

The Third Way in Britain: New Labour's neo-liberal education policy

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In this paper, I summarise and analyse ideologically New Labour's education policy since its election in 1997 and re-election in June 2001. I focus on the six issues of

1. curriculum continuity and change in both the national curriculum for schools and the national curriculum for initial teacher education ('teacher training')
2. the hierarchicalisation of schooling through marketisation and through the spread of 'selective' 'specialist schools' (what New Labour calls 'Modernising' comprehensive education/ 'encouraging selection and diversity')
3. privatisation/ nationalisation (what New Labour calls 'creating new partnerships')
4. the question of 'standards' achieved in school tests
5. the increase in inequalities in terms of racialised social class.
6. Reduced public expenditure on education (and on other public services) (what New Labour calls 'increased public expenditure')

I conclude with an overall ideological analysis of New Labour's education policy. The analysis is that New Labour is, in essence, intensifying neo-liberalism, glossing this with, yet ultimately subordinating both neo-conservative and social democratic policy. Finally, I briefly contextualise New Labour's education policy by locating it within the bigger picture of overall government policy.

PART ONE: NEW LABOUR AND EDUCATION PRIOR TO NEW LABOUR'S GENERAL ELECTION VICTORY OF MAY 1997

(Old) Labour's broadly social democratic education policies in Britain

Labour in government 1945-51, 1964-70 and 1974-76 (if not from 1976-79) pursued broadly social democratic policies in terms of the principles described below. While some Labour government policies may be described as socialist/ Radical Left - such as the wholesale nationalisations of 1945-49, and the local municipal and national enterprise boards of the 1970s - other policies, spurred, in part by international capital and its international banking agencies, acted as right-wing constraints on social democratic policy).

Social democratic principles can be categorised as:

- redistributive policy
- extending provision and financing through the agency of the local and national state
- tradition of equal opportunities in the strong proactive sense of achieving more equal outcomes
- relying on the professionalism (and qualifications) of professional groups
- regulation by government agencies of these professionals in the interests of equal opportunities

These principles can be seen in the following aspects of 'Old Labour' education policy:

Table 1: Social Democracy and (Old) Labour education policy in Britain

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. comprehensive schooling; 2. expansion/extension of educational opportunities and provision to hitherto excluded or semi-excluded sections of the population (e.g. expansion of secondary education via the 1944 Education Act, expansion of higher education, the Open University); 3. local community involvement in schooling, further and higher education; 4. local community control over schooling further and higher education (through democratically elected and accountable Local Education Authorities(LEAs)); 5. a commitment to policies of equal opportunities; 6. a degree of positive discrimination and redistribution of resources within and between schools, such as via the 1970s Educational Priority Areas, via targeted spending/'plussages' by LEAs, and via 'Section 11 funding' for minority ethnic groups; 7. a curriculum and education system which recognises issues of social justice and which aims at producing a technically efficient, but fairer, capitalist society; 8. developing the teacher as authoritative but relatively democratic and anti-authoritarian; 9. a contextual (or situational) type of teacher reflection rather than either a 'technical' ('how to') reflection, or a moral/ethical social justice ('why') type of 'critical reflection'. (Hill 1997a); 10. aims for education to include the flourishing of the collective economy and society as well as the flourishing of the individual. <p>(adapted from Hill, 1999a:15, 2001d:14)</p>

Opposition to New Labour from within the Labour Party

Changes to traditional Labour Party rhetoric, internal party organisation and policies became rapidly evident following the election of Tony Blair as leader of the Labour Party in 1994, in the aftermath of Labour's fourth successive general election defeat in 1993. (Incidentally, I fought two of those elections- in 1979 and 1987- for Labour, on a left Labour ticket). The New Labour changes provoked then- and have provoked since- widespread opposition to what is perceived widely as a n adoption (and extension) of Conservativr Party policies.

Opposition to the New Labour changes from Labour's traditional social democracy has come from two sources. Firstly from the 'Old Left' socialists and Marxists within the Labour Party (such as the Campaign Group of Labour MPs, most notably Tony Benn). Many socialists have left the Labour Party, though, or been expelled since the early 1990s. Opposition to New labour has also come from former social democrats such as (former deputy leader of the Labour Party) Roy Hattersley, influenced by writers such as Crosland and Tawney. These two different groups, historically opposed to each other as they are, comprise 'Old Labour' (1) and agree with Hattersley's comment (1996) that the ideological lodestar of any Labour policy should be whether or not it will lead to 'equality of outcome'. This is distinct from the meritocratic vision of 'equality of opportunity' argued for by

New Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer (Finance Minister), Gordon Brown (1996, 1997). In the eyes of both the Radical Left and the traditional social democrats, this 'soft' version of equality of opportunity is an equality of the opportunity to become unequal.

With respect to schooling, both the Radical Left and traditional social democrats have attacked New Labour over issues of selection and comprehensivisation - such as the New Labour acceptance (albeit in modified form) of Opted-Out (Grant Maintained) schools, and selective Grammar schools. At the public launch in December 1995 of *Excellence and Diversity: Labour's Crusade to Raise Standards* (The Labour Party, 1995) the Labour Party policy on education, the Shadow Education Secretary David Blunkett reversed Labour policy by refusing to commit a Labour Government to comprehensivisation - i.e. the abolition of grammar schools - a refusal maintained ever since. This acceptance of hierarchical diversity in schooling exposed major divisions in the Party, exemplified in the scale of reaction to the decisions of Labour Leader Tony Blair (in 1995) to send his son to an 'opted out' (non-LEA) school (the London Oratory School), and of the shadow cabinet member Harriet Harman (in 1996) to send one of her sons to a selective grammar school. The existence and intensification of social class-based selection in secondary schooling, through the mechanism of 'choice' has been graphically illustrated by the series of articles by Nick Davies in *The Guardian* (Davies, 1999a, b, c) and in *The School Report: Why Britain's Schools are Failing* (Davies, 2000). Michael Barber, however, distinguished the new from the old commitments of the party by stressing Blair's criticism of the traditional idea of comprehensive schooling because 'it did not come to terms with the diversity and flexibility of provision needed to meet the diverse needs and talent of all our people' (Barber, 1994).

Press reception of the December 1995 education policy statement *Excellence for Everyone* mainly noted the difference between New Labour and 'Old Labour' on the one hand, and the similarities between 'New Labour' and the Conservatives on the other, in respect of policies on teachers, on tests, on failing schools and, to a lesser extent, on Local Education Authorities. The *Times Educational Supplement* was not alone in noting that 'both Labour and Conservatives declare education their national priority. Many of their policies also now bear striking similarities.' (TES, 1995c). According to Hackett, 'a mark of how far Labour has shifted is that Dr Madsen Pirie of the right wing Adam Smith Institute can claim that the party has taken bold steps in adapting its policies on the need to close failing schools and its stress on the need for parental responsibility'. (Hackett, 1995, in the article 'Labour accused of "teacher-bashing"').

In 1997, the six 'promises' in the New Labour general election manifesto were to cut class sizes to 30 or under for 5, 6 and 7 year olds; provide nursery places for all four year olds; attack low standards in schools; provide access to computer technology; provide lifelong learning through a new University for Industry; and to spend more on education as the cost of unemployment falls (Labour Party, 1997; DfEE 1997).

PART TWO: NEW LABOUR IN GOVERNMENT: ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROPOSALS

New Labour's Principles in Education and its 2001 Green Paper *Schools: Building on Success*, (DfEE, 2001a,b) and its 2001 White (Consultative) Paper, *Schools Achieving Success* (DfES, 2001a)

In the list below I have selected key areas of education policy referring to New Labour's plans for education from 2001 till 2006 and its claims regarding its achievements 1997-2001. Each point is offset by analysis of the principles, and effects- and therefore the ideological trajectory, of New Labour education policy overall. I have focused, in particular, on issues of equality and inequality (for further detail and discussion, see Hill, 1999a, 2000a,b, 2001d,e; Muschamp et al, 1999; Power and Whitty, 1999; Docking, 2000; Tomlinson, 2001).

1. Curriculum continuity and change in both the National Curriculum for schools and the national curriculum for initial teacher education ('teacher training')

The National Curriculum introduced into England and Wales in 1988 by the Conservative government, and its revision in 1995, can be seen as an attempt to create a Conservative hegemony in ideas, and remove liberal progressive and socialist ideas from schools and from the minds of future citizens. Several of the 'Programmes of Study' in particular subjects of the curriculum were manipulated by Prime

Ministerial and ministerial diktat. Thus, for example, subject Working Party recommendations to include the social effects of Science, to study History since of the last twenty years, and to have a considerable concern for creative writing were all rejected by Margaret Thatcher or her education Ministers. This is clearly set out in Margaret Thatcher's autobiography (Thatcher, 1993) and in those of Minister of Education, Kenneth Baker, (1993) and the first Chair of the National Curriculum Council Duncan Graham (see Graham and Tytler, 1993). It was certainly not an exercise in consensus.

The Conservative National Curriculum is widely criticised as overwhelmingly elitist (Davies et al, 1992; Cole, Hill and Shan, 1997; Hill, 1997b, 2001c; Hillcole Group, 1997; Searle, 1998; Hill and Cole, 1999b) returning to more formal, test-driven methods and incorporating specific *disadvantages* for particular groups, such as working class and minority ethnic groups. It is a policy aimed at *cultural assimilation* (to English upper and middle-class male, heterosexist white values).

In teacher education, similarly, the Conservatives gradually introduced a highly restrictive, detheorised, skills-based and increasingly school -placement based model of training teachers.

Analysis

New Labour's policy on teacher education following its first general election victory of May 1997. Its first two Circulars (legislative directives) 10/97 and 4/98 (Department for Education and Employment, 1997, 1998) were virtually a replication of the former Conservative government plans for an increasingly regulated, technicist and de-theorised teacher training curriculum. New Labour's September 2001 proposals for the reform of 'teacher training' (Teacher Training Agency, 2001a,b) includes more detailed 'standards' (for student teachers) on equal opportunities, but with less time in higher education settings in which to develop those understandings. Thus, the tension between the social democratic and radical right (neo-liberal and neo-conservative) impulses within the schools policy of the New Labour government is also apparent within teacher education policy.

With respect to schools, New Labour's revised National Curriculum for schools (in 2000) have made little change to the content of the curriculum other than increasing its focus on 'the basics' (numeracy and literacy). Currently (in late 2001) New Labour's proposals in its White Paper *Schools Achieving Success* (DfES, 2001a) suggest 'a more flexible' National Curriculum 'to allow pupils to develop their special talents'. This would appear to presage 'non-academic' children being excused from the national curriculum in favour of a more vocationally oriented curriculum. Not only is there a thrust towards 'working class schools for working class kids' (described below), but, apparently, a 'working class curriculum for working class kids'.

New Labour has, *to an overwhelming extent*, accepted the Radical Right revolution in schooling and initial teacher education, scarcely amending the Conservative legacy in terms of routes into teaching or in terms of the curriculum.

2. The hierarchicalisation of schooling through marketisation and through the spread of selective 'specialist schools' (what New Labour calls 'Modernising' comprehensive education/ 'encouraging selection and diversity')

New Labour attacks 'bog standard' comprehensives and is steadily reintroducing selection into secondary schooling. It claims that it is encouraging 'diversity' in types of schools to meet the needs and aspirations of all children. For example it claims that local parents can decide on the future of their grammar schools, and insists that schools should 'abandon a dogmatic attachment to mixed ability teaching'. The number of 'specialist' schools (in technology, languages, sports and arts, with new specialisms in business, science, engineering and enterprise) should reach nearly a half of all secondary schools by 2006 (DfEE, 2001:7).

Analysis

New Labour's policy and plans for more *Competitiveness and Selection* are a continuation, indeed, an extension, of most of the structural aspects of the 1988 Conservative Education Reform Act, in terms of the macro-structure and organisation of schooling. The neo-liberal principle of competition between schools (which results in an

increasing inequality between schools) and the principle of devolving more and more financial control to schools through local management of schools are all in keeping with preceding Conservative opposition to comprehensive education and to the powers of LEAs.

The major focus of New Labour's February 2001 plan (the Green Paper- *Schools- Building For Success*) (DfEE 2001a) for education for 2001-2006 was greeted by a front-page article from the right-wing *Daily Mail* 'Death of the Comprehensive' (Halpin, 2001). New Labour is promising that nearly half of all secondary schools are to become 'specialist schools' by 2006. These schools are allowed to select up to 10% of their pupils 'by aptitude' and receive extra funding of £123 per pupil per year. These proposals remained unaltered in the September 2001 White Paper, *Schools Achieving Success* (DfES, 2001a) and were greeted across the political spectrum in the newspapers of 5 and 6 September, by recognition that selection in schooling was returning with a vengeance. To take two examples, the *Daily Telegraph* editorial of 6 September, 2001 noted that,

The language in which education is discussed has changed. The government's education White Paper... includes a section entitled 'Excellence, innovation and diversity'... the White Paper's most important contribution ... (is) accepting that variety is better than uniformity and that the private and voluntary sectors can make valuable contributions to that variety.

Similarly, the radical right philosopher Anthony O'Hear, writing in *The Daily Mail* was in no doubt that 'the White Paper signals not just the end of the *bog standard* comprehensive. It signals the end of the comprehensive ideal, pure and simple.' He also noted that 'gone is the desire to give all children the same education and the same National Curriculum from 5-16, and to assess them at the end of compulsory schooling with one uniform exam, the GCSE.' (2)

Simon Jenkins called the White Paper a 'shameful step back to the 11-plus' (Jenkins, 2001). He continued, 'the political force behind yesterday's White Paper is to help middle class parents who cannot afford private schools to avoid having to seat their children alongside London's burgeoning immigrant population... the White paper offers those rejected by the system only the stigma of institutional failure. A similar comment is that of Frances Beckett- 'the government has declared war, not just on comprehensive schools, but on the comprehensive principle itself' (Beckett, 2001).

3. 'Privatisation/ denationalisation (what New Labour calls 'creating new partnerships' and 'private sector involvement')

The 2001 Green Paper promises to change the law 'to allow external sponsors to take responsibility for under-performing schools against fixed-term contracts of five to seven years with renewal subject to performance' (DfEE, 2001:3) and to expand the City Academy programme 'to enable sponsors from the private and voluntary sectors to establish new schools in areas of historic under-performance' (p.7). The White Paper calls for 'creating a diverse range of partners and providers' (2001a:43), proposes that 'the City Academy programme means that sponsors from private, voluntary and faith groups can establish new schools whose costs are fully met by the state' (p.44), that any new LEA school will have to open to bidding from the private sector. In short, in the words of the White Paper, 'we also want to encourage schools to choose to establish new partnerships with other successful schools, the voluntary sector, faith groups or the private sector' (p.44).

Analysis

New Labour is strengthening the role of Privatisation and business involvement into the management/control of schools and LEAs. Business has been courted to take the leading role in Education Action Zones and the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) and Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) have been replaced by a Skills Council. The White Paper's most controversial aspect (as evidenced by motions to the 2001 Trades Union Congress and Labour Party Conferences) has been over the creeping privatisation of schooling and education. See Reagan, 2001). The Private Finance Initiative (PFI) enabling private funding for and ultimate control over new schools and colleges has been expanded.

4. Improving Standards achieved in school tests

The New Labour government claims that standards of attainment have been achieved through: a combination of support and pressure; regular inspections of schools and of LEAs; performance targets; published tables of achievement; delegating more resources to schools; the Beacon Schools initiative of rewarding selected schools financially so they could share their expertise; and 'getting tough', (partly through 'naming and shaming') with 'failing' schools and LEAs.

The 2001 Green (Consultative) Paper (DfEE, 2001a,b) and the September 2001 White Paper (DfES, 2001) catalogue New Labour's achievements in terms of 'more investment' and 'improved outcomes'. Thus

- More children leave primary school able to read and write well. Seventy-five percent of children achieved the standards for their age in 2000 compared to 54 per cent in 1996;
- More children leave primary school numerate. Seventy-two per cent achieved Level 4 and above in 2000 compared to 54 per cent in 1996
- Progress in primary school English and Mathematics is fastest in the most disadvantaged areas of the country
- More young people now achieve 5 or more higher grades as GCSE- 49.2 per cent compared to 46.3 per cent in 1998
- The percentage of children of parents whose occupation is 'unskilled or semi-skilled manual' achieving 5 higher grades at GCSE also rose faster than the national average (DfEE, 2001: 4-5).

New Labour's Green and White Papers also note fewer schools going into 'special measures' and fewer unsatisfactory lessons. It also promises to focus on improving secondary school standards in a New Labour second term, in contrast to the primary school focus of the first term in office.

Analysis

With improvement through *standards and control*, the emphasis is on 'standards not structures' and on supposedly non-ideological technical efficiency. Governmental and managerial control over education has been increased, and reinforced by punitive measures - for example, through increasing use of compulsory testing; setting measurable targets; centralised control of the school and ITE curriculum; surveillance and monitoring of pupils, teachers and those involved in 'initial teacher training'; punishment of 'failing' teachers, schools, Local Education Authorities (LEAs), teacher training departments, and 16-18 year-olds who do not participate in the 'New Deal' (of education, training, voluntary work or work). The Green and White papers promises a reduction in central control, with 'light touch' inspections, for example, in the future.

The focus for improvement is *Managerialism*. This is secured through the focus of policy on 'Improving Schools' (and LEAs) and by School Effectiveness strategies to raise standards; also by stratifying the teaching workforce, for example by Performance Related Pay (PRP) and 'superteachers' (see Allen, 1999 *et al* for a discussion). School improvement and school effectiveness may be desirable (who wants declining or ineffective schools?), but the concepts of school effectiveness and of school improvement have, intrinsically, nothing whatsoever to do with the concept of equality (see Chitty, 1997; Hatcher, 1997, 1998b, c; Mortimore and Whitty, 1997).

The standards to be maintained and improved are, for the most part, traditional ones. *Traditionalism* is sustained through the continuation (despite the 1999 Review of the National Curriculum) of the euro-centric and traditionalist Conservative National Curriculum of 1995; the assault on liberal-progressive education (e.g. attacks on mixed ability teaching and concentration on 'back to basics' in the curriculum with the Literacy Hour and Numeracy Hour in Primary schools).

5. The increase in inequalities in terms of racialised social class (what New Labour calls 'Inclusion').

New Labour promises 'to benefit the many not the few'. This includes targeted expenditure for areas of social exclusion, setting targets for schools to reduce truancy and exclusion rates by one third by 2002, and the 'New Deal' for 18-24 year-olds to ensure that young people without qualifications are in work, education or training.

New Labour's policies on Social Inclusion through targeted expenditure involve some increases in spending targeted at areas of Social Exclusion. These policies include: increased resourcing for inner city and other areas of social exclusion, Education Action Zones, Education Maintenance Allowances for poor 16-18 year olds, and increased funding for schools and LEAs capital and revenue budgets (for example to reduce Primary class sizes and to repair and improve schools buildings). There is also a whole raft of (interventionist) measures such as summer schools, mentoring projects and school-post school links, together with the 'Excellence in Cities' programme which 'will include one third of all secondary age pupils by September 2001' (DfEE, 2001:7).

New Labour's 2001 Green Paper comments that 'universal nursery education for all 4 year olds is now in place. There has been a significant expansion for 3 year-olds. In total there are 120,000 more free nursery places than in 1997' (DfEE, 2001b: 9). It also promises to 'ensure that every school with fewer than 25% achieving 5 or more A*-C at GCSE or more than 35 per cent on free school meals receives extra targeted assistance' (p.9), and 'expand Sure Start (a programme aimed at helping pre-school children in poorer areas) to include 500 programmes, to support 400,000 under-4s, one-third of under-4s living in poverty, by 2004' (DfEE, 2001b:6). The White Paper expands on support for schools and children 'in the most challenging circumstances' (DfES, 2001a:49-51) detailing additional funded schemes, and additional funding for 'increasing the participation of under-represented groups in higher education' (p.35).

However, as commented on Anthony O'Hear above, the White Paper, promises possibly widespread (and social class based) disapplication of- and exclusion from- the National Curriculum. Furthermore, New Labour's introduction of student fees for higher education is beginning to show signs of reinforcing elitism and excluding poorer groups from study.

Analysis

The key difference between 'Old' and New Labour is that between the concern for more equal outcomes on the one hand, and on the other the (New Labour) concern for more equal opportunities but within an acceptance of existing degrees of inequality of outcomes. New Labour is criticised by both traditional Labour and the Radical Left for its refusal to use the language of equality and implement egalitarian policies. Hatcher notes the example of the 1994 Green Consultation Paper on Education, where the Labour Party 'is extremely weak on the issue of tackling inequalities of gender, "race" and class' and 'assimilates the issue of social class inequalities into the general rubric of raising standards' (Hatcher, 1994). In contrast with The Swann Report (1985) and the Labour Party documents as late as 1994, New Labour continues 'more with Conservative education policy of the 1990s than with the egalitarian reform movement of the 1980s' (Hatcher, 1994).

Hatcher (1996) quotes Cohen's (1994) observation that 'in its quest to occupy the supposed middle group of British politics, Labour is abandoning even its traditional moderate goals. It represents an important accommodation to conservative education discourse of the 1980s.' (Hatcher, 1996:34). He quotes Walter Secada, describing a similar situation in education in the US, where 'equity has become little more than trickle down excellence' (Secada, 1989: 3), and 'the original concern for the education of women, minorities and individuals from lower socio-economic background was submerged to a concern for improving education for 'everyone' (ibid: 2, cited in Hatcher, 1996:34).

The concern with social inclusion and social exclusion in New Labour policy and rhetoric disguises and rhetorically replaces, the existence of social class and its attendant inequalities. New Labour is determinedly not egalitarian, having turned its back on the 1976 Labour Party statement (incidentally, on which I fought the 1979 general election for Labour),

Our programme is founded on the principles of democracy and socialism. At its head is a basic socialist priority: to bring about a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of power and wealth in favour of working people and their families (Labour Party, 1976:10).

New Labour's classically social democratic equal opportunities measures of targeted expenditure occur within the overall context of New Labour privatisation and low public expenditure strategies in their first term of office (see

below). As the conclusion to this chapter suggests, this policy of social inclusion is contradicted, and, to an extent, interdicted, by the widening social and educational gaps consequent upon selection and hierarchy in schooling. (Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe, 1995; Hill, 1997b, 2001b; Whitty, Power and Halpin, 1998; Thrupp, 1999; Gillborn and Youdell, 2000; Tomlinson, 2001).

6. Reduced public expenditure on education (and on other public services) (what New Labour calls 'increased public expenditure').

New Labour's education papers are replete with information about *proposals* for increased spending on education.

Analysis

The first term of New Labour in office has been a regime of low public expenditure, which has strictly controlled and limited overall spending on education. New Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair, following eighteen years of public expenditure cuts under Conservative governments (1979-1997), claims that 'public expenditure has more or less reached the limits of its acceptability' (Blair and Schroeder, 1999). By this they mean, not that the level is as low as is acceptable, but the opposite. For Blair, the level of public expenditure has reached the highest level acceptable, hence, other perhaps than in a pre-election period, he is disinclined to raise public spending.

Despite the increases announced in July 2000 by Chancellor Gordon Brown for extra spending (including an extra £12 billion for education over three years), it was then projected that by 2005 *public spending* would have risen to only 40.5% of GDP - still less than in John Major's last year (*The Guardian*, 1999a), a 'smaller share than in most other developed countries' (Coyle, 2000) and less than the 49.9% in 1976 (Toynbee, 2000). Toynbee also points out that the increase in funding on education under New Labour will be 3.8% over the Parliament till 2002, compared to John Major's 1.6%. But she adds that Gordon Brown's first two years as Chancellor 'saw the lowest public spending in 35 years'. Larry Elliott notes that spending on the nation's infrastructure has been lower in each of New Labour's four years in office (1997-2001) than in the final twelve months of John Major's Conservative government- and only one quarter of what it was at the end of (Old) Labour Jim Callaghan's government in 1979 (Elliott, 2001)

Yet tax takes and public spending vary tremendously between different advanced industrial states. Taking taxes and social security contributions together, as a percentage of gross domestic product, there are wide variations across the European Union. The 1997 figures (from Coates and Barratt Brown, 1999:50. 1986 percentages in brackets) are Sweden 53.3% (52.5%), Finland 47.3% (42.4%), France 46.1% (44.0%), UK 35.3% (37.8%), USA (1986 figures) only 25.8%.

Cuts in state spending on education have been savage throughout both the developed and developing economies. According to the 1998 OECD report on spending per secondary pupil, the UK is bottom of the league table with £2680, as against the EU average of £3145. (Germany spends £3946 per pupil) (*TES*, 2000. See Marginson, 1997 for details, for example, on Australia).

The government response is that in its first term of office its major concern was to reassure voters that it was economically competent and not spendthrift. Thus, *for education*, the 2001 Green Paper promises major increases in spending, for example that 'by 2003-04 we will be spending on average £700 more per pupil in real terms than in 1997-98' (DfEE, 2001b:14). However, be that as it may, 'Labour squeezed spending on Britain's schools and universities in its first term to the lowest share of national income since the 1960s' (Stewart, Denny and Woodward, 2001). The September 2001 report by Howard Glennester reported in Stewart *et al.* Shows that spending on education fell to just 4.5% of GDP in 1998 and 1999, 'a lower level than under Margaret Thatcher's government when it fell to 4.7%'. Glennester points out that despite the extra money (referred to above in Gordon Brown's July 2000 Spending Review, education's share of GDP will, by 2003-4 only have returned to the levels of the early 1990s. 'Real-term spending per pupil, too, is only now beginning to creep up to the levels of five years ago... It was not until 1999/2000 that real per pupil spending in secondary schools rose above the 1995/6 level in England. Glennester continues that the government has promised to boost spending per pupil by over a quarter in real terms by 2003/4. This however, is presumably dependent on other financial exigencies.

PART FOUR: NEO-LIBERALISM IN EDUCATION POLICY

Sixteen Radical Right (societal level) ideological themes

In order to evaluate the extent to which New Labour's education policies can be categorised as neo-liberal, it is possible to identify sixteen wide (societal level) ideological themes recurring in Radical Right ideology, principles and policy (see Hill, 1999a, 2001b,d).

Table 2: Sixteen Radical Right (Societal level) Ideological Themes in the UK

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| 1. Pro- Individualism |
| 2. Pro-Privatisation and Private Enterprise, anti-Public Sector |
| 3. Pro-Market Competition and Consumer Choice |
| 4. Pro-Monitoring, Measurement and Surveillance of public welfare, social and educational services |
| 5. Pro-Cost Reduction/ profit/ cheapness/reducing costs of products and public services |
| 6. Anti-Professional 'producer power' |
| 7. Pro-Tradition and Traditional Family |
| 8. Pro-Back to Basics |
| 9. Pro-Nationalism and 'Britishness' |
| 10. Anti-anti-racism |
| 11. Pro-Authority, Order and Social Control |
| 12. Pro-Elite (Social, Cultural, Economic) |
| 13. Pro-Hierarchy and Social Differentiation |
| 14. Anti-liberal progressivism |
| 15. Anti-socialist/Marxism'Practical' |
| 16. Anti-theoretical bias and emphasis |

Of these, six can be identified as the neo-liberal (or 'free marketeer') themes of *individualism, privatisation/ private enterprise, market competition/consumer choice, surveillance of public services, cost reduction of public services, and anti-producer power*. There are six neo-conservative (or 'traditionalist'/ social authoritarian) themes - *tradition and traditional family, 'back to basics', nation, monoculturalism regarding 'race', authority, order and social control, elitism and hierarchicalism*.

The remaining four themes are appropriate to both neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism. These are the themes of *derision, distrust and disrespect for public services, socialist/Marxist egalitarianism, liberal-progressivism, and for the theory purporting to underlie what the Radical Right see as essentially practical activities, such as teaching and initial teacher education*. The concomitant therefore of the anti-theoretical bias of Thatcherism is an emphasis on *practice*. This list of sixteen themes is not exclusive, but shows those dominant in relation to education (Lawton, 1994, and Giddens, 1998, have similar, though not identical lists). Thatcherism itself has been widely analysed, commonly

It is sometimes difficult to disentangle neo-liberal and neo-conservative theories within Radical Right discourse. They are usually mutually supportive, but also the 'traditional England' concept contained more than golden sunsets, stiff upper lips, dutiful marriages and workforces and a tear in the eye for Empire. 'Traditional England' also comprised laissez-faire entrepreneurs, the playing fields of Rugby, competitive school 'House systems' and dockers and labourers queuing up to be chosen for work. Thus competition and individualism figure in tradition. Transportations, Trade Unionists, Red Scares and 'Reds under the beds' are as much a part of English tradition as imperial conquest, the Royal Family and fagging.

At the *macro-policy level* neo-liberals and neo-conservatives both seek to perpetuate the interests of capital untrammelled by strong trade unions, professional restrictive practices, an inclusivist welfare state, and a permissive non-work-orientated unproductive culture. For both traditions the good society is best understood in

terms of a strong state, free economy and stable families' (Barton *et al.*, 1994:532. See also Gamble, 1983, 1988; Hall and Jacques, 1983; Whitty and Menter, 1989; Lawton, 1994; Hill, 1997, 2001d).

PART FIVE: IDEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF NEW LABOUR EDUCATION POLICIES

New Labour policies on education in general since the general election of May 1997 can be related to categories ranging from social democratic to Radical Right (3). I provide examples in the following (although again, these categories are not exhaustive and certain policies can be related to more than one category).

Table 3: New Labour social democratic education policies

- nursery education on parental demand
- reduced class sizes for 5-7 year olds
- policy focus on reducing social disadvantage in schooling through a variety of funded schemes, ranging from increased spending on Education Action Zones (EAZs), to summer schemes for 16 year olds, education maintenance grants for further education students from poor backgrounds
- proposals to increase the number of students in further and higher education
- increased expenditure in Education Action Zones (EAZs)
- increased expenditure for 'Excellence in Cities', targeted at areas of particular social need
- planning an overarching post-16 agency to control competition between institutions and replace it by co-operation
- some use of research expertise from the education community, related to instrumental ends such as researching the effectiveness of different experiments within EAZs

Table 4: New Labour's Continuation of Conservative technicist policies (which are not identifiably/particularly neo-liberal, neo-conservative or Thatcherite)

- intensification of a regime of testing and assessment for school pupils/students (by the addition of tests for 5 year olds)
- extension of Ofsted inspections and controls on nursery education
- extension of Ofsted inspections and controls on further education
- intended introduction and application of subject content and standards controls over higher education via the Quality Assurance Agency
- policies for the increase of information technology and techno-ideology throughout the schooling system

Table 5: New Labour's Continuation/acceptance of ideologically neo-liberal policies

- the competitive market in schooling between schools of the same type (albeit with some minor modification)
- the post-2001 policy of changing the structures of schooling (setting up new types of school and new types-privatised- ownership of education services)
- lack of locally elected democratic accountability across much of the education system (albeit in a modified form with some extra powers given to LEAs, and an increased number of parent governors on school governing bodies, set against examples of increased private control)
- 'naming and shaming' of 'errant' LEAs and schools, and the accompanying
- closures of 'failing' schools
- stressing managerialist solutions to schooling problems as opposed to solutions relating to the level of financing/ the nature of the intake/ the nature of the curriculum
- restricted financing of education, which despite publicised 'improvements' and targeting met Conservative public expenditure limits 1997-1999, and a planned overall increase which is notably meagre

Table 6: New Labour's Continuation/acceptance of ideologically neo-conservative policies

- the 1997-2001 mantra of 'standards not structures' (i.e. the focus on technical efficiency and school effectiveness and compulsory testing instead of restructuring schools into a comprehensive system)
- increasing the focus on 'the basics' in the school curriculum
- the neo-conservative, utilitarian national curriculum in schooling and in Further Education
- lack of locally elected democratic accountability across much of the education system (albeit in a modified form with some extra powers given to LEAs, and an increased number of parent governors on school governing bodies)
- 'naming and shaming' of 'errant' LEAs and schools, and the accompanying
- closures of 'failing' schools
- stressing managerialist solutions to schooling problems as opposed to financial/ intake/ curricula solutions
- restricted financing of education, which despite publicised 'improvements' and targeting met Conservative public expenditure limits 1997-1999, and a planned overall increase which is notably meagre

Table 7: New Labour's extension of ideologically neo-liberal, neo-conservative or Thatcherite policies

- the attack on mixed-ability teaching;
- Performance Related Pay (PRP) for teachers, and the accompanying
- policy for superteachers
- extending para-educational, lower-paid and trained teaching assistants in the classroom
- extending, and more highly funding, specialist (i.e. to an extent selective) magnet and specialist schools, thereby increasing the competitive market in schooling
- introducing fees for undergraduate courses, in addition to student loans
- private company control over schools in EAZs
- private company control over 'failing' LEAs
- private contracting out of particular schools
- the extension of the Private Finance Initiative (PFI), whereby private companies build schools and lease them to LEAs but thereafter own them outright
- increasing the focus on 'the basics' in the school curriculum.
- proposals to end the national curriculum for many 'non-academic' children

These last four policies may be seen as the beginning of the privatisation of the education system and semi-privatisation of the state sector (Hatcher, 1998a, 1999, 2000a; Whitty, 1998; Ainley, 1999, 2000; Cole, 1998; Hatcher and Hirtt, 1999; Hill, 1999a; Hill and Cole, 1999b). This policy has been extended in a major way, as noted above, following New Labour's 2001 June general election victory, in particular via the September 2001 White Paper *Schools Achieving Success* (DfES, 2001a. See also the accompanying press release, DfES, 2001b).

PART SIX: CONCLUSION

Education policy

New Labour has accomplished the transition from Old Labour by claiming to be beyond old ideologies, beyond left and right and guided instead by principles of technicist and technological and managerial efficiency. Blairism, lauded by theorists such as Giddens (1998, 2000) and by neo-liberal think tanks such as the Adam Smith Institute, stifles debate about the ends and purposes of policy, and concentrates instead on more efficient and technologically advanced means.

In an overall determination of the New Labour government's education ideology, some of the policies analysed and categorised in Hill (1999a) (and extended in Hill, 2000a b, 2001e, 2002) are more overarching, more influential than are others (See also Gamarnikow and Green, 1999; Hatcher, 1999, 2000, 2001; Muschamp, Jamieson and Lauder, 1999; Power and Whitty, 1999; Docking, 2000; Tomlinson, 2001 for similar, though not identical analyses). Of the seven most important, two might be deemed social democratic (targeted funding at the

poorest areas; use of the state in addition to the market to raise standards); and one neo-conservative (the neo-conservative curriculum in schools and teacher education/training). However, in the remaining four policies of privatisation - of Performance Related Pay (PRP), of reliance on grossly socially divisive selective market in schooling, and in the overall low-level of public expenditure on education - New Labour education policy is dominated by neo-liberalism.

New Labour policy and discourse on education, on schooling in particular, displays both continuities and differences with Thatcherism. The major continuities are a regime of low public expenditure, privatisation, and the maintenance of a selective, 'specialist' and exclusionary education system. Yet unlike the rhetoric of Thatcherism, the gloss over New Labour selectiveness is the concern to overcome 'social exclusion', the effort to 'include' the excluded - in a system that excludes at every level. This market system is becoming ever more selective and exclusionary. New Labour is actually spreading the frontiers of neo-liberalism in education, in its promotion of the business ethic and privatised control over schooling and education (Hatcher, 2001, Rikowski, 2001a, b), and in its under-funding of public services and, in particular, the education service.

This contrasts with the lack of continuity between New Labour and 'Old' Labour/ social democratic and with Radical Left education policy. While there are numerous examples of traditional social democratic 'big state' interventions, and while there is some targeted socially redistributive expenditure, these have to be set within the larger policy context of low public funding and the maintenance- and extension- of the bulk of the Thatcherite neo-liberal and neo-Conservative restructuring of education.

Overall State Policy

Analysis of one or two areas of policy, the operation of one or two ideological state apparatuses, might help determine a government's ideological trajectory. Yet to consider the relation of education policy to overall policy requires the bigger picture of state policy (see Jessop, 1990; Hill, 2001a; Hill and Cole, 1995; Cole, Hill, McLaren and Rikowski, 2001). This is because it may or may not be the case that one particular set of state apparatuses - in this case the education state apparatuses - accord with the operations of other state apparatuses, or with the overall direction of state policy under a particular government. State theories take cognisance of the disarticulations and inconsistencies in policy production and implementation. This is so both vertically (in the 'chain of command' from Ministry level to shop floor/classroom level), and horizontally - for example in disagreements that might occur between the Prime Minister, the secretary of State for Education and Employment and the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

However, in its other major policies, too, neo-liberal policies of marketisation, privatisation, hierarchicalisation of social and welfare benefits and increasing levels of economic and racialised social class differentiation are evident, suppressing, distorting and dominating the social democratic elements of its policy. Such neo-liberal policies include:

- privatisation (such as of Air Traffic Control);
- PFI (Private Finance Initiative) which gives eventual private ownership of health, education and other public and publicly funded services to private capital (discussed by Richard Hatcher at this Conference and in Hatcher 2001); steadfast opposition to overwhelming public demand for the re-nationalisation of the Railways and track in the UK;
- fiscal/taxation and low minimum wage/ high 'fat cat' salary policy;
- attempts to reduce compliance with the workers' rights in the European Social Chapter;
- overall government policies resulting in increasing racialised social class inequalities in income and living conditions (see Hill, 1999b; Hill and Cole, 2001; Hill, Sanders and Hankin, 2001; Rahman *et al*, 2001).

However, while recognising that disarticulations do occur, the conclusion from the evidence of this paper is that New Labour education policy is congruent with, and an important constituent part of, the overall neo-liberal ideological thrust of state policy under New Labour.

NOTES

1. Driver and Martell, 1998, and Giddens, 1998, 2000, engage in detailed comparisons between what they term 'Old Labour' and New Labour. So does Hattersley, (1996, 1997a, b, 2000, 2001a, b,c) In this paper I use the term Labour to signify the traditional Labour Party, what some have termed 'real Labour'. I use the term 'Old Labour' only where Labour, in its longstanding traditional policy form, is thus described. The emblematic and policy shifts in the Labour Party's ideology have been discussed, with varying degrees of approbation e.g. Blair (1996, a, b, 1998); Blair and Schroeder, (1999) Driver and Martell (1998), Giddens (1998), Gould (1998), Mandelson and Liddle (1996), Perryman (1996), and with disapprobation e.g. Cliff and Gluckstein (1996), Cohen (1999), Cole (1998), Cole and Hill (1997), Hill and Cole, (1999b) Hatcher and Jones (1996), Panitch and Leys (1999), and in my own writing, (Hill, 1999a, 2000a, b, 2001a,b).
2. This is a derogatory term, meaning standard, in the sense of 'commonly unexceptional and therefore sub-standard'. 'Bog' is a slang term for toilet.
3. The analysis of eight New Labour educational principles and forty-five policies in education is based on the speeches and writings of Tony Blair, David Blunkett and Michael Barber, together with press releases and other publications by the Labour Party, government legislation, Green (Consultation) and White Papers, DfEE press releases and Press sources. These are developed further in Hill, 1999a, 2000b, c, 2001d, e.

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