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BOOK REVIEWS

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BOOK REVIEWS

Radical possibilities: public policy, urban education, and a new social movement

Jean Anyon, 2005

New York, Routledge

\$22.95 (pbk), 240 pp.

ISBN 0415950996

Radical Possibilities charts the grim reality of urban and suburban education failure in the United States. Anyon points the finger at social policy at federal, state and city level. It is housing, transport, and employment policies that create decisive structural barriers that prevent educational attainment. At one point she argues that urban black youth would do better to organise militant trade unions than go into higher education!

She shows how more than two decades of neo-liberal reform continues to undermine educational progress. Poverty, rising inequality, institutional racism and segregation remain key features. It is a familiar, although in important ways different, picture to that in the United Kingdom. Whether it is Bush's No Child Left Behind or Blair's City Academies programme, ruling elites have tried to impose their own solutions on these problems. Yet the problems of our inner city schools persist.

The need for education reform and the place of progressive education within it remain critical questions. The real interest in *Radical Possibilities* lies in what Anyon proposes about how education 'activists' should organise.

She uses her experience of activism in the civil rights movement of the 1960s and '70s as a template for organising a new social movement for education. Local grassroots campaigning with regional and national linkages, she argues, could create a social movement of sufficient weight to force concessions from ruling elites. She cites many examples of local activism, although few regional or national initiatives.

Yet the crucial question of exactly how education could become a new civil rights movement is not really addressed. I will return to this issue later. But first it is valuable to look briefly at some of the different features in the United Kingdom.

A decade of the New Labour government has, for complex reasons, demobilised much local and national campaigning on education issues. The reform movements of the 1960s and '70s that fought for a properly funded and comprehensive education system have largely dissipated. Teacher union campaigns have tended to succeed only on 'pay and conditions' issues. Local parent-based organisations have withered and national campaigns, such as CASE—the Campaign for State Education—are shadows of their former selves.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century the presence of movements for educational reform and progressive education in the United Kingdom is barely visible.

Campaigns, such as the Anti-Sats Alliance,¹ did emerge, but they have tended to be short lived and have failed to develop as a movement. Teacher unions remain marginalised, parent organisation is almost non-existent and neither governors nor head teachers tend to get involved.

A crucial factor has been the role of the New Labour government. From its inception, Blair placed a premium on 'education, education, education'. Optimism surrounding his election in 1997 evaporated as it became clear that New Labour would extend previous Tory government policies by, for example, demanding more testing and more privatisation.

Repeated attacks on the 'bog standard' comprehensive school increasingly undermined public confidence in state education to the extent that today's 'reform' agenda has been re-focused on programmes to extend 'choice and diversity' and other thinly veiled measures to privatise elements of state education.

This agenda has not been exclusive to education. Public services have been increasingly privatised as part of a neo-liberal re-organisation of state functions. As with council housing or the NHS, the impact within the education community has been dramatic. But the defence of comprehensive education has been almost impossible to raise as a legitimate objective.²

In just a decade, New Labour has effectively neutered movements for educational reform. The notion of education as a force for social justice, for social mobility and as a desirable end in and of itself has been replaced with a crude measure of education for employability. Reduced to levels and targets, 'progress' in education tends to be measured by its contribution to UK plc rather than its ability to engage and excite our children.

There are simply too many issues here to consider. Be it pedagogy, curriculum, funding or whatever, the trajectory of public discourse has been firmly against progressive, comprehensive education. There is now a generational gap, between ageing 'comprehensive education' activists and new teachers or parents for whom comprehensive education is a meaningless slogan. Grassroots movements for educational reform of the type Anyon identifies in the United States are almost non-existent in the UK. So the question of how to fight for educational reform has to look at some different issues.

The role of the Labour Party in UK politics is what makes comparison with the United States and with Anyon's *Radical Possibilities* so awkward. The United States has nothing similar. Generations of education activists were drawn to support the Labour Party as it could justifiably claim to have achieved real advances for ordinary people in education. Whether it was ever an effective vehicle for those wanting to pursue a really progressive agenda education is a different issue.

What, I think, is clear today is that New Labour has not only ceased to be a vehicle for progressive education, but has also ceased to be a vehicle for education reform. New Labour education policy is now made up of the stuff that Margaret Thatcher could only dream. Blair—and his sidekick Lord Adonis—have declared war on comprehensive education, in much the same way that Blair declared war on Iraq.

If the major vehicle for educational reform in the United Kingdom no longer exists, what, then, are the possibilities for reform? Whatever the future of the Labour Party after Blair, it seems reasonable to suppose, as Anyon does, that a national movement for reform based on grassroots involvement of parents and teachers is required.

This is easier to theorise than make a reality. There are, however, grounds for optimism. Some features in the United Kingdom make for a favourable terrain. Education remains a key political issue. The national media frequently ventures into key debates and as a result educational journalists and parent campaigners such as Fiona Millar and Melissa Benn³ have been able to carry effective arguments to a wider audience in recent years. The teacher unions, in particular the National Union of Teachers, have increasingly focused on educational reform issues. Its activists, in its local associations, often provide the backbone to local campaigns that do emerge.

There is also a rich academic tradition that has championed the cause of progressive education. Some academics, themselves victims of the neo-liberal restructuring of higher education (see Callinicos, 2006), are willing to question and campaign. And there is also a democratic, local structure of education authorities—although this has recently been targeted to reduce its powers.

But in any ‘war’, there is a need to deal with the enemies’ advanced guard. In the United Kingdom, that is the Academy programme. The government plans 400 of these semi-privatised academy schools. As they have rolled out they have, on occasion, hit significant local opposition (see Hatcher & Jones, 2006). Academies not only represent a form of privatisation, they also threaten to destroy comprehensive education, creating a two-tier system that will restructure inequality in much the same way that the grammar and secondary modern system blighted generations of working-class children.

At its second annual conference in November 2006, the Anti Academy Alliance⁴ set itself the task of halting this advanced guard. The Alliance has, tentatively, brought together precisely those forces that could build a new grassroots movement. It remains to be seen whether it will succeed. If it can forge a genuine united organisation out of the very different groups of activists within it, it may well succeed.

And again there are grounds for optimism. The AAA is modelled on the Defend Council Housing campaign and the Stop the War Coalition. These are mass movements—united fronts⁵—that have been able to strike at the heart of government policy, although in neither case have they successfully reversed it, as yet.

In this context it is hard to see how, on either side of the Atlantic, education would become the central focus of a new civil rights movement. Opposition to war is likely to be the key issue. However, it is realistic to imagine that as the intractable ‘war without end’ generates ever greater opposition, new spaces will emerge that will enable activists to question other social policies, education included. In the late 1960s the anti-Vietnam war protest movement became increasingly linked with the civil rights movement, each helping the other grow in influence.

Perhaps similar opportunities will arise. But however the movement develops, the fact that Anyon has posed the question of educational reform in this grassroots

movement way has, in any event, provided a useful template for discussion and action. Education activists should 'seize the time'!

Notes

1. The Anti-Sats Alliance attempted to organise opposition to the government's extension SATS testing in primary schools in 2003/4.
2. So effective has been the attack on comprehensive education, that those campaigners still seeking to promote its values have coined new slogans such as 'a good local school for all our children'.
3. Millar and Benn were in the forefront of the campaign against the 2006 Education & Inspections Bill. They co-authored *A comprehensive future: quality and equality for all our children* (Benn & Millar, 2006).
4. The AAA held its founding conference in 2005, bringing together several local campaigns.
5. By this I mean, in a Marxist sense, a collection of different organisations and individuals from a variety of political backgrounds that are united around a single objective.

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Japan and Germany under the U.S. occupation: a comparative analysis of the post war education reform

Masako Shibata, 2005

Lanham, MD, Lexington Books

£45.85, 213 pp. + xviii

ISBN 0-7391-1149-3

Dr Shibata adopts the perspective of comparative education to analyze and compare the education reforms taking place in Germany and Japan after World War II. Her penetrating account points out the ways in which the two defeated nations, though both immensely influenced by the United States, dramatically diverged in the directions of their education reforms and operations. Dr Shibata offers the reader an intriguing starting point.

This book is not just confined to a description of the two education systems. Shibata marshals myriad documented records and research to present the historical backgrounds and cultures of Germany and Japan. In the first part of the book,

Shibata lucidly demonstrates her capability in archive analysis and research. She compares the Meiji period of Japan with the Kaiserreich period of Germany, respectively elucidating the role of the state and the development of the education systems under the increasing influence of national elites. Japan was then in its transformation from a feudal country to a modern one. With the establishment of the Ministry of Education during the Meiji period in 1871, the state education system was gradually rid of the influence of traditions. Universities of this time started to cultivate elites for Japanese society. Shibata faithfully depicts, with abundant documents and data, the role of universities that were of expanding importance under the powerful phenomena of Meiji innovation. She also introduces an analysis of the political environment, economic development, and the process of social transformation, which helps to draw for the reader a clear picture of the prototype of an education system in Japan. Compared with Japan, the contemporary Germany, according to Shibata, was a decomposing political territory. It was not until 1871, when William I came to the throne and established *Das Zweite Reich*, that there was a fully organized education system. Despite the fact that *Das Zweite Reich* was a state built upon dominant politics and military force, the Kaiserreich period was still a time in which the traditional social order and national ideology held sway. German schools or universities, in Shibata's opinion, though lacking the energetic purpose of leading the country to modernity as they did in Japan, still performed the function of cultivating elites for society. In this section, Shibata's explanation of the historical background undoubtedly not only meets the primary demand of comparative education—in offering a profound understanding of different societies and cultures—but also provides a lucid comparison in terms of the role of education in historical development.

The second part of the book deals mainly with the analysis of the changes in their education systems when Germany and Japan were under US occupation. Shibata assumes an American viewpoint to relate how the United States viewed Japan after Japan had been defeated in 1945, and how it spread its influence throughout politics, the economy, and education. Through discussions of the structure and content of the education system, Shibata identifies a new form of education policy which emerged from US–Japanese cooperation. Likewise she analyzes the education policies and education system which emerged out of US–German cooperation. The research indicates that on the whole, the United States had a pivotal and influential role in the practice of education in Japan. However, the situation in Germany was more complicated. Reforms in Germany, for political reasons, were mainly focused on the process of de-Nazification. Furthermore, though the United States held a leading position, the heterogeneous voices from within the allied powers diminished the overall influence of the United States. Moreover, the insistence upon a traditional education system from the leading class in Germany also confronted the United States with difficulties in asserting a new educational order.

Ultimately, Shibata's analysis of the developments in Germany and Japan during the US occupation concludes that state, universities, and social elites are the key factors in differentiating the two nations. The book combines comparative and historical

enquiry with intensive analysis of social and cultural contexts to present an illuminating and unique account of the process of carrying out education reform. This is an unusual book that addresses essential questions about education in the research of comparative education.

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Education policy and social class: the selected works of Stephen J. Ball

Stephen J. Ball, 2006

London, Routledge World Library of Educationalists

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As Mike Savage has noted, the sociology of class has been kept alive in the sociology of education. Indeed, it is—as Stephen Ball records in an outline history of ‘the sorry state of educational studies’ in one of the 16 papers constituting this collection—traditional to it since ‘British sociology of education had its beginnings in ... the London School of Economics’ (p. 55). There, as he says, it was ‘driven by the methods and politics of the LSE [that] placed education as part of ... the establishment of the welfare state’ (p. 55). Monitoring this, ‘The particular focus upon social class differences served to establish social class as the major, almost the only, dependent variable in sociological research for the next forty years’ (p. 55).

What has happened to this ‘particular focus’ since Mrs Thatcher told *Vanity Fair* in an interview in June 1991 that ‘Any reference to class distinctions is a Marxist concept’, John Major declared ‘a classless society’ and Tony Blair added that ‘the class war is over’? As Stephen notes in his outline, ‘In the 1980s, things became more complicated as class analysis was displaced as the primary variable and race, gender and, later, disability and sexual orientation came to the fore’ (p. 56). Meanwhile, the well-known consequences of educational sociology’s focus on class *origins and destinations*, as officially defined by the Office of Population Censuses and Statistics (OPCS), produced a short-hand deficit definition of ‘working class’ as academically unqualified and ‘middle class’ as academically qualified. The upper or ruling class dropped out of the picture, since the sociology of education was only concerned with the state school system. In any case, what Ken Roberts in his 2000 *Class in Modern Britain* calls ‘the smallest, best organised and most class conscious class’ only ever figured problematically in the OPCS categories—even as revised in 1997.

Contemporaneously, sociology took its postmodern turn and dissolved into the pitiful collection of competing discourses and courses of study that it presents today without any agreed notion of itself, its subject (society), or any collective canon beyond the obligatory recognition and simultaneous rejection of the Pantheon of

Founding Fathers. It is not alone in this loss of purpose which afflicts all of the humanities in further and higher study from A level on. The dreaded 'binaries' of 'simplistic' Marxist class analysis were dissolved and the commonsense 'upper, middle, working' pyramid was largely accepted by default, while quantitative surveys—increasingly concentrated on research departments favoured by government patronage—used the OPCS measures of what Stephen has elsewhere dismissively derided as 'tick-box sociology'. Ongoing class recomposition, however, continued to 'fracture', as Ken Roberts put it, the traditional manually working class, an unskilled section of which has been relegated to a so-called underclass. This leaves a new Americanised class pyramid in which a new 'middle-working class' is sandwiched by the same old 'upper class' (somewhat internationalised). These popular perceptions have been theorised by Mike Savage as an expansion of the traditional middle class (as the OPCS categories reflecting the decline of heavy industry and the growth of services would seem to indicate) into 'the new universal class'. This view is complemented by the only other version of class in the literature (apart from its dissolution altogether into competing individuals, whether on a sliding Cambridge scale or not), which sees class redefined globally into a minority of oppressors in the developed countries with enclaves elsewhere and the vast majority of the world's population (as by Jeremy Seabrook, for instance).

Paradoxically, therefore, the 'return of class' has taken the form of talk about the middle class rather than the old mole of the working class. This is where Stephen comes in. Following his 1981 classic case study of going comprehensive in *Beachside Comprehensive*, he has developed a series of in-depth, qualitative studies of 'school choice' by mostly middle-class parents in the south-east of England. Here social polarities are particularly heightened—especially in London, as he remarks in this collection, conceding this could be read as a limitation in a description of the current UK situation or as particularly predictive of its possible future development. Most recently, Stephen has extended these micro-studies to further and higher education. Unfortunately, much of this empirical work is not included in this selection, which offers instead a series of largely theoretical reflections on his recent ethnography.

As Stephen writes in his introduction, 'my proclivity is to chip away at bits of the social, always looking for joins and patterns but equally aware of fractures and discontinuities' (p. 2). In this endeavour, 'I have taken on some of the post-modern suspicion of grand narratives ... which have their applications policed by guardians of interpretation' (p. 2). However, Stephen's position in the subdiscipline, his research record in a continuous stream of ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council) grants and this honorary collection of papers itself, many of them given to august academic gatherings around the world, indicates that he is himself one of the guardians. The interpretation that he sanctions and exemplifies derives, as he acknowledges here, particularly from Foucault but also, increasingly, from Bourdieu. Like the former, Stephen is therefore willing to entertain the eclectic possibility that 'two theories [are] almost always better than one' (p. 2) and, like the latter, to think 'about sociology, as a particular form of practice in relation to and within the social' (p. 2). However subversive this sounds—and Stephen has been a forthright critic of successive governments'

education and research policies—this theoretical agnosticism means that Stephen remains unaligned with any particular political position or organisation. In fact, the peculiar ‘discourse’—to use its own now ubiquitous term—of Foucauldianism allows for a flexibility and variety of meaning that has made it the new orthodoxy in the social sciences, replacing the old Weberian orthodoxy of LSE days with which it shares a mutual genealogy in Nietzsche. (As Foucault admitted, ‘I am nothing but an old Nietzschean’, while Weber remarked shortly before he died in 1920 that ‘The world in which we live today is substantially shaped by Marx and Nietzsche’.)

When it comes to education or other policy (the other half of the title of this collection), Nietzsche’s *Will to power* has acknowledged limitations because power is everywhere and therefore nowhere in particular. Only one example will be given of the drawback of this approach. This is taken from the oldest (1990) of the papers collected here and perhaps Stephen’s best known, on ‘The New Right and discourses of derision’, in which he draws upon Schwarz’s account of divisions within the ruling Conservative Party under Mrs Thatcher. Unlike Schwarz, however, Stephen does not see the shifting conflicts and alliances between these factions as allied variously to different sections of domestic and foreign capital. Instead, he sees a contradictory ‘discourse’ melding them all together. This means he is unable to account for the sudden abandonment of vocationalism in the run-up to the 1987 general election. Nor can he trace the evolution of what is arguably a new state formation, called variously a *post-welfare state* by Sally Tomlinson with specific reference to education, or more generally ‘a new market-state’ by the influential American political scientist Phillip Bobbitt, whose formulation is considerably more accessible than Bob Jessop’s ‘Schumpeterian Workfare State’ which Stephen endorses along with various other ‘binary’ contrasts between Fordism and Post-Fordism, etc. Stephen mentions Ted Heath’s brief ‘Selsdon Man’ phase but not his ‘Businessman Team’ who recommended the agency principle of funding public services as a way of making them more like the private sector. This was pioneered in education and training by the Manpower Services Commission but is now universally to be applied to schools by the 2006 Education and Inspections Act, following on the 2003 Higher Education Act and the 1993 incorporation of FE colleges (and polytechnics before them). It is this new funding system with its accompanying targets and inspections working to the principle of contracting out responsibility whilst power contracts to the centre (ultimately the Treasury) that now drives the system. ‘Discourse analysis’ that sees policy texts inscribing themselves on individual actors cannot adequately comprehend the material realities of this proletarianisation of the professions whose autonomy it has reduced and whose identities it has changed.

This returns us to the vexed question of social class. Stephen’s tendency, shown in many of the papers here, is to fissiparate class into its individual representatives with almost novelistic description of their lives and the equivocations they express for the compromises they make. Just as a Foucauldian notion of power cannot grasp the historical causation of policy development, these descriptions give vivid insight into individual lives but do not constitute a sociology of class, ‘middle’, ‘working’, ‘class’ or, as Stephen sometimes writes, ‘classes’, nor to various undefined ‘fractions’ within

them. Insightful though it is, the book does not understand class as a ‘social fact’ involving millions of people in the divisions of labour and knowledge in society with corresponding class cultures that those in the same class positions use as ideological bases for their actions. So Stephen endorses the individualism he opposes, seeing individual agents ‘structuring’, Giddenslike, the social inequalities they attempt to circumvent.

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Education policy and social class: the selected works of Stephen J. Ball

Stephen J. Ball, 2006

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This book seems premature. Stephen Ball is still in full flow. His personal selection of papers contained in this book will surely need updating before long. In any case, it does not span the author’s full career (which now extends back over 30-plus years) of researching and writing on education. The earliest paper in this book is from 1990 and most of the rest (there are 16 in total) first appeared in 1997 or subsequently, so the selection is really from recent work. Stephen Ball’s total output amounted (at the time when this book went to press) to 12 books and over 200 articles—probably now heading towards 300. I can understand the concentration on recent output. Stephen Ball has been addressing some broadly similar issues throughout his career, and later writings in some ways supersede earlier efforts. However, I was disappointed that there was nothing from the era of *Beachside Comprehensive* (1981) or from Ball’s 1980s work on the micro-sociology of the school. This used to be a healthy genre within the sociology of education. Where has it gone?

Actually this question might well be asked of the entire sub-discipline. In the pre-Ball era—that is, before the 1980s—the sociology of education was among the most vibrant specialisms in the discipline. There were numerous studies that broke through the edges of knowledge into how the 11-plus was working, then how comprehensives were working, the role of and life in independent schools, the consequences of

streaming, the formation of pupil subcultures, the consequences of the expansion of higher education, debates about the role of language and cultural deprivation in the reproduction of class inequalities, then interventions from feminism, then controversies about race and the respective merits of multi-cultural and anti-racist education. Thereafter our presence in publishers' catalogues shrank alarmingly. One trauma was the loss of the trainee-teacher audience as teacher recruitment was cut back and when it was decided (by those with the power to decide decisively) that sociology was an unwelcome distraction for entrants to the profession who really needed to concentrate on classroom techniques. However, other sub-disciplines within sociology have remained in rude health without a captive audience of professional trainees. Education itself, certainly in the United Kingdom, has been an exciting place throughout the last 30 years, with major changes at all levels, and education has never been far from the heart of politics. Stephen Ball has not been a lone soldier, but he would have had much more company from sociologists doing similar kinds of work had his career begun 30 years earlier.

The papers in this book are helpfully arranged in three sections. Those in the first section lay out Ball's approach to policy sociology. Among current education policy-makers, Ball's approach will often be off-message, but within sociology he is no maverick. Virtually all Ball's colleagues in sociology will endorse his reservations about research being steered by government agendas and judged by its usefulness to government departments. I think that most of us share Ball's critical views on the pseudo-science of policy evaluation, and the extent to which research has become subject to a global hegemonic neo-liberal common sense. Ball's ideal is the sociologist as a sceptical and typically critical outsider, always prepared to engage in intellectual violence with policy agendas.

When in receipt of research funds, Ball's research has usually been supported by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), and his achievements show why we need an independent (of government) social research funding agency. I suspect that much of the effort that would otherwise have kept the sociology of education fit and healthy over the last 25 years has been sucked into the treadmill of projects for state agencies that demand quick and, most important, useful (to them) results. Millions of pounds must have been spent on evaluations which have typically shown that the latest policy wheeze is delivering positive outcomes, followed by a period of silence, then a ministerial announcement that actually the initiative did not work and a new measure is being launched. Stephen Ball is important because he has not only advocated but, in successive projects, he has actually done policy relevant research that is highly rated by colleagues in sociology. He is basically an ethnographer, and has continued to do fieldwork throughout his career. This alone makes him out of the ordinary. His output is littered with voices from schools and homes. These voices make Ball's own arguments convincing.

This book encourages one to reflect on, and I wondered why there has been so little apparent synergy between Ball's enquiries and the quantitative research in which his institute, the London Institute of Education, also excels. Over the last 20 years a great deal of ESRC funding has been ploughed into the creation of policy-relevant data sets

including our so-called crown jewels—the birth cohort series and the BHPS. These data sets have been and still are being subjected to a great deal of analysis, but we are still awaiting the authoritative synthesis on the impact on children's current lives and futures of the changes in education over the last 30 years.

The second batch of papers illustrates the application of Ball's policy sociology to the 'reform' of schooling over the last 20 years. Here, as with the underlying analytical approach, Ball is part of a sociological consensus about what is sometimes, rightly or wrongly—I think wrongly—labelled 'a post-welfare state settlement'. These papers are lightly illustrated with evidence from fieldwork. Ball is critical of the new managerialism, performance targets, markets, and partnerships with business etc., which are said to wreak havoc with teacher morale and sideline any conception of the public good in deference to private interests. I think that nearly all education academics (not just sociologists), and most teachers also, will agree with Ball on all of this, which invites the question as to why such a weighty and expert body of opinion has exerted so little influence on policy-making over the last 20 years. In the 1960s expert committees were extremely influential. Then things changed. Our thinking ceased to be considered useful. Our places were taken and remain occupied by think tanks stuffed with bright blue skies thinkers, where the blue skies are cluttered with pro-market economists and small state political theorists, all devoid (it appears) of useful experience or understanding of the education that most children receive.

The third section of the book contains what I regard as Stephen Ball's major and distinctive contributions to the sociology of education. These papers arise from his series of small-scale research projects, all in London, with material gathered by interviewing parents, young people and teachers. In my view these enquiries have been exceptionally successful largely because of the decision to focus on key transitions in educational careers—into secondary school, into post-compulsory education, and into higher education. The strongest theme throughout all these papers is about the influence of social class. It is argued, and demonstrated, that enlarging the role of parental and student choice has not empowered the less advantaged but has allowed the already advantaged to advantage their children. Surely no one in sociology, surely no one in government, will be surprised by this. How could anyone have expected otherwise? Ball's research repudiates notions about class being a thing of the past. I regard it as a strength rather than a weakness that Ball does not try to define class precisely and operates without a comprehensive model of the class structure. His research highlights important aspects of what class 'is'. Class is not just a matter of occupation and income, but governs our social relationships (social capital) and pervades our minds (cultural capital). Class is not just what we do but who we are.

In some of these papers Ball flirts with the idea that the post-1970s reforms of schooling have been driven by middle-class interests: that the reforms are an attempt to give middle-class parents access to the kinds of state education that they want—good secondary schools for their children, then good universities, and an escape from LEA zoning and banding. If true, this would neatly tie together the different sections of Ball's work. However, I wonder whether this tie-up really works. Maybe satisfying middle-class interests has been an intention of policy-makers, but if so it cannot have

been in response to public demands from the middle classes or anywhere else. There was minimal public discussion prior to the publication of what became the 1988 Education Reform Act. In any case, the reformed school system will not allay middle-class anxieties. This is because they cannot all be enabled to get their children into what they regard as the best schools any more than, in the 1950s, they could all get their children into grammar schools. If all middle-class children could be placed in good secondary schools, this would not guarantee them entry to the 'best' universities, and degrees from these universities will not guarantee entry to traditional graduate careers. The United Kingdom's, but probably more specifically England's, and possibly even more specifically London's, present-day school education seems designed to amplify rather than quieten middle-class anxieties. This is the reason why, in my view, there is no 'settlement', and we are not in a post-welfare state era because state spending on welfare is higher than ever.

In an objective sense, working-class families and their children are clearly handicapped in the education market place, but the evidence from Ball's own research does not portray working-class parents as the most frustrated 'consumers' of state education. Working-class parents typically seem content if a child is happy at school, and if the school is convenient. Working-class (and ethnic minority) teenagers seem content with places at universities where there will be plenty of other students like themselves, and where they will be able to continue with their part-time jobs. Middle-class parents seem to be by far the most stressed about whether a child is going to a suitably good school and, in the case of the socialist middle class, they anguish about sacrificing their principles. London, where most of Ball's fieldwork has been conducted, is different from most other places in Britain, but in the case of Ball's research the differences probably amplify and highlight the contradictions in current education policy and practice.

Long may Stephen Ball's research continue. The need is as great as ever. There will be more reforms. We have no settlement; not even a route map.

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Reference

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