QUESTIONS FOR SURVIVAL

— some problems of political education and how to combat them.

MARK SMITH

"An activity is deemed to be political if it advances a new strategy. "

An unnamed spokesman for the Manpower Services Commission, quoted in The Guardian, November 3, 1983.

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Some problems of political education and how to combat them

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Introduction

[page 3] This booklet is about some of the issues that face youth and community workers when they become political educators. It began life as an idea for some notes to accompany the book Organise. In writing that book I was conscious of the many difficulties that workers encounter when undertaking the sort of political activity being described. I thought that people could be steered away from the worst pitfalls with a few well-chosen words. Those few words have expanded into these pages.

The questions explored here have grown from the experiences of workers struggling with political education. As such they do not fit into tidy categories. They are also provisional — the pace of events has often overtaken the writing of the booklet. Political education takes place in an ever-changing environment, and it means that an activity can be OK on one day and painted as highly subversive on the next. To this we must add the complexities of employment law. When legal advice was sought on an earlier draft it was found to contain "instances of possible incitement to commit criminal offences with clear encouragement to workers unlawfully to breach their contracts of employment". That came as a shock as one of the express intentions of the booklet was to help workers avoid that kind of problem and the fact that I came adrift should serve as a warning. Political education is a highly contested area.

This warning is also significant because some of the passages in question may well have gone unremarked a few years ago. Within the welfare and education services there has been an increasing use of workers' contracts of employment to insist that, as employees, their first duty is to show 'undivided allegiance' to the employer. We are witnessing a concerted attempt to curtail workers' already limited freedom of action.

Youth and community workers have not escaped from attempts by both central and local government to undermine what autonomy they have, yet a considerable potential for political education still remains. Not only that, youth and community workers are in a position to develop a political education that is

firmly rooted in the everyday experiences of those they work with. We are not hampered by classroom walls and examinations. We have an ideology that emphasises work with the whole person. It should be that we can work with life as it is being lived and build a political education that is in the interests of the vast mass of people who are effectively excluded from exercising any real power over their lives.

Fine words! From what has already been said it is clear that there are limits on the work it is possible to do as paid or funded employees of the state. As I will argue later there is a basic conflict of interest between those who have power in our society and those who seek to establish a political education that enhances human freedom and dignity. Those conflicts of interest will show up in the boundaries put on the work. However attempts to limit the scope of the work can be used by workers to demonstrate the reality of political power and so provide powerful opportunities for learning. As Saul Alinsky once wrote about political campaigning — the real action is in your opponents' reaction.

[page 4] Whilst there are limits on the political education possible in state sponsored youth and community work, there are also contradictions. Helping people to see and use the space that those contradictions create is important work. We sometimes get caught up in grandiose language and thought and so overlook the many small or low-level ways in which a practice can be developed that addresses the material realities of people's lives. It is all too easy to dismiss youth and community work or social work as forms of social control and to forget the real gains they have brought to some people's lives. Those gains have to be safeguarded and the attempt to subordinate people through welfare and educational provision resisted. More than this, those real gains need extending. In one sense at least we should not be afraid of the constraints put on the work by those who have power over policy. Those constraints are there to be exploited and exposed and in so doing contribute to a political education that is rooted in people's everyday experience.

The aim of this booklet is to help workers address some of the central questions of political education and to examine ways in which workers can begin to construct with people a political education that speaks to their condition. As a consequence the booklet is divided into three main sections:-

1. Thinking about political education

This first section attempts to explain why workers should be political educators, what the work is and what some of the key problems are when the work is put into practice.

2. Developing political education within your work

Here I ask a series of questions designed to illuminate some of the central issues that face workers wanting to do political education as part of their recognised job. The questions are about creating the climate, obtaining the backing and doing the sort of thinking that is necessary to push back the boundaries of work within your own organisation. The whole area of how to innovate is an important theme within the text. Whilst many of the specific comments about employment matters refer to those that have or are entitled to have contracts of employment, the general comments and the direction of the questions applies to all workers if they want to avoid sanctions of other kinds.

The questions are not in any particular order and deal with the issues I have seen workers experience problems with.

3. Working outside

Part three briefly examines the severe problems of attempting work outside job descriptions/contracts of employment or the stated policy of your organisation. This is an area fraught with difficulties and some of the key problems are described.

It is a general assumption of this booklet that every effort needs to be made initially to work within job boundaries. The first reason for this is purely pragmatic — on the whole it has been my experience that the strain and degree of organisation necessary to act outside the boundaries of job descriptions and the like in such a contested area of work is such that it can easily outweigh the potential gains in learning involved. There are opportunities to undertake political education 'beyond your contract', but to do so means ensuring a high degree of distance if you are employed as a full time youth and community worker. Work that breaks *[page 5]* contracts involves building a power base and

degree of collective strength that it is difficult to imagine being sustained in the current political climate.

The second reason is a more general point and has, to some, extent, already been dealt with here. The work we do within education and welfare is the product of contradictory demands within society. On the one hand the work is seen by some as a means of containing people. So much of post war government policy appears to be aimed at avoiding conflict — particularly conflict that may threaten the position of those who already hold power. On the other hand our work has brought about real gains for many groups of people who would otherwise experience deeper suffering. In other words when we push job boundaries we are intervening in a dynamic political struggle. Of course such action cannot be taken in isolation and can only be ultimately successful when part of a wider movement to establish a society which is enhancing of peoples freedom and dignity. However the focus of this booklet is on our activities as workers.

Whilst there is a note of gloom in these opening words, in this area at least, it pays to expect the worst. What the booklet sets out to do is to show how some of the main risks can be minimised. In the end though, those risks cannot be totally eliminated, and we have to face and take them or fail both ourselves and the people we work with.

I've tried to write the booklet so that it may be read as a whole. If at times you find the advice or questions obvious, then I would urge you to ask yourself whether you actually do these things. The obvious is often left undone. Similarly if you hope to find in these pages a lengthy discussion of the curriculum and methods of political education, then I am afraid you must look elsewhere (see Further Reading for details).

'Questions' is based on an idea by Gina Ingram and I've benefited from her comments and experience during the writing of the booklet. Also, members of a political education workshop contributed some significant additional items and my thanks go to Trudi Clapperton, John Garwood, Roger Greef, John Howarth, Gordon Keable, Bill Keen, Christine Kerrison, Pat McKenne, Elisabeth Piecha, Terry Webster, Nancy Clarke Briggs and Peter Lavender.

Special thanks must also be recorded to Keith Bell of the Community and Youth Workers Union and to Judy Benson, Terry Cane, Cathy Kirkwood, Rod Moore, Alan Rogers and Christine Rogers. In the end the opinions are my own and, bearing in mind the legal points already made, I need to say that whilst every effort has been made to check the advice given neither I, nor those acknowledged, can accept any responsibility for loss occasioned to any person acting or refraining from action as a result of reading the booklet.

All of which tries to practice what the booklet preaches — at all times try to cover yourself and the people you work with!

Mark Smith February 1984.

1. Thinking about political education

[page 6] One wit has described political education as teaching children to believe what their teachers read in the Guardian that morning. Quite often when people hear the term, they have in mind a picture of the sort of thing that used to happen in school lessons like 'citizenship' or 'civics'. Others may have visions of workers leading people to the barricades (or at least driving them in a minibus to the gates at Greenham Common!) Political education can involve all these things and plenty of other activities as well. In this short section I want to say why it is important, what it is and why workers experience problems with it.

First why should youth and community workers become political educators?

The simple answer is that we are only doing half a job if we fail to recognise the political nature of our work and to act accordingly. This is how Lily Montagu put it back in 1904:

> Like other philanthropists, club workers are too easily satisfied with fringing the problems with which they should endeavour to grapple. They peep down into the abyss in which the under-fed, the ill-housed and badly clothed work out their life's drama, and then turn their energies to surface polishing. They try to make their girls conduct themselves well in the clubs and interest them and amuse them as best they can during their evening's leisure. But they are inclined to forget the industrial life; they like to forget the grim truth that, if girls work for less than a living wage, in a vitiated atmosphere, they are not likely to become the strong, self-controlled women whom we desire the clubs to train.

There is an immediacy to her words that seems to reach across the eighty years that separates the reading from the writing. In these few words she provides a rationale for youth work's concern for the political and speaks to a familiar state of affairs. We still like to forget the grim truth; we are content to fringe problems. And somehow the circle seems complete. As Lily Montagu was

concerned with the industrial life so we find ourselves concerned with the lack of it.

Community workers have, in recent years, been clear about the political nature of their job. For instance in a new study community work is presented as having three aspects:

• first, to help people to act on issues of importance to them. These issues will almost always involve influence over the allocation of resources. For most people this will be the goal, but workers should also see the process as contributing towards:

• second, the development of political responsibility; and *[page 7]*

• third, the development of communal coherence. (Thomas 1983: 102)

Youth workers, like community workers, are being asked by Lily Montagu to develop a sociological imagination. As the words are written here it seems so obvious — people's private troubles are bound up with public issues. Unemployment statistics mean little until they are understood in terms of the lives of the individuals and families who suffer from the indignities and deprivations that being out of work entails. And those personal experiences can only be adequately dealt with and known when the political and economic decisions that brought about mass unemployment are taken into account. Obvious this may all be, yet somehow, we often forget or put out of our minds the social and political context in which youth and community work takes place. We act as if our contribution has no relation to the society of which it is a part. It may be that the personal focus of youth work in particular, in some way acts to exclude the political. Our vision becomes blinkered by the private troubles we encounter. It could be sheer laziness — we have enough on our plate without having to think about social factors. Again it could be fear of the consequences — what being political might mean for jobs and our private lives. Or it could be the size of the concerns leave us bewildered in their face; After all racism, sexism or subordination of any kind are not as easy to tackle as setting up a five-a-side tournament. Recognising the public or social dimension of youth and community work, as Lily Montagu was asking, means that we will have to act differently as workers. But how?

First, recognition of the social and political context should make our everyday responses that bit better informed. For instance the simple realisation that there are far less jobs than there are people wanting them should make us a lot less ready to concentrate on things like self-presentation and interview skills when working with unemployed young people. The unfortunate fact is that in such circumstances by helping one person get a job we exclude another. Whilst there may be good reasons for helping one individual or group at the expense of another, those reasons are of a profoundly political nature. Our actions may be 'personal' but their consequence is 'political'. Here then we can see one of the first steps we must take — making clear the values and political concerns that underpin the work and exploring how they might guide our actions when working at this 'personal' level.

Second, we must act in the political arena itself (what the boundaries of that arena are will be discussed later). Early workers like Lily Montagu saw clearly that they had to be campaigners putting pressure on those who had power to alter the situation facing young people. Indeed a major part of the early work of the National Organisation of Girls Clubs (later to become NAYC) concerned campaigning and educating for improved working conditions for young women. An indication of the nature of early club organisation is given by NOGC's two sponsoring bodies — the National Union of Women Workers and the Women's Industrial Committee.

[page 8] Taking action in the political arena is, to many youth workers somehow separate from their work with young people. It is something we do in our union branches or through our management committees or through our membership of political parties. We seek to make people aware of the situations facing those we work with and the need for further resources for their benefit. We are advocates on their behalf.

One of the things that we fail to see is that the political arena is not just something 'out there' but that it is also part of our lives. In a traditional view, politics is quite separate from one's personal life. Politics is about what happens to societies; personal life is what happens every day to individuals. From what has been said here major issues become part of everyday life and everyday life becomes a major political issue. It means that we can take action of a profoundly political nature in our personal lives and in the way we work with

people. One of the things we can do is to help others to be their own advocates. This is part of the third step we must take — initiating political thinking and action in our work and in our lives.

The extent to which direct political education work should be an integral part of youth work has been a matter of debate right from the start. For instance in 1910 we find suffragettes in Leeds asking their local association of girls clubs if a meeting could be authorised so that they 'might address the elder girls on the suffrage question.' The committee's response has a familiar ring to it — they could take no part in political or controversial movements. They added that 'it would be permissible to send the Annual Report, containing the addresses of club secretaries, leaving it open to individual clubs to accept the offer if they so wished' (Bunt and Gargrave 1980: 55).

It is easy to imagine the sort of discussion that took place in reaching that decision — one that has often been repeated over the years. There is a tendency to present political education as something new — a bandwagon — but there are plenty of examples of explicitly political work taking place right from the beginnings of youth work. One fascinating example was the Clarion Scouts started by Robert Blatchford in 1894 as groupings of young socialist pioneers. The Clarion Scouts claimed to have 120 clubs with 7000 members by 1896. They set up Clarion Youth Houses — forerunners of the youth hostels — and carried the socialist message through the countryside and to neighbouring towns on cycles. For instance the Glasgow Clarion Scouts formed groups of young people to cycle out to mining villages at weekends with papers, leaflets, and parcels. They would hold meetings and discussion groups (Simon 1965: 38-9).

Young people have always talked about politics in clubs and workers have always been faced with questions about the appropriate response. Just how far should the worker be an initiator of political thinking and action?

Again community workers have, over the years been fairly clear in their response. For those working directly with community groups the desire to help people who are adversely affected by the actions of the state and powerful by more general structural problems has frequently been strong. A key community *[page 9]* theme has been the development of self-help and mutual support and of people's own capacities for self-representation and decision making. Youth

workers have tended to emphasise the relationship and leisure aspects of their work and the initiation of political thinking and action is not common. Yet, as we have seen, it should be.

In *Creators not Consumers* (Smith 1982) I argued that one of youth work's central tasks should be to help people gain for themselves the knowledge, feelings, and skills necessary to meet their own and others developmental needs. The 'necessary knowledge, feelings and skills' must also include those conventionally labelled as political as the society we live in directly affects our ability to meet developmental needs. We talk a lot about social education in youth work and it has to be remembered that the word 'social' not only applies to interpersonal relationships but also to the relationship people have with society and to the ways in which society wide forces and institutions affect ourselves and our involvement with others. It is not possible to be 'non-political' in youth and community work. The real question is whether we recognise and act on the political or not.

What is political education?

So far, I have been using words like 'politics' and 'political education' without defining them. Perhaps it is time to look at the word 'political'.

Earlier we saw something of the debate over what the word might be used to cover — does it simply mean the process of government or is it something far broader to do with power? Here I am using the word to describe the overt and covert conflicts that significantly affect the way societies work. In other words it is about power in society and between societies. At a time of change, with resources in relatively scarce supply, individuals, groups, and societies compete for power and advantage. This competition is seen in debates between political parties, but it is also experienced in our everyday lives. The institutions in which we live, such as the family or the club, reflect society wide differences in power. These power differences appear in relations between the sexes or between adults and young people. There is therefore a constant political dimension to our lives and what becomes significant is who has the power to determine the dominant models of relationships like the structure of the family? Why do they have that power? How is it used? Also why is it felt appropriate that they would

have power and by whom? These are fundamental political questions and from them we can begin to see what a definition of political education might involve.

Before I go on to formulate a definition, I just want to make a few brief comments on the word 'education'. Later on in the 'Questions' section there is a discussion of some of the values that underpin educational endeavour. They concern things like the search for truth, a belief in justice and freedom and respect for the right of people to make up their own minds freely about issues and ideas. The first point I want to make here is that education is a conscious process.

It is important to bear in mind the distinction between education and learning. The former is a set of deliberate actions. The latter can be the acquisition of both intended and unintended knowledge etc. It is an outcome of living and thinking.

[page 10] Second, I am using the word 'education' to include the conscious learning of knowledge, skills and feelings (attitudes and values). In order that we may both think and act we must be motivated, have a set of moral principles by which to judge our activities, be able to call on a wide range of intellectual and other skills and have an appropriate store of knowledge. We are concerned with education in its fullest sense.

From this we get a working definition of the area:

> Political education is a conscious process of helping people to gain for themselves the knowledge, feelings and skills necessary to understand and exercise power in and between societies.

We can see that political education is concerned with questions of personal worth as well as broader social issues. It is concerned with helping people to understand the nature of the conflicts which significantly affect the way society works. It should also help people to gain the ability and the motivation to take part in those conflicts. In a sense this view of political education is only really a starting point — a number of questions are left unresolved, and these will only be sorted out in the actual doing of the work.

If we turn to what political education work has actually been happening within youth and community work, then we find a rich variety of activities. These range

from fairly formal knowledge-based approaches such as the provision of a series of talks and workshops on the functioning of local government for community and youth groups to full blown campaigning work and direct work within social movements and parties. In between we can find informal and spontaneous discussion, the development of self-help schemes and of participation and learning about important issues such as nuclear disarmament.[5] The range of approaches is there but each needs testing against our definition. For instance if we look at a number of participation exercises the central aim appears to be to develop the ability of participants to act upon their immediate environment such as the club or group. That environment is shaped by the very movements and institutions that are involved in the society wide determination of power, and unless that connection is made it becomes difficult to justify such work .as political education.

Similarly we also need to look carefully at whether any particular piece of work satisfies our educational criteria. Is the activity conscious, committed to the pursuit of truth, enhancing of human freedom and dignity and so on.

Why do workers experience problems with political education?

If you read the introduction and what has gone before in this section, you are probably already fairly clear on why problems exist. However I do want to briefly draw together what I see as some critical themes before we turn to the 'questions' themselves.

First and foremost, political education has to be recognised as a political activity. It deals with highly dangerous and seditious commodities like ideas and values. *[page 11]* What makes these ideas and values so important is that they concern the way power is exercised and held within society. We want to know who has power and what right they have to it. We ask whether such a distribution of power is fair, whether government's or institutions actions are contributing towards human freedom and dignity. One of the most subversive aspects of political education is when it begins to examine 'taken for granted' ideas and institutions for their political significance. Dominant groups within society have an interest in the status quo. Thus 'the way things are' is often represented as the natural order of things. Similarly the special interests of groups are presented in such a way as to appear that it is in the interest of all

for something to happen. For instance politicians might talk of the group of which they are a part. In such a system we all need 'built in crap detectors' so that people's words and actions can be judged.

As if suggesting that the political system might act in particular groups' interests were not enough, the whole area becomes further contested because in order for people to make judgements they need principles to act upon. Political education involves the acquisition of values, and it is biased in favour of certain ideas and feelings. We have seen this already. For instance it is based on a belief of human worth and freedom. It explicitly advocates participation by all in political processes. It values curiosity. True these are ideas and values that underpin education and youth and community work generally, but they are viewed with a great deal of suspicion when they appear in political contexts.

Political education is not only concerned with thinking, it also involves action. Within youth and community work there is an emphasis on learning through doing. People learn by actually experiencing a situation and by then reflecting upon it and building theory. This might mean developing attitudes and skills in organisation through things like members committees or tenants groups; encouraging feelings of personal worth and winning resources through the organisation of self-help groups such as in the self-advocacy movement for the mentally handicapped; or helping groups to campaign about issues they feel strongly about. Action based forms of political learning present managers and workers with a number of problems, not the least of which is that the target for people's actions is frequently the worker's own employer or funder. In other words we find educators working in what has traditionally been seen as the political arena and many politicians and policymakers do not see it as an educator's place in life. We should remain in the classroom or in the youth club and be "neutral". Those in power have an interest in keeping many things labelled as 'non-political' so that attention is not drawn towards the way in which power operates. Education is one of those things and when educationalists do not play the game of being 'neutral' then much is thrown into doubt. Not only this, in a society where power is unevenly distributed it is likely that workers find themselves working with those who suffer in the system. Indeed it is explicitly part of community work thinking that they should. Given this it is probable that the worker will be involved in activities that are viewed as

oppositional by dominant groups in society. Involving people in political action and oppositional action at that, is a third reason for problems.

To act and to think requires motivation and one of the central motivating forces in politics is people's identity with others who they see as being in a similar predicament. For those who are denied any real access to power the only significant influence they can have in the political system is when they join together with others.

[page 12] In other words when they take collective action. For such action to take place there has to be an identity with a collectivity such as a party, class, or movement. As soon as political educators are seen as helping people to affiliate to groups and movements that are perceived as 'political' then major interests are at stake. Individual questioning of the system and action by small community groups are one thing but when connections are made to wider political groupings and there is the possibility of collective action within the political system, then the educator is sure to be treated as a political animal.

A comprehensive political education entails ideas, values, learning through action and developing motivation through identification. Each of these things pose major questions for the educator. Taken together they are often viewed with alarm by the ruling groups in society.

There is a basic conflict of interest between those that hold power and those that seek to educate people excluded from power. Political education has a limited acceptability because it helps maintain a picture of democracy. It starts to become unacceptable when people begin to ask serious questions or act as if there was democracy. When workers become political educators, they become political actors. Their actions will be contested by those who have power if what is done or said does not support their position. Thus in the last year the Manpower Services Commission has withdrawn funding from schemes that sought to help young people gain some critical understanding of unemployment; the Home Office instructed a major voluntary agency, the Community Projects Foundation, to control the political activities of their staff; and a number of workers have ended up in the clutches of disciplinary proceedings and the like. All this comes in the wake of the recent Review Group Report on the Youth Service which recommended that the provision of political

education should be a normal part of the Youth Service curriculum — "pursued in such ways as to involve active participation."

If this wasn't enough, the political educator can find that politics can become very personal. To what extent are the ideas and values we are discussing and articulating reflected in the way we work or the way in which we live our lives. Are our actions a reflection of our values? In approaches that use learning by experience, the way we do things and the people we are, inevitably find their way onto the agenda. Politics and personal life cannot be kept separate from one another.

The explicitly political nature of this area of work also seems to throw into sharp relief a number of problems that central to other areas of educational endeavour. We find problems over the role of values, the nature of the worker's role, the conflict between ends and means, and the ability to develop team approaches. The list goes on. Many of these issues are discussed elsewhere and in the 'Questions' I have restricted myself to those aspects that workers appear to have found most difficulty with.

Lastly workers face problems with political education not so much because it is new but because it is an unknown quantity. In other words they face the classic problems of innovatory work. These problems include the gaining of acceptability and credibility, building power bases to safeguard any space won and securing funding. All these activities require quite sophisticated skills — in fact they are *[page 13]* the very political skills we need to be sharing with those we work with. Thus the actual process of making space for political education can be a form of political learning in itself.

Already in the text you may have noticed an emphasis on workers. In the main these words are addressed to people who are either actually doing face-to-face or are close to it and are wanting to create a place for political education. In the end it is workers who 'do' political education and it is they who are the innovators.

The history of innovation within youth work in recent years is a workers' history. If we look at the significant changes in the last decade — the growth of junior club work, the pioneering of new approaches to work with girls and young women, the development of black youth work and the establishment of daytime

work with the young unemployed — what we see is workers responding directly to needs expressed in their communities. By and large it is only later that national agencies and local authorities begin to take on any active developmental role. Indeed these developments have often been achieved against considerable opposition from youth and community work policy makers at the local level.

Besides being the people who actually innovate, (or perhaps because they are the people who innovate), workers are also the individuals who end up at the receiving end if things turn sour. If, a bit later on, you find the tone or language confrontational, then I would urge you to remember this. Employers are in a position of considerable power in relation to employees. This can manifest itself both through the control of a worker's actions and the supply of resources. In the last resort it boils down to the ability to control workers' opportunities to practice their craft and be paid for it. Failure to recognise this power differential can leave the worker badly exposed and vulnerable. (I have dealt with the implications for employers in another booklet *Political Education — some common questions answered*, NAYC 1981)

In this section I have tried to say why workers should be concerned with the political in their work, what political education is and what the nature of the problems with political education are in practice. I wanted to show that political education is simply part of good youth and community work. Political education's problems are inseparable from those of youth and community work. These problems are related to both their political and innovatory nature as well as to more general issues concerned with the process of education. Such issues provide the backdrop to the questions that follow.

2. Developing political education within your work

1. Are you clear what being an employee means?

[page 14] If you are being paid to do a job it is crucial that you are fully aware of the responsibilities this puts upon you. In return for payment you are expected to act in a certain way and undertake certain tasks. Within youth and community work there is much looseness about specific expectations and whilst this can provide wide scope for action it can also lead to people's downfall.

There is a further reason why workers who engage in activities that might be irritating to their employers should take special care to be model employees. It is all too easy for opponents to point to some area of your work in order to discredit your political education activities. In fact employers will often shy away from direct disciplinary action concerning political activities and will use associated or other breaches of contract.

Aside from anything specifically laid down in your contract of employment, workers are generally obliged to:

Work and co-operate

Your primary obligation is to turn up for work and personally do what you have agreed to do. You do not have to do more than your contract requires and co-operation only applies to what is legal.

Obey orders

You must obey any reasonable and lawful instructions your employer gives you. The exceptions to this would involve transgressions of the law, the use of unsafe machinery and plant or work outside the strict boundaries of your contract. In addition to this, instructions to work in an unprofessional manner can be questioned and disobeyed if there is sound case law to support your case. An example of this might be a refusal to open a building because of inadequate staffing levels. You must obtain the advice of your union or professional

association in such circumstances. However this may still be, technically, a breach of contract.

This is an area that can lead to major problems — and has probably led to the most trouble in terms of disciplinary proceedings against workers. There can be a number of defences to the charge of gross insubordination but they nearly all mean admitting your transgression and claiming extenuating circumstances.

Take reasonable care

You must take reasonable care in the way you carry out your duties, If you cause *[page 15]* injury or damage because of your carelessness and your employer loses money, then you can be ordered to pay the money back. Rather more likely, failure to take reasonable care will lead to disciplinary proceedings and possible dismissal.

One area of difficulty as far as experiential approaches to political education are concerned are things like arrests at demonstrations and the like. Given the somewhat random nature of policing at such events, such activities have to be approached with great caution. You must ensure that the people you are working with are aware of the legal position of their activities and that every care is taken, through things like stewarding, that the law is conformed to. You must inform your employer of activities that may, through no fault of your own, lead to legal proceedings. The point about this area is that whilst it may run the risk of disciplinary proceedings — perhaps more significant are the political implications. Actual and potential transgressions of the law by young people whilst you are technically working with them can be used all too easily to discredit your work.

Whilst we are discussing demonstrations it is worth noting that workers have faced disciplinary proceedings both for leading and for being on demonstrations that have involved people they are working with. In the end the only real safeguard is to have written, specific and positive permission to do so. One argument that has been used to gain such permission when working with young people is that you have to be present to protect people who are at risk. Some employers have attempted to forbid workers publicly opposing the policies of their department or authority (Jones 1983: 120-1).

Be trustworthy

If you pass on "confidential" information about your employer' business you are breaking your contract which requires 'faithful service'. This can be a tricky area as far as youth and community workers are concerned. There have been a number of instances where confidential minutes of committees have been passed on to the groups that they affect e.g. in the case of compulsory purchase orders, planning discussions and so on. Here is an old chestnut — are workers 'accountable' to their employer or to the community and groups they work with? Whatever the ethical arguments, you should be aware of the political and the legal implications of any action you might take in this respect.

Work only for your employer during working hours

Youth and community work is beset with problems in this area — given the sessional nature of many contracts and the unsocial hours worked. You must keep clear records of when you work — and do not undertake activities that are not for your employer during that time. Care has also to be taken not to use stationery and equipment unless specific permission has been given. Here the use of official headed paper for personal or union business has to be watched, similarly the use of telephones and photocopiers. In the case of the latter items some union branches have been able to negotiate through their joint consultative committees usage for union business. Officials of recognised trade unions are allowed time-off for training and for union duties and under the ACAS Code of Conduct the employer should provide basic facilities including places for meetings, use of the phone and, 'if justified' certain office facilities.

[page 16] In this brief discussion I hope it has become clear that it is very easy to break contracts. What is not so easy is to assess the consequences of such action.

2. Do you know why you want to politically educate?

In the opening sections I discussed why I think you ought to be doing political education work — but are they the reasons you have for being engaged in this area? As with any other area of work, we have to be vigorous in our thinking if we are to be true to our craft. However the difficulties associated with political education make it especially important to be thought out.

At this point you might like to list your own reasons on a separate sheet of paper. When you have done that, you could consider whether the list is an adequate summary of your thinking. Could you argue the case for your involvement in political education to another person?

There are, of course, a range of justifications for political education and for the involvement of youth and community workers. They frequently begin with some comment on the political ignorance of those we work with. Here are some useful quotes from the survey of young people's views that was commissioned by the Review Group on the Youth Service:

> Around three-quarters of the 14- to 19-year-olds acknowledged being politically apathetic, and political involvement at this stage was minimal, only 2% ever attending any political meetings/parties...
>
> The younger adolescents were certainly less interested in politics (80%) than the older ones (65%), while those in further education, who were perhaps a little more radically inclined, were least likely to claim disinterest (59% versus 77% employed, 70% unemployed).
>
> The adolescents felt strongly that there was a lack of opportunity for the young to make themselves heard in the adult world both through lack of understanding on the part of adults (72%) and their views, if expressed, being generally ignored (60%). The unemployed felt particularly disenfranchised in this way (DES 1983: 25)

Now some justifications and explanations of political education.

> Young people need to be equipped with a basic understanding of the functioning of our democratic political system, of the mixed economy and the industrial activities, especially manufacturing, which create our national wealth. (DES 1977: 11-16)

[page 17]

> Political education is not the same thing as political studies or civics though it may include some elements of civics. Much of the political education in schools or even within the Youth Service has this passive character. It is not enough. What is required is experience of such a

> kind that the young people learn to claim their right to influence the society in which they live and to have a say in how it is run. It is active participation in some form of political activity, formal or informal, which really counts. (DES 1982 para 5.37)

Para 5.37 Experience and Participation, Report of the Review Group on the Youth Service in England, HMSO 1982 CMND 8686

And why the Youth Service?

> The Youth Service has the potential to fulfil a much needed and vital role not only as a forum for the theory of political education but also as a scene of political activity addressed to issues which are of concern to young people. Through the internal machinery of their youth clubs or centres, through the wider scope offered by various forms of youth council in the locality, through the participation in local and national issues, the Service can offer young people the real opportunity to express their views in the relatively 'safe' context appropriate to the inexperience of those taking part. (DES 1983 para 5.39)

Finally a thought from two HMIs who specialise in political education.

> Those who claim that politics ought to be 'kept out of' whatever it may be are being disingenuous (or, on occasions disingenuous and politically skilful). Wherever there is disagreement, there lies a potential for politics; for aggregating issues, organising support, arguing, propagating, settling differences. There is 'politics' in this wide sense in every club, society or classroom if we did but see it."

Here are some of the reasons others have advanced for political education — and such quotes when used judiciously can provide useful support in your arguments — however they are no substitute for your own thinking.

3. Are you able to demonstrate that you have clear objectives and that you know how to achieve them?

The last question concentrated on your own thinking — but are you able to communicate that thinking to others? Political education is subject to much

closer scrutiny than almost any other area of work. It means that you will have to be able to state your aims, objectives, and proposed methods of work in a form that your managers and others are able to understand. This may well be different to your own language, but care does have to be taken to avoid jargon. At this point I am assuming that your stated aims are also your intended aims.

[page 18] Broadly the sort of questions you will need to prepare answers for are as follows:

Why do you want to become involved in political education?

You need to be able to state the broad social and educational reasons for involvement in this area. In youth work it is possible to use the Youth Service Review Group report as some form of basic justification (see Question 2). Beyond that you should also be able to point to a specific need in your own community and setting and the appropriateness of you and your agency for the work.

What are you seeking to achieve?

Here you should work out clear objectives. These do not have to be stated in a highly explicit or behavioural form, but should, in the main, be kept at a concrete and practical level. I say 'in the main' because some workers have found it helpful to keep a clear moral dimension in their stated aims and objectives. Words like freedom, justice, human dignity all have contested meanings, but they are helpful when circumstances force the inevitable changes on your plans. If you are called to account, they can also be used to explain your actions. You should also say who you are aiming to work with.

How will you measure success?

With clear objectives it is easier to demonstrate the degree of your success. If the idea is going to be a difficult one to sell — it may well be helpful to suggest some sort of review session after the work has got going so that managers can see what the progress and problems have been. This sort of action is particularly important if you want to take people with you.

What methods will you use?

Managers will be paying special attention to this area, particularly if you are using methods that may lead to some form of political action.

Who will need to be involved?

You should try to work out what the impact of your political education work will be on other areas of work. For instance what are the staffing implications, who needs to agree and support your activities?

What will you need to do it?

Will you need additional resources, time etc.

What timescale is involved?

It is as well to keep initial work within a fairly short timescale.

4 Do you know the policy boundaries applicable to you and your work?

Having a good grasp of your employer's policy (or lack of it) is a vital component in developing any innovatory work. First, the obvious, if you know what the policy is, you are in a much better position to use or change it. *[page 19]*

Second, policy is a double edged sword — whilst it may place limits on your work it can also be used to place limits on what your employer can do to you. Making the other side live up to their book of rules is a well-known campaigning ploy. The intricacies of policy statements and procedures frequently give great room for dispute and debate. Certainly many cases that unions fight when their members have been accused of some breach of the rules are based on the argument that the employer has failed to honour their side of the contract. For instance where the employer has not provided adequate support or supervision or where there were no clear policy guidelines in that area.

Third, you need to know the limits and the danger zones so that you may take appropriate action when you are getting close to them.

Some pointers to consider:

Don't make your boundaries tighter than they need to be. Don't restrict yourself more than you need to.

In my experience most workers draw the boundaries more tightly than their employers do. We usually stop well short of the potential in our situation for political education. There is a form of self-censorship where we read into employers policy positions constraints that are not there. Or it might be that we simply want to avoid aggravation. We need to look for blockages in our own thinking and vision so that we may work to make constraints explicit and visible. In doing so we begin to open up a central political process.

Use an absence of policy to develop one that fits your own

The reality is that very few employers have a thought-out policy in this area of work other than "anything that rocks the boat must be avoided". Where there is some semblance of a policy it is often contradictory. Frequently there is considerable space for workers to begin to formulate policy on political education. You may for instance use staff meetings and conferences to produce 'professional' papers. Similarly semi-official bodies such as Youth Organisations Committees or district youth committees might be encouraged to formulate policy. Also voluntary bodies such as the local council of voluntary organisations or the union may be in a position to develop policy directly with councillors and officials.

One of the key contradictions that can occur in policy is connected with the fact that the current balance of educational thinking favours political education. It is therefore often difficult for employers to oppose political education on educational grounds. The argument is political. However employers cannot be too blatant about this and so have to wrap opposition up in administrative or educational jargon. For instance you may get questions about the most efficient use of plant and time, suggestions that schools might be the most appropriate place for political education and so on. There is sometimes a danger of thinking that the arguments advanced by policymakers against political education are their 'true' objections — frequently they are not. Thus whilst it may be good tactics to answer and expose objections, it is no guarantee of success. Often all that happens is that the ground shifts. To create the freedom to act it is

necessary to look behind the arguments for the objections those opposing you are loath to make public.

Calculate the long and short term gains of short cuts

One way around the contradictions that appear is sometimes to call political *[page 20]* education something different such as 'social education' or 'community involvement' or 'participation'. Whilst these may be useful as short-term measures there are dangers — in the end they are likely to be found out and it is therefore necessary that you make some calculation about the likely consequences. For instance will you have made sufficient progress for the thing to be recognised and accepted? There is another consideration here. If you wish to push back the policy boundaries then hiding your intentions can only really be a successful short term tactic. In the end you must become public. I personally have always deliberately used the term 'political education' so that the issues are forced out into the open right from the start and would advise others to think carefully before trying to smuggle the work under some other heading.

Always share your knowledge of policy with the people you are working with. As with much else that has been said here, the nature of the gaps and limits in your employers policy need sharing with the people you are working with. The process of exposing and using constraints and contradictions is a crucial piece of political learning.

There is a great danger of engaging in the changing of policy without reference to or the involvement of, those whom that policy affects. In this we can see the possibilities of slippage into ways of working that emphasise the worker as the arbiter of needs, the decider of what is best.

There is a further point. To a large extent the people we work with are, or should be able to expect to be, waged workers. Whilst youth and community work affords considerable freedoms, those of us who are paid should not be so arrogant as to forget that we too are, literally, workers. Our struggle to push back the boundaries of the work and to protect our conditions of employment not only affects the people we work with, it also provides opportunities for people to learn how space can be won in the workplace.

For many adults we work with this latter opportunity is unnecessary. In fact it is they who have much to teach us in terms of workplace organisation. However for others, and in particular for young people, there may be little opportunity elsewhere and here there is a possibility of extending their understanding.

5. Have you examined the way you work? Is it appropriate for political education?

We have to think carefully about the way we work in order to examine whether our methods and personality affect the potential for political education in our situations. In *Creators not Consumers* I discuss at some length this question and here I want to draw attention to four points.

Creating dialogue

Effective political education is based on dialogue. It entails the development of a reciprocal relationship between educator and educatee. As one writer puts it: *[page 21]*

> It is not a question of authorities simply teaching the 'correct' vocabulary of politics, but of teachers and learners together generating the relevant vocabulary for understanding and meeting their own peculiar predicaments and dilemmas. (Entwistle 1981)

Such an approach is based on the idea that the educator has much to learn from those s/he works with. It isn't just that discussion is an effective means of learning but that its active nature can lead participants into exploring areas that they see as relevant. If, in such circumstances, the educator is too prescriptive then there is the strong possibility of failing to connect with people's experiences and feelings.

Dialogue implies literacy. It involves, as the writer above suggests, building a relevant vocabulary for understanding the situations we all find ourselves in. There is a long tradition of political education through literacy. In recent years this has been expressed in the writing of Paulo Freire. His pedagogy of the oppressed involves the process called 'conscientization' and, hence, the liberation of the person through a campaign to promote adult literacy (see Freire 1973). The political education movement within this country has also had

an emphasis on language. The term ‘political literacy’ has been extensively used to describe the main aim of political education. Literacy has long been seen as the essentially liberating intellectual skill.

This emphasis on dialogue and literacy poses a number of questions for our practice. For instance:

- How much attention do we pay to the literacy of those we work with? Can we identify those people we work with who have difficulties with reading and writing? What do we do to help develop those skills?

- How much time do we spend in discussions with people? So much of youth work, for instance, is simply about maintaining contact rather than any lengthy or detailed discussion.

- To what extent do the words we use connect with people’s experience of power and social division. Do we use concepts like class, gender, ethnicity, age and handicap to explain distributions of power?

- What do we talk about? Do we encourage the making of links with political phenomena?

- Does the ethos we create encourage dialogue? What messages do our actions and buildings give off?

Learning through doing

In the approach to political education I have been describing there is a tremendous emphasis on understanding our direct experience. It involves exploring our lives and the institutions that are part of living. The family, school, work, being *[page 22]* unemployed, being male or female, and being a member of a club or organisation all provide much material for us to work on. Our aim is to turn this experience into conscious learning. We want to understand the political nature of our lives and relationships. Once we have developed some sort of understanding we can then apply it to what we are currently experiencing. The process then continues with further reflection.

This process is usually known as ‘experiential learning’ (or learning by doing). When looked at in the context of political education, the assumption is made

that much that forms the curriculum can only be learnt in action. The competencies involved in campaigning, working in groups, developing relationships can only be acquired in a limited form within the confines of the traditional classroom. They only gain real meaning when directly experienced. As with our concern with dialogue, we need to ask some fundamental questions about the extent to which our practice allows such learning. For instance:

- How much attention do we pay to helping people identify and understand significant experiences? Do we encourage observation and reflection?

- Have we created a framework in our work for people to be able to act and then openly discuss their experiences?

- Do we understand the consequences of adopting political education approaches that involve, action?

Letting go

In action-based approaches to political education it is necessary for the worker to give over quite a good deal of the control over what is happening to the people being worked with. It means for instance, that when things are going wrong it is usually not the workers role to step in and magically put things right. In doing so s/he can so easily be curtailing the learning of those involved (or simply teaching them to leave it to the 'experts'). Whilst such ways of working come easily to some youth and community workers, many find the experience difficult. Similarly people used to working in more structured educational settings may find the pace and the mistakes frustrating. All this points to the need for the worker to examine very carefully the role they propose to take in the exercise or project and to prepare for it. Helping other people to make decisions rather than taking them yourself, is a major change of gear particularly when it is also in such a politically sensitive area. Some of the steps to take include:

- adopting a different frame of mind (more easily said than done)

- preparing the ground with councillors, managers etc

- making clear your role to the people being worked with

• allowing the work plenty of time

• being clear on the sorts of learning you can expect to occur. Many of these things are discussed elsewhere in *Questions… [page 23]*

The hidden curriculum

So often it is not what we say that matters but the way we say it. Thus the famous youth work phrase 'I asked them what they wanted, and they didn't know'. If there is no tradition of participation within a setting, or an expectation that the worker will reject suggestions, then people are unlikely to respond. The sorts of questions that need to be asked are:

• Am I a person who responds to other people's ideas?

• What sort of personality do I project in my work — is it one that encourages people to talk and experiment with ideas?

• How does the club or project function — how much is it an expression of my and the other workers' personalities?

• How much do I concentrate on concrete outcomes rather than on the way things happen?

These interconnected concerns about the way we work are not things that can be simply worked out in our heads. They too, involve working through in action.

6. Have you covered yourself with your employers?

If you are intending to get involved in political education as part of your work then it is sensible to locate your work firmly in the structure of your employing organisations so that when things go wrong you are covered. Some things you should do:-

Get the agreement of your manager/s to your plan

One possible approach here is to use the idea of a 'project' to give an aura of experimentation and educational innovation. It also has the advantage of a distinct time scale and would provide the manager/s with some opportunity for review. Whatever you do, you must make every effort to get their agreement in

writing. Never rely on the spoken word. In meetings ensure things are minuted. If your manager/s will not put things in writing, then you should write to them saying that if you do not hear from them by a specified date, you will assume their assent. If verbal promises are made, then a letter should be sent to your manager summarising the significant points of the conversation. Whilst these actions won't guarantee protection, they do at least demonstrate a concern to keep your employer informed and to 'obey orders'.

You should put things in writing when submitting your own proposals Your proposals must be clear and explicit enough to cover your intended actions. Some workers have tended to write the sort of proposals that they think that their managers will approve but which do not bear any great relation to what they intend to do. Whilst there are clearly different ways of putting things — I do not *[page 24]* think that this is a particularly advisable course of action. The wording must be such that it will cover your actions — if it doesn't then there is a strong possibility that you will be called to account.

A further practice that can be profitable used is the 'copy for information'. You may want to keep your manager informed by passing on copies of routine reports, letters etc. so that in the event of any problem you have the defence that you kept people informed. Always keep a record of what you send and when you send it. One variant of this approach is to besiege people with paper — so much that it is difficult to read in any detail. In this way things can tend to go through 'on the nod'. It is however, incredibly time consuming. Unfortunately it is also a technique that is sometimes used in reverse, where management ask for very detailed and regular reports.

Negotiate a relevant job description

You should attempt to negotiate with your employer or line manager a job description that includes specific references to involvement in political education. It should specify the sorts of activities that the employer and you agree to as being legitimate areas of action. There is an old saying that job descriptions are useless in good times and essential in bad times. When dealing with political education you should expect the worst. You should also ensure that your work is regularly reviewed (more of this in Question 11)

In the long run work for clear policy statements

An overall policy statement that states the need for political education and your responsibility for carrying it out can be useful. Such statements must be worked out both within your own sector or area e.g. in the youth and community service, and outside through normal political processes.

Think about a code of conduct

Another possibility is to work out a code of conduct with your employer. For instance you might want to have specified what your role should be during demonstrations, whilst lobbying councillors and so on.

One of the areas worth including is the delicate matter of what should go to officials and what goes direct to councillors. Also the timing of such information etc. and the nature of the circumstances need working out. One of the obvious things to consider here is some provision that you warn officials when you are going to approach councillors so that they may be ready to respond (and hopefully defend your work).

Whilst the process of working through the development of policy statements and codes of conduct can be useful, you should never fall into the trap of actually believing what they say. As the Youth Service Review pointed out, 'pieces of paper are apt to be thrown to one side when it comes to a pinch'. However, such pieces of paper can be invaluable when it comes to things like disciplinary proceedings, they can often be enough to get a worker off the hook. Also great care has to be taken in the way you interpret policy. For instance you may act in such a way as to face a charge of recklessness although the general action was within the policy. As a 'professional' worker you should be in a position to predict, within limits, the outcome of a particular action. If it can be shown that you have not thought *[page 25]* things through then there could be problems with your employer and the people you work with. Deciding on a basic strategy for dealing with management is dealt with in Question 11.

7. Are you honest with your employer?

We have already seen that workers must, if they wish to stay within contract, act in a trustworthy manner and obey orders. Workers who are not honest with

their employers can face difficulties and possibly disciplinary proceedings for breach of that 'essential relationship of trust and confidence', which on many occasions Industrial Tribunals have seen fit to imply into the contract of employment. Whilst the legal position is clear — the ethical and professional position is not.

Looking at the ethics that should govern the relationship between workers and those they work with we can see that honesty and openness are of great importance. This develops from the core values that underpin youth and community work — values like a belief in justice, equality, human dignity, and a respect for truth. Now it is perfectly clear to me as a worker and a trainer that I should be as honest and straightforward as I possibly can with the students and people I work with. In a way I have a double responsibility in this respect because I often have power over those people.

Inevitably when working with people, values can be brought into conflict with one another and require interpreting to the specific situations. Thus, in talking with one person about another we have to respect any confidences we have exchanged with that other person. The problem when we then transfer this to the employer/employee relationship is that within a crude reading of contractual case law the employer can require or expect information that may break the bounds of confidentiality established with the people we work with. To refuse to volunteer such information may well breach that 'essential relationship of trust and confidence' between employee and employer. It is possible to cite passages from the job description and then argue that it is the normal custom and practice of youth and community workers to act in a certain way. In other words by asking for certain types of information the employer would be requiring the worker to act in an 'unprofessional' manner. However as readers will only be too aware, what constitutes 'unprofessional' behaviour can be open to dispute and the judgements of employers and industrial tribunals can be somewhat different from those of workers and their professional or industrial organisation.

Beyond this there is a more general question — does the possession of power alter the ethical position? As a youth worker, I can sometimes have considerable power over the people I work with. As a worker, my employer has considerable power over my actions. I know as a youth worker that the information I am

given by young people will be affected by the difference in power between us. The young person might tell very different things to her/his peers.

[page 26] I know that I must not abuse that relationship and would want and help the people I work with to take steps to protect themselves against such abuses. I would hope that both parties could be truthful but would recognise that given the reality of power relationships this could not always be so. As an employee I might hope that the same would apply to my unequal relationship with my employer but, like the young people I work with, I cannot rely on the other party's good intentions in this area. I in turn must protect myself. The problem then becomes what is legitimate practice and this is the very point I ended the last paragraph with — it is open to dispute. Not only that, a worker has to balance other central values such as a belief in justice and freedom. It may be that the requirement to be truthful to the employer and obey orders cuts across these values so severely that the worker decides to break 'the relationship of trust and confidence' they have with their employer. This involves breaking contract and in such circumstances the worker has to decide whether to lie/misinform the employer or to be open about their ethical inability to comply with the employer's request. Being absolutely pragmatic about this, dilemma — what works best?

Misinforming management or keeping them ignorant of matters can only be kept up for a limited amount of time. This approach also has the nasty habit of ending somewhat abruptly and angrily. To keep in control the worker has therefore to think carefully about the moment to come clean, choosing the moment when least damage is done to the political education work and yet before any explosion that might cause attitudes to harden.

Another variant of this approach has been labelled by one writer as the 'Billy Whizz' phenomenon (Rigby 1982). Here the tactic is basically one of avoidance — the worker keeps busy, gets 'lost' in the neighbourhood or the work, rarely appears in the office and always seems in a hurry. In other words the technique is to make it as difficult as possible for management to keep track of your activities. Again it is only a matter of time before you get caught. It is my feeling that these approaches need treating with a good degree of caution. There may be circumstances when they are appropriate but on the whole, it is better to attempt to enlist management as an 'ally'. There will often be circumstances

when they will support your work provided you keep them informed. In addition it is important that attempts are made to push back the frontiers of what is acceptable in the work. At the point where management and politicians say "no" then the worker has to decide whether to carry on and take the consequences, work through other means, or give in (for the moment!)

Additionally being perceived as honest and open can be a very useful political weapon. Thus the worker who is open about and who can communicate the intrinsic integrity of, their position can often command respect for their actions even though they may in some way break contract. Whilst this still means the worker has to face the consequences of their actions — it may be that the consequences are somewhat different and favour the worker rather more than would happen otherwise. However each situation needs judging in its own terms and workers must take legal and casework advice through their union in those circumstances. *[page 27]*

8 Are you open about your own values and objectives with the people you are working with?

At the centre of the conflicts and controversies that go to make up political education stand competing personal and social values. Inevitably many of the workers and trainers who are advocates of political education are themselves heavily involved in some social or political cause.

In other words workers will have strong ideas themselves about the nature of politics.

The question we have to face is how does the worker handle and use his/her own values when involved in an educational endeavour such as this?

Education itself is, not value free. It is built on broadly liberal values such as:

- a commitment to *truth* or rather, the search for truth guided by;

- *reason*, the critical process that leads us to make decisions about what is useful and what is not;

- a belief in *human freedom* i.e. the opportunity to make significant choices in a self-willed and uncoerced way;

• *justice* or what is a fair way to make social decisions; and

• *equality*, the impartial treatment of people with different treatments being grounded only in the recognition of just and relevant differences.

Each of these values is open to considerable debate as to their concrete application — but it would seem that such values should lead the worker to make explicit the reasons for their involvement in political education and their own beliefs. Not only does this allow people to make judgements about the nature of your actions and words but it can also help with development. This is especially true in work with young people, where there is much to be gained from open debate with other people who have strong ideas and beliefs and who are prepared to say what they think.

I'm sure that at this point there will be readers who are thinking that there is a great danger that the expression of strong opinion by the worker may well obstruct the development of people's thinking. It might be that the workers thoughts are adopted without the person thinking through the thing themself. All I can say is, yes there is this danger, (although we should have some humility about the power of our influence!) but it can be limited by the way we do things. The key question becomes does you own expression of opinion help the other person develop their own thinking in a self-willed and uncoerced way? In other words does it open up discussion or close it down? If it doesn't help the person to think for themselves then keep your opinions to yourself.

[page 28] Within schools and colleges there has been considerable debate about educators values. The key principles that one commentator, David Bridges, sees as applying to world studies provide a useful starting point for thought. These principles include:

• A respect for persons, which includes people's rights to hold opinions that differ from your own and a readiness to understand these opinions ourselves;

• A concern to cultivate and develop the personal autonomy of people — including in that the understanding and self-confidence which are conditions of free choice;

• An honest acknowledgement of the true state and status of opinion — including an open recognition of the uncertainty, the provisionability, the

controversiality of judgement and recognition of the difficult distinction between fact and value;

• A readiness on behalf of the educator to detach from her opinion as far as it is possible the authority which belongs to her position and personal charisma and to rest it on the authority of reason alone;

• A concern that the people we work with grasp the reasons, evidence and argument underlying any opinion we give;

• A concern to teach the controversy and not just one person's view of the proper conclusion of the controversy;

• A concern to cultivate in ourselves and others a constant alertness to, and ruthless criticism of, especially those beliefs which we take most for granted.[5]

One of the dilemmas that workers often face in this area is whether they should work to politically empower individuals and groups who have values and beliefs that fundamentally contradict their own. The most obvious examples of this have to do with racism and sexism. To me it is clear moral and political lunacy to take actions that might strengthen groups that disagree, in a basic way, with the values that underpin the work. When this possibility occurs it is up to the worker to make their position clear — to say that their own values will not allow them to work with the group on that particular issue. This does not, of course, preclude them from working on other things with the group or individual. Indeed the act of making your own values clear in this respect may lead on to working with the group on, for example, their own racism and sexism.

Following on from this I do want to add a footnote on the question of bias.

When becoming involved in political education it's a penny to a pound that someone will raise the issue of balance or bias. We have seen that political education is inevitably biased. Given it's values it is difficult to be 'balanced' about things like racism, sexism, violence and oppression of any kind. As Bernard Crick once wrote, "..everyone is worried about bias, because everyone is biased. The avoidance of bias would be the avoidance of life"[6]. When the question of bias arises I feel the best tack is to be honest about the problems involved and point to the values that influence the way you work. Also you can point to the many

[page 29] safeguards that exist e.g. management committees, members groups, parental comment, community comment and so on.

I would recommend that you try to deflect attention away from the question of bias. It does tend to be an issue that gets people heated and can leave workers with unworkable conceptions of 'balance'. Certainly the reality within schooling is that whilst at the beginning of programmes of political education there may be some noise about bias — as soon as the programme is established and running nothing more is heard. The thing you want to avoid is having to act like a television controller, carefully adding up the amount of time spent on each viewpoint or making sure that each political viewpoint gets the correct amount of exposure. It is the values that guide the way you work that matter, and it is to those that attention must be given. Above all do not shy away from the strong viewpoints. If we reflect on our own lives and look at the people who influenced us most, very often it is not those who are 'unbiased' who are significant, but those who felt deeply, strongly, and passionately about particular issues and beliefs. The crucial questions concern the way those opinions are handled; whether the process reflects a concern with truth, reason, justice and freedom, and the extent to which people are able to make their own minds up.

9. Have you made your status clear to the people you work with?

The boundaries between what you do as a private individual and what you do as a worker tend to get very blurred in things like youth and community work. As a consequence, as we have already seen, workers need to make sharp such boundaries.

It will be remembered that in this section we are concerned with work that can be done within an agreed job description. The reason for making status clear isn't simply to protect yourself but is an important piece of political education in itself. Explaining what sort of activities are permissible within your job and what are not is one method of helping people to see some of the ways in which political power is used and experienced in organisation. When workers attempt to gloss over debates and boundaries of this kind, they are misleading those being worked with as well as throwing overboard the opportunity for learning. Elsewhere I have made the point that the skills, attitudes, and knowledge that are necessary to push back boundaries of policy within organisations are the

very abilities that political education is concerned with. Thus involving people in the struggle to make a place for the work can serve as a valuable educational tool.

We need to focus on our status for a further reason. When discussing the values that should inform our political education work one area was the readiness of the worker to detach from his/her opinion, as far as it is possible the authority which belongs to their position and personal charisma. The aim being to use opinion on the authority of reason alone. Not only that, but the position is also to be reasoned out by individuals and groups themselves. In other words, they have to make and *[page 30]* own their judgements rather than uncritically accepting the views of significant others like workers.

10. Do you continually ask the question 'What are people learning here?'

When involved in a programme of political education it is all too easy to get carried away with the events and the political issues without being clear on the educational reasons for your involvement in them. Some of the problems arise because most informal approaches use 'learning by doing' (experiential learning). In other words, people are gaining the knowledge, feelings and skills to be able to think and act politically by actually becoming involved in political action. The danger here is that the achievement of the political objective takes precedence over the learning that is gained from the process of planning and carrying out some form of political activity. For instance a group may well choose the person who is best able to present a case to a councillor or a committee so that they have a better chance of being successful, rather than giving the opportunity to others who could learn more from the experience. It is here that the worker and the group need to ask, 'What are people learning here?'

There are no easy answers here. It is important not to lose sight of the sense of achievement and confidence that can be gained by the group from winning. However what asking the question does is to both put learning on the agenda and, if it is asked in the right way, provide an opportunity for 'hidden' curriculae to surface.

As a way of encouraging the group to keep learning in mind is to suggest that they:

• work out some rules or guidelines about the way they intend to work, and be clear about the values and aims they are basing those rules on.

• make space for reflection and analysis after they have undertaken some action or conducted their business.

• try to make some theory based on their analysis about why things happened as they did, and the sort of actions they must take in order that they get the results they desire.

• get involved in doing something again, so that they are able to test out their ideas.

• keep reaffirming their ownership of and responsibility for their own learning, perhaps through the use of review sessions on the way they work.

What this process hopefully does is to help people turn their experiences into conscious learning. What they felt or did can then be understood in a wider framework, it can be connected with other ideas and concerns and so modify or confirm any *[page 31]* further thinking or action.

The one thing I want to say about what people are learning concerns the need for workers not to go outside the experience of the people they are working with. It is often the case that the worker is considerably more sophisticated in terms of their knowledge of politics and tactics than those s/he is helping. Not just this. The worker can be coming from a very different class or cultural position and have very different perceptions and understandings. As a consequence there can be large discrepancies in what people view as important. It is an area of tension — as the worker is inevitably wanting to change — to move people on from being to being more. The only way forward is through dialogue, with the worker checking out their own understandings and wishes and trying to ensure that the issues and methods adopted are felt to be part of the lives of the people s/he is working with.

11. Do you manage your manager?

Earlier we discussed how you might set about covering yourself with your employer or manager. Here I want to look at the longer term process of handling management so that innovatory work such as political education can happen.

Management has become a major rallying call in recent years. Part of the reason for this derives from the continuing cutbacks in public expenditure. Policy makers have become concerned with the efficient use of resources and have therefore sought to extend the degree of control they possess over the work they fund. This process connects with a broader movement at work across the labour market, particularly in the area of skilled labour. The process has been called the 'proletarianisation' of work. In social work and youth and community work it has involved reducing the autonomy of workers by introducing a variety of measures designed to ensure a closer conformity to agency policy. As Chris Jones has commented about social work.

> An important part of that experience concerns the increasing amount of paperwork they are expected to deal with; paperwork both in the nature of case records and in the number of official forms and reports they are supposed to complete. That social workers spend up to a third of their working week in their offices undertaking bureaucratic paperwork provides a very clear indication of the significance of this aspect of contemporary state social work. (Jones 1983: 123).

Similar processes have occurred within youth work. There has been an increasing emphasis on paperwork in an attempt to monitor and control the activities of workers. Crucially we are also seeing changes in the nature and structure of management. Many authorities have attempted to dispense with the services of local management or advisory committees, preferring to centralise their powers. Sadly workers have all too frequently contributed to this process through undervaluing *[page 32]* the work of these local bodies. This has often been done in some misplaced belief in their own professionalism, in other words that the worker is the 'expert'. Sometimes it is simply in the service of our own egos. Whatever, it indicates an arrogance and contempt for the young people and communities we are working with and for. By failing to develop local

community management we have jeopardised one of the key guarantors of our freedom to respond to the needs expressed by local people. Whilst management committees and the like can involve considerable amounts of work they remain a ready means of mobilising local support and of holding some power at a local level.

Whilst there is a generalised attempt to extend the control of central management, there are also major structural factors that work against this trend. If we examine the nature of most youth and community work organisations, we can see that by necessity they are 'front line organisations'. These sorts of organisation have three main characteristics:

- local units, (the 'frontline'), have considerable freedom independently of other units and make decisions;

- each unit is able to get on with its work quite independently of other units; and

- there are considerable obstacles to the direct supervision of the activities of such units. (See Moore and Rogers 1979; Smith 1979)

All this means that the local group or organisation usually has a great deal of power over what they do and rightly so. Many of the decisions that have to be taken must be taken quickly. They cannot be passed up a big chain of command — a response is often needed there and then so as to avoid major problems. Secondly, this recognises that it is usually the people on the spot who know the local and particular situation best.

One of the concerns I have with the resistance of some workers to increasing centralisation is that is based on resistance to any form of accountability. My argument here is that workers should be accountable to and managed by the community of which their work is a part. To say this alone is to beg many questions, particularly "to whom and how?" This is an area that has been heavy on rhetoric and light on practice. I suppose that many people's fear about 'democratisation' is that youth and community work could be surrendered to groups that have hostile values and politics. Thus in what follows I have sought to suggest a number of practices that can be used to develop management that is supportive of the values and concerns that have been discussed here in the

context of political education. In particular I want to emphasise the development of local involved management. The basic strategy here is to explore the contradictions offered by the current interest in 'managerialism' and to use those aspects which can enable the development of a grounded and relevant political education. I also want to note a number of significant pitfalls experienced by workers. These are some of the key concerns.

Who are the Managers?

Within youth and community work there is frequent confusion about lines of *[page 33]* accountability within organisations and between them. One of the most common difficulties arises when workers are seconded to voluntary management committees who are then supposed to be responsible for the management of the worker. Problems can arise when the worker is asked to work in situations that are contrary to the policy of the authority or to the ideas of the relevant officer. In such situations the worker can be put in a very difficult position — there are sometimes threats to withdraw the worker or straight orders given to him/her to work in another way.

However, such things are usually at the end of the line and the debate and difficulties can create enough space to push an area of work forward. That debate is safer to the worker if accountability issues have begun to be resolved beforehand. Thus when engaging in work that is supported by a local committee but not by the seconding authority it makes life a lot easier if the meaning of 'secondment' is got clear from the start. The confusion is frequently added to when the representative of the offended authority is called an 'adviser', and yet they have clear control over significant resources.

A more recent confusion occurs when the worker is seconded to more than one management committee or finds that part of their time is allocated to the authority and part to the local management committee.

Within local committees and organisations there can also be difficulties about the exact nature of the line of accountability. For instance is the worker responsible to the committee or to the chairperson of the committee?

The worker should clear this area up — it is easy to be caught out by the word 'seconded' and to find that work has not been adequately sanctioned. The

advice in Question 6 about getting things in writing and related issues should be heeded here.

As important as the formal lines of communication and accountability are the informal systems — in other words who has power and influence. We have all had the experience of working to or on committees, that contain individuals or groups who exercise power without being in the formal positions usually associated with power. The consequence of failing to pay attention to those who have the informal power is often to find oneself isolated or out on a limb.

All this deals with the manager or managers as you find them. There is an old adage that workers get the managers they deserve. One part of the worker's role in this respect is to help create a management structure or process that understands the needs of the community being worked with and the nature of the contribution that youth and community work can make. This might involve the introduction of appropriate people into existing committees, the actual creation of committees or groups where none had existed before, the development of managers competencies and awareness and the building up of supportive management practices. In other words the democratisation of the work. However before we encourage this we need to know what management is.

Who is responsible for what?

Each of us engaged in the work is to some extent a manager. We have to assess *[page 34]* needs, plan, make decisions, get those decisions implemented and then evaluate the results. Full-time workers and part-time workers in charge will usually have significant responsibilities for the way in which both they and the other workers operate. For a group or organisation to work effectively and openly it is necessary for a fairly high degree of clarity over who is supposed to do what. This is particularly so where the actions of one person or group significantly affect the other. The central process that achieves clarity for the full-time worker is the preparation of a job description. This document, which should be agreed between the worker and his/her management, describes the setting, relationships, authority and accountability of the post. Key elements here are:

Position held — the formal title or position.

Basic function — a short summary of the job's aims. (Sometimes known as the 'core mission').

Authority — who and what the post holder is responsible for and the extent or limits to their authority (e.g. financial or behavioural limits).

Accountability — who the post holder is responsible to.

Relationships — who the post holder has working relationships with inside and outside the organisation or authority.

Key tasks — the main activities or tasks the person can be expected to be involved in.

Many job descriptions have a further main section which is often an attempt to keep the description alive:

Results expected — these results or targets are usually put forward by the post holder in the first instance. (See Baker 1970 and Arnold *et. al.*

The worker who engages in political education should make every effort to include details of potential activities within the job description. It may mean that you have to agree to keeping specified people informed of your activities. It is also important to keep the job description alive by having it regularly reviewed so that new activities and plans are included and you have some protection. The other side of the coin is, of course, that management has some protection.

The process of preparing a job description can be one way of educating management about political education. It soon becomes clear that there is a political dimension to all the work and that it is impossible to draw workable boundaries on, for instance, the content of informal discusions in the coffee bar. What often happens are limits on acitivities eg participation in demonstrations, but these limits are frequently drawn a good distance beyond where the worker initially expects. In other words they have considerably more space in which to operate.

One boundary that a number of workers have found it helpful to bear in mind lies between broad policy making and detailed implementations. Thus within an

organisation that has a management committee it becomes the responsibility of *[page 35]* that committee to decide on:-

Broad aims — the ultimate goals of the organisation.

Target(s) — who the organisation is attempting to reach.

Methods — the broad approaches being used.

Priorites — the relative importance of the various areas of work as outlined within target and method.

These things go to make up the club or project policy and will involve both the managers and the workers (and hopefully those being worked with) in the process of making decisions. However it is the responsibility of those labelled 'managers'.

The workers in this view are then primarily responsible for the setting of objectives i.e. the steps by which the aims are reached, and tactics. The latter are about the way things are done. [This distinction is based on work done by Alan Rogers].

Recognising what motivates managers to become managers

It is very easy to forget to examine the motivations and pressures that animate managers. In order to extend the boundaries of our work it is necessary to take these things into account — we are, after all, affecting the use of their power. If we consider some of the main motivations for people to become managers, then we can see that it might be necessary to adopt different tactics to gain their support or approval. First, I will concentrate on the motivations of "professional" managers. Some basic motivations:

To improve things — we sometimes overlook the fact that managers have aspirations for the work. They, as workers, may have felt frustrated in their attempts to influence policy and so joined the policymakers. All too often, the power to influence a large authority's or organisation's policy is extremely patchy in the way it is distributed so that the officer remains frustrated or becomes settled or socialised into bureaucratic ways of seeing or doing things. In this situation the worker or local group may well be able to play on this

suppressed vision. If the officer has both vision and power, then so much the better (providing the vision is your vision!)

To get and experience power — here the person is concerned with the achievement of power for itself. They like the experience of being powerful, and the perceptions people may have of them in terms of character and status that such a position may bring. Here the worker or group is either faced with a direct confrontation or having to appeal to this motivating force. For instance a piece of work may be indirectly presenting as enhancing his/her status or position.

To get more money — where the basic motivating force has been hard cash then the group or worker can be faced with some difficulties as this is most often associated with a cautious 'safety-first' approach by the officer concerned. Here the tactic is perhaps to put the officer or managers concerned into the position of having little choice either by creating pressure from 'above' or by making life so unpleasant from 'below' that they succumb to the demands for the sake of an easy life. *[page 36]*

To escape from field work — not a small number of people end up in middle management because they have grown tired of field work (or 'it' has grown tired of them!). Whilst there is a distinct problem with the lack of any realistic 'career structure' in youth and community work, I cannot but be reminded of the Peter Principle, which states that we all rise to the level of our incompetence. As with the above motivation the resulting behaviour is all too often 'blame avoidance' and 'safety first'. The same tactics probably apply for the worker or local group, although it may be possible to appeal to a sense of guilt or nostalgia for field work.

When Judy Lowe did her research on youth club management committees in the early 1970s, she found that the reasons for appointment to such committees was fairly evenly matched. There were five main reasons:

Progressing to the management committee through the club — this group included ex-leaders or helpers as well as club members.

Borough youth committee or local council nomination — in the Lowe survey it was noticeable on some committees that if one member came from (eg) the local council, several were likely to, as friends recommended each other within a

political group. There can be a real problem with professional committee joiners particularly when they bring with them petty disagreements that should be resolved elsewhere.

Church representatives — as with the political nominations mentioned above it was found to be usual that a committee either had no church representatives or several. There are a variety of reasons for this including the use of church premises, the sponsorship of youth work by churches and the fact that it is often seen as a 'good thing' to have the churches represented on committees.

Approached by the committee for expertise — in practice this often means that the people approached knew about finance and accounting.

Miscellaneous — this included work contacts, links with schools and contact with parents.

The reasons why people accepted nomination to the committees could be divided into two broad groups:

- People who said that they joined because they were actively interested in the club, young people or youth work in general; and

- those who didn't really say why they joined, but seemed to regard it as a duty

connected with their other public services. They go on to the committee because they are asked to.

This basic split in motivations suggests that different strategies may well have to be adopted to different members of the committee. To the first 'youth orientated' group, the concern may be to maintain and develop their interest and commitment and to show how political education is an intrinsic part of the work. Part of the strategy for the latter group will be to increase their 'youth orientation' — but again much will depend on the individuals concerned and their politics. In the following section I suggest some fairly ordinary actions that the workers *[page 37]* can take to make their managers (be they a committee or an individual) more supportive of the work.

Helping managers to be helpful

When we look around at youth and community work management it is possible to discern two broad approaches:

enabling — where the manager's job is seen as creating the necessary space and support for the workers to do their jobs; and

constraining — where the managers want to limit and control the activities of workers. This will often be associated with a desire to avoid 'blame' or risk.

In many respects this comes down to the individual or organisational, view of human nature — are people inherently good or bad. However in both cases managers can be helped — in the first to make the enabling effective and in the second to limit the constraining orientation. This involves a number of the things we have already talked about:

Being clear about the manager's job — this can be achieved through discussion about how the manager or management group operates, who is supposed to do what and through the construction of the worker's job description and the formation of policy. Some management groups work out a basic job description for each member of the group.

Getting involved in the issues — the worker can, through the way reports are constructed or meetings run, bring managers far more directly into the issues that s/he has to work with. Half of the time workers face problems with management because the management are ignorant of the realities of the work. By bringing into discussions examples of the work and the concrete problems faced, the worker can achieve a far more supportive environment.

Making demands of management — sometimes problems can occur because the management has only half a job to do — they are not being asked by the workers for policy direction or suggestions for the work. In other words they are not being made to work. If people come to management meetings that seem to have little influence over the way things are run, then they will tend to have a diminished commitment to the club or project. They have to be valued and one of the key ways of doing this is to ask them to do a significant job of work.

Creating a management support process for the worker — Here managers should be encouraged to create a framework for the worker to air issues and concerns about policy and practice and for decisions to be taken and implemented. One obvious demand managers should make of workers is the preparation of reports concerning the work. By and large the managers will only have limited direct experience of the work they are responsible for and the main thing they are dependent on is the worker's report. If the worker is going to push policy boundaries back, then much hangs on the quality of reporting whether written or verbal. Beyond having space for the preparation and discussion of reports it is in the worker's interest to secure regular meetings with line managers or some nominated representative of their committee, such as the chairperson, so that they can become more *[page 38]* aware of the day to day issues facing the worker and so that both parties ensure the job description stays alive and relevant.

Creating the right environment for management — We also need to be influencing the environment in which management operates — creating support in other contexts for the work we wish to pursue. This may necessitate:

• Seeking the active support of other workers — Besides getting the right relationship with your managers every effort should be made to get the support of your colleagues, perhaps through discussion at staff meetings and by keeping them informed of progress. Even better if you can also get them involved in similar work in their own settings. Another possibility is to use your local union branch.

• Look for public support — Here you may try to get sympathetic news items in the local paper or 'featurettes' on local radio. In doing this it is advisable for the worker to play a low profile (Always try to avoid being seen as representative of your employer unless you have clearance). Your role should be to mediate — let the young people or the community group do the talking. We will be returing to press relations a bit later on as they are a potential graveyard for workers.

• Get to know local councillors — At a less public level you may want to 'make friends' with local councillors in order to explain what you are doing and how it might affect them. If appropriate, try to get them involved but if you do be

prepared for debates and questions about the political balance — you may find it expedient to involve all sides.

• Developing links with other community groups and bodies — Your aim is to create a positive climate for political education so that the more bodies and groups that explicitly support the work, the better. The local council of voluntary youth service, local associations of the national youth organisations, the council of voluntary organisations, local schools and colleges — all can help by expressing support. Another possibility is to involve your local HMI or adviser.

The relative length of this Question is perhaps indicative of the importance I attach to the development of supportive management that is part of the community in which we work. Within this section I have also tried to show how workers can generate a higher degree of clarity about their role. Clarity is important not just for the worker's protection, but also as a means of helping people to see the nature of political boundaries and to make the work more effective.

12. Are you a member of a relevant trade union?

Over the last few years a number of workers have had to face disciplinary proceedings because of their political education work. Often this has resulted from their involvement in some form of political activity, but not always so. Disciplinary *[page 39]* proceedings have been instituted even in cases where the workers appeared to be following their authority's policy statement. Joining a union makes sense as it can:

Provide legal and casework support

If you are likely to be getting into positions that your employer will take exception to, then you may need this form of support — especially if any form of disciplinary action is possible. The specialist needs of youth and community workers make it advisable that you join a union with experience of fighting cases in this area such as the Community and Youth Workers Union (CYWU).

Give political support

A union is able to give political support partly through its ability to impose sanctions of various kinds and partly through its potential to give workers a collective voice outside of the usual administrative channels. Many union branches will have informal contacts with councillors through things like joint consultative committees.

Sponsor work

Unions, because they provide a separate organisation or body can also be used as a vehicle to sponsor work. Thus, for instance, several branches of CYWU have put on training events and conferences that deal with political education. These have often been in districts where the local authority has not been prepared to take such work on. However, workers should be clear beforehand on the authorities' attitude to the recruitment and the staffing of such events (see section 3)

Provide personal support

Frequently the business of branch meetings, or the events around them are concerned with providing support for workers who are in difficult situations or are undertaking problematic work (which is all of us at some time!)

Enable links with the labour movement

As has already been said, the contradictions within the work can only be fully worked on when put in the context of conflicts that exist within society. At one level there is the firm need to get youth and community work and political education onto the agendas of trade union activists so that they may both lend their support to the work and examine their own activities in particular toward young people within the labour movement. At another rather more fundamental level, is the recognition that the struggle for political education, if it is to have any real meaning, has to be experienced as part of the wider struggle to overthrow the subordination of the many by the few.

13. Are you ever tempted to go it alone?

We have already seen that it is necessary to make political friends and to get political support in the form of union membership. Here I want to emphasise the dangers of going it alone. The result can be isolation and vulnerability because you have *[page 40]* failed to carry either your managers or staff with you or have failed to think through the consequences of your actions.

Working in this area can be a difficult and frustrating business. As has already been said it isn't simply your mental health that is at stake but also your livelihood and the success of the work. It is therefore essential that workers have some mechanism by which they can reflect on and analyse their practice. There are at least three further potential sources of personal support that need underlining:

Managerial supervision

In Question 11 we discussed in some detail the ways in which management could be encouraged to support the work and the worker. The only point that needs mentioning here is that while management supervision can provide a forum for discussion, it is necessary to identify what concerns are appropriate to this form of supervision. There are likely to be areas that the worker does not want to discuss with management and yet may be under some pressure to do so. In order to resist such pressure we have to be worked out.

Consultant supervision

The sorts of decisions and actions that might need discussing are a strong argument for consultant supervision i.e. the opportunity to talk through the events and your feelings with a sympathetic outsider, and to begin to construct appropriate plans and responses.

Support from team members

By now most workers are part of some sort of team, whether it is a district team or one within their own club or project. Collectively through team events and meetings the other member may be able to help support and analyse your work — perhaps even take part in it themselves. It may be that other members of the team are able to provide consultant or non-managerial supervision. A lot of

work is involved in maintaining a successful and supportive team and one danger I have seen in this area is that workers have not been 'demanding' enough of their colleagues. Support often has to be asked for.

Constructing opportunities to reflect upon the work is particularly important when we consider the nature of political action. It links with a central question — how do you react, with your head or your heart? Whilst passion and emotion are an essential part of politics — they can be a disaster area as far as successful political actions are concerned. In fact many workers make considerable problems for themselves because they react at a gut, feelings, level rather than giving themselves space to think things through. There is a real sense in which feelings have to be held and controlled and applied to ideas and values but not to the question of tactics. Winning politically is all about pragmatics.

When we react emotionally, we begin to lose control and our vision becomes clouded. Whilst that feeling is understandable because of the amount we may have invested in a particular issue it is more likely to lead to bitterness and failure than political success, I suppose this is why humour is such an important part of politics. It helps us to maintain our sanity and to keep our distance from dogma. In a sense it is a way of creating some detachment. Humour, supervision + teamwork help *[page 41]* in keeping a degree of detachment, but there are dangers.

Perhaps the biggest danger arises where the worker creates a network of support that is based on feelings rather than reason. This can happen where the supervisor or support group becomes emotionally committed to the worker and is unable to stand back. In such circumstances all that happens is an emotional spiral where issues become personified and where one feeling feeds off another. The result can be a morass deeper and stickier than the problem that first fuelled the cycle.

The more thought out we are about what we want to achieve and what can be gained from different situations — the less likely is an emotional response. Preparation and forethought are the key. Indeed here again we can see the advantage of compartmentalising our emotions. To succeed it is necessary to anticipate and to anticipate it is necessary to be able to see and feel as the

opposition does. The more clouded our sight becomes by our feelings the less able we are to do this.

Teamwork

Being a member of an effective team tends to be intellectually more stretching. It means that actions and ideas have to be subjected to careful scrutiny. Additionally, it means that more energy and experience can be focussed on an issue than if it were approached individually.

This is what one respondent wrote in a recent study of community work.

> The development of a tight team was a reaction to cowboys in the previous structure here. The team helps to provide a policy and not just an emotional response to issues and marks the end of the autonomous maverick. We have sniffed out the student politics element of community work and replaced the radical chic of community work with a radical strategy. There is no room for complacent radicalism — our radicalism is more pragmatic. (Quoted in Thomas 1988: 233)

Teamwork is not only essential in the formation of policy but also in it's implementation.

There can be a very real danger of the worker who wants to innovate not carrying his/her staff team along with them. Grand ideas and schemes can soon become as nought if the people who have got to put them into action either don't understand them or simply do not agree with them. One of the lessons I was slow to learn as a worker was that significant changes in the work could only happen if I put a great deal of energy into supporting and developing a team approach. Perhaps the classic situation is where all your energy has gone into working with the young people in the centre or club — their power and skills have been increased and the part time or voluntary workers feel that they have been left or squeezed out. Before you start out into such a problematic area as political education you must ensure that it has been fully discussed and agreed as a staff. It might mean that things move more slowly, and it may mean that less ambitious things are attempted — but at least it brings a better chance of success. *[page 42]*

14. Do you record?

Workers are often exhorted to record the work they are engaged in — and I'm afraid I'm going to do it again here. My concern now is less with recording to help reflection and analysis than with keeping a record of what happens in 'sessions' or in telephone conversations, so that if problems arise later on you are able to quote from your own notes of what happened. Such notes must always be dated. To a certain extent there is a game of bluff involved here — it does look impressive if you can produce notes of a meeting or event. However there is a rather more serious side. Many of the complaints that are made of workers actions are based on second and third hand descriptions or stories about what happened. First-hand evidence that is committed to paper as soon after the event as possible can help to dispel misinformed comment.

Unfortunately, whilst some events and meetings are clear candidates for recording it is often difficult to predict what conversation or event might cause trouble — so it is advisable to over-record rather than under-record.

When deciding how you are going to undertake recording for this function it is necessary to look at the whole process of recording. In this respect I can do no better than to recommend Alan Rogers' (1982) work – much of what follows is based on this. Recording can help us structure experience and provide a means of reflection. It helps us to externalise our thoughts and feelings so that we may more readily analyse them. As such it is one mechanism for creating the necessary intellectual distance for the work. Effective recording can, in different forms, clarify the experience it records, suggest future action, aid the memory in the long term and aid communication to others. Whilst it is not the only way to do these things it does have the distinction of being permanent and of being relatively precise.

In *Recording and Reporting*, Alan Rogers suggests that field workers have six typical responses to questions about why they record:

- Planning — 'I need to plan ahead.'
- Monitoring — 'I need to know how the work is developing.'
- Clarifying — 'I use recording when I'm not sure what to do next.'

- Informing — 'The rest of the team need to know what's happening.'
- Resource — 'One of our aims is to offer information as a resource to the community.'
- Accountability —'I have to do reports for my management committee.'

Given these motivations or requirements it follows that their will be forms or recording appropriate to the situation. From the point of view of the 'safety net' function *[page 43]* required in any contested or potentially contested work what is needed is a way of integrating material required for this into other forms of recording such as the project or club journal or your own personal diary.

15. Are you prepared to compromise?

If you are attempting to work within the system, then it is likely that you will have to compromise or at least give the impression of doing so. Pushing out the barriers of the work is dependent on a certain amount of negotiation. It therefore pays to build in room for manoeuvre. You might ask for more resources than you need, get sanction for certain types of activity that you do not foresee happening and so on. If you get them you've got added flexibility — if you don't then it doesn't matter. The one danger in this area is that you might raise expectations unnecessarily — so that needs watching.

Some words of advice on negotiations:

Have clear objectives for meetings

The basic decisions concern the ground you must hold and what things you are prepared to ditch.

When making a concession make a lot of noise

Some people are able to make 'losing' into a real art form. If you give the impression that the point is more important than it is and that you are prepared to give ground then it can seem more of a victory to your opponent than it is. This can be a useful ploy as you can use your giving way on one point as a bargaining tool for some other point.

Be nice

It is likely that you will have to negotiate again with your manager or the policy makers. It therefore pays to make the proceedings as good natured as possible. Both winning and losing should be done graciously — faces do need to be saved. If the relationship is a continuing one, then it is not a bad general rule to make your political moves fairly openly and to tell the opposition at the appropriate moment that you are doing it. (Don't however tell them too early — so that they can take counter action!) One person put the matter graphically — if you are going to 'stab' somebody, do it from the front! There will of course be situations where you feel that either the matter is too important or there is little good faith on the part of the opposition. In these circumstances you may want to act in a less straightforward way.

Keep a nasty on the horizon

When entering negotiations it is sometimes quite helpful if you are seen as the reasonable one. This is the 'if you don't settle with me, something much worse could happen' approach. *[page 44]*

Make people work to your agenda

Disputes and campaigns are won by getting and keeping the initiative. The idea being that your opponents have to respond to you. It is with their response that the real action begins — and, if you've done your homework right, you should know what the likely responses are and have planned accordingly.

Where possible get your opponents onto ground that they do not know — where there aren't the ready answers so much the better. One useful card to play with bureaucratic structures is that in the end it is you who knows what the 'real' situation is with young people or the community. Using and dramatizing that situation can be powerful. It can, however, backfire. First the opposition may simply capitulate and if you haven't got your plans worked out then you are going to look foolish. Second your opponents may have done their homework and are able to answer you point for point — so don't exaggerate.

Don't ease up on the pressure

You should have a variety of tactics up your sleeve — successful campaigns are usually based on a mix of demands and measures. If you are negotiating, remember to carry on with other means like press stories and lobbying. But be careful that you only use tactics that help your case. Do not employ means that are likely to undermine the negotiations.

Avoid getting side-tracked

Watch out for suggestions of things like working parties to look into the matter. There are a number of responses that can be made including the "I'll go ahead with my project anyway so that you have something concrete on which to make your judgements" through to the straightforward charge of prevarication. One way of cutting a considerable amount of ground from under your opponents' feet is to have your own proposals extremely well prepared so that they find it difficult to sustain objections on grounds of detail. It is however important that they are presented in such a way as to avoid the charge of fait accompli. It may be necessary to signal your intentions in this respect. In addition be mindful of the danger of investing everything in your proposals. Be prepared to accept changes that you feel could improve the work or at least not harm things too greatly.

Lose graciously

Avoid getting nasty or bitter or stroppy if you lose. There are bound to be times when you fail to achieve your objectives and in losing the 'wrong' way you can do much damage to your future negotiations with your opponents. Smile, retreat to safe ground and salvage what you can. Learn from the experience.

Anyone who is in a position of power will have been where you are at some time or other. They will often sympathise with you. In a funny way being able to lose graciously is the mark of a 'professional' in political terms. Whilst your cause may not be progressed at that moment it does leave you able to try again on another day in another way. It can also increase your status. *[page 45]*

16. Do you know how to handle the press?

Where the press is concerned it always pays to assume the worst. More than a few workers have experienced discomfort from their managers and political masters and mistresses because of unguarded comments made to the press (me included!). Some points to remember:-

Are you the right person to comment?

Always ask yourself whether you are the appropriate person to make a comment. As a general rule it is adviseable that youth and community workers should either get other people to say the things they want, such as management committee members or they should say it as representative of some other collectivity such as the union branch.

Take your time

Don't be hurried by the journalist — if you have nothing to say, then say nothing! However explain why, e.g. you are not the right person, you are not authorised to make comments, the situation is too delicate to comment at present. Try to suggest some other person (if you can trust them) or say you'll give a statement later. Similarly try to avoid making unconsidered statements. You can always say you will phone back with a quote.

Watch for Buzby

Remember that most people tend to say more than they intend to on the telephone. The vast majority of material gathering is done by journalists over the phone.

Say it in full

Don't answer journalists questions with a simple yes or no. You should always try to put what you want to say in your own words — watch out for they way journalists paraphrase statements and feed them back for your approval — they can often come out quite differently from the way you intended. In this respect it is sometimes better to issue a written press statement rather than rely on the journalist's transcriptions.

17. Do you look at your work and ask the question, 'In whose interest is all this happening'?

Allied with questions about what people are learning and doing, it is also crucial that we ask whose interests are being served by this learning and action? We must do this:

To guard against worker exploitation

Here I'm less concerned about bias, than about the reasons that motivate the workers involvement. For instance is the sole reason for their political education work their own personal enjoyment or because it might help with 'career' advancement? *[page 46]* This is not to say that the workers interests should not be served, rather that they should not take precedence over the interests of the people being worked with.

In a sense it is a very positive thing if the worker's interests are being served — as it may well be a better piece of work as a result of the stake the worker has in it. There is a lot of truth in the old adage that we do best the things we enjoy.

To guard against group exploitation

The importance of group politics provides a further reason why the question, "In whose interest" needs to be shared. Power relationships within groups has been a traditional concern of youth and community workers and if people are to own and apply the sort of values we have been describing here then constant reference has to be made to who is benefiting from the group and whether that outcome is fair and appropriate.

To guard against organisational exploitation

All too easily the needs and dynamics of the organisations we work within can push us down paths that we would not choose or think appropriate to the needs or wishes of those we work with. Sometimes it is unthinking routine ('because it has always happened') that has us undertaking events or promoting programmes which we have long forgotten the reasons for. At other times the reasons are less benign, and we find ourselves committed to courses of action that maintain the organisation but do little or nothing for young people or the community concerned.

All this has particular pertinence to political education. One of the key dilemmas that faces the political educator is the extent to which s/he actively encourages young people to identify with political and social movements and organisations. As we have seen politics is about collective action and for action to happen there must be some sort of feeling for or identify with a collectivity or group.

Where people are becoming involved with movements it is crucial that they are encouraged to ask whether the exchange between their needs and the movements is a fair one. Are actions undertaken for the good of the movement or for the good of its individual members? What we have here is a major moral and political question. Do we judge things by their effects on individuals or on collectivities? How do we strike a just balance between the needs of both?

To guard against state exploitation

As with any of our activities we have to ask what political interests are being served by our actions? So often youth and community work seems to operate in the interests of those who have wealth and power. It might be that certain forms of political education are nothing more than attempts to convince people the 'rightness' of the world as it is.

It isn't very likely that you will get clear cut answers to questions such as these. Frequently our actions will serve a number of interests — some of which will be contradictory and all which will be contested by those having different value positions and material interests. However the essential point about asking the question is the process it can spark off — and the growth of clarity — rather than the gaining of 'certain' answers.

3. Working outside

[page 47]

One of the major themes of this booklet has been that the only certainty about political education is its uncertainty. Nowhere is this clearer than when we consider the issues surrounding choices about working outside or beyond the policy of your organisation or job description.

As private individuals it is a right, by and large, to be politically active. I say 'by and large' because some contracts of employment explicitly prohibit certain forms of activity. The two best known examples of this would be council employees standing for election to their employing authority and civil servants of certain grades belonging to political parties. We also need to bear in mind that tribunals have seen fit to read into contracts of employment a number of things that can restrict freedom of activity. (Dealt with in Question 1). Beyond these there are the informal pressures. I have heard of several instances of workers being advised by their managers that their career prospects, funding or support could be jeopardised by too public involvement in politics, even though it is in their own time.

I want to begin by making a simple distinction between those activities which may be:

- deemed to break a contract of employment; and those which are
- beyond contracts of employment.

Whilst this distinction looks simple, in reality it is not. The interpretation depends on the particular situation and the ways in which workers and employers see and treat things. However the distinction does help us in our thinking and possible response.

Beyond the contract

Here we are concerned with activities that take place in one's own time and space. In other words they are seen as having no connection with the place, people or direct work of the agency you are employed by or are seconded to. Here the worker is clearly perceived as acting as a private individual. Thus we might canvass for a candidate at a general election, become an officer in a political party or undertake peace education work for members of our church. Again it is important to stress that each of these activities could be judged by the employer as being in some way undesirable. For instance one large youth work employer advised its employees "not to become politically involved in areas where they work". This was an attempt to avoid the problem of the issues concerned being seen as having the blessing of the workers' employers. The 'advice' was rightly contested by the workers concerned. It is inevitable that any prominent involvement in the public arena will reflect in some way or form on the way you are seen as a youth and community worker. As workers we need to make our own judgements about the desireability or impact of changed perceptions.

I would think that most people reading this booklet would feel that it was important to be politically active and to be seen to be so. Afterall it would be pretty odd to subscribe to political education if we as workers didn't hold its key values. Amongst those is the importance of political participation. In addition most of *[page 48]* us would want those with whom we work to see and understand us as people as well as workers in a particular role. We see our humanness, our experience of life, as forming a powerful aspect of our work with people. However we do need to bear in mind the impact of our political involvement or beliefs on those we work with. We need to think carefully about how and when we present ideas and experiences (if these things are within our control). For instance Von Hoffman, an American community organiser, gives the following advice on image management and the way in which the worker comes across to local people. Drop as much of your ideological baggage as you can,'people' don't like cultists. If you are a vegetarian, keep it to yourself, hide it, because there are a certain number of butchers in the community and you want them in the organisation too. (Quoted in Henderson and Thomas 1980: 120)

Whilst Von Hoffman's advice is somewhat overstated it does alert us to a key question. For me the issue is rather more about the way in which we might present our 'vegetarianism' or 'politics' rather than whether we should present it at all. One of our central concerns is surely the acceptance of diversity, (alongside others like justice and equality).

As well as making judgements about the way the community might see our political or other involvements, we clearly need to predict our employer's response. To take an earlier example — we may as members of a church engage in a programme of peace education with the members of the congregation. If we live and work in the same neighbourhood it is quite likely that some of that congregation may also be the people we work with. The skills, attitudes, and knowledge that we use in such a programme could be seen as those often associated with the role of youth and community worker. In such circumstances people may experience us in similar roles but in very different settings. Some employers have been very touchy about instances such as these and have endeavoured to restrict, often through informal means, the worker's private activities. It therefore pays to anticipate and there are some fairly basic things that can be done in order to clarify and safeguard your position. Each of these things does, however, need carefully weighing in the light of your own situation.

Consult your union

You should check to see whether there is any relevant case law or guidance concerning the sort of activity you wish to engage in. As part of this you should check your contract of employment — particularly if the activity involves payment of any kind. It also needs to be remembered that unions do not give their protection to their members when they act as private individuals. Assistance is provided only in matters arising out of, or in the course of a members working life or union activities. Thus whilst disputes with an employer over whether a particular activity is acceptable as "work" or one's overtime may be a case for union action, we would not be entitled to union legal help if as private individuals we were found to have been negligent in our activities.

Discuss with your employer

Most of the advice given in the previous section is just as relevant to our actions *[page 49]* here. It is highly advisable to discuss the situation with your employer

before you take any action. If the management is informed then if there are any problems, say from councillors, then they may be able to short circuit complaints because you have acted in "good faith" by making the employer aware of your activities. In this way informing management can provide protection — particularly if they are given specific time limits in which to respond. Here things must be got in writing. By this action, you too can be prepared for problems if they occur, especially if the employer has some reservations about your potential actions. You can then take the necessary steps through your union etc.

Act under the auspices of a bona fidi organisation

There are three main reasons for locating any 'private' political education work within the confines of an appropriate organisation. First it clearly labels you and the activity as being somehow different from your work as an employee of a particular authority or body. Creating this distance from your employment is a central theme in the advice given in this section.

Second acting as an individual in contested areas is likely to lead to suspicion both from the employer and from the people being worked with. The labelling helps to place you and it also provides protection. Opponents know that they are not taking on an individual but a group. It makes the situation a lot less easy to present as some private dispute between employer and employee. Any dispute then becomes a political issue.

Lastly working with others can also make political education that more effective for reasons we have already discussed. Groups can provide support, resources and an environment which encourages greater rigour. In addition much of what we have been talking about here can only be ultimately achieved when real connection is made with the movements and groups whose struggles inform the political agenda.

Make clear your 'private' status.

In what you do you should make absolutely clear that you are in no way representing or acting on behalf of your employer. If literature is produced ensure that your employer's name does not appear in any way associated with your own.

Do not use facilities or time provided by your employer to support the work unless you have written prior agreement.

First there is the obvious advice already given in the 'questions' — do not use equipment, facilities, or personnel for private work. Always make clear when you are working and when not. Fill in time sheets accurately and do not claim expenses for 'private' travel.

Second do not use work opportunities to recruit for your outside activities unless given permission or it falls within a clear policy position of your employer/manager (and even then, seek written clarification).

Third do not undertake political education in a voluntary or private capacity within a club or building you are employed to take responsibility for unless you have specific permission. In such circumstances it is very difficult for the worker not to be seen as representative of their employer. *[page 50]*

Alongside the specific advice given here, workers also must follow the general maxim that political education is political and act accordingly.

Many of the general points about creating the appropriate climate and policy need also to be followed here. In addition it is vital that we keep at the forefront the values and practice appropriate to political education. There are two broad concerns here. The first is a general ethical point about the way we as human beings should conduct ourselves. The values etc here discussed in the context of education are, in effect those that we, as educators, believe should govern human conduct.

Secondly, and more pragmatically, the way that workers operate within their private lives can all too easily be used by opponents as a way of judging the workers working relationships and practices. If in a private, but similar role, a worker fails to take reasonable care or acts in an untrustworthy manner then this can be used as a direct argument against allowing the worker to undertake contested work or at an informal level to block worker's career and other prospects. Unfortunately rather more suspect things such as the nature of political belief are also used to smear or block workers.

This section had been about drawing very clear boundaries between work and nonwork and then ensuring that there is the necessary distance between the

two activities. Inevitably, where the line is actually drawn varies from situation to situation and is frequently contested.

Breaking contracts

It is said that there is hardly a car on the road that doesn't in some way contravene the laws relating to their safety and maintenance. Similarly there can't be a driver who hasn't at some time broken the law governing speed limits. So it is with contracts. We all can expect to 'break' in some way the contract we have with our employer (if we are employed). Whether the 'breakage' is noticed or taken action on will depend on the sensitivities of the employer. This is therefore a very difficult area to give advice in. Not the least because I could be judged or interpreted as giving 'possible incitement to commit criminal offences with clear encouragement to workers unlawfully to breach their contracts of employment'.

In this area the most fundamental breaks are likely to occur if the worker:

- continues (in the normal course of his/her duties), to work with groups on issues or in ways proscribed by the employer;
- divulges confidential information about the employer or employer's policies;
- fails to take reasonable care and so 'endangers' those worked with; or
- uses the employer's resources for proscribed purposes.

If one does break contract in such a way, then you are placing yourself in a position of considerable risk and can expect the consequences. However the position is extremely cloudy.

First there can be considerable disagreement over orders or policies that in some way can be demonstrated to require the worker to act in an 'unprofessional' manner. Earlier we saw some of the dilemmas concerning the expectation that a worker should be truthful to their employer and how this may require them to act in a way that would be seen by most workers to be unacceptable. There are many instances *[page 51]* where employees have been encouraged to disobey orders on professional grounds — a recent example here would be the instruction received by careers officers and workers in some

areas from their union, not to cooperate with the Manpower Services Commission and give details of young people who refused places on youth training schemes. The crucial point to grasp in disputes such as these is that the outcome will not be dependent on whether the issue is professional or unprofessional, but on political strength.

Second, it is often unclear what constitutes, for instance, a failure to obey orders. For example a worker may be forbidden to undertake political education work within their own organisation. However they may have as part of their job description, a responsibility to support other youth and community work organisations. If these organisations choose to undertake such work, and are abetted by the worker, then there can be considerable room for disagreement over the meaning of the employer's policy — so placing the worker at some risk. If we follow the advice given elsewhere in this booklet, then the worker should obtain clarification from the employer/manager. The irony in this situation is, of course, that when workers have to explain their employer's refusal to allow them to undertake political education work to people, they are in effect engaging in political education.

Where an employer or manager specifically forbids a particular activity or it is in clear breach of contract, then the worker is faced with three basic choices.

The first response of many would be to give up and forget about the activity, perhaps putting it on one side until the climate of opinion changed sufficiently. Sometimes this is indicative of moral cowardice, but often it is a simple recognition of the powerlessness of the individual in such situations. From the point of view of the concerns expressed within the booklet a more appropriate response would be to attempt to alter organisational policy or practice. Here the worker might attempt to use established channels such as team meetings, regular work reviews, managerial supervision etc. in order to keep pressuring for change. In addition the case should be taken up through the union or through any appropriate professional organisation or voluntary bodies. For instance it might be that your local association of youth clubs or council of voluntary organisations will support your case for a policy of political education. Similarly other interests such as the advisors or HMI's could be enlisted. It may also be that the process of explaining why you are unable to work with a group in a particular way or on a particular issue may lead to that group themselves taking

some sort of action. (This is an area of great risk to the worker and the necessary safeguards must be taken). Such a line of action translates the matter from one of individual concern to an interorganisational one.

The last choice open to the worker is simply to disobey the order and undertake political education work. As one worker put it — you don't bite the hand that feeds you, but sometimes it is important to go hungry.

Some workers are able to sustain such a Kamikaze approach by having strong nerves, influential friends, and an ability to persuade management that to tangle with them could be a disproportionately mucky and painful business. They seem to follow two maxims. The first is that power is not only what you have, but it is also what your opponent thinks you have. The trick is to make calling the bluff *[page 52]* look extremely risky.

The second maxim is that the opponents' bark is usually worse than their bite. In other words threats are usually more terrifying than the thing itself.

In such circumstances there are those who advocate a head down approach — to keep quiet about things. As has already been said, where political education is concerned things have a habit of getting out. Therefore it may be advisable to be open about your activities and to be prepared to accept the consequences. Those consequences can be lessened in severity by cultivating the appropriate political and professional support.

Not a happy ending — but a realistic one. For as long as there is inequality and injustice, political education will remain unsafe. Except, of course, where it runs entirely along lines set by those who hold power. But then that wouldn't be education but indoctrination.

A spokesman for the MSC said: "This is a community programme, the purpose of which is to serve the community. There is a strict stipulation which says programmes of this sort should not be involved in political controversy and that includes putting leaflets and posters on noticeboards. There must be no involvement with CND. An activity is deemed to be political if it advances a new strategy". *The Guardian* Thursday November 3 1983. *[page 53]*

Afterword

Each year for a number of years, the activists in the graduating class from a major Catholic seminary near Chicago would visit me for a day just before their ordination, with questions about values, revolutionary tactics and such. Once, at the end of such a day, one of the seminarians said, “Mr. Alinsky, before we came here, we met and agreed that there was one question we particularly wanted to put to you. We’re going to be ordained, and then we’ll be assigned to different parishes, as assistants to — frankly — stuffy, reactionary, old pastors. They will disaprove of a lot of what you and we believe in, and we will be put into a killing routine. Our question is: how do we keep our faith in true Christian values, everything we hope to do to change the system?

That was easy, I answered, “When you go out that door, just make your own personal decision about whether you want to be a bishop or a priest, and everything else will follow.’’ (Alinsky 1972: 13)

Further Reading

[page 54] It's difficult to know what to include for further reading as there is a very large range of relevant material — coming from many different sources. In the end I've chosen books and articles that I've found most useful in writing this.

First books and articles on the practice of political education.

Derek Heater and Juditth Gillespie (Eds) (1981), *Political Education in Flux*. London: Sage. This collection of articles provides a useful survey of contemporary issues and provision in Europe and in the USA — although largely based on formal approaches. At just under £19 this is a book to get from the library.

Curriculum Review Unit (1983) *Teaching Political Literacy — Implications for teacher training and curriculum planning.* University of London Institute of Education (distributed by Tinga Tinga). Whilst not being aimed at the youth and community work field, this booklet does raise a number of important questions for trainers as well as providing a helpful general bibliography.

Mark Smith (1982) *Creators not Consumers* (2e). NAYC Publications 'Creators' discusses at some length the political dimension of youth work and suggests an experiential approach to learning. More specifically on the practice of political education in youth work you could look at two articles in *Youth and Society* — 'Taking Sides', (April 1982) and 'Practicing what you preach', (June 1982).

The Youth Work Unit at the National Youth Bureau are currently working on producing some case studies of political education practice in youth work. Available 1984.

NAYC Political Education Project (1981) *Political education in youth work — some common questions answered*. NAYC Projects Team. This short report discusses some of the implications of political education for managers and policy makers.

Tony Taylor and Roy Ratcliffe (1981) 'Stuttering steps in political education' in *Schooling and Culture* Issue 9. An article which provides a graphic picture of some of the problems that can be encountered with employers and policy makers.

Paul Henderson, Anne Wright and Keith Wyncoll (Eds) (1982) *Successes and Struggles on Council Estates — Tenant action and community work*. Association of Community Workers. Of the recent crop of community work books I find myself referring to this the most. It is written by a number of field workers and provides some very helpful and unpretentious accounts of political education and action. *[page 55]*

David N Thomas (1983) *The Making of Community Work*. George Allen and Unwin. This book reviews the development of community work and makes some suggestions about key issues in training and practice. Of particular interest is his discussion of community work as political education, although the language can be somewhat academic.

Jane L. Thompson (1980) *Adult Education for a Change*. Hutchinson. A collection of articles and case studies that places adult education in the context of a class society and within the 'realities of political struggle'.

Paul Williams and Bonnie Shoultz (1982) *We Can Speak for Ourselves*. Souvenir Press — Human Horizons Series. Describes the development of self-advocacy by mentally handicapped people along with guidelines undertaking such work. Recommended.

David Hicks and Charles Townley (Eds) (1982) *Teaching World Studies — an introduction to global perspectives in the curriculum*. Longman. World Studies is a related curriculum area, and this book provides a useful discussion of some common issues as well as giving a fairly comprehensive resource listing.

Two forthcoming books look to have relevant and interesting material in them:

Phil Cohen (1984) *Stopping the Wheels — Youth, Labour and the Crisis*. Macmillan and Angie McRobbie and Mica Nava (Eds) (1984) *Gender and Generation*. Macmillan.

For books that discuss the position of the worker in the current political climate I would recommend:

London Edinburgh Weekend Return Group (1980) *In and against the state*. Pluto Press. Discusses some of the issue that face socialists who work within welfare services.

Mike Simpkin (1979, 1983) *Trapped within Welfare — surviving social work*. Macmillan. The book attempts to elaborate the elements of a strategy for socialist welfare workers whereby their politics can be brought to bear on all aspects of their jobs, as well as informing the struggle to transform them. That's what the blurb says and the book goes a long way to meeting that promise.

Chris Jones (1983) *State Social Work and the Working Class*. Macmillan. The book covers similar ground to Simpkin although with a more developed historical perspective.

Paul Curno (Ed) (1978) *Political Issues and Community Work*. Routledge Kegan Paul. Contains a number of helpful articles and case studies both on the relationship with the state and with the people being worked with.

[page 56] Bernard Davies (1981) *The State We're In*. National Youth Bureau. Examines current developments in the building of a British youth policy.

On political tactics and methods I would recommend:

Saul D. Alinsky (1972) *Rules for Radicals — A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals*. Vintage Paperbacks. This is an infuriating and opinionated book based on American experience. It is, however, marvellous and thought provoking reading.

Roger Jefferies (1982) *Tackling the Town Hall — a local authority handbook*. Routledge Kegan Paul. Gives a useful description of how local government operates and in particular how the work of the different departments can be challenged. A subject the author ought to know about as he is chief executive of the London Borough of Hounslow.

Mark Smith (1981) *Organise! A guide to practical policies for youth and community groups*. NAYC Publications. An introduction to basic methods and tactics.

Denis MacShane (1979) *Using the Media*. Pluto Press. A handbook for those who want to intervene more effectively in the production of news.

On employment issues and on some of the 'professional' concerns discussed see:

Jeremy McMullen (1983) *Rights at Work*. Pluto Press. This is a workers guide to employment law and is a revised and updated edition of the 1979 original which takes into account recent legislation and judgements.

Alan Rogers (1982) *Recording and Reporting*. NAYC Publications. Gives examples of different recording and reporting techniques and categorises them along lines of potential use.

Warren Redman (1981*) Guidelines for finding your own support*. NAYC Publications. How to create networks of 'professional' support

Instep (1980) *Guidelines to a staff development policy*. Council for Education and Training in Youth and Community Work. The booklet provides a useful overview of the area and provides much that can be used to argue, authoritatively, for good 'staff development' practices.

Julie Arnold et al (1980) *The management of detached work*. NAYC Publications Much useful material for the groups of people who manage projects etc.

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