

# MONEY MONEY MONEY



At the same time there is all the rhetoric of widening participation the funding for studying is reversed from a paltry and shrinking grant to fees and student loans. Given that neither New Labour nor the Tories were willing to fund the expansion of HE at anyway that matched the increase in need for resources they had to find them from somewhere else. Firstly came 'efficiencies' – that is staff doing a whole lot more for no more. Unfortunately for the Government whilst they have managed to get away with a lot it wasn't getting the results they needed – so by a twist and a tuck

(and more or less by ignoring its content all together) they took Dearing and turned it into Student Fees. But most importantly student loans are the funding mechanism for students to live on – basically telling students – the vast majority of whom are 18 – to take out a mortgage or don't bother trying to study.

### Long hours & you pay

Many students now work nearly full-time hours in crap low paid jobs (actually lowering the rate of pay in some areas so desperate are they to get some work). The effect is showing on students whose academic work – the reason they

are students – is suffering. The main difference between part-time and full-time study is one of balance and when you study. Part-time students work full time mainly during the day to pay for an education that they also have to study long hours for. Full-time Students study full-time and work long hours in order to pay for their course.

### elitism

Now there is talk of 'top up fees' where the *elite* universities will be able to charge more to get more to compete on an international stage. What this will most likely mean, despite all the Russell Group's talk of bursaries for the working class, what is really on the cards is a return to the pre-1992 binary system. The *elite* will concentrate on the prestige research and post graduate markets, with a bit of teaching to the richest students paying huge fees to help fund it all (oh, and odd smart working class kid for image purposes). However in this new binary system the old polytechnics will be joined by a few of the older universities – most likely those from the 1960's without the large reserves and funds from wealthy benefactors.



## EDUCATION WORKERS' NETWORK

The Education Workers' Network is open to all those working in education from porters to lecturers to teachers to clerical staff to students. The EWN seeks to work to provide support to those in education and to do so through self-education and activism. The long-term aim is the formation of a revolutionary labour movement in the anarchosyndicalist model. The position of the EWN as part of the Solidarity Federation and the International Workers' Association is vital to place education within the wider context and to provide links across industrial sector and around the world.

## CONTACT DETAILS:

**Education Workers' Network**  
P.O. Box 29, SWDPO, Manchester M15 5HW  
Ewn@scandrac.demon.co.uk  
<http://www.scandrac.demon.co.uk/ewn/ewnhome.htm>

**Solidarity Federation** same address as EWN  
0161 232 7889 <http://www.gn.apc.org/solfed/>

**Direct Action Magazine** of the Solidarity Federation  
(Autumn 1999, Issue no. 12's theme was education)  
Da@directa.force9.co.uk  
<http://www.directa.force9.co.uk/>

# EDUCATION WORKER

A Solidarity Federation Publication

## PERMANENT REVOLUTION

Ever since Blair proclaimed 'Education, Education, Education' Blunkett's DfEE have been having a whale of a time. Hardly a day goes by without some exciting 'new idea' in this state of permanent revolution what is the effect on those who actually have to deliver these brain storms and those who have to study through the maelstrom? This article looks at two of these shiny ideas: Curriculum 2000 and Foundation Degrees, both of which effect those in Further and Higher Education (FE & HE).

### Curriculum 2000

Curriculum 2000 (or C2k as we have trendily decided to call it) is the re-vamp of the style and delivery of FE. Gone are the old A'levels and in their place AS's (roughly corresponding to the 1st year of an A'level) and A2's (roughly the 2nd year of an A'level). A student will take a wider selection of AS's with the option of focussing down on a more select number of subjects in the second year for the A2's.

### More=Less

So students will be offered a great deal more choice to study a breadth of subjects, rather than the narrowly focussed specialisms of A'levels – a good thing? Well yes if this was really true, but as with much under New Labour not all is as clear as we might like. This new choice, new variety and new options will all be delivered with no more money. In fact given increasingly tightening budgets it will have to

demands for which they do not have the resources to meet. The end results will be some very big classes indeed. FE colleges across the country are anxiously pondering how they are going to resource delivering AS level Information Technology to just about every one.

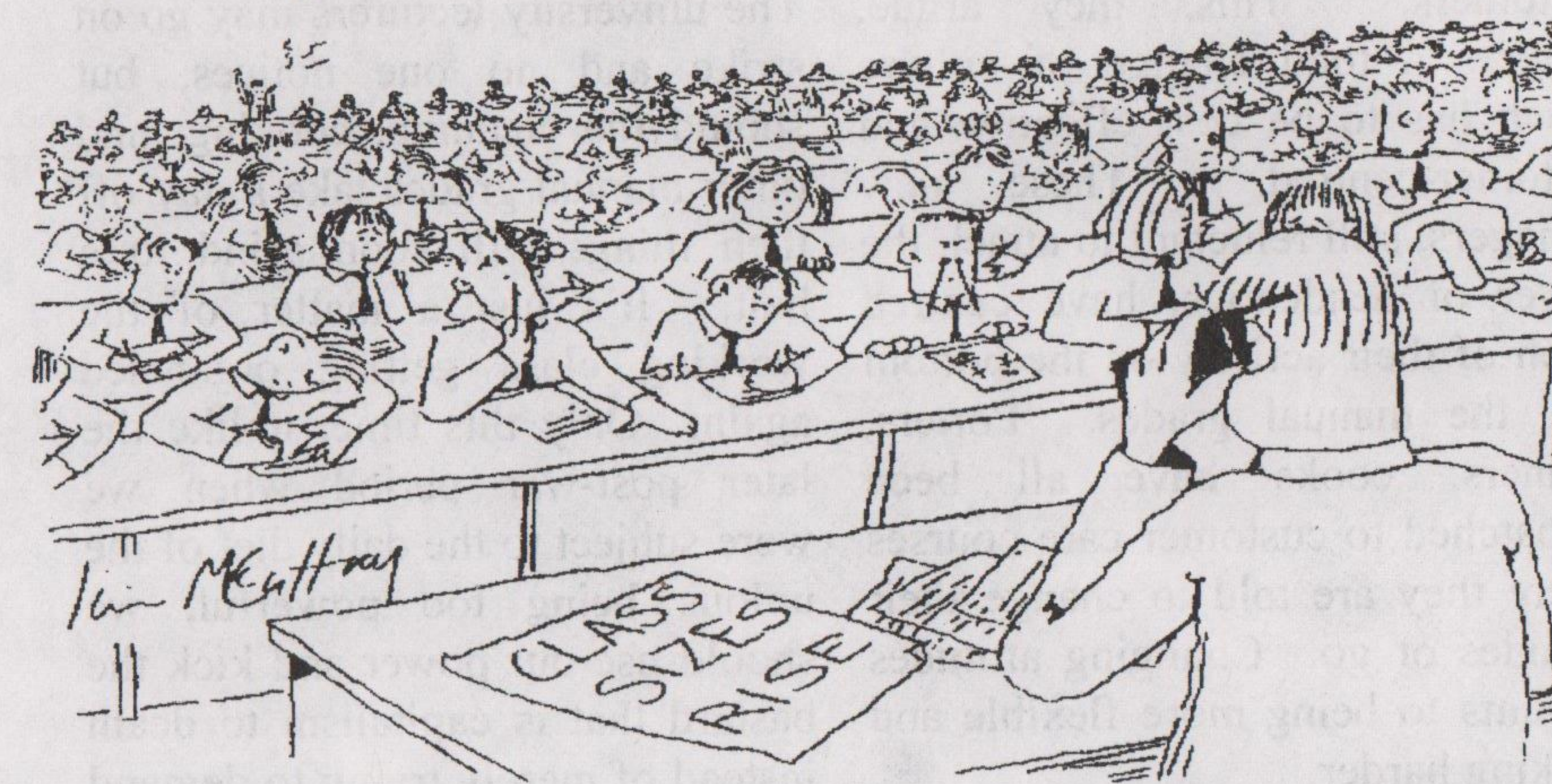
### Hard sums

A major problem for the students is the lack of clear guidance available as to what will best suit their needs. Students wishing to go onto HE will need to ensure that whilst looking for the breadth they don't neglect the depth. There is already serious concern about the type and level of mathematics taught in GNVQs and A'levels, especially for subjects such as engineering. The speed of introduction and the lack of information surrounding C2k has resulted in staff in both FE and HE institutions desperately trying to piece together decent sensible information for the students. That this information will no doubt vary depending on the size of the school or college and its current balance of A'level to FE provision means that in practice no one really has a clue what is going on nationally. At the same time as their work loads in terms of teaching and administration are rocketing staff are having to make guesses as to what options they can actually deliver and that will actually benefit the students.

### Foundation Degrees

If C2k was not big enough and ill-thought out enough there is yet more. Blunkett's DfEE newest bright idea is Foundation Degrees.

(continued on page 3)



"Stop complaining, Johnson, and just be thankful this class is below average size"

### GNVQ's

The same time GNVQ's are to be split in to smaller three credit chunks, which again build up to more or less the same six or twelve credit qualifications. Students will be able to mix and match various combinations of AS's, A2's and chunks of GNVQ.

be delivered with less resources per student. Some courses will obviously attract greater numbers of students than at present, because they are easier to fit in to the students' timetable. Again this seems a good thing, but colleges are faced with the prospect of huge demands for some courses,

The bulletin of the Education Workers' Network

## New Labour: New Working Class?

Not really it's the same people who do the fetching, carrying and cooking. In education as elsewhere manual workers are over looked and underpaid, and the solution is not new either – organise!

It's odd how manual workers, in education as much as anywhere else, seem to have disappeared from view. They are rarely mentioned in today's media obsessed as it is with high-tech industry, as if the mere mention of manual labour would spoil that high-tech world. The reason for this disappearance is not hard to discern - it is because of loss of power.

When manual workers were well-organised they made headlines to the extent that they were seen as the problem affecting the British economy. A union leader only had to burp for it to make the headlines. Nowadays manual workers are seen as obscure. Freed from the threat of industrial unrest the media can quietly forget manual labour save for the occasional "how bad poverty is". Meanwhile, through the veil of crocodile tears, wealth can be seen increasingly concentrating in the hands of the upper middle classes made rich by the same high-tech industry the media are so fond of.

### Hi-tech servants

That the working class are surplus to requirements is an odd perspective. Amid all the hype about the wonders of the internet and the ability to order meals, videos and groceries to be delivered straight to the door, the media conveniently forget that it is human beings that do all the fetching, carrying and cooking which allows the idle rich the luxury of being waited on. It's like some high-tech version of Edwardian Britain where "one only had to ring the bell for the servants to come a-running", only now, the servants are not in the cellar but at the end of the internet.

Should the internet take off as we are told it will, it will require an army of workers to service it. In other words the working class are still very much a reality. It's just that their role is changing and, as in the past, Britain's elite are using the uncertainties of high-tech industries to exploit us. Having broken the traditional unions they are using the new enterprise culture needed in the new service economy to drive down wages and conditions.

### Culture

This new culture is now making its mark within the education system, most notably in higher education. A new breed of managers is being installed which argues that higher education is like any other industry and has to compete in the market for customers. This, they argue, requires a total change of culture which has to be cost effective and customer-centred. These new managers, still reluctant to attack the power of academics, have centred much of their activity on the bottom end, the manual grades. Porters, cleaners, cooks have all been despatched to customer care courses where they are told to change their attitudes or go. Changing attitudes amounts to being more flexible and working harder.

As workloads increase pay stays the same at poverty levels. Amid the wealth of high paid academia, cleaners earn £3.80 an hour, while porters take home just over £500 a month. There can be little doubt that as market forces are applied further to education, national pay bargaining will go in an attempt to drive down wages and conditions still further.



Of course there is nothing pre-ordained in all of this. The working class' role may be changing but we remain powerful. The university lecturers may go on strike and no one notices, but should the cleaning, cooking, and other manual grades take a day off then things will soon grind to a halt. It's just a matter of the working class getting organised again. Only this time, unlike the later post-war period when we were subject to the daily diet of the unions being too powerful, we should use our power and kick the bastard that is capitalism to death instead of merely trying to demand a living wage.

## SELF-ED - Self Education: much more than reading dusty tomes

Education is more than just what happens at schools, colleges and universities – it is essential and an on going part of life. Its so much more the New Labour's *Life Long Learning*, its all about self education. The Education Workers' Network (EWN) is committed to the principals of self-education, of education as a means of empowering the individual and workers against the demands of capitalism.

The EWN supports the Solidarity Federation's SelfEd Collective that seeks to share and develop practical skills for revolutionary activity as well as developing knowledge, including a course on *The History of Anarcho-syndicalism*. Everything from writing and talking to printing and DTP and much more.

For more details contact:

Self-Ed, PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR.

## PERMANENT REVOLUTION

(Continued from page 1)

These arrived from another of Chairman Blair's great pieces of oration – the one that said 50% of all young people will go to HE. Unfortunately what he never said in this snappy little sound bite was how this was to be achieved, how it was to be funded and perhaps most fundamentally did 50% of the population want or need to go to HE?

### Post-emission consultation

The consultation document which came out earlier this year is an under nourished thing. It has all the hallmarks of something written by people with only a sketchy notion of what was going on, a strict deadline and even stricter orders not to talk to any one who knew anything at all. The DfEE failed to consult with FE and HE institutions, with industry (and its big on employer involvement), with the new training bodies, with the QAA, with HEFCE, with the professional bodies... in fact unless they said their prayers each night it hard to see who they did consult with. What we have is a proposal for a new sub-degree level programme to be increasingly in FE institutions with copious amounts of work experience and study skills. It will 'subsume' all existing sub-degree programmes and it doesn't fit with any existing provision. In addition these Foundation Degrees will be able to be topped-up to Honours in a year and a third. Universities and their consortia of FE colleges are now being asked to bid to run the pilot projects, where the only additional funding is available. At the same time everyone has actually been asked to comment on how to turn this half-cocked idea into a reality. Already the CBI and HEFCE have expressed reservations about them, the universities and colleges are also likely to submit carefully worded, but questioning comments. Most employers don't even know they are coming.

### Questions

Given so much is unanswered, one more question won't be too much – in this new climate of market style choice in education how many students will actually choose to do these new Foundation Degrees? Just remember when Tony wants something choice is a flexible term.

## WOODHEAD EXPANDED



From April 2001 sixth form and FE colleges, workplace training and adult education are to be subjected to inspection by a new regime, a regime overseen by Chris Woodhead, the Chief Inspector of Schools.

Ofsted led by Woodhead is a thing of dread to all working in schools and the EWN has taken an active interest in the appalling quality of some of its inspectors. In fact it would appear that because school staff are put through hell in preparing for Ofsted visits and the quality and consistency of the inspectors is so poor that many prefer to play the lottery twice a week - believing that the odds of winning the jackpot are better than of getting a fair deal from Ofsted. So EWN sends condolences to those, who on top of all the other tasks they have to do are about to face an Ofsted visit (or visits from FEFC, HEFCE, QAA or whatever bit of the government has its clipboard out for you this week). Remember the only way to get an education system that delivers the best to the students and staff is to organise and fight for one. ☺

## Inequality in Higher Education

There is an eight percent pay gap between lecturers from ethnic minorities and white lecturers. There is also a wide gap between male and female lecturers with unmarried woman being paid on average fourteen percent less than men. Now this discrimination can not be explained away by differences in age and experience, or length and continuation of employment – all these factors have been accounted for.



Maybe this is why it has made such a relatively big impact in the broadsheets or why the employers have been forced to make soothing noises.

### Ungentlemanly clubs

The response has been to promise more monitoring and more procedures and more forms. In the bureaucratic mindset that is university management (fed largely by the obsession of the Government with inspections and 'quality procedures') there is no longer any solution which cannot be fixed without more forms, more monitoring and more meetings. Unfortunately the problem does not lie in the processes so much as in society as a whole.

Academic disciplines tend to be small worlds, people working in these fields tend to get to know each other and a sort of 'gentlemanly camaraderie' builds up and as happens too often these little groups can become inward looking and conservative. Those who do not fit in – and in a society dominated by white middle-class males women and ethnic minorities tend not to – have a much harder time breaking through. As such, liberal academia is a sad reflection of our broader fundamentally unequal society.