

NOTES ON EDUCATION COMMISSION MEETING FEB 1 1975

About 20 people there - 3 ELBF, 1 WLBF 5Lp BF, 3Red Collective and a few others.

Morning Higher and Further Ed.

Afternoon Schools and organising with teachers and kids.

HIGHER EDUCATION

It became clear that we can't generalise across different sectors especially not between FE and techs, on the one hand, and Univs. and Polies on the other. Degree of repression, levels of existing organisation, presence of other political groups, class composition, student turnover, future jobs and present expectations all very different.

LpBF summarised their work in Education Base Group; specially intervention in several tech. colleges. Regarded this as unsatisfactory in sense that it hadn't continued, generalised, become more independent of BF militants activity. They attributed this to (1) lack of analysis (of education) and (2) lack of resources especially time to spend on extending and deepening relationships with students. They suggested that BF needs a national intervention in education, in sense both of (a) national linking of struggles so not just ad hoc and local and of (b) raising national issues more e.g. Ireland fascism. Some people disagreed with this conclusion pointing out that LpBF's own understanding of the weaknesses of their intervention would suggest the need to work more intensively in particular colleges, while developing analysis at a national level. (i.e. distinction between national intervention and nat. analysis)

Student movement - Its present development Student movement has no critique of mass conditions of education, no base, only few links outside. Now material conditions, wages, are the greatest concern if we judge it by NUS, broad left activity and lack of ideological critique. One contradiction is the mass mobilisation over grants but no lead or analysis or development from this.. Student Unions are elitist, sexist - broad left and trots vie with each other in terms of militancy. Examples were given of how the NUS/CP ruined potentially revolutionary struggles, e.g. womens groups, debates on fascism. The latter the broad left lost because it was all pitched at the level of freedom of speech, not related to areas which students lived in, worked in, or to racism in the college. Many students could not relate to the debate to their own lives, the same is true for Ireland. NUS womens campaigns have little feminist content. Decline of soc-socs noted and also polarisation into left groups with no credibility. Womens groups and in some places black groups seem most alive and non-sectarian but they and other potentially rev. students don't relate to NUS politicking. The growth of NUS "trade unionism" in students seen as part of the proletarianisation of students accentuated by inflation and education cuts. By proletarianisation was meant increasingly direct incorporation of higher education into the needs of all kinds combined with decreasing differentials between wages and conditions of these people and so-called blue collar workers (the decline in status of teachers jobs was particularly noted), the increasing rationalisation of many white collar jobs, greater investment in machinery. Contradictions exist between both the expectations of college etc. and its reality, and between expectations of getting educated and the reality of jobs or their scarcity. FE's and polies had many WC students and their subsequent white collar jobs were often interchangeable with factory jobs.

Intervention This was entirely about how we in BF as teachers could intervene with students not with teachers. There were differences in how far the role of teacher in such a situation was seen as ~~making~~ a problem for BF intervention. Lp. said that once students knew who you were it was not a problem with them, but because of the degree of repression in FE colleges they had to work secretly from the staff - no security of jobs for the part timers. (Significance of part timers in FE etc organising for this now in London??). Others

age. The question of how far a teacher can be inside student struggles depends on the actual situation, and how far their interests do or can be made to coincide.

There was also some discussion about how to relate to the tu politics of the broad left. Lp. felt that BF could raise mass mobilisation to a higher level but that the main problem was lack of resources. By mass work they meant greater preparation before any activity (eg meetings and leafletting ?? typist) and more follow up so that actions were not seen simply as coming from external agency. They were doubtful about being able to involve lots of people in planning actions for security reasons. ELBF said that what was needed was a much greater understanding of what was going on amongst students how people were really concerned about jobs, what to do, the point of education, the experience of being in college, - amounting to a challenge to the definition of education imposed by K. and its context. This would be the start of a critique of education.

Lp. organise as Student Struggle, seeing BF at the service of students to organise and develop their own needs. ELBF in one Univ. college tried to work first within the Soc-soc and then outside it. Both attempts were unsuccessful because of the demoralisation produced by T. Trot and CP presence and definitions of politics. One problem for BF is that students are very suspicious of being recruited into anything. The two BF members have since worked around existing departmental struggles and students everyday concerns. Individual students have come to ELBF meetings and are trying to start activities locally poss. around housing and building workers. ELBF did not think that BF could or should make a national intervention in Higher ed but that we should concentrate on obtaining a far clearer and more detailed picture of what is happening in education around the country not just in the 3 or 4 colleges we happen to work in.

#### SCHOOLS \* ORGANISING WITH TEACHERS AND WITH KIDS

##### Rank and File

How far is it possible to work through R and F as a way of contacting other militant teachers - or is it possible to actually work within R and F as a coherent group. WLB described his experience of working in Hounslow r and f which is seen as quite a 'successful' revolutionary organisation in any way - totally naive and simplistic view of educational issues - talk about pay and conditions all the time and have their own stereotypes of how to campaign over pay etc. They squashed the suggestion that all teachers should refuse to teach classes over 30 since this is the NUT recommended max figure. Poss tactic might have been to ask the extra kids to leave each week. Wouldn't do this because of their "liberal" concern for the kids and what they might be missing which is ridiculous as most of them aren't learning anything anyway. R and F called a public meeting in Chiswick and talked about pay and conditions - one of the kids got up and pointed out that education seemed to come bottom of the list - everyday kids express their view of school by not turning up and R and F's answer is the 5 year task of getting a decent salary and contract of employment. Why is r and f like this and how do we relate to it? Can use it as a way of meeting teachers - shouldn't assume that most teachers are only concerned with pay and conditions- in fact many young teachers turn up at r and f looking for something else and leave- in London teachers got a lot out of organising for the London allowance but this wasn't followed up. Originally in 70 and 71 r and f was split between those who wanted it to be economic and those who wanted to raise ed. issues. Now those who stay in are militant economic trade unionists who see themselves as a teacher oligarchy. Lpbf suggest that we can't really use r and f because of their analysis of teachers role - basically they are interested in developing TU consciousness amongst teachers and BF opposes this in all industries. Particularly in education it can be reactionary e.g. in the NAS Teachers are encouraged to see themselves as a sectional group and to aim for cutting down teaching hours not to worry about the kids. Can't equate teachers with other workers





Red Collective wanted to know why this wasn't contradictory with the concept of the 'proletarianisation of teachers'. They didn't think that you could take different lines depending on the different situation. If your politics were aimed at abolishing the role of teacher then how do you work as a teacher. In Brunel we attacked the role of exams with students. If students are choosing not to get a degree then you can't work with them, and stay on as a teacher. Other people in the Red Collective disagreed with this, saying that if there's some point in working with students and student teachers, then you don't just give up when they qualify.