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As a Lecturer employed in the field of Further Education, I would say that my views on education are likely to be prejudiced to some extent in that all my teaching has been directed towards and influenced by vocational considerations. I will go further than that, and say that since I am a Mechanical/Production Engineer, I am no doubt influenced in my outlook by my technological background.

I see education as being a provision for life in general; a provision that should enrich and enhance one's enjoyment of life, whilst at the same time providing a framework upon which the need to make a contribution to society at large may be placed. This need to make a contribution to society is crucial, even though the individual may not personally perceive it.

We are, I believe, living through an age when it is becoming increasingly difficult, if not impossible, for a very large section of the population of Great Britain to fulfil this need. The unfortunate section I refer to is the unemployed. Most of the unemployed, but particularly the young, must be smarting under a sense of bitterness and resentment towards our society, which has failed to provide the means by which their need to contribute, and hence feel to really belong, can be met.

Not too many years ago not, one expected, and by one, I mean practically everyone, expected to follow some pattern of life whereby gainful employment in industry, commerce, education, etc. followed a period of education. This period might, or might not, have included a further or higher education element; the expectation of employment following the education period was implicit in the system. There was a truism very often repeated to the young: "Study hard, get your qualifications and you will get a better job." Now, even a degree is no guarantee of a job at all, let alone a better one. It would seem from this that I hold the view that only by having a conventional job can a person achieve the fulfilment to which I feel they should be entitled. This is not the case; many people choose to do their own thing, not as a job in the conventional sense, but for the love of it. Participating in music, dance or other performing arts, using or developing talents in other art forms, such as writing, drawing, painting, sculpting, etc. are examples of where contributions to society can be made and fulfilment achieved without recourse to the accepted job pattern.

The important element, as I see it, is really choice. Few of the unemployed have chosen to be so; it has been inflicted upon them and our education system has, as yet, been unable to provide an education that will enable the vast pool of the unemployed to cope adequately with their lack of employment prospects, nor do I see any signs that the situation is likely to change. Very sadly, a large unemployed pool is to be the norm for a long while yet, as it would never suit a government of the present hue to have full employment, for very obvious reasons. The Education Reform Bill will not in any way ease the situation. Amongst its many faults, it suffers from the classic doctrinal philosophy of this present government, in that it will lead to a dual system in which the wealthy will be able to buy a better education for their children, and the children of those parents unemployed or on lower incomes will have to make do with a deteriorating, underfunded local authority system after the "haves" have creamed off the best schools in the system by opting out from the local authority control. Like the National Health Service, the education system will offer an exceptionally good service for those willing and able to pay and a much inferior service for the remainder.

The inadequate funding of education provision by the Local Education Authority has resulted in a lack of resources and a deterioration in the fabric of our colleges; this has been noted in reports from H.M.I. Britain is a manufacturing nation; it requires a strong, flourishing manufacturing industry in order to survive in the very competitive world market place. This industry requires a competent and flexible workforce, able to respond to the rapidly changing nature of modern technology. The provision of adequate, scientific, technological and commercial education to meet the needs of industry and commerce is, I feel, essential, yet this must not preclude the provision for education in the fields of the arts and other areas that make their greatest contribution to society in cultural terms. The system most likely to be able to meet these requirements, is a tertiary system with a single coherent approach, aimed at maximising access and progression. The rationalisation of resources brought about by the adoption of this system would not be the least benefit.

The greatly improved Youth Training Scheme does not, in many cases, provide good "off the job" training nor education, and it is wrong that many young people have to make the choice between a YTS scheme with its financial inducement, or a course in Further Education where only a discretionary grant might apply. A choice based on financial allowances rather than educational considerations is not likely to be the most sound. The City Technology colleges will not provide a solution; they will, in fact, further fragment the educational provision and again tend to be divisive.

Until society provides something of value for all young people to be able to do after their period of full

time education has finished, and this carries suitable remuneration, then I am afraid that there will be a pool of young people disillusioned and resentful, feeling that education is a waste of time. This attitude is more likely to be held by those who do not achieve academic success as measured conventionally by examination results. Is their attitude unreasonable? Perhaps we should reeducate the politicians!