NOTES ON EDUCABION 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 experctations 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 independe not 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 people disagreed with this conclusion pointing out that LpBF's own understanding of the wealknesses of their intervention would suggest oping analysis at a national level. (i.e. distinction between nat intervention and nat. analysis)

Student movement - Its present development critique of mass conditions of education, no base, only few links Student movement has no 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 elitis ist, 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, worki ed in, or to rascosm in the college. Many students could not relate th 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 accentuate ed by inflation and education cuts. By proletarianisation was ment increasingly direct incorporation of higher education into the needs of K K, the increa ing production of people with qualifications of all kinds combined with decreasing differentials between wages and cinditions of these people and so-called blue collar workers (the decline instatus of teachers jobs was particularly noted), the increas ing rationalisation of many white collar jobs, greater investment in m machinery. Contradictions exist between both the expectations of colle ge 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 inter Intervention

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 EMMENT-knew 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

There was also some discussion about how to reate to the tu politi cs of the broad left. Ip. felt that BF could raise mass mobilisation t 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 jobb, what to do, the point of education, the experience of being in college, - amounting to a challenge to the definition og education imposed by K. and its context This would be the start of a crutique of eductaion.

Lp, organise as Student Struggle, seeing BF at the service of stude ents to organise and develop their own needs. ELBF in one Univ. colleg 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 od 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 justin the 3 or 4 colleges we happen to work in.

SCHOOLS * ORONISING WITH TEACHERS AND WITH KIDS Rank and File

How far is it possible to work through R and F as a way of contact ing other militant teachers - or is it possible to actually work within R and F as a coherent group. WIBF described his experience of working in Hounslow rand f which is seen as quite a 'successful' grou p. Said it was simply a waste of time- couldnot be seen as a revolutionary organisation in any way - totally naive and simplistic view of educational issues - talk about pay and conditions all the time and ha have their own stereotypes of how to campaign over pay anc. squashed the suggestion that all teachers should refuse to teach classes over 30 since this is the NUT recommended max figure. Poss tac tic might have been to ask the extra kids to leave each week . Would n'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 learn ing anything anyway. R and F called a public meeting in Chiswick and talked about pay and conditions - one of the kids got up and ponted ou 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 teache rs 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 econmistic and those who wanted to raise ed. issues. Now those who stay in are militant econmistic 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 - basica lly they are interested in developing TU cs.ness 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 themselv es as asectional group and to aim for cutting down teaching hours not to worry about the kids. Can't equate teachers with other workers

experience of organising with kids. When EL was organising with parent to keep Bow school open they did a leaflet with some of the kids which led to an immediate strike r and f teachers refused to give any suppor t while militant parents went down to the school to support their kids. The teachers main concern was for their jobs if the school did close down and they were worried that kids militancy would prejudice t their chances of getting a resolution against the school's closure pas LpBF found that IS teachers were hostile when they were organising in Rebel and when they put out a leafletsaying "If a teacher hits you hit him back" this was seen as a threat. They fekt that in Rebel they could only organise with kids independently of teachers. . Other peopl e pointed out that NUSS type organisation which is prepared to work with teachers could be useful - its presence in a school can present a threat to existing authoriteies and schools councils can be a good experience for changing the cs.ness of school students. ELBF had also had problems in working with R and F and parents -which made them question r and f analysis of the rel. between parents and teachers. Last year there was part time education in EL and r and f were involve ed in attempts to organise around 'the crisis in the schools'. Many parents came to the first few meetings but felt used by r and f who were still posing the problem in the schools as being basically to do with teachers pay and conditions - didn't work out who to work with or how to work in that situation. LpBF pointed out the importance of at least putting out propaganda to teachers in r and f.

Working with teachers or students?

Brixton suggested that raising questions of education in schools has two be done concretely through teachers working together, working out ways of teaching together, young teachers supporting each other in school, because kids aren't there voluntarily. Political activity basically has to be with teachers and teachers have to recognise that they are on the other side from the kids. (Se teachers action collective and review of it in latest Falling Wall Review.) LBF sees the link between organising with teachers and pupils is through teachers trying to change (a) therein managerial role and (b) content of what we teach through developing alternative resource material etc - we can be of direct use to peoples' self-organisation.

West London says that you have to choose which teacher you work with and why and choose your school carefully too. e.g. the area and the class composition. You can't just work politically as a teacher, but as part of your general work in the area. Concretely what that means is meeting kids outside of school and knowing what's going on in the xarea, like squatting and Troops Out. For example, you could organisme around anti-recruitment with kids.

But you couldn't do that in the school.

LBF pointed out that it was really difficult to organise with schoolkids around school issues, probably because of the strength of youth culture. In Italy France and Germany there is a lot of organising outside of schools and kids take up political issues e.g. conscription. In Lotta Continua comrades who are teachers don't see the contradiction between teachers and students - the school system is so repressive that everyone is fighting against it. But they have also had problems similar to ours in how to bridge the cultural and political gap. They have tried having pop festivals and didn't know how to deal with things like kids taking drugs.

LBF thought that it was very difficult to work out what we can offer to kids as an alternative to existing youth culture. The possibilities seem to be having a building for kids, goingon holidays with them, linking up with youth workers, etc. It was pointed out that leafletting-type of activity is irrelevant to the present situation, where some kids want to learn, but a lot of other kids and teachers would like to close the schools - what we need is a closer understanding of the situation.

Red Collective wanted to know why this wasn't contradictoryx with the concept of the 'proletarianisation of teachers'. They in it think that you could take different lines depending on the idifferent 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 watudents and student teachers, then you don't just give up when they qualify.