" planning, which belittles the power of ideas (and ideals) and amounts to a blind surrender to market economy.

Describing how a reluctance to "take sides" was to lead Le Corbusier (and many others) into an a-political zeal for technical solutions, he shows how this becomes perverted to promote the de-humanisation of the urban environment which is fast becoming recognised as one of the major social problems of our times.

The connection between effective town planning and Socialism, so far as the modern world is concerned, is emphasised by the author, and in discussing experiences in Britain as well as the lessons, both negative and positive, of developing Socialist countries, Houghton Evans advances the elements of a Marxist theory of town planning.

#### TOWARDS THE FIRST CONGRESS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF CUBA

The Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba—meeting on the 83rd anniversary of the founding by Jose Marti of the Cuban Revolutionary Party, which, at the end of the 19th century led the Cuban struggle for independence from Spanish colonial rule—has decided to convene the First Congress of the Cuban Communist Party in December of this year.

It set up a Central Preparatory Committee, presided over by Fidel Castro, to guide the drafting of the Congress documents, which will be submitted for discussion by the Party and people, before being presented to Congress.

Representation at Congress will consist of one delegate for every 100 Party members or candidate members, to be elected at one of the six Provincial Assemblies, or in the Isle of Pines Region, or at one of the meetings of Party organisations in the Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces and the Ministry of the Interior. In addition, Communists of a number of work centres selected because of their political or economic importance, will directly elect delegates to Congress.

Congress agenda will include discussion on the record of the Cuban Party and people in establishing the basis for the construction of socialism; a programme of future Party activity on questions of home and foreign policy; the Party Rules; the draft Constitution; a plan for economic development;

the role of the People's organs of power and the election of the Central Committee.

The PB of the CC of the Party called on the working people to participate in the preparatory tasks of the Congress and in the discussion of its main documents. It expressed the certainty:

"that the working class and all our people will decisively contribute to the creative effort to make 1975—when we also commemorate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the first Communist Party of Cuba—a year of new and more important victories of socialist construction."

The main watchword for the First Congress is

**"TOWARDS THE 1st CONGRESS FOR NEW VICTORIES FOR OUR HOMELAND AND FOR SOCIALISM."**

The main slogan

**"The strength of the Party lies in its close ties with the masses."**

#### SOCIALIST ECONOMIES

Marie Lavigne's "The Socialist Economies of the Soviet Union and Europe"<sup>4</sup> translated by T. G. Waywell is a valuable contribution to the discussion of current economic developments in the European socialist countries. Its particular merit is that it brings together a great deal of up-to-date material relating both to the Soviet Union and all the socialist countries of Eastern Europe except Albania, thus facilitating comparative study.

Mme. Lavigne examines the structural framework of the socialist economies: economic institutions, the management of units of production and distribution, industrial and agricultural enterprises and commercial organisations. Part 2 discusses operational mechanisms: the strategy or growth and the means employed to achieve it, planning methods and the tools of economic intervention. Finally, Part 3 considers the international economic relations of the socialist countries both between themselves and with the developing and developed countries.

The picture which emerges is one of considerable and to many perhaps surprising diversity both as regards historical development and current policies. All the countries of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union have in recent years, for example, adopted measures of economic reform designed to bring the previous highly centralised planning systems more into line with present-day

<sup>4</sup> Martin Robertson, £6.95.

(Concluded on p. 224)

# Universities and Capitalism— The Present Crisis

Martin Jacques

The aim of this article is to contribute towards the elaboration of a strategy for the work of Communist academics. With this end in mind, I will explore two main areas: the role and position of the university in capitalist society and the nature of academics as a social group.

## PART I—THE ROLE AND POSITION OF THE UNIVERSITY

### The Role of the University

Historically, the role of the university has varied as according to the precise nature and degree of development of capitalist society but, in general terms, its functions may be listed as follows:

- (i) The transmission (via the “teaching process”) of ideological concepts and scientific knowledge within an ideological framework which together serve to legitimate, reinforce and reproduce the existing social relations. This statement does not preclude the possibility of the teaching of “counter-ideologies” but it does presume that the dominant taught ideology will be that of the bourgeoisie.
- (ii) The production of new scientific and ideological concepts (i.e. the “research function”).<sup>1</sup>
- (iii) The training of various types of intellectuals for positions of authority and leadership in, for example, industry, the church, the judiciary, the civil service, education and the army.
- (iv) In addition to (iii) above, the training and reproduction of a larger body of technical, administrative and intellectual wage-labour.

It should be added, however, that the university has not always performed each of these functions nor, indeed, performed them in the same way. Rather, as we would expect, both the number and nature of these functions has changed as the relationship between the university and capitalist society itself has changed. In this context, we

<sup>1</sup> The points made in (i) above about the class nature of those concepts are again applicable here.

can, broadly speaking, identify three main phases in the development of the university since the bourgeois revolution.<sup>2</sup>

The first phase saw the various changes in Oxbridge during the seventeenth century, with the initial “opening up” of these institutions after 1640 and then the relative “clampdown” which followed the Restoration. These changes involved functions (i), (ii) and (iii) of our classification.<sup>3</sup>

The second phase witnessed various relatively belated (compared, for example, with Germany) changes in the university system in the second half of the nineteenth century which were largely a response, often of a “local” character, to the scientific and technological needs of British industry. They included the establishment of various new (so-called “redbrick”) universities and the introduction for the first time of teaching and research in a number of scientific disciplines. At the same time, there were important changes in the nature of Oxbridge which together broke the virtual monopoly held by ecclesiastics over education there. In all, these innovations marked the widening of the first three functions of the university and the “birth-pangs” of the fourth function.<sup>4</sup>

The third phase of the university system concerns the role of the university in the era of monopoly capitalism and widespread state intervention. This phase can be dated from the various changes that were made at the end of the First World War,<sup>5</sup> but the most important developments came after 1945 with, for example, the emergence of the state as the main source of university finance, a series of increases in student

<sup>2</sup> In this context, it should be said that the *Scottish* universities followed a significantly different pattern.

<sup>3</sup> C. P. Hill, *The Century of Revolution*, 1969, pp. 74, 121, 175, 215-7.

<sup>4</sup> A. H. Halsey and M. Trow, *The British Academics*, 1971, pp. 39-55. Oxbridge, of course, remained the essentially elitest centre for the education of the upper classes.

<sup>5</sup> For example, the creation of the University Grants Committee (UGC) in 1919; Halsey and Trow, *op. cit.*, p. 61.