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Industrial Studies for Trade Unionists

Bruce Spencer

MANY CANADIAN UNIVERSITIES offer labour studies concentrations to undergraduates, but few provide dedicated programs of study for trade unionists. Western Canadian offerings include Simon Fraser University's Labour Program,[1] the University of Manitoba's Labour Three Year Certificate Program (Saturday mornings) and the University of Saskatchewan's Labour Studies Program (three-hour evening classes for three years). In the East, the flagship program is the Atlantic Region Labour Education Centre (ARLEC) run through St. Francis Xavier Extension. Other institutions claim their classes are open to trade unionists, but in some cases it is unclear if these are dedicated courses intended to provide a coherent program of study and if the programmes are cosponsored by local trade unions. Certificates are granted in some cases and these usually are non-credit. The dedicated courses seek to supplement trade union "tool" courses — skills-training courses for union representatives — with a broader educational program, or to provide a research basis for union activity.[2]

[1]Bernard, "Labour Programmes: A Challenging Partnership," *Labour/Le Travail*, 27 (Spring 1991), 199-207, reports on the Simon Fraser and Harvard Trade Union Programs; she also lists 13 post-secondary institutions in Canada claiming to provide courses.

[2]Provincial federations of labour and individual unions provide "awareness" as well as tool courses; awareness courses cover history, economics and politics. The distinction between "tool" and "awareness" courses, used by Canadian union educators, is not used by union educators in the UK because most of their work is "tool" training, that is, for preparing shop stewards and safety representatives for their workplace role, making reports, meeting members, chairing meetings, and handling grievances. This article focuses on "labour

Bruce Spencer, "Industrial Studies for Trade Unionists," *Labour/Le Travail* 30 (Fall 1992), 261-75.

Most of the tool courses in Canada have been provided directly by the trade unions, rather than placed in educational establishments. This contrasts with the situation in the US and the UK, where colleges and university extension programs traditionally have provided some tool courses. Also, the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) Labour College, while using university educators, is directly accountable to the CLC and, although placed in the University of Ottawa, is a separate entity unlike the roughly-equivalent Harvard's Trade Union Program or adult residential colleges in the UK (Ruskin, Northern College, and others).[3]

This pattern of provision differs from the case of the UK where many university extension programs have included courses with and for trade unionists. The recent developments in UK workers' education, however, have brought a retreat from extensive programing with the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and some individual unions. Courses have been shifted to further education colleges (similar to community colleges) and curriculum has been narrowed to encompass only the training of workplace representatives (tool courses), rather than including the broader workers' education (referred to as industrial studies and similar in scope to labour studies in Canada) programs associated with UK university extramural departments. Those UK university programmes that have survived the 1980s do attempt to maintain broader educational provision while also working directly with individual unions.

If Canadian universities, particularly extension faculties, are to become more involved in workers' education, an insight into the nature, extent, and trajectory of UK provision could be invaluable. (It should be noted that many US labour educators attached to universities have become locked into short-term programing — weekend and day-schools, the decline of union influence in the US has directly affected US labour educators manoeuvrability.)[4] This article discusses UK educa-

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education" and does not discuss the vocational training courses run by unions such as the National and Local Government Officers (NALGO).

[3]The origins of the CLC's Labour College is discussed in Max Swerdlow, *Brother Max: Labour Organiser and Educator* (St. John's 1990), Ch. 10.

[4]In trying to understand the origins and diversity of Canadian labour studies and labour education I came across a recent MA thesis which made me realize there are a number of misconceptions about the nature of UK educational provision for trade unionists. Carol Arnold's (*Labour Education in Alberta*, Adult Education, Fall 1989) otherwise stimulating and informative thesis — in a passing comment on UK provision — mistakenly suggested that the trade union movement in Britain handed control of union courses to the WEA. A further problem she encountered in understanding UK developments was due to her trying to discover the origins and nature of trade union education from the writings of classic adult educationalists such as Raybould, many of whom had only a tangential connection with workers' education.

For a discussion of the origins of worker's education in Canada, see M. Weldon, ed., *Knowledge for the People: The Struggle for Adult Learning in English Speaking Canada 1828-1972*, (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education Press 1987).

tional provision for trade unionists, concentrating on that provided by the TUC — the CLC's equivalent. It will review the development of workers' education and trace the establishment and purposes of the centralized TUC scheme. It will record the successes of the day-release provision of the late 1970s and its endurance in the 1980s, and comment on what TUC policy changes appear to imply for institutional providers. A better understanding of how industrial studies has developed — particularly in the last 20 years — could help Canadian scholars and trade union educators evaluate their own programs and avoid some of the tensions which can occur between unions and universities.[5]

Introduction

ONE OF THE FEW "EXTERNAL" SUPPORTS for workplace trade-union organization in post-World War II Britain is the industrial studies educational provision for trade unionists, aimed primarily at representatives (shop stewards, staff representatives, safety representatives, and others). This educational provision has developed on parallel lines to workplace trade unionism in the same period.[6] It will be argued, however, that while trade union education responded to similar stimulus to post-war trade unionism in general, the period since the 1960s has been one of increasing concentration of centralised control by the TUC rather than a shift to locally-controlled (either by providers or trade unionists) trade union education and training. This reality has been masked somewhat by use of student-centred learning methods which suggest a workplace-centred and student-controlled curriculum.

While it is important to trace the developments in workers' education and to review recent debates, it would be wrong to overstate the impact of education upon workers' organizations and consciousness. Education plays, at best, a supporting role to trade union organization and activity. Some commentators argue shop steward training has (and some would say should) be aimed at formalizing and incorporating shop steward behaviour within post-Donovan workplace bargaining (the Donovan Commission — like the Woods Task Force in Canada — reported in 1968 and called for the formalization of workplace bargaining and procedures and shop steward training to fulfil these functions). On the other hand, others insist that since World War II, industrial studies for trade unionists has maintained older

[5]Both E. Bernard, "Labour Programmes," and P. Kumar, "Academic Research on Labour: Strengthening Union-University Links," *Labour/Le Travail*, 25 (Spring 1990) refer to tensions between universities/educationalists and labour unions but the nature of these are not spelled out. G. Levine, "Relations Between Unions and Universities in Research and Teaching: Union Expectations," *Labour/Le Travail*, 21 (Spring 1988) and C. Gonick, "Comment," in the same issue, began to explore the source of these tensions. See also J. Bullen, "Rewarding Your Enemies, Punishing Your Friends: The Labour College Strike of 1983," *Labour/Le Travail*, 27 (Spring 1991), for a clash between academics and the CLC.

[6]B. Spencer, "Trade Unionism, Workplace and Politics in Post-War Britain," *Labour/Le Travail*, 28 (Fall 1991), 187-217.

traditions of independent working-class education. It is important to explore in some detail these divergent views, examining in particular the extent to which industrial studies for trade unionists does influence workplace trade unionism.

However, the involvement of external providers (such as colleges, the Workers' Educational Association [WEA], and the universities) and of public funding for the centralized TUC scheme of courses targeted at workplace representatives, adds another dimension to understanding the functioning of this educational provision. The funding is provided directly to the TUC from the Department of Employment with the clear government intention that TUC education should "improve" workplace industrial relations practice. (This is similar to the Canadian case, were state money is also available to assist labour education, except that union accountability for the funds is not restricted by a narrowly defined industrial relations objective.)

Before tracing the historical development of the TUC scheme, readers might benefit from a sketch of existing provision of UK labour education. This sketch is divided into representative training courses largely provided through the TUC and the numerically-smaller provision of "labour studies" courses for trade unionists. Most of the courses are targeted at workplace representatives; both individual unions and the TUC provide training courses; individual union courses tend to be shorter, two or three days, and may be offered at weekends; typically, TUC courses cater to mixed groups of trade unionists on a once-weekly basis for 10 consecutive weeks (totalling 60 study hours); these courses are run in local colleges by TUC "briefed" tutors employed by the college; these courses have a workplace focus. There are a few longer courses, lasting one or two years, often certificate courses and sometimes linked to degree programs, offered by higher education institutions; these educational courses are not supported by the TUC but may be backed by individual unions; typically these would be evening classes, although some unions (for example the Transport and General Workers Union [TGWU]) have negotiated some paid time off work; these courses have a broader focus and seek to set trade unionists' experience within a social, economic and political context.

The first attempt to establish unity

A NUMBER OF PROVIDERS of workers' education established prior to World War I — the WEA and the avowedly-Marxist Labour Colleges — became more intense rivals in the interwar period.[7] During the 1920s, the TUC tried to bring together the different parties in a more integrated structure and argued that:

[7]J. McIlroy and B. Spencer, "Waves and Workers' Education," *Convergence*, Vol. 22, No. 2/3, 1989, 33-46. For a more detailed discussion see the contributions in Brian Simon, ed., *The Search for Enlightenment*, Lawrence and Wishart, 1990.

For a discussion of the current framework of UK adult education, see B. Spencer and J. McIlroy, "British University Adult Education in Context: Lessons for Canada?," *Canadian Journal of University Continuing Education*, Vol. 17, No. 2, 1991 21-40.

... in providing educational facilities for workers, it is important to realise that while they need certain specialised forms of education...we have in mind above all an education broad enough to give every worker who desires it a new sense of understanding and therefore power to mould the world in accordance with his human social ideals...[so workers would be] equipped by education with the social, economic and political understanding needed for effective action.[8]

In 1925, an agreement was reached on a unified scheme which would give representation to the different education providers within a TUC-controlled structure.[9] Although the agreement stated that its objectives were not to "abolish the rights of criticism or propaganda of the separate organizations,"[10] the WEA ran into difficulties with its voluntary members and local and national government (which provided some funds). The new scheme was not established. The TUC and individual unions began developing their own programs. Although they still worked with the WEA and National Council for Labour Colleges (NCLC), the courses were more suited to the unions' organizational needs and less concerned with either liberal education or education for social change. It is important to recognize that the provision in the interwar years was limited in its impact and made demands on the workers' own time. So, despite of the fierce debates of the period, and its importance for understanding later developments, it would be a mistake to present interwar workers' education as involving large numbers of the organized working class.[11]

After the war — the move to a unified scheme

IN THE POSTWAR PERIOD, the syndicalist/workers' control ideas, which had exerted a powerful influence on trade unionists and on workers' education, gave way to the dominant political perspective of unions which worked within the established framework of industrial and political relations and hoped to influence the Labour government. The TUC appointed a Director of Studies at Congress House in 1946 to run courses "essentially practical in character,"[12] but the TUC was also willing to sponsor courses at the LSE and other Universities. As noted by one commentator, "... they continue to regard the voluntary education organizations as the most appropriate bodies to provide that liberal education in the social studies which is

[8]Trade Union Congress, *General Council Report*, (London, TUC, 1922), 227.

[9]For a discussion of the implications of the 1925 Scheme, see R. Fieldhouse, "Voluntarism and the State in Adult Education: the WEA and the 1925 TUC Education Scheme," *History of Education*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (1981). And for an overview, T. Smith, "Trade Union Education: its past and future," *Industrial Relations Journal*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (1984).

[10]Point 7 of the Scheme, reprinted in Fieldhouse, "Voluntarism."

[11]These later developments are discussed in J. McIlroy, "Adult Education and the Role of the Client — the TUC Education Scheme 1929-80," *Studies in the Education of Adults*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (1985).

[12]T. Corfield, *Epoch in Worker Education*, WEA, 1969, Ch. 7.

essential to any member who intends to engage effectively in trade union activities."[13]

Differences persisted among worker educators after the war. These hindered development of a unified scheme, but it is likely that the desire to bring about reconciliation between the WEA and the NCLC within a TUC education centre in the late 1940s and early 1950s first foundered upon the lack of funds.[14] By 1957, the TUC training college was established with courses on basic trade unionism, work study, and other subjects, and drew 632 students in the first full year. The Trade Union Congress returned to the question of how to establish a unified scheme, and considered pooling funds and resources of the different organizations and unions. It set up a working party which came up with a plan for the 1959 and 1960 Congresses and retained many of the structures and objectives of the 1925 Agreement.[15] But in 1962, the TUC General Council presented Congress with proposals which differed markedly from the concerns of existing educational providers. It proposed that the central authority for the new scheme should be with the General Council, not with a body more representative of the diversity of educational opinion. The report only noted the value of advice from others outside the unions, although it did assert that the long-term developments should take account of "suitable facilities for the sustained study of the social and economic subjects relevant to the work of trade unionists."[16]

By the 1963 Congress, the TUC had moved further. At this time, its General Council presented a report which had emerged from a meeting with the British Employers' Federation (later merged into the Confederation of British Industry). This gave a detailed assessment of workplace representative training needs — the first since the search for a coordinated provision had been resumed in 1957. "The training courses should provide above all a clear understanding of their functions as responsible officers of their unions, and of union policies and viewpoints relevant to them."[17] Thus, in contradiction to the 1925 and 1960 General Council statements about getting understandings and education for empowerment, the purpose now was "above all" training worker representatives.[18]

It is important to recognize that this statement emerged within the context of the Keynes/Beveridge consensus on full employment and a welfare state. To many labour leaders, the urgent need for emancipatory education no longer was self-evident because the postwar consensus had provided many of the political gains which they had sought. Within trade unions, there was a development of shop steward organization and workplace negotiation, and at the national level, unions were

[13]*TUC Report*, 1951, 170. See also Corfield, *Epoch*, 89.
[14]Corfield, *Epoch*, 114.
[15]*TUC Reports*, 1957-1960.
[16]*TUC Report*, 1962, 162.
[17]*TUC Report*, 1963, 192.
[18]A point underlined by Smith, "Trade Union Education."

concerned with the need to modernize industry through their involvement with government — exemplified in the newly-formed National Economic Development Council. They did not want the newly-emerged shop steward movement upsetting these arrangements. In particular, the national trade union leaders and the TUC became concerned that the education and training needs of workers to meet these new conditions were not being met. The 1963 statement even made reference to the value of joint union/employer courses in bringing about a better understanding of the problems and improvements in industrial relations. The TUC also agreed with the employers on the need for paid release; on consulting over syllabus; and on setting up a small, standing advisory body to maintain a joint oversight of the development of training.[19]

The movement toward the concerns of the union as an organization and of the education of the representatives for industrial relations purposes, and away from broader adult education/worker education concerns, thus was consolidated in this period. In university extension, there had also been a shift away from social studies and emancipatory workers' education to liberal studies targeted at the general public, with much of the provision becoming even more dominated by the middle class.[20] Trade union education had thus become separated to some extent from broader adult education. And although there were examples of long, broadly based courses for workers such as miners and steel workers in a number of university extra-mural departments, much of the education in this period became focused on the training of local lay union officials as responsible workplace negotiators and reliable union administrators.[21]

1964-79: The TUC scheme and Donovan

IN 1964, the TUC agreed upon a unified scheme which involved winding up the NCLC and the trade union arm of the WEA — WETUC (Workers Education Trade Union Committee). The TUC established a regionally administrated scheme with existing NCLC organizers able to apply for the new TUC Regional Education Officer (REO) posts. The REOs were controlled from the centre with only an advisory body established in each region. Unlike the NCLC, they set out to use the state system to provide courses by the universities and technical colleges as well as the semi-autonomous WEA. Although achieving a unified scheme had been a trade union objective for 40 years, trade unionists expressed doubts about what had been created. There was some criticism of Congress about the training focus of the new scheme and the refusal, as one delegate put it, "on almost all points to accept proposals that have been put forward [in earlier Congresses]."[22] In particular, the

[19]*TUC Report*, 1963, 191-2.
[20]J. McIlroy and B. Spencer, *University Adult Education in Crisis* (Leeds Studies in Adult and Continuing Education, 1988).
[21]J. McIlroy, "The Triumph of Technical Training," in B. Simon, *Search*.
[22]*TUC Report*, 1964, 481.

failure to institute an annual education conference was regretted. These points were disregarded by George Woodcock, General Secretary of the TUC, who also noted that if the TUC were to have a scheme it "must be absolutely in control of it." Others could have an influence but they could not disturb the "fundamental principle of responsibility from the top downwards." Interestingly, he also commented that education "is not training, it is a very broad activity intended to stimulate the critical faculties. That is better done by an organization dedicated exclusively to the task."[23] Yet the TUC was to place its shop steward training courses, particularly after 1974, in educational bodies such as the university extramural (extension) departments, the WEA, and further education colleges.

The Donovan Committee Report in 1968 lent substantial backing to recommendations to increase the training of shop stewards. This training emphasis also helped to integrate students in the industrial relations system, rather than attempting to develop an independent workers' education movement. This can be seen clearly in the objectives outlined in the 1968 TUC Working Party Report:

> Employers are concerned that [stewards] should act within the constitutional procedures of [their] union and industry and observe agreement reached. Training cannot guarantee this but it does give opportunity for the purpose and nature of the rules to be examined.[24]

The Report warned against general courses:

> ... too much of the syllabus tends to be devoted to extensive general information on economics and industrial relations to the neglect of subjects specifically related to the duties in which the representative is specifically engaged.[25]

This TUC Report also defined training as

> systematic instruction, study and practise that will help to equip union members to be competent as representatives of their union in the workplace...obviously this excludes consideration of their wider educational needs as citizens or even potential general secretaries or Cabinet ministers.[26]

Therefore, although the 1968 TUC Report asserted the right of trade unionists to trade-union controlled courses, this was clearly set in a training and collective bargaining framework.

It could be argued, however, that although the TUC was responding to the Donovan Report's insistence upon the need to integrate the informal system of industrial relations within the formal system (and perhaps to the demands of worker

[23] *TUC Report*, 1964, 483-4.
[24] TUC, *Training Shop Stewards*, 1968, 11.
[25] TUC, *Training Shop Stewards*, 1968, 21.
[26] TUC, *Training Shop Stewards*, 1968, 9.

representatives for immediate training for their new role), it ignored other implications of the Donovan Report's findings. Donovan suggested that local-level bargaining was to be welcomed as an expression of more workplace democracy within a pluralist perspective of industrial and commercial management. Similarly, lay officials were seen as playing a key role within their union organization, yet the TUC and national union officials were not prepared to push control of TUC education provision down to local lay trade union officials or to local committees. Thus, within the contradictory framework of the Donovan Report (incorporation of, yet recognition for, workplace trade union organization), the TUC was only prepared to develop a centralized structure of shop steward course administration.

The focus of the provision on training and collective bargaining was illustrated in the shift in the total provision from 1965-66 to 1970-71 from weekend courses on broader issues (down 73 per cent) to day-release representative training courses (up from 19 to 444 courses).[27] While this shift to day-release may have been more satisfactory in educational terms — more study time, students less tired, and so on — than weekend or even linked weekend courses, it was a conscious move to a narrower focus on workplace bargaining and workplace unionism. As Tony Smith has commented, "the original purpose to give students an opportunity to study the 'broader social, economic and political subjects' had apparently been virtually abandoned."[28]

The unions were successful in resisting the suggestions of the Commission for Industrial Relations (CIR) in 1972 that employers should have a greater role in this area. They asserted that industrial relations training should not be separated from union education and, indeed, should be conducted in educational establishments rather than 'on site' under the eye of the employer. But such resistance to employer-influenced content and control had perhaps more to do with union opposition to the 1971 Industrial Relations Act — and the CIR as a body created by it — than with any principled opposition to joint courses or an industrial relations focus.

In pushing for paid release in the 1975 Employment Protection Act, the TUC accepted this distinction between industrial relations training which received paid release, and training for trade union duties which only attracted unpaid release. In seeking state aid for trade union education from the 1974 Labour Government, the TUC further compromised its independence, making it impossible for the Congress to pretend to have inherited the interwar traditions of independent working-class education.

Although the TUC scheme had been developing since 1964, a real impetus to trade union training was to come during the period 1974-79. The legal rights to paid release for trade union representatives contained in the 1975 Employment Protection Act had been anticipated by some unions and employers and the number

[27] *TUC Reports*, 1966 and 1971.
[28] Smith, "Trade Union Education," 77-8.

of courses began to rise from 1974. However, because release was for industrial relations purposes, the statutory limitation provided an opening for employers to challenge the courses for which release would be granted. At the same time, it provided a justification for the TUC to focus upon workplace training issues rather than broader industrial studies education. The rights to paid release coincided with the TUC successfully negotiating a direct state grant worth 1.5 million pounds in 1976 and this ensured the TUC 10-12 day-release provision increased during the social contract period from 643 10-day courses involving 8,721 student places in 1973-74 to 2,849 10-12 day courses involving more than 40,000 students in 1978-79.[29] During this period, individual unions also expanded their programs and several opened new training colleges.

The TUC scheme meant a retreat into workers' training issues, but many educationalists and trade unionists were happy with this perspective since there was clearly a need for training for the new army of workers' representatives.[30] Some of these educationalists believed that the initial phase of skills training would spill over into broader educational concerns and, indeed, the curriculum did expand into new areas such as health and safety, and to courses for women members, and members of ethnic minorities. The basic stewards' courses were extended into a range of follow-on courses in 'Rights at Work' (including the legal framework and workers' rights), 'Bargaining Information' (including company information, value-added and financial control), 'New Technology' and 'Work Study' (including methods of work measurement, payment systems and control of work), many of which started a move from immediate training needs towards broader educational concerns.[31] Thus, workers who began with an introductory course could then seek release for a whole series of follow-on courses, providing them perhaps with the equivalent of day-release for a two-year period — a modular yet 'sustained' course of study nearly matching the interwar three-year university/WEA tutorial classes for workers.

Also in this period, the TUC became involved in a multimedia project with the BBC, Sheffield University Extramural Department, and the WEA. This combined television programs with course books, home study, and study groups organized throughout the country. The subject matter started with the workplace and moved on to the economy and questions of industrial democracy.[32] This was an imaginative programme which tried to raise issues in an educational setting but foundered

[29]*TUC Reports*, 1974, 1976, and 1979.

[30]P. Caldwell, "The WEA's Work in Trade Union Studies, *The Industrial Tutor*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (1979).

[31]B. Spencer, "Collective Bargaining and the Rights at Work Courses," *The Industrial Tutor*, Vol. 3, No. 9 (1984). B. Foley, "Bridging the Gap: Accounting Information and Shop Steward Education," *The Industrial Tutor*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1985).

[32]See T. Matthews, *Trade Union Studies: A participation in adult education between th BBC, the TUC and the WEA*, BBC Education, 1978.

both on the limited ownership of video equipment at the time and on a half-hearted commitment by some at Congress House who felt the concentration should be on the day-release courses.[33]

For some students, this mixture of TUC courses would then lead on to further demands for evening certificate courses, or sustained courses such as the two-year program for workers in health, local authority, and the bus industry run at Leeds University, or residential courses — which had been expanded by the opening of Northern College — or for broader-based courses organized through a growing number of Industrial Branches within the Workers' Education Association. However, the TUC Education Department did not support any education program outside its control (save a few bursaries for residential adult colleges) and refused to sponsor jointly or advertise these broader courses through their regional education service.[34]

By the end of the period, it was clear that the TUC had established for the first time a system of mass provision for trade union representatives. But at the time the Labour government collapsed in the 'winter of discontent' of 1979, workers' education was dominated by trade union role education, and it was not at all clear that this provision was in a position to face the new political challenges of the 1980s.

Trade union education in the 1980s

WITH THE ONSET OF THE RECESSION and the consequent tightening of day-release for those remaining in work, day-release courses declined in the early and mid-1980s but later recovered to 1,466 involving nearly 16,000 student places in 1987/88, plus 1,097 shorter courses (three days and less).[35] The real value of the annual state grant to the TUC was also declining. In 1983, moreover, new conditions were placed upon the grant, giving management a greater say in some of the TUC provision. Although the courses targeted at workplace representatives had decreased, it must be remembered that they compared favourably with the position in the early 1970s, and it must also be recognized that many unions, despite of declining membership, continued to spend substantial sums on their own educational provision. The Transport and General Workers' Union, for example, in the early 1970s, was budgeting only 100,000 pounds per annum for educational schemes, but by the early 1980s it was spending around half a million pounds in spite of its decreased membership.

On the periphery of this massive expansion of TUC education, a number of new courses of a longer day-release type were developed in certain universities,[36]

[33]Views expressed at TUC briefing in Congress House, 1977.

[34]See McIlroy, "Adult Education." REOs did exercise some independence from the Congress House on this question, and both John Connell and Jim Mowatt acknowledged the value of longer courses but they could not support them financially.

[35]*TUC Report*, 1988.

[36]For example, Leeds, K. Forrester, *et al.*, "Industrial Studies in a University Adult Education Department," *The Industrial Tutor*, Vol. 4, No. 8, 1988.

although the total provision of sustained courses was in decline, as was the proportional contribution of the WEA to union education. As skills training became more dominant, more and more of the TUC courses were held in local authority (technical/further education) colleges and this fitted in with the skills training approach of the courses. Some initiatives for new worker education courses were undertaken by Labour-controlled local authorities in the early 1980s, but these soon were restricted by the cuts in local authority spending of the mid-1980s.[37]

Evaluation

WHILE IT WOULD BE CORRECT to present the period since 1974 as one in which trade unions asserted their rights, sometimes against the more independent and elitist approach of some professionals and providers of education, it cannot be characterized in terms of a straightforward development of independent workers' education channelled toward the diverse needs of workplace representatives. In the postwar period, trade union leaders took a greater interest in education as an instrument of internal control and as a way of creating more loyal, efficient (bureaucratized?) activists within their official union organization. Officials also saw education as a way of exercising some control over the way in which negotiations were taking place at work. It could also be presented as a part of a *quid pro quo* for bargains at national level with sympathetic governments, so that trade union education presented the arguments for government economic policy. On this analysis the TUC education mechanism could be seen as a way of guaranteeing the bargains the TUC entered into with the government at national level. The obvious example would be the social contract of the mid 1970s. The pressure, then, was more a pressure from the top down, the pressure of the State economic and industrial relations policies being brought to bear, by way of the incorporation of the TUC General Council, on workers' education. (The postwar TUC leadership, being content to play a high profile role in national bargaining and economic policy, did not want an activist shop steward movement upsetting this arrangement.)[38]

The position of leaders such as Jack Jones of the Transport and General Workers Union was more complex as they were prepared to trade support for economic policy, inevitably involving incomes policy, for legislative support for moves towards industrial democracy achieved by extending shop steward rights at work (as in the 1975 Employment Protection Act and the Bullock Report). But Jones' position was not supported by other trade union leaders who were more concerned with promoting economic efficiency; this dominant view was reflected in TUC educational provision.

[37] 'Take Ten' was a scheme devised at Sheffield; it was to be expanded to more days off and greater numbers of local authority workers.

[38] Interestingly, this is a similar situation as developed in Australia in 1983. See R. Morris, "Trade Union Education in Australia," in M. Tennant, ed., *Adult and Continuing Education in Australia* (London 1991), 171.

As a result, the curriculum on shop steward education courses could be seen shifting in the direction of workplace problem-solving and away from a broader educational thrust aimed at creating a greater understanding of the economic and political context of trade unionism. This shift was entrenched further by the TUC Education Department from 1979. The curriculum was perhaps more practical — it was safer from the TUC's point of view and more limiting in educational terms. This new direction concentrated on the workers' needs — on the problems which workers themselves identified — and yet, it was argued, allowed other issues to emerge.[39] So the new course structure was presented as not only focusing on workplace problem solving, but as a way of directly meeting the immediate democratic needs of workers' representatives and other union members.[40] Faced with this situation, some educators have accepted that indeed they are facilitators supporting this new educational direction and do not claim professional expertise or academic independence but rather insist on a workerist perspective which argues the limited role of knowledge in addressing workers' real problems.[41] Even within the WEA, the attempt at an independent workers' education was seen, in the 1980s, to be secondary to the simple provision of courses for the TUC.

The TUC's understandable desire to maintain its state grant has led it to proceed cautiously in relation to the curriculum in the 1980s, but given overall limited resources this grant commands and the constraint of state support (the TUC recently withdrew its new "Working Women" booklet because of government objection), it does beg the question of whether or not the TUC would be better off using its own resources. But even if it did, would the course program be different given the TUC's postwar policies?

The changes in TUC educational policy have left many university extension departments behind. The industrial studies programs that survive in UK universities are those that have linked to particular union or industrial/service sectors. They have provided educational and research support for trade unionists outside (and in one case — Leeds — alongside) TUC provision. It is difficult to be optimistic about the future of this provision given the current industrial relations climate and the cuts in educational funding. But within current university extension practice are the seeds of a more imaginative industrial studies program; one which perhaps

[39]D. Gowan, "Student Centred Learning," *Trade Union Studies Journal*, 6 (1982).

[40]This flavour can be detected in a number of articles by TUC-approved tutors in the *Trade Union Studies Journal* in the early 1980s. However, it is clear that the interwar concern for developing an independent working-class education, based on syndicalist/workers' self-management ideas, were a long way from the objectives of the TUC in setting up shop steward training from 1964. These educational arguments are discussed in detail in B. Spencer, "Student-Centred Courses and Social Awareness: Contrary Evidence from UK Workers' Education," *The Canadian Journal of the Study of Adult Education*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1992).

[41]Gowan, "Student Centred Learning"; T. Nesbit and S. Henderson, "Methods and Politics in Trade Union Education," *Trade Union Studies Journal*, 8 (1983).

might recreate the interwar "independent working class education" in the context of the 1990s.[42]

Conclusions

THE EXTENT OF TUC trade union education — made possible by the 1970s legislation which established employer-paid release from work for TUC 10-day courses — and the quality of many of the training materials may cause trade unionists and educators to envy the UK provision and to see them as a model for Canadian trade union federal and provincial courses. But the professionalism of this centralized educational provision can blind visitors to the narrowness of its curriculum. Also, it would be a mistake to abandon the Canadian "emphasis... on forging collectivist thinking and increasing the levels of participation by the rank and file."[43] The determination of the provincial labour federations to maintain both "tool" and "awareness" courses allows Canadian trade unionists to represent their members and bargain with the employer *and* to argue a labour-movement perspective in public. The existence of the Labour College attests to the CLC's commitment to broader education.

This breadth of Canadian provision is also illustrated by the program offered by facilities such as Toronto's Metro Labour Education Centre, which ranges from basic adult education including ESL to labour studies. The best example of a distinctive single union provision is the Canadian Auto Workers Paid Educational Leave (PEL) program run from the union's Family Education Centre in Port Elgin, Ontario. The union has negotiated a PEL contract in 75 per cent of its bargaining units covering 93 per cent of its members, the funds pay the full cost of the programme and neither the employer nor the state has any influence over the course. To date 3,000 members have undertaken this four week residential course which is committed to challenging the dominant ideology through an examination of history, economics, politics, and society. The union regards the program as central to underpinning its social unionism perspective.[44] Nothing like it is thriving in the UK, and if UK unions continue to rely on employer-paid release for longer courses, it never will; the only similar option available to UK trade unionists is non-TUC supported evening or distance certificate courses.

Some industrial relations experts might regret the toughness of Canada's unions or their insistence on "social unionism"[45] but it is hard to deny S.M. Lipset's

[42]B. Spencer, "Distance Education in British Trade Unions," *Research in Distance Education*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (1991).

[43]Arnold, *Labour Education in Alberta*, 25.

[44]B. Spencer, "The Canadian Autoworkers PEL Programme," *Industrial Tutor*, Vol. 5, No. 5 (1992).

[45]A number of writers suggest that unions have to change in line with management changes, particularly in the private sector. See the article, and references cited by K. Stratton and Y. Reshef, "Private Sector Unions and Strategic Planning," *Relations Industrielles*, 45-1

assertion that higher union density in Canada, compared to the US, is related to the maintenance of a more collectivist working-class culture.[46] (A similar argument, in reverse, could be made about the UK — the TUC's retreat into "new realism" may have aided Thatcherite ideology and undermined traditional collectivist class values which in turn could have contributed to the UK's steeper decline in union membership. The changes within the TUC have been mirrored in its educational provision.)

One way to sustain collectivist culture and union membership could be to insist on the importance of broadly-based labour education, one that discusses trade union history as well as union contracts. (This need was recognised in the 1980s by some UK unions, noticeably the TGWU, which sponsored longer, more educational courses offered by some universities and polytechnics.[47]) Given the demarcation between Canadian union-provided training courses and Canadian universities labour studies programmes, as well as the UK experience, it is clear that Canadian university programmes should provide for the *educational* rather than the training needs of Canadian workers.

Study programs need to be extended and properly funded (Paul Petrie, recently Simon Fraser Director of Labour Programs was expected to "earn" his salary from course fees). Links need to be established with provincial labour federations, individual unions, and the national federations — a partnership can be built on the understanding of the differences between unions and educational institutions. The possibilities for credit transfer for union courses undertaken need to be explored along with credit courses for unionists and part-time and distance learning opportunities, such as those offered by Athabasca University. If only a fraction of the resources that Canadian universities and extension faculties expend on business and professional education were made available to workers and their organizational and educational needs, there would be a noticeable and qualitative increase in industrial studies provision for trade unionists.

The clear lesson from recent UK experience is that Canadian universities should not attempt to mirror union provision of skills training in a similar way as has happened in the US. Rather, they should continue to develop courses which augment the existing Canadian union educational focus on social unionism and provide educational opportunity for individual unionists to better inform their social action.

(Winter 1990). Shirley Carr and other union leaders discuss "social unionism" in the interviews in P. Kumar and D. Ryan, *Canadian Union MOvement in the 1980s: Perspectives from Unions Leaders* (Kingston 1988).

[46]S.M. Lipset, ed., *Unions in Transition* (ICS Press 1986).

[47]Spencer, "Distance Education."