

## THE CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF SCOTLAND'S EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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"The crisis in Scottish schools is a crisis in Scottish life... Scotland's schools are at the centre of Scotland's perplexity, one of its main causes. They make little contribution to its cultural development, they are insulated from dealing with the problems of ordinary life. In their uniforms, discipline, and discouragement of original thought they are authoritarian... The democracy of Scottish education (and Scottish life) is a myth." (R.F. Mackenzie) (1)

"Crisis" has become a favourite word with which to describe Scottish education. Nigel Grant used it in the title of his 1982 Saltire Society pamphlet and defined the crisis in terms of direction, resources and identity (2). The term also features frequently in the correspondence columns of The Scotsman, The Glasgow Herald and The Times Educational Supplement Scotland: proposals for reform, whether of the curriculum, the examination system, or the disciplinary regime of schools, are seen by supporters or critics as likely to reduce or intensify a perceived crisis in the classroom. In some respects, however, the use of the word is misleading. It seems to suggest a degree of urgency, a realisation of the need for imaginative solutions to serious educational problems. But, despite the rhetoric of crisis, there is very little evidence to suggest that the kind of intellectual engagement that is required is actually taking place amongst those who are in a position to encourage policy initiatives. Difficulties encountered by teachers are seen in terms of institutional resources or management strategies or in-service training, not in terms of larger social or political or bureaucratic structures. There is still a marked reluctance on the part of most professional educationalists to address the sorts of questions R.F. Mackenzie poses about the relation between schooling and cultural values. This paper attempts to open up some of these wider issues and to locate Scottish education within cultural dimensions that are usually ignored in official reports emanating from the Scottish Education Department. Comprehensive coverage is clearly impossible and, in the second half of the paper,

one particular aspect - the "political" role of certain elite groups in education - will be examined in some detail.

First, however, some brief observations about theoretical and methodological issues are required. The study of the contemporary Scottish scene in cultural terms is relatively undeveloped. There is, for example, no body of work comparable to that produced by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University. To make this point is not necessarily to imply approval for the particular theoretical orientation of the Birmingham group: it is simply to draw attention to a gap in the writing on Scottish society. There is, of course, a great deal of important work going on. The upsurge of nationalism in the seventies helped to stimulate a number of extremely valuable political and constitutional studies, the most recent by Keating and Midwinter: (3) Schools of Scottish Studies in the universities continue to pursue worthwhile historical and literary investigations: and specific topics, hitherto neglected - for example, the position of women (4) - are now receiving the attention they deserve. What is lacking in all this, however, is some kind of over-arching conceptual framework which helpsto illuminate the connections between different aspects of Scottish culture and, in particular, takes us beyond the traditional institutional categories of church, law and education, by which that culture is usually defined. The publication of A Companion to Scottish Culture (5) is to be welcomed but in a way it symbolizes the nature of the problem. It offers an alphabetical list of discrete entries covering, in addition to the traditional institutions, topics such as banking and industrialization and the lives and achievements of distinguished (and some not so distinguished) Scots men and women. It also makes a gesture towards popular culture by including football, newspapers and pubs. Many of the entries are undoubtedly well-informed and well-written but there is little attempt to convey the "relationship between elements in a whole way of life", (6) the study of which Raymond Williams has identified as the crucial feature in any theory of culture.

The difficulty of communicating the interactive nature of cultural processes is, in Scotland's case, exacerbated by the constant shadow of a dominant neighbour in the shape of England. Most people living in Scotland experience, though in different degrees, dual

nationality as Scottish and British and it is often difficult to know where one ends and the other begins. A recent observer has remarked with acerbity on "the reality of Scots culture: Tandoori, "Dallas", snooker, country and western, Princess Di, and holidays in Benidorm, all not much different from the rest of the U.K."<sup>(7)</sup>. Nevertheless, the impetus to define the distinctiveness of Scottish culture remains strong and sometimes it takes the form of a particular brand of uncritical nationalism, which seeks to defend anything (whether good, bad or indifferent) that is perceived as being under threat from real or imagined assimilation to English norms. This tendency manifests itself intermittently in the field of education (though, as will be shown later, it is modified by other tendencies). The separate institutional apparatus for Scotland (the Scottish Education Department, the Scottish Examination Board, the Consultative Committee on the Curriculum, the General Teaching Council) has at times been assiduously presented by the leadership class as the guardian against English cultural encroachments. Such fears are, of course, not always unjustified but one effect of this mode of perception has been to make Scottish educationalists resistant to change: almost any proposal for reform can be interpreted as an assault on Scottish identity where a climate of touchy defensiveness prevails. Such responses, it could be argued, are indicative of a nation which lacks confidence in its own ability to shape the future and which clings, romantically or despairingly, to symbolic vestiges of the past - a natural tendency with regard to education, given Scotland's earlier reputation in this field.

Resistance to English cultural imperialism also encourages the view that it is meaningful to speak of the culture of Scotland. There is, however, and always has been, considerable cultural variation within Scotland - between Highlands and Lowlands, between Edinburgh and Glasgow, between Catholics and Protestants. The existence of three native languages - English, Scots and Gaelic - is another indicator of significant diversity and one which obviously has important implications for education<sup>(8)</sup>. Add to this the presence of immigrant groups in various parts of Scotland, with their own languages and traditions, and the picture becomes even more complicated. Yet despite these differences, and despite the British connection, there remains a strong temptation in the popular mind to subsume the whole of Scottish life under a standardized and idealized model which, improbably,

combines elements of Burns, Hampden, Knox, Red Clydeside and a kailyard version of community life in which the dominie features as a folk hero. It is a tribute to the contortions of the Scottish psyche that it manages to remain sane - and, indeed, to remain convinced of its own ineffable common sense - in the face of such contradictory forces. The early work of the distinguished (and, perhaps significantly, exiled) Scottish psychiatrist, R.D. Laing, could usefully be extended from the individual to the national consciousness:<sup>(9)</sup> the concurrence of conflicting self-images is only possible through the sophisticated deployment of a range of schizoid defences. Scottish education, it will now be argued, both reflects these confusions within the culture as a whole and, paradoxically, serves as an important instrument in helping to contain them.

James Scotland has remarked that "much of Scotland's pride in her educational tradition is unreasoning and unreasonable":<sup>(10)</sup> nonetheless, he concludes his two-volume history with the sentence, "At its best the Scottish tradition in education has served the people of Scotland well"<sup>(11)</sup>. What are the defining characteristics of that tradition and to what extent are they still evident today? The accounts offered by James Scotland and, more recently, by Henry Cowper and Willis Pickard<sup>(12)</sup> include the following features: the value attached to education as a general social good; equality of opportunity for all pupils; democracy in terms of the social mix of schools and the absence of a significant private sector (except in Edinburgh); the use of education to advance the cause of religion; a bias in favour of academic learning; avoidance of experimentation in curriculum and teaching methods; practicality in the training of teachers; a concern for economy and efficiency of provision; general acceptance of the authority of the teacher.

Some of these characteristics are less obvious now than they were in the past. The connection with religion, for example, has progressively weakened in most schools since the end of the nineteenth century, though it remains strong in the Roman Catholic sector. Other characteristics, such as equality, have been challenged on the basis of sociological evidence. A major recent study, drawing on extensive data collected over a number of years, has cast doubt on "the folk image of the lad o' pairts, and the accompanying notion of equality... Scottish education since the war has been neither meritocratic nor

equal; the levels of inequality are similar to those observed in England and other Western societies"<sup>(13)</sup>. Again, the setting up of an official committee in 1974 to investigate problems of truancy and indiscipline in schools<sup>(14)</sup> would seem to indicate that the traditional respect for teachers can no longer be relied upon.

From a cultural point of view, however, the most interesting aspect of conventional accounts of the Scottish tradition in education is the potential for conflict between the various elements that contribute to it. Just as there are contradictions and inconsistencies in Scottish culture as a whole, so the Scottish educational system embodies values and ideals which coexist rather uneasily. For much of the time these tensions are submerged, not least because they are uncomfortable to contemplate. But it is precisely for this reason that they call for examination. It should be noted first of all that the democratic claims made on behalf of Scottish education are somewhat undermined by the narrow definition of worthwhile knowledge expressed in the academic curriculum and the implied downgrading of forms of intelligence other than cognitive. This tension is of long standing. In the middle decades of the twentieth century, for example, Scotland gained an international reputation for the work carried out at Moray House and elsewhere on the development of intelligence tests which were used to separate the academic sheep from the non-academic goats: allocation of different "types" of children to different types of secondary school thus became a relatively simple exercise. The maintenance of a belief in the democratic character of the system was possible for two reasons: the seemingly objective, scientific nature of the tests employed; and, more importantly, the uncritical acceptance of the view that success was dependent purely on ability, not on factors such as wealth or class<sup>(15)</sup>. This ensured that even those who failed were inclined to accept the apparent justice of their failure: they had, after all, been given a "fair chance" and had been shown to be academically unworthy. Working class successes were, not surprisingly, even more inclined to assume that selection for secondary education was made on grounds that were rational and just: they further assumed that the heavily academic diet of senior secondary education represented a proper conception of worthwhile knowledge, an attitude which encouraged many of them to go on to become teachers themselves, often from the best of motives. We no longer have a selective system of secondary education but some of the

old divisions certainly remain. The distinction between "certificate" and "non-certificate" pupils will be phased out when the proposals of the Munn<sup>(16)</sup> and Dunning<sup>(17)</sup> Reports are implemented but it will be surprising if the differentiation of courses into Foundation, General and Credit levels does not, in practice, become a differentiation of "types" of pupil. The fact that this will take place within a single institution called a "comprehensive" school may soften the effect but it is unlikely to provide a justification for the exaggerated democratic and egalitarian claims that are often made on behalf of Scottish education.

There are further tensions to be observed in conventional accounts of the Scottish tradition in education. Pragmatism and efficiency serve to reinforce each other but both seem to conflict with another agreed feature, the resistance to pressures for change. Scotland can hardly claim to have been in the vanguard of reform: the major changes in the post-war period - the raising of the school leaving age and the switch to comprehensivization - depended on initiatives from London, not Edinburgh. Furthermore, although a good deal of energy has been expended on proposals for modifying the curriculum and examination system, the approved policy is decidedly modest in educational (if not in bureaucratic) terms: the only real sign of a willingness to grapple with basic structural issues is in the post-school sector<sup>(18)</sup>.

Another source of unease is that, despite the social value accorded to education in Scotland, there has, until recently, been little reciprocating involvement by schools in the society which sustains them. R.F. Mackenzie is referring to this when he says that they "are insulated from dealing with the problems of ordinary life"<sup>(19)</sup>. Even James Scotland comments on the influence of the academic bias in Scottish education "in drawing the schools in on themselves, and out of the general life of the community"<sup>(20)</sup>. Given the relative isolation of schooling from other social processes, it may seem strange to suggest that it embodies particularly significant cultural values and attitudes. However, social pressures which lead to division and separation, which encourage high boundary-maintenance between different aspects of living, are unlikely to develop without a reason. Indeed, the stronger the boundaries, the greater the need to examine the functions they serve. As part of this, the precise nature

of Scottish "democracy" poses considerable problems. It seems to make sense in relation to access to schooling and the absence of a substantial independent sector of the kind that flourishes in England. It makes much less sense, however, in relation to the intellectual isolation of schools and, most obviously, the typical teaching styles found in Scottish classrooms: the overt oppression of the past, often enforced by a fairly brutal system of punishments, is perhaps much less in evidence nowadays, but the whole process remains heavily teacher-centred. It is clear that there are very definite limits to "democracy" in Scottish education.

What, then, are we to make of these tensions and conflicts and seeming contradictions? How has it been possible to sustain belief in the merits and coherence of an educational system which, whatever its achievements in the past, now seems to express a set of values, the internal consistency of which is doubtful? Before addressing this substantive issue directly, it is necessary to return briefly to methodological matters. Anyone seeking to understand the cultural significance of Scottish schooling cannot expect to find the major part of the answer within schools themselves. Schools need to be regarded as cultural symptoms, not (pace R.F. Mackenzie) primary causal factors. A serious deficiency of the standard histories of Scottish education (including James Scotland's own) has been their neglect of the wider climate of religious, scientific, environmental and political forces which determine the particular form of educational institutions at different points in history. Thus if we are even to begin to approach an understanding of the problem we need to cast our nets wider than usual. Important and revealing though the actions, attitudes and achievements of teachers and pupils are, they cannot in themselves provide all the information which the cultural analyst seeks. In a sense they are merely acting out a drama, the script of which has been written elsewhere. Having said this, however, an immediate qualification is necessary. It is relatively easy to make loose generalizations about the effects of cultural processes on particular institutions: it is much less easy to illustrate with some precision the form in which those processes are expressed. The lack of a substantial body of writing on contemporary Scottish culture, which was noted at the outset, intensifies the problem. As a first step, therefore, it would seem desirable to aim for some intermediate type of analysis, somewhere between the school as an institution and the

wider structure of customs, beliefs, attitudes and values which makes up the culture of a society. In other words, it is important to get the level of analysis right, to steer a course between the small-scale institutional (or micro) level and the large-scale theoretical (or macro) level. The strategy that will be adopted in the remainder of this paper concentrates on what might be called the bureaucratic/political context of Scottish education.

The substantive issue may be restated thus: how can equality, authoritarianism, democracy, practicality and scholarship coexist in Scottish education? A simple, common-sense explanation might take the line that in a pluralist society there are bound to be conflicting values and that schools inevitably reflect these. Furthermore, it might be pointed out that there is often a time lag before changing social values are accommodated in the school curriculum and it is not surprising, therefore, that it becomes an arena for seeming cultural dissonance. At a more sophisticated level, it may be suggested that the problem can be explained in terms of a difference between the myth and the reality of Scottish education. We are now familiar with the distinction between the formal and the hidden curriculum in schools. Might not this also apply on a larger scale so that, for example, the myth might make great play of the democratic and egalitarian character of Scottish schooling (compared with, say, English), while the reality, especially as experienced by pupils,<sup>(21)</sup> might be authoritarian? Such an approach does raise some interesting questions - for example, who promotes and who believes the myth? - but it is not entirely satisfactory. It assumes that there is a "reality" to be grasped and that it is possible to separate myth, which is false, from reality, which is true. But it has been rightly pointed out that myths are stories that people tell themselves, "and tell for two purposes. These purposes are, first, to explain the world and, second, to celebrate identity and to express values"<sup>(22)</sup>. Expectation, knowledge, belief, hope, fear and justification are intermingled and to separate them neatly in the way the myth/reality explanation tries to do is to distort the complex nature of human perception and understanding.

The "mythology" of Scottish education, then, cannot simply be dismissed as a series of illusions or self-deceptions. It is an important part of Scottish consciousness, a celebration of the past and an explanation, albeit a confusing one, of the present. These

functions need to be acknowledged in any attempt to offer a balanced account of the cultural significance of the Scottish educational system. The question remains, however, of how it is possible to keep such a structure intact. If we use the term "ideology" to refer to the whole network of ideas forming the basis of the received wisdom about Scottish education, and if we begin to look at the power groups which help to sustain the ideology, part of the answer may begin to emerge. It should be stressed that the account that follows is certainly incomplete and represents only one of a number of possible approaches.

A range of strategies designed to maintain ideological consistency can be detected at work in Scottish education. Values are invoked selectively by different groups according to the needs of the moment. Counter-values are discounted by a variety of means. The formation of sub-groups with a stake in at least part of the dominant ideology is encouraged. Fundamental questions to do with the political significance of the ideology as a whole are evaded. The general effect is to induce a high measure of uncritical conformity in thinking about Scottish education. This is achieved not principally through overt authoritarianism (though examples of that can certainly be found), nor through any kind of carefully co-ordinated conspiracy (though there is certainly enough circumstantial evidence to encourage such an hypothesis), but through the professional, institutional and bureaucratic pressures to which individual men and women are subject. These points require illustration.

To begin with it should be noted that the most powerful groups in Scottish education, at both national and local level, manage to maintain a remarkable degree of anonymity. There is, for example, no study of the S.E.D. comparable to Sir William Pile's book on the D.E.S.<sup>(23)</sup> and no work on Directors of Education in Scotland which compares with that of Bush and Kogan on their English equivalents<sup>(24)</sup>. In other words, the leadership class in Scottish education has not been subject to much in the way of critical scrutiny. Within the S.E.D., the functioning of two major groups is especially important. First, there are the senior career civil servants (Assistant Secretary and above) who have access to the Minister responsible for education. Since the Minister has other responsibilities and has to spend a substantial amount of time commuting between Edinburgh and London, the power exercised by the senior career civil servants can be

considerable. They are, moreover, quite likely to have served in other government departments, including departments in Whitehall and will have been carefully initiated into the traditional bureaucratic virtues of confidentiality and secrecy. Their first loyalty is not to education, nor to Scotland, but to the British state.

The second major group within the S.E.D. is the Inspectorate - more than a hundred men and women, usually recruited between the ages of 30 and 45 from the ranks of the teaching profession. In addition to traditional inspectorial functions, H.M.I.s have responsibility for conveying advice to the Secretary of State on a wide range of educational matters and for stimulating curriculum research and development. They also serve as members or assessors of more than four hundred external bodies and are, therefore, very well placed to know what is going on in the Scottish educational world: indeed they are sometimes described, rather ambiguously, as "the eyes and ears" of the Secretary of State. Some aspects of their work are not entirely clear - their access to politicians, their precise relations with senior career civil servants, and their connections with the D.E.S. in London. What can be said is that, with few exceptions, they are quickly assimilated into the administrative ethos of a large government department and that, within the Scottish educational system as a whole, they enjoy elite status, about which they are fairly sensitive. They objected, for example, to the word "basic" being used in a report describing the nature of their work. They felt it might be interpreted as meaning "elementary or low level" instead of "supremely important"<sup>(25)</sup>.

Both the senior career civil servants and members of the Inspectorate (particularly the latter) play a significant part in the Secretary of State's use of patronage. The Secretary of State has power to appoint individuals to educational quangos of various kinds and he relies on his officials for recommendations. In some instances he simply has to choose from a list of nominees submitted by an outside body but here too he depends on the advice of those within the S.E.D. who are closely involved in the day-to-day running of the educational system. Much sounding out takes place privately and unofficially over the telephone. It would be surprising if, in such circumstances, the decision makers did not tend to err on the side of caution. The extensive use of patronage leads to the appointment of

many hard-working and well-meaning individuals but it also tends to ensure that critical voices, however well-informed, are excluded from the policy-making arena. This tendency has been noted operating at a more general level in the report of the inquiry into the work of the Inspectorate conducted as part of the Rayner review of efficiency in government. The report makes the point that "...it is important that Inspectors do not trade too much on the respect they have gained. It would be unhealthy for the system if too tight a grip were exerted at too many points throughout it...care should be taken not to be stifling to initiative, enterprise, new or different ideas which could emerge from other agencies" (26).

Other pressures which serve to exclude or neutralize criticism are to be detected. The remits of committees looking into various aspects of education are circumscribed ostensibly on practical grounds but also to ensure that fundamental questions of meaning and purpose are discouraged. Again, the geographical distribution of representatives on bodies such as the C.C.C. and the S.E.B. is carefully monitored. S.E.D. policy has been to ensure that the different parts of Scotland are reflected in the membership, an understandable practice but one that leads to an imbalance of input. The heavily populated areas of West-Central Scotland have been consistently under-represented in the formulation of educational policies (27). As these are also the areas with the most pressing educational problems and the most unionised teachers the effect once again has been to cut out possible sources of controversy from debate. The career patterns of Inspectors themselves reinforce these conformist tendencies. They often include small towns outside the West-Central belt which are unrepresentative of the experience of most pupils and teachers but which serve to perpetuate many of the traditional assumptions. Andrew McPherson has called this the "Kirriemuir career" and has commented illuminatingly on its significance (28).

At local level the leadership class is represented by Directors of Education and their staffs. This group, like the Inspectorate, prefers to maintain a low profile but can be rather more obviously directive in its mode of operation. A recent example is the circular issued by Grampian Regional Council to headteachers instructing them not to contact their M.P's if they disagree with Council

decisions (29). The circular stresses that headteachers owe a direct responsibility to their employer and "if they are aggrieved by any decisions taken by that employer, their official recourse is to take the matter up with the Director of Education...members of Regional staff should not contact outside bodies, organisations or individuals, including Members of Parliament, in order to ventilate grievances about their work." The fear of public criticism is quite explicit here and betrays a willingness to suppress legitimate debate on important matters of public policy in the interests of administrative smoothness. Insistence on proceeding via "proper channels" serves both to identify critics and to control the sort of discussion and investigation that takes place.

Usually it is not necessary to intervene in such a heavy-handed fashion. Advisers and headteachers, for example, quickly learn that in written reports or public statements it is wise to pay tribute to the good sense and generosity of the authority, and to play down deficiencies in provision. Among classroom teachers there is a widespread belief that promotion is dependent on flattering one's superiors and suppressing criticism of approved national and local policies. This kind of suspicion is, of course, almost impossible to prove and serves as an easy refuge for the bitter and the cynical. But, even if it is untrue, the fact that it is widely believed is enough to ensure that most teachers tread carefully. Just occasionally, bold spirits do step out of line, as in the series of letters in The Glasgow Herald early in 1983 criticising regional policies on discipline, following the abolition of corporal punishment. Some of these were quite outspoken in their comments on remarks attributed to the Director of Education for Strathclyde and the Chairman of the Education Committee. Generally, however, self-imposed conformity can be relied upon.

There are several explanations for the ready compliance of classroom teachers. They are, in social terms, an upwardly mobile group, many being recruited from the aspiring working class: respectability and security are thus highly valued. In addition, most teachers wish to be recognised as "professionals" and, indeed, the history of the Educational Institute of Scotland, Scotland's largest teachers' union, founded in 1847, is essentially the history of a drive for professional status. An important side-effect of this

concern is that it gives members a sanction against each other which is probably as effective as any external sanction. Non-conformist behaviour on the part of a colleague can be labelled "unprofessional" and thereby discounted.

The role assumed by the E.I.S. (and also by the General Teaching Council, constituted as a "self-governing" professional body in 1966) is quite acceptable to the S.E.D. E.I.S. officials are routinely consulted and develop a liking for the sensation of living "on the inside" of the decision-making process. They want to be regarded as responsible and are, therefore, quite willing to accept conventions of confidentiality in exchange for guaranteed representation. The alternative to controlled assimilation would be an independent pressure group operating entirely outside the governmental machine but this would require the acceptance of a less "professional" image, a prospect that the E.I.S. leadership has so far been unwilling to contemplate.

The bureaucratic, institutional and professional pressures that have been described allow us to begin to construct a rudimentary picture of the way ideological consistency is maintained in Scottish education. Some remarks by the philosopher Patrick Corbett are relevant here<sup>(30)</sup>. Corbett states that "the social function of ideologies is to condition men intellectually to obedience" and he explains the process in these terms:

"Ideologies serve the interests of certain institutions, and therefore of those who hold office in those institutions. Men enjoy power, and the fruits of power. They like to make other men act as they decide; the spectacle is pleasant in itself and brings material gains. But how can other men be made obedient? It is impractical to be always telling and forcing them to act as you desire. That takes too much time; it is also too rigid, and is liable to produce resistance. More effective is to persuade them that obedience is in their own real interest; more effective still is to persuade them that what looks like obedience is really nothing of the kind, but rather the fulfilment of some plan or necessity which transcends the lives and needs of any individuals. That the plan or necessity in question ministers much more to the lives and needs of some people than it does to those of others is merely incidental, and to be accepted as part of the nature of things."

In the context of Scottish education, this analysis may seem exaggerated, and certainly it seems to imply a degree of consciousness on the part of the leadership class which may be misleading. The main value of Corbett's explanation, however, is that it enables us to perceive the gap that may develop between the stated aims of an institution and the underlying functions which it serves. In-so-far as these underlying functions serve the interests of a particular class or group, and especially if they operate in a society which pays lip service to the values of democracy and equality, efforts will be made to disguise them - through, for instance, an elaborate process of "consultation" with other groups (many of which can be relied upon to share the same basic ideology), or through the skilful deployment of a disarming rhetoric. A clear example of the latter can be seen in relation to the 1965 Primary Memorandum<sup>(31)</sup>. This has been presented again and again as a liberating document (most recently in the P4 - P7 Report<sup>(32)</sup>). But, as Frank McEnroe has argued, "the Memorandum, in spite of frequent references to liberal sentiments, envisages education as an instrument for promoting the value-system of a reified society"<sup>(33)</sup>.

It would, however, be unduly cynical to say that Scotland's educational system is run principally for the benefit of its leadership class and that the clients (pupils, parents and the community as a whole) merely serve as the excuse for various forms of self-interest. Undoubtedly much good work still goes on in classrooms up and down the country - but it goes on within a context that fails to encourage the critical thinking that is, ironically, supposed to be one of the aims of education, a context that is, moreover, markedly hierarchical and status-conscious. Other Scottish institutions, such as the church and the law, betray similar characteristics: the common factor is the political/bureaucratic dimension which modifies and, to some extent, undermines the values that the institutions are supposed to embody. Within any single institution the structure as a whole is rarely perceived, let alone understood. In education, for example, the commissioning of separate reports for 10-14, 14-16, and 16-18 age groups has ensured that the values of freedom, equality, social unity, academic standards and vocational training are invoked in piecemeal and, at times, contradictory fashion. However, given the strict demarcation of remits, it remains possible to sustain belief in the coherence of some vaguely defined Scottish tradition. Would-be

critics, if they are not effectively assimilated or dismissed as cranks, are labelled as Anglicizers or political subversives. In short, the paradoxes of Scottish education are never tackled directly. As long as it is believed that fragmented enquiries into curricula and examinations constitute "research", the fundamental problem of increasing disaffection with schooling will continue to be ignored. As long as questions of discipline and authority are viewed only in terms of pupils' behaviour in the classroom, the intellectual authoritarianism of the educational bureaucracy will persist. Most important of all, as long as the rhetoric of democracy and equality remains unchallenged, the political significance of the received wisdom about Scottish education will fail to be understood.

We are now in a position to summarize the argument and point to some further lines of enquiry into the network of cultural interactions, of which education is only a part. Belief in the ideological consistency of Scottish education is secured by a variety of strategies: by the low visibility of the leadership class: by controlled assimilation of people and ideas through the patronage system: by focusing attention on what happens in schools and ignoring the bureaucratic structures which surround them: by limiting the remit of committees of enquiry: by encouraging "professionalism" and giving interest groups a stake in it: by appeals to a particular form of defensive nationalism. These are strategies of containment which seek to suggest a high degree of cultural solidarity. Potential sources of division - for example, language, religion and class - are controlled in several ways: through token provision, or "divide and rule" tactics, or by regarding them as being outside the realm of effective educational action.

Many of the tendencies that have been noted are not peculiarly Scottish in the sense that they are to be found in complex institutions throughout the Western world, but the particular form they take and the cultural effects they have are unique. Both Bob Tait<sup>(34)</sup> and David Donnison<sup>(35)</sup> have recently commented on the monolithic character of Scottish education and its imperviousness to outside influences. Tait has argued that "education is one of the principal... under-pinnings of Scottish civil society and culture" and that "as a national system it presents relatively few varieties of styles of authority and social organisation". Donnison has claimed

that, despite their self-image of forthrightness, most Scots reveal an astonishing degree of deference in the face of political and professional authority: part of the explanation, he suggests, is "to do with schools founded by Churches speaking in the name of a stern God, and with teachers who gave or withheld the opportunities which shaped people's lives". He adds, "In England people's opportunities always depended on many other things besides education".

These remarks bring us back to the need to re-locate the study of Scottish education in its cultural context, to identify and seek to explain the connections that undoubtedly do exist between schooling on the one hand and the wider climate of social, religious and political forces on the other. These connections have been obscured by the containment strategies that have been outlined, which have succeeded in separating schools from the value systems which shape them and the cultural functions they serve. This paper has concentrated on the bureaucratic/political dimension but there are many other avenues in need of exploration. The paradoxes of Scottish culture are manifold - "forthright speech and subservient conduct, aggressive masculinity and maudlin sentimentality, contempt for and envy of most things English, moral righteousness and eschatological guilt, the democratic myth and the corruption of power"<sup>(36)</sup>. Education, or at least schooling, in varying degrees and in different ways, reflects all of these: in R.F. Mackenzie's words, it stands "at the centre of Scotland's perplexity"<sup>(37)</sup>.

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