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ADULT AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION IN THE WEAR VALLEY

DISTRICT OF COUNTY DURHAM

Bernadette Ann Murphy

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A Thesis submitted for examination for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy to the Department of Sociology  
and Social Policy of the University of Durham. May  
1991.



14 OCT 1992

ABSTRACT

ADULT AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION IN THE WEAR VALLEY DISTRICT  
OF COUNTY DURHAM

BERNADETTE MURPHY

A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR EXAMINATION FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY TO THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND  
SOCIAL POLICY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM. MAY 1991.

Throughout the 1980's traditional liberal adult education \* in Britain has been in crisis. Changes in the ways it is funded and organised, coupled with the breakdown of the liberal progressive ideologies which have informed its theory and practice since the turn of the century, cast doubt upon the extent to which adult education still exists as an identifiable part of the British educational system and idea.

The public image of adult education is ambiguous and informed by very little public debate about the role or purpose of adult education in modern societies. Its practitioner image is still, predominantly, one of public service. In this thesis I describe what happened when I set out to examine the extent to which there was still a viable adult education service (particularly for unemployed people) in a small area of the North East of England characterised by long term social and economic decline.

There is very little sociology of adult education. There is no theoretical knowledge base upon which to ground this study and no methodological framework within which to situate it. The research has been, primarily, a search for methods of research which would allow that adult education is both a social construction and a cultural phenomenon. I have drawn heavily upon the methods of both cultural studies and cultural anthropology while eschewing their more descriptive moments, believing, in the end, that sociology has a definite de-mystifying purpose: that it is, or should be, 'the critic of the absurd and not its high priest'.



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I am particularly indebted to Mr Tony Thompson, the Local Education Authority (LEA) Further Education Officer for the area of County Durham which includes the Wear Valley. The LEA Peripatetic Youth and Community Worker and Field Officer for this area also gave me much valuable help, support and access to community centres and other adult education settings. I wish to extend my thanks to the Deputy Director of Education for County Durham and the Principal of Bishop Auckland Technical College and to Mr Norman White of the Durham College of Agriculture and Horticulture.

I would like also to thank the members of staff at Durham University Delegacy for (now Department of)



Adult and Continuing Education whom I interviewed: in particular Mr Roy Biggs. My thanks are extended to Mr John Gosden of the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) Northern District and to Lil Cassie.

Thank you also must be said to Dr Brendan Quayle and staff of the Durham Rural Community Council and to members of the Wear Valley Trades Union Council: in particular Mr Dave Ayre. Mr Edward Short of Durham County Social Services Department also gave me valuable help and support as did the Wear Valley Recall Group. Thanks are also due to Professor Frank Coffield of the University of Durham School of Education and to Dr Bill Williamson (now Director of the Department of Adult and Continuing Education of the University of Durham) who, in his pre-DACE days, supervised the first two years of this research.

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the ESRC funded Field Research seminar series which he has organised at Warwick University in recent years.

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Thanks are due to the ESRC for providing three years financial support for this project and a range of interesting and informative research training initiatives such as the Summer School and Field Research Seminars already mentioned and a series of

activities undertaken by the Rural Economy and Society Study Group including a Summer School in Lahti, Finland (in the summer of 1987), organised by Professor Howard Newby.

This research was a long time in the doing: seven years. During this time I met, and was helped by, many people in a range of voluntary groups and associations in the Wear Valley as well as by adult education providers there. I would particularly like to thank the members of the Glenholme Theatre Club, Wolsingham Women's Institute, the Weardale Field Study Group and the volunteers and staff, including Deborah Jenkins, of the Caravanserai project at Bishop Auckland.

I met many people, living and working in the Wear Valley, who described themselves as 'ordinary' whose lives, it seemed to me, could only be described as quiet triumphs. I am thinking particularly of Kevin and Emmerson Bell to whom I extend my grateful thanks for allowing me and my tape recorder to intrude into their lives.

During the course of this research I made many friends. Of these I would like to dedicate this thesis to Kevin and Emmerson Bell and, with great sadness, to

the memory of Violet Maddison and Debra Clark.

PROLOGUE

'Social theorists have failed in the face of the facts ...'

and therefore:

'... as disillusion has piled upon disillusion virtually all have come to despair of finding any comprehensive account of how the present may connect to the future'.

G.Hawthorn

Enlightenment & Despair

Cambridge University Press. 1st Edition.  
(1976) (p258).

'... I believe the intellectual life of the whole of western society is increasingly being split into two polar groups. ... Literary intellectuals at one pole - at the other scientists, and as the most representative, the physical scientists'

Snow C.P. 'The Two Cultures. The Rede Lecture 1959' in 'The Two Cultures and A Second Look', Cambridge University Press, (1962), (pp3-4).

'... one truth is straightforward. Industrialisation is the only hope of the poor. I use the word 'hope' in a crude and prosaic sense. I have not much use for the moral sensibility of anyone who is too refined to use it so. It is all very well for us, sitting pretty, to think that material standards of living don't matter all that much. It is all very well for one, as a personal choice, to reject industrialisation ... and if you go without food, see most of your children die in

infancy, despise the comforts of literacy, accept twenty years off your own life, then I respect you for the strength of your aesthetic revulsion. But I don't respect you in the slightest if, even passively, you try to impose the same choice on others who are not free to choose'.

Snow C.P. 'The Two Cultures and A Second Look: An Expanded Version of The Two Cultures and The Scientific Revolution'. Publ. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge. (1965). (pp25-26).

'It is probably too early to speak of a third culture already in existence. But I am now convinced that this is coming. When it comes, some of the difficulties of communication will at last be softened'.

Snow C.P. 'The Two Cultures: A Second Look' in 'The Two Cultures and A Second Look'. Publ. Cambridge University Press. London. (1962). (pp70-71).

'At its best it has truly contributed to change itself and continues to contribute - in a social order which has more need of it, being less conscious of its real situation than, I think has ever been the case. For this is a social order which really does not know in what crucial respects it is ignorant, in what crucial respects it is incompletely conscious and, therefore, in what crucial respects this collaborative process of adult education is still central'.

R.Williams  
'Adult Education and Social Change' in Adult Education and Social Change: Lectures and Reminiscences in Honour of Tony McLean  
WEA South Eastern District.  
p18. Cited in McIlroy.J Studies in the Education of Adults Vol.22. No.2. Oct 1990.  
pp129-166.

'... I am still an uneducated, unextended adult, and I have fallen into the habit of browsing through an imaginary, handsomely printed course bulletin that is more or less typical of them all: Economic Theory: ... with an emphasis on money and why it's good ... History of European Civilization: Ever since the discovery of a fossilized eohippus in the men's washroom ... a new perspective on the formation of European society ... enables historians to conjecture about why it sprang up in an area that would have made a much better Asia. Also studied in the course the decision to hold the Renaissance in Italy. ... Psychopathology: Aimed at understanding obsessions and phobias, ... The compulsion to seek out the company of beavers is analysed. Philosophy I: Everyone from Plato to Camus is read, and the following topics are covered: ... Epistemology: Is knowledge knowable? If not, how do we know this? The Absurd: Why existence is often considered silly, particularly for men who wear brown-and-white shoes. ... Philosophy XXIX-B Introduction to God. Confrontation with the Creator of the universe through informal lectures and field trips. The New Mathematics: ... a reevaluation of counting as a method of getting from one to ten. ... formerly unsolvable equations are dealt with by threats of reprisals. Fundamental Astronomy: A detailed study of the universe and its care and cleaning. The sun, which is made of gas, can explode at any moment, sending our entire planetary system hurtling to destruction; students are advised what the average citizen can do in such a case. ... Rapid Reading: This course will increase reading speed a little each day until the end of term, by which time the student will be required to read The Brothers Karamazov in fifteen minutes ... Music Appreciation: ... The ear, too, must be trained, for it is our most easily deceived organ and can be made to think it is a nose by bad placement of stereo speakers. ... The four-bar rest and its potential as a political weapon. ... Writing For the Stage: ... Why is a play about a loveable old character ... not as interesting in the theatre as staring at the back of someone's head and trying to make

him turn around? ... Required text:  
A.F.Shulte's Shakespeare: Was He Four Women?  
Introduction to Social Work: ... Topics  
covered include: how to organize street  
gangs into basketball teams, and vice versa;  
... what to do if you are hit with a bicycle  
chain. Yeats and Hygiene: A Comparative  
Study: The poetry of William Butler Yeats is  
analyzed against a background of proper  
dental care. (Course open to a limited  
number of students)'.

W.Allen 'Getting Even'. Publ. W.H.Allen & Co.  
London. 1975. pp55-61



## INTRODUCTION

Liberal adult education (1) in Britain is acknowledged, within adult education discourse, as being in crisis. Some anticipate, but do not chronicle, its demise (2). Outside of adult education practice this crisis has aroused little interest or comment. The public image of adult education is ambiguous. Provision is assumed to be adequate, often plentiful, and uniform throughout the country, despite financial retrenchment on the part of its providers. The content or curriculum of adult education is often assumed to be dull and technologically outmoded. It seems that few people would choose to participate in adult education activities. Adult education activities are, however, regularly offered as a panacea for all manner of social and individual problems: including unemployment, loneliness and psychological difficulty. All of these conditions, paradoxically and to varying degrees, restrict choice.

The contradictions within the public image of adult education reflect the contradictions, confusion and complexity which surrounds adult education today. It is an image which is, in part, created and perpetuated by adult educators: their marketing strategies and

publicity materials, for example, routinely stress the 'something for everyone' availability (3) of adult education. The literature of adult education, however, reveals that provision has been greatly reduced in the last fifteen years. One of the reasons for this is shortage of money. This has meant that the 'minimum student number' (4) ruling has been enforced with increasing determination. There is, then, 'something for everyone' only if they find, at the enrolment session, eleven or twelve others 'like themselves'. The public seems to be largely unaware of this threat to adult education provision.

There have been few ways in which adult education could bring its plight to public attention. It has, since the 1944 Education Act, regarded itself as a public service, and there is some justification in the wording of that Act for it to do so. The legal and organisational status of adult education within the Act, and therefore within the state provided education system, remains ambiguous. The 'wished but not legislated for' nature of the adult education service has meant that it has attracted little public debate over its policies. This is unusual in a country where educational debate has been prolonged, and public. Some have argued that there is no analysis of adult

education policy (5) and others that adult education has no policy (6). Both claims are hard to refute.

The variety of adult education activities and practices, as form and content, however, make it difficult to imagine what a coherent adult education policy would consist of. Would it be a primarily educational, recreational or social policy?

The origins of British adult education are long and varied. They have led to a system of provision which is complicated and related as much to social welfare policies and activities as to educational ones. In recent years new forms of recreation provision have blurred the already indistinct boundaries between adult education and leisure.

There is an obvious need for detailed, empirical research aimed at finding out what goes on in the adult education 'classroom' and to inform debates about the role and purpose of adult education in modern British society.

In this thesis I describe some of the theoretical and methodological difficulties I encountered when trying to conduct a small scale empirical study of adult

education in the Wear Valley of County Durham in the mid 1980's.

I take a typical 'prediction' from the literature of adult education: the argument that the non-university and voluntary adult education sectors may be better equipped to provide liberal adult education than the university sector. I use this prediction to provide a backdrop against which to situate an examination of a small area of adult education provision, (for unemployed adults), in a small geographical area of the North East of England, in the context of an examination of a series of images of adult education taken from its literature. I try to provide a sociologically informed theoretical and methodological background within which to situate my research. I do this by a reading of the literatures of adult education and the sociology of adult education. I draw attention to the need to link the adult education 'classroom' to 'the wider world', pointing out that one of those links has, traditionally, been work and industry. I argue that adult education rose to prominence during, and immediately after, the Industrial Revolution. I show that as capitalism re-structured and unemployment rose in the early 1980's, there were many people who believed that adult

education had a role to play in alleviating some of the worst effects of unemployment.

An attempt to study sociologically adult education provision for unemployed adults in the Wear Valley is described with particular reference to the ethical problems I encountered. I then describe attempts I made to study adult education both historically and sociologically, synchronically and diachronically, in the Wear Valley before turning to an interpretivist study of the meaning of adult education to those involved in its provision and practice in the Wear Valley as it has evolved (and is evolving) within time, space and culture.

I give detailed accounts of the ways in which Local Education Authority (LEA), Workers' Educational Association (WEA) and University extramural adult educators gave meaning to their adult education activities in the particular social and economic context of the Wear Valley.

Attention is drawn to the many and varied meanings attached to the term adult education by practitioners in the Wear Valley and the potentially conflictual nature of some of its dominant ideologies. I examine

the social and cultural context of the Wear Valley, arguing that the ways in which the Wear Valley is perceived by adult educators exercises a significant effect upon ideas of what an adult education suitable to the needs of the people of the Wear Valley might consist of.

In the final chapter I present a case study which demonstrates the difficulties encountered when a group of adult educators, all with different social class, age, gender, educational and adult education organizational backgrounds (and different - and often conflicting - ideologies of adult education) came together to work co-operatively in providing an 'innovative' adult education initiative in the Wear Valley.

I also draw attention to the difficulties of conducting adult education research in a context where there has been very little theoretical and methodological or adult educational under-labour carried out; particularly from a sociological perspective.

I conclude that adult education in modern Britain has lost its purpose: a purpose which has been, in large

part, an ethical one as much as a social or educational one.

Notes and References

1. There is no single or simple definition of liberal adult education. In this thesis I set out to examine 'liberal adult education' theories and practices. I found no adequate definition of adult education and resisted the strong temptation to operate with an a priori and theoretical definition of adult education taken from its literature. The research underpinning this thesis has consisted of an attempt to 'define' or locate adult education theories and practices relationally and in the social, historical, geographical and temporal location of their structuration as the social construction adult education. Attempts to come to terms with 'the problem of definition' in adult education can be found in: Legge.D (1982) pp1-2, The Russell Report (1973), The Alexander Report (1975), The Murphy Report (1973), and Wiltshire H. in Rogers A. (1976) pp31-38. The brief definition provided in the opening sentence to Mee G. and Wiltshire H. (1978) is adequate to our purpose here: "By 'adult education' we mean publicly provided education addressed primarily



to adults and mainly serving other than vocational needs" (Foreword).

2. See Crombie A.D and Harries-Jenkins G. 'The Demise of the Liberal Tradition'. Publ. Department of Adult and Continuing Education, University of Leeds (1983).
3. University of Durham Department of Adult and Continuing Education Brochure (1989).
4. See 'The Numbers Game' in Newman.M (1979)
5. Griffin C. (1987)
6. Small N. (1981).

CHAPTER ONE: IMAGES OF ADULT EDUCATION

'Our contemporary world is losing its confidence in the inevitability of Progress. Men's ways of ordering their common lives have broken down so disastrously as to make hope precarious. So headlong and pervasive is change to-day that the scholar's historical parallels are decreasingly relevant as present guides, because so many of the variables in the situation have altered radically. The scholar-scientist is in acute danger of being caught, in the words of one of Auden's poems,

"Lecturing on navigation while the ship is going down" '.

R.S.Lynd

Knowledge For What?

The Place of social science  
in American Culture

Princeton Univ. Press. 1967.

1st Edition. 1939. (pp2-3).

(Cited in Abrams.P 'Historical Sociology'.

Publ. Open Books Publishing Ltd.

Somerset. England. 1982).

'In contemporary discussions about the role and function of university extramural departments, one of the more important questions which arises is whether there is anything provided by the traditional university department which could not be provided more effectively, more efficiently, and more cheaply by an alternative agency. It is not a simple question for it involves not only issues of resource allocation and the rational ordering of curricula, but also debates about values and historical tradition'.

Harries-Jenkins.G

'University Adult Education into the 1980's' in

The Demise of the Liberal Tradition.

Publ. by The Department of Adult and Continuing

Education of the University of Leeds (1983) (p1).

In posing the question of 'whether there is anything provided by the traditional university department which could not be provided more effectively, more efficiently and more cheaply by an alternative agency' Harries-Jenkins sets the theoretical parameters of an adult educational research agenda which stretches towards the year 2000. We do not know, beyond stereotypes of curricula dominated by 'serious' art and the transmission of 'high culture' what 'traditional liberal adult educators' (in universities) do. We do not know, therefore, what university adult education is. Neither do we know what alternative agencies such as the Local Education Authority (LEA) and the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) do when they are doing adult education. We do not know, therefore, what the bulk of non-university and voluntary sector adult education is.

The range of adult education activities engaged in by all of these agencies is wide and varied. Their role within the theory and practice of adult education, or society, cannot be determined in any a priori and

theoretical way. Unless, and until, we have detailed knowledge, based on empirical research, of these activities and the relationships in which they are carried out, we cannot say which, if any, adult education agency is better equipped, willing or motivated to take 'liberal adult education' into the future.

The argument that university adult education in 'the liberal non-vocational tradition' is declining as part of 'the general decline of the liberal-progressive ideology' appears plausible:

'One sign of this shift is the manner in which it is now accepted with but few reservations that the relationship of the state to society has altered immeasurably. In the sphere of our economic life we witness the increasing involvement of government in the affairs of the nation. A very large part of all economic activity is now controlled by the state, and that is not regarded even by conservatives as socialism. Equally, political life in the United Kingdom appears to be encountering growing demands for the adoption of more positive - if not more extreme - ideological stances. Such demands impose a considerable strain on those attributes such as tolerance, balance and equality of treatment, which have always been identified as defining characteristics of the liberal-progressive ideology' (Harries-Jenkins, 1983, p7).

Care must be taken, however, to avoid positing an essentially passive or reactive response by something identifiable as 'the liberal progressive ideology' to

'the state' as a result of something called 'social change'. The individuals who engage in activities they define (within boundaries set by historical and geographical circumstances) as adult education are themselves part of the social processes which are understood as 'the decline of the liberal progressive ideology'. They are part of 'social change'. The social construction adult education, in being shaped by the activities of these social individuals, is both constitutive and reflective of those processes of social change. We need therefore also to be aware of the possibility that 'adult education' may not be merely a reaction to, but a part of, 'the state'.

Harries-Jenkins argues that the decline of 'the liberal-progressive ideology' is manifest in university extramural departments by calls for involvement in 'community', 'compensatory' or 'participatory' education. Those who advocate this role for the university, however:

'... do not necessarily make clear why universities are better placed than any other agency such as the WEA or the LEA, to work in those fields. Indeed, it can be argued that not only are other agencies better equipped with specifically trained staff but that there is a certain arrogance in the assumption of the university extramural departments that they can readily adapt to this projected role. Alternatively, it can be argued that the logical

consequence of such a shift is an involvement with social engineering or community activism which ultimately replaces intellectual enquiry with polemical politics' (Harries-Jenkins, 1983, p41).

While there are advocates of community type education in university extramural departments there are advocates of many other types of adult education and learning too. Indeed, Harries-Jenkins' essay contains a plea for extramural departments to provide

'... continuing professional education, role education and renovative education' [as part of a policy of] 'education for adults' [which will] 'without special regard for the social conditions of students or for satisfaction of political aims facilitate the access of the public to university education and university research' (Harries-Jenkins, 1983, p42) (1).

'The Decline of the Liberal Tradition' as an explanation for processes by which one way of doing adult education can be identified and abandoned in favour of another is misleading. The social processes leading to the crisis in adult education are more usefully understood as manifestations of the breakdown of the liberal consensus which has characterised British social and educational life since just before the second world war (2). A consensus representing the formal resolution of:

'... a particularly bitter struggle between two contending alliances. The first, oppositional alliance was organised around the demand for egalitarian forms of educational expansion; the second, dominant alliance resisted these demands and sought, where possible, to reverse expansionist tendencies. The progressive alliance was described by R.H.Tawney, its leading intellectual, as 'educationalists and teachers, economists and social workers, administrators, and not least, the parents themselves'. The parents were represented in a largely masculine form, in the organisations of the Labour movement, but also by the Workers' Educational Association which Tawney saw as a vehicle for the opinions of 'plain people' on educational policy' ('Unpopular Education: Schooling and Social Democracy in England Since 1944. Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, (1981), p41).

A consensus facilitated and legitimised, in part, by ideological constructions such as 'the liberal tradition' in adult education. A consensus now being broken down as much by adult educators themselves as by 'external' political pressures.

Empirically informed research is needed to determine the extent to which adult educators are constructing and re-constructing their practices as part of, and a reaction to, this process. A process which Williams has described as:

'Bad faith ... a very characteristic kind of liberal bad faith ... the right wing in Britain is itself in any active sense a minority. I'm more interested in the

reactions elsewhere - in the body of opinion which still takes itself as liberal. It's been confused by propaganda ... But this couldn't happen if it weren't for the confusion that we're all now living in, when a major political tradition, a tradition which taught most of us to think, is under pressure and in crisis, beginning to break up, and when its habits of thought, its descriptions, its categories, no longer enable us to see and respond to what is happening in the very rapidly changing world' (Williams.R 'Why Do I Demonstrate?' (1968), in Resources of Hope (Ed) Gable.R, Publ. Verso, (1989), p61-64).

There are other aspects of Harries-Jenkins' argument that must be questioned too. For example: the (valid) assertion that those who advocate community type education activities in extramural departments

'do not necessarily make clear why universities are better placed than any other agency such as the WEA or the LEA, to work in those fields' (p41).

is not followed by any clear statements of why universities are not

'better placed than any other agency ... to work in those fields' (p41).

The observation that

'there is a certain arrogance in the assumption of the university extramural departments that they can readily adapt to a community type educational role' (p41).



is valid. There is also, however, 'a certain arrogance' in the assumption that they 'could readily adapt' to a 'continuing, professional and renovative' educational role. The assumption that the non-university sector remains untouched by the social and political forces which have threatened 'the liberal tradition' with 'demise' is as unwarranted as the assumption that there is something recognisable as 'the liberal tradition' by university and non-university adult educators alike. Empirical research, of the type which informs this thesis, challenges these assumptions and the theories they inform.

The assumption that adult educators in the non-university sectors are 'better equipped with specifically trained staff' is ungrounded. Empirical research shows that while this may be the case, in times of financial restraint and uncertainty about the role and purpose of non-university adult education it is not necessarily the case (3). The assumptions that a community type approach to liberal adult education (4) leads necessarily to 'community activism' which in turn leads necessarily to 'polemical political involvement' are unwarranted. While such approaches can lead to such activities they do not always, or

necessarily, do so. In this thesis, which is essentially a defence of the liberal perspective within a range of adult education activities, I shall argue that when community education activities are undertaken in liberal adult education terms they should not, and usually do not, result in 'political polemicism' (5).

The argument that the non-university adult education sector remains able and willing to provide adult education is the hardest to sustain after empirical observation; premised as it is on the assumption that there is one 'traditional liberal adult education' with which we can all identify.

There are, in reality, many adult educations: some of them liberal. We cannot be sure about what they are or represent because we do not know what adult educators do. We can begin to find out what adult educators do by looking at what they say they do. We can begin to research the purposes and consequences (intended and otherwise) of adult education by looking at what we think it does. While many of these accounts are clearly informed by the rhetoric of 'the Great Tradition' they do not necessarily contain knowledge

about what really happens in adult education settings or 'classrooms' (6).

Turning first to images of adult education taken from its literature we note that in support of his claim for the primacy of continuing education (7) in future extramural provision Harries-Jenkins (citing Marriott.S, 1981, pp96-97) argues that the liberal tradition in university adult education is one of continuing education:

'There has been too much loose talk and writing about a 'Great Tradition' in English adult education. The tradition is older and more complex than the 1919 Report or the adaptations that have subsequently been made of its philosophy. Our perceptions of the present might be enriched if we recognised the longer tradition' (1983, p42).

Marriott's argument in 'A Backstairs to a Degree: demands for an open University in Late Victorian England' is valid. Others have, however, interpreted both the longer and the post 1919 Report traditions of adult education differently. For example, English adult education has long been associated with the working class, being seen to have:

'... emerged at the turn of the century in two main forms. On the one hand there was the self-help tradition, originally developing from the work of the Corresponding Societies, which came to be

known as independent working-class education. On the other, the tradition of provision of education for the working class - a movement which (in its modern form) originated at Cambridge University (and later Oxford) in the form of Extension lectures, and was later institutionalised in the Workers' Educational Association. These two traditions were, to some extent, opposed in their objectives, and indeed it is that opposition which provided much of the dynamic of development in the early years of the century' (Simon B, 1990, pp9-10, original emphasis) (8).

The former tradition 'has a history as long as the working class itself' and aimed:

'To enlighten the people, to show the people the reason, the ground of all their complaints and sufferings; when a man works hard for thirteen and fourteen hours a day, the week through, and is not able to maintain his family; that is what I understand of it; to show the people the ground of this; why they were not able'. (Evidence given by a 'group of mechanics who formed the Sheffield Corresponding Society' cited in Simon.B, 1990).

The Final Report of the Adult Education Committee of the Ministry of Reconstruction known as the 1919 Report and 'the most frequently cited document in the history of adult education marks:

'a turning point in our national history. A new era has come upon us. We cannot stand still. We cannot return to the old ways, the old abuses, the old stupidities' (9)

Or presumably to 'our old' adult educations. The

'necessary conclusion is that adult education must not be regarded as a luxury for a few exceptional persons here and there, nor as a thing which concerns only a short spell of early manhood (sic), but that adult education is a permanent national necessity, an inseparable aspect of citizenship, and therefore should be both universal and lifelong' (Wiltshire, 1980, paragraph 4, p11).

A Joint Committee appointed by the British Institute of Adult Education and the Tutors' Association reporting in 1928 (10) (which included among its members Harold Laski, G.D.H.Cole, Ernest Green, Grace Hadow, J.M.Mactavish and Basil Yeaxlee) (11) stated that:

'The aim of adult education is not to give the student a better place in the labour market, but to give him the opportunity of living a fuller and more interesting life, and to equip him for a more intelligent citizenship. Adult education is indeed infinitely varied. If, at one end, it includes the intensive study of Plato's Republic or Marx's Capital, at the other it has room for classes in Carpentry and Horticulture; and in future it is likely that the proportion of classes of the latter kind will increase. But even here the primary object is not that the learner shall earn a higher wage, nor even that the community shall be supplied with better professional carpenters and gardeners; but that the learner may enrich his life by finding new interests and new means of self-expression' (Original emphases, p1).

These images of adult education suggest that adult education has benefits for both individuals and classes: most notably the working class. More recent ones suggest that adult education may have existentialist benefits to confer:

'Whether the education of adults could empty all the hospital beds which are filled with mentally ill patients is certainly open to question but it is arguable that it could lead to a better mental equilibrium in a world where too many seem unconsciously to echo Houseman's phrase 'I alone and afraid, in a world I never made' (Legge, 1982, p15).

They suggest also that it may provide support as well as education for a range of social groupings, most especially women:

'It's a great feeling between the women and just goes to show that women can support each other very effectively despite opinions to the contrary. Personally I'd rather spend time with Second Chance women than with men'. (Student's comment cited in J.L.Thompson, 1983, p176).

The political and emancipatory role of adult education is frequently stressed. Legge argues that there is a case for:

'... the use of the education of adults to 'develop active, democratic citizens'' who will evaluate the plans and policies of experts instead of being dominated by them, who will effectively control their own lives and discharge their democratic

responsibilities within the community'  
(Legge, 1982, p18).

Some of the most sharply focused images of what adult education is as opposed to what it is for are to be found scattered through the writings of Raymond Williams. In an article tracing the paternalistic influences of Reith over the BBC (see 'Communications and Community' in Gable.R (Ed), 1989), Williams illustrates what he means by:

'The paternal system? ... I cherish a photograph of an adult tutorial in Balliol in 1908, in which a young man in a straw hat, who is the tutor, is standing on the lawn, while on the bench below him ... sit three rather well-dressed working men, not as well-dressed as he, but on the bench, pencil in hand, looking up. I often remember this picture when I walk around Balliol watching adult groups now, knowing first the complete impossibility of telling the tutors from the students, except perhaps by the opposite criterion, and knowing also what would happen in the average adult education class, if physically or spiritually that relationship were attempted or lasted for long' (pp27-28).

These two images are perhaps evocative of Balliol both as it might have been in the year the report 'Oxford and Working Class Education' was published and as Williams found it. They point to the changing relationship between adult education student and tutor. In writing about the processes of cultural

production, however, Williams offers an image of adult education which casts doubt upon the extent to which the content as well as the form of adult education has changed:

'I refuse to join in a way of talking about cultural production in our kind of society ... that way of talking in which it can be said that down every back street somebody is writing a novel, in every kitchen or on every suburban Sunday somebody is painting a picture, a sense really that the world is being overrun by writers and painters and artists of every kind, with a strong tone of condescension towards these pullulating amateurs which easily communicates itself as a professional tone. Now I've seen a good deal of this work myself as an adult education tutor, and what I am not intending to say is that all of it is work which can immediately command respect or interest from others ... I'm not advancing the mute inglorious Milton hypothesis, but stating that this very widespread kind of production does correspond much more nearly to the way in which I think the processes of writing and the desire to create have to be seen' (in 'Art: Freedom as Duty', in Gable.R, (1989), p89).

To sum up: the overriding impression of adult education which we get from its literature is of it being a universally 'good thing'. If not a 'God-word' then a God phrase: a conjunction of two words 'adult' and 'education' which in their union take on sui generis characteristics: conferring almost limitless benefits upon both society and the individuals it consists of.



The literature of adult education is frequently described as being 'poor in quality and quantity'. This charge as a generalisation is unwarrantable: See for example the numerous writings on adult education by Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart. Very little of the literature of adult education has, however, been informed by empirical research or observations. In the American Context:

'Reviews of the publications of adult educators do not generally support the charge that adult education is overly empirical. Long and Agyekum (1974), having analysed Adult Education over a nine year period, 1964-1973, concluded that approximately 60 per cent of the articles were descriptive statements of personal belief and programme descriptions. Dickinson and Rusnell's similar analysis (1972), this one covering a twenty-year period, 1950-1970, indicated that only 22 per cent of the articles were based on empirical research. Furthermore, 48 per cent were reporting on descriptive surveys'. (Long, pp20-21, 1980, cited in Jones, 1984, p4, who argues that:

'The picture is even more abysmal if we look at the British journals devoted to adult education and compare their quality of academic rigour to other, both 'hard' and 'soft', areas of knowledge' (1984, p4)).

Examination of the philosophical underpinnings of adult education have generally been atomistic: stressing the educational component of the couplet 'adult education':

'The concept of education may be the same whether one is dealing with children or adults but ... I believe that there is still some profit in considering the issues from an adult education perspective if only to remind ourselves that adult education is concerned with education. I am critical of the current tendency to equate adult education with community work and social service, not because I am unsympathetic to such work but because I am of the opinion that adult education is badly in need of justification as education. Adult education may have a bearing upon things like community work and clearly it is a recreational activity for many people, but it is not synonymous with such things, therefore it has to be justified on its own terms'. (Original emphases. Lawson K.H 'Philosophical Concepts and Values in Adult Education', 1975, pp9-10).

Others have acknowledged the implicit educational content of adult education and have sought to measure the intellectual weight of 'studies in adult education' as compared to studies within acknowledged academic disciplines such as philosophy and psychology:

'Although organisational changes can and do from time to time take place within and across the major academic disciplines, the cognitive and educational primacy of the great disciplines, when viewed in their fullness as mankind's most deep-questing forms of knowledge and understanding, is, I submit, permanent and unshakeable. Of architectonic significance for all knowledge and inquiry of all kinds, they constitute our most profound and complete ways of receiving and interpreting human experience.

Hence they must be recognised as having epistemological sovereignty over all other, lesser, localized bodies of knowledge. What kinds of epistemological and pedagogical relationships can subsist, then, between a logically primordial form of knowledge and inquiry such as philosophy and a contingent ensemble of cognitively localized themes and topics such as adult education studies?' (R.K.Patterson, 'Philosophy and Adult Education' in B.Bright (Ed), 1989, p29)

The aim of many adult educators is to bring adult education to the point of academic and social respectability at which it can be labelled a profession. The images of adult education presented in its literature are diverse and often conflicting and conflictual. Always earnest and often radical, they contrast sharply with images of adult education (taken from newspapers, magazines and popular books) in mainstream British culture. These images are usually of the self-help Smilesian kind (12) or humorous. Sometimes they are intended to be both as in 'The Secret of How to Win Freedom from Clutter' (13) in which it is argued that some people allow their lives to be filled with time and energy consuming junk (including people). The solution:

'... one of the positive ways to avoid junk relationships. You can join an evening class'. (Aslett D, 1985, p121)

Mindful, perhaps, that 'A hundred feeble excuses for hanging on to clutter' includes the reason for keeping:

'Three quarters-full notebooks from evening class: 'I may want to brush up on that one day'' (Aslett D, 1985, p24).

The Guardian's adulterous 'Dulcie Domum' promotes self-help of a different kind through adult education:

' "Tell him you've got an Evening Class. Then you could come every Thursday". Intoxicated by thought of coming every Thursday, promise to see him later. .. Enter Spouse's study with placatory cup of coffee. Spouse half-way through Milton on Divorce. Inform him I am attending Life Class this evening. Spouse utters incredulous laugh and enquires whatever next. Just manage to refrain from telling him ... Worried about transparency of alibi. Phone Tech to see if Evening Classes have actually started, but phone is permanently engaged'. ('In the Grip of Acute Temptation'. Dulcie Domum. Bad Housekeeping. The Guardian. Sat-Sun. 23-24th Sept, 1989, p9).

Less frivolous public and national, images of adult education are often presented in womens' magazines of the more traditional and 'cosy' type. The following, taken from an article entitled 'What to do if ... you want to go to evening classes' says:

'One and a half million adults (...) give up a few hours a week to attend evening classes. They're there to learn about

anything from the three R's to landscape architecture. Some just go as a relief from boredom, or to meet people and make friends. Others want to train for a career, or to build up their confidence. Many just want to find out more about a subject which interests them' ('Woman's Realm', Oct 1983).

This image is reflected in, if not constituted by, the image of adult education purveyed by providers for marketing purposes. There is a surprising similarity between the national and local versions of this image given that adult education is often promoted as a community and, therefore, local, service. See for example the following quotation taken from the Wear Valley context:

'Last year, as in previous years, over 3,000 people enrolled in our classes ... Most people came to follow up an interest in anything from local history to computer science or Chinese. Most came not knowing quite what to expect but sure that they would meet other people like themselves' (14) (The Director, University of Durham Department of Adult and Continuing Education programme of classes for 1989-90, p1).

Some six years separate these two statements. It does not seem to matter. Part of the popular image of adult education is its apparent timelessness.

In these public images of adult education a common core curriculum is much in evidence. It is at odds

with the image of Adult Education to be found in its literature where the practice of adult education is often portrayed as being radical or dangerous. Tuckett heads his 'Commentary' in the last issue of the journal 'Adult Education' (Vol.61. No.4, p290, March 1989) in the same way as Hutchinson 'opened one of his first commentaries (then called Notes of the Quarter) ... in June 1950' with the following quotation:

' "We are engaged I realise, in a dangerous traffic; that of teaching people to think for themselves". (Mr W.E.Williams, then Director of the Bureau of Current Affairs, in a letter to the Times, 2nd April 1950).'

In the same issue of that journal its former editor Arthur Stock argues that: 'adult education has its first martyr', reporting the death of:

'a Palestinian lady of great character, sensibility, wit and intelligence ... [who] ... on the morning of 18th December, 1986, was dragged from her taxi on the way to work (in Beirut) and was shot on the spot, by three armed men. So adult education has its first martyr'. (p298) (15).

Juxtaposition of, and comparison between, the public and private (practitioner) images of adult education raises questions about the marketing of so radical an enterprise in such conservative ways. The cause lies in 'the nature' of the typical adult education

student: or adult educators' perceptions of that 'nature'. Mee and Wiltshire in 1978 cite adult education practitioners who feel that they must tolerate the large number of middle-class, middle-aged women who make up the bulk of their students in order to generate the income for 'compensatory' initiatives elsewhere:

'... I can put up with my blue rinse ladies because I know we are doing nicely at X ...' (p89).

Almost thirty years ago Pahl made the same point when penning two caricatures of adult education classes which are still evocative of practice today:

'Sir David Eccles (16) has used the word 'dreary' to describe the image presented by adult education. One could paint a dismal caricature of a group of faithful adherents sitting at uncomfortable desks in cold, ill-lit primary schools discussing in a conservatively socialist way, the evils of a decadent capitalist society with an intense tutor made neurotic by a life time's work in such an atmosphere. Or there is the class held in the drawing room of the lady of the manor where a select band of the local gentry spend a gently stimulating evening discussing with their tame but delightful tutor the amusing entries in the local parish registers. The tutor, of course, dines with each of them in turn before the class, and is so very tactful in the general conversation which breaks out in the interval when coffee and cakes are brought in' ('Adult education in a free society', New Orbits Group, 1962, p8).

Pahl concluded that while 'well over a million people ... attend ... classes run by the WEA and the LEA's, adult education has lost much of its social purpose'. In recent years 'the social purpose' of adult education has come to be understood largely in terms of the social and political position of women in society (17).

There has been very little written about the adult education student in terms other than of personal characteristics. In consequence, while we know that most students of adult education tend to be middle-aged, middle class, white women who have already been in receipt of a higher than average amount of education and at a higher level than is usual in British society, we know little else about them. These personal and social characteristics are assumed to hold across university and non-university, statutory and voluntary adult education sector activities. It seems also that such students show a curious 'brand loyalty' to their chosen mode of provision: Extramural University, Local Education Authority or Workers Educational Association. This is a major factor in determining the curriculum of adult education as against for example Further or Higher Education curricula which are constructed around a subject



matter which remains constant and students who leave at the end of the course. In adult education the students return each year and the subject matter is changed accordingly. This is often put forward as the reason why adult educators are unable to do as much research (both in their specialist subjects and adult education) as they would like.

In summary: I have argued that the images of adult education presented in its literature are diverse: often conflicting and conflictual. They are frequently radical and always earnest. They contrast sharply with public images of adult education which are mainly conservative and usually frivolous. When serious they portray adult education provision as plentiful if increasingly restricted:

'Not everyone will be fortunate enough to have a polytechnic or university close by, but most people will be within reach of an adult education institute. You should have access to all adult centres ... in your LEA ... Some LEA's are now refusing to pay extra district fees and if this happens ... you may be refused admission outside your own area' (J.Bell and G.Roderick, 'Never Too Late To Learn: The Complete Guide to Adult Education', 1982, p18).

Adult education is also assumed to be popular and to offer a wide, yet traditional, curriculum:

'If your desire is to pursue an academic subject at a fairly high level out of

general interest, with no wish to obtain a qualification, you will probably find what you are looking for in a university extra-mural department, or with the WEA. Countless thousands of adults from all walks of life and often with few qualifications turn out in the day or evening throughout the winter months to study a whole range of subjects with others in small groups under experienced tutors. Of recent years there has been a great growth of interest in local history (or local studies) and in archaeology ... there is scarcely any subject which is not to be found within the programme of an extra-mural department (Bell & Roderick, 1982, pp21-22).

We do not know how representative of practice, and of adult education, these images are. We do not know how they are received by potential or actual students. Practitioners stress the high quality relationships which develop (usually in the pub at the end of the formal teaching session) between themselves and their students.

There are few student comments on the adult education classroom or relationship. What happens in an evening class is one of the better kept secrets of British social and educational life. Our suspicions about what might happen are fed by accounts such as the following, presented by the pacifist diarist Frances Partridge:

'... a lecture Molly [McCarthy] went to by Nansen, who described their dreadful polar

adventures, 'And then we had nothing to eat for four weeks but penguin meat, and I dare say you can imagine that wasn't very nice ...'. Or again, 'the wind was so strong it blew our huts over. And I dare say you can imagine that wasn't very nice'. So it went on until the end of the lecture when Nansen described their return home, 'and when the ship entered harbour there was my wife waiting for me'. A voice from the back of the hall: 'And I dare say you can imagine that wasn't very nice'. (Partridge, 1985. p113).

Of 'Enlightenment and Despair' Hawthorn has said, 'I began this history in supposing that there was something called 'social theory' which was as it was and had usually been presented'. In beginning this study we must hope that whilst 'it is as it is' adult education is, perhaps, not entirely 'as it has usually been presented'. Adult education is a social construction. The first step in the process of understanding any social phenomenon is to look at the way, or ways, in which it presents itself to us. We can do this in either of two ways. We can assume that there is a social phenomenon 'adult education' and that it is as it is and how it has usually been presented. In so doing we commit an act of faith which, as Hawthorn (1987) has shown with respect to 'social theory', may well turn out to be one of 'bad faith'. Alternatively we can adopt a Marxian and realist model (18) and assume that while there is a

phenomenon, and it is as it is, it will almost certainly not be as it is presented. We will, therefore, need a special method to draw out the underlying 'real relations' before we can describe them. There are problems with both approaches. On the first, if the phenomenon 'as it is' coincided with the phenomenon 'as it is presented' research would be superfluous. On the second view, in as much as a phenomenon does not present itself but is always the work of human agency and therefore, ineluctably, of translation of interpretation and of creation there is no reason to suppose that how it presents itself to analysis, Marxian or otherwise, is, ipso facto, how it is.

We need, therefore, to look at how that phenomenon is presented, and constituted, by people in specific contexts, under particular circumstances. There is always a risk of reification. It is here that sociological analysis is useful: not in discovering fundamental truths about how things are but in refuting common sense assumptions about how they are. Falsification not verification: de-mystification not reification.

Chapter One: Notes and References

1. The arguments for provision of 'the education of adults' model of adult education (in complex 20th century societies) are strong. It is not my intention to detract from them. The case for liberal adult education for social purpose has, however, to be made with equal force.
2. For an account of the affects of this consensus on the politics of educational policymaking see 'Unpopular Education: Schooling and Social Democracy in England since 1944'. Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. Hutchinson. London. (1981).
3. Training in adult education has traditionally been patchy in provision and limited in range and scope. While both quantity and quality of adult education training has increased in recent years the situation does not justify the assertion that 'other agencies are better equipped with specifically trained staff'.
4. For a critique, from a Marxist perspective, of liberal approaches to community education see:

'Class, Ideology and Community Education' by  
W.Cowburn. Publ. Croom Helm. London. (1986).

5. Neither do they preclude a 'socialist' perspective on adult education: The best socialist adult education is perhaps always liberal in form and content.
  
6. The literature of adult education is predominantly the literature of practising adult educators. There are few academic journals which focus on the theory, philosophy or methodology of adult education. Of these 'Studies in the Education of Adults' now takes precedence in a field formerly dominated by the 'professional' journal 'Adult Education' which (it has been argued see Adult Education Vol 61, No.4, 'A Valediction for 'Adult Education' by Arthur Stock, pp293-298) has become 'the magazine Adults Learning'. While there has been a growth in the publication of books by adult educators as a result, perhaps, of pressures within university extramural departments to 'publish or perish', they tell us little about what goes on in the adult education 'classroom'. There are few student accounts of the adult education

classroom. In consequence, most of the references to what goes on in the adult education 'classroom' are exhortatory rather than analytical or reflective.

7. The term 'continuing education' is as elusive of definition as that of 'adult education'. Some have argued that the term came into use with the establishing of The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) and that it has done little to clarify the meaning of either adult education or continuing education.
  
8. In 'The Radical Tradition in Education in Britain' Simon argues that 'The Radical tradition in education is, ..., that tradition which sees educational change as a key aspect (or component) of radical social change'. In 'The Search for Enlightenment: The Working Class and Adult Education in the Twentieth Century' Publ. by Lawrence and Wishart, London, (1990), he argues that the growth of adult education is linked, organically, to the rise of the trades union movement.

9. Wiltshire.H in 'A General Introduction' to 'The 1919 Report: The Final and Interim Reports of the Adult Education Committee of the Ministry of Reconstruction 1918-1919 reprinted by the Department of Adult Education of The University of Nottingham, (1980), citing para 1.92 of the Report.
  
10. 'The Tutor in Adult Education: An Enquiry into the Problems of Supply and Training'. British Institute of Adult Education and Tutors' Association. Publ. by the Carnegie Trust, Dunfermline. (1928).
  
11. A single group of people were extremely influential in establishing the ideological and practical base of twentieth century adult education in Britain. J.L.Thompson (1983) has pointed out that they were nearly all men. They were also all liberal, and often Christian socialists of some variant.
  
12. Self-help in the Smilesian tradition has long been a component of adult education. For a brief account of its influence on nineteenth century adult education see: 'Samuel Smiles and



Nineteenth Century Self-Help in Education, Ed's M.D. Stephens and G.W. Roderick, Nottingham Studies in the History of Adult Education, Publ. Dept Adult Education, University of Nottingham, (1983).

13. A book on self-help methods some of which could have been applied, with profit, to its title.
14. Adult education is not a broad church. Its students tend to fall into the same socio-economic categories and to return to the same institution or even lecturer year after year. Even so: being sure of meeting 'people like themselves' can look dangerously close to an invitation to form a clique.
15. The death of this woman was tragic and neither it, nor her memory, must be diminished. The notable fact about it is, however, not that adult education 'has its first martyr' but that war has claimed another victim.
16. Sir David Eccles when Minister of Education.

17. See Thompson J.L. (1983 and 1980) and Purvis J. (1989) for example, taken from the literature of adult education and the historiography of adult education respectively.
  
18. See, for example, Sayer D. 'Marx's Method', The Harvester Press, Sussex, (1979).

CHAPTER TWO: THINKING SOCIOLOGICALLY ABOUT ADULT  
EDUCATION

'...there are few works by [Bruegel's] hand which the observer can contemplate solemnly and with a straight face. However stiff, morose, or surly he may be, he cannot help chuckling or at any rate smiling' (Van Mander, 1604, cited in Preface to Stechow.W 'Bruegel'. Publ. Thames & Hudson, London, 1990, p7).

I have argued so far that the role of liberal adult education in modern British (1) society is changing. While some welcome its abandonment in favour of continuing professional or social purpose orientated work other adult educators believe that 'the way things are is, more or less, the way they ought to stay' (2). Whilst this thesis is essentially a defence of the liberal approach to adult education it is not clear what form that approach takes in most adult education settings. The 'liberal tradition' of university extramural provision does not exhaust the liberal approach to adult education. We need to understand the role and purpose of the university and non-university, statutory and voluntary adult education sectors before theorising their future roles.

An already complex system of adult education has been made more complicated in recent years by new, and ostensibly mass, forms of education and leisure provision for adults: Further and higher Education 'Access' programmes, Open Learning initiatives, the Open College of the Arts, Sports Complexes, Leisure Centres and increased adult provision by agencies such as the Development Commission in rural areas. All are assumed to co-exist in a state of functional equilibrium, if not symbiosis:

'... the British have been (...) innovative in many forms of adult education - in the university connection, through voluntary bodies, in political and trade union studies, in literacy, in outreach work, in community education, in new opportunities for women and so on ...' (Jones H.A, in Foreword to Legge.D, 1982, pxii)

Leading to a situation in which of adult education:

'The final impression is of rich variety, as in one of those Breughel village scenes where work, play, social interaction, personal contact and community activity are all separately identified, but within a frame that is the whole of human life'. (Prof H.A.Jones in Foreword to Legge.D, 1982, pxii).

If we are to learn anything about the role and purpose of liberal adult education in modern British society we must move away from assumptions, structural functionalism and 'impressions'. We must also take

care when comparing our impressions with those of others. We must seek to understand the purposes for which those impressions were produced and the conditions of their production.

To conclude, for example, that of adult education provision 'the final impression is of rich variety as in one of those Breughel village scenes ...' is to present a two dimensional account of the artist and, by implication, of adult education. It fails to acknowledge the interpretive characteristics of Bruegel's images and of the conditions of their production. In precluding the possibility of there being more than one way of seeing a painting by Bruegel we are perhaps less aware of the many ways in which we might view adult education: Stechow.W (1990) argues that while 'It is a truism that every epoch has its own conception of a great artist of the past' (p9) Bruegel has been more resistant to categorisation than most:

'The man has been thought to have been a peasant and a townsman, an orthodox catholic and a Libertine, a humanist, a laughing and a pessimistic philosopher; the artist appeared as a follower of Bosch and a continuator of the Flemish tradition, the last of the Primitives, a Mannerist in contact with Italian art, an illustrator, a genre painter, a landscape artist, a realist, a painter consciously transforming reality and adapting it to his formal ideal

... ' (Grossman.F cited in Stechow 1990, p10).

It is common to understand much art and literature as being realistic representations of a golden (and usually pre-urban) age. The works of Bruegel, often commissioned by Flemish merchants may, with some justification, be seen in this way. They are also, however, highly contrived mixtures of allegory and realism and develop classical themes such as the changing of the seasons. The bucolic bonhomie, like the games depicted in them are not real: Some of the themes such as 'The Slaughter of the Innocents' are grim. These images add little to our understanding of modern adult education.

Having looked at the ways in which adult education presents itself to us we must seek to know for what purposes, under what conditions and by whom those images are produced. In seeking to move beyond, but not necessarily behind (3), impressions we must give careful consideration to the means by which we do it. There are no techniques or methods specific to adult education research upon which we can draw.

Sociological research has not focused on the study of adult education in ways which have furthered the terms of a methodological debate.

In order to prepare the ground (for a sociological study which moves beyond Breughel-esque images and self-equilibrating social wholes) of the role and purpose of adult education in modern British society, we need to see how sociologists have understood adult education. We need to look at sociological images, (or images within the sociology of) adult education.

Adult education is a sociological joke: a taken for granted fact of social and cultural life:

'Once she was out of the room, I opened my notebook and began to record observations. But after a line or two I stopped. I was convinced we were on a false trail. The Seekers were only one more of thousands of well-meaning religious uplift groups you can find everywhere in the backwaters of America. They would never run into more opposition than a noisy power-mower next door. And they might as well be studying flower arrangement or Great Books for all the use they would be ...' (Lurie.A 'Imaginary Friends', Publ. Sphere Books Ltd, London, 1987, p14).

The views sociologists hold of adult education are frequently informed by the images of adult education which we have just examined. Adult education provision is assumed to be plentiful and popular. In reality it is often poor and in some areas of Britain may no longer exist. Adult education is often assumed to be

able to compensate for society in ways which Bernstein (4) argued education per se could not do.

In the main adult education is characterised by sociologists as being 'worthy but dull' and ignored. I shall argue that adult education is as puzzling a phenomenon as any other fact of social and cultural life and, therefore, worthy of sociological study. This 'because it is there' approach to the study of adult education does not detract from the clear need to study adult education from a variety of perspectives aimed at changing it (5). It does, however, allow for the possibility that we may (as sociologists) not be able to (6) change it or even influence the ways in which it does change. It allows also, for the complexity of social phenomenon such as adult education. For example, there is a great deal of adult education activity which takes place outside of formal adult education provision and settings. Such educational activity, frequently viewed as leisure activity, is provided by a variety of voluntary groups and organisations ranging from the Womens' Institutes to small, localised hobby groups and enthusiast societies. The tension between formal and informal or non-formal adult education and education for, or as part of, leisure and recreative activities was woven



into this study at its beginning: one of the first adult education 'classes' I participated in was a home gardening talk and demonstration given by a local nursery woman to a meeting of the Wolsingham branch of the National Federation of Womens' Institutes (NFWI). Enthusiasm groups, hobby clubs and associations have traditionally been under researched by sociologists and adult educators.

In adopting a sociological approach to the study of adult education we need to bring into consideration the social processes which constitute the fact and the illusion of consensus and conflict, change and stasis in adult education. Why, for example, does adult education remain, in its public and private images, essentially as it was forty years ago? In what ways is it the same? In what ways is it different? In what ways is it changing? Who is doing the work necessary to create the partial illusions of both stasis and change? Under what conditions? In what ways do adult educators' ideas and activities differ from each other? It is not enough to note, in passing, that adult education is inherently conservative or that it has inbuilt radical potential. We need to know in what ways it is conservative and radical and for what purposes. Who is defining it as conservative or

radical and for what ends? Whose ends are best served by an adult education system so apparently 'unchanging' as to seem to have little relevance in the modern world? By what processes do the variety of diverse activities which we have come to recognise as 'adult education' become structured in ways which make them recognisable as adult education and not as other activities such as, for example, leisure?

Consideration of the reasons why adult education is left off sociological research agendas reveals as much about sociological pre-occupations as it does about the phenomenon adult education.

Those sociologists who have conducted research into adult education and have taken, as their knowledge base, images of adult education taken from its literature have frequently been pre-occupied with the problems of adult education as defined by adult educators (7) in that literature. In consequence they have asked few sociological questions about adult education (8).

The most persistent sociological image of adult education is that of 'poor cousin' or 'Cinderella' in a front end (schooling dominated) extended educational

family (9). This image is rooted in the parlous financial position of adult education within the educational system. The pre-occupations of British social theory and of sociological research, have been essentially pragmatic ones. The 'book-keeping of social reform' (10) has worked against a thoroughgoing sociological study of the role and purpose of adult education with its 'infinitesimally small budget'. Within the sociology of education interest in adult education has been limited. The 'political arithmetic' approach to state provided education in Britain has ensured that aspects of it, not readily amenable to statistical manipulation, have generally remained unresearched. The 'new' sociology of education's interest in the 'black box' of the classroom has not been fully extended to the adult education classroom. Adult education, numerically and statistically 'invisible' generates little public debate about either its form or content. In consequence adult education is assumed to be of little educational or political importance. Mainstream sociological study of those phenomenon not obviously 'political' in resource terms has been very limited.

Similarly, there has been little sociological interest in leisure and recreational activities until, in the

last decade both have become foundational aspects of the nascent economic regeneration of British society: a process of which:

'It is now generally recognised that the 1980's have witnessed, and will continue to witness, a major transformation of the economic and social structure of all of the advanced capitalist societies. Moreover, this process is seen to be a fundamental restructuring of these societies and not - whatever the commonly offered rhetoric on these matters - a simple recession. These are major changes, not temporary phenomena, and there will be no 'return to normal' should the general level of economic activity recover'. (Original emphasis. Newby et al, 1985, p1).

One of the more persistent public images of adult education is, however, that of its being a leisure activity (albeit of minority interest). It was within the small but growing literature of the sociology of leisure that I found some of the most considered approaches to the study of adult education (11). Aspects of an approach to the study of adult and community education drawn from the sociology of leisure inform the theoretical framework in which the ethnographically derived accounts of adult education in the Wear Valley of County Durham (presented in later chapters) are situated. The interesting problems inherent in the relationship between adult education and leisure are not only those of definition or, to

some extent, of stated purpose. They are of role, purpose and consequence in a context increasingly shaped not by social, educational or recreational ideas, but by economic ones and the market forces they are manifest in.

These market forces operate in a particular ideological climate in which 'the nation' engaging actively in social, economic and cultural reconstruction is perceived as being in decline (12). The building of a national economy around tourism, leisure and 'heritage' activities within the context of a wide-spread culture of pessimism in which:

'whatever the true figures for production and employment, this country is gripped by the perception that it is in decline. The heritage industry is an attempt to dispel this climate of decline by exploiting the economic potential of our culture, and it finds a ready market because the perception of decline includes all sorts of insecurities and doubts' (Hewison R, 1987, pp9-10).

Promoting a feeling described by Elizabeth Bowen as 'the bend back', a sense in which something 'fails in the air of our present day that we cannot breathe it' (13). A feeling which leads to retreat into fantasy and nostalgia. A feeling we take to be specific to Britain but which may be an integral part of the

modern or even post modern condition (14). The process has been described, in a country whose short English speaking history might be expected to mitigate against re-construction in terms of 'heritage' in these terms:

'Nowadays the past is also pervasive in its abundance of deliberate, tangible evocations. To an American, the landscape of the 1980s seems saturated with 'creeping heritage' - mansarded and half-timbered shopping plazas, exposed brick and butcher-block decor in historic precincts, heritage villages, historic preservation; ...'we moderns have so devoted the resources of our science to taxidermy that there is now virtually nothing that is not considerably more lively after death than it was before'. (Lowenthal D, 1985, p xv, Citing Dennis.N, 1955).

At first glance adult education appears to be one of the few things 'that is not considerably more lively after death than it was before' (15). There is no adult education heritage industry. No-one, it seems, remembers, either fondly or with distaste, their nights spent in evening classes. The heritage industry is characterised by its mass appeal. Based on commonly used artefacts of life for the majority of people in the recent past its consumer goods, from visits to Wigan Pier (16) to flower sprigged piss pots, are made (in the 1980's and 1990's) for mass consumption. Common experiences such as work in a particular trade or industry are used as backcloth against which to

situate the artefacts of heritage. Schooling has long been recognised as one of the few experiences which most people in modern western societies share (albeit mediated by class, race, gender, ethnic and age factors). Schooling plays a prominent part in 'heritage': most museums have their own schoolroom complete with slates, cane and cocoa mugs.

I have found few references to the adult education 'classroom' (17) reconstructed and evocative of memories, shared or otherwise. However, in 'Class, Ideology and Community Education' Cowburn argues that 'the director of the Community Education Development Centre, John Rennie, told him that:

'... the best example of community education he had ever seen evidence of was located down a slate mine in Blaenau Ffestiniog in Wales, no longer a working mine but an industrial museum' (1986, p50).

Quoting directly from the conversation Cowburn has Rennie tell us:

'They've got life size models of miners and they're all sitting round the table having their snap and there's about ten of them and there's one guy sitting at the end of the table and he's got a book. And they had a half-hour break out of what was hell and they're sat there in the thick dust and they're using that half-hour to have education - they were educating themselves. And when you see that you think, 'Well,

there was real, genuine, grassroots, rock-hard community education'. All the crap that's come since has mainly been led by professionals ...'' (1986, p50).

Most of the criticism of the heritage industry has come from the British political and cultural left. It has often focused on the tendency for heritage museums to encourage those who visit them to accept their sanitised and largely ahistorical artefactual reconstructions as true representations of the past. Rennie's apparent identification of 'real rock hard community' education with the representation in the Blaenau Ffestiniog mining museum is a new development in the long established tendency of idealising and romanticising the adult and community education past and in doing so, to simplify it.

The relationship of the social to the individual (and of the 'social individual to capitalism in Marxism) is the defining characteristic of sociology. it is present in adult education theory and practice as the relationship between adult education in society (usually seen as community) and the individual adult learner (student). It has been largely ignored by the sociology of adult education. If we compare the 'heritage' model of adult and community education presented by Rennie with the account of the working



class autodidact and autobiographer presented in a book whose title

'... is taken from one of the best known working class autobiographies, William Lovett's The Life and Struggles of William Lovett In his Pursuit of Bread, Knowledge and Freedom' [We see that] 'The phrase captures the essence of both Lovett's career and those of the majority of individuals whose accounts we are studying. These were men who struggled for their bread in common with the rest of their class, but who also found in themselves the desire and the energy to embark upon the pursuit of knowledge and freedom. The order in which these objectives were listed reflected the relationship between them. The pursuit of bread was the prime concern of any working man, and the context within which all other activities were conducted. The pursuit of knowledge derived its impetus from the circumstances under which bread was gained, and in turn was seen as the essential pre-condition for the pursuit of freedom. By "knowledge" Lovett and the other autobiographers meant book knowledge, and the reading and on occasions writing of literature lay at the centre of their response to the industrializing society' (Vincent, 1981, p109).

We begin also to understand the relationship of the adult reader and writer to society. While the social and political action necessary to the pursuit of bread and freedom were collective activities 'the pursuit of books' as book knowledge through reading:

'... is a solitary activity, and many of the problems encountered by these men were created by the need to withdraw from the company of their families and friends, yet as they wrestled with their difficulties, so, inevitably, they began to make contact with other readers. A constantly recurring event in the autobiographies is a meeting with another working man who has embarked on a similar course of self-improvement ...' (Vincent, 1981, pp125-126).

and yet:

'The extent to which such relationships could overcome the problems facing the reader was always limited. William Lovett, for instance, formed a friendship with a fellow apprentice in Newlyn ... but faced with the dearth of literature in their community, the two of them made no more progress than each separately. All they achieved was a pooling of their ignorance' (Vincent, 1981, p127).

In searching for mediating relationships between the working class autobiographer and reader Vincent focuses on mutual improvement societies but concludes that while mutual improvement societies had a role to play in forming 'the relationship between the individual and social identity of the reader' in working class communities:

'they were mostly short-lived, and even as a member of a flourishing society the reader would continue his private studies. What translated individual endeavour into a culture in the sense of a social entity which existed as a distinct element within the culture of the working class as a whole

was not so much the incidence of corporate activity as the simple recognition, with all that it entailed, of one reader by another' (Vincent, 1981, p128).

The relationship between modern adult education provision and the adult student is equally problematic. Sociologists of adult education, while acknowledging this complexity, have done little to explore it. The nature of, and relationships between, adult education (as a collective activity whether formally or informally organised) and adult learning (as individual achievement) are essentially manifestations of the processes of social structuration in adult education. They are usually perceived as problems of definition. Pre-occupation with the problem of definition in adult education has resulted in amplification of the tendency of the sociology of adult education to view social life in individualistic or collective terms: to speak of 'the working class', 'the community' or of 'the adult learner' and 'the student'.

The sociology of adult education, however, is very small. Making a distinction between sociology of, and sociology in, adult education C.Duke and S.Marriott (cited in R.Kenneth Jones) argued in 1973 that:

'... the sorry fact is that the sociology of adult education is almost non-existent' (Duke and Marriott, 1973, p15. Quoted in Jones, 1984, p2. Original emphasis in Jones).

R.Kenneth Jones writing in 1984 argues that:

'... at no time ... has any sociological perspective been seriously applied to the area of adult education'(p10).

In 1991 the position remains essentially the same. While there has been a substantial increase in the number of publications discussing the role of sociology in adult education there is still very little sociology of adult education. In 'Right For the Wrong Reasons: A Critique of Sociology in Professional Adult Education' P.F.Armstrong argues that:

'In recent years there has been growing acceptance of the place of sociology in the curriculum of adult education training courses. This is part of a general trend in professional and vocational training after many years of suspicion of what is a relatively young discipline, whose content and epistemological status is still uncertain' (In Bright.B (Ed), 1989, p94).

Concluding that:

'sociology can be made useful to the professions provided it is made relevant and remains at the level of technique' (In Bright, 1989, p116).

Both P.Jarvis and R.Kenneth Jones have written books about the relationship of adult education to sociology entitled 'The Sociology of Adult and Continuing Education' (1983) and 'The Sociology of Adult Education' (1984) respectively. Both are introductions to sociological approaches to adult education: listing perspectives and key concepts rather than sociologies of adult education.

The books by P.Jarvis and R.Kenneth Jones share common aims in reviewing sociological theories and perspectives in relation to adult education. Jarvis tends to focus on the individual adult learner in society while Jones focuses on the social collectivity arguing for a political economy of adult education.

The most notable sociological encounter in the literature of adult education has been that between Burton H. Clark's 'The Marginality of Adult Education' (1958) and S.Marriott recounted in 'Extramural Empires: Service and Self-Interest in English Universities Adult Education 1873:1983':

'Clark chose adult education as the paradigm case of a practice which is marginal to the larger administrative system on which it depends. He described the condition and unintended consequences of marginality,

arguing for example that the managers of adult education, in trying to strengthen their own base, are drawn into short-run opportunism. Following his mentor Philip Selznick, he declared that high-minded statements of 'philosophy' so characteristic of adult education serve to cloak what it is found expedient to do' (1984, p10).

Marriott's rejoinder that the theory of marginality limited understanding of university extramural education has relevance today:

'The importation of the theory of marginality was timely and promised to raise the level of critical discussion in English adult education. Unfortunately ... it was also restricting in that it confined attention to the internal workings of the system. The very notion of marginality seemed to imply that the organisation's place in the wider world - in effect its political situation - could be taken for granted' (Marriott, 1984, p10-11).

I have argued that before we can predict or determine the role of adult education we need to know what it is: how it sees itself and presents itself. We need also to know how adult education is received by 'the wider world'. I have looked at images of adult education presented in its literature and at images of adult education in mainstream British culture. I have suggested that a sociological approach to the study of adult education while not precluding the possibility of influencing social change should not necessarily

aim to do so. In a critique of 'the radical-sociological' approach to adult education Marriott argues, cogently, that:

'It is certainly a challenge to the old assumptions of apartness and special status, but it [the radical sociological approach to adult education] swings directly between classroom practices and a theory of knowledge without saying much about what lies between' (Marriott, 1984, p12).

Marriott provides a detailed analysis of one of the social phenomena that lies between the adult education classroom and the wider world: the institutional system of inter and extramural work. In doing so he revises the theory of marginality in university extramural adult education and argues that

'If university adult education were totally marginal, could it survive? A political view of organisational life suggests not' (Marriott, 1984, p119).

And against

'the naivety of the onwards-and-upwards school of self-justification [in adult education and its] equal and opposite simplification ... the bourgeois hegemony, which acquires much of its distinctive flavour by being spiced with hints of capitalist conspiracy. Both ... insist on treating adult education as a solidary phenomenon, seen in the one case as benign, in the other as repressive. It would be better to keep an eye open for evidence of plurality of interests within the one area

of educational organisation' (Marriott, 1984, p12).

In this thesis I shall argue that one of the things which lies between the adult education classroom and the wider world is the adult education organisation or system. It is accompanied by the adult education idea and becomes adult education when embodied as practice by living actors: adult educators. To understand adult education we need therefore to understand the meaning of adult education to those who believe that they are doing adult education.

Although, in this thesis, I focus primarily on the meaning of adult education to those involved in it I am not suggesting that adult education is reducible to that meaning or to the intended purpose of adult educators. The social construction adult education is made up as much by the congealed consequences of adult education practice (as system and idea) as by the meanings or purpose with which adult educators invest their activities. Some of those consequences, while unintended, still set the parameters by which adult education practices may be taken into the future.



Notes and References

1. I have throughout used the term 'British adult education'. Others have spoken of English adult education. (See Marriott, 1984). We know little about adult education in Scotland, Ireland and Wales. This situation may reflect the lack of publicly available writings about adult education. An account of work carried out in Scotland ('Living Adult Education: Friere in Scotland', by Kirkwood.G and Kirkwood.C, Publ. by the Open University Press, Milton Keynes, in 1989) suggests that the theory and practice of adult education in Scotland may be changing more rapidly than in the rest of Britain. The Murphy Report on adult education in the Republic of Ireland published in 1973 (and arguably standing 'shoulder to shoulder with the Russell and Alexander reports' (Webster R, 1985)) shows the structures, organisation and activities of adult education there (and the ideological and resource arguments surrounding them) to be remarkably similar to those identified by Alexander in Scotland in 1975 and by Russell in England and Wales in 1973.

2. J.L.Thompson (Ed) in Preface to 'Adult Education For a Change', Publ. Hutchinson, London, (1980).
3. To avoid explanations in terms of 'false consciousness' we must assume that the way things look is, to some extent, the way they are. To explain how things can look as, and (at the same time) other than, they are, is the task of sociology: It centres on adequately explaining the processes of social structuration without recourse to dichotomous definitions such as material base or ideological superstructure; society or the individual; reality and representations and, in adult education, the adult learner and 'the whole way of' adult education life.
4. Bernstein.B 'Education Cannot Compensate for Society' in 'School and Society: A Sociological Reader', Ed. Cousin.B.R et al, RKP in association with The Open University Press, London and Henley, 1971.
5. As Rex has argued it is 'absolutely essential to reverse Marx's eleventh thesis and to say that hitherto sociologists have tried to change the

world or politicians have tried to change the world; the important thing if anyone wants to change it effectively is to understand it' (Mullan B, 1987, p11).

6. There have been few analyses of the role, function and purpose of sociology in society. Where such studies have been conducted they have generally concluded that while the role played by sociology in informing public consciousness (a process Giddens has called 'the double hermeneutic') has been profound, if ultimately unquantifiable, the success of sociology in achieving its stated interventionist goals has been limited.
  
7. J.Purvis, for example, in a paper published in 1977, notes the problems of 'the cinderella' or 'low status held by adult education in the wider educational community'. Concluding that the student centred pedagogy in adult education may well 'conflict with the struggle for professional status among teaching staff and contribute to its low status'.

8. It would be easy in a study of this type to give the impression that I am operating with a caricature of adult education. To some extent this is the case. (It has been drawn, however, by adult educators and not by me). In the absence of publicly available, and preferably independent (of adult education practice) research findings and an informed and critical adult education practitioner literature it is difficult to do otherwise. This is so despite the wealth of good adult education practice that undoubtedly exists in Britain today: practice that is not reflected in its literature. In this thesis, then, I am taking issue with the literature of adult education and not adult education practice.
9. See 'The Poor Cousin' (1979) by Newman.M.
10. See Rex.J in Mullan.B (1987).
11. See for example the article 'Evenings at the Ivory Tower: Liberal adult education', by D.Jary (1973).
12. This is a major cultural and ideological change from the optimistic mood which characterised the

Reconstruction efforts which followed the Great and Second World Wars and shaped modern British adult education. While some practitioners of adult and community education in the Wear Valley spoke of 'reconstruction' it was with little sense of creating the future. The more limited aims of 'getting back what we've lost' taking the place of the grandiose schemes for the role of adult education in nation building which were common after both world wars.

13. Cited in the Preface to 'The Mulberry Tree'. Edited by Hermione Lee, Virago, (1986).
  
14. John Urry (1990) urges us to exercise caution when using nostalgia as an explanatory concept arguing that the idea that there has ever been a group of people who did not make a 'golden age' of its past may be a peculiarly sociological and mistaken one. Nevertheless, for those engaged in descriptive sociological work, in industrialised nations, the 'facts' of nostalgia, heritage and 'the bend-back' are real and are so in their consequences too.

15. Other than within the literature of its practitioners perhaps.
  
16. For an account of the ways in which Wigan Pier is being visited and re-visited in ways which bear little resemblance to the ways in which it was visited by Orwell and B.Campbell (Wigan Pier Revisited, 1984), see Hewison.R, (1987).
  
17. I have not defined adult education in this thesis. I have talked of 'the liberal tradition' of university extramural adult education which I have set within the parameters of the liberal approach to adult education. A main aim of this thesis is to move away from a priori and theoretical definitions of adult education. There is no discussion of 'the problems of definition'. The definitions of adult education found in this study have been taken from the literature, speech (in interviews) and practices (under observation) of adult educators themselves.

CHAPTER THREE: ADULT EDUCATION, WORK AND UNEMPLOYMENT

'I think I caught a glimpse then of what may seem to future historians one of the most dreadful ironies of this time of ours, when there were never more men doing nothing and there was never before so much to be done'.

J.B.Priestley in 'English Journal'  
Publ. 1934. Cited in Seabrook.J  
'Unemployment'. Publ. Granada  
Publishing Ltd. (1983).

A longstanding and well established link between the adult education 'classroom' and 'the wider world' has been work. The nature and organisation of work in modern Britain has exercised a foundational influence on adult education as a social and cultural phenomenon. In the 1980's some adult educators felt that adult education could best secure its future by abandoning its proletarianised past, if indeed, it had ever had one. Others that adult education could best secure its future by returning to its roots in the processes of industrialisation which produced both adult education and the working class in the mid nineteenth century. Processes which produced large-scale economic and industrial re-structuring and long-term unemployment in the mid twentieth century.

The primary concern of this project, outside of adult education, was with unemployment. It reflected a value judgement, a feeling that the brutality with which capitalism in Britain restructured both its mode and its relations of production (1) was both inhuman and uncivilized. The word 'civilised' is both currently out of fashion and difficult to use. It is also central to the debate about adult education, work and unemployment. The links being made through the concept, as Williams has noted, of culture. The word

'Civilization is now generally used to describe an achieved state or condition of organized social life. Like CULTURE (q.v) with which it has had a long and still difficult interaction, it referred originally to a process, and in some contexts this sense still survives' (Williams, 1983, p57).

The word 'civilization' carries imperialist connotations which are deeply offensive. Yet, as Williams noted, citing Mill in his essay on Coleridge, the word civilization can be, and has been used, positively:

' "Take for instance the question how far mankind has gained by civilization. One observer is forcibly struck by the multiplication of physical comforts; the advancement and diffusion of knowledge; the decay of superstition; the facilities of mutual intercourse; the softening of manners; the decline of war and personal conflict; the progressive limitation of the



tyranny of the strong over the weak; the great works accomplished throughout the globe by the co-operation of multitudes ..." (Williams, 1983, p58).

It is in contrast to this sense, of a positive state of achievement, that the word 'uncivilized' has to be used when talking of long-term structural unemployment: a state of affairs which, in modern Western societies, is permitted to deepen already gross social and economic divisions and inequalities (2). Civilization is indeed 'capable of being lost as well as gained' (Williams, 1983, p60). Through its long associations with the working class and its fairly recent challenging of 'high culture' as an implicit model for 'a civilized society' (see the work of Williams (3), Thompson (4) and Hoggart (5)) adult education has, in its traditional liberal-socialist variant, played a small but significant role in forming and promulgating views of, and debate about, the nature of a civilized society'. People in need of 'civilization' and 'cultivation' or 'culture' have long been accepted as the raw materials of adult education. As Williams has said.

'Culture in all its early uses was a noun of process: the tending of something, basically crops or animals ... the important next stage of meaning, by metaphor. From [the early 16th century] the tending of natural growth was extended to a process of human

development, and this, alongside the original meaning in husbandry, was the main sense until [the late 18th and early 19th century]' (1983, p87).

In his classic work on adult education 'Learning and Living 1790:1960' Professor J.F.C.Harrison entitles a chapter 'The Ground to be Cultivated' citing 'Joseph Livesey, the Preston temperance advocate' in 1833, with respect to the working classes, that

'There is no desire for learning; the ground is in a fallow state; and therefore it is not enough to purchase manure and secure the implements of cultivation; they must be applied, the ground must be broken up, the manure must be spread, and then we may hope that the results will be good'  
(Harrison.J.F.C, 1961, p5. Original emphasis).

Logically the uncivilised way in which capitalism in Britain was to discard its unwanted workforce (or 'reserve army') should not have surprised anyone. Capitalism is a harsh doctrine and industrialisation a chastening experience. Accounts of its revolutionary phase are as grim as they are plentiful (6).

As Hobsbawm noted in the opening paragraph of 'Industry and Empire' (1968):

'The Industrial Revolution marks the most fundamental transformation of human life in the history of the world recorded in written

documents. For a brief period it coincided with the history of a single country, Great Britain. An entire world economy was thus built on, or rather around, Britain, and this country therefore temporarily rose to a position of global influence and power unparalleled by any state of its relative size before or since, and unlikely to be paralleled by any state in the foreseeable future. There was a moment in the world's history when Britain can be described, if we are not too pedantic, as its only workshop ...' (Hobsbawm.E.J, 1968, p1).

J.F.C.Harrison noted in 'The Early Victorians:1832-1851', (p35), (cited in Burnett.J, 'Useful Toil', 1974, p25) that the processes of industrialisation meant that:

'A vast amount of wheeling, dragging, hoisting, carrying, lifting, digging, tunnelling, draining, trenching, hedging, embanking, blasting, breaking, scouring, sawing, felling, reaping, mowing, picking, sifting and threshing was done by sheer muscular effort day in, day out'.

A situation often observed with horror:

'No observer in Manchester in the 1830's and 1840's - and there were many - dwelt on its happy, well fed people: "Wretched, defrauded, oppressed, crushed human nature lying in bleeding fragments all over the face of society" wrote the American Colman, of it in 1845. "Every day that I live I thank Heaven that I am not a poor man with a family in England" (Hobsbawm.E.J, 1968, citing Colman cited in Briggs.A (Ed) 'Chartist Studies', p95, 1959).

As E.P.Thompson noted in 'The Making of the English Working Class':

'It is neither poverty nor disease, but work itself which casts the blackest shadow over the years of the Industrial Revolution ... New skills were arising, old satisfactions persisted, but over all we feel the general pressure of long hours of unsatisfying labour under severe discipline for alien purposes ... After all other impressions fade, this one remains; together with the loss of any felt cohesion in the community, save that which working people, in antagonism to their labour and to their masters, built for themselves' (Cited in Seabrook.J, 'Unemployment', Granada, 1982, p3).

These social and economic conditions have long been understood to have produced the ground to be cultivated by adult education in the form of a working class, who, Edward Hall argued in 1858:

'... are not generally healthy in the full sense of the term; but under the best of health which they enjoy, they are subject to feelings of languor and weariness, which people do not feel who live in healthy situations and breathe pure air when they are asleep. This feeling is forced off by necessity on the six days of labour; but on Sunday, when this is not the case, it is felt perhaps more than at any other time, giving them a disinclination to exert either their mental or physical powers, except it be to stimulate them by the exciting drink and company of the beershop or public house' (p14. Dom Miss. Cited in Harrison J.F.C. (1961). p13).

A hundred years later, in the boom years of the 1960's, when we 'had never had it so good' (7), conditions of work were both less arduous and less conducive to serious adult educational activity. As far as can be discerned from the limited quantitative and qualitative data available it was the more leisure-based adult education activities of the LEA's which experienced a period of growth and relative prosperity. There was much to escape into leisure from. In 1974 Paul Sweezy wrote:

'The sad, horrible heartbreaking way the vast majority of my fellow countrymen and women as well as their counterparts in most of the rest of the world, are obliged to spend their working lives is seared into my consciousness in an excruciating and unforgettable way. And when I think of all the talent and energy which daily go into devising ways and means of making their torment worse all in the name of efficiency and productivity but really for the glory of the great God Capital, my wonder at humanity's ability to create such a monstrous system is surpassed only by amazement at its willingness to tolerate the continuance of an arrangement so obviously destructive of the well-being and happiness of human beings' (Foreward to Braverman, 'Labor and Monopoly Capital').

A year before Beynon had published an account of one of the better jobs (in terms of pay and conditions) that were available to men in boomtime Britain:

'It's strange this place. It's got no really good points. It's just convenient. It's got

no interest. You couldn't take the job home. There's nothing to take. You just forget it'. (Worker on the line at Ford Motors, Halewood Plant. Quoted in H.Beynon's 'Working For Ford'. Penguin, 1973, p121).

Writing from a different political and analytical perspective Toynbee recalls her experiences as a participant observer in what was understood by many working class (8) people to be a 'good job for a woman'; work with a clean, light and domestically orientated product:

'I was horrified by the work, and became depressed within a few days - tired, and bored. In the evenings I had meant to take notes, but was too deadened by the day to do anything except watch television. That kind of work gets right into the system. You can't shake it off when you get home and settle down to something rewarding or creative. Sociologists who examine the so-called leisure problem might find the answer lies in work. What will people do with more leisure time? Look how they waste it now in bingo halls, the palais, the pub and down the bowling alley. Why don't they go home and read a good book? Throw a pot or two in the pottery at the local arts centre? Join the local operatic club? Have play readings and chess tournaments? Take evening classes, learn a language or two. Paint pictures of sunsets in the municipal park? Read poetry beside the fire, or even write it? Couldn't they expand their minds in the evenings, so that they wouldn't mind about the drudgery of their work? Can't they spend their money on anything other than drink and the dogs? Such William Morris thoughts about the worker who loves to weave and paint of an evening are a long way from how things really happen'. (Toynbee, 'A Working Life', Peacock, 1973, p40).

and

'The factory, built nearly 50 years ago, was out of date and insufficiently automated. [The production manager] ... told me that a far greater percentage of the price of cakes from that factory represented labour costs than was spent on labour in other factories owned by the firm, and that was nothing to do with the wages being higher. People were employed instead of machines' (Toynbee, 1973, p46).

Alienation is a difficult concept to work with, social science archives are littered with attempts to operationalise and define it (9). The alienating nature of such labour is, however, well documented in accounts concerned with the meaning of work to both individuals and societies. It is the alienating capacity of such work that both renders adult education necessary and mitigates against its success. Alienation in the work place is acknowledged as 'spilling over' into all other time including 'leisure'. The tragedy of work in an industrialised capitalist society was that it seemed inevitable and unavoidable in the 1960's:

'At fifteen, these boys are children. They've hardly passed the stage where like all small boys, they wanted to be engine drivers or free-fall parachutists. Suddenly in one short interview, their fantasy worlds are swept away. From being the small boy who could still be anything, do anything 'when I grow up', he finds that he has had all the opportunity he will ever have, and somehow, somewhere along the line, it slipped through

his fingers without his ever having known about it. The chances are, he never had an opportunity to do something different, but like most people, believes that he had, and that he muddled it. People don't take easily to the idea that they never had a chance (or that they did, and were cheated), that their lives were more or less pre-destined from the day they were born. It is too unbearable a thought to live with. In this one interview, these children are suddenly brought up short by some dim realisation that where before they had opportunity always ahead of them in the world of work, they now had opportunity always behind them in the world of school, but that somehow, they had never had it at all' (Toynbee, 1973, pp17-18).

But even as the fundamentally alienating nature of much manual labour was beginning to come under social analysis things began to change and to worsen. The inevitability of work giving way to the near certainty of unemployment:

'The officer was a man in his early 40's ... His view of a Youth Employment Officer's job was this: he could either try to soften the blow that hits children when they leave school and enter the real world, or he could try to toughen up the children and prepare them not to flinch. The town, he explained, was a tough place, and with unemployment still rising, these boys had to have realistic aims in life, or they might find themselves out of work altogether (Toynbee, 1973, p14).

It was logically obvious that a system which had the capacity to produce such alienation and ennui amongst



its highest paid, most trades unionised and therefore most powerful workforce and societies at large would not deal gently with those whose labours it no longer required. The brutality with which capitalist production relations were re-structured in Britain, however, still came as an almost physical shock to many people. Few had bargained for the callousness with which capitalism would discard parts of its labour force when the imperative of its logic dictated.

Both the accounts of alienation in the workplace and the effects of the operation of wider 'social forces' can be understood in terms of C.Wright Mills' account of the twentieth century state of being:

'Nowadays men often feel that their private lives are a series of traps. They sense that within their everyday worlds, they cannot overcome their troubles, and in this feeling, they are quite often correct: what ordinary men are directly aware of and what they try to do are bounded by the private orbits in which they live; their visions and their powers are limited to the close-up scenes of job, family, neighbourhood; in other milieux, they move vicariously and remain spectators. ... Underlying this sense of being trapped are seemingly impersonal changes in the very structure of continent-wide societies. The facts of contemporary history are also facts about the success and the failure of individual men and women. When a society is industrialised, a peasant becomes a worker; a feudal lord is liquidated or becomes a businessman. When classes rise or fall, a man is employed or

unemployed; when the rate of investment goes up or down, a man takes new heart or goes broke. When wars happen, an insurance salesman becomes a rocket launcher; a store clerk, a radar man; a wife lives alone; a child grows up without a father. Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both. Yet men do not usually define the troubles they endure in terms of historical change and institutional contradiction. The well-being they enjoy, they do not usually impute to the big ups and downs of the societies in which they live. Seldom aware of the intricate connexion between the patterns of their own lives and the course of world history, ordinary men do not usually know what this connexion means for the kinds of men they are becoming and for the kinds of history-making in which they might take part'. (C.Wright Mills, 'The Sociological Imagination'. Oxford University Press. 1959, pp9-10).

When capitalism re-structures the working class becomes, in large part, the unemployed.

In his foreword to the report of the review of the Manpower Services Commission 'Review of Services for the Unemployed' (published in 1981) its Chairman, Sir Richard O'Brien spoke of unemployment in terms of its costs:

'Most unemployment is due to a lack of demand in the economy, and the future prospect is for continuing high levels of unemployment. Estimating the full costs of unemployment to the economy and to the individual is inevitably subject to a considerable margin or error, but these calculations do indicate the scale of costs

involved. The gap between 2 million unemployed and a workable minimum implies annual output forgone valued at over 4.75% of GDP and an additional financial cost of almost £4 billion per year. If registered unemployment reached two and a half million then these real resource and financial costs would increase by more than a third. The individual unemployed person, who typically earns low wages when in work, loses a third of net disposable weekly income, depending on family circumstances. Unemployment is concentrated on certain individuals, with almost half the total flows on to the register accounted for by persons who have already experienced some unemployment during the previous 12 months. Apart from the financial costs of unemployment there are marked psychological costs which increase as the duration of unemployment lengthens'. (March 1981, para 2.36, p9).

The threat of unemployment in, and to, western industrialised societies was often referred to as being 'second only to the nuclear threat' (10). It was interpreted primarily as a problem of youth unemployment. The MSC mobilised its efforts and considerable financial resources around a series of 'schemes' (from the Youth Opportunities Scheme (YOPS) to the Youth Training Scheme (YTS)). In March 1986 Willis wrote:

'Wolverhampton ... is typical of the older industrial areas of this country. About 90% of last year's 16 year old school leavers who were looking for work could not find it. They have been offered a year on the Youth Training Scheme - varieties of work experience plus some off-the-job training. But they will be tipped back on to the dole again one year later. Many of them will not

find work again before their mid-twenties. Many many never work.

At the moment, 40% of all the registered unemployed in Britain are under 25, and getting on for a third of these have been unemployed for more than a year' (New Society, 29th March, 1984, pp475-477).

Summing up two years of research in Wolverhampton into the 'Social Condition of Young People' (11) Willis argued in his opening paragraph that:

'Long term unemployment brings a modern form of poverty. Though we may not have nineteenth century slums with beggars on street corners, and though unemployment has not yet taken food and shelter from its victims, we do have a vast urban swathe of young people who are excluded from the things the rest of us take for granted or which are the common objects of desire. The unemployed are in poverty compared with the rest of us' (1986, p1).

In the winter of 1987 Townsend, one of the authors of the distinction between relative and absolute levels of poverty spoke (in a lecture given at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne) of growing numbers of homeless young people begging on the streets of many of the major cities in Britain and of the return of absolute poverty. A major cause of their homelessness was unemployment (12).

The gravity of the youth unemployment problem throughout the 1980's detracted, understandably, from public recognition of the extent to which other groups in society (most particularly older adults) were being affected by unemployment. But to those unfortunate enough to become and remain (for any length of time) unemployed, the costs were considerable. They were frequently compared with, and seen to be similar to, the effects of unemployment on people in 1930's Britain. In 'I Was One Of The Unemployed' Cohen argued that only someone who has lived through the experience of long-term unemployment can know the:

'... multifarious sources of worry that can afflict an out-of-work. Unemployment brings into being many diverse sources of worry which become so intermingled and interlocked that their cumulative effect is well-nigh intolerable' (p158).

'What is astonishing is not that there are some unemployed men and women who are nervous wrecks and psychopathic cases (the medical statistics on this question would surprise many people), but that there are not many more. It is, however, not the least crime of the present social system that there are today, at this very moment, thousands upon thousands of people who are suffering what can literally be described as excruciating mental tortures. They suffer in this way not because they are congenitally more neurotic than the average, but solely and simply because anarchic social forces have uprooted them, and undermined their social, economic and therefore psychological stability' (1978, p159. 1st Ed 1945).

The literature of unemployment is large. It is my intention here to refer to it only where it adds something to our understanding of the relationship between adult education and unemployed people. The effects of unemployment, as the effects of work in industrialising nineteenth century Britain, both make adult education necessary and mitigate against its success. E.F.Schumacher puts the point neatly:

'Until quite recently, I heard it said everywhere that the real task of education was not education for work, but education for leisure. Maybe this extraordinary idea has now been abandoned. Fancy telling young and eager souls "Now what I really want you to envisage is how to kill time when you have nothing useful to do"' (In 'Good Work', Anchor Press, 1979, cited in Seabrook.J (1982)).

Lazarsfeld in his introduction to 'Marienthal: the Sociography of an Unemployed Community' shows that our understanding of the effects of unemployment on people has changed little in forty years:

'The term "breakdown of a social personality structure" is one way to tag the essential finding of Marienthal. In the German original, we used occasionally the expression "reduction of the psychological life space". In this country I have suggested "reduction of a man's effective scope"' (1972, pX).

accompanied by a situation in which:

'the unemployed men kept almost obsessive order in their own rooms while they neglected their backyard and lost practically all contact with the larger community and its concerns' (1972, pxi).

A state of affairs which (it could be argued) both made adult education the more necessary while precluding most chances of its being successful. The solution for Lazarsfeld was education out of the culture of dependency created by unemployment.

In the 1980's the solution was understood in the same terms by many in Britain. There were also those who argued against 'education for leisure' and 'education for unemployment' and advocated a radical restructuring of the ethical principle informing most attitudes to unemployment. There was still some hope, some optimism that the conditions of daily life for many people could be improved by the restructuring of industrial societies, the introduction of new technologies and consequent improvements in the nature and organisation of much work. It was a commonly asserted proposition, in the literature of both adult education (13) and sociology, that adult education had a role to play in alleviating some of the worst psychological consequences of unemployment for individuals and in rebuilding some of the social

relationships of a *gemeinschaft* nature believed to have been destroyed by capitalism's heavily industrialised productive phase.

It has been suggested so far that the nature and conditions of work for many people during capitalism's heavy industrial mode of production have long been inimical to full participation in adult education. This despite the fact that some conditions, paradoxically, increased the necessity for adult education intervention. It has been further suggested that large scale, structural unemployment offered both social constraint and opportunity in a society as rich and technologically advanced as Britain in the 1980's. In particular it has been suggested that adult education could intervene positively at the level of peoples' experience of unemployment. For many people, in 1983, it seemed that if the distribution of financial and status rewards could be handled in an equitable manner then unemployment could be, at least a partial, release from the kind of toil described in the accounts by Sweezy, Beynon and Toynbee cited earlier in this chapter. This would have involved a radical change in a major prevailing social ethic, conceptualised by Weber as the protestant work ethic. To be in paid employment in a society dominated by a





work ethic is to be a fully participating member of that society. Increasingly the work ethic and its dominance came under scrutiny and were found wanting by many. At the beginning of the 1980's in 'A Life To Live' I.Clemitson and G.Rodgers focused on the persistence of the moral dominance of the protestant work ethic in modern industrialised societies, arguing that it must, sooner or later, be replaced by 'a broader, deeper ethic concerned with the fullness and wholeness of life'. The persistence of this ethic is well documented. Allatt notes that:

'Despite the continued rise in unemployment through the 1970's and 1980's there is little evidence of decline in the significance most people attach to paid work and the stigma attached to unemployment' (Allatt.P, 1986, p13).

This does not, however:

'suggest that large sections of the population hold a precise understanding of the behaviour patterns and values which Weber propounded as components of the ethic-asceticism, hard work, the morality of work itself, frugality, not being idle, the notion that time is money ... As Brock (1985), discussing Furnham's work on attitudes towards the unemployed, observes: 'It is enough to know that the "feel" (rather than a precise understanding) of the ethic is still strong in peoples' minds' (Allatt.P, 1986, p13).

There seemed an obvious role in this process of exchanging full employment (and the work ethic) for limited employment (and a 'full-life') ethic for adult education, 'life-long' education and education permanente. An ethic, concerned with 'the full development of human beings and human potential' in which work must become only one of a number of ways in which a person may develop his/her abilities. Clear structural alternatives to unemployment needed to be developed in the form of reduced working hours, early retirement etc. But 'the last and most promising alternative' was education to allow for the development of a 'full-life' rather than 'full-employment' ethic. 'A Life To Live' concluded with a plea for a comprehensive system of educational maintenance payments to enable young people to take advantage of what was, in some ways, clearly an opportunity to escape from a life of mindless toil. The book was endorsed and had a foreword by Neil Kinnock, leader of the Parliamentary Opposition. Its message had as little impact on the fate of the unemployed in the 1980's as Labour Party policy generally within the context of the political and ideological rise of what has been called 'the New Right'.

As the realities of unemployment in the 1980's began to take form the 'life-long' and 'education permanente' models (See for example 'Continuing Education For the Post-Industrial Society', Ed Costello.W and Richardson.M, 1982). began to recede from debates about adult education and the unemployed in favour of those more traditionally understood as adult education for 'the deprived' or 'Russell-type' provision.

'Adult Education: A Plan For Development is the report of a Committee of Inquiry appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science under the Chairmanship of Sir Lionel Russell C.B.E'. Published in 1973 it was the first major review of adult education policy and provision in England since the 1919 Report. The Alexander (1975) (for Scotland) and the Murphy (1973) (for the Irish Republic) produced their own reports to similar briefs. The 1919 Report is acknowledged as being 'probably the most important single contribution ever made to the literature of adult education'. The Alexander Report has been influential in Scotland but used as supportive evidence for Russell in England. The Murphy Report has remained virtually unacknowledged on mainland Britain.

Both Alexander and Russell drew similar conclusions as to desirable adult education practices and purposes. Aimed primarily at the creation of

'A Comprehensive Service of Adult Education [in which] we are not concerned with the mere garnishing of leisure hours but with the full personal development of men and women in environments that are often inimical to creativity and independence of mind [in a local adult education service understood as] a requisite of community life, [a] service rooted firmly in local communities, responsive to local variations of need and opportunity, and with the active involvement of the local community in planning and management ... It must be a public service drawing upon public funds' (pp20-21, paras 59, 63 and 64).

This has given rise to the term 'Russell-type' adult education. A term which has often generated more emotion than adult education; more rhetoric than actual adult education practice.

The term 'Russell-type' adult education is usually understood as referring to educational activities other than those identified as 'life-long', 'continuing', 'permanent' or 'leisure'. It is not a water tight definition of any particular adult education theory or practice. Almost anyone can claim to be doing Russell-type adult education: it is a term frequently invoked by those who feel themselves to be in opposition to the prevailing dominant views of

adult education while remaining aloof from more radical initiatives.

The Russell Report stressed the need for an integrated, comprehensive educational service covering both school and adult life. Although financial support for its aims has not been forthcoming from central government the report has influenced adult education since its publication. It is within a comprehensive structure of Russell-type adult education provision in local communities that we expect to find scope for researching the relationships between adult education and unemployed people.

In this chapter the relationship between adult education, work and unemployment in 1980's Britain was placed in the context of a debate about a 'life' as opposed to 'work' ethic current in the early 1980's. The ways in which capitalism's heavy industrial mode of production has both provided fertile ground for, and mitigated against the growth of adult education, as traditionally understood, have been documented. Attention has been drawn to the term 'Russell-type' adult education. It may be one of the last unexplored 'sacred cows' of the British state funded education system.

Notes and References

1. Whilst in the 'last analysis' a mode of production must include relations of production as well as its means there is no necessary and immediately reflective, mirror-like relationship between a new (and in the case of 1980's Britain micro-technological) means of production and the social relationships necessary to allow the fullest (most profitable) use of that technology. It is equally of little use to suggest that somehow the relationships of production lag behind the introduction of new technological means. They do not. The means and relationships of production are not best envisaged in terms of base and superstructure metaphors. Rather should they be seen as instances in the long, inter-related process of social structuration.
  
2. See R.Taylor for a concise account of the form and content of these unequal relationships in the context of a debate about the relationship between adult education and the unemployed in 'Problems of Inequality: The Nature of Adult Education in Britain' in 'Adult Education and the

- Working Class: Education For the Missing Millions', (Eds) K.Ward and R.Taylor. Publ. Croom Helm (1986).
3. 'Culture and Society' (1958) and 'The Long Revolution' (1961).
  4. 'The Making of the English Working Class' (1963).
  5. 'The Uses of Literacy' (1957) and 'A Sort of Clowning' (1990).
  6. See for example Engels.F 'The Condition of the Working Class in England' (1892), 'Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution' by John Foster (1974), 'Victorian Cities' by Asa Briggs (1963) and with respect to the industrialisation of agriculture Newby.H 'Country Life: A Social History of Rural England' (1987).
  7. This now looks to have been a sadly prophetic, rather than a polemical statement, by the then Conservative Prime Minister Harold Macmillan.
  8. This is a personal observation based on my own experiences of trying (unsuccessfully) to get

such employment in the West Midlands in the 1960's and early 1970's. Such jobs were scarce. Working conditions were good: warm and dry, the pay was high and above all the product was clean and dry. A woman employed in such work would not leave the factory smelling of suds oil, a common hazard for those working class women not 'respectable enough' to work in the cake factories and employed instead in numerous motor car factories. Incidentally, being 'respectable enough' usually meant 'having somebody to speak for you', ie. someone who already worked there. This job of Toynbee's was then, a good one and one of the best that many working class women could hope for.

9. See for example: Lukes S. (1956), Meszaros I. (1970) and Ollman B. (1971).
10. Professor Frank Coffield of the University of Durham Dept of Education speaking in a local radio debate about unemployment and schooling.
11. See 'Youth Unemployment and the New Poverty: A Summary of a Local Authority Review and Framework for Policy Development on Youth and Youth



Unemployment' by P. Willis. Publ. Wolverhampton Information Centre in March, 1984. See also the main study 'The Wolverhampton Youth Review: The Social Conditions of Young People (16-24) in Wolverhampton in 1984. Publ. Wolverhampton Information Centre, March 1984.

12. Few landlords will rent property to people who are without paid employment: few people will employ people in paid work who are of no fixed abode.
  
13. See for example Ward K. & Taylor R. (1986), Ward K. (1983), ACACE (1982), TUC (1981), Kirkwood C. & Griffin S. (1984), Charnley A. et al (1982), and McDonald J (1984).

CHAPTER FOUR: ADULT EDUCATION, SOCIOLOGY AND  
UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE WEAR VALLEY

'Research without an actively selective point of view becomes the ditty bag of an idiot, filled with bits of pebbles, straws, feathers, and other random hoardings'.

R.S.Lynd 'Knowledge For What?'  
 Princetown University Press, 1970.  
 (Copyright 1939). (p183).

'The government is very keen on amassing statistics. They will collect them, add them, raise them to the nth power, take the cube root, and prepare wonderful diagrams. But you must never forget that every one of these figures comes in the first instance from the village watchman, who just puts down what he pleases'.

Sir Joseph Stamp,  
 Inland Revenue Department,  
 England. (1896-1919).

I began this research with a gut reaction: a feeling that unemployment was morally wrong. I felt also that 'something had to be done about it'. A reading of the literature of adult education convinced me that something could be done about it. I set out armed with a large amount of moral fervour and a small list of questions to audit and evaluate adult education provision in one area of the North East of England.

Intending to carry out primarily classroom based research (1) I chose the Wear Valley district of County Durham because it was presented in the literature of sociology as being 'a microcosm of the North East' of England. An area of declining social and economic activity with high levels of unemployment the Wear Valley contained both urban and rural communities. I wanted to compare provision for unemployed adults in a number of geographical and social locations and the Wear Valley was made up of some very small and geographically relatively isolated villages as well as the market towns of Crook and Bishop Auckland and some ex-mining villages such as Willington and Tow Law. I felt that there would be many different types of adult education in the Wear Valley: meeting the different needs of unemployed people living in its communities.

The Wear Valley district covers a large area. Some of its communities are a long way from its major population centres which (excepting Bishop Auckland) are strung out along the A690 from Willington to Cowhill. There was, however, a comprehensive bus service and I experienced few difficulties getting to most places in the valley during the day time. At night it was more difficult: there were few buses. The

bus service had grown around the needs of people in the Wear Valley to travel to and from work. The decline in the number of buses running in the Wear Valley represented the shrinking number of people employed in the valley. One bus driver told me:

'There used to be 94 buses leave here, 94 buses, leave Crook every morning to ferry people backwards and forwards to work and now there's just one, this one and it'll be going soon'.

I have cited Hewison in a previous chapter as saying that 'whatever the true picture Britain is gripped by the feeling that it is in decline'. This seemed to be the case in the Wear Valley. Because the relative decline of the Wear Valley and its workforce had been so severe it was commonly assumed that the decline would go on to be absolute: there would soon be 'no schools, no buses, no shops, nothing'. It is difficult to get any sense of what was really happening in the Wear Valley in terms of economic and social activity from small scale qualitative research and it is my intention here only to explore people's perceptions of the economic and social activities in the Wear Valley as they affected adult education.

A reading of some of the more quantitative studies that have been carried out in the Wear Valley shows

that one of the reasons for the decline in the number of people using buses may well have been the rise in car ownership particularly in the relatively picturesque communities of its rural hinterland into which a great many relatively affluent and middle class incomers had moved (2). The mood though was of decline not of growth or even of stasis: decline of a 'whole way of life'.

Taking that image at face value and assuming that adult education had a role to play in alleviating some of the worst consequences of that decline for some people, I focused less on the area, the Wear Valley or the communities within it, and began to look for patterns of adult education provision and participation by unemployed people. I wanted to know which unemployed people took part in what adult education activities, where, when, at what cost, for what purpose, provided by whom and to what outcome. I thought that I would be able to answer those questions and provide an ethnographically informed account or 'picture' of adult education provision for unemployed people by using a combination of quantitative and qualitative research techniques in support of what would be, essentially, a classroom study. I hoped also to arrive at the 'truth' of adult education provision

by some kind of triangulation of quantitative and qualitative methods. Any thoughts I had, at this stage, about the difficulties involved in such research centred on the problem I felt sure I would have: that of narrowing down the focus of the study; of having too much data, of having to make choices between different forms and types of provision: different adult education 'classrooms' in different settings (3).

Fifteen months later I was forced to abandon the project as I had originally conceived it. I had not found, after extensive searching, enough adult education provision of a non-vocational nature for unemployed adults in the Wear Valley to sustain the research in that form. Moreover, the ethical problems I had encountered while finding this out had made me very reluctant to carry out further research into, what was essentially in this context, the daily life of unemployed people. Hammersley and Atkinson note that there is a fairly common occurrence in the early days of the research process when 'the original problems are transformed or even completely abandoned in favour of others' (1983, p33). They note that one of the factors affecting the final decision to re-work or abandon a research project is its setting:

'... in ethnographic research the development of the research problem is rarely completed before fieldwork begins; indeed, the collection of primary data often plays a key role in that process of development. As a result, though, it is often found that some of the questions into which the foreshadowed problems have become decomposed or transformed are not open to investigation in the setting selected. The researcher is then faced with the choice of either dropping these questions from the investigation or re-starting the investigation in a setting where they can be investigated' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, p40, original emphasis).

I decided to stay in the setting: the Wear Valley of County Durham. As I had found very little adult education provision for unemployed people in the district I extended the focus of the study to include vocational adult education provision provided by agencies independent of the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) (4). The only significant providers of this type of adult education provision in the Wear Valley at this time were connected with the Anglican Church. I spent some fifteen months working as a volunteer with the 'Caravanserai' project in Bishop Auckland, during which time it became obvious that I was observing and participating in the running and maintenance of an initiative which was not being used for primarily educational purposes by the unemployed in the Wear Valley in ways that had been anticipated.

The project was subsequently acknowledged to have failed due to 'the apathy of the unemployed in the Wear Valley' (5). A sister project of the Caravanserai initiative in Leeds had been successful, strengthening the popular opinion (among adult education practitioners) that unemployed people in the Wear Valley of County Durham were different, in ways which were not made explicit, from unemployed people in other areas (6).

In looking for adult education provision for unemployed people in the Wear Valley I made no distinction between statutory and voluntary activities. I also made a list of most of the leisure associations and hobby clubs in the area. I became a member of three of these:

- 1) A drama group in Crook,
- 2) A photographic project (run by volunteers) aiming to act as a catalyst of, and focus for, memories and recollections, among elderly people, of life in the valley and
- 3) A field studies society in Weardale.

In joining these groups I aimed to meet people in the Wear Valley (where I had been living for two years)



and to penetrate its communities. I hoped to learn something about the conditions of life, work and recreation of those who lived there and of the role and purpose of adult education in them. I was especially keen to meet people who were members of voluntary groups: people who could be regarded as 'joiners' (7). I assumed that they would be more likely to be taking part in, or to have taken part in, both formal and informal adult education activities. I assumed that these groups would have some unemployed people among their members.

It is not easy to make contact with unemployed people. The stigma still attaching to unemployment, the shortage of money for transport and the psychological effects of unemployment upon people have led to a privatism which is well documented (8). I did not try to meet unemployed people through Benefit Agencies, Job Centres or MSC schemes. I wanted to meet unemployed people in (preferably non-vocational) adult education settings who were not there under compulsion (as for example Restart students in local technical colleges (9)). Experience gained from working on the vocational adult education project Caravanserai had shown me that while most unemployed people were very willing to talk to me about their experiences they

frequently came to the project just after they had become unemployed. They were often in a state of shock: experiencing both disbelief and grief at the loss of their paid employment. When they discovered that Caravanserai could not offer or find them another job they did not return. People who had been unemployed for longer periods of time seemed to have disappeared from public view: were swallowed up by what Coffield et al have called 'caring North-East communities': (10) their fate largely unknown and unrecorded. There are clear ethical difficulties involved in working with people who are in a state of grief and, or, shock. They often poured out their hearts to me telling me much more than they might have done in better circumstances for them. I felt that the best I could do, in the Caravanserai setting, was to give as much informal, social education, in the form of 'Claims to Benefit' advice as I could, (a subsidiary aim of the Caravanserai project), as well as the 'setting up your own business' advice (which was the main aim of the project) and to listen to their stories. To ask them about their liberal adult education activities in anything but the most general of terms seemed perverse. I nevertheless gathered that there were not many such activities in the Wear Valley.

I have not used any information gained from working with the unemployed at Caravanserai in this study. There were many ethical dilemmas and some role-confusion: during the course of my work at Caravanserai, for example, I was often approached (as a voluntary worker) by other researchers and agencies interested in unemployment. On one occasion I was interviewed by a researcher (sponsored by the public library service) looking at library provision for unemployed people in the Wear Valley. The Caravanserai volunteers were critical of public library provision for the education and training of unemployed people in the Wear Valley. As a Caravanserai volunteer I was equally critical. They also knew most of the library staff personally as friends, neighbours and relatives. They were therefore reluctant to criticise what they felt to be a desperately under-resourced and financed county library service in case their criticism got back to local staff and was interpreted as personal criticism. Although they had not specifically asked me not to criticise the service, I felt that in detailing the difficulties I experienced in getting relevant and up-to-date books for those keen to set up their own businesses for example, from the public library I was somehow betraying a trust. Letting the volunteer team

down. I also felt like an imposter: I was, after all, not a real volunteer, merely a participant observer posing as a volunteer.

The most difficult ethical dilemmas were generated in situations in which people who saw themselves as 'still unemployed' were also adult educators. On one occasion I had almost completed an interview with a Marriage Guidance Outreach Worker employed to carry out adult education work, in informal settings, with people whose marriages and other close relationships were damaged and endangered by their unemployment. When talking about the experimental nature of his work and the temporary contract under which he was employed, this man began to cry as he spoke of his own unemployment and its effects upon his marriage. Turning off the tape I offered to give him the tape recording I had made or to destroy it. He refused saying that he was 'a living embodiment of the unemployed'. They were not a group set apart from society:

'If you can just get that across in your report it will help'.

By taking part in the activities of voluntary groups and clubs I was able to meet people on terms other

than their unemployment: when unemployment was discussed by the groups, the individuals within them or myself, it was in the context of the life history of that group or its members or their current activities. For example, the drama club made a decision to raise the membership fees for its unemployed members while leaving fees for old aged pensioners at a reduced rate.

In this way I gained a more complex and context bound view of the meaning of unemployment to some people in the Wear Valley. I built relationships with many of those I interviewed which were to last much longer than is usual in Phd orientated sociological research (11). This involvement generated further ethical dilemmas: I was interested in the adult educational activities of unemployed people of a formal and informal nature. Clearly a great deal of informal adult learning and education is required if people are to survive the financial difficulties which usually accompany unemployment. Some of this learning had breaking the law without incurring its punitive consequences as one of its ancillary aims.

The distinction (made with force, in the literature of unemployment in the 1980's) between young people and

adults is somewhat arbitrary. Based on age alone, usually taken to be (as we have seen in the context of the Willis study quoted in the last chapter) the 16-24 groups, it masks the extent to which the 'young' unemployed are also the 'adult' unemployed and the extent to which they share the common problems associated with unemployment: poverty, loss of status and above all a sense of loss of meaning attached to their daily routines, perhaps, even, to their lives. It masks also the extent to which common 'solutions' to these problems exist: In 'Out of the Trap' (New Society, 10th Jan, 1986, pp49-51), S.Evans argues that not all young people sink into inactivity upon becoming unemployed. Many manage to motivate themselves and to put meaning into their daily activities by constructing:

'... personally meaningful alternatives to formal employment. The sad part is that these alternatives are not necessarily socially acceptable, and may put them on the wrong side of the law' (p51)

I have not recorded any details of these activities in my field notes. My main worry was not whether or not I should 'inform' on these 'law-breakers' but whether, in detailing their activities, I might inadvertently draw unwelcome attention to them by the many agencies who, once a person becomes unemployed are licenced to

become involved in most aspects of his/her life (12).  
I have decided not to take that risk.

To sum up so far: in changing and widening the focus of adult education to include vocational adult education provision for the unemployed in the Wear Valley I had not anticipated the ethical constraints of such a project. My informal, leisure based activities were leading me to suspect that there was very little adult education provision of a vocational or non-vocational nature for unemployed adults (as opposed to MSC 'schemes' aimed at young people) in the Wear Valley. Where I had come into contact with unemployed people I had become aware of the ways in which such a study could damage their interests.

Changing the focus of the study I decided to audit adult education provision in the Wear Valley: how much liberal, non-vocational adult education was there in the Wear Valley, provided by what agencies, for which people, in what kind of settings, at what cost and to what effect? I had already begun a series of interviews (13) with adult education providers in the area. They typically began by interviewees discussing adult education provision for the unemployed in their area very briefly. This was followed by a fuller

discussion of their general adult education provision, its aims and objectives. I began to use this information, together with the leisure association and hobby club materials, to form the central axis of the study instead of the 'background' I had originally intended. While doing so I began to think about the failure of the project to develop as planned. What had been its domain assumptions? Where had they come from?

The assumption that there would be both vocational and non-vocational adult education provision for unemployed people in the Wear Valley had been too easily made. It had been taken directly from the literatures of adult education and sociology. My empirical investigations had shown research based upon the assumption of plentiful provision to be unsustainable: there was virtually no adult education provision for unemployed adults in the Wear Valley. The ethical problems of conducting more informal research were intractable. I re-structured the research around the following two aims:

- 1) To get detailed information about adult education provision of a generalist kind across the Wear Valley and



- 2) To understand the origins, and reasons for the persistence of, the myth of plentiful liberal adult education provision nationally for everyone and especially the unemployed.

In beginning an audit of adult education provision for unemployed adults in the Wear Valley I was asking essentially quantitative questions: who does what adult education, where, when, at what cost and to what effect in the Wear Valley of County Durham? I expected to gain answers based on statistical records of site (geographical location) and size of class, number of fee and non-fee paying students, age, class, gender and ethnic background, length of class, and its curriculum. I assumed also that some means of evaluating its curriculum in terms of educational outcomes for the student would be in existence and documented. When I made these assumptions I had little awareness of the general methodological problems involved in such an approach to social research. Neither had I considered the specific methodological problems of research into, or about, adult education generated by the 'just puts down what he pleases' nature of much of its quantitative information.

In seeking to establish the nature of adult education provision and the extent to which people in the Wear Valley of County Durham took part in it I began to experience problems reconciling the type of information that is typically available about adult education with the kinds of questions sociologists typically ask. An attempt I made in a university extramural class to generate my own data by pilot questionnaire had shown me the scale of the work involved should I pursue survey methods.

I thought seriously about the possibility of giving people in the Wear Valley a computer coded questionnaire in order to get information about their adult education activities in recent months and perhaps years. At one stage in the research process I thought (supported by my supervisor) that it might be possible to use first year undergraduate students to administer such a questionnaire. The information which I was getting from my involvement in the hobby clubs, voluntary associations and other groups in the Wear Valley such as the Trades Union Council, however, indicated that there had been little adult education provision in the Wear Valley in recent years, that there was little 'lived history' of it and that, therefore, there would be little point in trying to

retrieve it by using such a labour intensive method (14).

While trying to understand the origins, and reasons for the persistence of, the myth of plentiful liberal adult education provision I found myself continually looking for ways into the body of accumulated research knowledge which I was sure 'must be there somewhere' if only I looked in the right place. Lack of research into, and about, adult education means that little has been published about it within sociological literature. Adult education practitioner research tends to be focused on the adult educator's 'specialist subject' (which is rarely adult education). The little research into adult education which has been carried out tends to be small-scale, practice orientated and to remain unpublished. It tends to be circulated amongst practitioners only and is, therefore, difficult to locate and obtain copies of. The numerous bibliographies of adult education while locating its major texts, often fail to list the more ephemeral of these publications. Research into adult education, therefore, demands wide reading for little reward. In the literature search I found no more than the most cursory (and usually historiographical) references to adult education in

the Wear Valley. Where adult educators had conducted research it had been based on their specialist subjects (in keeping with what we know of their research activities from reading the literature of adult education) and not on adult education in the Wear Valley.

Most of the data which I generated and collected took the form of tape-recorded interviews with adult education practitioners in the Wear Valley and with people involved in leisure, hobby and informal group activities. I also kept detailed field notes in which I recorded my observations of these and other activities. When lectures or talks were given (as to the Field Study Group) I took detailed notes and used them as data. I used documentary sources of information where available. The problem of data generation, storage and retrieval was large and threatened at times to become unmanageable.

In seeking to understand the origins and persistence of the myth of large-scale adult education provision for unemployed people I was essentially asking different kinds of questions about the meaning of adult education. I was seeking to understand the ways in which adult education added to or detracted from

the quality of life of the people who lived and worked in the Wear Valley. These questions demanded research techniques capable of realising the 'feel' of adult education in the Wear Valley. It is when we come to pursue such studies that we understand that research methodologies are not just matters of applied technique. In seeking to apply 'qualitative methodological techniques' to my study of adult education I realised also that I had also to construct a theoretical and methodological framework within which to allow the process of research to take place.

The search for a theoretical framework was time consuming. Because there had been so little sociological research into adult education I could not locate my work in any readily identifiable body of theory, practice or knowledge. I have still not been able to. I could not find an interpretive framework within which my observations of adult education in the Wear Valley were meaningful other than in terms of the meaning which those involved in adult education activities in the Wear Valley attached to those activities. It was a long time before I was able to abandon my search for 'the real adult education' and accept that this was probably the only meaning I needed to be concerned with. The meaning of adult

education activities to those who are engaged in them is not, of course, the only meaning which they have or can be given. I have already outlined the meanings which adult education in more general terms has been given in the literatures of its own practice, the media and of sociology. I have indicated that while these meanings are interesting as aspects of the way in which adult education is given meaning in modern British society they do not contain, for less exhaust, the range of meanings it might be given. One of the most usual ways in which adult education has been given meaning has been through historiography and therefore as history. In beginning my search for the meaning of adult education in the Wear Valley in the 1980's I looked for the meanings which had been attached to it since 1850 hoping by finding out 'what it was like then' to be able if not to show what it is like now then at least to be able to give some explanations of the ways in which adult education in the Wear Valley had become like it is now.

Notes and References

1. See for example S.Ball (1981), P.Willis (1980), and D.Hargreaves (1967).
2. See Wear Valley Study Group Report 'The Wear Valley: Decline or Development'. (1985).
3. This positivist and scientific base was soon eroded by the volume and scale not of 'raw data' about the Wear Valley and adult education in it but by the range of different interpretations of the Wear Valley I encountered and the depth of emotion with which they were often conveyed. Where adult education came into focus at all it was often as an attempt to change the perceptions of the Wear Valley held by those who lived in it. See for example the RCC's 'rural adult learning' initiative in chapter eleven.
4. A fellow student in the Department of Sociology and Social Administration at the University of Durham was researching (MSC) provision in the Wear Valley in 1983.

5. For an analysis of the ways in which the term 'apathy' has been used by those, usually middle-class, people whose aspirations on the part of 'the working class' have not met with the expected results see Tomlinson A. (1983).
  
6. The reason for this state of affairs was usually assumed to be the nature of North-East Labourism and, in particular, of its Wear Valley variant which was understood as having created a municipal economy and in doing so a dependent, uncritical and extremely politically conservative populace. The absence of an indigenous middle class in the Wear Valley was also seen to have led to a state of affairs in which there were few 'indigenous leaders' especially within 'the business community' upon whom the task of economic re-generation was seen to fall. There was no enterprise agency in the Wear Valley and few opportunities for local people to take part in Business or Commerical education when I carried out the fieldwork which informs this thesis.
  
7. For a brief review of the literature on 'joiners' see Bishop J. and Hoggett P. (1986).



8. In Marienthal, as I have pointed out in the previous chapter, Lazarsfeld argues that our perceptions of what it means to be unemployed have changed little in forty years. They include the 'observation that the unemployed men ... lost practically all contact with the larger community and its concerns'. In 1982 Seabrook found little change: writing of unemployed people who:

'say how they are ashamed to go out because some of their neighbours who are working think the husband hasn't tried hard enough to get a job. He no longer even goes to the pub to enjoy a pint as he used to, but stays at home all day watching television, even the women's (sic) and children's programmes' (p12).

9. See Burgess.P in 'New Society', 12th December, 1986, p19.
10. See 'Growing up at the Margins', Coffield.F et al 1986, for an account of these 'caring' communities in which: 'Reg went to collect her one evening and found that Carol Ann's face and arms were bruised. Her father had locked her in her room ...' (p28).

11. I was a member of these groups for three years during 1983-1986: the period of the fieldwork which informs this thesis.
  
12. During the period of this research 'harassment' of unemployed people by state agencies such as the DHSS and the DES (through its Restart programme for example) increased. (See Burgess, New Society, 12th Dec, 1986, p19).
  
13. All of the interviews I conducted were very loosely structured. It was my intention to capture as much of the meaning of adult education for those who provided and participated in it as possible. I felt that a structured, or heavily semi-structured interview, would inhibit the conversational flow and prevent this from happening. I therefore allowed people to talk about adult education, to expand their views and to bring into the conversation whatever aspects of life and work in the Wear Valley they felt were necessary to give an adequate account of the meaning of adult education to them. At all times, and in all cases, I stressed that this doctoral research would be seen by people, supervisors, and examiners, for example, other than me. I told

them also that it would probably be stored in a library and even published.

14. The absence of quantitative data for example of a kind immediately useful to sociologists may reflect not a lack of quantitative data within adult education practice but a lack of quantitative data in the form in which sociologists require it. However, Mee and Wiltshire drew attention to 'the difficulties of quantification in this area; there are no firm bases for sampling since there are no reliable data on numbers of institutions, students or courses' (1978, p4).

CHAPTER FIVE: HISTORY, SOCIOLOGY AND ADULT EDUCATION  
IN THE WEAR VALLEY OF COUNTY DURHAM

'The sociologist who begins a history of social theories is at once very tempted to stop. To write such a history, he has first to decide what social theories are. If he suggests a sociological answer, he both presupposes the validity of what he is trying to explain and undermines his claim to have taken a decision at all. If he suggests another, he seems oddly to exempt himself and his subjects from the determinations he claims to detect in others. He is caught between circularity, self-cancellation and bad faith. This is a history written in bad faith. It accepts that sociologists have asked important questions. It doubts that they have so far provided very good answers. And this distance between question and answer is nowhere greater than on the issue of what social theories themselves are. None of the existing answers to this question will do, although why they will not makes it clear what might'.

Hawthorn.G 'Enlightenment & Despair'  
Publ. Cambridge University Press (2nd Ed)  
Cambridge (1987) (p1)

'One has to look at history not as a finished process, as pattern inexorably determined, but as a process of change, and with all its options open. The fact that we think we know, from our reading of the past, what actually happened, and that the course of events was apparently decided by this or that particular combination of issues, is not enough just as it is not enough to accept that what was happening to men was happening in exactly the same way to women. We have to know also what was going on under the surface; what might have succeeded but didn't; by what combination of forces it was defeated; to what degree it failed and what

it left behind as seeds for the future. For it is possible to build forward even from defeat. Indeed it is important to recognise that every defeat defines the possible ground for a new thrust forward'.

'A Radical Reader: The Struggle For Change. England 1381-1914'. (Ed C.Hampton). Penguin. (1984).

The sociologist who begins a sociological study of adult education is tempted to stop and do a history instead. This temptation and the tendencies to 'resurrectionism' which accompany it must be resisted. So too the tendency to produce a synchronic and historical sociological snapshot. By 'resurrectionism' I mean, following Abrams:

'... the project of recovering the past as it 'really was' by way of observation - Selbourne calls it 'resurrectionism' - ...[which]... is, especially as it is thought to be a matter of technique, essentially misconceived, not properly part of any serious argument for historical sociology. Excavation is a necessary first step, but sifting the ore from the dross and processing the ore for use are what distinguish mining from grubbing around' (1982, p318).

I did not set out to uncover any part of the history of adult education in the Wear Valley. Fearful of constructing no more than a 'resurrectionist' fantasy and assuming a great deal of history to have been written about the Wear Valley (including its adult

education activities) I set out to use that historiography to inform a sociological study of adult education in the Wear Valley. By finding out how adult education was (in an unspecified then) I hoped to cast light on how it was in the 1980's. Finding no written histories of adult education (1) in the Wear Valley I began to look for sources for one: class registers, minute books, posters, fee receipts and prospectuses, for example. I found very few. In fact I found one. In the Methodist Museum at High House in Wearhead (where John Wesley is reputed to have preached to thousands of people under a thorn bush) I found an elderly woman volunteer, sitting, dressed in a poke bonnet, lace apron and black skirt (of indeterminate style and period) taking the role of a living exhibit in a fireside scene from Methodist life at the turn of the century. There were several books (of Methodist history) strategically placed to form part of the 'scene' from the history or 'heritage' of Methodism in Weardale. Thinking that they might contain information about adult education activities put on by Methodists in the Wear Valley I asked if I could read them. They yielded nothing. The woman in the bonnet asked me if I had found what I was looking for. I said no. Taking off her bonnet and lace apron: 'You can't do anything in these' she opened a cupboard in a sideboard (one of

the artefacts of the scene). It was full of books and papers. 'See what you can find in here' she said, 'this is where we keep our history' (2). I found a prospectus for Bishop Auckland Technical College (1957). While listing some liberal non-vocational courses as well as technical and vocational ones it was not intrinsically interesting in the context of this research. The circumstances in which I came to find it, however, illustrate a few moments in the relationship between history, heritage and the sociology of adult education in the Wear Valley. This woman also furthered my growing awareness that there was little 'lived history' of adult education in the Wear Valley. She could not remember any adult education classes in Weardale

'except once, in the war, I remember, we had a make do and mend and I made a pair of driving gloves out of a chamois leather. They lasted for years'.

I am not sure, if I had found many such adult education artefacts, how useful they would have been: the very circumstances of their survival setting parameters to their use. The difficulties associated with using adult education prospectuses as indicators of the level and nature of actual adult education

activities is well known. Mee and Wiltshire (3) argue, for example, that:

'Programmes have certain obvious shortcomings as evidence of provision: brief titles of courses yield very little information about them; not all courses that are announced in a programme take place, and not all courses that take place are announced in the programme'. (1978, p28).

Often referred to as 'ephemera' adult education programmes and prospectuses, where they survive and become adult education 'memorabilia', present essentially the same shortcomings when used as evidence for constructing histories of adult education. There is the obvious temptation to assume that if they have survived they have done so because an activity has been particularly popular, successful or notable in some other way. I found no adult education 'memorabilia' and very little 'ephemera' in the form of prospectuses and programmes. In fact there were so few posters or leaflets advertising adult education classes in the Wear Valley that when I found one (in the window of Stanhope Community Centre) advertising 'Dressmaking' I joined the class thereby gaining access to 'the field' and beginning the participant observation research activities which inform much of this thesis. The outline programme or prospectus is not then a record, and is a poor



indicator of, actual adult education activities. Adult education prospectuses must not be taken as being a record of adult education provision in the Wear Valley in the years in which this research was carried out. Neither are they representative of adult education activities in the Wear Valley. I suspect that they may not even be indicative of them. When such programmes become 'memorabilia' the problems of using them as evidence of what happened in the adult education past are greater than the considerable problems of using them to indicate patterns and levels of provision in the present.

Finding few of the resources necessary to make a historically informed study of adult education in the locality of the Wear Valley I attempted to locate the history of adult education in the Wear Valley in the national context. The recent history of adult education in the Wear Valley has, to a large extent, been part of the history of state provided adult education nationally since the turn of the century. It is not usually presented as such. Most histories of adult education take a longer view. The first systematic survey of adult education was published in 1851 and, as J.F.C.Harrison has said, this date is

usually taken to mark the birth of modern adult education:

'Undoubtedly the idea of adult learning can be traced very far back in history; and whether the starting point is taken as the Ancient Greeks or the Medieval Christian Church or Sir Thomas More's Utopia is mainly a matter of personal choice ... In the 1790s the movement in its recognizable modern form appeared as one of the functions of the new industrial society. There had been lectures for adults, schools for adult literacy, and mutual improvement societies throughout the eighteenth century and earlier. But when J.W.Hudson published the first History of Adult Education in 1851 he began his story at the end of the eighteenth century. The promotion by the Corresponding Societies and the Societies for Constitutional Information of groups to study the works of Thomas Paine in 1792, and the establishment of the first specifically Adult School at Nottingham in 1798, heralded a new development. The two institutions symbolized the ambivalent role of adult learning as alternatively a movement of protest and a means to promote social acceptance and harmony' (1961, pxii-xiii, original emphasis).

The end of the period post 1850 until 1917 is marked by the appearance of the 1919 Report which contained the first systematic proposals for a state-funded adult education system. The 1944 Act which, while not referring to Adult Education by name, (locating it within the category Further Education as the sub-category Other Further Education) marks the beginning of the modern system and, it seems to me, the Baker Education Reform Act of 1988; its end. These are the

historical parameters by which we should locate adult education in the Wear Valley.

There is little sense of that history in the Wear Valley, either 'lived' or written. The Wear Valley is not unusual in having little of its adult education history recorded. As J.F.C.Harrison noted in 1963:

'The opening sentence of the now classic report on Oxford and Working Class Education (1908) [original emphasis] began: 'The story of adult education in the nineteenth century has still to be written. Forty years later this was still substantially true, despite the valuable historical survey in the 1919 Final Report the Adult Education Committee of the Ministry of Reconstruction and A.E.Dobbs brilliant but truncated pioneer study Education and Social Movements, 1700-1850 (1919). There is still no standard history of the English adult education movement; but since 1950 a number of excellent studies of several branches of it have been made ...' (Harrison, 1963, pxi, original emphasis).

There were no branches and few twigs, of that history of adult education in the Wear Valley. That there is a history of adult education and that it is long and reaches into the very recent past too is revealed in some of the national literature of adult education. Hudson, for example, gives evidence of a Mechanics or Literary Institute in Crook in the mid-nineteenth century. More recently in Jack Lawson's biography of

Peter Lee (1949) we learn that Lee went down the pit at the age of ten and by the time he was thirteen

'didn't feel like going to nightschool after a 5 am start and a 10 hour shift or any other form of recreation'. The only form of recreation wanted being: 'the occasional 'Magic Lantern' show in a darkened room'.

From the same source (4) we learn that, after settling in the village of Stanley near Crook in the Wear Valley Lee left it because of its lack of adult education opportunity. Later still, and perhaps more tantalising, Cornish (1989) makes reference to his time spent at art classes in Spennymoor Settlement (5) with fellow student Sid Chaplin:

'The classes were held in 'Spennymoor Settlement' - an institution set up in the early thirties with the aim of bringing hope and interest to people by organising classes on various educational themes' (p25).

The history of adult education in the Wear Valley is, then difficult to locate and construct. Sources, where they are available, are fragmented, insufficiently tied to the adult education context and difficult to locate in any wider sense than that in which they most usually appear: in the form of advertisements for individual classes or periods of tuition in the local newspapers. The Northern Echo of Friday, January 7th,

1870, for example, carried an advert for the following:

'Practical Education' in 'Letter Writing. Invoices. English Literature. Drawing. Chemical Analysis. Logic. French. Geology. Physiology'.

with the rider that there would be 'No classes unless a pupil's parents desire it'.

This advert indicates that education was by no means regarded as a universal good, in and of itself, in the Witton-le-Wear area of the Wear Valley in the late nineteenth century.

Adult education as religious instruction is well evidenced in the same issue of that newspaper which carries an advertisement for 'cheaper re-issues' of Christian texts and 'Sunday lectures to working men by the Rev. Hugh Stowell Brown' at which 'Startling statements and powerful appeal's to the Christian world' would be made.

There is evidence of adult education for leisure or entertainment as well as instruction in the Wear Valley. The Northern Echo of Tuesday 11th January, 1870, announces that 'Mesmerism' is to be performed:

'Professor Morgan is this week giving a series of entertainments in the Mechanics Institute at Willington. He has a crowded house every evening and his instructive lectures have been favourably received'.

The Northern Echo for January 8th, 1900, bears witness to two other forms of adult education noting the 'Success of University lectures at Middlesbrough - a course of 12 lectures on evolution' at the end of which '12 students sat for examination and all got certificates' while advertising

'Information of priceless value for married ladies on receipt of an S.A.E' sent to a Liverpool address.

An account of a lecture: 'Among the Red Indians' given by the Rev Egerton B.Young at Crook appears in The Northern Echo for Thursday 22nd February, 1900:

'The famous missionary to the North American Indians the ... lectured in the Crook Wesleyan Chapel on Thursday night ... The lecture held the audience interested ... His stories were characterised by their humour and their originality ... he told how upon visiting an Indian in the neighbourhood of the Hudson Bay Fur Trading Company, who with great solemnity and the dignity characteristic of the Indians greeted Mr Y with 'Does your mother know you are out?' By a supreme effort said the lecturer I managed to keep a straight face ... there were no railroads and no cars ... tea was frozen after being brewed for seven minutes'.

To sum up: while current adult education activities have their roots in the type of adult education activities (among others) outlined above there is no easy way of determining the links between the adult education present and the adult education past and therefore of explaining how adult education became the way it is now in terms of the ways in which it was then.

Current adult education provision in the Wear Valley of County Durham is provided by the usual variety of agencies and 'auxiliaries' that make up the unique British cultural phenomenon of adult education but there is very little systematic sociological or historiographical knowledge of them. The problems of doing such research are frequently alluded to in the literature of adult education but rarely confronted.

In previous chapters I have described the ways in which I simply expected the materials and mechanisms by which to study adult education in the Wear Valley to be there and in a form amenable to sociology. This was a commonsense assumption: It is commonplace to characterise modern western societies as overly quantified and quantifiable. It is salutary to

discover that this is an assumption that does not always bear empirical scrutiny.

When thinking about doing 'a history' of adult education in the Wear Valley I realised that the problems of insufficient source materials would increase the possibilities of producing a 'resurrection'. More significantly still the preliminary results of the fieldwork, in as much as they were taken as being 'empirical' and, therefore, to be in some ways, representative of adult education in the Wear Valley, were indicating the emergence of adult education ideas which bore little resemblance to those of its founding fathers. The Liberal or 'Great Tradition' of adult education had, in large part, reflected, and in many cases been constitutive of, industrialising social forces operant at the turn of the century. Its main focus the plight of the working class. There was little evidence of that sense of social purpose in the Wear Valley in the mid-1980's. Those same 'social forces' operating in the 1980's were essentially ones of de-industrialisation. As the organisation and conditions of work changed in the Wear Valley so did its geographical landscape. So too did the ways of thinking about both the Wear Valley and its adult education 'needs'. As the valley became



greener, 'prettier' and more 'rural' it was less easy to talk in terms of adult education and the working class and easier to talk about adult education for rural development and environmental protection and conservation for example.

The popularity of 'oral history' (6) and the publicising of its methods tempted me to a further methodological move: a reliance on 'lived history' as a means of understanding the current form and content of adult education in the Wear Valley. As a member of the voluntary leisure groups: field study society, drama group and photographic project I had spent time talking to people about their past involvement in adult education activities and about current, future or proposed involvement in adult education activities. I had been wary of taking this approach assuming that it would generate too much 'data' for me to 'process' in the time left to complete the research. I worried unnecessarily.

I spent many fruitless hours trying to elicit comments about adult education out of people who wanted to talk about anything but adult education. The memories of education I elicited by even more intensive means were 'thoroughly contained' within the notion of 'the

golden age of schooling'. A genre already well represented at the national level by the fiction of 'Miss Read' (7) and in the context of the Wear Valley by a growing number of publications aimed at the tourist and heritage markets. (Frequently written by people who no longer lived in the Wear Valley) (8).

In the end I returned to the point at which I had ended my reading of the history of adult education nationally. The history of adult education in the Wear Valley is ineluctably and inseparably linked to the history of work. The nature and organisation of work has shaped adult education in the Wear Valley just as it has moulded and cast its mark upon almost every other aspect of life there. The history of adult education in the Wear Valley is, in large part, the history of the adult education activities of the people who worked in what have been, since the Industrial Revolution, its major economic activities: lead and coalmining.

In the 'official history' of 'The Durham Miners:1919-1960' W.R.Garside (citing E.Welbourne's 'The Miners' Unions of Northumberland and Durham' published by Cambridge University Press in 1923) argues that:

'The Durham Miners' Association had long recognized the importance of education for the benefit of its members and miners' movement as a whole, and continued to promote its development after 1919. The north-eastern branch of the Workers' Educational Association had been established in 1909 and in 1911 joined the University of Durham in providing tutorial classes throughout the coalfield. The miners' union helped finance the work of the W.E.A. in the County, and worked in close co-operation with the County Education Authority in promoting the development of adult educational facilities in colliery villages' (Garside, 1971, p298).

He re-iterates the conclusion drawn in 'a review of the adult education movement within the coalfield during the 1920's' that:

'the miners were "the backbone of the Movement, both as students (exactly one-third of tutorial class students in 1924 were colliery workers) and as County Council representatives in helping to finance classes when they were organized" ' (Welbourne cited in Garside, 1971, p298).

Although the history of adult education in the Wear Valley is largely the history of the nature and organisation of work in the Wear Valley. Few of the people I spoke to in the Wear Valley talked of formal adult education experiences. When they spoke of education they spoke of school:

'Life, beginning as far back as I can remember at five year old, going to school and every time you went to school, you, as

the beginner, got put on the rocking horse, to encourage you, to get you into school life ...'.

When they spoke of adult education they spoke of vocational training. The man who 'got put on the rocking horse' became a miner:

'He (the colliery manager) wanted to know who your family was before you got on. Of course, when I told him my name he said 'right, start a Monday, three o'clock'. Righto, sir, just goin' out the door and the chap turned around and said three o'clock in the morning, not afternoon. So it was Monday morning, three o'clock, going through there, you went up the colliery road, you couldn't get a lamp. You had to buy an oil lamp. Two brass pillars and a circle of brass in the back to reflect the light and when you got to the colliery you met a chap in charge of a district, mine was Eighth West. You were given a pony at the stables to go to Eighth West and drive, I had no experience ... I was bloody frightened to death of the pony, going down the pit - a terrifying experience because it was only wooden backs up then, water's drippin from the roof and going in, well, it seemed like hours ... into the stables ... new starter? That's your pony Wilf. Never seen a pony as far as yoking one up I was terrified to death of him and the keeper said 'come here and I'll show you what to do, and mind, don't forget because this is the last time I'll tell you'. So I put his body gears on, put his head cap, his skull cap on and the rest of the harness and when I come to the top of the stables they'd gone so I shouted to the horse keeper 'which way?' and he said just follow the horse ... and that was the beginning of my pit life ... I never saw a soul for seven hours - picking up three empty wagons and coming our with three full, just following the bloody horse'.

From the rocking horse to the pit pony this miner's life was dominated by fear, by struggle and only the most cursory of 'sitting by Nelly' vocational education and training. Yet like most of the people I spoke to in the Wear Valley he valued adult education of a non-formal, idiosyncratic and individual kind highly. He had never taken part in formal non-vocational adult education but he took great pride in his collection of books about wildlife and birds and the fact that he had taught himself:

'about every bird in the British Isles and taught meself well enough to go and speak in the school about them'.

As a voluntary speaker in the local school he was taking part in the education of

'the next generation. I like to think I'm doing that. I hope they have it easier than we did, my generation, the one that went to war and down the pits'.

In the extracts from interviews with people living in the Wear Valley cited above I show how I learnt something about schooling in the Wear Valley albeit through the prism which creates the 'golden age' and also about the generalised ways in which adults learn in society. The ways in which children become adults: learn to accept and take on 'their responsibilities'.

I learnt little about formal adult education except perhaps that, in 1980's Britain, it was superfluous to the lives of many of those for whom it has traditionally been provided. The very few people in the Wear Valley who had taken part in formal adult education classes that had been provided in this tradition, by the LEA, regarded them as second rate in educational terms judged by what they learned:

'Evening classes? Well you see them advertised sometimes, not very often mind. I went to one once - dressmaking. It was useless, I mean with working at Ramars all your life you know all there is to know about sewing, and like, all the inventions, the technology, I could make a dress in a quarter of the time it took her [the teacher] to fiddle on. A waste of money'.

Also in an area with high levels of unemployment there was a lot of Manpower Services Commission training activity in the Wear Valley. It promised, at first, training, and then, perhaps, a job, a way out of unemployment and the poverty it brings. Set beside such training provision with its extensive and glossy advertising traditional liberal adult education was seen to be largely irrelevant to the needs of many people in the Wear Valley. The following extract from an interview with a woman in her early thirties who described herself as 'only a housewife' was the

fullest discussion I had with any potential adult education student in the Wear Valley. It illustrates the way adult education is typically viewed in the Wear Valley in terms of the difficulties attached to actually getting it and the negligible returns it was seen to yield for such efforts. I have reproduced this small piece of interview text in its entirety in order to capture the profound lack of interest in adult education which I believe it reveals:

PC 'Well, I fancy night classes, but there's nowt at the end of it is there?'

BM 'Do you know what classes are available locally?'

PC 'French, English and 'O' level standard Maths isn't it? You'd have to do them at Bishop Auckland Tech. Two changes of buses. You'd have to set off about five o'clock to be there for seven, so really it's just not worth it is it?'

BM 'Has it always been like that?'

PC 'Yes. There's never been anything in Crook. There's nowt in Crook. Maybe there's the flower arranging class, who can afford to arrange flowers anyway? And who wants to?'

The conversation was then changed by the interviewer in the direction of describing the hobby club at which I had met her.

In the course of this fieldwork I only heard two spontaneous references to adult education and both of them were to correspondence courses: one in photography and the other in book-keeping. Most of the people I interviewed were prepared to talk about almost anything except adult education.

Most of the responses to my questions about adult education were of a generalised 'you never stop learning' type. Adult education being understood as a generalised process of adult learning which persists throughout life in all circumstances. This learning which we all seem to get merely by becoming adult and which takes place in many varied contexts using a variety of means was often juxtaposed to, if not compared favourably with, school experience. For men in the Wear Valley, it frequently included reference to some kind of military training (but not the specialised liberal forces adult education service):

'My husband said he learnt more after he left school, after he went in the forces, he went into the Terriers, the Territorial Army, the real army and then of course he had to go to the war [WWII]. He was, he said, he definitely learnt more that way and he says now, he's still learning, learning himself you see?'



For the women of the Wear Valley this generalised adult learning process seemed often to have centred on domestic crafts:

'My mam taught me more as far as knitting and sewing, embroidery, making rugs ... she had clever hands on her, well she had to, because she came from a poor family and they couldn't afford to buy carpeted things. It was just the quarries. Just the quarrelled (sic) floor ... and she managed to make four nice rugs, the progged ones she used to like to do, that shook up nice you know. She always had one by the fireplace, one by the other place, like four sides of the table and in the bedroom, and that polished round we thought we had a posh house. Well she taught me a lot as far as all little handicrafts and that ... and darning, we don't darn today, socks, but I do try on some things to renovate it and I try to save ... I pull a jumper out and wash the wool and boil it up and knit it again. We had to do it and I still do it today and my husband says 'Oh, don't bother with that, throw it on the fire', and I say 'No, I don't believe in waste ... waste not want not''.

For most of the people I interviewed in the Wear Valley there was an implicit assumption that this 'university of life' education was as good as, if not superior to, formal adult education. One unemployed man I interviewed in the Wear Valley was explicit in his comparison, and criticism, of adult education and adult learning. On the topic of favourite television programmes he said:

'I can't just sit and watch something. I have to weigh it up. Like bloody well done

that. Well written that. That's why I think there must be something inside me that makes me want to write. I do write a bit and I would love to be able, to objectively look at me work but I sometimes think its impossible. Perhaps if I did an Open University course but then, reading, great novels, there's some that you enjoy and some that you don't enjoy. I like Graham Greene. He's very Catholic isn't he? It comes over in the way he writes. I've read 'Brighton Rock'. When I was in hospital, having my third cartilage out, I learnt how to do cryptic crosswords, I taught meself how to change channels remotely on the TV and I read my first Graham Greene novel. It was 'Brighton Rock' and I hated it. I found it so heavy to get through and the characters were so heavy and depressing. I mean everything he writes about, its always so depressing isn't it? Even the happy bits, they're so bloody depressing arn't they? There's always something behind it - Ooh, painful and as soon as I finished it I thought Christ, thank God I've finished that at long last and then I started reading it straight away again. I must be mad. But it was such a sense of achievement in reading it ...'.

This kind of individual adult learning of course, does little to further the interests of the working class as the traditional working class autodidact has been understood to. It is difficult to assess its benefits other than in general terms but they include the raising of a literary critical awareness, the development of a sense of one's location in cultural time and place, the development of self-confidence and the sheer pleasure to be gained from accomplishing such a task. All of these are put forward as being the

results of participation in formal adult education too and there is no doubt that they are indeed benefits. It seems sad therefore that, in the Wear Valley, people should be effectively deprived of the opportunity to take part in such activities.

Adult education, however, has long been associated with the organised working class movement and one of the less beneficial products of this relationship has been the tendency to see all individual pursuits of knowledge as somehow 'bourgeois' and intrinsically worthless. The kinds of activity which can give much pleasure, and in my view, perhaps be encouraged to lead to 'better' or more formal adult education opportunities have often been written off as leading only to 'quiz knowledge'. In my experience of the Wear Valley even 'quiz knowledge' was useful in the sense that it gave people a sense of their own worth as well as being peculiarly satisfying in and of itself. I once spent a whole day in the local library with a sixty three year old woman (whom I had met doing voluntary work) searching for the answers to the sixty questions of a local newspaper general knowledge quiz. She had developed her skills in this area so fully as to be able to make a significant contribution to both

the household budget and the quality of life of herself and her husband:

'I was once a Ladbrookes Bingo Queen, you know and I'd Ladbrooks on me hat and Ladbrooks on me back and all pearls on my skirt, like pearl necklaces ... I still have that dress in me wardrobe, absolutely gorgeous and this photographer came from Darlington and took me photo on the step and I thought it was because I'd been this Ladbrooke's Queen but it wasn't, it was because I'd won this holiday to Malta. I just answered some questions in the paper and won this week in Malta. I like doing competitions, especially general knowledge ones. I've won dozens ... but this holiday to Malta when the letter come confirming it and we were getting ready to go I kept saying to [husband] do you think this is all a dream, I couldn't believe it at my age because I would be sixty two then and it felt like a dream'.

It was work, however, that most people I spoke to in the Wear Valley remembered and wanted to talk about: work and school. It was work which shaped the attitudes of most people to adult education:

'I was a coalman. It involved bagging it up and delivering round the doors ... it was a mucky job. It was a change from school though, enjoyable at the beginning but then the novelty wears off and you realise its day after day drudgery. You get fed up. That's when I decided it's not for me. It took six years to realise it but ...'.

This man, a member of one of the local voluntary associations I had joined told how he enjoyed his

current work in forestry but feared that the firm would soon close:

'We've, our firm, we've been hit very bad with pits closing. Not so much round here but in Sunderland and that way. Five years ago, summertime, that's all we did. Produce pit timber, chocks, beams, props, different lengths from one foot six inch to five foot six inch, and by the thousand, not just a few. We used to grow them from seedlings to felling and we had this big woodyard down at Witton-le-Wear, and from the end of May to the middle of June, right through to the end of August that's all we did. Six month of the year. Thousand upon thousand and that was just for the North East. Just local pits. They never took them very far. That was besides the paper mills, they used to take ton upon ton ... chip board ... and the laminate place at Hebburn ... there's none of that now ... well, there's that many wanting to supply them ...'.

Although almost sure that he would be unemployed soon he did not think that he would be out of work for very long:

'Well I'm not entirely finished because I've got another trade up me sleeve. I'm pretty good at electrics, repairing TV's, hoovers, washing machines, anything electrical...'.

In talking about the ways in which he had acquired the skills of his second trade he told me also something of the meaning of adult education to him both as formal provision and private study:

'Well TV's [repairing them] started with a Christmas present from me mam and dad. They bought me an electronic kit, just a kid's thing in a box and it used to make little transistor radios and little transmitters and what have you. It all stemmed from there. It just grew from that. I read about them, worked with them, experimented with them, did different things and you learned as you went along what to do and what not to do. You learned the hard way with many explosions and many electric shocks, you weren't long learning ... they were the good old days ... I enjoyed it more then, the experiments worked, I loved that ... I've stacks of books on radio and TV ... I get wrong for all the clobber I've got. We have a spare bedroom and it's literally chock a block with repair gear, different items. I bought most of the books ... what you get from the library isn't much good because half the time it's just for beginners and I've advanced a little bit further than that'.

The knowledge that he needed from books, not surprisingly in a high tech, information society was that which was up to date:

'What I need to know is servicing. As new models come out you just buy the service books. Odhams press do one every year by volumes and alphabetically working through all the models'.

He was proud, in an understated and modest way, about his considerable achievements. He had not had any formal training or education at all:

'The amazing part about it is I went to further education for radio and TV and they wouldn't accept me because I'm colour blind.

I manage because I usually have somebody tell me the colours. If I'm on me own I'll number them with sticky tape on the wires. I don't suppose they would have the time to do that at college. They just wouldn't accept me. This was about ten years ago. I remember they gave me a fistful of little wires and there must have been about 150 of them and they were all different colours. They told me to pick five different colours out that this person mentioned. Well, I hadn't a chance. I've known I was colour blind since I was about ten year old. At school I used to paint purple seas and brown grass ... they'll say to me now, look at that heather there up on the moor, isn't it beautiful, and all I can see is a load of brown'.

He had felt very upset and angry when he was turned down by the college:

'I felt really angry. I turned around and I said to the chap I probably know more about TV's than you do. You might know it all in theory, but I've put it all in practice because I've been doing the tellys for ten years, I never pursued it further. I felt, like, disheartened'.

This man felt able to support himself if he became unemployed by using the skills he had taught himself as a hobby or leisure activity. Like the miner who had been 'put on the rocking horse' at school and 'bloody terrified to death of the pit pony' his working life had been arduous, his vocational training and education being of the most cursory 'sitting by Nelly' nature.

The ways in which people spent their time in paid employment (if indeed they were able to) in the Wear Valley was changing again when I did this research: so was the nature and organisation of adult education there. The WEA presence in the valley was minimal. Although the coal miners' strike was in progress (9) with some of its most violent confrontations between striking miners and their supporters taking place in Crook as miners were arrested on the picket lines at Tow Law and taken to Crook Police Station for detention. There was little support for, or involvement in the miners strike by agencies providing adult education in the Wear Valley. The question of whether or not adult education was 'a part of the Miners Strike' was raised by the presence in the University of Durham Delegacy for Adult and Continuing Education of a member of the Wear Valley Trades Council who upon receipt of a £2,000 grant from the Economic and Social Research Council's 'Open Door' project was carrying out research in conjunction with academics from that and other university departments into ways of reducing the 'decline' and promoting the 'development' of the Wear Valley (10). All of those involved in this study identified a clear role for adult education in both political and economic processes to arrest decline in the Wear Valley but it



did not include support for the striking miners. Few of those involved in the study could agree about the nature, form, organisation or purpose of that role. The Trades Union Council representative felt that the role of politicising adult education in the Wear Valley while essential to their study was not confined to it and embarked upon many adult education initiatives outside of their formal adult education activities with, if not in, the university. Those activities centred around the miners strike (11) and gained the Trades Union Council representative the reputation amongst local labour politicians of 'bringing the Trades Union Movement into disrepute'.

It would be easy to assume that the distance between adult education and the miners in the Wear Valley during the years immediately preceding the strike was a political one and many observers did. The way in which the nature and organisation of work in the Wear Valley had produced what has been referred to as the 'close and closed world of the mining community' had it seemed to me mitigated against the development of the kind of relationships between those communities and formal adult education provision which would have been necessary for adult education to play a prominent and politicised role in the affairs of the Wear

Valley. Moreover, many of the mines in the Wear Valley had closed in the 1950's and 1960's and when people spoke of decline and of unemployment they were increasingly referring to the collapse of the heavily industrialised manufacturing base of the Wear Valley economy: steel making, iron casting. They referred also to the failure of light manufacturing industry to provide and maintain enough jobs in the Wear Valley to replace those being lost in the pits and heavy industry. Jobs which most people were 'glad to see the back of'. When the pits closed in and around the Wear Valley the traditional association of the miners with adult education, it seemed in some ways, died with them.

While the formal providers of adult education in the Wear Valley were revealing their distance from the miners and their affairs the miners were increasingly turning from adult education to leisure. The relationship between adult education and leisure has always been acknowledged. Usually in terms which stress that the working class pursuit of leisure (stereotypically understood as the pursuit of beer, baccy and bingo) mitigates, perhaps fatally, against the pursuit of adult education. This relationship, between adult education and leisure was assuming new

significance in the Wear Valley at the time of the Miners Strike.

The statutory duty to provide for the 'social' welfare of all employed in the coal mining industry which was part of the 1946 Act of Nationalisation of that industry meant that education was provided for the miners under the auspices of the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation (CISWO).

'At national level the Board decided in 1948 to offer scholarships in mining and other technical subjects to boys leaving secondary schools and to boys and young men employed in the industry. A further three-year course of 'directed practical training', aimed at providing planned experience as a supplement to formal education, was offered to successful candidates after taking their first university degree or diploma ... Miners in Durham who satisfied the colliery manager that they would be likely to benefit from further study were allowed by the Divisional Coal Board to attend part-time day classes in subjects related to their employment. Provision was made for the payment of class fees, half of the cost of essential textbooks and the appropriate day wage ...' (Garside, 1971, p471).

Non-vocational or 'social' education, as well as being provided informally by the WEA was provided under the various 'social' and 'welfare' schemes which culminated in the formation of the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation (CISWO) as a result of the duty laid upon the National Coal Board in the 1946 Act

of Nationalisation. These were the precursors to the Miners Welfare Trust which in the Wear Valley in the 1980's was instrumental in setting up and maintaining the Spectrum Leisure Centre at Willington. In so doing the Miners Welfare Trust, if not the miners, made an implicit commitment to recreative sports training and not adult education. The Spectrum Leisure Centre was to impose itself upon many of the discussions I had with adult educators based in the Wear Valley (although not with the Responsible Body adult educators who seemed unaware of the Centre other than abstractly as 'mass leisure provision to help the local council to spend all the money it's got from selling council houses').

In the next two chapters I shall show how the parameters of the debate in which the relationship between new and sports orientated leisure provision and 'traditional' adult education in the Wear Valley were given meaning by those involved in providing adult education. In a later chapter I shall show some of the ways in which these debates, and the meanings they were informed by and gave expression to, were used by social actors when building and maintaining their versions of adult education in the Wear Valley. In describing those parameters I shall focus on the

meanings of adult education revealed in the course of interviews and observations with the main providers of adult education in the Wear Valley: the Local Education Authority (LEA), the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) and the Durham University Delegacy of Adult and Continuing Education (DACE).

Notes and References

1. This does not necessarily mean that adult education had not been written about: only that such work was not usually publicly available as published volumes or articles. While many adult educators are reputed to write their memoirs few publish them. Such accounts, where they exist, can be very useful for sociological purposes. The ways in which such accounts, where they survive, can inform sociological work, is shown in this thesis by references to the Saunders (1983) self-published volume, and the section in Richard Hoggart's autobiography, 'A Sort of Clowning'. Publ. Chatto and Windus. London. (1990).
  
2. There were, it seems, at least three sources for, and ways of doing, history in High House Museum. The most public being 'heritage'. Secondly if I wanted to know the 'real' (ie. professional) history of Wesleyanism in the Wear Valley I could consult various influential members who 'keep all the valuable books for safety'. Or thirdly, if I 'just wanted to find a few things out' I could consult the documents in the sideboard, which 'you can't just throw out can you?'

3. Almost fifteen years old this survey still represents the most, and perhaps only, systematic attempt to find out what meaning adult educators (in LEA centres) gave to their activities
  
4. Bulmer (1978) has urged the use of caution when treating this autobiography as evidence for sociological research. Lawson was 'himself a Labour MP and unlikely to show his party in an unfavourable light' (p20). The account, moreover, was 'tinged with sentimentality' (p93). The asides in which adult education are mentioned, however, seem to have a certain authenticity because so casually made. They serve to cast doubt upon the stereotypical picture of working class adult education as being, for the most part, a collective activity: part of the onward and upward march of working class emancipation.
  
5. The role of the settlement, and what went on in it is unclear: Chaplin, for example, gained a lot of his adult education while studying at Fircroft College in Birmingham. The institutions of working class adult education have often functioned to take their students out of their

communities in order to educate them and it could be argued that it is precisely this which accounted, in large part, for the failure of adult education to develop or even take 'organic' root in working class communities.

6. See for example: Popular Memory Group (1982), pp205-252, in CCCS (1982).
7. The 'Miss Read' novels include 'Village School' (1955), 'Village Diary' (1957) and Miss Clare Remembers (1962).
8. See for example: Scott E. (1987) and Milburn T.A (1987). The authors living in Oxford and Norfolk respectively.
9. See 'Digging Deeper: Issues in the Miners' Strike'. Beynon H. (Ed). Verso. (1985).
10. See 'The Wear Valley: Decline or Development' (1985).
11. I had explored the possibilities of researching the connections between the miners adult education provision and adult education provision



more generally in the Wear Valley. During the course of my first interview at the headquarters of the Durham Union of Mineworkers the news 'that these lads have been locked up' came through on the telephone necessitating immediate and concerted action on the part of their union and the postponement of my research into miners adult education for the duration of the strike.

CHAPTER SIX: ADULT EDUCATION IN THE WEAR VALLEY: THE  
LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY (LEA) PERSPECTIVE: COUNTY  
HALL

The power of individual adult education practitioners, especially heads of centre and wardens, to determine the form and content and, therefore, the meaning of adult education provision in the local context is considerable. An extramural centre head describes the way in which his values and 'world view' influenced adult education form and content in 'his' centre:

'I was a teacher of English Literature and a poet. I knew that after nobbut three thousand years of so-called civilization, Man was little better than humanoid, ... I concluded that what Middlesbrough, and the world needed, was a humanization through the arts, and above all the arts of language, the ultimate civilizer, to enable people to match up in maturity to their technological genius. I was most at home in the English Renaissance, another age when Man had to adjust to new truths, when almost anything could conceivably be true, and when people worked out conjectures and hypotheses in brilliant drama and poetry, rejecting the dogmas, ambivalent, dichotomous, finding virtue in doubt and flexibility, surviving by pragmatism' (Saunders, 1983, pp3-4).

The influence of individual practitioners in the LEA sector in determining the role and purpose of adult education is also understood to be significant:

'Though the adult educator in a Specialised Institution sometimes complains of a lack of career opportunities he (sic) will, almost without exception, point to the very positive job satisfaction resulting from the autonomy which he typically experiences in the role. About 60 per cent of full-time staff, and almost a half of spare-time centre heads, indicated that in practice they did not have a boss, and nearly all saw themselves as autonomous within the authority's regulations' (Mee & Wiltshire, 1978, p61).

Practitioners interviewed by Mee & Wiltshire made statements such as: 'I like my independence' and 'I'm the boss. I run my own show' (p61). Their influence over policy as well as practice in this chunk of state supported education although significant remains relatively unexplored and unanalysed.

Although there is little public debate about, or interest shown in, the role and purpose of adult education in modern British society, its aims are ambitious. Saunders' intention to 'humanize' both Middlesbrough and 'the world' is only slightly less modest than many made in the literature of adult education. The focus of debate within adult education in recent years has been 'Evaluation' (1) but we still do not know to what extent adult education achieves its aims and therefore what role it occupies within the education system and 'the wider world': The

absence of debate about the role and purpose of adult education is unusual in a modern western society where publicly provided education is a source of much debate and frequent controversy (2). Adult education has traditionally been understood as having both educational and social welfare functions (3). In beginning to construct one conceptual framework within which adult education policies may be understood Griffin argues that:

'Neither social policy nor adult education lend themselves to precise definitions ... there can be little doubt either that adult education is an object of social policy or that the policies of adult education are in some sense social' (1987, p3).

While adult education can, and perhaps should, be analysed in social policy terms there is also a need for analysis in terms of the educational policy implicit in adult education practice. The absence of analysis and debate (some have said policy) in and around adult education generates some sociological questions too. One of the most puzzling is the relationship of the social to the individual in adult education. I have talked about this relationship as it is represented in the literature of adult education as being a dichotomous one, between 'adult education' (which is seen as a collective process and,

traditionally, as a mass movement) and the individual adult reader, student or learner. That relationship is 'lived' in adult education practice through the theory and practice of the core curriculum. With regard to LEA provision Thompson J.L. (1983) in support of an argument for a woman centred and feminist core curriculum for adult education has noted that Mee and Wiltshire's (1978) study:

'... makes clear that, despite claims to the contrary about 'meeting individual need' and 'responsiveness to local communities and conditions', an amazing consensus exists throughout LEA non-vocational adult education about what kinds of programmes ought to be offered' (p81).

The core curriculum is both representative (as congealed past practice) of the adult education tradition and constitutive of the adult education present and future. The core curriculum in adult education has not been explored other than in terms of making it more or less 'relevant' to the needs of the individual student, community or society. In this chapter I shall focus on the ways in which notions of the 'core curriculum' in LEA adult education structured debate about the adult education system and idea in the Wear Valley. Asked to give their definitions practitioners gave them in ways that were for or against the core curriculum as they saw it.

Faced with changes in the system of provision: from an adult education to youth and community orientated structure (at the level of County Hall) adult educators, or those responsible for adult education in the Wear Valley, began to define their practice and the meaning of adult education to them in terms of the core curriculum of youth and community work. Asked to define community work as distinct from youth work most practitioners told me that community work had never really been given meaning 'at county level', therefore, youth and community work meant in practice (in the Wear Valley) youth work. There is, of course, a core curriculum operating within youth work theory and practice (4). Asked to define their practice and, therefore, give an indication of the meaning of youth work to them these practitioners spoke largely in terms of table tennis, fundraising walks, the Duke of Edinburgh's award and 'keeping them off the streets, especially the bad ones'. The ideas for youth work practice were in turn generally understood to come from individual community centre management committees or at least to be regulated by them.

I have, in previous chapters, focused on 'the liberal tradition of university extramural adult education and argued that it might be better understood as 'the

liberal approach to adult education' in a variety of forms and settings. In the literature of adult education individual adult educators are often understood as 'embodying' that approach in what are sometimes very personal ways. The literature (and not just the history) of adult education abounds with references to 'Tawney the patron saint of adult education' and other tales of its 'Great Men' and their doings (5). In this chapter I shall show how the individual practitioner is at the fore of adult education practice in the Wear Valley too. However, the persistence of the core curriculums of adult education and youth work belie the notion of the totally autonomous adult education practitioner. The adult educator may well make his/her own history but s/he does not do so in ways entirely of their own choosing.

The emphasis placed on the autonomy of the individual adult educator in informing and shaping adult education policy and practice both legitimates the absence of debate and masks it. Mee and Wiltshire argue that it is 'particularly important' to ask of adult education institutions 'what do they teach' because:

'... they are free of many of the external pressures operating upon, for example, Further Education establishments and schools which have to meet the demands of external examinations and career qualifications, or have to teach certain subjects because a national consensus of opinion defines them as basic subjects or because Universities regard them as entrance requirements. Adult education institutions are free of such pressures; the range of choices open to them seems virtually limitless or is limited only by their ability to recruit interested students' (1978, p28).

Lack of debate also obscures, however, the extent to which a liberal consensus, most obvious in its 'core curriculum' sets parameters to the activities of individual adult educators. It masks the extent to which adult education is a social construction. In arguing that adult education is a social construction I stress that it must be understood not as a reified structural phenomenon 'adult education' but as a delicately maintained balance between the many social and educational practices social actors use and construct when making and maintaining what is recognisable as the phenomenon 'adult education' over time.

Adult education is not usually understood in its literature, within mainstream sociology or the sociology of adult education as a social construction. Problems which should be understood as arising



essentially out of the ways in which adult education is constructed by those who see themselves as doing adult education are subsumed within 'the problem of definition'.

The 'problem of definition' in the literature of adult education, however, is usually 'solved' by recourse to reification. There is assumed to be something called 'adult education', which stands over and above the practices of adult educators. It is frequently taken to be synonymous with the 'Great Tradition' which in being sui generis, is reported upon reverently while remaining unanalysed. In 'Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State' (1977) Abrams argues that:

'The state is not the reality which stands behind the mask of political practice. It is itself the mask which prevents our seeing political practice as it is. There is a state-system: a palpable nexus of practice and institutional structure centred in government and more or less extensive, unified and dominant in any given society. There is, too, a state-idea, projected, purveyed and variously believed in in different societies at different times. We are only making difficulties for ourselves in supposing that we have also to study the state - an entity, agent, function or relation over and above the state-system and the state-idea. The state comes into being as a structuration within political practice; it starts its life as an implicit construct; it is then reified - as the res publica, the public reification, no less - and acquires an overt symbolic identity progressively divorced from practice as an illusory account of practice. The

ideological function is extended to a point where conservatives and radicals alike believe that their practice is not directed at each other but at the state; the world of illusion prevails'. (Journal of Historical Sociology. Vol.1. No.1. March, 1988, p58).

This analysis has clear relevance to an understanding of the role and purpose of adult education. Adult education 'is not the reality which stands behind the mask of adult education practice. It is itself the mask which prevents our seeing [adult education] practice as it is'. It is also the mask which prevents us seeing the extent to which adult education practice is, increasingly, part of the state system and the state idea.

There is an adult education system or institutional structure. There is also an adult education idea. We have to study both but 'are only making difficulties for ourselves in supposing that we have also to study' adult education: 'an entity, agent, function or relation over and above the adult education system and the adult education idea. Adult education has been reified. There is an adult education res publica and it too has acquired 'an overt symbolic identity progressively divorced from practice as an illusory account of practice'. In the case of adult education 'the ideological function is extended to a point where

adult educators believe that their practice is not directed at social individuals and at each other but at 'the adult learner', 'the working class' and increasingly 'the community'. The 'world of illusion prevails'.

Adult education as system in the local context, is what adult educators do within the structural and organisational parameters laid down by the 1944 Act modified in social, educational and organisational terms by perceptions of local need. There is no legal compulsion upon a Local Education Authority, for example, to provide adult education but many still run a service despite increasing financial pressures to use their resources in other ways. What is provided in the local context is also determined, in part, by tradition as evidenced by the core curriculum in LEA and Responsible Body theory and practice. Ultimately, however, adult education is the congealed consequences of the activities of adult educators. We need therefore to understand, following Geertz, what the adult education 'natives' think they are up to when they set out with the intention of doing adult education.

In this chapter I shall show what some of the adult education natives in the Wear Valley thought they were doing, when operating within the LEA system, they were doing adult education. I shall show also that while adult educators enjoy a degree of power and autonomy over their product (adult education) and the conditions of its production which is unusual in modern industrialised societies they do not all enjoy the same amount of freedom to determine practice. Not all adult education practitioners 'enjoy' this freedom as will be shown in the context of the Wear Valley: at least one practitioner felt isolated and remote from County Hall, which he understood to be the centre of adult education educational policy making activities.

Adult education in the Wear Valley of County Durham is provided as a system by the Local Education Authority (LEA), the University of Durham Delegacy of Adult and Continuing Education (DACE) and the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) which together constitute Responsible Body (RB) provision for the area, and a number of voluntary and quasi-voluntary organisations, such as the Rural Community Council (RCC).

It is not my intention here to give detailed and formal lists of providers. Where possible I have used quotes from interviews (6) with providers in order to draw out their impressions of the provision system. For example: the newly appointed Deputy Director of Education for Durham County Council does not mention the agricultural college at Houghall in County Durham. Neither does the Further Education Officer with special responsibility for adult education. I was interested originally in the agricultural college because of the leisure based gardening classes which were being run there. (I wanted to join one). After conducting several interviews there I realised that although not generally recognised as part of the formal adult education provision in the Wear Valley, the agricultural college was providing a significant amount of adult education in the Wear Valley, and in doing so, was close to the centre of a major controversy about the role and purpose of adult education in the Wear Valley. (See chapter 10). The Deputy Director of Education, however, described the LEA adult education system as follows:

'Well, basically adult education in County Durham is ... first of all there are courses organised through the FE Advisers which I suppose you can call LEA provision. They can go on in a wide variety of places ..., we don't really have such things as adult education institutes, they will put on

courses in buildings which will cope with groups or whatever. The second group who put on courses are the FE colleges and they do that on the basis of whatever practices they have adopted in the past to service a local area. We then have Beamish Residential College which puts on courses, as the name implies, of a residential nature. It does a number of one day events as well as a number of residential courses. We then have the youth and community organisations. Now the FE Advisers have a responsibility for both adult education and for youth and community organisations. And what has happened in the recent past is that there has been a switch of provision in some instances from their controlled provision and this has gone to a youth and community organisation who then run it as part of their youth and community activities. I suppose it's in part a reflection of the increased profile of what I would call the educational element in youth and community work, not just seen as a sort of leisure activity, but seen very much as a sort of educational activity. It's also a reflection that at times it can be easier to manage through a local management committee than through an FE Adviser. Sometimes, for example, there will be a full-time worker in a youth and community organisation who can be much more responsible for the day to day issues than the FE Adviser who has an area of the County to deal with, often quite a big area. There are then people like the WEA, the University, I suppose you could also include in this, in fairness, Adult Literacy'.

In this chapter I will present the meaning of adult education to the Deputy Director of Education for County Durham as he gave it to me during a tape recorded interview at County Hall. I understand this meaning to be representative both of County Hall policy towards adult education in the Wear Valley, and

of the Deputy Director of Education's personal view of, and attitude to, adult education: as mediated by aspects of his biography. Throughout this research I have taken the Millsian edict that 'the co-ordinate point for a proper study of man (sic) is history, society and biography'. In recent years, a number of philosophical perspectives have found their way into sociological debates about meaning. Denzin has drawn upon the work of, among others, Mead, Heidegger, Gadamer, Weber, Husserl and Goffman to present, out of what he calls 'the interpretive heritage', the perspective of 'interpretive interactionism' which allows us to recognise that:

'Troubles are always biographical. Public issues are always historical and structural. Biography and history thus join in the interpretive process. This process always connects an individual life and its troubles to a public historical social structure. Personal troubles erupt in moments of individual and collective crisis. They are illuminated ... in ... epiphanies of a person's life. These existential crises and turning-point encounters thrust the person into the public arena. His or her problem becomes a public issue' (1989, p18).

Identifying the moment in which an individual 'trouble' becomes a public issue as the 'epiphany': a turning point crisis after which a person's life is never the same again: 'the transforming moment'.

Denzin brings together a concern with meaning at the level of the individual experience of existentialist crisis. The Deputy Director saw the meaning he gave to adult education as having arisen out of a disjuncture between two distinct and separate phases in his working life. A disjuncture he could not quite explain in terms other than existentialist ones perhaps:

'I've got a strange background. I started out as a university lecturer in Geography at Newcastle. I then got ... my name was put forward for a job in Sunderland and I went to that ... which was a joint Department of Education and Science and the Environment project in community education and community leisure, which interestingly enough started very oddly. I went along to this so-called interview and there were twenty-eight people on the management committee and me and this so-called interview went on for an hour and three-quarters and at the end of it they said right, 'Do you want the job?' Yes? You've got it. Right. I started three months later much to the amazement of my University Professor. He thought I was utterly mad leaving a job ... because I was just about to be given tenure for life at the University, and he couldn't understand why I was going off to do a two year contract and neither could I really, I don't know ... and from there I went to Liverpool and Gateshead and that's how I got into education. I moved out of being policy adviser to the council in Gateshead and into education ... So I'm only a recent arrival in education'.

His experiences of community education during the two years in Sunderland had shaped his ideas of what adult education was:



'... one of the problems I've always found with non-vocational adult education is that it tends to be going nowhere. They go along, turn up for the class, and maybe come back next year and instead of painting a boat they paint a ship ...'.

Those years had also shaped his ideas of what adult education could be:

'Education, to me, is all about progression, you learn something and then move onto something else, you don't just go round in circles on the same point. If for example, we take the art classes, it might be very valuable as an end point to do the painting and something else ... to paint for a weekend, a residential weekend at Beamish say, so that people move from local to other kinds of provision and therefore of education'

A key figure in the system of adult education provision for the Wear Valley as outlined by the Deputy Director was the FE Officer responsible since 'the recent past' for both liberal adult education and youth and community work in the Wear Valley. He was assisted in this task by a full-time peripatetic youth and community worker and a part-time ('three paid sessions a week') Field Officer. These three people, in occupying these roles in the adult education system exercised a great deal of influence over both the form and content of adult education in the Wear Valley (7). I will now draw out the meanings of adult education

given to me in interviews, and through observation of their practice, by the FE Officer, the peripatetic worker and the Field Officer. We need to place these accounts in the context of the one given by the Deputy Director of Education for County Durham.

For the FE Officer 'the recent past' which had brought about a change in the system of provision was 1973-74. The year 1973-74 is noted in the literature of adult education as being 'a watershed for LEA provision', a year in which major financial cutbacks had been made restricting provision and forcing re-organisation. A year in which, in the Wear Valley:

'... the role of the FE Organiser was created to be responsible for the youth and community work and non-vocational adult education. In real terms, of course, the situation has not improved since 1973 and 1974, the economic crisis, things have either stayed as they are or they have decreased'.

How these financial and organisational changes were interpreted by those involved in LEA provision was dependent, in large part, upon their idea of what adult education was or could be. The FE Officer had little sense of what adult education in the Wear Valley was. He felt that there was not really enough

adult education to talk about adult education in the Wear Valley in any meaningful sense:

'It's gone most of it. Nearly all of it went after the cutbacks and the re-organisation and frankly I'm not sorry to see it go. I much prefer the community approach'.

The FE Adviser's idea of what adult education could be was that it could be community education:

'People look for the village halls and the community associations, so the flexibility of the village halls is working against the council classes. Classes are not so popular now due to finance. While adult education has decreased to a one quarter the youth and community has quadrupled due to there being so much scope for development. When I took over I had the idea of putting something in most places apart from tiny little places like Daddry Shield. The strong labour controlled council helped through a system whereby every committee must have a county councillor. The presence of the councillor would equal political suicide if the village hall were closed down'.

This had led to a situation in which the overall picture, despite financial retrenchment and against national trends, adult education provision, albeit as community education, in the Wear Valley was increasing:

'Even now we're getting 5% increases. Even now we're getting 5% increases in the Wear Valley. The biggest outlay is salary. The county council pays 100% salary to all workers but they cut back the classes by

20%. They asked the leaders to do more voluntary work, close the buildings more often etc so they got 20% less provision. Most of the community centres carried on as before though so there have been cutbacks ... and actual increases in provision in the Wear Valley put on by the community centres. Most of them are though not actual Adult Education so there's been a drop in Adult Education. They can put classes on cheaper and you can pay nightly and they can pay the teachers less. The county council has to have thirteen but you can fiddle around, for the community centres the management committee keeps the purse strings. So at the end of the day all the needs of the community are satisfied through the youth and community system. My attitude is that as long as there is a system I don't mind who gives it - WEA, Extra-Mural Departments, Youth and Community or whatever'.

I had begun interviewing wardens and community centre members in the Wear Valley and had reservations about the assumption that community centres in the Wear Valley were 'more than compensating' for any loss of traditional adult education classes by increasing their own provision. I was also not sure whether the two forms of provision were directly comparable. To assume that they were would be to reduce the re-organisation of 1974 to one in name only: since an adult education class, without any change in its content, remains an adult education class whether it is put on in a school after hours or a purpose built community centre (8). I assumed that the content of much of this adult education had changed: the stress

placed on centres to cut costs by asking 'the leaders' to do more voluntary work meant that as 'the leaders' were youth and community leaders and not adult education tutors the approach to adult education in the Wear Valley must have changed significantly. I found little evidence that in the process youth and community work had become more 'educational' as indicated by the Deputy Head. Rather had the adult education provision become more youth and, in the process, leisure (as games and sport) orientated.

It is difficult to know, of course, what actually goes on in an adult education class. Teachers and 'leaders' also have their own 'idea' of what constitutes adult education, youth and community work and it was very difficult to find a class in the Wear Valley which was actually running in order to carry out observation (participant or non-participant).

The difficulties of getting quantitative data about adult education activities (9) is compounded when they become 'activities' in community centres which are mainly self-governing and self-financing. There seemed to be little conceptual awareness, on the part of the LEA workers in the Wear Valley, of the distinctions in philosophy, theory and practice which might

characterise adult education activities and which might become modified or altered in different settings. This lack of conceptual differentiation reinforced the ways in which individual adult educators were able to influence adult education practice and policy by processes which one observer termed 'sustained ad hocery'.

Ostensibly the most informative guide to adult education in the Wear Valley was the termly prospectus. In the Wear Valley prospectus the core curriculum, identified by Mee & Wiltshire, was much in evidence. The amount of directly usable information for a sociological study of adult education in the Wear Valley contained in the LEA adult education prospectuses was, as would be expected, limited. They were, however, regarded as unattractive but informative (for the general public and prospective students) by the FE Officer. One of the ways in which many LEA's had tried to make cost savings had been through using less expensive means to produce less elaborate advertising at the beginning of the period of this research. The Wear Valley had not followed this trend. Its prospectus had always been, although expensive to produce, unelaborate.

'... the same prospectus that they've used for years ... Awful isn't it? This is IT and all it's ever been since I came here. Not very inspiring is it? I think it's even the same murky green as its ever been ... I am dissatisfied with the look of the advertising but at the same time it is very informative'.

Whether the programme is informative or not depends upon who is looking for information and for what purpose at what time. Ostensibly a Wear Valley programme lists all the LEA aided classes by village or small community that are running at any given point in the three terms which make up the Wear Valley adult education year. The FE Officer, however, urged extreme caution before taking these programmes as being representative, or in some cases, even indicative of adult education provision in the Wear Valley. The FE Officer advised that provision:

'... tails off in the summer but it is still available ... The brochure is only notional. It doesn't tell you how many classes actually run. For example, I tried a Durham Quilting class in Tow Law but only got six so it didn't run. The brochure is only one picture'.

Without access to quantitative data in the form of class records, student attendance records and fee totals etc it is very difficult to know how many of these classes run and with how many students but my

impression is that the Wear Valley programme of classes is very notional indeed. The FE Officer said that he kept figures of class enrolments and attendances but would not release them (10). During the Autumn terms (traditionally the busiest) of the years in which I carried out this research I telephoned the centres listed in the programmes and asked whether the advertised classes had achieved the minimum attendance numbers and were running. I found very few indeed that had. (This does not, however, preclude the possibility that most of the courses in the programme 'enrolled late' and went on to run full-term).

The FE Officer's idea of adult education was that it was best provided as, and apparently indistinguishable from, community education. His approach to community education, however, was essentially liberal:

'I don't mind what they put on in the community centres, as long as its legal, they can do what they like in them. I don't get involved in what they do in the centres. Jo does that. She does the face-work'.

Jo was the peripatetic worker. She told me that:

'the latest craze in the community centres is microwave cooking. I've done six microwave classes this year already'.



The Deputy Director's view of adult education had little room in it for this type of activity. His vision of adult education for the Wear Valley was of a centrally provided system:

'which would filter ideas down from the centre ... and it would also tend to get adult education out of the sort of cake decoration, knitting syndrome, and while I wouldn't in any way want to belittle that, it's a very limited view of what adult education can be about and my view is, it's a bit like religion, you know, whenever two or three are gathered together ... they're interested, that's the legitimate ... and whether they're learning about the world as per the Durham Light Infantry explaining what happened in the second world war or, I don't know, somebody interested in a course on third world politics, I don't think it really matters, but at the moment there's far too much of FE non-voc classes that stay within the restriction ... and things like introducing microwave cookery become a revolution, although it's virtually the same as they've been doing before, its just that instead of using ordinary cookers they use microwave cookers ... I don't want to belittle it but really it's a matter of very limited horizons as to what they might actually get interested in'.

The FE Officer felt distanced from the educational policy making structure in County Hall:

'I've not even met the new Deputy Director yet. I'm not saying this against you, mind, but I've heard that he's had time to see you, a researcher from the university, but he's never even been introduced to me yet. I've never set eyes on him. Well I know he's only been there a few months but it's more

than that, it's to do with the job, the way they see us FE Officers at County Hall, it's years since I had any real contact with anybody at County Hall and it shows, it shows in the way you feel about the job'.

The Further Education Officer described his dissatisfaction with his work in terms of his biography:

'Before I came here I was a PE teacher and I am a magistrate and I had done this kind of thing before but when I came here I just had a desk, a phone and a map and I was told to get on with it. I was left to get on with it. There was nothing here at all. Nothing. Not even the office furniture. The filing cabinets and things like that we got ourselves. Everything is provided in the area due to my hard work. I feel I'm ready to move on now. I've put something in every village. There is a service which won't grow any more but there is a service'.

His account bears a remarkable resemblance to the one given by Saunders in the extramural context:

'I started then with nothing but a secretary, and a telephone on the floor, and the results of her first excursion, cups and saucers, milk, sugar and tea' (Saunders, 1983, p36).

An image imbued with notions of having triumphed against all the odds, an ethos of make do and mend and of the boy scouts at camp: the job being done once the tent is put up.

'I'm bored with this job now. I've done everything I've set out to do. Achieved it all. I mean I'm on this committee of the Gas Board, I'm off to a meeting there now and I get much more satisfaction from that kind of thing now than I do out of FE'.

Before moving on (in chapter eight) to the actual adult education 'tent' in the Wear Valley: its buildings, its bricks and mortar and what goes on in it I will give details of the meaning of adult education to the peripatetic youth and community worker and the Field Officer, arguably the two most important adult education figures in the Wear Valley. In doing so I shall show what type of answers are given to questions about the purpose of adult education in the Wear Valley. The processes involved in building the adult education 'tent' in the Wear Valley were, all who had been involved in it said, intrinsically very satisfying:

'You start with a patch of ground, a heap of rubble in a village or wherever, and you call a meeting somewhere, wherever you can get, a house or a pub, and say "right, what do you want to do? What are you trying to achieve?" And you just take it from there. It's a great feeling when the centre, you finally see the centre opened' (FE Officer).

Few people were prepared to say either why the tent had been built or what should take place in it after its completion.

Notes and References

1. An interest reflecting, in the main, the influence over adult education of central government in the form of the 'Replan', DES and FEU initiatives and not coming from adult education practitioners. Evaluation in adult education is frequently understood as being the application of quantitative techniques of measurement to essentially qualitative phenomena and therefore to be both unsustainable and undesirable. Adult education is understood by many to be part of the civilising process and as such its effects can not be measured in simple or short term ways.
2. In Britain most especially since Labour Prime Minister Callaghan's Ruskin speech which opened up the 'Great Debate' on education in 1976.
3. An understanding made most recently and noticeably in the recommendations made in the Russell Report (1973).
4. See Smith M. (1988).

5. The tendency to view the history of adult education in terms of 'Great Men' may have its roots in the prominence of history as a subject discipline within, and therefore an influence over, adult education.
  
6. I also interviewed, on several occasions the Principal of Bishop Auckland Tech and some of the staff responsible for adult education leisure classes and adult literacy. The writing of ethnography is, perhaps, about what is left out of the final account as much as what is put into it. I have not given any detailed descriptions of Bishop Auckland Tech's adult education provision in the Wear Valley because of pressure of time and space, but above all, because it seemed remote from the valley. The building itself, on the outskirts of Bishop Auckland, would have necessitated at least two and probably three changes of bus on a journey there from many of the areas in the Wear Valley. Its form of provision, consequently, was 'campus based - they have to come in to us'. Its staff and Principal were aware of these difficulties and invited me to talk to a Head of Department

meeting about the travelling problems in the Wear Valley. It was decided that a policy of 'bussing in' students might be appropriate.

7. The highly bureaucratically structured adult education system at County Hall tended to crystallise around a few individuals involved in adult education practice in the Wear Valley.
8. For an indication of the range and variety of buildings used as adult education 'classrooms' and community centres see the photographs at the back of this thesis.
9. The literature of adult education is full of ostensibly very good, student-centred reasons for the lack of quantitative data on adult education provision and participation in local contexts. Refusal to allow public access to class enrolment and attendance figures is well-documented in the literature of adult education. It is generally acknowledged among practitioners that this is one of the few ways in which 'the books can be cooked' to allow classes to run without the requisite minimum number of students in attendance both at the start and as the term

progresses. The literature abounds with instances where students are 'lost' from a course with more than the minimum student attendance to be gained by those whose attendance figures have not met the 'statutory' requirements. The suggestion in the Wear Valley was that this was the case there too. My own observations indicate that most of the classes advertised in the Autumn termly programmes did not run at all but I cannot 'prove' this in any quantitative way.

10. This is a fairly usual occurrence in adult education research and accounts for a major part of its notorious 'statistical invisibility'. The re-organisation in terms of youth and community education and the financial crisis had meant that, in the words of the FE Adviser:

'Since 1974 the FE programme has decreased by three quarters in the number of students tutored. There are only one quarter of the students left. The County Council has a rigid number and the fee system and fees have risen astronomically. At the same time the weeks have been cut from twelve to ten. This means fees are five times more over the last eight years. We must have a certain number ... thirteen ... to run a class economically'.



CHAPTER SEVEN: ADULT EDUCATION IN THE WEAR VALLEY: THE  
LEA: IN THE FIELD

In defining his role as an administrative one the FE Officer for the Wear Valley both locates himself within a wider national framework of FE Officers and distances himself from the daily running of the adult and community education service in the Wear Valley. The meaning of adult education in the Wear Valley, for him, is a matter of bureaucratic and administrative procedures culminating in 'putting a centre, or something in each community, however small'. The educational components of the service being, in large part, the responsibility of the peripatetic youth and community worker and individual adult education and community centre staff.

The bulk of his work was made up of administering the regulations of grant allocation both for the building of community centres and village halls and their maintenance. The system whereby the Department of Education and Science (DES) provided half of the cost of a new hall or community centre, the county council a quarter and the rest was found by the community association, residents association or local community

itself had ended two years before this research began. Probably the last community centre to be built in the Wear Valley, under this scheme, was Binchester Village Hall. It was likely to be one of the last to be built:

'Now money is awarded on block grant so it can be used on capital things or not. Durham has pruned it down so much it's obsolete. So, in reality, on central government policy new buildings are, and will be, few'.

Concern with the bricks and mortar of adult education is as common in the literature of adult education as concern over finance. Mee and Wiltshire note that the 'problem of premises' (usually shared use premises) has a significant effect upon the adult education service contributing to feelings of insecurity and lack of status among practitioners.

There was evidence of many problems of 'shared-use' and 'joint-use' premises in the Wear Valley, as will be seen in the next chapter. There were also problems of a different kind associated with some of its adult education buildings as rising unemployment, the collapse of traditional vocational apprenticeship education and the rise of Manpower Services Commission training schemes began to exert their influence upon many of its communities. The new community centre, at Binchester, 'probably the last to be built with

central government funding' was closed because it was structurally unsafe (1). An event, recounted with something approaching glee by many of those I spoke to in the course of this research. It was widely believed that the centre had become structurally unsafe because the main support wall, 'running the length of the building', had been put up by MSC trainees under MSC supervision, without any foundations.

In the Wear Valley of County Durham the FE Officer seemed almost to define his role in terms of bricks and mortar: Organising the funding, planning and subsequent maintenance of a 'community facility' be it centre or village hall took up most of his time. While this aspect of his work had, at first been challenging, he felt that, in providing the physical structures of adult and community education his task was done; the educational components of the service being, in large part, the responsibility of the peripatetic youth and community worker:

'You see, I'm very lucky. I have an excellent peripatetic worker - Jo ... I do the administration and Jo does the face work. The advisory staff have been cut back by one third since 1976. There's only seven of us now. There used to be twelve. I now have to cater for Wear Valley and half of Durham. There is big pressure on advisers ... There are no staff development ... schemes. Advisers meet monthly. This [the service in the Wear Valley] has been built

up from absolutely nothing by me in the last nine years. I have grown up and matured tremendously. I was a PE teacher. I must say I am always community minded and if adult education went down today I wouldn't mind - my involvement in FE is minor. The writing is on the wall for non-vocational adult education. It's future is in community education'.

On the FE Officer's account the transition from a traditional liberal adult education service to a community education service (largely 'provided' by members of the communities themselves) seems to have been made successfully. The picture given is of a full service running for the benefit of those who provide it: the community. The decline of formal adult education classes, although acknowledged as being significant, is understood to be minor compared to the perceived growth of adult education entrepreneurs:

'The dilemma is that the council is supposed to be running classes yet it encouraged shared use centres. As long as there is a good service and it's monitored regarding standards I don't mind. The entrepreneurial approach worries me ... such as two day aerobic classes from teachers who come up from London and make £600 by hiring the town hall. This happens a lot. An awful lot'.

The official account of adult education in the Wear Valley is of liberal adult education provided as part of a liberally informed Youth and Community service in which the programme is:

'... determined by what people want. There is no development work. The fact that there is a village hall or centre in every area helps. This combats too much centrality. I am against centrality. By leaving the responsibility out in the sticks you avoid too much central control'.

One of the consequences of allowing people to determine their own community centre activities is of course that some of them may want to bring in private, commercial and entrepreneurial adult educators. This, however, seemed on the official view, to be the major difficulty the traditional liberal adult education perspective (albeit in its new 'community' form), in the Wear Valley, experienced. The question of which people determine the adult and community needs of which other people and under what conditions was answered by vague references to 'the community' deciding and meeting its own needs.

The FE Officer's assurances of the superiority of 'community' based, over traditional provision was typical of those found in the literature of adult education in the early 1980's. Mee and Wiltshire, for example, assert that:

'There is only one word which we have heard even more frequently than 'disadvantaged'

and that is 'community'. We are not proposing to attempt the impossible task of defining it, but note some of the implications of 'community education' a term which is very widely used, ... It carries the implication of a new start, a reaching out to people not normally touched by adult education, a questioning of traditional forms and subjects, an attempt to break through the boundaries of the institution to a wider range of local contacts. This may seem vague but it is invigorating and is felt to be so; it produces a sense of freedom and of release from academic traditions and inhibitions from which new and more firmly focussed initiatives will surely come' (Mee & Wiltshire, 1978, pp111-112).

The vague term 'community' informed adult education provision in the Wear Valley. As Mee and Wiltshire have said 'it carries the implications of a new start'. It also carries other less welcome implications as will be seen as this chapter develops. They fall into two categories: Firstly those associated with the term 'community' and community provision or activity of any kind. Difficulties Alan Twelvetrees has referred to in the assertion that 'who says organisation says oligarchy followed by ossification', (cited in Tomlinson.A, 1983, p69), and secondly those associated with assuming adult education to be an educational activity. Questions about the educational as opposed to the recreational content of many community activities. The FE Officer stressed the need for carefully monitored 'in terms of

standards' provision. I could not ascertain what these standards were, upon what criteria they were determined and how their attainment was assessed and student progress evaluated. The failure of adult education nationally to address, let alone answer, any of these questions has led to claims that adult education is a form of leisure pursuit: indeed is no more than a leisure pursuit, albeit of a fairly select middle-class group of people, and that it should accept this status without umbrage and drop all pretensions to being involved in educational activities (Jary, 1973). After my examination of adult education and community adult education activities in the Wear Valley I concluded that even these minimal claims for the role and purpose of adult education could not be made in the context of provision there.

The peripatetic worker who 'does the face work' does it in 'nearly a hundred youth and community centres and clubs' in the Wear Valley:

'I deal with the whole area. I mean, I work under Tony. He deals with the advisory further education aspect and I deal with the work at grass roots level'.

She explained the ways in which she interpreted that work in terms of aspects of her biography too:

'I do most of the training, the training of the youth leaders as well. You know, you can't get a job as a youth leader now if you're a teacher. You've got to do the part-time youth leaders course and I teach on it but I was a teacher before, I mean I'm not a qualified youth leader as such, my qualifications come through experience. I haven't you know ... graduate ... youth leaders training. No, I've no youth leaders training but all of my work now is really to do with youth work'.

In locating herself within youth and community work practice the worker is also locating herself within one of the most heated debates in the theory and practice of youth work: whether youth work should or could be done by teachers or specialist youth leaders who are specially trained in the skills needed for working with young people. She did not locate herself in the context of an adult education or community work debate. Her adult education role in the Wear Valley was minimal and mainly one of tuition. I observed her teaching a cake icing class in the village of Hunwick, for example, but her work was predominantly advisory and in connection with the setting up of youth clubs where:

'I help with the fund raising' and community centres: where I help them with the constitution. That's the most important bit, getting the constitution right, after that it's up to them. It's not easy, mind, to get the officials, a secretary and a treasurer. People don't want to do it. My husband he



says, he's a professional as well, he's a teacher. He says when he's finished work the last thing he wants to do is go and sit on a committee full of people like himself. He'd rather go to the pub and play darts with the shepherd'.

The worker lived in Weardale, the rural part of the Wear Valley: a source of some controversy and innovative adult education practice as we shall see in the last chapter. She seemed to express a clear dichotomy between herself and her family and the work she did. Advocating youth and community work as being 'OK' for those who need it but not necessarily something one would do by choice:

'You know even when you've got the centres set up you can't force people to go, with the best will in the world you know ... most of them won't go, they've got better things to do. My son, my son, for example, he's not interested in youth clubs, he's not one for sitting on a street corner waiting for something to be put on for him'.

This attitude among community workers extends much further than the Wear Valley. One of the more successful aspects of community provision in the Wear Valley was the social services luncheon club. Tomlinson, researching a similar club in Brighton, was told of a community centre:

'I've popped in now and then to deliver jumble, but there's nothing for me. It's the

lowest form of life, sitting there eating a cheap lunch' (1983, p81).

The 'youth work side of things' was seen to predominate in adult education youth and community provision in the Wear Valley and of that youth work its social control aspects were to the fore:

'In Weardale we had a do, just before Christmas when there was cannabis and stuff found, and then there was some heroin found but it's all been cleared up now and they went back to glue again. So the police have got most of it under control. It's the petty theft among young people, and cars, they reckon is more of a problem in the Wear Valley than drugs'.

Set beside these problems adult education was of marginal concern or interest to the worker:

'I wouldn't do away with those type of classes, mind, I think they have a place but not here. People don't want them. In the adult education system if people, twelve people, want a class, want to do something, then they can ring in and it can be suggested and if it's feasible it can be set up but it's very rare that it happens'.

The community centres were, it was understood by the FE Officer and the peripatetic worker, providing adult education of an equally, if not higher standard than the traditional tutor system had offered. I carried out observations in four such centres and found little

evidence of this. I found considerable evidence in support of the argument that adult education is a leisure activity and not an educational one. I found evidence, too, that it is a leisure activity access to which is restricted. In the Wear Valley it was restricted not so much in class terms: the stereotypical 'middle class leisure activity for middle aged women' of the literature, but to friends and family of the management committees and of the youth leaders.

The tendency for users of youth and community facilities to form 'cliques' and exclude or potentially exclude new members from using the facilities is well known in youth work practice (if not documented in its literature). During my observations it became quite obvious to me that many of the community centres were little more than publicly subsidised tea-rooms. This stems directly from the liberal policy of 'putting something in every village' without any educational input as to its use:

'Well each centre develops in its own way, depending on the needs of its own people. The voluntary management committees, they plan and run their own centres, we're only here to advise and mainly on the constitution. What they do in the centres is up to them'.

In answer to my question that this may leave the way open for very small groups of people to determine both the forms and content of provision the peripatetic worker said:

'Well yes, that does happen. It does happen in a lot of places, and it's got very little to do with adult education or youth work, but they have an Annual General Meeting and people can elect or fire their management committee and they represent the public from that meeting so it's all democratic and above board'.

This strategy of leaving the content of youth and community activities to be determined by the local management committee was defended in two ways. Firstly as being 'democratic'. It seemed to be so only in the minimal sense of being publicly and structurally ie. constitutionally accountable and secondly in terms of the importance of local knowledge:

'I can't tell you what the people in Binchester want, for example, the only place where I could tell you what people want is the village that I live in myself. I would, you know, have a pretty good idea as an ordinary inhabitant as to what people would enjoy and you do get cliques and certain peculiar sections building up that's inevitable and if the public don't like it, I mean these are voluntary and they will do what they want to do and if you've got a bad character he's going to continue unless at the AGM, they elect him out'.

It seemed that while the peripatetic worker could identify with the youth and community and (by implication) adult education needs of the village in which she lived she fell victim to the feelings which many people I spoke to in the Wear Valley told me about.

'Well, these cliques, you always get them in a community. In community anything, I mean, people dare not go. I mean I wouldn't dare go in my village hall to the ladies bowls night, because there's half a dozen of them and they look at you when you come in the door, and they won't speak to you, you know, all this kind of thing to cut you out. It's like going into a Working Men's Club or a bar, if you're a woman. Just the same thing. I agree with you they do wield a lot of power but there's nothing I can do about it and I wouldn't want to either because I can't physically or mentally run ninety odd clubs and centres. We need somebody else to run them. People get the opportunity to do something, but you can't force them'.

There was another part of the system, a Youth Organisations Committee (2) for the Wear Valley which was run by the Field Officer 'a part-time version' of the peripatetic worker. I attended the meetings of this committee for about a year. There were few members of it who were under sixty. They defined youth and community work in the Wear Valley as 'sports: five-a-side, netball, that kind of thing'. One member of the Youth and Community Committee and a youth leader told me:

'It's all sport here, in the Wear Valley. All sport and youth work. I'm interested in the community side of it myself but that's never took off in Durham County never mind the Wear Valley'.

The Field Officer defined her role in the adult education and youth and community provision mainly in terms of adult training and not adult education:

'There's Tony at the top, well there's another man at the top there somewhere but Tony's not seen him for five years. So there's Tony at the top and he does the advisory work, Jo in the middle she does the trouble-shooting with the management committees and then me and I do the training. I arrange the different modules for the youth leaders as part of their training'.

The tape recorded interview in which this information was given to me was a group interview consisting of the Field Officer, a volunteer from the Mountain Rescue Service and myself. The Field Officer had invited the mountain rescue volunteer to help her provide a training module entitled 'Somebody Else's Child'. It was hoped that this module would be useful practical training for youth leaders about the potential difficulties involved in and responsibilities of youth leaders who took children on visits which involved staying away from home overnight.

The following discussion between the Field Officer (FO) and the mountain rescue volunteer (MR) and myself (BM) show the circumstances under which he had become involved in the planning of the module. It gives a feel of the autonomy of the Field Officer in the Wear Valley Youth and Community Service and of the extent to which she is able to determine the form and content of both the training programme for youth leaders and what goes on in youth and community centres in the Wear Valley and ultimately of some adult education provision in some adult education 'classrooms'. The mountain rescue volunteer saw the structure of provision coming down from County Hall as:

MR 'An inverted triangle? Where there's a lot of people at the top making the policy and one person, or two at the most, on the ground, putting it into practice who may not be aware of the philosophy behind it, at the top?

FO Most certainly. Yes. I'm not aware of anything there. All I'm doing is doing my job and doing it how I think it should be done.

MR So how can you plan? It's an upside down pyramid. You need some back up even if it's just for finance. Just to get the money.

FO I don't have any trouble with money. I can get whatever money I want from the County. At that printing thing (3), that printing doo dah when they were saying where can we get the money from. I knew I could get that money, that £55. If I just said it was to train the youth leaders. Him, from the university, he wanted it to be open to the public but I said if we make it a training module I can pay for it so that's how we got round that ...'.

MR How do you decide what to put in a module? Where do the details come from? Who helps with that?

FO Nobody helps me. I do it. These modules go up - over from me, they don't go down over from County Hall. They don't know what I'm doing. I haven't even told them about this one.

MR The responsibility for all this lies with you?



FO Yes. All these people at the top, they're busy and since I've come to do the job they've found out that I can do it without going to any committees and that's how the training now comes, up - over instead of down over.

MR So there's no formulated plan for youth and community training at all?

FO Well all the leaders have to do this certain amount of training and its left to each district to decide. There's one county training weekend and the rest is put on at district level and I'm responsible for the Wear Valley district.

BM Who employs the youth leaders?

FO The Management Committees of the Community Centres. They decide who the youth leaders will be, voluntary as well as paid ones and they decide what training will be done but they're usually guided by me. Like now, with this 'Somebody Else's Child' module. I have just to go to the Management Committee of a centre and say to them 'Well, look I've got a friend and he wants to put this on and then he'll go and meet

them and he's in. He's in to two places already without any fuss or bother' arn't you?

[Addressing the question to the mountain rescue volunteer].

BM Where do the ideas for what to do in the youth club come from?

FO Just the general committee. The members of the public who make up the Management Committee. They want the place to run as they want it. They're not trained in youth and community work.

BM This is the situation in which the youth and community leaders are operating?

FO Yes, and very often they can't do their job because of the Management Committee and then they have to go. Find another job and the Management Committee will get somebody in who will do as they want them to. You've got to conform to stay in the youth and community service.

MR But they're not too bad these Management Committees. I've known worse. For example, at Darlington, Darlington Hospital, I asked if I

could put up a static, a static mind you, display for the Territorial Army (which I'm a member of) and they said no. So I wrote to the head one there and explained about the TA's medical corps, how we treat anybody who has been injured, not just our own side and they wrote back and said all right but only as long as you don't put up any posters with guns in them. Well, can you believe it? No posters with guns, well it is supposed to be a nuclear free zone so it's in keeping with their looney labour policies I suppose.

FO Never mind. You can put up as many posters as you like in the community centres. Nobody'll bother you there once I've recommended you.

In this chapter I have tried to do two things. I have tried to let the adult education practitioners in the Wear Valley describe both the system and the ideas which inform their practice, and I have tried to present those ideas and accounts of the system in a way which will allow the reader to get some idea of the 'feel' of adult education in the Wear Valley. Adult education in the Wear Valley is, in these terms, part of youth and community provision and in reality

youth provision. Training for youth leaders is counted as adult education by individual youth leaders and the Field Officer when it is convenient for them to do so (as we shall see in chapter 11). There is no formal adult education system in the Wear Valley.

However, the idea of adult education is still presented in terms of the core curriculum. In the Wear Valley it is abandoned in favour of a youth and community 'curriculum' which has a curiously traditional core of sports and a Duke of Edinburgh style, para-military activity of a type long associated with Boys Clubs. It is hard to account for the persistence of these core curricula in terms other than as the congealed consequences of previous adult education activities mediated by social, historical, geographical, cultural and political struggle. Very few people in the Wear Valley were formerly involved in adult education (or youth and community work), it seemed to me, yet everyone knows what we mean by adult education, or youth and community work, in terms of the stereotypes outlined in the earlier chapter on image which are part of the cultural identity of people in modern Britain. The individual worker in the Wear Valley seems to enjoy a level of autonomy vis a vis the adult and community education programme

mediated as much by popular ideas of what constitutes adult and community education on the part of individual members of community centre management committees as by any informed by social and educational policy or its analysis. The public and the private images of adult education converge in notions of core curriculum. There seemed to be few mechanisms by which policy decisions made at County Hall could be transmitted to the adult educator or youth and community worker in the field.

The other powerful and semi-autonomous determinant of adult education's form and content is the adult educator as centre head, warden or tutor. In the next chapter I shall give an account of the activities of one of the better resourced and used youth and community centres in the Wear Valley: one which was still running programmes of adult education classes. I shall present the meaning of adult education to the warden or head of that centre as he gave it to me during several interviews and 'a tour of the building'.

Notes and References

1. I could not check the supposed cause of the wall's instability but the closure of the hall, because the wall was declared unsafe by a building inspector, was widely reported in the local press.
2. I became a member of the Youth Organisations Committee who planned and implemented much of the youth and community work in the Wear Valley. A small committee: most of its members were over sixty. Almost all of the activities were sports five-a-side, football and fund-raising walks.
3. This is a reference to a joint enterprise put on by the LEA, Responsible Body and Rural Community Council and will form the basis, as a case study, of Chapter Eleven.

CHAPTER EIGHT: LEA ADULT EDUCATION IN THE WEAR VALLEY:AN OBSERVATION

'A riot is at bottom the language of the unheard'.

Rev.Martin Luther King. 1929-68.

In the last chapter I have described some of the ways in which LEA adult education was given meaning by some of the people involved in its formal provision in the Wear Valley in the mid 1980's. That meaning was, in part, structured by the decision, taken at County Hall, to make the adult education service a part of the youth and community service. That adult education was, therefore, informed by the rhetoric, and congealed practices, of youth and community work as well as of adult education. The youth and community service and, by extension, the adult education service, were staffed by voluntary as well as paid members. These voluntary workers in the words of the Field Officer:

'Don't have to be qualified. They don't have to be trained either. You cannot order a voluntary worker to do a certain number of shifts like you can a paid worker and you can't make them do any training either if

they don't want to, because they'll just walk out'.

We must assume then that adult education practice in the Wear Valley is also given meaning and therefore informed, to an unknown extent, by the images of adult education (and of youth and community work) held by 'members of the public' who make up the management committees and voluntary staff of many community centres, youth clubs and village halls. We must assume, also, that it draws on public images of adult education which remain largely unrecognised, unacknowledged and unanalysed. These images, links between 'the wider world' and the adult education 'classroom' are carried in stereotypical notions of the core curriculum: and of what are 'right and proper' activities for youth clubs, community centres and village halls. In chapter eleven we shall see what happens when these public and private (as practitioner) images of adult education are brought together, in practice, as part of the social structuration 'the adult education classroom'.

There are, of course, other ways of structuring and of giving meaning to adult education. In the Wear Valley a particularly influential role in the construction and provision of adult education was played by part-



time staff (wardens, head of centre and youth leaders) who were either teaching in schools as well or were trained teachers. As we saw in the last chapter the LEA peripatetic worker was not a youth leader or youth and community worker or an adult educator: she was a trained school teacher.

In this chapter I shall describe, using notes taken from several interviews with its warden (or head of centre) and my own observations, an adult education 'classroom', located in a community centre: the permanent staff of which were all trained teachers. The first thing to note about this adult education 'classroom' is that although it offered a programme of adult education classes I was unable to see one in operation. I made several visits to this centre but only witnessed youth club activities: although I had gone in the early Autumn (ostensibly the busiest time for adult education activities) there had been few enrolments and, therefore, no classes to observe. The staff, mostly teachers in the same building (as school) in the day time defined youth and community work (and by extension adult education) primarily in terms of providing sports activities for children.

The second thing to notice about this particular adult education 'classroom' is its social and economic location in the Wear Valley of County Durham. A location which, as understood by those providing adult education and youth and community activities there, had a profound effect upon the ideas they held about an appropriate liberal adult education relevant to the needs of the people living in the area of the Wear Valley catered for by their centre. A liberal adult education taking the form of a youth club, despite the rhetoric of 'youth and community' provision which the centre head or warden used to describe the activities of the centre.

The phrase 'putting a centre in every village' reflects the liberal aims of LEA adult education policy in the Wear Valley since 1974. It masks the differences between the form such 'centres' take ie: shared use premises, joint use premises, community centre, school or village hall. It also hides the extent to which the adult education activities which take place within those centres are provided as part of formal provision or informal initiative and the extent to which they are staffed by trained adult educators or volunteers (or, in the case of the adult education trained teacher volunteer, by both). It also

obscures the distinction between 'adult education' and 'youth and community' or 'youth' activities. This situation, when allied to the paucity and poverty of adult education's statistical information and record keeping, makes for great difficulties for social researchers who are trying to find out exactly what kind of adult education activities, in what numbers, are taking place in a given centre as opposed to, for example, youth work activities.

The rhetoric of 'a centre in every village', then, serves to obscure the extent to which those centres differ from each other in form and content. It also masks the extent to which the 'village' or settlements in the Wear Valley differ from each other in geographical, social, economic and cultural ways.

The Wear Valley is made up of a number of discrete villages or towns each having different geographical, economic, social and political circumstances (and often idiosyncratic responses to them) within the overall context of the de-industrialisation and post-industrialisation that characterises much of western Europe. As the heavy industrial base of Britain, and in particular, the North-East of England, has declined so have many of the settlements whose economic

infrastructures were most dependent upon it. In the Wear Valley these settlements include Crook, Bishop Auckland and Willington. As post-industrial economic activities have taken root and begun to grow (albeit tentatively) so have those areas of the Wear Valley with the resources to participate in what has been called an 'ice-cream and picture postcard' economy.

Those areas are mainly in rural Wear Valley or 'Weardale'. Resources for economic re-generation and development in the Wear Valley, as part of its new tourist and leisure based economic activities, are frequently those which have a role to play in the manufacturing of 'heritage'. There are two kinds of 'heritage' in the Wear Valley: industrial, as witnessed in the attempt to 'save' the water wheel and the workings of the derelict Killhope Lead Mine and 'rural' heritage: the struggle to protect and 'save' the 'unspoilt' beauty of 'the last great wilderness' of the Southern most tip of the North Pennine Moors. There are few attempts to 'save' either the artefacts or activities of the recent industrial and, therefore, urban past in the settlements of Crook, Bishop Auckland and Willington. The old Co-operative store in Crook Town Centre, for example, was demolished to make way for the building of the new civic centre for

example, despite large-scale and prolonged public opposition.

It is in these former heavily industrialised and urbanised areas of the Wear Valley that the processes of decline are most evident. In compiling their report 'The Wear Valley: Decline or Development' (1985) its writers drew on a national district council survey (published in 1984, no bibliographic reference given) which had concluded that the Wear Valley had

'a level of multiple deprivation which is comparable with and, in many instances, more severe than that experienced by a significant number of government's specially aided inner city authorities' (WVSG, 1985, p35).

The compilers of the Wear Valley Study Group report identified three main groups in the Wear Valley: 'the deprived', 'the average' and 'the non-deprived': key indicators of deprivation in the Wear Valley were taken as being 'much higher than the national average' rates of sickness, unemployment and mortality which the people living there experienced. A situation often compounded by poor housing. Subjecting this data to further statistical analysis, they identified three 'cluster groups' in the Wear Valley. 'Cluster one: Working Class Council House Tenants, High

Unemployment'. 'Cluster two: Working class, Average Unemployment' and 'Cluster three: The Better Off'. Cluster one was made up of electoral enumeration districts in the more heavily urbanised Wear Valley. It included the settlements of Sunnyside, Crook, parts of Bishop Auckland, Willington, Coundon and St.Helen's Auckland. These settlements are understood as having the highest levels of unemployment and smallest number of economically active people in the Wear Valley; a higher than average (for the Wear Valley) number of single households and households over pensionable age. Only one third of the people living in this group own a car. It has the lowest proportion of owner occupiers and the highest proportion of council house tenants in the Wear Valley. 'Few of the households are involved with agriculture'. Cluster two, working class with average levels of unemployment, displays average (for the Wear Valley) levels of unemployed and economically active males and females, and an average level of home ownership ... more than half of the households do not own a car'. There is a higher than average proportion of manual working class households but few of those are connected with agriculture, the main economic activity being manufacturing. This area includes parts of Bishop Auckland, Roddymoor, Billy Row, Peases West, Witton Park and Escomb. In cluster three: 'The Better

Off'. The Wear Valley Study Group found below average unemployment and a lower proportion of households of pensionable age. A higher than average (for the Wear Valley) proportion of households being involved in agriculture. A low proportion of single parent households and 'a very low proportion of households without a car'. Large houses, more middle class households and a higher proportion of owner occupiers. 'This cluster represents the Dale. It includes parts of Bishop Auckland, St. John's Chapel, Frosterley and part of Stanhope. The Wear Valley Study Group conclude that the three types of 'clustered' area face 'very different circumstances' in 'terms of what kinds of development might take place there'.

Cluster analysis as a statistical technique, while helping to isolate particular areas of the Wear Valley in terms of their social and economic situation can do nothing to change that situation. Attempts to promote social and economic change informed by the logic (and terminology) of this report where they were presented as 'adult education' and 'community development' in the Wear Valley met with fierce local opposition (including opposition from some adult educators) as we shall see in chapter eleven. Neither can such analysis account for the fact that, in the Wear Valley, often

gross inequalities in terms of income, (Pahl has spoken of 'work rich households') and amenities are apparent almost at street level.

Cluster three, the better off, includes the area of the Wear Valley known as Hunwick and Stanhope. I attended a Weardale field studies lecture at the Barrington School in Stanhope and it was a warm, cheerful, well equipped building unlike the primary school in Hunwick in which a Christmas cake icing class I observed took place in which several women worked in cramped conditions at very small childrens' desks. There was no hot water to wash dirty and sticky (with sugar icing) utensils and the desks they were placed on were covered with the dirt, debris and glitter dust of a childrens' Christmas card making session. The women had to bring their own tea towels and hot water (in thermos flasks) for washing up.

Relative prospects for future economic and social prosperity then, in the Wear Valley, in the mid 1980's was related, very closely, to the geographical proximity of individual settlements to the post-industrial resources of heritage and tourist potential.



The 'communities' of the urbanised areas of the Wear Valley differ from each other in geographical, economic, social, political and cultural terms with those in rural Weardale (formerly Weardale Forest and 'playground of' the Prince Bishops and now 'playground for Sunderland Polytechnic'). The more self-consciously rural areas of 'Weardale' have experienced, in the last decade, a fairly large-scale transformation in land use and industrial base and the social and personal characteristics of many of their residents has changed. The steel works at Wolsingham, for example, has reduced its work force from 'hundreds to tens', caravan parks replace sheep on the gentler slopes of the valley side and the stone terraces have been 'gentrified' in an often stylistically rural way (bulls-eye glass windows framed in dark hardwood frames). 'College lecturers and social workers' have moved into those settlements within commuting distance of Newcastle, Sunderland, Durham and Teesside. Most of the settlements having the highest number of cars, home ownership, bathrooms and liberal or independent local politicians and the lowest level of infant mortality. They also tended to have the best buildings (in terms of bricks and mortar) as community centres or village halls and more money for their maintenance and to buy equipment. This will surprise no-one. The

history of Fabian Socialist reform has been of a struggle to distribute resources equitably between middle and working class communities. The history of Fabian Socialist research has been that of an attempt to document and understand the failure of this enterprise (1). Despite all efforts it is the case still that the poorer the community the poorer its resources, including adult education facilities, community centres and village halls (2). The ways in which potential for social and economic development was understood and realised in the Wear Valley in the 1980's was of course linked to the ways in which those possibilities had been understood and actualised in previous decades.

The endeavour to restructure the local economies of the Wear Valley in terms of light manufacturing industry in the 1960's has been acknowledged (in general terms) as having failed (3). In some settlements however, some factories took root and developed. Those areas, in the 1980's, where there is in consequence a small but established amount of light manufacturing industry such as Crook and parts of Bishop Auckland have, while undergoing considerable economic decline in recent decades, still maintained a degree of prosperity and economic stability

particularly where employment is to be found as part of what has been called a 'municipal economy'. These working class communities perhaps approximate the second type of cluster to be found in the Wear Valley (described by the Wear Valley Study Group) and have undergone some gentrification. A considerable number of new houses have also been built: for example the new housing estates at Hartside and West Road in Crook. Community centres in such surroundings are new, often purpose built and relatively well-off in financial terms.

The attempt to create a local economy based on light industry in the North Eastern region in the 1950's and 1960's was large-scale and sustained. Kielder Reservoir, for example, was built to hold the water it was felt the new industry would demand. In the Wear Valley large council estates were built to house the workers it would call for. Those estates, in the 1980's, represented the sorriest sight in the Wear Valley and make up the third identifiable 'community' and perhaps 'clusterable' type there. The Bishop of Durham on a televised tour of his diocese in the mid 1980's put the unemployment rate on the Woodhouse Close estate at Bishop Auckland at 75%. The phrase 'a centre in every village' masks the real struggle which

some areas of the Wear Valley had to mount in order to build and establish their centre (4). They often had an even harder struggle to maintain it. The phrase 'something for everybody' also masks the pain felt by some of those involved in such endeavours and for whom the term 'community' seems to have been imbued with more than symbolic significance as can be realised when things go wrong. Many of the emotions referred to by Sennett and Cobb as resulting from 'The Hidden Injuries of Class' (5) can be detected in the following account of the rise and fall of 'the best community centre the Wear Valley's ever had', the Christian Fellowship Community (CFC) Link project on Woodhouse Close Estate:

'Once upon a time, as all good stories, so they say, are supposed to start with these words. A man had a dream, this man was working with the Christian Fellowship ... As his work developed, so his dream became more grandiose, and he made enquiries to find larger premises. His enquiries led him to the District Council ... Now this building was once the Y.M.C.A. After the Y.M.C.A had abandoned the building and the people of the area, it had become a 'Centre of Excellence' for glue sniffers.

Eventually, with the help of grant aid, some say that the grants amounted to at least £250,000, the building opened its doors ... As it is well known, grants do not last forever, so ... the Link applied for a drinks licence. The local magistrates turned this down after objections from local people. The application went to the Crown Court ... The Court was told that the

licence was needed to make the Link self-sufficient. The licence was granted. There then followed yet another conversion, this time a bar area. The money for this came from a loan by a brewery. As we all know, the Link finally closed because of bankruptcy in March 1988, and what are we left with. An empty shell of a building. All the fittings have been removed, and one can understand the logic of removing fittings for gain, but we will never be able to understand the logic of senseless, mindless destruction which has followed. So it begs the question of all parents, is your child one of the HOULIGANS and VANDELS (sic) who have finally turned the dream into a nightmare'. (In 'The Woodhouse News', May 1989, No.100).

The above account indicates the ways in which the liberal philosophy behind the adult education and youth and community policy in the Wear Valley sometimes fails even those who accept its values and work within its organisational parameters. In order for the centre to remain economically viable, alcohol has to be sold on the premises. A brewery loan has to be taken out to pay for the bar. Presumably not enough beer is sold and the centre eventually becomes bankrupt. The children of the estate are blamed for 'Finally ... (turning) ... the dream into a nightmare'. The hidden injuries of class affect both individuals and communities and seemed to rain down upon the people in the most depressed areas of the Wear Valley as blows upon the bruises of lack of work, low income, poor housing, poor health (6), inadequate transport

and worse than average levels of morbidity within the general population and of mortality among infants.

Each population settlement in the Wear Valley, then, experienced its own particular set of social, political, economic and cultural circumstances. Some had considerable resources with which to enter a post-industrial society while others had little bar their people. Each settlement, then, demanded its own adult education policy and practices as well as its own 'centre'. Each demanded the taking of political decisions. As the prospective Labour Parliamentary candidate (now MP) for a large part of the Wear Valley argued when I interviewed her:

'The Youth and Community Committee (at County Hall) has lots of voluntary groups on it and has been totally and completely apolitical. Youth and Community work here is seen in totally apolitical terms. The "centre in every village" stuff is nonsense. They should be making political decisions about where to put resources in ... This is the old liberal view of it and this is the predominant view, here, in the Wear Valley. I teach on the full-time youth and community work course at Sunderland Poly ... and I think in the Wear Valley, the needs of the young people are not being met ... they don't want youth clubs ... but they do need a friendly adult to help the transition and liberate resources for them. I believe very strongly in local management but it doesn't just happen. People who've never been allowed to participate (particularly women) can't just take over ...'.

There was little attempt, however, to acknowledge or even realise this state of affairs. Those involved in the day to day running of the adult education and youth and community services in the Wear Valley did not, as we have seen, understand their activities in this way: in terms of poverty, deprivation and unequal resources and opportunities.

One of the few 'centres' in the Wear Valley still actively promoting an annual programme of adult education classes (amongst its youth activities) was the Community Centre at Parkside Comprehensive School (7) in Willington. This centre, in one of the more 'disadvantaged' areas of the Wear Valley could, with some justification, easily be seen as being in need of some kind of 'compensatory' policy on behalf of the County Youth and Community and Further Education Committees. Situated a few hundred yards from the new Spectrum Leisure Centre, however, it was suffering (disproportionately to other community centres) from the adverse effects of the recent mass leisure provision policy taken by Wear Valley District Council's Leisure Department and the Miners' Welfare Trust as well as those of the County Council's Further Education and Youth and Community Committees' policies.

Reputed to be 'the second largest centre in the Wear Valley' Parkside Community Centre was a local example of the difficulties adult educators face in 'shared use' premises. It had a warden (deputy headmaster of a nearby school) who lived less than a mile from the centre and was well aware of the social and economic problems of both the area and the community centre. He saw his role as being one of encouraging 'self-help groups' to use the centre in response to the policy move away from traditional adult education in favour of community provision made at County Hall:

'I'm to set self-help groups away - self-financing you know, but really we're a kind of a night-school, class based activities. This is what people want. They want class-based activities because when you have a class you have a tutor and they get some tuition. It's very hard to get community groups going, they're frightened of being put onto the committee'.

The move away from class-based activities since the 1973-74 re-organisation had, in addition to the large increase in fees for traditional liberal adult education classes, in the warden's opinion, caused class attendance to fall 'dramatically'. This had added to the difficulties already experienced in this run-down area of the Wear Valley:



'There's no sustained interest. You've got to have class directed activity. The attendance here is low enough and this community business, I mean to get anything going at all in Willington you deserve a medal as big as a dustbin lid. The apathy is tremendous'.

This 'apathy' (8) in, and usually attributed to the people of, the Wear Valley was something I was to hear about constantly throughout the research. If there was one thing that the competing, and at times warring, factions of the Wear Valley's adult and community educators could agree on it was 'the apathy' of the local people. The continual use of the terms 'apathy' and 'community' in the context of the Wear Valley was problematic: there was reputed to be a strong sense of 'community' in the Wear Valley and in each of the geographical communities of which it was made. This co-existed with 'unbelievable apathy' on the part of those same communities. It was, therefore, difficult to see in, and of what, this 'community' and its converse 'apathy' consisted. It did not seem to be simply that those settlements with a strong sense of 'community' had fewer 'apathetic' individuals in them than others. Nor did it seem that most individuals became 'apathetic' under certain circumstances: such as that of the adult education class (see for example Ernest Green, ex-secretary of the WEA 'Adult

Education: Why This Apathy?, 1953). It seemed rather, that all settlements were both 'apathetic' and real 'communities' from time to time, and often at the same time, as the ethics of a situation or the logic of a particular argument dictated.

There is a sense in which 'apathy' along with 'community' can be added to the list of God-words and phrases which have informed much of the literature of adult education. The terms 'apathy' and 'community' are part of the legitimating rhetoric and the res publica of adult education and serve to mask the ways in which adult education, like most social phenomena, is structured around, through and including variable and shifting relationships of power, interest and culture (see chapter eleven).

The image of the community centre at Willington given to me by its warden was of an oasis of 'community' in a desert of 'apathy'. Its existence threatened by the close proximity of the purpose built, ultra-modern, high-technologically equipped Spectrum Leisure Centre:

'We're in a really invidious position now with Spectrum because they can quite legitimately say 'why duplicate facilities?' I don't think we'll go in the near future but it's a distinct possibility'.

The reasons for the taking of such a decision by the District Council to 'invest in leisure' were not generally understood in the Wear Valley. The reactions of most of the people I spoke to were cynical and dismissive: 'It's just them daft buggers at the council, man' or puzzled:

'There's so much variety now, so many things for children to do, it seems to be all those parallexes (sic) now, what is it? What do they call them? Complexes? Em, I don't know. What do they call them? I'm thinking of these places where all the games are. Do they really need them?'

As has been noted adult education policy is not usually subject to public analysis or discussion in the way in which schooling often is, in the local or national context. Leisure policy, however, because of its major role in British economic regeneration, was increasingly the focus of debate and policy analysis during the 1980's. There was, however, little attempt to assess its impact on existing sources of leisure provision or on those adult education activities which lie on the periphery of it in the 1980's. The warden of the Willington centre was forced, however, to assess the possible future effects of mass leisure provision on 'his' centre because of the new leisure centre's close geographical proximity. In doing so he

also compared the ethos of the two forms of provision and the quality of the staff-user relationships which they promoted and sustained. He made this comparison in Gemeinschaft and Gessellschaft terms, understanding the new leisure centre to be characterised by a cold atmosphere and associational relationships between its staff and users. By comparison his community had a warm and supportive atmosphere arising out of its 'organic' relationship to most of its clients:

'We've built this relationship up with the kids over several years. We know them all. Two of the leaders here are teachers in this school in the daytime so they know them'.

The conflating of the roles of teacher and youth leader is apparent here and it might be supposed, on some accounts of what happens in schools (see Willis.P, 1977), that the youth club might fail to attract the pupils of the school that it was held in. This did not seem to be the case: there were about sixty children playing ball and net type games in the gym (with no equipment other than a ball and a net) on the nights upon which I visited it. The children aged between eleven and fourteen were, perhaps, the average youth club attenders in age and predilections. Most of 'the real athletes' had, however, ceased to use the club being 'won over by the outstanding sports

equipment' at Spectrum (and, perhaps, by the measure of anonymity afforded them by its size and an opportunity to escape, for a while, from the atmosphere of school and the presence of their teachers):

'It's so big. I mean mentally, you know, physically this school is big, but we know everyone in every class and we know everyone who comes to the centre, by name and there's just the two of us here, Mike and I, [wardens] and we switch our nights around. I'm not saying there's not a place for us, mind, 'cos there is, but our sports are gone and our main strength was our sports. We were inundated with demands for the gym but now they just ask to hire the hall'.

Spectrum had the 'first high tech gym in the country outside of London' and it was felt that the dog-eared and sweaty gym mats, the pea green walls and sagging vaulting horse of the school gym could not compete with such provision. Competition for users, however, was not restricted to offering better equipment in bright, clean surroundings. The 'bussing in' of customers, seen as a last ditch attempt to raise the profile and user levels of the leisure centre by its manager, was adding to the unequal competition between the two forms of community provision in the Wear Valley:

'Bus fares. They give them free bus rides. How on earth does anybody get round that

kind of competition, I mean they might win on cheapness alone. Bus fares are very dear around here'.

The community centre was also short of cash:

'We break dead even here on the finances. Always something like fifty pounds in the pink. It works to a T. Last year we had one thousand and twenty seven pounds in and one thousand and twenty four pounds out. I don't know how it works. We have a little bit of rainy day money as well. We needed it three years ago when the County cut us right down. They said your classes can go to the wall but we only lost two classes 'cos we had this money but I don't know how you cope with this, I mean they've got a virtually limitless budget'.

The fact of this community centre's financial solvency in the rundown area of Willington seemed, to me, to be a triumph. Particularly so, following the severe financial retrenchment enforced on the adult education service throughout the 1980's:

'Any class with less than thirteen in it should be cut. That was all of ours so we went self-financing'.

The Spectrum leisure centre, however, was understood as having an 'unlimited budget'. The warden was very pessimistic about the chances of the financial situation improving, endorsing the FE Officer's comment that 'This state of affairs can't get any

better'. A tour of the building revealed it to be in very bad decorative order:

'It's very depressing decor here, very, especially for adults. I mean, when people come here it gives a very bad impression. It really does. I can understand the reason behind it if there's no money and I suppose in the school we're so used to it we hardly notice but when people come here it doesn't give a good impression. It's the dog end and its quite obvious we're the dog end'.

This is, of course, another familiar theme in the literature of adult education the 'poor cousin' (9) starved of resources and taking place against, and in spite of, the world:

'We exist in spite of things ... we've got over five hundred members. We can tell this on the renewal side in January when we get what we call our 'buffer' money in. It gets us through from July to December. May, June and July are grim months and then it picks up again in September. We've got to axe two classes in the New Year. Ladies Keep Fit - costing a fiver and bringing in a pound. There are only three members!'

Not surprisingly, it was difficult to attract and keep community centre staff, although, when they could be found they often brought valuable students with them:

'We're losing our cookery teacher. I've managed to find another girl (sic) from Howden and she might bring another lot of students with her. Often they do, you know, the tutors, they bring their own kind of

clique with them that they've been teaching for years in different places'.

Interviews with members of staff and participant observation in the community centre led me to form the conclusion that most of the work there was, in fact, youth work. Without a policy commitment on the part of the adult education and community providers to develop education and community education a policy of 'youth and community' quickly becomes 'running a youth club' (10):

'Our youth club's very good. Very good. It's always difficult to keep adult classes going, Flowers, Cakes, Dress-Making. They're our stalwarts but anything more adventurous - like computers - well it doesn't go. But with the youth club paying for itself and above, its swings and roundabouts. We keep a running total. So we can tell at a glance what the position is every week. I sometimes don't like to look. Still for every failure we seem to have a success story. I'm disappointed about the computers though. I really thought the computers would go but there was no interest, none at all and now we're stuck with all these televisions here...'

The centre had invested some of its scarce resources in computer equipment and television sets to serve as audio visual screens but the class on 'Home Computing' had failed to recruit. The problems of shared-use premises so often discussed in the literature were illustrated on a tour of the building. We tried to



gain access to the dressmaking room but no key had been left by the school staff for the community centre staff's use. The telephone rang, the only one in the building, from behind locked office doors. The community centre was not allowed access to any keys or the telephones. This presented potential difficulties in the case of an accident or illness. With, on some evenings, upwards of fifty children on the premises, most of them engaged in sports of some kind, such an occurrence as an eventuality might be predicted rather than ruled out. I spent several weeks as a participant observer at the youth club and it was obviously very successful (in its own terms). It was also the only youth club in Willington:

'We get nothing, you know, to set this club up. They closed all the others in Willington and asked me to set this one up. Well, the others had plenty of equipment, I mean, there's a video somewhere. It's still youth club property ... but it's been salted away somewhere'.

During the tour I was shown the First Aid Room in which an examined First Aid Certificate Course is run every year. I was also shown the library:

'Look at this - it's the total library for the school. A school of one thousand kids. There isn't enough books for half of them to have one each. It's like the whole total place, the whole fabric of the building,

it's knackered, knackered ... how can you do adult education without books?'

The youth club I had observed was run in the school gym. The room normally set aside for the youth club had been closed. It looked as if it had been bombed. There were holes in every part of the room's structure: Walls, ceiling and floors. Electric sockets had been pulled out and switches gauged out of their plaster surrounds in the walls:

'This was brand new. Purpose built two years ago. Those marks in the ceiling are where chairs have been thrown through it. It was accoustically developed and built for drama. When it rains the water pours in through that hole in that wall. How can you put the kids in a doss-house like this? Slums arn't buildings, you know, they're people'.

It seemed that the damage had been done by:

'The school. In the lunch hour you know. Unsupervised breaks ... Look at the walls, can you believe it? Even the sockets ... they were done in with table-tennis bats. I mean, can you stretch your mind to conceive that? I can't, but it's true and this is the only youth club facility in Wellington'.

There had apparently been worse incidents in this room to which it was hoped to attract adult education students:

'It's awful. You wouldn't get these conditions in a prison. Mind you, that's because it wouldn't be allowed in the first place. There was a riot here eighteen months ago. Fifty windows smashed. They went berserk. Berserk'.

I have relied heavily on the interviews and participant observations I carried out at this community centre in order to provide a description of one of the Wear Valley's largest community centres. I have tried to locate this centre and the Wear Valley local education authority response to adult education within the literature of adult education. I have also attempted to locate the Parkside Centre within a social and economic profile of the Wear Valley. There were many familiar problems of shared and joint use facilities. There was a predominance of youth over community work and clear evidence, too, that adult education was the 'poor cousin' of the educational system. There was, too, some evidence that adult education in the Wear Valley was becoming the impoverished neighbour of the formal recreational systems of the District Council too.

Of immediate concern to the centre head in Willington was the material fabric of the building in which he worked. It mitigated strongly against, if it did not

preclude, the success of the adult education activities there. The community centre adjacent to the Education Office in Bishop Auckland was acknowledged as being very successful:

'If you want to see the template its King James 1st and has been since 1976. It's one of the best centres in the county - 2000 to 3000 members. I've only got one class there. The rest are run by the community association'.

The King James 1st Community Centre had been purpose built as a shared use school/community centre and was kept in good repair and decorative order. While membership numbers are not the best evidence of the success or failure of a community centre they provide, as do the adult education class programmes an indicator of the level of activity around, if not in, a centre. A level of activity which must be maintained if resources of time and money are to be found for example, to buy equipment, maintain the fabric of the building and pay staff.

Two community centres: King James I and Hartside (Crook) were noted as being the most successful in the Wear Valley. Both were in middle class areas and acknowledged by themselves as being well resourced in terms of staff, equipment and money. The situation for

the other 'centres' in the Wear Valley must also have differed with their geographical, social, economic and cultural location. While the community centre at Hartside had 'more equipment than we know what to do with really' the centre at Parkside, Willington, on the evenings that I visited it had, as far as I could see, little more than a basket ball and net.

The classical liberal stance taken by the FE Officer to the provision of adult education and youth and community facilities in the Wear Valley remained uncomplicated by issues of equality of provision or of adult education opportunity or outcome. The FE Officer seemed almost to be unaware of the obvious differences in levels of adult education and youth and community provision, equipment, buildings and activity in the Wear Valley. He, in giving meaning to adult education, made no obvious links between the clear differences in provision, activity and resources outlined above and the various levels of 'deprivation' in the Wear Valley. He linked adult education in the Wear Valley to individual and psychological rather than social purpose.

The investing of large sums of money in prestigious mass leisure centres in the Wear Valley in the face of

the sort of social and educational deprivation I witnessed in the Willington school and community centre seems perverse unless understood in terms of economics: as an attempt to bring tourists, athletes and sports enthusiasts to the area and to create work for its residents. This school, however, probably has the largest intake of working class children in the Wear Valley. It is often argued, in the literature of adult education, that a person's experience of school somehow conditions his/her attitude to adult education. If this is so then it is not surprising that adult education seemed to have little meaning for most of the people I spoke to in the Wear Valley. What is surprising is that, where adult education did have meaning for people, it did so in strong terms. The warden of the Parkside Centre said:

'You can't imagine anyone coming here voluntarily can you? And yet they do, you know. I remember a couple of years ago we ran an upholstery class and these two women, they came from the top end of Willington, and they lugged this three seater settee all the way down and back again twice a week for months until it was finished. Can you imagine that? Of course, there's no storage space here, but to do that, they really do deserve better than this'.

J.L.Thompson (1983) has urged caution in the use of the term 'poor cousin' in the context of adult education arguing that it is not the 'poor cousin'

which serves the interests of the poor. The location of adult education on 'the lowest hierarchical level' of the education system does not mean that it constitutes an alternative means of educational provision for the less educated either. Adult education, on Thompson's view, then, acts as 'a microcosm of the educational system to consolidate educational and social divisions of schooling in capitalist society'. There was little to be found in the Willington Community Centre with which to mount a challenge to this view. There was little to endorse it either. There simply was no adult education activity in the Wear Valley that I was able to see let alone determine the function of. It seemed to me that adult education in the Wear Valley of County Durham was increasingly becoming a victim of the rhetoric of community in its many guises. It was also being affected, in ways equally difficult to determine, by new forms of leisure provision aimed, in the main, at re-generating the local economy. Adult education in the Wear Valley was therefore changing in response to the changing nature of work under capitalism in its nascent post-industrial form. Adult education was also, it seemed to me, in the Wear Valley, becoming increasingly divorced from any educational role or purpose, either putative or actual.

There were, then, clear threats to the identity and even the existence of non-university and voluntary adult education in the Wear Valley of County Durham. The adult education service, itself seriously reduced by the re-organisation which had made it part of the youth and community service was further overshadowed by new forms of, potentially mass, leisure provision.

The Deputy Director had referred to District Council Leisure provision as part of his outline sketch of the LEA adult education service:

'Then you've got places like the DLI [Durham Light Infantry Museum] and Bowes [Country House Museum] ... then you've got the district councils. Very often the district councils will be mainly involved in strictly leisure activities, they are set up as leisure activities, swimming, surfing or whatever, but those activities have always been potentially a part of, often a part of the County education provision. You can't really leave them as separate ...'.

In saying that I, as a researcher, could not really separate the County Council education provision from the District Council provision for adults, the Deputy Director of Education for County Durham was quite correct. The most recent form of District Council provision in the Wear Valley had been the building of the large purpose built leisure centre on the site of



the old miners' welfare hall using monies from the miners welfare trust: it was seen to be posing a serious threat to the existence of adult, youth and community provision in the Willington Community Centre by the head of the Willington Centre. A situation which was not appreciated by the FE Officer and his colleagues who dismissed the Spectrum Centre as 'a huge white elephant'. Conflict between the two forms of provision was frequently expressed in terms of individual personalities and working practices:

'... the young lass (sic) at Spectrum you know ... has just sent us a letter asking us for a list of all the organisations in the area. I rang her up and asked her to be a bit more specific, you know, what kind of organisations and she said well, you know, the Miners' Welfare, things like that and I said well you're standing on the only Miners' Welfare in the area, or where it used to be, it was knocked down to build your place, Spectrum'.

The lack of local knowledge displayed by the new leisure providers was regarded by the traditional adult educators and youth and community workers as evidence of their being 'Strangers, yuppies and incomers from the South'. It was, above all, seen as a product of a new and 'hard nosed' commercial approach to what has traditionally (whether as adult education or recreation) been seen as a public service:

'It's not just an educational function. It's a social function. To get out of the way of the husband and the kids. ... This is very important. It is a very important function of these classes ... Also it has to be informed ... I am not dogmatic about what goes on in class. If you want to see the high powered, commercial and profit-making view of recreation see the Spectrum Leisure Centre - a Mr Les Morgan - that is not my view of it all'.

I went to the new leisure centre and interviewed its manager and several of the staff. While the manager was an 'incomer' ie. from a district outside of the Wear Valley, the staff were mostly local people employed, in part, 'because of their knowledge of the area'. The young woman whom (the FE Officer alleged) had not known where the miners welfare hall was told me that she had been born just a few yards from the Spectrum Centre and therefore from the old miners' welfare hall. It is therefore inconceivable that she had not 'known' where the miners welfare building was in material terms. It is, however, easy to understand that, because it had little or no meaning for her, then she did not know where it was materially or conceptually in relation to her work in the leisure centre. (One of the most striking cultural 'facts' of the Wear Valley, for me, was the limited knowledge of their own recent history many of its young people possessed).

This account of the obvious 'incompetence' of the new providers was enhanced by the revelation of a youth and community worker that a letter had been sent out, 'through the post', by the new leisure complex secretary to the secretary of the old miners' welfare hall (at his home address) despite there being almost daily meetings between the secretaries of the leisure centre and officials of the miners' welfare trust (including its secretary). The role of this kind of 'data' in a Phd thesis is clearly problematic. It should not be. In the last analysis whether these stories are true or false need not concern us. That is a matter ultimately for epistemological resolution. For our purposes the fact that these stories were told, and that they were used both to reinforce 'group solidarity' and to inform future relationships between the various adult education providers and thus, practice, means that, to some extent at least, they were real in their consequences (intended or otherwise).

On the day that I visited it in November 1984, the first impression I registered was of a large number of notices. They were sited all around the centre: inside and outside, and prohibited all manner of things:

dogs, cycles, walking on the grass, walking beyond certain points, parking and 'stickers'. Clinically clean, the leisure centre was much quieter than the average hospital: the pop music coming from the Tannoy emphasised the silence in the fitness and games rooms. A couple of young school-age (at school time, on a school day) boys were desultorily throwing a ball. Spectrum was designed like a modern airport. Its lounges are called 'Arrivals One' and 'Arrivals Two'. Its telephone number chosen as 000747. Its windows are round: like port-holes. They swing up and over on hinges. The children of Willington had recently been invited to visit 'Captain Spectrum'. On the day I visited eight or nine children were climbing in and out, in and out of the centre through the revolving windows. Inside there were more notices: the prohibition of the wearing of black-soled shoes on the badminton court for example.

The manager of the centre had told me immediately (and without my asking any questions) when I rang to arrange an interview with him that he was 'doing my best but the public just aren't interested'. On the way to his office I noticed that although it was a lovely morning, with the sun low and bright in the sky, none of the outdoor facilities were in use.

Inside a boy of about eleven was plying the 'Space Invader' with money. The only other signs of activity: the giggling of two receptionists cocooned behind glass, eating chocolate and the swish swish of the feet of some dour and athletic looking young men who disappeared behind a door marked 'private'.

Mr Morgan was on the phone. On the walls of his office were several posters. The most eye-catching bearing the legend 'Those who say it can't be done are usually interrupted by those who are doing it'. He made six phone calls, telling me, in between dialling and waiting for the caller to answer, that he was a busy man and that it was:

'... always best to go to the busiest people in an organisation if you want anything doing as they're the only ones who can get anything done because they're aware how precious their time is'.

I explained what I was interested in adult education activities in the Spectrum Centre and asked if he had any literature detailing formal provision: dates, times and cost in order to avoid my asking questions designed to elicit information that I could get elsewhere: as he was clearly very busy. He gave me two very expensive looking leaflets, printed in bright primary colours on glossy paper. A marked contrast to

the FE Officer's publicity materials for Adult Education. In reply to the question 'What kind of activity do you see Spectrum providing? Mr Morgan said:

'It's very parochial. There are barriers from Crook to Willington never mind Eastgate to Willington. It is Wear Valley you're interested in isn't it? Spectrum replaces the community centres laughable provision. It was very good in the 1960's but this is the 1980's. This is the big form of the type of provision they should stand for. In theory it should be the focal point for leisure in the fullest sense, not just sport, but meals, a picnic area and all that. We've got a disabled lift. This is the flagship and what we need is a leisure stroke recreation pattern'.

Asked about the kinds of adult education activities provided at the Spectrum Centre the manager immediately turned the question to his own purpose: to tell me what he wanted me to know and not what I wanted to know. What he wanted me to know was how much conflict there was surrounding Spectrum. I assumed he meant conflict between new and more traditional forms of leisure and recreation provision and, perhaps, between 'leisure' and adult education. The conflict Mr Morgan wanted to talk about, however, was wider: it was, as he saw it, a conflict between the Spectrum Centre and 'the Wear Valley' understood as being 'its people':

'The problem is the people. The public. I mean, we're having to start to go to the dales. We're actually having to go to the shops and things to tell them we're here and what we do because they don't read newspapers, posters or listen to local radio or anything. I've used local radio a lot. I've used every media there is. I'm having to spend money going out into the communities which I don't think I should have to do'.

There is, also, perhaps a sense in which the manager of the leisure centre was involved not only in a conflict with 'the people' of 'the Wear Valley' but with 'the wider society' too. The building and running of leisure centres has been as significant a part of the re-structuring of the post-industrial economic base of Britain as the instigation of 'heritage' projects, but more criticised. Perhaps because 'heritage' seems to belong to everyone: 'there's something for everyone' being a popular museum slogan in the 1980's. But leisure centres have often been seen to be of benefit only to a few specific groups, middle class squash players and working class male youth. The problem of non-attendance at the leisure centre in Willington did seem, however, to be more intractable than might typically be expected. As a large part of the Wear Valley is situated in rural or semi-rural surroundings there was a causal assumption made about

the poor public transport facilities that are usually associated with such areas:

'... The county council is giving a bus fare refund to the kids so they can go to the baths in the holidays but it is the usual rural bus problem. In future, My Gaard [eyes rolling and hands flapping a la Black and White Minstrels show] we may have to organise special leisure buses. Aaaagh!'

I reply that this seems like a good idea and the 'problem' is once again located in the wider communities of the Wear Valley and with 'the people' who live in them. The manager clearly saw his centre and its activities as a universal good, in and of themselves, and was angry at the reception they were receiving in the Wear Valley:

'Yes, but the people here are so bloody negative. You know I've actually started walking out of pubs up here. I won't stand for it. They're totally negative. They actually say to me 'Oh, it'll never work' or 'when's it closing down?' It makes me spit. I won't stand for it. I just walk out. We had a table tennis international last week you know, a chance to meet top world class players in Willington and they didn't want to know. As far as I'm concerned Spectrum is here in Willington. They have no option. They, Wear Valley, should be proud of it and support it but they haven't. Some people from Willington don't even know where it is'.

Much of the public opposition, in the Wear Valley, to the Spectrum centre seemed to have nothing to do with



its staff or its ethos or activities. It was perhaps an expression of growing political opposition to the long-time labour dominated local council and what had, in a time of severe financial restraint and economic depression, come to be seen as its excessive spending on leisure provision. The Spectrum centre, along with the proposed new Civic Centre, had become the focus for much of this protest.

The Spectrum had cost around £2 million to build and was in need of regular and costly refits and equipment updates. It was primarily an economic venture: its main aim to provide a profit making leisure facility for both the people of the Wear Valley and tourists:

'The name of the game is to get as many paying punters through that door as soon as you like'.

The adult educational aspects of Spectrum provision were not mentioned and, perhaps, had not been identified in those terms. Adult education associated with sports and leisure provision is typically understood to be both incidental and secondary to, training and recreation. The Spectrum Centre was understood by the Parkside Community Centre head to be a threat to his centre in terms, not of its adult education provision, but of its youth club. If the

centre at Parkside was going to be forced to close, as had been suggested, it was because its junior members were understood to be 'being pinched' by the Spectrum Centre: without its youth club then, the Parkside Centre would close.

The staff of Spectrum had qualifications relevant to its economic and sports training aims and purpose. Mr Morgan was an experienced leisure centre manager.

'I've done this before in Glasgow. I am qualified in PE instruction [but not a teacher] and I've got a qualification in Man Management'.

He, in common with the Further Education Officer, had a qualification in PE (Physical Exercise, but as an instructor, 'not a teacher'), and a lot of freedom to determine the centre's policy and activities:

'There's a trust committee within the council. This was originally the old Miners' Welfare building. There's a member from the community on it and I spend their money for them. I came here because of what the site could offer. I have a vision of what the council should provide for leisure. Do you know what they were going to call it? Willington and Derwentside Recreation and Leisure Centre. I mean, now how can you sell that? I mean leisure is politics now. It's one of the few growth industries. Even central government are in it due to the unemployed'.

I concluded the interview by asking him what 'leisure' meant to him and he replied:

'This complex exemplifies leisure, old, young, disabled etc. You can't get more comprehensive than that'.

He fell silent. Then pulled a brochure from a filing cabinet and began to quote from it:

'Leisure is replacing work. If you don't work then you have leisure time. After work and sleep and food there is one third daily target. As far as unemployment goes in the Wear Valley leisure replaces work. Leisure .....

So far this examination of the specific nature of adult education in the Wear Valley has, not surprisingly, in the context of a modern 'mass' society, identified several issues which are well documented in the literature of adult education and, increasingly, of leisure and of youth and community work: and some which are not. The decline of the liberal adult education tradition the rise of mass leisure provision with an overt emphasis on sport and fitness and the relative underdevelopment of youth and community facilities compared to both the traditional adult education past and the modern leisure-centre future. The meanings of adult education in the Wear Valley to both the FE Officer and the manager of the

new leisure centre have been identified as containing little reference to either education or adults. Both speak of their provision in terms of leisure and recreation. They talk of 'community' and 'the people' while aiming their services predominantly at children and young people. The Deputy Director of Education for County Durham, on the other hand, spoke mainly in terms of education and of education aimed at adults. None of these people seemed to have informed their discussions by either direct involvement in adult education or community education in the Wear Valley or by empirical research. None spoke of the social and economic context of the Wear Valley in terms of deprivation. The centre head at Willington however, although he did not use the word 'deprivation', seemed almost to define his task of being that of 'surviving': keeping the centre open. This despite the relative deprivation of Willington to other areas of the Wear Valley, of the Parkside School and Community Centre to others within the Durham County education system and, above all, of the relative deprivation, in terms of money and resources, of his centre compared with Spectrum.

The meaning of the Wear Valley for each of these key figures in adult education provision differed. For the

Deputy Director the main problem he was experiencing in giving the Wear Valley meaning was in locating it geographically:

'It's difficult in Durham because the sheer physical size means that, by and large, if you're talking about any structure then you have to, you tend to, think about it in terms of five areas of the county, so you're talking about five mini-structures there, and, hopefully, not too bureaucratic at the top, which enables some sort of county wide provision and that includes the Wear Valley'.

For the FE Officer the Wear Valley was an administrative and geographical area: a very large and 'totally unmanageable area including half of Durham as well as the Wear Valley' in which the bricks and mortar of community had to be erected and maintained. For the leisure centre manager the Wear Valley had meaning as an economic unit: his task was to play a significant part in the re-structuring of the local economy by providing work and income by producing organised leisure as a substitute for work.

The LEA adult education service in the Wear Valley was clearly undergoing change. While the system of adult education provision nationally remained essentially the same as that laid down under the 1944 Act there had been changes made in the Wear Valley and other

localities which have been documented in the literature of adult education. It is difficult to make any direct comparisons between the Wear Valley and anywhere else in Britain due to lack of research and the quantitative materials necessary for such a comparative project. It does seem, however, that the Wear Valley had still retained a notional commitment to the idea of a formal and traditional liberal adult education programme at a time when many LEA's had abandoned it. The termly prospectus however was indicative, in my view, of no more than such a notional commitment and was not really representative of the actual realities of adult education provision in the Wear Valley. Similarly, its fee remission scheme. The Wear Valley prospectus presented an image of a reasonably comprehensive adult education service (albeit with traditional arts and crafts curricula) with financial assistance to the unemployed and old aged pensioners. This service was, on the official view, reinforced by a growing and coherent body of community centre activities. Reference was made to monitoring this system in terms of 'educational standards' as well as attendance and good management but in later conversations the FE Officer admitted that he could not really cover all the ground for which he was responsible in terms of 'the most

important job - making sure that the community centre management committee is coping and that its democratic'. He didn't really have much time for anything else. The educational component of any activities 'in the centres in every village' was, it seems to me, if it was considered at all, taken for granted.

In this context, the suggestion in Harries-Jenkins' account of the 'Demise of the Liberal Tradition' of university extramural adult education provision that Local Education Authorities were one of the bodies who could provide liberal adult education 'more effectively and more efficiently' than the university sector seems absurd. Few in the Wear Valley believed the liberal tradition of adult education to be worth maintaining. Those who did were frequently operating in run down community centres with little support from either the LEA or the local people they claimed to be providing an adult education or community centre service for. Where community centres were successful it was in terms of their youth provision. Increasingly this was perceived as being threatened by new and purpose built sports and leisure centres.

Notes and References

1. The Interim Report 'Inequalities in Health in the Northern Region' by Townsend.P et al (1986) provides evidence of the ways in which inequalities between populations of different areas in health are manifest in the Wear Valley and between areas of the Wear Valley and the rest of Britain. In doing so it gives more evidence of the levels of deprivation experienced in some parts of the Wear Valley as against others. Woodhouse Close electoral ward (a large council estate) in Bishop Auckland having, in 1986, 67.0% of households 'without a car, 10.9% of those households being overcrowded, 86% of them not being owner occupied and 46% of their occupants being Registrar General Social Class Grouping ranked as 4 and 5. As regards health and mortality Woodhouse Close has a Standard Mortality Rate (SMR) of 167, a number of deaths at 81 (per thousand) and a permanent sickness rate of 4.6%. The number of people permanently sick was 51% per thousand and the percentage of low weight births was 24.5%. It had a deprivation rank of 13 and percentage of people unemployed there was 23.5%.



Some comparable figures for Crook South are Number of deaths per thousand, 45. Percentage permanently sick 3.5%. Low weight births, 16.4%. Deprivation rank, 251. Unemployed, 15.2%. Households overcrowded, 3.5%. Class 4 & 5 households, 20.2%.

For Stanhope the figures are Number of deaths per thousand, 23. Percentage permanently sick, 2.2%. Low weight births, 7.8%. Deprivation rank, 413. Unemployed, 9.3%. Households overcrowded, 2.0%. Class 4 & 5 households, 32.8%.

2. There were community centres in the Wear Valley for example, Hartside Community Centre in Crook whose treasurers and secretaries were 'embarrassed by the amount of money we've got in the bank and there's nothing to spend it on. They, the kids, have got all the equipment they want'.
3. For a series of perspectives on the form and content of the move towards light manufacturing industry as a partial economic base in County Durham in the 1960's and early 1970's as a

response to the decline of the coal industry see Bulmer.M (1978).

4. I do not want to be drawn here into making statements of the 'poorer an area, the poorer its community facility, the more it needs adult and community education' variety because I am not at all sure that this is the case. In my view British adult education is a form of leisure activity at its most successful. Its success or usefulness as a political or economic activity is by no means established or to be assumed.
5. Sennett R. & Cobb J. (1972).
6. See Townsend.P (1986).
7. I entered 'the field' of this research in a number of ways at roughly the same time. I approached the FE Officer and made 'official' entrances to the field. In these I was either accompanied by the peripatetic youth and community worker or had gone to the centre on her recommendations. I also approached a number of centres in Crook, Willington and Bishop Auckland without introduction - once I had got permission

to 'go where you like, just tell them its all right with me' from the FE Officer. There was a clearer difference in terms of staff employed and ways of working, between the centres held up as being 'the best' by the youth and community worker and those I just stumbled upon.

8. This 'apathy' is as ubiquitous a term in the literature of adult education as 'community'. It served many purposes for many people in the Wear Valley. During the course of a meeting in which a relatively small amount of funding was denied to the local Citizens Advice Bureau the leader of Wear Valley District Council, John Richardson, stressed that the CAB, in common with most local voluntary organisations had very little public support in the Wear Valley:

'They're so apathetic. Even the working men's clubs. They can't get anybody to serve on the committee, and mind, it has to be bad when it get so as its affecting the working men's clubs'.

9. See Newman M. (1979).
10. I was formerly employed as a Youth Leader by County Durham Youth and Community Committee so had some familiarity with the practice and policy

of youth work in County Durham. In my experience it was neither as untheorised or unpolitical in its aims as many of its critics would maintain, however, the form and content of much of its practice was determined at individual 'Centre' level by wardens, leaders and youth workers and members of the public as management committee members. It is therefore impossible to generalise about either youth and community policy or practice in the Wear Valley of County Durham. There was, however, general consensus amongst most of the people I met in the course of this research, that 'community' had been neglected in favour of 'youth work' in County Durham. The same assertion was frequently made in the Wear Valley by practitioners other than the Further Education Officer and the Peripatetic Youth and Community Worker, both of whom declared in the face of much of the evidence that I came across, that there was a thriving adult education and community service in the Wear Valley.

CHAPTER NINE: ADULT EDUCATION IN THE WEAR VALLEY: THE  
RESPONSIBLE BODY PERSPECTIVE

'The pages of the Association's newsletter the WEA News adds personal testimonies of the esteem in which the WEA is held by those who know what it does. Members of Parliament of all the major parties have paid their tributes - Alan Beith for the Liberals, Shirley Williams for the SDP, Neil Kinnock for Labour and Keith Hampson for the Conservatives.

All see the WEA as a major instrument in the development of adult and continuing education for which all profess enthusiastic support' (Jennings, WEA News, 1984).

Responsible Body adult education is that provided, jointly and separately, by universities and the Workers' Educational Association (WEA). Reflecting the idea of university liberal adult education as being 'outside the walls' of the university these providers have traditionally been organised in departments, delegacies or boards of external, extramural and adult education. In recent years, reflecting the changing form and content of university adult education (which prompted Harries-Jenkins to speak of 'The Demise of the Liberal Tradition') provision has been increasingly organised in departments of adult, continuing and, or, professional education. Whether this, in academic and ideological terms, reflects a

move 'inside' the university is not clear. Many practitioners (see for example Marriott.S 1984) would welcome such a move believing that the role and purpose of university adult education should be that of bringing all adults, irrespective of social and personal characteristics, into the university 'proper' and, therefore, into contact with the research and scholarship which goes on in it.

In the Wear Valley in the 1980's Responsible Body adult education provision was made by the Delegacy for Adult and Continuing Education (DACE) (1) and the North Eastern District of the WEA. It was difficult to separate the theory and practice of the WEA, and therefore its provision, in the Wear Valley from that of mainstream DACE liberal adult education provision there because of the close working relationship which had been built up, 'over the years', by the WEA tutor-organiser (responsible for that provision) and some members of staff of DACE.

There were, however, clear differences of opinion (frequently reflected in practice) over the role, purpose and, therefore, the meaning, of adult education to, and between, members of the university delegacy. The WEA tutor-organiser located himself, and

his view of adult education, at 'the more traditional end' of the extramural curricular continuum. This indicates that, in so far as adult education provision in the Wear Valley was influenced by him, it was 'fairly traditional fare'.

Historically and nationally the WEA and university response to adult education has taken different forms since the inception of the WEA in 1903 (although their content has frequently been similar). Of that content, writing to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the WEA (in WEA News, New Series No 26, Spring 1984) Howard Wall drew attention both to the aims of the WEA and to the question of their continued relevance in the 1980's. Giving its aims as providing liberal education for personal development, improving the effectiveness of community participation (whether in trades union, political or social service), encouraging cultural pursuits and securing improvements in the public education system and the removal of inequalities in educational opportunity he acknowledges that:

'... there may be people who wonder whether the WEA has a role in contemporary society, there may be many who have only a limited idea of what it is and what it has achieved since its foundation in 1903' (Wall.H, 1984).

The aims of the WEA, as stated by Wall, remain as cogent and in some ways as unrealised as they were in 1903. It is tempting to suggest that the WEA is as relevant today as it was then. Such a judgement, however, is perhaps better made on the basis of the performance of the WEA; its ability to fulfill its stated aims rather than on a mere repetition of their social purpose and import. We do not know, however, as with most adult education, what the WEA adult educator does and therefore what WEA adult education is. Upon learning that the association has nine hundred branches in twenty one districts and is served by a national organisation employing nearly two hundred full-time staff (including tutor-organisers, development officers and administrative and secretarial staff) and that it provides employment for thousands of part-time tutors to provide for over 170,000 students on nine hundred courses receiving financial assistance from both central and local government as well as from voluntary sources (Wall, 1984) we should not immediately conclude (along with him) that:

'This brief catalogue of information should provide sufficient evidence of the virility of the WEA'.



We should perhaps ask the question: what do all these people do, where and under what circumstances do they do it and to what purpose and end?

That some adult educators in the WEA in the 1980's, at the level of national policy, upheld the aims of its founders can be seen in the following comments made by its President, Bernard Jennings:

'The problems facing our society today are so formidable that we are tempted to seek solace in studies as far removed as possible from economic and social issues ... The WEA believes in education for its own sake and education for social purpose. We should find room in our programmes for an adequate consideration of social and political issues' (WEA News, 1984).

At the local level of the Northern District, the 'social purpose' aims of the WEA are upheld (at least in its literature). Some of the difficulties of realising them are also acknowledged:

'Overall, a deeply disappointing year with a surprising number of failures of courses on social, economic and political topics. People did not want to examine means of dealing with unemployment, nor explore the myths and realities about "Geordies" nor discuss "The Police and Society" with a Chief Inspector from Northumbria Police and a lecturer in Sociology from Durham University. (And this during the height of the Miners' Strike!). The prospect of a future with far more 'leisure' time raises

all sorts of questions. But "Leisure: The Work of the Future" also failed to recruit. In an increasingly divided society, the role of 'pressure-groups' might be considered to be worth examining. But nobody turned up at 7 p.m. and just one person arrived, late. ... If I sound sad, almost bitter in tone, this is how I am feeling, ... The above courses were not designed or described in academic 'dryasdust' terms; they were extremely well advertised, and it is not as if people turned up only to be disappointed by the tutor. The courses did not fail because of large declines in attendances; they failed because they did not recruit sufficiently in the first place. All were offered in Newcastle, and the branch committee is to be congratulated for a most ambitious programme of socially relevant subjects. People agree that it is all a "Good Thing", but they don't want actually to turn up and be part of it!' (Alex Howard, Tutor Organiser in WEA Northern District, Annual Report, 1984-85, p12).

The report of the tutor organiser (2) responsible for WEA adult education provision in the Wear Valley area while noting that there had been 'strong programmes' in his area, particularly in Durham, Darlington, Stockton, Hartlepool and Billingham, made no mention of the Wear Valley. The failure to develop a WEA branch at nearby Derwentside and 'the dubious future' of the Barnard Castle branch (founded in 1942) 'unless willing volunteers come forward' (3) was recorded. The tutor organiser's report made no reference to the kind of social purpose adult education desired by Jennings and despaired of realising by Howard. This may, of course, reflect shortage of space in the publication.

It may also reflect the autonomy of the individual tutor organiser in determining the content and, to some extent, the form of WEA adult education provision.

The tutor organiser for the Wear Valley in describing WEA adult education in the Wear Valley revealed, also, clear ideas of what he felt it should be: it should be traditional, liberal and progressive. Demanding neither social or political involvement as its aims but not precluding them. It was, and should be, about the education of adults which, while it may take place in community centres and village halls, was separate from either community education or youth work. He was aware of the need to evaluate provision in adult education terms if not always able to do so. When I interviewed the tutor-organiser I told him that I had been involved (as a participant observer) in a WEA 'class' in Bishop Auckland. The course was run by a woman tutor: and aimed specifically at women. The tutor gave an example of one of the difficulties of monitoring and evaluating this type of WEA provision:

'I think Lil is OK. I don't really know. I haven't actually been and sat in on a session because of the obvious problem ... I'm a man. I can't go and sit in on a session like that. All I can do is arrange for one of my female colleagues to be involved'.

When interviewed the tutor-organiser spoke of the difficulties of providing 'a coherent programme' in an area which:

'includes the Wear Valley and everything else between the Rivers Tweed to the Tees and from the North to the Irish seas'.

He had few activities in his programme which took place in the Wear Valley and rarely had the time to visit it. I met him at a meeting organised by 'Replan' (4) and held in Auckland Castle - the official residence of the Bishop of Durham (while I was working as a volunteer with the Caravanserai project for unemployed people). The tutor was surprised that I had managed to locate him:

'The WEA is not in each of the telephone books. It's in the Newcastle one, the District Office, and after that all the area tutor-organisers ... they each run from their own private homes and I gather that if we advertise under our own names, under WEA, we're from our own homes and we're likely to be done for a) tax problems and b) a business line. What's supposed to happen is the WEA's supposed to put a list of telephone numbers in each of the various districts, but I don't think we've got round to it ... it makes life difficult until you find out who is the one particular person and of course there's no-one in this area that's involved to any particular extent else you would have picked up the trail ... How did you get onto me?'

I had 'picked up the trail' through a conversation I had with one of the women who came into the 'Caravanserai' project while I was working there as a volunteer and whom I kept 'bumping into' in local shops throughout the course of the research. She ran the women's course. As far as I could ascertain, this group of about six women was the only WEA initiative in the Wear Valley. I became a participant observer in this group which met in the King James Ist Community School and Centre at Bishop Auckland: 'the jewel in the crown' of the LEA youth and community provision in the Wear Valley. The problems of 'shared use' were again apparent:

'Lil is my one major contact ... she attempts to run a class at King James I which is not the easiest thing to do because of the problems of, although its a joint use school, the school has predominance in the day time and they want to run classes in all their rooms, in fact, Lil's just had a big spoon-stirring session. She wrote to me and I'm following it up. I'm hoping that, although we've complained, it won't be held against us ... I mean, the creche has just got to be made available in the day time and not just for school re-sit exams which is, in fact, what's happening'.

While I was part of this women's study group (for most of its duration) we were continually moved from one room to another because 'the school must come first' and were made to feel generally unwelcome in the

cheerful community school building with its purpose built coffee bar in which the women of the study group looked (and told me they felt) 'out of place'. The problems of pressure for space, the low priority accorded to adult educational activities, the difficulties of establishing suitable and reliable child-care facilities in shared use and joint-use accommodation are well documented in the literature of adult education.

Most of these problems were present in the Wear Valley's 'showpiece' community centre: the King James I at Bishop Auckland: 'the template' of LEA community centre provision. There were problems of finding a room in which the WEA 'class' could take place and in running and staffing the necessary creche to accompany it. These tensions had begun to coalesce around the need for a room in which to hold the creche.

The school needed the room the WEA session usually took place in for a music room. It was suggested that the class move into the room the creche was run in but no other room was offered in which to house the creche. The WEA 'class' was part of 'community association provision'. When I joined the WEA 'class' (as a fee paying member in order to ensure that it

made its absolute minimum number of fee paying students requirement) the headmaster of the community school, faced with a choice between school and 'community' was threatening to withdraw the music room from the WEA without offering an alternative: in effect, to close the class.

The women's group was the only WEA activity in the Wear Valley when I interviewed the tutor organiser. In describing what had 'traditionally' been provided in the Wear Valley and some WEA 'involvement' in the industrial museum making project at Killhope Wheel, he seemed, to me, to portray the 'barely there' fact of its provision in the Wear Valley:

'... the other class, the other class in the Wear Valley, is the art class that Mrs Soper's been doing at King James I for donkey's years, er, but she's now very elderly and I think probably that will cease in the next year or so. I don't really envisage her being able to carry on very much longer. In fact the class at Bishop Auckland failed this past year, during this year, there was about seven or eight I think, students, when in the past they've had twenty or thirty ... when she was at the old Barrington school, its Pennywise now, of course it was ideal in the market place, there was none of this traipsing out and hunting round the King James I site, you knew exactly where you were and in many ways, that was a very good centre, ... so that's been my, Ed Soper's been the one person, through the years, who since I've been here has consistently been doing something in, or close to, Bishop Auckland 'cos her other class is up the hill at Toft

Hill. Now that's going on, that's Teesdale, technically, but close enough geographically ... They have, Ed and her husband, a good following whether the art, being perhaps slightly critical, whether the art, whether the sort of art that she's willing to teach is the sort of art that the modern tutor would teach is another matter but certainly she at least manages to introduce quite a few beginners to doing things ... I wouldn't do her down totally. I do, as I say, think it might be time for a bit of a change but it's difficult when she's been doing it for so long'.

The scale and size of the geographical area for which the tutor organiser was responsible shaped the WEA programme in the Wear Valley (as elsewhere) considerably:

I've been here eighteen years and I'm full time looking after the whole county. The whole of County Durham and the Northern half of Cleveland so I've got Stockton and Hartlepool and the whole of County Durham ... which means that in many ways you are absolutely reliant on a contact like Lil, developing something which then gets off the ground of itself and then is developing itself into a branch, or a group of people who then say, 'Oh can we have this?' and 'Can we have that?' and the whole thing begins to escalate but unless you've got that it's very difficult ... I am reliant on people knowing a) that the WEA exists and b) them finding out I exist ...'.

The WEA's most recent involvement in the Wear Valley had happened following an approach from people living and working there:



'County Planning Office said to ... contact John Gosden because he can put something on with you ... the Countryside Unit said to him, contact John Gosden because he can provide you, pay tutors for you, so last summer Peter Clack did these three linked weekends where ... they were fairly well spread across from Alston to Easington so about half a dozen people from the dale and the rest from everywhere else ... but the Friends of Killhope Wheel is a slightly different thing ... a lot of it is local but it also interests a lot of industrial archaeology minded people from all over the county ... so that went very, very well ...'.

The tutor had formerly been the county archaeologist and the content of the weekends had been primarily skills based:

'What he did, what Peter did, what they wanted was a skill. The skill was: how do we survey this Killhope site archaeology so that we're getting out of it, we're not losing things, missing things, for a start, but also so that we can make sure we know most of the things that are on the site, at least superficially ... so that, then, we're in a position to make recommendations as friends of the wheel and help get funding perhaps ... for some of the future development of the wheel site which isn't just the wheel, it's all the way up the hillside ... so what Peter did with them was to take a dozen of them up on the tops to one of the washers, one of the old water sluicing water dam ways of stripping the top off so you could get to the lead ... and so they literally surveyed from high on one side of the hill, of the gash, down down into the middle and out t'other side. Now you try to do that, it's a considerable logistical problem of just keeping your feet, let alone trying to survey it at the same time, so he put them through the mill, in terms of being able to do surveying on

the ground, making sure it was transferred accurately onto maps, into newly created maps ... it was tied in to the grid system in some way or other so that you knew roughly where you were ... but it was quite deliberately limited. It wasn't a course or a programme of classes'.

Recent WEA adult education in the Wear Valley therefore has been skills based, related, through an 'official' contact, to a hobby or enthusiast group and related to a practical project: the aims, purposes and outcomes of which were decided by the members of the enthusiast group: 'The Friends of Killhope Wheel' and not by any a priori model of adult education for social purpose or otherwise. The WEA was, therefore, in the Wear Valley responding to locally generated demand not initiating it and that response was essentially a liberal one.

Given the size of the geographical area this tutor was responsible for, and his problems finding adequate premises, the WEA adult education activities in the Wear Valley, relative to those of other providers, were significant in form and content and quantity.

The difficulties involved in getting and keeping suitable premises for WEA activities in the Wear Valley (and presumably elsewhere in the area of the

Northern Region of the WEA for which the tutor was responsible) had led 'over the years' to a situation in which he worked 'where possible with the university' because they were not solely dependent on finding accommodation in local contexts having premises of their own (including adult education centres in Durham and Stockton). WEA provision in the Wear Valley therefore was linked very closely with that of the Durham Delegacy for Adult and Continuing Education, an adult education organisation which was undergoing considerable changes of a financial and ideological nature in the years in which I was doing this research.

The Report of the DACE session 1980-81 showed that the popular environmentalist David Bellamy had been conferred as Honorary Professor. The Director of the Delegacy felt that university adult education in the Wear Valley would benefit greatly from being associated with such a popular figure. He thought also that Bellamy's attitude to, and skills of, popularising education and particularly environmental education, reflected two key aims of DACE provision: to take adult education out amongst the people and 'to hook into, and benefit from' the growing environmental

awareness which was becoming manifest in the de-industrialising North East of England at that time.

A report of the session 1980-1981 made reference to the financial pressures under which DACE was operating. Noting that a major task:

'will be determining the level of student fees for 1983-84 and possibly 1982-83. The University Grants Committee in its letter at the end of the 1980-81 academic year recommended - no more than that - a 100% + increase at present-day prices, according to our calculations' (DACE, 1981, p2).

With regard to the programme (1980-1981) there had been:

'a gratifying response to a series of linked lectures in urban Darlington on 200 years of farming change ... The course on computers and information had to be duplicated and the signs are that in 1981/82 more will be needed (four are planned ...)' (DACE, 1981, pp2-3).

And that one notable event had been

'... a joint one week field course at Malham Tarn Field Centre. The mixing of adult students from the north-east and south-east proved so successful and rewarding that the collaboration will continue. Next year a joint party will visit the south of France for a fortnight. Part of the time will be spent studying a rare species of European tortoise' (DACE, 1981, p5).

It also reported, however, that:

'On the other hand, the difficulty of obtaining viable numbers for courses concerned with vital issues of contemporary concern ... remained and so the courses "The Social Implications of the New Technology" and "Political Decisions and Economic Results" were poorly attended' (DACE, 1981, p3).

And noted that with regard to history classes, (which were popular), the appendix:

'... records all we attempted including classes that had to close, [so that] the reader can determine that omissions are a failure of planning and not of student reception' (DACE, 1981, p5).

When I began the research which informs this thesis I had taken, as my 'research problem' the relationship between adult education and unemployed people. That problem was taken from the literature of adult education. It included literature from the local context. The response made by DACE to the growing pressure for adult education to respond positively to the problem of large-scale unemployment was typical of the 'extramural' response across Britain: talk, concern, uncertainty and, in consequence, very little activity:

'What has the department's response been to this situation? So far fitful. People who are unemployed and their dependants are admitted free to all courses ... Mr Biggs

has from time to time organised courses specifically for those out of work with occasional success. In 1981-82 the Elvet Art Centre, Durham, will be open to the unemployed on Wednesday mornings for them to follow their own interests in the visual arts. The morning sessions will be followed by open afternoons with minimal instruction and supervision for people to continue their work throughout the day if they so wish. Less traditional channels of publicity are being used such as the Green Shop, drop-in centres and job centres' (DACE, 1981, p8).

On the whole, however, the DACE response to the educational needs of the unemployed had been a vocational one. It was represented mainly through the work of 'Mr P.W.Smith, the fieldwork development officer under the auspices of the Community Business Ventures Unit'. Enquiries revealed that this work consisted, in the main, of education aimed at helping people to set up businesses in the form of co-operatives.

It was, then, acknowledged within DACE that:

' ...debate about the role of the department [with regard to unemployment] is only just beginning. There are those who feel that no special provision, other than that already described, should be made. Others are uncertain of the form it should take and understandably diffident about whether they have any relevant skills to offer. Some regard most of the present unemployment as structural and see our community as moving or as already having moved into a 'post-industrial' society. On this basis it is argued that our country is and will be one in which substantial numbers of people will

never again be offered full-time or even part-time paid employment. And that it is our responsibility in adult education to rethink our ways of working both organisationally and in terms of teaching objectives and approach to take account of this awesome development' (DACE, 1981, p9).

While the concerns of DACE reflected the concern of adult educators nationally with regard to unemployment the situation was generally understood as being more pressing because:

'The Northern Region has the highest percentage of unemployed of any region in England and Wales (19.0% in Cleveland, 16.1% in Tyne and Wear and 15.1% in Durham in August 1981). ... The figure of 18.5% for South Tyneside meant 23,700 males and 9,700 females out of work in that month' (DACE, 1981, pp7-8).

Other aspects of DACE activity (as represented in the report of the session) reflected the wider concerns of adult education with its curriculum form, content and theory. The adult education seminar programme for the year had included Dr Paula Allman and Tom Lovett as guest speakers. Reflecting, perhaps, the wider pre-occupation in adult education with teaching methods (understood as andragogies (5) to distinguish them from the pedagogies which characterise education for children) and community development (6). Interviews with members of staff of DACE revealed similar

concerns and tensions between the individual adult student or learner and the adult collectivity or community. These issues were seen as being particularly relevant in the context of the Wear Valley. Tutors who had worked in, and therefore, gained experience of, some of the communities in the Wear Valley and its people tended to stress the need for 'traditional' adult education aimed at meeting the needs of individual students. Tutors with little or no experience of adult education in the Wear Valley were the most enthusiastic advocates of a community approach to adult education there.

To sum up so far: DACE was divided about its response to unemployment (potential and actual). It was divided in its response to the perceived needs of the adult learner/community. It was also divided in its views of the role, purpose and nature of university extramural adult education. For some tutors liberal extramural adult education was, and should continue to be, subject based and oriented. The tutor was understood as having a specialist body of academic knowledge and, therefore, as being an expert. Adult education was acknowledged as being a profession. Biographically informed accounts of the ways in which adult educators in DACE took up adult education revealed a pre-



occupation (in terms of research and teaching) with a specialist subject as opposed to adult education. Adult education was a vehicle for delivering (teaching) subject knowledge. Again, this is usual in adult education (or at least what we know of adult education) practices nationally as reflected in the literature of adult education. So too the tendency to 'drift' into adult education. A local history tutor, for example, told me:

'I've been in adult education now for almost thirty years ... I've always taught history and that history, in the main, has always been local history. I just drifted into, well drifted no, ... I'm not sure, ... adult education's the only thing I've ever done ... when I was at Oxford, the deputy extramural head of department there ... he let it be known that, ... he invited people to go to talk to him about adult education work ... and my tutor ... Christopher Hill ... he invited me to go, so I went round and talked to the man about it and that's actually how I first got to know about adult education. I'd never been conscious of it as a child or teenager in my locality, where I lived and my parents hadn't gone to such a class. I must confess that I knew nothing of adult education although my parents had quite civilised interests, reading and playing the piano, it isn't as though they were ignorant Sun readers or its equivalent in those days ... I went straight from Oxford to the WEA and then into university extramural work'.

The picture here is of traditional liberal adult education (as perhaps understood by Harries-Jenkins) as a civilising activity. This tutor entered the world

of adult education as a way of pursuing other (more subject based) interests:

'I became personally interested in local history and was, it was an important and expanding kind of subject in those days and adult education really took the lead I think, not just in popularising local history but in promoting the serious study of local records ... and also wanting, myself, to do some research ... local history in an adult education department provided the best opportunity'.

This tutor presented an essentially liberal view of adult education. The academic pursuit of subject based knowledge. Taking place in traditional adult education 'classroom' settings but not tied to any particular locality: Aimed at the individual adult student and not a collectivity of 'community', group or team (although clearly not precluding it). A tutor with experience of providing adult education classes in the Wear Valley, 'although not recently', he identified one of its major population centres in which he had taught local history for many years before lack of interest or 'apathy' on the part of its people had forced the class to close (7):

'I really think, in places like Crook, for example, one has to be philosophical about a class finishing. OK, there are some historic examples of a class or classes, that went on for ten or fifteen years but there are people in this profession who would say, on principle, that that is probably not such a

good thing. My own view is that, in ordinary practice, one has to assume a class only has a certain life time and beyond that class, perhaps even the locality only has a certain life span as a centre for adult education activity. It has to be a question of whether you have actually exhausted an area's potential for adult education activity'.

On this view, then, adult education is essentially a subject based, roving activity to be taken from one area to another by expert tutors who are members of a profession. It is open in its access and increasingly threatened by new forms of educational and recreative activity such as the media:

'Of course there are things that television can do that you just can't equal in an adult education class'.

But still offering a distinct and identifiable educational product which was 'a good thing' in and of itself: knowledge for knowledge's sake:

'My philosophy is very much in the liberal tradition, I think we still offer something that adults would very much want to do, pondering, reflecting, this is a bit of a caricature but you know what I mean, pondering, reflecting the larger questions of life and its another way really ... of saying that something that was once important is gone ... you see this model, this way of doing adult education, is going, because its not what the market wants ... we don't do history, or perhaps a better example is philosophy, we don't do philosophy because it needs doing and needs doing well because we don't think like that

any longer I'm afraid ... we think of the market ... that's mainly vocational and professional courses ...'.

We have already seen how some tutors in DACE felt that 'the growing concentration' of professional and vocational courses within its programme was damaging to the interests of 'traditional liberal' extramural adult education as they perceived it. While not all of the tutors upheld the liberal model as being suitable to determine the role or purpose of university extramural adult education in the Wear Valley many identified 'professionalism' as mitigating against the furtherance of the educational aims and principles which they held to be the defining characteristics of adult education: An arts tutor argued that:

'A lot of students come into our department to do vocational courses, that's true but a lot come in to do courses like counselling or the CQSW (8) because they want to be part of the caring system ... what they find is they get to be part of the professional system and that stops a lot of them dead in their tracks ... the others toe the line and get conditioned and are changed by that very process of education. Now this is not adult education. It's exactly the inversion of it ... all education should be open. It should delegate the responsibility for self-education back to the students'.

While this tutor still saw himself as being essentially a liberal adult educator:

'You know, I'm not a Marxist or anything like that'.

he understood the task and the promise of adult education differently to those who saw it as a profession. For him adult education was about 'empowerment: of people and of communities'. His understanding of the educational needs of people living in the Wear Valley community of Crook, for example, were different from those of the tutor quoted above who felt that each community, village or settlement had a finite adult education potential. For the second tutor there were no limits to adult educational potential posed by place or temporality. The only limits to adult education activities and development in an area were those created by inappropriate teaching techniques (pedagogy over andragogy) and by what he called 'lack of commitment' on the part of adult education tutors to 'involving themselves in the life of the place'. For him, the adult educational 'way forward' in Crook, for example, was:

'to do fairly traditional adult education as a way in. It's a matter of identifying gaps in the traditional programme and then filling them but with an idea of potential intervention in the community. The most important issue is the nature of that intervention. If people are given access to traditional adult education then we need to

look at it and develop it and do what we can to extend it. It's a small scale process but an important one'.

The interventionist stance and the idea of adult education as process implied in this model of adult education were, he felt, aspects of adult education which brought him into frequent conflict with DACE policy with its overall stress on professionalism in adult education.

His attempts to do 'fairly traditional adult education as a way in' to communities in the Wear Valley meant that he needed to work closely with those who provided (or were notionally under the 1944 Act responsible for providing) most of it: the LEA and its local workers. There was very little (9) DACE adult education in the Wear Valley in the years in which this study was carried out and, as I have shown, very little LEA provision. This tutor was very keen to work in the Wear Valley having been involved in a Trades Union instigated study group (10) and wanted to do further research and adult educational development work there. He felt that his anti-professional stance and 'radical' adult education purpose had distanced him from DACE (which he called the Department of Adult and Continuing Education) in many ways.

He had, he said, distanced himself from the theory and practice of LEA adult education in the Wear Valley. He still needed, however, to remain in close contact with the personnel whose practices he was so critical of in order to gain access to buildings, local people and potential subjects for his research. The reason was once again understood by him to be a matter of the ambiguous role and purpose of 'professionalism' in adult education:

'There are some youth and community workers that I meet and work with and they are doing, they are working under very great restrictions and yet they're doing the very best that they can. There are others working under very little restrictions who are blocking adult education ... it's not that they are uncritical ... they are on the margins of their practice but they're supporting the system back again because its giving them something. ... If you look in our department ... they see, its that people in our own department see their autonomy as being the most important privilege. They don't want to lose it, within their subjects and so on and when you argue about adult education - that's a direct threat and it is a real one, because there'd have to be policies of some kind which would drive through their individual subject empires and affect their autonomy, within that, they'd have to draw some consensus. And youth and community in the Wear Valley seems to operate in exactly the same way where people are allowed to roam without any evaluation, they've got a time sheet that they fill in and they have a chat to their co-ordinating boss, which, if they get on with him, increases their autonomy and its extended even further .. and that's what's destroying

adult education, the notion of the individual within the profession'.

The 'people' the art tutor was referring to here were the LEA peripatetic youth and community worker and the Field Officer. These two workers represented the 'face' of LEA adult education and youth and community policy in the Wear Valley. It was to this tutor an unacceptable one. While his criticisms were frequently couched in highly personalised ways and directed at the two workers they were aimed, ultimately, at the LEA system and idea of adult education which for him 'functioned' to allow the workers 'to do exactly as they please, without any questions asked, no checks or balances'. In 'doing exactly as they pleased' they were, it seemed to him, acting as

'goalkeepers. Keeping out everybody who wants to do anything in the Wear Valley. The very opposite of what they're paid to do which is to open up, create opportunities, release resources'.

This tutor felt that the ramifications of the laissez-faire approach to adult education and community education had far reaching implications which were not limited to adult education:

'I believe that the biggest disengagement you can get with democracy is to take education away from the people. That is why



I'm so keen to work with groups, teams, study groups ... any one with a base in the local community'.

The future of adult education, and perhaps of 'democracy' was seen to lie in developing new approaches to traditional liberal adult education. An 'old wine in new bottles' approach familiar to readers of the literature of adult education. The tutor wanted:

'... to get away from individual professional tutor work and to work with teams of local people in a situation where their expertise is valued as equal to our own in adult education'.

In the course of his search for 'new bottles' as 'adult education development work' in the Wear Valley the art tutor had become involved in a joint enterprise 'Community Print' with members of staff of the newly re-organised Rural Community Council (formerly the Community Service for County Durham). The policies of its newly appointed Director, Dr. Brendan Quayle had been exercising influence over the adult education policy of DACE as we note from the report of the session 1983-84, which relates that Dr Quayle had asked DACE to 'ponder' on what they meant by the term 'community development', and to imagine

what taking community development seriously would entail for their received notions of adult education.

The model of adult education as community development which was to inform much of DACE adult education practice in the Wear Valley in the years in which I was studying it was not, of course, the idea or property of one individual or department, however much in the 'great man' of adult education tradition, it may have been presented as being by those, in DACE, who were enthusiastic about it. The idea of adult education as community development was, in fact, current among Rural Community Councils nationally and was informed, in part, by work carried out by members of the Bristol Extra-Mural Department and sponsored by the Ernest Cook Trust and the Development Commission.

This new model of 'adult education' when introduced by a combination of DACE and RCC staff, into the Wear Valley, immediately came into conflict with more traditional forms of education for adults living and working in rural areas. Because of its close associations (through sponsorship for example) with the Development Commission for England and Wales the role and purpose of 'rural adult education' were often understood as being a matter less of adult education

than of governmental policy implementation. The unpopularity, in the rural part of the Wear Valley of some of those policies in the 1980's brought 'rural adult education' and those involved with it into immediate, bitter and fierce conflict with many of the people living and working in the Wear Valley: including some the providers of adult education there.

Notes and References

1. DACE subsequently changed its name from the Delegacy of Adult and Continuing Education to the Department of Adult and Continuing Education.
2. In WEA Northern District Annual Report 1984-85.
3. The WEA is a voluntary organisation structured by a system of branches within a District to which they are affiliated. Branches are made up of voluntary tutors (although paid for the tuition which they undertake) and students.
4. For details of the DES 'Replan' initiative see Charnley A.H. et al (1985).
5. See Nottingham Andragogy Group (1983).
6. See Lovett T. (1975).
7. One class had produced a local history of Crook based on the 1851 Census.
8. Certificate of Qualification in Social Work.

9. I found evidence of one long running English literature class held in one of the more rural communities - Ireshopeburn - of the Wear Valley, and rumoured to resemble the second of Pahl's caricatures reproduced in chapter two of this thesis.
  
10. Which produced the report: 'The Wear Valley: Decline or Development'. DACE. Durham. (1985).

CHAPTER TEN: RURAL ADULT EDUCATION IN THE WEAR VALLEY

'Of all noxious animals ... the most noxious is a tourist. And of all tourists the most vulgar, ill-bred, offensive and loathsome is the British tourist'.

Rev. Francis Kilvert. 1840-1879.

'Diary'. 5th April. 1870.

So far, in this thesis, it has been possible to talk of adult education in the Wear Valley while making very little reference to the Wear Valley. I have examined 'adult education in the Wear Valley' referring to 'the Wear Valley' only as a backcloth against which to situate pictures of adult education activity. The idea of 'rural adult education', however, if it is taken seriously, forces us to see 'the Wear Valley' as an object of study too. The notion of 'rural adult education' (or even the less definitive term adult education in rural areas) because it is, or should be, tied to an idea of place (eg. The rural Wear Valley), extends the parameters of a discussion about the role and purpose of adult education in modern British society. In the face of our obvious inability to define adult education we have also to say what we mean not only by 'rural adult education' but by implication, what we mean by

rurality too. If we attempt to define rural adult education as those adult education activities that take place in rural areas: places where 'rurality' as a way of life is constructed we, in the absence of ways of defining the constitutive practices of 'rurality', will almost certainly end up talking about place: in this case, 'the Wear Valley'.

There was no general agreement about what 'the Wear Valley' consisted in, and of, in the years in which I carried out this study. In previous chapters I have shown that there was little agreement, among practitioners, about the role, purpose and nature of adult education in the Wear Valley. In the next chapter I shall indicate some of the forms these disagreements took, jointly and singly and the effects they had upon the structuring of an adult education 'classroom' in a village hall in the Wear Valley.

The Wear Valley was generally acknowledged to be characterised by a distinct urban-rural 'split' occurring along boundaries which were, however, fiercely disputed. In consequence, and reflecting the problems of identifying, or defining, 'the rural' in modern industrialised societies there was scant agreement about the nature, role and purpose of 'rural

adult education' in the Wear Valley. In this chapter I shall indicate some of the forms, as system and idea, that those disagreements took.

The idea of a specifically 'rural' adult education or of a particular adult education relevant to the needs of adults living in rural areas lies uneasily within the overall proletarianised ethos of liberal adult education. I have argued in a previous chapter that the nature and organisation of work in modern, industrialised capitalist societies has both made adult education necessary and mitigated against its taking organic root in many communities. These processes of industrialisation in Britain have led to a way of life understood essentially as being urban: They have led to an idea of adult education as being, essentially, part of the civilising process. A particular kind of 'civilising process' made necessary by the perceived ravages of processes of industrialisation and urbanisation upon a predominantly Gemeinschaft and (in ways not explained) intrinsically 'civilised' and 'rural' way of life.

Unable to locate 'rural life' coherently within a class based social theory (1) adult educators and



their historians (frequently one and the same) have made few references to adult education in rural areas.

Where adult education in rural areas has been mentioned the term adult education has referred to essentially the same sorts of activities that are understood to take place in urban settings: the study of history for example. The difference between adult education for the working and urbanised classes and adult education for the labouring classes in rural areas is seen to reside in a) the nature of the rural area or b) the nature of 'the rural student', and sometimes in both. In consequence references to, and accounts of, adult education in rural areas are often informed by myths of the essential 'goodness' of rural or 'village life'. The language of 'the working class' is replaced by the idea of 'the rural mind' as the following passage taken from 'An Adventure in Working Class Education: The History of the WEA' written by its founder, Albert Mansbridge, shows:

'Among the many and varied experiences which fall to the town-bred W.E.A. organiser, village meetings are the most stimulating, perhaps because everything is novel and fresh. He (sic) must, of course, let the meeting choose its own way. I shall never forget a group of agricultural labourers and their wives, crowded into a small schoolroom, heated by an ancient stove, and seated in desks made for infants. They listened to an address on education for the

better part of an hour; then they were asked what they wished to study. After a long period of intense silence and inaction, punctuated by the earnest appeals of the lecturer, who adopted all the arts he could think of, four hands were held up. They were obviously magnificent hands for heavy manual work. The lecturer paused triumphantly, and said encouragingly, 'Well?' The answer was 'Shorthand'. Such an answer as that might well have brought the proceedings to an untimely close, but somehow or other, perhaps owing to a hint from an understanding person, perhaps through a knowledge of the workings of the rural mind, which is not given to revealing its secrets or desires in public, I divined that they wished to study history' (1920, p27).

This celebratory account of how 'a group of agricultural labourers ... listened to an address on education for the better part of an hour' only to be told that what they thought they wanted ie. shorthand, was not what they wanted at all (with the implication that they, (the labourers) possessed of 'the rural mind', were not able to know what they wanted) goes some way to explaining the essential unpopularity of WEA adult education amongst those for whom its founders intended it: the 'apathy' of the working class in the face of adult education (2). It also shows the ways in which adult education in rural areas has been conceptualised: in terms of place and of psychology.

Adult education in rural areas has long been associated not only with the WEA but with women's education. Mansbridge explaining:

'The extension of the WEA in rural districts would have proved to be a much more difficult matter if university education had not spread to women in the last century. There were many highly educated women who were not professionally engaged, but who longed to do some useful work, and consequently the educational movement came to them as a benediction. These women threw themselves heart and soul into the rural movement; in some instances they did their work so well that hardly an eligible person stood aloof. Classes were organised, lectures arranged and plays produced. Village classes were always astonishing, both as regards the numbers who attended them, and the persistence of the students. In most of the villages the average attendance was about thirty' (1920, p26).

The relationship between women and rural adult education and learning is also stressed, because to some extent, realised, in the histories of the National Federation of Women's Institutes. The first such history 'The Story of the Women's Institute Movement' (Robertson Scott, 1925) stresses, however, neither 'the rural mind' nor 'rural adult education' focusing instead upon the specific nature of rural life itself. The history of the WI ('the Rural's) being

'written in the heart of the country, as it is meet it should be, and it comes to its

readers from a little publishing office which I have set up in a hamlet for the benefit not only of this volume, but it may be, of other rural publications, by myself and other writers, which it is desired should be 'truly rural'' (pxii).

Writing in 1970 Lowe argued that when talking of adult education in 'the rural areas':

'... it would be a mistake to assume that we have to deal only with a 'rural' problem. Many people now live in areas which are neither strictly town nor country, though they are certainly the product of urban sprawl ...'.

and that:

'Some administrators believe that with the extension of private car ownership it is sufficient to organise classes in the larger centres of population, arguing that if people are really interested in a given subject, they will gladly drive a long distance to a class centre. All the evidence indicates that this is not so. On the whole people will not travel very far in search of classes; what is more, townsmen appear willing to travel longer distances than country dwellers. ... Many parts of the countryside are worse off for public transport than they were even ten years ago. ... In some areas, the infrastructure is so bad that since Dr Beeching's axe fell for the last time a considerable section of the population has been immobilised after 6 or 7 pm'. (p198).

The 'problem' of adult education in rural areas is, then, understood as being one primarily of lack of

transport and of inadequate facilities: a shortage of buses, bricks and mortar:

'Despite the admirable record of a few counties existing facilities in the countryside are far from adequate. Many areas are poorly served and have always been neglected ... the WEA is not very effective, since it concentrates upon urban and industrial groups and is handicapped in some areas by its working class connection. But the basic trouble is the lack of suitable accommodation. Many villages have no accommodation at all and such premises as are available may be totally unsuitable ...'.

In seeking to understand, in sociological terms, the role, purpose and nature of adult education in rural areas the researcher is forced to acknowledge the shortcomings in the sociological response not only to adult education but to the study of 'rural life' and, or, rurality. In 'Locality and Rurality: Economy and Society in Rural Regions' Bradley and Lowe have argued that:

'Rural social research has no theory to call its own. That being said the keyword ideas on which its development rested until the 1970s - community, rurality, tradition, ascription, folk culture, dispersal - and the antonymic polarities to which it addressed itself - association, urbanisation, modernity, achievement, mass society, concentration - were the bedrock concepts of early sociology and social planning' (1984, p2).

Bradley and Lowe conclude that the 'common problem' of sociology and of rurality:

'is one of the explanatory power of drawing connections between the artificial entities of 'geography' and 'sociology', of 'space' and 'society'. For, as Saunders comments, in summarising the complex sociology of knowledge contained in various perspectives on urban sociology:

'the basic stumbling block that all have encountered in different guises has been the need to relate certain social processes to particular spatial categories' (1984, p3).

Turning a sociological gaze on attempts to understand 'rural life' and 'rurality' as opposed to measure or causally explain it, in modern Britain, Newby argued in the opening paragraphs of his 'Green and Pleasant Land' (1979) that:

' 'The apparent monotony of rural ways', wrote Lionel Johnson, the Victorian poet and critic, 'viewed by spectators used to streets crowded with strange faces, inclines a writer to people his fields and villages with primitive virtues, or with primitive vices, but hardly with both'. To most inhabitants of urban England such an antithesis remains: to them the countryside supports a serene idyllic existence, enjoyed by blameless Arcadians happy in their communion with Nature; or alternatively it is a backward and isolated world where boredom vies with boorishness, inducing melancholia and a suspicion of incest. It is not easy to move beyond these images, for most of what is written about rural England is influenced in some way by one or the other of these stereotypes' (1979, p13).

There had been few sociological approaches to the study of rural life until the publication of Newby's 'Deferential Worker' opened up a debate (3) about the changing nature of rural life which has been dominated by two concepts: 'deprivation' and 'community'.

Bradley, Lowe and Wright have argued of 'deprivation' that it is 'a prime example' of what Bhaskar has called 'a chaotic concept' and that arising out of its encounter with 'libertarian social policy' it:

'has become a catch-all category for every negative consequence of the operation of an hierarchical system of social stratification within a market orientated society' (p2, no date, possibly 1986).

Bell and Newby citing Butterworth and Weir's 'The Sociology of Modern Britain' have argued that:

'community tends to be a God word. In many circumstances, when it is mentioned, we are expected to abase ourselves before it rather than attempt to define it'. (1982, p15).

In addition to the paucity of 'rural' sociology there has been little sociology of adult education. In consequence when sociologists have made reference to adult education in rural areas they have done so within the context of debates about a perceived loss

of community and the intractability of deprivation in those areas. There is, as Lowe has argued, very little social theory within which to locate a debate about rural life. I have argued that there is very little social theory within which to locate a debate about adult education. In consequence, there is very little theoretical or methodological debate in which to locate a study of adult education in rural areas or, perhaps, of 'rural adult education'. The sociological image of adult education in rural areas draws upon its minor role in the ultimately futile process of searching for and reconstructing a lost and 'gemeinschaft' way of life:

'There are, however, many newcomers who intend to stay permanently in the village and who are attracted, at least in part, by the very prospect of living in a 'real community' ... Where the indicators of a thriving community life are ostensibly absent, they may even try to create the 'community' which their preconceptions of rural life have led them to expect. The major problem here is that their images of what this community consists of tends to be markedly different from that of the local population. In particular it tends to be associational rather than communal - that is, they regard as a key indicator of a flourishing village the number of clubs, societies and other associations which it supports. A common characteristic of social life in the modern village is thus the attempt by newcomers to create an ersatz sense of community by founding and running local organisations - branches of the WEA, amateur dramatic societies, art clubs, etc - and even building a new 'community centre'



in which to house them'. (Newby H, 'Green and Pleasant Land, p197, original emphasis).

The idea of 'rural adult education', or adult education in rural areas, taking form in the Wear Valley was essentially tied to the idea of community development (not reconstruction), both 'real' and 'ersatz'. It was growing in popularity among Rural Community Councils (RCC's) nationally. Although it was informed, in part, by work carried out by members of the Department of Extra-Mural Studies at Bristol University it was not generally understood or referred to in the literature of adult education as being either adult education or 'rural adult education'. It was understood to be 'adult education for community development' and therefore as much a developmental activity as an adult education one (4). It was, an ostensibly new form, or way of doing, adult education. The 'rural adult education' pilot project at Bristol University had been sponsored by the Ernest Cook Trust and the Development Commission. Individual projects in University Departments such as DACE were given financial aid in the form of grants from the Development Commission (5).

Writing in the preface to 'Developing Your Community: Rural Development Through Adult Education' David M.

Clark, the Chief Rural Officer of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) (6) defines 'rural adult education' in the following way:

'Rural adult education has come full circle. In the 1920s the newly formed Rural Community Councils were busy setting up evening classes in villages. The objectives were to raise leadership standards, break down rural isolation and help people participate more fully in the economy. In many areas the RCCs struck up a partnership with the WIs, university extra-mural (sic) departments and local education authorities. The latter took on a more dominant role in the post war years but in more recent years, faced by financial constraints and falling demand, they have tended to concentrate their classes into the towns.

Yet the needs of rural communities remain. ... The traditional village-based evening class therefore seemed to us to offer an alternative way of achieving rural community development' (1985, p1).

The meaning or processes of 'rural adult education' were not made clear in the literature which promoted it as a new and innovative form of adult and community education. Neither were its form or curriculum content. Its aims were general:

'... to promote rural community development ... through adult education classes'.

and

'... to evaluate the potential for adult education to make a more positive .

contribution to rural community development throughout the rural areas of the United Kingdom' (p1).

The task of giving life and meaning to 'rural adult education' was left to local and regional agencies: most especially RCC's.

The idea of 'rural adult education' in the Wear Valley, then, was that promoted by the newly named (1985) Rural Community Council (RCC), which had formerly been known as Community Service for Durham County (CSDC). In the annual report marking the end of fifty years of CSDC and the birth of the RCC its retiring Director noted that CSDC was experiencing:

'... [a] time of great change ... we are seeing the emergence of a new profile, a revised structure and some adjustments in emphasis' (1985, p1)

but defined the role of the RCC as essentially unchanged from that of CSDC:

'As in the past, our intention is to form one bridge between County Durham's voluntary sector, in particular local bodies, community groups and parish councils, and the statutory sector as represented by the local authorities, government agencies and parliament' (1985, p1).

While the RCC had no specific adult education role it was acknowledged that:

'Through our Rural Committee (Durham's 'Rural Voice') [we] provide an independent, non-partisan forum for these various bodies and the wider rural community [and] Further local community development and self-help through a range of educational and training programmes and through the practical provision of information and 'know-how' (1985, p7).

CSDC's 'catchment area' included the whole of County Durham: its urban and rural areas. In limiting the role of adult education to the work of its 'Rural Committee' CSDC both signified the limited role played by 'rural adult education' in its activities and left its definition of adult education wide. In practice the task of giving life and meaning to the idea of 'rural adult education' was that of individual practitioners within the newly formed RCC.

The RCC was making a conscious effort to change its image: away from the 'laissez-faire informal attitude' associated with much community work in Britain. It did not operate as a team or group. It was hierarchically organised. At its top a Director: followed by an Assistant Director, a Field Officer (7) and two patchworkers. For the Director of the RCC the central problem of 'rural adult education' in the Wear Valley

was that of getting people involved with what was essentially 'social and economic development' in 'Weardale'. In the course of a tape recorded interview which lasted for over an hour, he never once mentioned the Wear Valley, only Weardale:

'We tend to work with the same people, we're always seeing the same people ... I have to find someone who speaks for the locals ... I have to do that and there's a problem because we're such a small organisation and we cover such a large area ... I mean, I can't just go through the telephone book for a list of names because I'll be wasting my time, I'll be getting no response from persons A, B, C, D, E, F and G and you, as an outsider, might see me as having a vested interest ... I have no vested interest. My interest is only to create development ... we have to operate with groups, ... groups that are already in existence, always established. We can't just go into the main street and say "Hullo, I'm from the RCC ... are you interested in community development? We're organising a class, would you like to come along? We're going to talk about economic indicators and, er, investment programmes or new initiatives ... in Weardale and the development board", and the eyes will roll within seconds, so rather than do that, other than do that ... working with established groups, there's no way that you can get to the parts others haven't reached, so really we try to be as open as we can but the models we come up with will always be criticised ... but, really, I've been through community development programmes where we've really tried to have the total ground level absolute approach where you are bringing in 'the people' and they all fall flat, nobody comes, they're not interested, they would happily leave it to us and that's human nature and that's inevitable ...'.

There is a model of adult education implicit within this view which is acknowledged as being unable to change or even challenge the 'apathy' of those people most adult education is aimed at. An 'apathy' seen by him as being part of 'human' nature itself. On this view the 'civilising' aims of adult education are secondary to those of social (as practical project) and economic development.

He gave an account of a recent adult education 'classroom':

'Our Open Forums ... the first one ... we had three people standing at the top of a hotel room and I had a video and a supply of wine and cheese, we all talked and there was a long question and answer session and that was very good and very healthy we, ... it worked very well, the responses to it ... some projects emerged from it and er, if we all want for the other ... the other way of doing it, of having a meeting to discuss development with no chairman, no anything like that, just sitting around in groups discussing, in workshops discussing, 'the possibility' and all the rest of it, it would not work, 'cos people wouldn't come. They're not interested. It's too much. It's easy to sit around and do nothing ... so it may look autocratic, what we do, or elitist or power hungry but I'm afraid it works and the other one doesn't work ... encounter group techniques and that sort of thing, they don't work. I'm afraid they're a long way off before they'd be acceptable to, or successful in the Wear Valley, so that's that really ...'.

As with the Director of the Spectrum Leisure Centre the Director of the RCC turned my questions into a way of talking about what he wanted to talk about.

For the Director of the RCC then 'rural adult education' was a matter, largely, of policy implementation and of conflict with 'the local people':

'Our functions are given to us by central and local government. We have to work with established groups to fulfill those functions. If they, or we, come up with an idea, we can prime them with some money. The aim is to come up with some idea for development through adult education irrespective of how that is perceived locally'. No matter how that is perceived locally. Our brief really is to find out what people want, really, what do they want or at least those people who are interested in coming along, what they think is best for the area. A lot of people won't come, they won't be interested or they don't know about it ... but those who do, what those people want, what they think is best for the area, but I mean I can predict what we will come up with because I know what is currently acceptable ... you know, the enterprise centre, they'll all think that's wonderful because it's economically appropriate, there are grants available and its quite interesting, exciting, all the rest of it, they'll like that and there'll be quite a lot of environmental schemes if you get the right amount of people in who are prepared to do things, physically in the environment ... you can predict because there's only a limited range of possible outcomes ... something that makes a facility where there was no facility before'.

For the Assistant Director of the RCC 'rural adult education' was primarily a matter of making contacts with established groups. New to the post, she was experiencing difficulties making those contacts:

'You see what the RCC needs, above all, is contacts'. [The previous community face worker had just left to take up new employment]. 'When he left he didn't leave, and couldn't leave, although I personally think he could have left more, his contacts, you know his contacts, all his knowledge, his years of cumulative experience about each individual parish and the people he'd been working with and their names and he said, "well it was pointless" and I said "well, please could you leave your address book at least or could you make a list with their names, the names of the people you've found to be useful contacts?" And he said "well, what I've done may not be what another person wants to do", ... but I still feel he could have left his address book. It's like starting from scratch again ... we've got hardly any contacts'.

The difficulties she was experiencing in making contacts was further complicated by what she perceived as the failure of her predecessors to record their 'field work' in ways which could be easily stored and retrieved:

'What we're lacking, what I notice, coming from a social work background ... where you have to record everything, you record everything, such as a student on a placement, doing group work, you recorded what they did and you recorded what you did, and you had to write up the projects ... nobody here has a tradition of writing up the projects ... Now if only we could do



that and leave a nice clean copy on the files saying how it was done which is great for someone ... coming in, not knowing where to start ... It's crazy not writing up. I think we've got a moral duty to actually record stuff ...'.

For the Assistant Director of the RCC 'rural adult education' (8) was that model of adult education 'for community development' currently being promoted among RCC's nationally by Ian Scott. It was understood to be

'one of several innovatory approaches, extending conventional education practice into new ground. Such experiments ... (being) ... vital in today's countryside' (Scott, 1985, p1).

It was not made clear in what ways this approach was innovatory or what form it should take or what content it should have. In the context of the Wear Valley the approach was exemplified in the 'Community Print' project planning meetings of which I had attended. ('Community Print' will form the basis of the case study/observation in the next chapter).

The Deputy Director's interpretation of the role and purpose of the RCC was, however, a traditional one:

'Our officers might be involved in advising community centre groups who want to set up a new centre ... we went to see one last week ... where on earth was it? I can't remember, it's gone clean out of my head ... but our

role is to help them get money ... we've got an honorary architect who will help them draw up plans and a fund raiser, she's great, an absolute mine of information, you know if the pipes go cold or they need help with installing central heating. She's absolutely marvellous. She's currently got a great load of carpets from Wills cigarette factory which has just closed down and she's going round the community centres asking them if they want any carpets and she's also a great fund raiser'.

The Assistant Director saw the adult education work of the RCC as being linked directly to the Development Commission:

'The Development Commission will fund the projects that come out of the adult education work that the RCC does ... any old ill-thought out project really ... The Development Commission is a bunch of civil servants in London. I don't know all of them but I've met two of them ... one is a Tory landowner, Lord Vincent and the other is a professor in geography at ... it doesn't matter if they're right wing ... whether they're right wing or not doesn't really matter, what matters is that they, the civil servants themselves, don't have much idea about what's going on in rural areas, they're just there to fill in forms and ask all sorts of bureaucratic, incredibly bureaucratic and detailed questions and they've got no idea ... I think local development agencies ... some sort of regional based development agencies ... it's all about, in the RCC, people having some say in their parishes, their region or their district and that involves a whole rethinking of the structures of the Wear Valley'.

She interpreted her role in that process in the following way:

'The work I'm doing is what's already been going on. In established groups. We've got two patchworkers to find the established groups and I think they're experiencing some difficulties ... but that's what we've got to do, find local groups and work with them. One good thing is we've got an automatic entree' into these groups because we've got something to offer, we're the recognised body, we've got our expertise to give them, our advise and sometimes money, through the Development Commission. So we've got this automatic right of entry ... you know, knocking, like a social worker, knocking on someone's door. They probably don't particularly want you, but you're there for a reason. You're there for a reason and they've got to put up with you, you're not just going in blind, you've got a reason, you're there for a reason'.

From my observations of conversations and interviews with people in the Wear Valley it seemed that being there for a reason was often understood in the Wear Valley as intervention and the Assistant Director was, on the whole, I think, correct in her assumption that people in the Wear Valley probably did not want the RCC, or any other quasi-governmental agency knocking on their doors but, in the last analysis, seemed powerless to prevent it.

Adult education for people living in the rural areas of the Wear Valley, as opposed to 'rural adult

education' had traditionally been provided by the LEA's Houghall College of Agriculture. Informal adult education activities were also undertaken by a range of voluntary groups and organisations including The Women's Institute and church and chapel groups such as the Mothers Union. From observations, conversations and interviews with people involved in these activities it seemed that the meaning of adult education to the LEA practitioners (of Houghall College) in the Wear Valley was defined in terms of subject and of place and not in terms of an adult education model for promoting development as in the RCC's 'rural adult education' programme. In being linked to place re: the Wear Valley, the meaning of adult education to the agricultural college tutors I spoke to in the Wear Valley was also distanced from the model of the liberal tradition and its variants to be found within both the WEA and DACE. This may be because the agricultural college had understood itself to be a vocational and technical college and not a college of adult education and was therefore distanced from the non-vocational liberal tradition.

For one senior tutor I spoke to, with responsibility for the Wear Valley, adult education in that area was given meaning in terms of its proximity to a way of

life. A way of life, not understood as being wholly rural, yet seen as being largely rural and, as with most things rural, to be in decline. That decline was spoken of, however, not in terms of loss of 'community' but of loss of mutual dependence:

'In the rural areas [of the Wear Valley] mutual dependence is not as strong as it used to be. If you looked at the old agricultural plots on [sheep] dipping day all the neighbours got together and stuck in as a kind of work group. And on threshing days where everyone threshed each turn 'neighbouring' (9) one another ...'.

The decline, is not of 'a whole way of life' but of certain work practices in rural communities which begin to sound more like 'mutualities of the oppressed' than the romanticised rural communities so familiar in the literature of rural life and adult education:

Also, they used to give one another a wedding present of their labour and efforts, you know, three days ploughing to give them a start. I can remember getting the hay in, you know, thirty to forty years before combine harvesters became cheap when you had to use a binder and stack and thresh ... we did that right until well into the 1950's. These ways had an earlier demise down south.

Mutuality is seen to be giving way to competition in the rural areas of the Wear Valley in the 1980's:

There is a vestige of mutual dependence and collaboration in the community but now its more like competition than collaboration. But, there again, you see, there's always been competition in the uplands, competition for grazing rights, you know, which are supposed to be delineated by custom and practice, but its very hard to count sheep'.

The economic life of the upland areas of the Wear Valley had long been made up of a combination of lead or coal mining and small-scale farming. The agricultural college had, it seemed, put on many courses for farm employees, for the small-holders who made up much of the farming population of the Wear Valley. Known locally as 'cuckoo farmers' these small holders frequently held full-time jobs in or outside of the dale, their farming activities not yielding enough money for even a subsistence income. These farmers were understood by the agricultural tutors to be in need of educational help and support connected with a range of activities from drainage to obtaining grant aid and ultimately to cope with 'the fact' of social and economic decline. The rural adult education of the RCC, by contrast, he understood as having focused on adult education for the development of the social and economic infrastructure of villages in rural areas while doing little to support its underlying social and economic base. One of the most

publicised of RCC activities was that of adult education aimed at combating the decline in buses, shops and other services in rural villages. This was understood by some adult education tutors at Houghall College to be based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of social and economic decline in rural areas:

'Losing the bus is a symptom of the decline of economic activity, not a means of regenerating it ... These RCC people, they don't know what they're on about, they're talking about villages and buses. Always going on about buses ... there's a young lady in that organisation and every time she gets on her feet it's about buses'.

There was deep suspicion about what were seen as the 'conservationist tendencies' of some of the RCC staff. The Director of the RCC was a locally and nationally recognised environmentalist and conservationist: he had recently published an article in 'The Guardian' newspaper detailing his views about the environmental issues facing part of the Wear Valley and was understood as having 'just taken a year off: a holiday', to write a book about conservation with the internationally known and popular environmentalist David Bellamy (Hon. Professor of DACE). The book 'The North Pennines: The Last Great Wilderness' touched on aspects of the Wear Valley. It promoted tourism. The agricultural college tutor felt that the combination

of tourism and conservationist policies, promoted widely by Drs Bellamy and Quayle (10), would further damage the local economy by implementing 'soft' conservationist policies:

'They're not going to be allowed to influence the grouse shoot, it's the only source of revenue in some areas up there'.

It was also assumed that attempts, associated with RCC development plans, to re-generate the local economy in terms of tourism would fail:

'I don't think you will get tourism and diversification. Ten million people will go to the Lake District and only one million to Kielder. The viable farms don't want tourists for bed and breakfast and such as that. And even tourists, like walkers on the moors, well if they walk on the moors, they disturb the sheep in their natural habitat and disturb their homing instinct, their 'lefting' instinct 'cos sheep all learn their home patch from their grandmother and the shepherd always knows where his own sheep are because they go the same way but walkers, tourists, they destroy this instinct'.

'So, which other people will benefit? Local people won't get jobs - the hoteliers will just bring their own staff to live in ... More caravan sites will spoil the dale, there's already fierce, and I mean fierce, competition for customers on the sites there are. There's no scope for expanding and no new employment because the wives run the camp sites anyway'.



Rural education or education in rural areas was, then, understood by this tutor as being largely as much a matter of teaching the skills necessary to cope with industrial decline as of the techniques and possibilities of rural development.

'The problems of the valley are industrial decline and failure of any new industry to take the place of the old mining and quarrying ... if there isn't the new industry to replace it they should stop pretending. I would prefer honesty. For people to know where they stand. You can't say to people 'get on your bike' in public but that's what they've got to do. You need education for this, though. Across the county there is this problem of population and resources ... there used to be a call for dressed stone, Marble from Frosterley, but those sort of buildings have all gone, there's no call for it now'.

The role and purpose of adult education in rural areas for this tutor was ultimately to teach people to accept almost the inevitability of social and economic decline and to adapt to it: moving, if necessary, to areas or centres of full employment within, and without of, the Wear Valley. This was seen, among the tutors involved in traditional adult education to be 'the honest' approach to the role and purpose of adult education in rural areas. It was frequently contrasted with the approach of the RCC and its 'rural adult education' model:

'The RCC, that chap Quayle, that's not education, it's politics and I don't mean political education. He's trying to get round local people, using education, anything he can to get a foot in and ultimately to get what he, and his paymasters, the government want'.

When I interviewed him the Director of the RCC was very aware of the ways in which his 'rural adult education' policies were being interpreted by other adult education agencies in the Wear Valley:

'If they think these things are political they want to go to some real meetings. Some business meetings where there are things to discuss, where there's power at stake, where there's money being discussed, what they're talking about doesn't figure in the real state of things at all, I can assure you ... I've been to business meetings, full of vested interests where they'll do literally anything to get their own way, so what we're talking about here is really trivial in comparison ... there's nothing sinister or conspiratorial or exploitative or undemocratic about any of that ... the fact is that this agency exists ... [the RCC] ... and has existed for an awful long time ... and we've got certain resources, certain functions, given to us by central and local government and we have the responsibility to take part ... it's all perfectly normal and sensible and healthy and the way it should be really ...'.

For the Director of the RCC adult education in the Wear Valley of County Durham was a tool for arresting decline and of promoting development of a social and economic nature. Central to that development in terms

of structuring the ways in which it could take place (such as financially aided ones, through Rural Development Commission grants for example) was the appearance of the 'rural' areas of the Wear Valley:

'I would hope that people will see that Weardale is too small, will see that the greatest economic asset in Weardale is the countryside and there has to be some sort of organised effort to make money out of it ... bed and breakfast ... hotels ... small business ... money making'.

He favoured what he called a policy of mixed economic re-generation and development:

'Tourism has a limited potential up there in the North Pennines. It's always been a dual economy; farming and mining, farming and grazing, farming and manufacturing. The industry's gone now and the farming's not enough to keep the whole area going, keep those people busy, keep them employed and so tourism is the inevitable other side to the new dual economy'.

The Wear Valley's 'single biggest attribute' in development terms for the Director of the RCC was its countryside. It was essential that this be acknowledged and given formal status not only by the people of the Wear Valley but across the nation. A process by which this might happen had been set in motion by the Development and Countryside Commissions. The 'rural hinterlands' of the Wear Valley of County

Durham were currently being considered for designation as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). For the Director of the RCC the outcome of a forthcoming public enquiry into the proposed AONB status was of great importance to the Wear Valley in deciding whether it would:

'... develop or decline. The AONB is essential to this. It would be a disaster if we didn't get it. But I'm one hundred per cent sure we will. It's inevitable and highly desirable ... the structure that is created for the AONB that is important. ... It's pretty important ... there has to be a structure set up where there is some kind of support group for the North Pennines ...'.

The RCC was doing what it could to promote the processes by which the 'highly desirable' AONB status could be achieved:

'The structure for the AONB, how it will work, what it will look like, the structure that's created for the AONB is important, how that, ... how it will work, ... what that looks like, is pretty fundamental as any form of development goes what we're trying to avoid at the end of the day is a structure which says, like just another planning body, which says 'Oh you can do this but you can't do that' ... what we'd like to see is a, ... OK a group, a kind of support group for the North Pennines AONB drawn from the local authorities, planning offices, people who've got money to spend, who think it's a good idea and say how about such and such and that's the only way it's going to end. So hopefully that's the structure that we'll go for. That's the one we'd like to see ... We're saddled with the problem of, that we can't spend as much time

up there as we'd like. [Weardale]. We're a county body. Responsible for the whole of County Durham and we can't spend as much time up there as we'd like. There is no one person responsible ... our people on the spot are based in Durham so there's no one particular person who's responsible for that neck of the woods. There's nobody permanently up there pushing development projects and we need that otherwise it will just slide down into total decline ... unless there is some initiative and a lot of that initiative comes from us giving enthusiasm and encouragement really. That's our function ... but unless that happens the future of Weardale's hopeless, hopeless, literally. But there will be development. They will gravitate to development because it will become a response based upon need and they will gravitate towards our new initiatives and new ways of doing things. Of that there's no doubt. Absolutely no doubt.

The idea of 'rural adult education' promoted by the RCC and to some extent, by DACE, raised interesting questions (in this thesis) about the relationship of 'rural adult education' or adult education in 'rural' areas to 'traditional liberal adult education'. In the context of the Wear Valley it raised questions of a more immediate and controversial nature: most notably the relationship of 'rural adult education' defined largely in terms of policy implementation to liberal adult education. In the observation which follows (in the next chapter) we shall see what happened when the LEA, DACE and RCC models of adult education came into contact with each other and 'the Wear Valley' in the

context of a village hall community association adult  
education 'classroom'.

Notes and References

1. Marx, for example, seeming to exhaust his thought on the subject of rurality when likening the peasants to a sack of potatoes.
2. See E.Green 'Adult Education: Why This Apathy?' (1953).
3. That debate has largely taken place in the proceedings, and publications arising out of them, of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded Rural Economy and Society Study Group. See for example Bradley T. & Lowe P. (1984), Lowe P, Bradley T. & Wright S. (undated, probably 1986) and Buller H. & Wright S. (1990).
4. In their introduction to 'Rural Development: Problems and Practices' Buller and Wright have argued that the processes of rural development (and presumably of 'rural adult education' as rural and community development within them) have been little understood or researched in the United Kingdom having 'traditionally occupied a rather marginal and ill defined place within those disciplines concerned with the rural world.

Often rural development has been associated with an atheoretical and applied approach to single issue problem solving' (1990, p1).

5. Sometimes as much as 50% of the cost of providing the adult education activity.
6. See also 'Developing Rural Voluntary Action' in 'Involve: The Journal of the Volunteer Centre', No.46, October, (1985).
7. I interviewed the Director and the Deputy Director of the RCC. I was unable to interview the Field Officer. Based on conversations with her and observations of her practice (see for example 'Community Print' in Chapter 11) I had learned that she was experiencing great difficulty making 'the contacts' in the Wear Valley which she understood as being a defining characteristic of her role in RCC activity in the Wear Valley. She left her post and took up employment elsewhere before I had interviewed her formally. The two patchworkers were employed in areas of County Durham other than the Wear Valley.



8. She told me of a conference which was to be held at Bristol University in December about 'rural adult education' and at which I would be able to find out all about the model the RCC was using. I attended this conference at which the work of Ian Scott was presented.
  
9. I have not understood my role in this research as being that of collecting quaint phrases and identifying rural (or any other) 'saws' and sayings. Talk of rural life abounds in them. Throughout this research I interviewed and observed a range of people all with different social and personal characteristics in terms of class location, gender, age, ethnicity and locality. These people had a range of accents and dialects and often used words imaginatively. I have not tried to reproduce the people or their speech in this thesis as a means of adding 'colour' to turgid prose. My purpose has been heuristically illuminate if not understand or explain adult education practices in the Wear Valley. Where the pursuit of that illumination and understanding has led me into discussions about adult education in specific contexts ie: the rural one, I have allowed people to speak of

those contexts in their own way. I have not sought to distract myself or the story teller by asking for definitions or translations of phrases such as 'neighbouring'. I assume, when used in this context, the phrase 'neighbouring each other' to mean a group of neighbours working together on one piece of land to complete a specific job. I do not know, however, if this exhausts the meaning of the phrase.

10. In addition to writings mentioned in this chapter see: 'Report of Proceedings Seminar' on 'The Future of the Durham Dales' held on 11th October, 1984, at County Hall, Durham. Issue No.5: 'Can The Trends of Decline Be Reversed? Is The Effort Justified In Relation To The Scale of the Problem? Do The Dales Want To Change?' Quayle B, Director of Community Service for Durham County (p35). See also: 'Opening The Green Door', Quayle B, 'The Guardian', 20th September, 1986, and Bellamy D. & Quayle B, 'England's Last Wilderness: A Journey Through The North Pennines'. Publ. Michael Joseph Ltd. (1989). The book Dr Quayle was assumed by some adult educators in the Wear Valley to have taken 'a year off: a holiday' to write.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: ADULT EDUCATION IN THE WEAR VALLEY: AN  
OBSERVATION

'Social scientists reporting empirical research always include a descriptive section, telling something about the country, town, or organization they did their research in. What should such sections include? Researchers vaguely intend them to give readers "a feel for the place", and fill them from a commonly accepted list of things every reader would presumably need to know, a melange of geography, demography, history, and organization charts' (Becker H.S. 'Writing for Social Scientists', Publ. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1986, p62).

'... survival dictated I act quickly ... I scarcely got twenty feet by foot when I remembered my printing press, and not wanting to leave behind such a potent political weapon or piece of evidence, I doubled back to retrieve it. As luck would have it, the thing weighed more than it looked, and lifting it was a job more suited to a derrick than a hundred-and-ten-pound college student. When the police arrived, my hand was caught in the machinery as it roared uncontrollably, reprinting large passages of Marx down my bare back'. (Viva Vargas! In Allen Woody, 1980, p124).

I have argued in the last chapter that analysis of the system and idea of 'rural adult education' or adult education carried out in areas designated as, or deemed to be rural, brings us into contact with place. In this case, the Wear Valley of County Durham, in

ways which discussions structured around ideas, or perhaps (as we have seen) the myth, of 'the liberal tradition' of adult education do not. Clearly, then, place is one of the links between the institutional and organisational forms of adult education, (university department, LEA, college, community centre), its ideology (liberal extramural work, youth and community work) and the adult education 'classroom'.

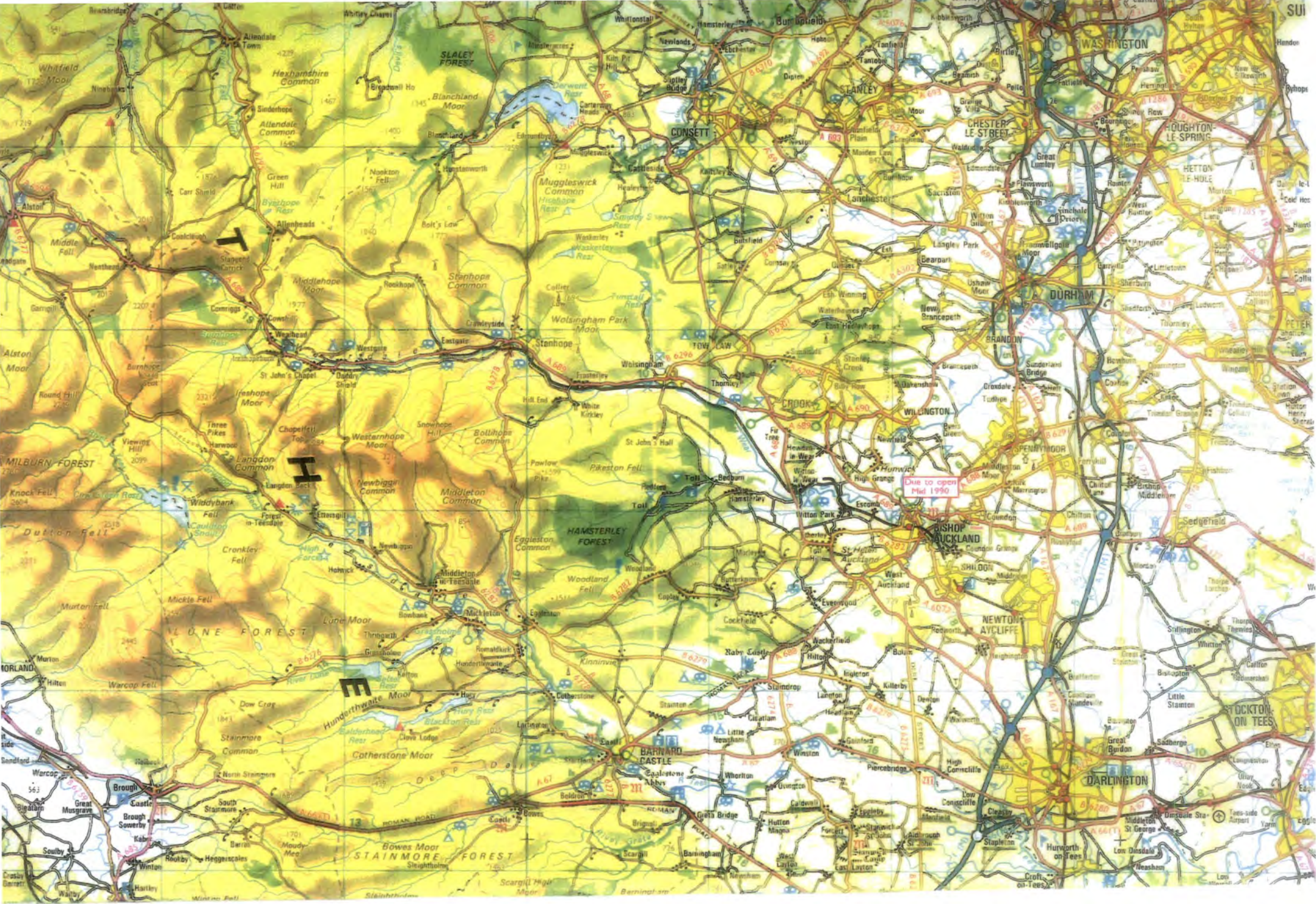
In this chapter I shall draw attention to some of the ways in which different perceptions of 'place' and of the role and purpose of adult education held by practitioners were used to structure events in one adult education classroom. So far, too, in this thesis I have focused on the ways in which notions of the individual adult learner or the adult education collectivity (usually understood as 'community') have informed adult education practice and helped to structure it in ways which have made it recognisable as the social structuration adult education.

In the chapter on LEA 'field' or development work I argued that the 'core-curriculum' in adult education, while being a matter of social structuration undertaken by adult educators was, in the context of

the kind of LEA community orientated provision common in the Wear Valley also structured, in ways of which we know little, by members of 'the public' (as management committee members) and, therefore, by public images of adult education. The public images of adult education are, of course, also mediated by the social and personal characteristics of the people who construct, perpetuate, operate with and modify them. In this chapter I shall indicate some of the consequences, intended or otherwise, of a coming together of a group of people (adult education practitioners, youth and community workers, parish councillors and local clergy) with disparate interests, social characteristics and ideas of what constituted adult education in a village hall setting purposely to create the illusion of 'community' while ostensibly engaged in adult education activities. The reasons for the acknowledged (1) failure of the adult education work represented in and by 'Community Print' have their roots not only in class, gender and educational differences but in political ones too. Those political difficulties were being expressed in the 1980's in a fierce battle about both the nature and meaning of the place: the Wear Valley and about, as part of that battle, its proposed AONB status.

The major geographical and demographic facts of the Wear Valley have been determined by its situation, strung out, as a series of settlements, along the 27 mile long bank of the River Wear from Cowhill (in the rural hinterlands of the North Pennines) to the suburban outskirts of the City of Durham. Beginning just outside Brancepeth along the A690 with the predominantly urban former coal pit village of Willington the Wear Valley includes Billy Row, Stanley Crook, Oakenshaw, Sunnyside and Tow Law and Crook. Leaving the A690 at Crook and joining the A689 (which runs through Bishop Auckland) the Wear Valley's arterial road passes through the increasingly geographically isolated and rural settlements of Wolsingham, Frosterly, Stanhope, Eastgate, Westgate, Daddry Shield, St. John's Chapel, Ireshopeburn, Wearhead and Cowhill (see map overleaf, taken from 'The Ordnance Survey Routemaster 5:Northern England'. Publ. Ordnance Survey. Southampton).

The Wear Valley has often been understood as being divided by a rural-urban split occurring at Crook, geographically determined and separating rural Weardale from urban Crook, Bishop Auckland and Willington. It is also frequently seen to represent a rural-urban continuum running from Cowhill through to



Willington. As has been seen in chapter eight, there are three identifiable 'communities' in the Wear Valley. Approximating, but not equalling, the Wear Valley Study Group's three cluster areas. There is first those communities which consist of very deprived and mainly council housed populations of Woodhouse Close, Tindale Crescent etc at Bishop Auckland, Low Mown Meadows at Crook and Watergate at Willington. Secondly the 'respectable' working class (ie: in employment) communities at Crook and parts of Bishop Auckland and thirdly, the 'better off' communities of middle class and rural Weardale.

Few people in the Wear Valley in the early 1980's would deny that it, or parts of it, were in decline and there were few differences of opinion about the causes and nature of that decline: the Wear Valley was commonly understood to have somehow, outlived its economic usefulness. Where disagreement arose, as we have seen in the chapter on 'Rural Adult Education in the Wear Valley' it did so because of the ways in which people responded to that decline. Some, like the Houghall tutor felt that the social and economic decline in the more rural areas of the Wear Valley was irreversible and that the educational needs of those living there were best met by education and training



aimed at encouraging, if not promoting, out-migration to areas (presumably urban centres) of full employment. Others, like the Director of the RCC felt that the issues were not confined to social and economic decline but included also, the environmental decline which accompanies upland rural areas when they become seriously underpopulated. For him adult education aimed at promoting development and countryside conservation in the Wear Valley was imperative.

The processes of decline and the high levels of deprivation statistically (and on a walk around the council estate of Crook, Willington, Bishop Auckland and Wolsingham) obvious to social researchers and academics was not, of course, obvious, in the same ways, if at all to the people living and working in the Wear Valley. While most of the people I spoke to acknowledged a feeling of decline and noticed the changes in their living and working conditions the concept of 'decline', 'development', 'deprivation' and even 'unemployment' often, when applied to the part of the Wear Valley they lived in, provoked an angry response and denial. The adult educators who had been involved in the Wear Valley Study Group frequently referred to the Wear Valley and those who lived there

(in their hearing) as deprived, provoking a level of antipathy and antagonism towards them that they could not fail to be aware of.

Those adult educators who had carried out social research in the area (the Director of the RCC and the DACE arts tutor) then spoke of 'Decline', 'Deprivation', and in the case of the Community Print project, 'the Unemployed' as abstract, theoretical entities. These violently abstracted notions of life in the Wear Valley seemed to have very little meaning for the non-university sector adult educators who came together to work collaboratively on Community Print.

Of more concern to them was the long running and fierce battle which was raging over the proposed designation of an area of the Wear Valley (known as Weardale) as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This designation was, of course (as we have seen in the interview with the Director of the RCC) linked to the issues of the forms which future development in the Wear Valley might take. The Director of the RCC spoke of 'appropriate development' referring to that development which would enhance and support the alleged outstandingly naturally beautiful areas of the North Pennines. This meant, in practice, tourism,

conservation and certain 'appropriate' forms of leisure.

Many of the people living in the Wear Valley were fiercely opposed to this type of development. They frequently spoke of this area of the Wear Valley as being 'a working dale' and saw its future as lying not in tourism and 'holidays' but in the re-generation of industry. They either did not, or would not accept, that the old, heavy industrial past of the Wear Valley had gone; ostensibly for ever. Faced with an inability to bring back the Wear Valley's industrial past they seemed almost to be willing to allow the Wear Valley to decline rather than see it develop along lines with which they disagreed.

So, as the geographical location of the Wear Valley (or parts of it) which had once determined the geographical location of Tow Law, for example, coincident with 'the most convenient border place between the coal and the ironstone in the county' had once led to its being described in the following terms:

'There is no 'oldest inhabitants' at Tow Law, for although some of the inhabitants are far from young men and women, none is worthy by reason of both life long residence and hoary locks, to set up as an oracle on

local traditions and yet there are traditions, one of which aims at the explanation of the name ... Whatever the meaning of the word, there is no mistake about everything else connected with the place it meant business; every stone of it, every house in it, every street and every enclosed space, every man, woman and big boy in it means business, coal, iron, wood and handwork are in close partnership for the manufacture of wealth' (Newcastle Weekly Chronicle, 10th May, 1873. Article entitled 'Our Colliery Villages: Tow Law').

So too, the geographical location of the Wear Valley, or parts of it, were shaping its role and purpose in modern Britain in the 1980's. The distinction between the Wear Valley and Weardale, had generally been acknowledged to be a geographically based rural-urban split:

'The country traversed by the River Wear from its source down to the town of Wolsingham is regarded as "Weardale" proper, but the district below Wolsingham and extending to Bishop Auckland is usually referred to as "The Wear Valley". (S.Cardwell. Rambler's Association. North Yorks and South Durham Area. Introduction to 'Walking in Weardale' by T.R.Spedding).

This geographical and rural-urban distinction was losing its meaning in the context of a Wear Valley increasingly characterised by changes in the nature and organisation of work there.

The fierce battle about the form and content of future economic policy and therefore the nature and organisation of work in the Wear Valley was, in many ways, a battle for the imposition of meaning in the Wear Valley. A battle being fought through ideas of decline and development, of work and unemployment, of community and association, and of rurality and urbanism. These debates crystallized around ideas of 'appropriate' development. While the Wear Valley was perceived as being in decline that decline was not total, developments of a social and economic nature were taking place. They tended to take a different form and have a different content accordingly as the settlements they took place in were understood to be urban or rural. In determining which kinds of development were seen to be appropriate the urban-rural continuum and the boundaries along it were crucial. Development in the urban areas of Crook, Willington and Bishop Auckland frequently took the form of opening new factories in old established premises such as churches and chapels on the main road running through, for example, Willington; the opening of new prize bingo and fruit machine entertainment 'shops' and the opening of the Spectrum Leisure Complex. In the more rural and gentrifying areas it

took the form of discrete (off the main road) purpose built workshop units and of tourism and conservation.

Of major importance in the Wear Valley then, was the 'problem of definition' as it applies to 'the rural'.

'... behind all the issues and questions which face the contemporary countryside today lies the problem of definition. The definition of what is 'rural' in modern English society is both varied and complex. At the physical level, it is difficult to distinguish between urban and rural areas, not least because any attempt to devise a continuum between extreme rural and extreme urban leaves most of the English countryside in the intermediate categories' (Russell.A, 1986, pp3-4).

Constituting as it did one of the most contentious problems of 'meaning' I was to encounter in the Wear Valley, 'the problem of definition' with regard to what is 'rural' was of topical importance. The debate about what was and was not rural (in the limited sense of what was environmentally worth preserving) was held in public through the series of debates that constituted, and surrounded, the public inquiry into the proposed designation of Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) status to the Wear Valley (or at least the whole or part of it, its rural hinterland).

The debate about the proposed AONB status was long, protracted and bitter. In his summing up of the public enquiry Sir Stephen Berthon stated that:

'If I had any illusions at the beginning of the Inquiry that it might not be too difficult a task to reach a fair and considered judgement on the proposed AONB, this had been totally dispelled after listening for five weeks to dramatically opposed views; ... What might seem at first sight to be a relatively straightforward question is both more complex and subtle than it appears' (1986, pp96-97).

Between the original declaration of intent regarding the proposed AONB status to the county councils involved in 1973, and the Countryside Commission's policy statement (Document.34) in 1983,

'... attitudes hardened and it could be said that an emotional bowwave built up which was to break itself upon the Public Inquiry. The volume of press interest in the form of articles in national newspapers and magazines, daily reports throughout the Inquiry in most local newspapers ... and a regional television discussion, all reflected that the matter was of considerable interest and importance to people in the Area. At the very least it can be said that the Public Inquiry increased the public awareness of AONBs' (1986, p97).

It was clearly not the task of the Public Inquiry to consider why such an 'emotional bowwave' had built up, only to accept that

'Fair and full understanding, and resolution, of the matter ..[was].. made more difficult because the main planks on which the proposers and supporters on the one hand, and the objectors on the other hand, argued their cases were matters of opinion and interpretation rather than fact' (1986, p97).

Most of the parish councillors in Weardale were opposed to the proposed designation. Stanhope Parish Council 'which covers the area from Frosterley to Rookhope and includes almost all of Weardale' were 'unanimously agreed to object to' the proposed 'North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Designation) Order 1978' on the grounds that Weardale 'most clearly is' an area of natural beauty but that its claim to status as an area of outstanding natural beauty was tenuous:

'The Commission's policy document identified the main purpose of designation as being to conserve and enhance natural beauty. It cannot be argued that Weardale is not an area of natural beauty, it most clearly is. Is it, however, an area of outstanding natural beauty? The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, under 'outstanding' has the following entry: "standing out from the rest, conspicuous, eminent, striking". Whilst Weardale is possessed of natural beauty, that beauty is not such as to be described as "striking", or as "standing out from the rest". It is a quiet, low key beauty, and possesses no features which warrant particular attention or which are of particular merit. Were this Dale cut out to be Area (sic) of Outstanding Natural Beauty the people would have chosen with their feet



and we would have been bursting at the seams with visitors long ago'.

In this evidence the parish council's representative (Mrs A.Ward) goes on to argue that designation would bring

'about an imbalance whereby the 'human' character of the Dale is subordinated to the 'natural' character, which is already adequately protected ... [and would result in changes to] ... the Dale's character from that of a working, dynamic and, hopefully, surviving rural community into that of merely an area of scenic interest with no internal life'.

and concludes that:

'It is worth noting that amongst the supporters of designation there is not one body with an immediate presence in the Dale. On the other hand the objectors are many whose own interests are ultimately linked with the Dale's success and these include the local people'.

Mrs Ward, it is also worth noting, is a local person, living as she does in Rogerley Hall, Frosterley, a locality in the immediate vicinity of which she is reputed to be a millionaire.

A Weardale Parish Councillor, Fred Peadon, stated in his evidence to the public inquiry (held at County Hall, Durham City, which began on 8th October, 1985):

'I was born, bred and still live in the valley known as Weardale. I am proud of my heritage which I guard most jealously ... I am dedicated to preserving a way of life which is unique to the area and to resist interference to that way of life from outside organisations as listed in the schedule of Supporters as laid before us today.

I am typical of the inhabitants of Weardale whose only desire is to be left alone to carry on in the traditional manner of their fathers i.e. to extract from the hills the minerals which are in abundance and farm in the manner that has created this beautiful area'.

Speaking 'as a Weardale man for Weardale people' Councillor Peadon states his occupation as 'a retired Water Authority Engineer', hardly an occupation giving much scope for mineral extraction and hill farming in 'the traditional manner'.

Both the local and national press gave the AONB issue a lot of coverage. The Northern Echo of 2nd October reported a spokesman for Lord Barnard's Raby Estates as saying that 'Dalespeople will never be prepared to sit around as stooges for tourists to gawp at in a showcase area', a variant of Pahl's 'props on a rural stage thesis', (2) arguing that the best way of conserving the area was by safeguarding the local economy which would of course include the annual grouse shoot on the 50,000 acre Raby Estates.

Maximum coverage was also given to the AONB debate in 'Community News', the 'quarterley newsletter for parish councils and community groups in Co.Durham' by the Director of the RCC Dr.Brendan Quayle, who also published several articles in the Guardian newspaper and presented evidence to the AONB public inquiry in favour of AONB designation as part of a programme of 'integrated rural development' for the Durham Dales. Dr.Quayle stated at the public inquiry that:

'I have come here wearing three hats - as a regular Dales user concerned about the Dales future; as a research specialist in upland economy and society for some 10 years; and now as the representative of the Community Service for Durham County'.

The metaphor 'wearing three hats' was translated by some local observers as 'riding three horses with one arse' and Dr.Quayle and the RCC became almost the sole focus for intense local ill feeling. This is perhaps the price that has to be paid for taking a high profile in public struggles of this kind. That price was also paid, in part by adult education, as we shall see. Dr Quayle was both a prolific and frequently published writer on and about the Wear Valley. One of his most (locally) contentious articles appeared in the 'Guardian' 'Grassroots' column on Saturday 5th

October, 1985. It revealed him to be, in local eyes, 'partisan', and did the Rural Community Council (RCC) and its adult education endeavours a great deal of harm in the Wear Valley where most of the people the RCC aimed to work with were fundamentally opposed to the AONB. That harm could be seen most notably in the failure of the joint RCC, DACE and LEA project 'Community Print'.

So far, in this thesis, I have identified a number of different and potentially conflicting views of what adult education was, or could be, in the Wear Valley of County Durham. Each individual adult education organisation, and within that, each individual member of staff, paid or voluntary, presented very different images of adult education to the people of the Wear Valley (or at least those present in the community centres, schools and village halls), to each other and to me. I have not, however, been able to portray any sense of the struggle for the imposition of meaning on adult education activities in the 'classroom' of the Wear Valley when these practitioners were forced by circumstances or ideology to work together 'collaboratively'.

I will now attempt to do so. Increasingly, the need to find financial funding was forcing adult education agencies in the Wear Valley to attempt to work together on common projects.

Jointly funded by the Rural Development Commission through the local Rural Community Council and by the local University Adult Education Department.

'Community Print' was one such project. It had been in the embryonic stage for at least eighteen months when I joined it as a participant observer in the mid 1980's. The aims of the project were wide and diffuse, if not vague: The result of a year and a half of negotiation and compromise which had allowed a group of adult educators (all operating with a different and potentially conflicting idea of adult education) to come together in a collaborative project bound together with the legitimating rhetoric of 'community'.

The overall stated aim of Community Print was to establish a mobile 'print workshop' to be transported around the Wear Valley by different adult education and community groups in order to serve as a resource for those groups to produce their own 'community' newspapers, magazines and publicity materials. The

adult education practitioners involved in the Community Print project were the art tutor from DACE, the LEA Field Officer and peripatetic worker, the RCC Field Officer and a community worker from an area outside the Wear Valley. Highly skilled in the production of high quality (and politicised) community newspapers, he was sympathetic to the art tutor's aims which were to contact local, and preferably unemployed people with a view to conducting liberal community based adult education aimed ultimately at 'raising the consciousness' of the deprived 'people of the valley'. He also hoped that there would be a considerable number of representatives from

'local groups and teams there that our department can do development and research work with'.

He aimed then to 'empower local people' while finding enough traditional adult education activities to allow him 'to climb on their backs and do some development work'. Because of the close working relationship he had built up with the Director of the RCC (through the stated purpose of examining community work as noted in the DACE Report) it was not, at any time, clear to me whether the art tutor meant adult education development work in the mode of the RCC: economic and social development or adult education developmental

work in the sense of locating and exploring 'new markets'.

The RCC Field Officer had sat through most of the planning meetings in silence. Commenting non-committally, only when directly forced to, she had remained outside of the conflict about the nature, role and purpose of adult education as Community Print in the Wear Valley while remaining inside the practitioner group and, she hoped, 'within sight of making some contacts'. She seemed almost to define her work in terms of contacting representatives of established community groups and agencies. She hoped to be able to make some good contacts out of the Community Print project especially its first workshop which was to be held in rural Weardale: in one of the communities most hostile to, yet necessary to the success of, the RCC's rural community development policy. A community in which the winning of hearts and minds of the people opposed to the inclusion of their 'community' in the proposed AONB designation was seen to be imperative.

The LEA peripatetic worker had been allocated the task of organising the workshop in terms of premises and members. Both the RCC Field Officer and the DACE art

tutor hoped that by filling the community centre and the workshop with representatives of local groups and organisations the peripatetic worker would give them the contacts they needed and provide an 'entree' into at least one local community in the Wear Valley. They were to be disappointed. There were very few local people at the workshop. I am not sure if there were any people there who were not connected, formally, with adult education, youth and community work or the Weardale parish councils in some, and usually direct, way. Local group or team participation was confined, (as far as I could ascertain), to a vicar and his wife who were there:

'to see whether we can borrow his printing equipment to do the parish magazine. It's such a long-winded job'.

Most of the community centre management committee were there, including Councillor Peadon who had been (in his evidence given to the AONB Public Inquiry) so adamantly anti-AONB. The peripatetic worker had invited him 'because he's a nice bloke and he'll stop this university business, this AONB'. There were also several other members of the community centre management committee there and, who, in walking around the room, dressed in 'best suits' and crimplene



frocks, gave to the Community Print session an air not of an educational workshop but of a civic function.

The animosity between the art tutor and the peripatetic youth and community worker generated by the large parish and district councillor presence at the workshop was palpable and kept erupting in verbal skirmishes. The arts tutor had wanted the workshop to be for local people. He had 'hoped to get away from parish council mentalities'. He had said this publicly and in the presence of the peripatetic youth and community worker designated to people the workshop. She had not told him that she 'preferred to work with parish councillors and people like that because they [were] the right sort of people to have at a do like this'. Neither had she told him that she was, herself, a Weardale parish councillor. She had just organised the workshop as agreed and allowed it to 'develop' a strong parish council presence if not collective mentality. Observing the planning of this workshop and the level of antagonism between the art tutor, the peripatetic worker and the RCC (although not the field worker who was regarded as 'a stooge' of the Director and therefore not a worthy opponent or threat), I could understand that the peripatetic worker had brought along the very people the art tutor wanted to

'get away from' as an act of aggression and defiance feeling threatened by what she saw as the encroachment of another agency (DACE) on her 'patch'. (In one of the meetings I had attended she had threatened the art tutor directly saying that if he did not stop trying to do community work and 'neighbourhood' work in her area, 'the whole of the Wear Valley', she would 'get him stopped'. She argued strongly that 'all the needs of all the Wear Valley communities' were being met by the LEA Field Officer and herself.

In the course of my research into adult education and youth and community provision in the Wear Valley I formed the strong impression that the peripatetic worker had very few contacts with local groups whom she could introduce to the Community Print Workshop even if she had wanted to. The nature of her adult education role in the Wear Valley as she had defined it 'working with management committees' meant that, by definition, she had very little contact with the activities that were carried out in community centres and village halls and the groups that ran them. In the community centres which I had visited including Hartside at Crook and Parkside at Willington I had been told that they had little involvement with any of the FE staff 'once we had got the building and set

ourselves away'. This was consonant with the definition (by the FE Officer of his adult education role and purpose in the Wear Valley in terms of 'bricks and mortar' and the peripatetic worker's definition of her role in terms of establishing publicly accountable systems of community centre and village hall management committees). The DACE tutor and RCC field worker were, it is my belief, looking for contacts which did not exist.

The Field Officer had no sense of confusion about her role in, or the role and purpose of, Community Print. It was 'a pilot run, to see if we can make a youth leader's training module out of it'. She brought the only three 'contacts' with the local community into the Community Print. Contacts, that is, who were not directly involved in the struggle for the definition of, and imposition of meaning being fought out through conflicting models of adult education, in some ways, in the Wear Valley. By involving the three youth workers as 'part of their training' the Field Officer was able to get some money (£55) from 'County Hall' to help pay for the costs of the workshop. In order to do this she had designated the Community Print Workshop as youth leaders' training and not adult education or community education. She had effectively changed the

meaning, role and purpose of the workshop. She also, in bringing the three youth leaders along gave the project its legitimation. Some adults were being, if not 'educated', at least trained.

It seemed, then, that however hard the DACE tutor tried to get local adults involved in what was essentially an adult education project, he was deflected in his aims by the LEA peripatetic worker who saw the workshop as being

'a good way for him to meet some parish councillors and get his own ignorant prejudices changed'.

He was, also, although to a lesser degree, because still able to work with the three youth leaders on a skills based printing technique level, also deflected by the Field Officer's stress on the definition of Community Print as being

'ideal for the youth leaders to learn how to show the kids how to make comics in their own clubs'.

There was, paradoxically, a sense in which although the ostensible, and community adult education aims of the project were abandoned the ancillary, aims of the personnel involved were met by Community Print.

Community Print was, therefore, a limited success. The RCC Field Officer was able to meet some parish councillors, the peripatetic worker was able to make it clear to the RCC that she was 'not going to do their bloody jobs for them' by providing contacts while taking credit for herself and the LEA for hosting 'a prestigious university funded workshop' in a local community centre. The youth and community Field Officer was able to 'get some workers trained up'. The only person who (on his own judgement) felt that the project had failed was the art tutor.

An attempt had been made in the planning sessions to create a unifying theme or ideology for Community Print by the adult education tutor. He constructed it in terms of the research he had carried out in the Wear Valley. He spoke of 'poverty', of 'the working class', of 'deprivation', of 'development' and of 'unemployment'. In alliance with the RCC and conscious of the location of Community Print in 'rural Weardale' he spoke of 'rural poverty', of 'rural unemployment' and of 'rural deprivation'.

The terms 'deprivation', 'poverty' and to a lesser extent 'unemployment' when used in the context of the Wear Valley and in particular Weardale provoked a very

hostile response in political circles generally. In the Community Print Workshop setting it provoked disbelief and anger. The peripatetic worker said that there was 'no poverty, nothing like that, no riff-raff here, in Weardale'. She had chosen to live there because it was 'a cut above the rest, with decent people living there, teachers and the like'. She took the view that if people were 'hard up' then in many cases 'it [was] their own fault', demonstrating a grassroots Toryism in long term Labour dominated districts which shattered most of the illusions of community held by the art tutor and led to even more ill feeling between them.

It was in these circumstances then, that a group of adult educators, community educators and youth work educators came together to create an illusion of community adult education provision. If these people were, at the end of the planning sessions, under no illusions about each other: some of them laboured under massive illusions about the 'communities' they intended to serve.

The art tutor had constructed a legitimating rhetoric for the Community Print initiative which allowed for the merging of the interests of what to him were the

two main agents of Community Print: himself and the RCC worker. His own interests were largely 'urban' ones: he had successfully carried out adult education work in the more urban areas of the North East and was hoping eventually to take the mobile print workshop to 'places like Crook, Willington and Bishop Auckland where there's mass working class unemployment'. He was interested in the effects of unemployment, poverty and deprivation on peoples' lives. The RCC worker did not seem to have any ideological interest in the project but insisted that it had to remain based predominantly in the rural areas of the Wear Valley in order to get Development Commission funding. The legitimating rhetoric of Community Print became then that of 'rural poverty', 'rural deprivation' and 'rural unemployment'.

The art tutor defined his role in the project as that of 'getting local people to talk about their unemployment' and eventually to write about their lives and their problems. In this way did a traditional, liberal model of adult education take on the radical guise of Community Print. The RCC worker defined the task as that of 'making the contacts and getting the RCC expertise out to them'. Both organisations wanted to take 'the lid off the

chocolate box in one way or another'. The parish councillors and the peripatetic youth and community worker were determined that in this aim they should not succeed.

As has been said, neither of the 'incoming' organisations had any access to buildings or many 'contacts' within 'the local community'. Both were dependent on the reluctant assistance of the peripatetic worker. The first workshop took place in Wearhead Village Hall. The peripatetic worker had at one stage, reported back to a Community Print planning session that the people in Wearhead were: 'getting a bit suspicious about all this help they're getting, what's behind it, that's what they want to know'. It was what she wanted to know too and she continually questioned me for signs that I might know 'what the university or the bloody RCC is up to', making a very difficult situation in which to carry out participant observation. I was constantly worried that I might be overly identified as being part of 'the university' and prevented from finishing my research.

The illusions of all three participants with regard to 'the local community' soon became obvious. There had been a meeting in which the Adult Education tutor and



the Rural Community Council worker had gone along with the LEA peripatetic worker to 'brief the community centre' about the forthcoming workshop in which one member of the community had appeared to be very hostile indeed. 'Who was he?' asked the ruffled Adult Education tutor. 'Oh him' came the reply from the peripatetic worker who lived in the same small village, 'he's nobody, he's just the milkman'. After much discussion and indignation it was decided that he was a true local character - hard working, independent, taciturn and not very bright. Salt of the earth but to be avoided by Community Print.

The first workshop began at 10.00 am on a snowy winter day when the Adult Education tutor told an assembled group of about nine people (made up of three youth leaders, the vicar and his wife, several parish councillors and myself) that we could learn to produce a community newspaper if we really wanted to and it was much easier than it looked. This was met by stony and embarrassing silence. 'Graphics' he said was 'just another word for communication - only with pictures. You know, when you're out and about you use your camera everyday don't you?' No one was ready to admit that they did or even that they did not. More silence. He gave a short talk about unemployment. He held up

some photos and told us that 'a group of urban unemployed people came up here and took these photos of your community - look at these 'For Sale' signs - what do they mean?' He held up a picture of a local shop literally smothered with estate agents' hoardings. An air of sharpened awareness, barely perceptible in the slightest turning of the head, came over the room which would have warned the less illusion-imbued that all was not well. The tutor carried on. 'We said, well, why are they all leaving the area?' One of the local community work team in the audience began to giggle. 'It's the rising unemployment due to the declining mining and mineral industries' said the tutor quoting almost verbatim from his research report. The giggles became open laughter of an embarrassed and embarrassing kind on the part of the working class youth leaders and an uncomfortable shifting of seats on the part of the vicar and his wife and the parish councillors present. 'What's wrong?' asked the tutor. 'Nothing' came the reply, and it is a measure of the resistance to the project that no-one told him what they had told me earlier: the local shop was for sale (members of the family who owned it still living there in tragic circumstances) as the result of an alleged serious and deeply shocking local scandal.

Equilibrium was eventually restored. Communication as the role and purpose of Community Print had been acknowledged by all to have failed. Expertise, in the form of tuition in the techniques necessary to operate the printing equipment: 'a golf-ball typewriter and a mobile duplicating machine' fared better. For most of the morning the three women youth leaders were absorbed in learning the tricks of the cut and paste trade.

During the course of the morning three or four other people, men, had joined the group. Over lunch it was revealed that they had considerable expertise in producing publications of one sort or another: local history bulletins and parish magazines for example. Most of them appeared to have been in receipt of higher education and were therefore on some criteria, middle class. They were, in objective class terms, difficult to distinguish from the Adult Education tutor in terms of education, values and commitment to education. Where they differed was in being part of the community under development: a historical, geographical and socio-cultural location. They were some of its less recent incomers and were fully occupied in those activities aimed at excluding others

of their ilk which Newby (1985) has termed 'pulling up the drawbridge'. They had come along for purely pragmatic reasons. They wanted to know if there was any way that this project could offer them practical assistance with the very real problems of 'producing anything printed' on a small budget. This was not at all what the tutor had in mind. He had set out wanting 'to get away from parish council mentalities' and now was left with an 'illusion' of community and its development which could not encompass the commonplace possibility, indeed most likely outcome of the project, that Community Print would, after it had aroused a great deal of local political interest, become a positional good for the benefit of, like most positional goods, the middle classes in the form of dominant community groups.

At the end of the workshop the level of tension was raised by the arrival of the 'hostile milkman'. He did not seem to me to easily fit the role of 'prop on the rustic stage'. I asked if I could interview him.

He was not a local person. He was from Devon. He wondered what all this communication business was about. It wasn't printing lessons that was for sure. It would be some of those national and urban-based

organisations like the Countryside Commission and the Development Commission trying to impose their ideas on local people. He was interested in producing publications. He'd produced an alternative magazine when he was at university. He helped with one now in his spare time. He showed me a copy. It was the most professional piece of magazine printing I have ever seen. Superbly designed, printed and sepia tinted it was easy to see why it was a 'sell-out'. This was his hobby. He'd only gone to that 'do' because he and his friends knew that the Rural Community Council had duplicating facilities, 'not the mobile one, the golf ball thing, that's rubbish, but a proper offset litho. It's in Hallgarth House', and they wondered if they (the RCC) would let them use it.

I stayed with the Community Print project for a few more months. The offset litho was to prove a continual embarrassment, as everyone who was asked to join the Community Print group knew of its existence and knew also that, in the words of the milkman, it was being 'used to produce cheap publicity about all the good works they're doing' (referring to the Rural Community Council, the Development Commission and the 'bloody' Countryside Commission), 'but they won't let us near it, we've asked and they've said "No", "Outright",

"No". This was seen unanimously as a sign not only of patronisation but of a deep seated 'bad faith' which the Community Printers were never able to rationalise away in the minds of those people with whom they hoped to work. 'If they were really interested in us producing things they'd let us use those duplicating facilities it's as simple as that. They won't so what are they up to?' The unease grew. The milkman could not stress enough how angry he was. He felt he was being patronised in some way. Poverty? There was real poverty in Devon where his brother lived. There was real poverty a few miles down the road in Willington. This was statistically and empirically well proven (see chapter eight) and lent even more weight to the argument that anyone who professed to be concerned with poverty and did not feel impelled to do something about it where it was known to be located was 'up to something'.

This suspicion between 'the community' and the community developers, which was evident at the first workshop, continued to grow. So did the competition and incompatible aims and working practices of the adult educators and youth and community workers themselves. Many such initial meetings between community developers, educators, adult educators and

the community they intend to work in go wrong: the community workers discover they have started on the wrong footing, but they react to their initial mistakes and adapt the project thereafter. In this case study however, the incompatibility of the participating agencies and their conflicting illusions was deep rooted and wide ranging. Tomlinson (1983) has shown (in the context of a Brighton community centre) how fundamental and class-based conflicts about the role and purpose of community centres result in disillusion and disappointment for many of those who become involved in activities in them. He has shown, also, how those conflicts often take the form of arguments about the 'core curriculum' of community centre activities: leisure and a drink of beer or education and the printing press. One of the Brighton community centre management committee members cited by Tomlinson stated:

'Me and the older type saw it not as a working men's club but as a place for old people to have a sing-a-long with an occasional bar ... as we jumped along we seemed to get a split of personalities as to what we were about ... we seemed to want to walk before we could run ... some of us wanted chit-chats, but others wanted xerox machines and typewriters, they wanted news - I thought ... why do we want a golfball typewriter?' (p77).

In the Wear Valley the same kinds of perhaps fundamental conflicts of class and culture manifest as conflicts between leisure and adult education, sing-songs and printing presses were clearly present in the Community Print workshop. They were, however, not the only sources of conflict. As we have seen, there was conflict between adult education providers as to what constituted the appropriate activity for Community Print - adult education or youth work. There were also conflicts about the role and purpose of the Community Print team in attempting to influence the course of the forthcoming AONB public inquiry and therefore to impose meaning and definition upon 'the Wear Valley'. These conflicts were accompanied, not surprisingly, by deep feelings of suspicion and distrust on the part of most of the providers and participants of the Community Print workshop. These conflicts were not resolved. They culminated in the art tutor formally resigning from the project. The adult education component of Community Print was removed and I do not know what happened to it afterwards. The adult education tutor made another attempt to 'penetrate' the local communities of the Wear Valley: a photographic project (see Appendix A). It resulted in his penning the following letter to one of the few people who had shown interest in it:



'I'm afraid the idea of forming groups in the Crook/Willington area has not progressed further. Without premises to meet in and do practical work there I do not think a group could sustain itself ... Frankly, if anything is to happen ... it will have to be an independent initiative on the part of local groups ... so far there has been no request from any group in those areas and this makes life difficult ...

In this year's brochure I am advertising our wares to prospective students in visual media and local history workshops. It's the softly, softly approach, an attempt to raise a small demand for some adult education sessions. If this is to work we will require at least 20 people! And a place to meet in!

All of this would be easier if I could work through the local Community and Youth Service. I have to say though that in my experience of the existing workers I cannot accomplish the aims of adult education. I have worked with them and I find them lacking in their response to development ...

Sorry to be so negative, its (sic) goes against the grain ... I had relied on the example (to some extent) of the Wear Valley Study Group but ... this has had an opposite effect' (Letter from Mr R. Biggs, DACE, 29th June, 1987).

Notes and References

1. The designation of the Community Print initiative as a failure was made by the adult education tutor. As I shall show, while it certainly was a failure in liberal adult education terms as defined by him it was, in some ways, for some people, most notably the LEA peripatetic worker and the Field Officer and youth leaders (under training) a success.
  
2. See Pahl.R 'Urbs in Rure'. (1965).

CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have shown what happens when an empirically grounded attempt is made to study the theory and practice of liberal non-vocational adult education sociologically. Both the theory and methodology of adult education research are underdeveloped and there are few sociological perspectives on adult education. I have explored some possibilities for developing a sociological perspective on adult education and 'tested' them in the empirical context of the Wear Valley of County Durham.

The extent to which a sociological perspective on adult education has been developed during this research can best be seen against a backcloth made up of two key documents of relevance to those with a sociological or public and educational policy interest in adult education. These are: 'Adult Education: A Plan For Development' being the 'Report of a Committee of Inquiry appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science under the chairmanship of Sir Lionel Russell CBE' (The Russell Report) publ. by HMSO in London in 1973 and 'The Sociology of Adult and

Continuing Education' by Peter Jarvis (published by Croom Helm in 1985) respectively.

The Russell Report is the first systematic attempt to survey and assess liberal adult education since the 1919 Report. The book by Jarvis represents one of the first attempts to apply sociology to adult education. In their own ways both publications have contributed to the limited understanding of the role and purpose of adult education in modern British society which allows Harries-Jenkins (1983) to assume that non-university adult education providers are better placed to provide liberal adult education in the traditional university mode than the academy itself. Close grained, empirically based study of adult education activities in modern Britain forces recognition of the complexity of their form and content, acknowledgement of their strengths and weaknesses, the problems associated with their provision and their relationship to the settings in which they take place. The literature of adult education, while emphasising 'the problem of definition' in a priori and theoretical terms has paid scant attention to the form and content of adult education, better understood as adult educations, in the context of everyday practice.

Harries-Jenkins, for example, makes no distinction between liberal adult education in the traditional university mould and the many other 'outside the university walls' activities that make up liberal adult education today. Jarvis makes little distinction between adult and continuing education or between university and non-university sector provision preferring (instead of empirically based investigation) to rest his case on the a priori and theoretical assumption that:

'there are two models of education in the same way as there are two sociologies: "education from above" is a model that demonstrated that education is functional to the social system so that the individual is moulded to fit his niche in society through the educational process, whereas "education of equals" assumes that the individual is free, able to develop and fulfil his own potential and able to create a truly human social order as a result of his new-found knowledge, skills and ability. These two educations pre-suppose two distinctive types of curriculum which are perhaps best represented by the discussions about classical and romantic curricula in initial education' (Crombie and Harries-Jenkins, 1983, p45).

Jarvis is, in making the distinction between 'classical' and 'Romantic' education drawing directly upon the work of the educationalist Lawton while acknowledging that 'Lawton's work refers totally to initial education and to the education of children'.

It is difficult to see the relevance of Lawton's (and, to the extent that he relies upon it, Jarvis') work to the sociology of adult education. Jarvis might best have achieved his stated aim to make 'a systematic attempt to analyse the education of adults from the perspective of the social theorist' by a reading of current social and sociological theory, in conjunction with some empirically grounded social research.

The sociology of adult education has, by default, supported all manner of commonsensual assumptions about adult education because it has been a profoundly uncritical enterprise. Most of the sociology of adult education is conservative, 'in-house' stuff. The book by Jarvis and 'The Sociology of Adult Education' by R.Kenneth Jones are representative of the few overt and sustained attempts to explore the relationship between adult education and sociology I have found. Both, unfortunately, operate with severely restricted and out-moded sociological models which they try to 'apply' to adult education as common-sensually understood. They offer little by way of sociological analysis of adult education. My own investigation provided evidence for more than a suspicion that the models of adult education incorporated into these two books do as little justice to the complexities of the

theory and practice of adult education in modern societies as they do to the complexities of sociology.

It might be expected that a book entitled 'The Sociology of Adult and Continuing Education' would expose the most deep-seated and naive assumptions about sociology and its relationship to adult education to critical scrutiny. Unfortunately the Jarvis book serves, in many ways, to reinforce outdated and stereotypical ideas about the role, purpose and nature of sociology with respect both to adult education and 'the study of society'. While not going so far as to uncritically validate the domain assumptions of adult education about its relationship with the wider educational and social communities of which it is a part Jarvis' turning of the sociological gaze upon adult education illuminates little: being neither critical nor exploratory. He, for example, argues that:

'One of the reasons why no study of the education of adults has been undertaken from ... (a sociological)... perspective is the difficulty in deciding precisely what is the phenomenon under consideration' (Jarvis, 1985, p3).

He is here referring to adult education as 'the phenomenon under consideration' which has proven, over

the years, to be obstinately resistant to a priori definition:

'McCullough (1980:158) nicely summaries this problem:

"Extracting adult education from its surrounding social milieu - or at least differentiating adult education from its social milieu - is as difficult as a (sic) determining how many angels can dance on the head of a pin". '

There are, it seems, no such problems in defining sociology, or indeed, 'extracting' it from 'its surrounding social milieu'. For Jarvis the matter is a simple one: there are, following Dawe (1970), 'Two Sociologies':

'The first of these commences with the assumption that sociology is basically concerned with the problem of order and for society to exist at all social order must be imposed on individuals ... The underlying point is that social order precludes the individual and if constraints are not imposed on persons then 'man would run wild' and chaos would reign' (p5).

The second 'sociology' being one of the individual actor.

'Neither perspective ... (however) ... is beyond criticism: the strengths of the one tend to be the weaknesses of the other' and there are then 'two sociologies' as Dawe has argued: ' "... a sociology of the social system and a sociology of social action. They are grounded in diametrically opposed concerns about two central problems, those



of order and control. They posit antithetical views of human nature, of society and of the relationship between the social and the individual" '(p7).

While doing the research represented in this thesis I could not see adult education in terms of this false dichotomy. Neither could I 'extract' it from 'its surrounding social milieu'. I understood 'adult education' to be the abstract representation of a range of activities labelled 'adult education' to varying degrees by different groups and individuals in different temporal, geographical and cultural locations. A social phenomenon maintained and renewed not within the constraints of relatively immutable social structures or the sui generis activities of a whole which is no more than the sum of its parts but by reflexive processes of social structuration in which the form and content of adult education were being made and re-made in the context of a daily life which, to be adequately textually represented, demands 'stream of consciousness' literary techniques as well as reflexive research methodologies. In trying to find ways of researching and adequately representing (in this text) adult education as I saw it I have sought always to make both 'adult education' and its 'sociology' problematical, strange and not 'taken for

granted'. To de-mystify both adult education and the kind of applied sociology associated with it.

What the sociological gaze encompasses of adult education (or any other social phenomenon) is determined by what is meant by 'sociology'. In this thesis I have argued, following Giddens, that sociology is necessarily and irreducibly critical. The task of sociology is always to de-mystify. Where it makes epistemological judgements they are, necessarily, of refutation not verification. There is no single truth about adult education which can be laid open by sociological enquiry. There is, therefore, no single adult education. No simple truth of its matter.

There are many sociologies and many adult educations. One task of the sociologist is to isolate and identify as many of them as possible in ideal-typical terms, to describe them and to point to ways in which, in their empirically observable actuality, they differ from the a priori assumptions we had of them. In short: adult education is not 'as it is and has usually been presented'. It is how it is but usually most definitely not 'as it has been presented'. If it were, of course, all research would be superfluous. While it

is fairly easy to show how adult education differs from the ways in which it is usually presented it is more difficult to say how it is: what constitutes adult education? There are no sociological truths of adult education outside of which all is false consciousness. The task is made harder by the absence of any significant theoretical and methodological under-labour. A large part of the research informing this thesis has consisted of doing this groundwork: of laying the foundations for a thorough-going examination of the role and purpose of adult education in modern British society.

An examination of the role and purpose of adult education in modern British society has, of course, to take account of the ways in which adult education has been seen by those whose interests are more readily identified with the formulation of policy. The most significant adult education policy document (in terms of the scope and acuity of its recommendations if not the extent to which those recommendations have been implemented) is the Russell Report.

The Committee of Inquiry noted when drawing up their terms of reference and identifying 'the Nature of the Task' that the only major review of adult education in

England and Wales 'ever to have been undertaken ... (The 1919 Ministry of Reconstruction Adult Education Committee investigation) ... is over fifty years old'(p1). The Russell Report is itself now almost twenty years old. I began this research ten years after the report had been published: an apposite time, perhaps, to see to what extent its recommendations had been implemented and with what effect.

The Russell Report notes in Part I para 2 that:

'... adult education has proved remarkably adaptive to changing conditions, so that much of present practice still operates satisfactorily, though clearly deriving from the principles of the 1919 Report. Nevertheless, the society of the 1970's is not that of 1919 and the accelerating rate of social and educational change has required us to pay at least as much attention to what is not being done in adult education as to what is, for some needs are being met imperfectly and others not at all'.

The committee went on, in paragraph three, to argue that:

'Our vision is a comprehensive and flexible service of adult education, broad enough to meet the whole range of educational needs of the adult in our society. It must therefore be integrated with all the other sectors of the educational system but at the same time firmly rooted in the active life of local communities; and it must be readily accessible to all who need it, whatever their means or circumstances. Only in such

terms can we conceive of education as "a process continuing throughout life" '(p1).

The point is reinforced and elaborated in ways which make it quite clear that the Russell Committee valued non-vocational adult education highly:

'If individuals are to be given the chance to develop their talents and abilities to the full and to meet with understanding the impact of rapidly changing patterns of employment and the stresses of a rapidly changing society, they require access to education in adult life as their needs emerge. There is no reason to expect that these will always be tied closely to some aspect of occupational training'(pp2-3).

The Committee found evidence to suggest that a basis for

'a comprehensive and flexible system of adult education already exists in present provision in educational plant already in being, and in the general cultural resources of local communities. But these great potential resources are uncoordinated and under-utilized, mainly for lack of professional staff'(para 9.6).

In para 9.7 the Committee argues that:

'To make these resources progressively available for the essential tasks of adult education the investment of further public funds will be needed'(p3).

Those funds were, in the main, not provided. During the course of my investigation of the state of adult education in the Wear Valley in the mid-eighties it was made very clear to me that even as the Russell Report and its recommendations were being made public the existing funds for adult education were being drastically reduced. Practitioners, such as the FE Officer responsible for LEA provision in the Wear Valley spoke of 1973, 'the year of the cuts' after which 'adult education, in this district has never recovered and I don't think it will ... I don't think you could ever get it back to what it was even if you wanted to'.

The key phrase here is 'even if you wanted to'. Although honoured more in the breach than the observance of its implementation the Russell Report generated some debate (and a lot of rhetoric) about the role and purpose of adult education in modern Britain. The adult education for social purpose debate acquired a new impetus under the title 'Russell type education'. The problem has been, of course, that in the same way that there has been little agreement about what constitutes adult education in the definitive sense so there has been little agreement

about the definition of 'Russell type adult education'.

A situation in which 'Russell-type' adult education came to be identified with increasingly loosely defined ideas of social purpose adult education taking place in many different settings has led to a situation in which we can learn very little about what goes on in an adult education 'classroom', how that 'classroom' is defined and constituted and therefore about adult education itself from accounts of its practice as presented in its highly stereotyped and romanticised literature. It is for precisely these reasons that an empirically grounded investigation of the role and purpose of adult education in the 1980's and early 1990's became necessary. The extent to, and the ways in which adult education policy (as represented by the Russell Report) has been implemented or not poses interesting sociological questions as well as public and educational policy ones. How do those involved in adult education define and give meaning to their activities? How do they judge the value of these activities? According to criteria of social or educational purpose or some combination of both for example? The failure to act upon the Russell Report by adult educators and central

and local government alike also raises questions about the relationship of adult education and adult education policy to social research and of that social research to social theory in what might be called 'the grand' mode.

In 'Living In the Interregnum' (a televised debate between Anthony Giddens, Johan Galtung and Immanuel Wallerstein, moderated by Michael Ignatieff and published in 'Voices' by Spokesman in conjunction with Channel Four television in 1987), 1973, the year in which the Russell Report was published and 'the watershed year' for adult education in the Wear Valley was taken as exemplifying the mood of modernity. A modernity characterised by crisis but in which 'the crisis of the postwar, and particularly post-1973 era' stood out (p102) as being the time at which it became obvious to many that 'we're hitting the ceiling'. There are limits to growth. The oil crisis, the wholesale dismantling of the heavy industries dependent on it and the high levels of unemployment for which adult education was assumed to be a palliative (if not a cure) all contributed to a feeling of panic and of decline. A relatively sharp decline into the social and economic gutter which could only be halted (if not reversed) by financial



retrenchment on the part of central and local government and an emphasis on the vocational and utilitarian in adult education. This process continues. In the Wear Valley community centre buildings (but not the land they stand on) are currently being offered for sale by its financially hard-pressed local authority. These processes, without doubt, have hampered the implementation of the Russell Report.

So, too, have changes in our world view: changes in our ethics, our idea of what the good society consists of. The notions of education for education's sake and the collectivism which underpinned much of the drive towards liberal adult education have been replaced by an individualistic and materialistic ethic which has transformed the adult education student or autodidact into a customer with the apparently inalienable right to as much non-vocational adult education as s/he is able or willing to pay for in an open market increasingly identifiable with the values and practices of 'leisure' rather than 'education'.

The same chill post-Enlightenment winds which have blown away ideas of Progress through Reason (including the rational use of leisure time as liberal adult

education) have altered the status of the social and educational researcher in relation to the subject of his or her enquiry. It can no longer be so readily assumed that the role of social and educational research is to inform and guide social change. The Russell Report falls within the parameters of the Enlightenment paradigm: we assume that because it was based on fairly 'objective' enquiry it should be implemented and are surprised when it isn't. It is, however, in the nature of the post-Enlightenment mood that the linear process of the generation of social and educational policy from social and educational research followed by its implementation can no longer be assumed to be either automatic or axiomatic. Giddens argued in the debate previously referred that:

'... from the Enlightenment until something like the turn of the twentieth century it was thought we could use knowledge of society to shape the course of our social development. And this gave us a kind of linear back up into time, and a linear progression into the future. I think we now know that isn't so. We develop more and more knowledge about the social world and we use that knowledge to change the social world, but it doesn't allow us to control it. Not in a simple sense. It detaches us from that kind of simple movement from one point to another, and that's what creates this kind of lurching feeling. I think that that is the best metaphor to describe the feeling of modernity now - the erratic coursing into the future ... [a] lurching, careering, tumbleweed kind of process, which is very different I think from the nineteenth century view' (1987, pp106-107).

In this research I examined the ways in which adult educators from a range of perspectives, traditions and providing agencies gave meaning to their activities. While few mentioned the Russell Report or 'Russell-type' adult education it was clear that most felt themselves to be engaged in some kind of 'social purpose' as opposed to purely educational purpose adult education but were no longer sure of its role, actual as opposed to putative purpose, and its relevance in modern British society. This debate was sharply focused in the accounts of the tutors of the DACE of the University of Durham. The debate, and the underlying conflict, being couched in terms of 'professionalism' and 'anti-professionalism', the subject specialist, classroom based tutor and the community based, needs responsive, social and educational 'facilitator' and 'animateur'. This debate reflected, in the local context of the Wear Valley, some of the heat which has been and still continues to be, generated in university adult education departments across the country and in the literature of adult education by the publication of the Russell Report co-incident with the apparent demise of liberal adult education and of the world as we had come to know it.

Paradoxically perhaps the Russell Committee seemed to aim its recommendations most directly at the non-university sector particularly the LEA's and the WEA sectors. Russell stressed the importance of the WEA tradition in English adult education arguing that:

'In spite of the growth of extra-mural departments, especially since 1945, most universities still rely on the WEA's help in arranging classes and in fact joint work with the WEA accounts for about a third of all extra-mural department classes ...'(p37).

The WEA tradition in the Wear Valley can only be described as moribund. As has been shown in the chapter on the WEA in the Wear Valley the tutor-organizer, responsible for a huge geographical area 'from the Tyne to Tees' (of which the Wear Valley was only one small and 'rather remote' area) had come increasingly over the years to rely on the university 'for help in getting anything going at all'. Where the WEA was still active in the Wear Valley it was as a result of the innovative and committed work of a few individuals working in situations of great difficulty re: rooms, equipment and premises. A situation which did not auger well for the future of WEA provision in the Wear Valley. Student numbers, too, were small and increasingly the tutor of the women's discussion group

I observed was relying on 'my friends in the women's movement' to reach the minimum enrolment number and keep the class running. The Russell Report (para 113, p38) (argues of the WEA at the time of its enquiry) that:

'Its voluntary nature has two significant effects on the provision. Although branch organization may have lost some of the vitality that marked the pre-war years, the amount of voluntary effort is still substantial'.

I can only conclude that in the mid-eighties, in the Wear Valley of County Durham, this was not the case: WEA adult education activity there being negligible but, by virtue of its still being on the statute books of adult education provision, contributing to the illusion of 'a comprehensive and varied service of adult education'.

The Russell Committee charged the LEA's with the major responsibility for providing adult education in the local context:

'The main initiative in ensuring a comprehensive and varied service of adult education should lie with the local authorities and they should cooperate with other providing bodies in its creation'(para 7, pxii).

To this end:

'Local education authorities should provide support with grants and/or facilities for local voluntary bodies, local units of national bodies and local societies of many friends that contribute to the local adult education service' (para 8, pxii).

During the course of this research I spent a great deal of time examining LEA provision and received much help from LEA staff. The data generated by a combination of observation and interview methods in the LEA context is particularly rich and I believe illuminative (not merely illustrative) of the state of affairs re: LEA adult education in the Wear Valley. Provision is poor to non-existent, its form and contents unmonitored and unevaluated. Its staff demoralised.

There was in the Wear Valley, a notional and nostalgic commitment to the idea of a liberal adult education service on traditional lines, as part of the world we have lost, which was not supported by an active commitment to designate resources of time and money in its support. The main thrust of LEA adult education provision was toward 'community work' as part of a social and educational policy couplet 'youth and community work' which in actuality seemed to mean

little more than the organization of five a side football matches and the provision of table tennis bats and balls for children around the ages of eleven in the youth and community centres of the Wear Valley.

The notion of co-operation and collaboration (much stressed by Russell) in the Wear Valley has been raised to prominence in this thesis because so much stress was laid, following Russell, on the stated need for inter-agency co-operation and collaboration by adult education agencies in the Wear Valley.

Paradoxically much of the adult education activity I observed there seemed to be aimed at preserving individual agency (and in many cases individual to the practitioner) definitions of adult education and ways of working despite the overt stress on evolving new forms of collaborative practice.

To say that collaborative, inter-agency adult education provision in the Wear Valley was characterised by reluctance to cooperate and intra and inter-agency rivalry is to say too much and too little. The situation was more complex than such a judgement will allow. Each of the practitioners seemed to be operating with their own, individual model of adult education, some more obviously than others. The

University adult education tutor's practice although broadly contained within the great divide of subject versus social purpose centred education was still very much informed by his own individual perspective on adult education as was the WEA tutor organisers. It is in the ways in which these activities have taken shape over the years that we must look for the answers. The lone adult education tutor is almost a romantic figure in adult education circles but as was pointed out by one of the university department tutors interviewed 'this stress on the autonomy of the individual tutor in adult education departments is very damaging to adult education'.

The obvious inequalities in pay, status and conditions of work between providers did not help to make the idea of co-operative and collaborative practice more acceptable to practitioners. Of particular relevance in this context was the disparity between the pay, hours and conditions of service of the full-time university tutor and the sessionally paid or voluntary unpaid LEA worker. The most overt conflicts, however, tended to arise around issues of equipment and premises such as the locked cookery room in the Community Centre at Willington and the photocopying machine located in the offices of the Rural Community



Council and not made available to the community groups the RCC aimed to work with. Perhaps such conflicts might be expected within the context of an adult education service in a series of communities overtly characterised by feelings of irreversible decline and loss of a whole way of life. Loss of its social and ethical purpose meant liberal adult education became apparently indistinguishable, in practice, from youth work, community education, community development, social work and the kind of sports activities which are a feature of mass leisure provision in the form of purpose built recreation centres. In short: in losing its social and ethical purpose adult education has lost, too, its identity. Adult education in the Wear Valley is, perhaps, a constituent part of other activities rather than an easily identifiable, or definable, range of practices which we can all see to be 'adult education'.

APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY

'The paradox of human agency is hardly a new discovery, although from Hobbes onwards many people have unveiled it as solemnly as though it were. In effect it is the empirical common denominator of a vast body of social analysis which has always obstinately refused to be relegated or confined to any single formal academic discipline. We find it at the very origins of historical materialism in the work of Vico, pervasively in the writings of Marx and Engels. It is Schiller's problem of alienation, Hegel's problem of estrangement and Lukacs' problem of reification. It is celebrated as the intellectual pivot of sociology by Herbert Spencer. It is a recurrent nightmare in the work of Max Weber. We find it framed as the problem of unintended consequences and latent functions by R.K.Merton (1957), re-invigorated as the 'awesome' heart of the social construction of reality by Berger and Luckmann (1967), strenuously wrestled with by Alvin Gouldner (1970) and Alan Dawe (1979) claimed as the defining concern of historians by Edward Thompson (1978)'.

Abrams.P  
 'Historical Sociology'  
 Publ. Open Books  
 Publishing Ltd  
 Somerset. 1982.

I began the research informing this thesis intending to make an empirically grounded sociological contribution to knowledge of the role and purpose of adult education in modern Britain. Aware that adult education had received little sustained sociological attention I assumed sufficient research and reflection had been done from within the practice of adult

education to provide a theoretical and methodological context for small-scale, close grained empirically informed study. I was wrong.

The theory and methodology of adult education research are under-developed. The literature of adult education is over-burdened with 'abstracted empiricisms' and grand theories (usually of the 'adult education and the working class' and andragogic varieties). The individual 'adult learner', 'the working class' and recently 'women' form the methodological and analytic units in most of the scant research which has been carried out by adult educators into the role and purpose of their activities in modern Britain.

There is little sense of time, place or culture in either adult education research or its literature other than a pre-occupation with the relationships between 'Oxford and Working Class Education' and 'high' (usually literary) culture and the masses as mediated through the work of Williams and Hoggart. There are no adult education research 'theories' of the middle-range' and little sense of the middle-ground: the adult education 'classroom' (made up of the activities generated by student and tutor group in a specific social, geographical and cultural setting).

This research took place in adult education 'classrooms': in the middle ground between 'adult education' and 'society'. I have examined the relationship of adult education not to a social class, gender group or structural layer nor to a series of individual 'students'. I have sought to follow the Millsian dictum linking biography to history to society through culture seeing their 'co-ordinate point' as the proper location for the study of adult education as indeed all other social constructions.

I have identified issues of interest in the border country between adult education, sociology and cultural studies. Issues which have often surfaced most acutely as methodological limitations mainly concerned with the essentially reflexive character of human agency and therefore the ways in which we think about what we do in the world. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) have argued, reflexivity 'is not a matter of methodological commitment it is an existential fact'. I have in this thesis stressed the need for a de-mystifying sociology. The need to go beyond common-sense explanations of the role and purpose of adult education. Common-sense is something, on the whole, to be distrusted rather than relied upon when doing social research.

Hammersley and Atkinson have argued that

'The distinction between science and common-sense, between the activities of the researcher and those of the researched, lies at the heart of both positivism and naturalism. It is this that leads to their joint obsession with eliminating the effects of the researcher on the data' (1983, p14).

I have tried to move away from the positivism versus naturalism dichotomy understanding it to belong to an Enlightenment determined view of the world which is increasingly losing its explanatory and heuristic powers. I have, however, sought to maintain a distinction between common-sensual reflexivity and sociological and cultural critique while acknowledging the possible scope and significance of the researcher's influence upon the researched, and consequently in the research I have drawn out some wider implications of that process linking the issue of researcher 'bias' or influence to questions about the role of social science scholarship in the modern post-Enlightenment world. While much of the time I spent doing the research was spent trying to gauge the effects of my presence and choice of methodological techniques upon those being researched I have, in this thesis, chosen to draw attention, albeit obliquely, to the ways in which the people I studied understood the

world and informed their behaviour accordingly. Adult educators, it seemed to me, understood and reflected upon their activities using conceptual categories and modes of thought taken from adult education, cultural studies and sociology in a process Giddens has referred to as 'the double hermeneutic'.

I finished the research feeling that it is not easy to identify the role and purpose of adult education in modern Britain and that we should not speak of it in general or a priori and theoretical terms as if it were. The consensus around what constitutes liberal adult education which has dominated its literature, theory and practice since just before the 1919 Report was published is breaking up, leaving in its wake many adult educations, some so 'illiberal' as to be unrecognizable to its founders inside and outside of the academy. We best understand those changes and see their implications for adult education by relating research (however small-scale and apparently discrete) to the current concerns of social (especially sociological) theorists concerned to understand the ways in which modernity is structuring, and structured by, our daily lives.

Research methodology is one of the ways in which we are forced to link small-scale empirically grounded research to wider social processes and theories about them if we are to begin to understand, and not merely to describe, what we see.

There is no one sociological truth of the adult educational matter. There are several adult educations and sociologies and consequent upon this several methodologies. There are, however, only a handful of methodological techniques and in this research I used most of those usually associated with qualitative research in the context of a definition of methodology:

'understood not as a set of neutral techniques but as the interrelations of substantive problems, sources of evidence and larger assumptions about society, history and the purpose of scholarship' (Skocpol.T. Preface. pX).

I used a variety of techniques at different stages of the research both to help me shed light on what I was discovering and to generate further areas of enquiry. That no one technique was adequate to the task of gaining access to an understanding of the role and purpose of adult education in the Wear Valley is obvious. In finding out what will not do, however, we

go some way to suggesting what might and therefore to preparing the ground for future research.

Taking the historical sociologist Skocpol's definition of methodology as the unifying theme for this appendix I will order my argument around its three substantive concerns:

- a) technique
- b) 'the interrelations of substantive problems, sources of evidence and larger assumptions about society, history' and
- c) 'the purpose of scholarship'.

At the level of technique I set out intending to apply a 'triangulated' methodological strategy to adult education in the Wear Valley of County Durham (see Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983) using both quantitative and qualitative research methods to gain information about adult education. By contrasting and comparing this information I hoped to verify certain aspects of the emerging picture as being not necessarily more 'true' or 'objective' but less 'subjective' and thus less relativistic than others, and therefore to say something about how adult education was in the Wear Valley. There was not enough quantitative data in the



form of statistical records of class location, size, student attendance, enrolment, fee levels or position statements to sustain such a study. The few quantitative secondary source materials found were insufficiently tied to the adult education context or regarded as 'highly political' (and therefore secret) documents by practitioners anxious to avoid 'giving those with the power to cut our budgets any ammunition'. I was frequently allowed to see class enrolment figures for example but undertook not to cite them when writing the thesis. The boundaries between 'technique' and 'the interrelations of substantive problems and sources of evidence' had already become blurred.

I considered trying to generate primary quantitative and qualitative data by conducting survey research in the Wear Valley using people who had taken part in adult education activities there in recent years and were doing so at the time of interview. Preliminary interviews with members of voluntary organisations given to the members of a DACE art class indicated that there had been little formal adult education provision in the Wear Valley in recent years and that the adult education component of voluntary activities was not usually acknowledged or understood to be

significant by those who took part in them. There was therefore little information about, or interest in, current adult education activities in the Wear Valley and no 'lived' adult education 'history' accessible through the techniques and methods of oral history.

A move away from 'triangulation' and its quantifying imperative towards mainly qualitative research led to a technical pre-occupation with unstructured interviews (with individuals and groups), observation (participant and non-participant) and the critical reading of the literature of adult education in an attempt to render the social construction adult education accessible as a cultural form. I began to see my task not as one of making statements about how adult education was (verification) but in pointing out the ways in which adult education differed from the ways in which we had generally understood it (falsification and de-mystification). The relationship between the synchronic and diachronic aspects of adult education remained elusive: of saying if not how adult education was then how it had been I found few histories of the Wear Valley and no histories of adult education in it. The problems of locating sources and generating data from them were, in many ways, essentially the same as those applying to the study of

current practice with the added difficulties posed by the ways and extent to which each had survived and become recognised as source materials. The literature of adult education as posters, prospectuses and hand bills is acknowledged in its literature as being ephemeral. When that ephemera becomes memorabilia it is even harder to locate and to extrapolate from.

While it was not possible to approach the adult education present through its past in any linear and causal way it was, however, useful to try to understand the ways in which the images of adult education present in its literature had grown out of images clearly discernible in its historiography. I turned to histories of adult education in an attempt to try to find out why the images of it in its current literature differed so much from the actuality of its practice in the Wear Valley. I focused upon the images of adult education in its literature (past and present) and in its sociology contrasting them with images of adult education taken from the public arena of newspapers, magazines and popular books using techniques of critical evaluation and textual exegesis more usually associated with cultural studies than critical sociology. I began to see adult education as itself a cultural form: not necessarily limited to or

arising out of the educational experience itself (as in the counter or anti-school cultures identified by sociologists of education) but linked to cultural processes and issues which transcended institutional or agency boundaries.

Adult education activities are not confined to a 'classroom' as usually understood. Adult education takes place in many settings and 'the classroom' can be any setting or place in which a group of adults gather together to achieve an educational outcome. It was difficult to interview adult education students or participants in the Wear Valley: there were no scheduled breaks, truancies or all of the other time periods which allow the classroom observer to clarify what he/she has seen take place in the classroom with pupils. The significance of the setting tends to grow in such circumstances and to become more than a backcloth. Classes or activities held in the predominantly rural areas of the Wear Valley tended to have a different form and content to those held in the more urban ones for example. Slowly I began to realise the importance of the geographical location of adult education in the Wear Valley to its construction as a social and cultural form. My pre-occupation with adult

education as a cultural form and therefore with meaning extended to the Wear Valley itself.

I began to see that the 'paradox of human agency' lies at the heart of the social construction 'the Wear Valley' as well as of adult education in it. The boundaries and the meaning of the Wear Valley were, as we saw in the chapter dealing with 'rural' adult education undergoing highly public and obvious changes at the time of this research. A struggle for the hearts and minds of the people of the Wear Valley and the imposition of a unifying definition of it as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) was taking place. Some of the unintended consequences of an attempt to use adult education practices as part of that struggle were shown in the case study. Most of the adult educators involved in promoting the AONB had a recent social science/research background and seemed to understand adult education in its terms.

The problem of the unintended consequences of such purposive human action and the role of reflexivity in producing consequences (intended or otherwise) gives rise to a tangle of epistemological and ontological concerns which should be central to the methodological awareness of anyone wishing to understand adult education as a social construction made and re-made,

hour by hour, day by day, by people who think (within certain traditions) about what they are doing before and after they do it, reflecting upon past and present actions while informing present and future ones.

Becker has argued that methodology is too important to be left to the methodologists. So too is reflexivity. It must not be reduced to the problem of researcher self-awareness or bias and the promotion of techniques for avoiding, or making explicit that bias.

Reflexivity is an inescapable fact of the research process because an unavoidable fact of 'the paradox of human agency'. Anyone wishing to understand adult education or any other social construction must face this issue squarely: it is produced and re-produced by reflexive processes of ongoing practical consciousness and not bequeathed to the future by the congealed social relationships it seems often to consist of. To understand adult education we must understand the role of those reflexive processes in its construction as well as their effect upon social researchers. To understand the role of adult education in modern Britain we have to locate it in processes of transformation applying equally to adult education and the wider society which sustains it. We need to develop methodological strategies which will allow us

to link technique with substantive issues and the wider social and historical processes referred to by Skocpol. We need to do more methodological work not in developing new techniques, either quantitative or qualitative, but in enlarging the scope of existing techniques and strategies. A matter of filling old bottles with new wine of a vintage recent enough to allow for additives of recent social theory.

Too often theory in social research is confined to the notion of 'grounded theory' with its rather cosy implications of hard empirical observation in tight local settings. Theory other than the 'grounded' variety is often assumed to be 'grand' and irrelevant to the concerns of the jobbing researcher. Few ideas are more dangerous to problem, not perspective, driven research. In a world characterised in its modernity by the presence of 'the double hermeneutic' how grounded is 'grounded theory'? There can be few, if any, places in the world which would yield or 'ground' a theory untouched by the sociological (if not the cultural studies) imagination. The commonsense world is, almost always, nowadays mediated by the processes of the double hermeneutic: sociologically informed and reflexive. We must make these sociologically informed

perspectives and reflexive relationships visible.

The reflexive relationship between adult education, cultural studies and sociology has another dimension as has been shown in this thesis. Much of the literature of adult education was informed by the cultural critique (if not research techniques) of Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart. Both have acknowledged that they developed their particular approaches to the study of cultural forms during classroom encounters with their adult education students. In using a cultural studies approach (albeit in combination with a sociological one) reflections about the nature of adult education and its 'surrounding social milieu' are being brought to bear upon the phenomenon adult education.

Those adult educators who brought a more explicit sociological and cultural approach to their work in the Wear Valley frequently operated in paradigms which allowed adult education to occupy its place in the modern world in exaggerated terms: most usually as 'the motor of history' or at least the generator of radical social change. Such ideas often resulted in a manipulation of the form and content of liberal adult education to social and political ends in ways which



ran counter to the ideas of the liberal tradition of adult education as represented in its literature with its emphasis on Socratic method and the quality of the debate rather than the tangibility of its social and political outcome.

It is at this point that we must question 'the role of scholarship' in social research methodology and particularly the role of the researcher. The difficulties encountered by those seeking to use adult education to promote the case and influence the outcome of the struggle for an AONB designation of the Wear Valley and the unintended consequences of their purposive actions forces a recognition of what Silverman and Gubrium (following Foucault) have termed 'the multi-locational' as well as multi-dimensional nature of power. Power can no longer naively be located within the state:

'Power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives' (Foucault, 'Power/Knowledge', Ed. C.Gordon, 1980, p39. Cited in Silverman and Gubrium, 1989, p1).

The role of the researcher in this context is complex. Traditionally the British social researcher has identified with and sought to promote the interests of

the impoverished, powerless underdog within paradigms owing more to the influence of Fabian Socialism than Marx, Durkheim or Weber. Where power is not immediately obvious, however, neither is powerlessness. I identified several adult educators (providers such as the University DACE and the RCC) having more direct and overt links to the formal centres of power and ultimately 'the state' than others. Paradoxically, however, these agencies did not achieve their goals as easily as might have been expected; if at all. The adult education providers and participants living and working in the Wear Valley itself (as opposed to Durham City where the RCC and DACE were based) had a great deal of power arising out of their local knowledge and power to withhold it and their 'contacts' from the adult educational 'incomers'.

It was difficult to find my way around these complex power relationships and the ethical problems and value judgements they generated. For the most part I managed to avoid confronting them directly by using a kind of situational ethics born of the wish not to engage in any activity damaging to the interests of those with whom I was working. In most cases this was a fairly unproblematical stance as I have shown with respect to

adult education and unemployed people in the Wear Valley.

I began this research seeing adult education as an abstract and undifferentiated activity. A good in and of itself with whose (largely imagined) values I identified fully. As the research progressed I identified several adult educations: each with its own particular tangle of values, aims and goals. These values and goals were frequently in conflict with each other and it was not easy to take a stance for or against in many cases. Moreover, as Gubrium and Silverman (1989) have argued, loss of faith in the Enlightenment project has led to a heightened degree of researcher role confusion. The post-Enlightenment social researcher can no longer appeal to the tenets of impartial, objective, truth-seeking science to legitimise his/her activities. Gubrium and Silverman have identified three roles which the researcher might occupy: that of 'scholar', 'state counsellor' and 'partisan' or defender of the underdog. All are for or against something: usually the state.

While carrying out this research (in so far as I have finished reflecting upon my role in it) I too have been for or against something, most notably I have

been for adult education in general terms and more specifically the liberal approach within it. The complex nature of power relationships in the Wear Valley however meant that I could not readily identify a group of people or activities with which to identify or a role to adopt. While I could not have described my role in the Wear Valley as that of state counsellor I certainly felt the roles of 'scholar' (purportedly independent) and of 'partisan' bearing upon me. The more I learned of adult education in the Wear Valley, however, the less I was able to identify with any one adult education or group of practitioners.

It was easy to see liberal non-vocational adult education as the underdog (victim of stringent financial cuts) against the might of 'the state'. Even easier to see voluntary groups as the underdog vis a vis the state in the form of the RCC (as illustrated by reference to the Xerox machine issue in the case study). Obvious too was the unequal position of the hourly paid or voluntary adult educators working for the LEA against the paid and tenured staff of the University DACE. Where being for the underdog, eg. the voluntary group against the RCC, did not bring me into conflict with my own values and allegiances I experienced little role confusion or difficulty. The

biggest problems arose when people I had labelled 'underdogs' showed themselves to be fundamentally ill-disposed to liberal adult education and in favour of table-tennis and five-a-side football for children. It was at this point that I questioned not only my role in the research but the purpose of the research and of 'scholarship' per se.

Any close-grained empirically grounded study will raise reflexive issues of this kind. Unfortunately they are still more often dismissed in much research than acknowledged and explored. If we are to understand the role and purpose of adult education in modern Britain, however, it is precisely at this level and with these issues that we should be working. Locating the researcher in post-Enlightenment paradigms characterised by loss of faith in scientific orthodoxy and the notion of unilinear progress accompanying it forces us to address the uncertainties of research in modern Britain as well as of adult education.

APPENDIX B: THE WEAR VALLEY

In this thesis I have presented a range of meanings given to adult education by its practitioners and some of the people I met in leisure and hobby groups in the Wear Valley. I have tried to show how these ideologies of adult education arise out of the complex interaction of adult education as 'system' and as 'idea' as it structures, through practice, on a daily basis: the social phenomenon adult education.

In presenting an account of the Wear Valley as I found it in the literature and through the meanings and practices attached to it by adult educators and social researchers living and working there I have offered a very limited view; both of the Wear Valley and the range of meanings which people I spoke to attached to it.

In trying to come to terms with, or to locate, 'the real' Wear Valley I was constantly aware of the violence done to the 'reality' of 'the Wear Valley' by abstractions of both a quantitative and qualitative nature. While trying to find my way around, and into, the Wear Valley, over a period of seven years (1983-

1990) I travelled many miles and saw many aspects of the Wear Valley which I felt were in some ways representative of, while not, of course, wholly encapsulating, it. In this appendix I will state briefly the difficulties I experienced grasping the Wear Valley as 'a totality' and, therefore, of having any comprehensive or grand theoretical or methodological approach to the research on the Wear Valley which informs this thesis.

How I saw the Wear Valley is, of course, linked to my social and personal characteristics: my biography. As a former factory operative from the inner-ring of Birmingham I moved to Crook in the Wear Valley: a predominantly 'respectable' working class community which still had rhubarb clumps and lilac trees in the gardens of its council houses. A retreat into 'the golden age' of working class life. Having witnessed the sudden, large scale, and apparently remorseless decline of parts of the inner West Midlands I became fascinated by the way in which, while clearly declining, the Wear Valley maintained an overall air of 'respectability' and almost of stability. The writers of the report 'The Wear Valley: Decline or Development' describe the Wear Valley in the following way:

'Economically and socially, Wear Valley District in 1985 can be seen as a microcosm of the North East as a whole, characterised by high unemployment, a declining level of economic activity since 1960, a declining and ageing population, a depressed urban environment with poor housing stock, very low levels of investment and few signs of economic growth. The settlement patterns, social structure, community life and local culture characteristic of the Wear Valley are consistent with its industrial past rather than its post-industrial present, and the area as a whole can be characterised as a context of de-industrialisation with an uncertain future and an economy in a considerable state of flux. There have been concerted attempts at industrial regeneration. In the 1970s multi-national companies were encouraged to establish branch factories in the Wear Valley but these have now mostly closed down and the overall strategy has proved a failure. Current planning policy is aimed at encouraging small firm development to create new long-term employment opportunities on a small and more localised scale' (1985, p3).

My overall impression of the Wear Valley was that it was certainly 'gripped by the perception' of its decline. In most of the conversations I had with people who lived and worked there that decline was most often noticed, or recounted in the context of stories about working life in the Wear Valley. Stories which often revealed a perception that the Wear Valley had both a pre-industrial past and a post-industrial future but had somehow lost its industrial present. Its future, paradoxically, was often viewed as being a return to the past: The logic of post-



industrialisation as de-industrialisation permeated much of the meaning which people living and working in the Wear Valley gave to their lives and their work. A worker on a sewerage plant told me:

'I got dive-bombed by swifts and swallows today because it's a biological digestion system and that means it produces a cycle of flies, worms, snails and all sorts of weird and wonderful things that the swifts and swallows feed off. It's also largely undisturbed and getting more so with the cutbacks ... nature will have it all back shortly, we won't be able to afford the money to stop it, most of the works are overgrown now, like miniature wildlife reserves'.

The 'biological digestion system' referred to is a means of turning sewerage into clear water to be pumped back into the river and 'sludge' to be sprayed onto the land as fertiliser. For those involved there have always been small, but real risks involved in working with the raw materials of such a process.

For this man, in the Wear Valley, who remained in work and therefore did not suffer the trauma of unemployment, there was still a feeling of decline experienced as a worsening of the conditions of daily life and an increase in those risks.

'It's just little changes, trivial like, but they make things less safe you know. I mean, the sewerage tanks - well they don't man the works any longer so all the little jobs - that make a difference, well they just get left, don't get done, you know the sewerage tanks, well there's a handrail and its all covered in shit, 'cos it's nobody's job now to clean up so nobody does. Nobody's going to make work for themselves are they? And this handrail round the tank, it's all covered in shit so you don't touch it but it's not all right really 'cos that handrail's there to stop you falling in the tanks, so you see the Health and Safety's contravened and it's just little things like this really and this is the time, you know with them not being sure about AIDS and that new hepatitis that they should be more careful to my mind. I was covered in shite (sic) after just three hours work and that never used to happen when they employed a bloke to keep the rails and that clean'.

The materialist model of man, allied to the industrial revolution seemed, to me, in the Wear Valley to be inadequate: to have lost most, if not all of its explanatory powers. The days when men and women were seen in their daily work as being able to bend the world to their ends having gone: in their place days characterised by dull pessimism and a growing sense of unease.

In talking of 'the mood' or 'the feel' of the Wear Valley we are acknowledging that place (in this instance the Wear Valley) does not exist in any simple materialistic sense outside of an attempt to

understand it in empirical terms for social research purposes. We are acceding that place ie: the Wear Valley is a social and cultural construction as well as a geological and geographical one. As the artefacts of adult education: prospectuses, reading lists and chamois leather driving gloves give an appearance of thing-like facticity to adult education so, too, do certain material conditions (geography, climate) and artefacts (such as transport systems) give to the Wear Valley an air of permanence and of facticity. This is so particularly with respect to its boundaries, which, because geographically evident and geologically 'formed' are often understood to be immutable. Yet we have seen that the battle for boundaries and therefore, to some extent meaning, in the Wear Valley was fierce and protracted.

There is, then, no one Wear Valley with which all of those who live, work and are associated with it would identify and agree upon. There are many, often conflicting and conflictual images of the Wear Valley. Social research, often seen as a way of getting away from a multiplicity of meanings and, perhaps, of 'realities' has often been scientific, informed by quantitative 'data' and based on rather positivistic models of the research act. Such accounts are useful

in providing 'background' information, in delineating 'place' in the first instance. They are not, however, as 'objective' as they frequently claim to be and often embody value judgements which, because of the stylised quantitative form they are presented in (pages of lists and figures for example) remain unchallenged. A brief description taken from 'The Wear Valley: Decline or Development' report serves both to illustrate that all that is quantitative is, perhaps, not 'objective', and to locate us, geographically, in the Wear Valley of County Durham.

The:

'Wear Valley takes its name from the River Wear which rises at Wearhead in the north Pennines and flows eastwards for 27 miles through the valley, continuing through past Durham City and the conurbations of Wearside to the sea' (1985, p2).

We learn also that the Wear Valley is geographically

'... bounded by Bishop Auckland in the south, Derwent Reservoir and the Northumberland border in the north, Nenthead and the Cumbrian border in the west and extending (sic) in the direction of Esh Winning, Brandon and Spennymoor in the east' (1985, p2).

The electoral district of the Wear Valley was formed in the 1974 local government reorganisations out of the merging of four authorities, three of these being

urban: Bishop Auckland Urban District Council, Crook and Willington Urban District Council, Tow Law Urban District Council and Weardale Rural District Council.

The:

'Wear Valley is one of eight local authority District (sic) in County Durham, having a total area of 50,500 hectares, of which 29,000 hectares (58.5%) is classified as agricultural land' ..... 'Most of the total population of 64,000 is however concentrated in the largely urban area of Bishop Auckland, Crook and Willington. Traditionally ... where most of the work has been located, in the form of heavy manufacturing and extractive industries' (1985, p2)

We soon realise that the Wear Valley is characterised by a rural-urban split. We can best appreciate the nature of that split by following, on the map between pages 355 and 356, from just outside Brancepeth, near Durham City, the A690 through the predominantly urban settlements of Willington (including Billy Row, Stanley Crook, Oakenshaw, Sunnyside and Tow Law) to Crook, where the A689 (running through Bishop Auckland) takes us through the increasingly less 'built-up' and rural settlements of Wolsingham, Frosterley, Stanhope, Eastgate, Westgate, Daddry Shield, St. John's Chapel, Ireshopeburn, Wearhead and Cowhill. When we learn from 'the Wear Valley: Decline or Development' report, however, that:

'The valley bottom, with soils derived from glacial till and clay loam, allows for mixed agricultural production on predominantly Grade 3 land. The valley sides open into extensive tracts of attractive heather and peat moorland which is stocked with sheep and in parts managed for grouse. The entire area is rich in coal and mineral deposits of lead, silver, zinc, flourspar(sic), barytes and iron, and there are also large reservoirs of granite, limestone, sand, gravel and brick clay, useful in the construction industry' (1985, p2. My emphasis).

we see that the Wear Valley has acquired an air of thing-like facticity which may serve less to describe than to obfuscate.

The first thing we should note about the facts of geography of the Wear Valley is that they are difficult to describe in terms which have meaning to many of those who live there. What, for example, is 'Grade 3 land'? To me the land usage patterns: sheep grazing on the higher slopes around Wearhead, some cattle on the lower ones at Bishop Auckland and Helmington Row implies that the land is not very good for growing crops other than (towards Brancepeth and Durham City) where the chrome-yellow flowered oilseed rape is seen by some to have 'spoilt the view'. The quantifying and quantitative term 'Grade 3 land' is positivistic in overtone and ill at ease with the value judgement on the appearance of the land:

'attractive' heather. While the writers of 'The Wear Valley: Decline or Development' report found the heather and peat moorland banking up around the valley 'attractive' many of those who lived and worked there did not. The edge of the North Pennines Moors, I was frequently told, was a place where people went to commit suicide. 'To top themselves'. For me the North Pennines held little attraction. Their geological and geographical scale having little to compare with either nearby Teesdale or the Lake District. Their lack of human population and recent industrial history leaving them scarred, isolated, and to my mind, sad places which attempts to gentrify their main population centres did little to compensate for.

I have relied heavily, when describing the Wear Valley, upon the report 'The Wear Valley: Decline or Development' because it was the first thoroughgoing review or social audit carried out in the Wear Valley for many years. Its descriptions of the mood of the Wear Valley are less exhaustive, reflecting the difficulties of the positivistic approach to social research with its emphasis on 'accurate assessment' (see Wear Valley Study Group, 1985, p35).

For the writers of 'The Wear Valley: Decline or Development' the Wear Valley was characterised by 'apathy, low morale and lack of commitment or initiative' in ways which were 'widespread throughout the area'. Certainly this was one of the reasons frequently given to me to account for both the absence of adult education provision in the Wear Valley and the failure of any such activities which did get underway. How 'apathetic' the people of the Wear Valley were and are, however, is difficult to gauge in the context of an investigation of adult education: an activity which has frequently been seen to have suffered from the effects of 'apathy' on the part of putative students and especially working class ones. In his book 'Adult Education: Why This Apathy?' (published in 1953) Ernest Green (then President of the International Federation of Workers' Educational Associations) argues that:

'There are, of course, large numbers of the adult population whom we must write off as totally deaf to any intellectual appeal, and certainly to any sustained educational effort, ... but they are not all by any means among what we call the educationally under-privileged.

Let us assume then that, even among the educationally under-privileged, there are some, as in all social classes, mentally incapable, others apathetic and uninterested and likely to remain so, and a number legitimately debarred by shift work or other factors beyond their control. What does it leave? It still leaves us with some millions



of manual workers, only a minute fraction of whom we have been able to attract to adult education' (1953, p135).

While I found the adult education, community centres and voluntary organisations which I studied in the course of this research to be run-down and short of members to the point, in many instances, of virtual collapse I would hesitate before attributing the causes of this state of affairs to 'apathy'. Rather did it seem to be the result of a complex mixture of social and economic determinants most notably class, age, gender and education.

Turning away from the report 'The Wear Valley: Decline or Development' which I have understood as giving a largely quantitative description of the area under study and towards other ways of describing the Wear Valley we must avoid the tendency to swing, in pursuit of a balanced perspective, to purely qualitative research. As there are problems associated with quantitative research methodologies so, too, are there difficulties with qualitative research as ethnography. Most notably the assumption that the ethnographic account of what has been studied is superior in some ways, usually unspecified, to other writings. And that the meaning given to the phenomenon being created by

the ethnographer is superior, in some way, to the meanings intrinsic to the situation observed and therefore to the social actors involved in it. In this research both quantitative and qualitative research has been used in order to locate the study and, by implication, the Wear Valley in what Wallerstein has called 'the world system'. A system which, as Hawthorn has argued, is in reality 'surprisingly unsystematic'.

The Wear Valley is not just a material and physical entity, a matter of geographical mineral wealth. It exists at the 'level' of the 'idea' too. The Wear Valley is a cultural phenomenon as well as a physical one. The task of situating the Wear Valley in 'the world system' in cultural terms is then an ethnographic one. In 'Ethnography in the Modern World System' George E. Marcus (1986) argues that 'Ethnographies have always been written in the context of historic change' and that

'... aside from the use of a few well-established techniques for taking into account change, history, and political economy, ethnographers of an interpretive bent - more interested in problems of cultural meaning than in social action - have not generally represented the ways in which closely observed cultural worlds are embedded in larger, more impersonal systems' (pp165-166).

We must remain alert to the veracity of this claim, but must also take care to ensure that in seeking to describe and portray 'the feel' of the Wear Valley, and of adult education activity in it, we do not lose sight of the ways in which culture is part of a living process of structuration and not the reflective component of a structural and material location.

An examination of literary accounts and images of the Wear Valley forces acknowledgement of the differences between them and ethnography and therefore between the world of lay and social 'science' and cultural studies meaning. One of the defining characteristics of ethnography is its self-conscious distancing from other writings such as the travelogue. As Mary Louise Pratt has argued in 'Fieldwork in Common Places' there is:

'a well-established habit among ethnographers of defining ethnographic writings over and against older, less specialised genres, such as travel books, personal memoirs, journalism and accounts by missionaries, settlers, colonial officials, and the like. Although it will not supplant these genres altogether, professional ethnography, it is understood, will usurp their authority and correct their abuses. In almost any ethnography dull-looking figures called "mere travellers" or "casual observers" show up from time to time, only to have their superficial perceptions either corrected or corroborated by the serious scientist' (Clifford and Marcus, 1986, p27).

While there was little, if any ethnography of the Wear Valley there was no shortage of travellers' tales, albeit travellers as tourists and of other accounts, some of which might, with some justification, be felt to be ripe for the correction of 'abuse' if not 'usurpation' by ethnography. (See for example the various 'Heritage Guides' listed in the bibliography). Most of the travellogues are aimed at 'the serious walker'. Most tell of decline and industrial despoilation of a landscape assumed at some point in its history to have been entirely 'natural'. These accounts are, in my view valid accounts of the ways in which the Wear Valley is seen to have changed by those who have been associated with it, because they convey some meaning which has been attributed to the Wear Valley by some of the people who have 'known' it. They pose a valuable challenge to ethnography and the single authorial stance it implies. In Railway Memoirs No.2, for example, we learn that for one writer:

'Looking at South West Durham today, it is almost impossible to imagine that the area was not so long ago covered by a dense and bustling railway system going back to the dawn of railways itself' (1990, p4).

While for another the decline of the railways goes unnoticed in the context of what is seen to be a process approaching absolute decline.

'In the 1960s the pits of West Durham were closed down. These closures were quite different from those which took place in the 1930s. In that decade pits closed in times of 'bad trade', opened again as trade improved. In contrast the closures of the 1960s were final. Places like Crook were badly hit at both times. In the 1930s the town - built around several pits and drifts and a large coke works - had one (sic) the highest rates of unemployment in England. But for all this, to the people who lived there it remained a miners' town. Today, with the pits gone and replaced by the new insecurities of factory employment, they feel that their futures are uncertain' (Strong Words Collective, 1979, p42).

Other accounts of the Wear Valley tend to embody the almost stereotypical images of the Industrial Revolution which have long been overly associated with 'the North':

'The county of Durham is still one of the least known parts of England, and to many people the very word Durham creates in the mind a picture of squalor and desolation. Unfortunately this picture is not without foundation, for scattered throughout the county one can still find small, pathetic mining towns and villages, deprived of means of employment with the closure of the local mines. The community continues to survive without hope. The pulse of life started with the opening of the mines and ceased with their closure' (p3 in R.Spedding's 'Walking in Weardale', 1974).

Caught between largely quantitative social research accounts of the Wear Valley and travellers' tales I found myself acknowledging the truths of both accounts while finding both inadequate to the task of describing the Wear Valley. Neither did I feel that ethnography, with its stress on the primacy of the authorial stance could do justice to the Wear Valley. Throughout this research I have been concerned with identifying, describing and presenting a range of meanings of adult education to people living and working in the Wear Valley. In doing so I have been forced to acknowledge the reified nature of the Wear Valley itself. The de-mystifying task of sociology is, in many ways, incompatible with the descriptive task of the ethnographer. In addition, I could never see the Wear Valley in ways which would allow me to write an effective ethnographic account of it, or adult education activities in it. The Wear Valley simply would not stand still long enough. This thesis is, therefore, largely an account of the research process: understood eventually as a search less for the facts of adult education in the Wear Valley than for an adequate method by which to study it.

At the stage in this research process when I still believed that it might be possible or that I might

have the necessary skills, to produce a heavily descriptive ethnographic piece of writing I began to take photographs of the Wear Valley. Snapshots: visual reminders of scenes and events that I had observed in my wanderings through the Wear Valley. I now look upon those 'snaps' less as an aid to ethnographic authorial memory, and more as a series of glimpses I had into the making of the life and meaning given to the Wear Valley by those who lived and worked in it during the mid 1980's - 1990. They are, also, of course, in the selectivity of their taking, a series of instances in the making of this thesis: the linking of the adult education 'classroom' to 'the wider world'.

I shall now present those photographs with brief commentaries in the hope that they will convey to the reader of this thesis a) 'a feel' for, and of, the quality of life in the Wear Valley, b) an impression of the way in which I conducted this research project in the Wear Valley as I found it and c), provide some kind of reference, however fleeting and inadequate, to the processes of 'social change' in the Wear Valley.

In photographs numbers 1 & 2 I show how the public and national image of adult education penetrates, and has

meaning in, the Wear Valley. We all know what we mean by 'evening classes'.

The illustrations 3, 4 and 5 are picture postcards on sale in the mid 1980's in Crook as part of the drive to bring tourism into the Wear Valley. They depict the formal 'official' civic face of the Wear Valley: its new town hall, and the war memorial. In photographs 6, 7 and 8, I show how the new civic centre has become a focus for protest.

When seeking to understand the ways in which people located themselves spatially and socially in the Wear Valley I frequently asked people 'where in Crook', for example, 'would you like to live?' In a rapidly gentrifying area in Crook there were one or two roads reputed by people 'born and bred' in Crook as opposed to the gentrifying newcomers to be the most desirable. Of these St.Mary's Avenue was always seen as 'the best road in Crook, where all the doctors and people like that live'.

In photographs 11a and 11b, I show how, early in the 1980's, when employment was climbing steeply in the Wear Valley, as elsewhere in Britain, the fabric of its industrialised past was torn down. The demolition



of the factory chimney at Dyson's Refractory was turned into a public spectacle and fund-raising event: tickets were sold and an observation area cordoned off.

When I began this research in 1983 Crook had an ornamental park. In the mid 1980's that park had been divided up: the areas surrounding its old (and redundant because of the new civic centre) council buildings was sold off. This piece of land outside a private nursing home was allowed to become unkempt and overgrown.

The images of the public affluence and private squalor in Crook (photographs 12 and 13) contrast with the grim images presented by the 'front street' of the nearby ex-pit village of Willington.

In photograph number 14 women stand outside a semi-derelict bus shelter close to the 'Priceless' prize bingo and fancy goods shop.

Photograph 15 shows a corner in Willington at which many young people gather to sit on the benches and while away time.

In photograph number 16 we can see that some of that time is spent altering the posters: this one, originally an advertisement for building society loans had said 'Looking for a better life? The Money's here and waiting'. It had been altered to read 'Fucking for a bet. The Money's here and waiting'. Within yards of this corner is the prestigious 'Stile' restaurant (photograph 17) whose customers are reputed to include university lecturers and Parliamentary Labour Party members.

Photographs 18a and 18b show other attempts to take Willington 'up-market'. Photographs 19 and 20 show how some of the former public buildings in the Wear Valley (such as schools, churches and chapels) were sold off to become private dwelling houses, bed and breakfast hotels or private nursing and 'care' homes.

Picture 21 shows how, with little regard for 'the environment' as aesthetics, an old chapel or village hall in Bishop Auckland has become a clothing factory.

Photograph 22 shows how an old board school in Helmington Row (near Willington) looked before it was turned into a private nursing home, while number 23 points to what is widely perceived by youth and

community workers in the Wear Valley as 'the problem of youth in the Wear Valley': young people who prefer street gang to youth club activities. Pictures 24, 25, 26 and 27, show more evidence of the street gang activities of young people in Bishop Auckland and also of the public squalor which surrounds many of the public buildings in Bishop Auckland. The new railway station at Bishop Auckland was covered with the most elaborate graffiti within weeks of its being opened (photograph number 28).

At the other end of the Wear Valley there are scenes to fuel myths of rural retreatism (photograph number 29). Crook and Willington seem to form an oasis of industrial and urban life between the university, City of Durham (photograph number 30) on the one hand and the rural edges of the North Pennines (photograph number 31) on the other. Heritage in the Wear Valley takes the form of constructing an industrial museum in rural Weardale. Aspects of formal leisure provision in urban Crook and Willington in 1984 are shown in photographs 33, 34, 35a and 35b and 36a and 36b. Informal leisure activities in Crook are depicted in photographs 37a and 37b. The public affluence of the new civic centre and this private squalor are separated from each other by just a few yards.

Photographs 38, 39, 40 and 41, show some of the different types of buildings in which adult education, and community and youth work are carried out in Crook. Photographs 42 and 43 show children playing outside of the 'financially well-off' and middle class Hartside Community Centre and on its roof.

In photographs 44 and 45, I show the village hall at Helmington Row which was destroyed in an arson attack and the new community centre which was built alongside it. Photograph 46 shows the community centre at Stanhope in Weardale and 47 the village hall at Wearhead where 'Community Print' took place. The notice in the window advertises, in florescent letters 'Bingo' and the wreath on its wall commemorates the dead of two world wars. In photographs 48a and 48b I show the Glenhome Boys Club recommended to me as 'one of the best buildings in the Wear Valley'. When I visited it, with a member of staff from the local technical college (looking for a room in which to run an adult literacy class) it was very run down, dirty and smelly. An elderly woman, sweeping the floor told us that the building was 'a lovely place, ideal for a youth and community centre; if they didn't keep letting all these kids in'. Photographs 49 and 50 show the FE Offices at Bishop Auckland and the affluent

King James I Community Centre at Bishop Auckland. The variety and range of buildings used for community centres in the Wear Valley is large. The one in photograph 51 dates back to the 1930's. Sixty years later it is for sale 'Building Only', perhaps an acknowledgement of the apparent failure of adult education and youth and community activities to 'meet all the needs of all the communities' in the Wear Valley. When I began this research in 1983 the garage next to the community and social centre was owned by ICI. As I ended it in 1990 it was owned by 'Q8' and a major war in the Gulf seemed inevitable.

Throughout this research, as I struggled to find words and ways of expressing what I was seeing and hearing in the Wear Valley I was struck by the amount of writing as 'graffiti' in the Wear Valley. The sign at the top of the hill in Billy Row is repeatedly painted over (and has been for the last ten years) to read Billy Crow. At Bishop Auckland photographs 55a and 55b show how a sign at the entrance to one of its largest council estates has been defaced. Known locally as 'Fort Appatchie' it is not clear whether the statements 'We Buy, Sell, Pinch Anything' are boasts or accusations. One of the last attempts the adult education tutor made to get local people involved in

adult education activities before being asked not to use any local community centres or buildings in the Wear Valley was a photographic project entitled 'Know Your Community'. The aim was to teach both photographic skills, and a critical awareness to adults by getting them to take photographs, develop and print them and write appropriately analytical captions for them. The project failed due to 'lack of interest' ie: apathy. On the weekend that putative students were supposed to take their photographs I went out with my camera. I saw (photographs 56 and 57) that the frontage of one of the Wear Valley's biggest employers had been defaced. The explicitly anti-semitic nature of the abuse and the threat carried within it bear testimony to Raymond Williams' comment that

'this is a social order which really does not know in what crucial respects it is ignorant, in what crucial respects it is incompletely conscious' (Williams.R, undated but probably 1983, cited in McIlroy J, 1990).

This thesis does not however endorse his belief in the ability of adult education, taken as system and idea in modern Britain, to overcome that kind of ignorance: to occupy a major role in the civilising process.

Photographs 1 & 2



(1) Adult education is part of 'the British way of life'. This image - part of a national advertising campaign - of adult education has presumed relevance in the locality of the Wear Valley



(2) In what ways and to what extent is it relevant? How far does this image represent reality? Is it founded on myth or memory?

Photograph: Bishop Auckland, Oct '89



Photographs 3 & 4



(3) The Wear Valley. Picture postcard images: St. Catherine's Church in the Market Place at Crook

Postcard: Printed by Noel Tatt Ltd, Devon



(4) The Wear Valley. Picture postcard images: The War Memorial in the Market Place at Crook

Postcard: Printed by Noel Tatt Ltd, Devon

Photographs 5 & 6



(5) The Wear Valley. Picture postcard images: The new Civic Centre in the Market Place at Crook

Postcard: Printed by Noel Tatt Ltd, Devon



(6) Images of the Wear Valley: The new Civic Centre. Locating local government centrally also provides a focal point for protest. This photograph (Jan 1991) shows that the Civic Centre has been defaced

Photographs 7 & 8



(7) A closer view reveals that it is a protest against the poll tax



(8) The Trustee Savings Bank (formerly the Municipal Bank) is located within the new Civic Centre. Its 'enterprise culture' image contrasts with the poll tax protest

Photographs 9 & 10



(9) Images of the Wear Valley. Private Affluence: Gentrification is now commonplace in Crook



(10) St.Mary's Avenue is still reputed to be 'the most sought after area' in which to live by local people. It enjoys an almost mystical status



Photographs 11a & 11b

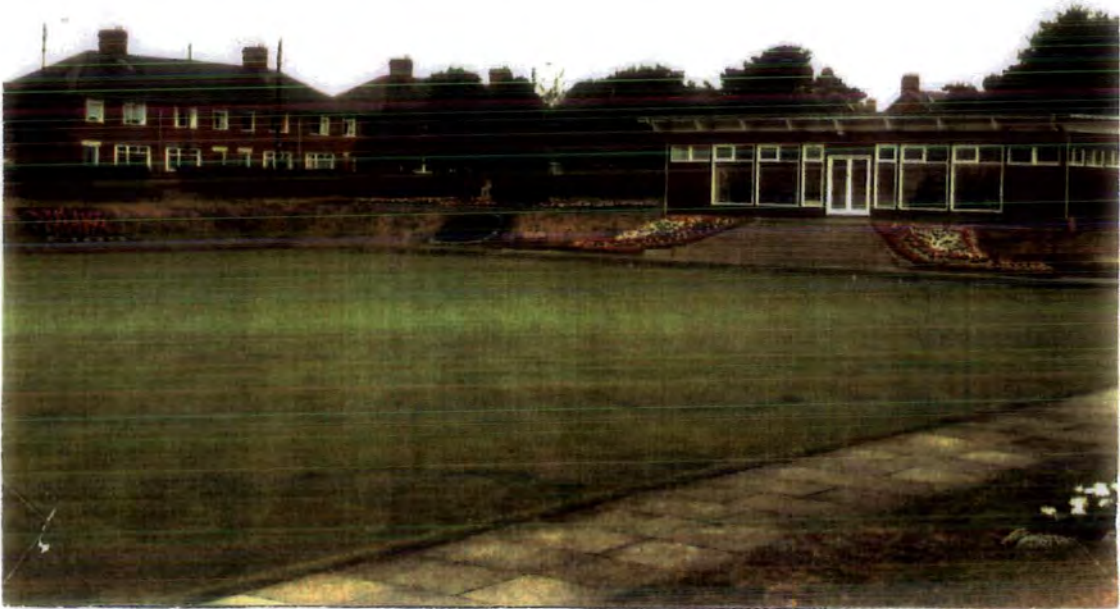


(11a) Images of the Wear Valley: The decline of the heavy industrial base in Crook is used to raise funds and as a way of taking leisure. People gather to watch ...



(11b) ... the demolition of this factory. Funds raised were donated to heart disease research organisations

Photographs 12 & 13



(12) Images of the Wear Valley:  
Public affluence - ornamental flower  
beds in the park in the centre of  
Crook



(13) Ornamental beds in the park in  
the centre of Crook after it had  
been sold for development as a  
private nursing home

Photographs 14 & 15



(14) Images of the Wear Valley: It is often portrayed as being in 'persistent decline'. There are some grim pictures of the Wear Valley in Willington - this one shows women chatting at a bus stop



(15) A further 'unscenic' view of Willington. Closer inspection shows that the advertisements have been modified ...

Photographs 16 & 17



(16) Perhaps to bring closer to the realities of life in Willington -- for some people. This advertisement is for a building society and originally read looking for a better ...



(17) Images of the Wear Valley: Indicators of deprivation tell us little about inequality in the Wear Valley which is obvious at almost house by house level. For example this very up-market restaurant is but a few yards from 'Priceless' in Willington



Photographs 18a & 18b



(18a) Many of the public houses  
( & ) in the Wear Valley are  
(18b) becoming self-consciously  
decorative in an attempt to draw  
the tourist trade



Photographs 19 & 20



(19) The past becomes the present in Bishop Auckland as former churches and chapels become 'desirable residences' or private nursing homes



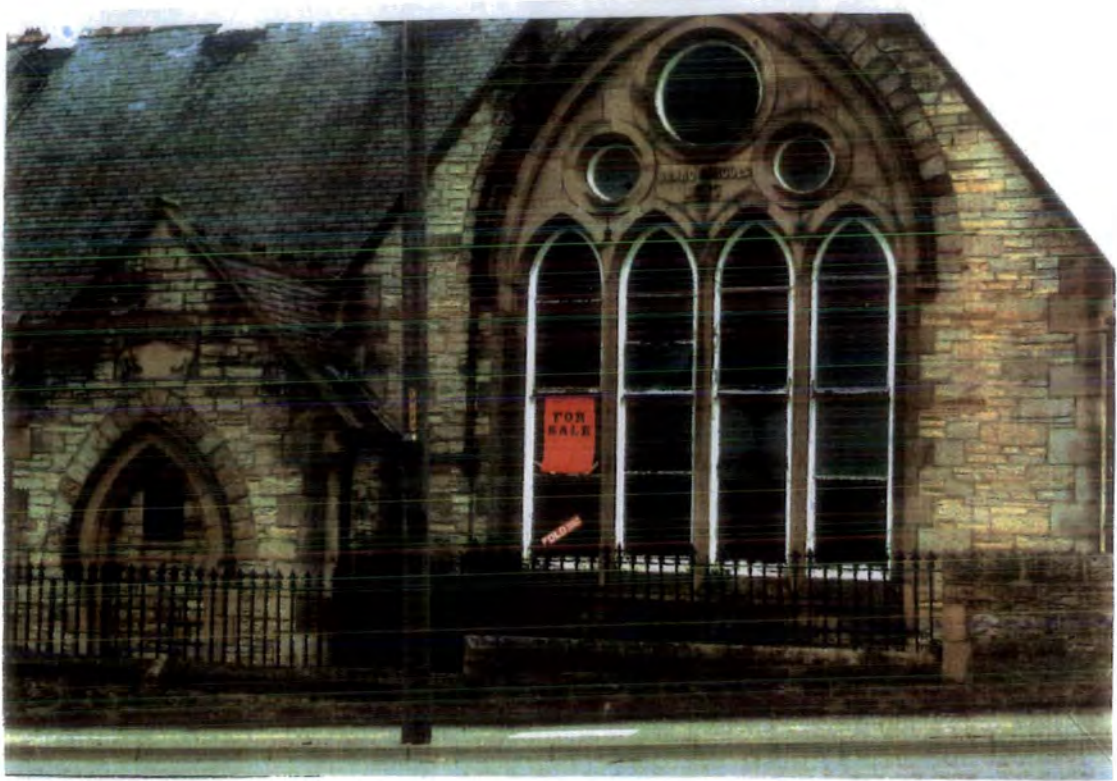
(20) The new hardwood windows (centre and right) do not quite fit in with their stone surroundings as did the one on the left (before it was barred)

Photograph 21



(21) An old chapel or village hall  
becomes a factory in Bishop Auckland

Photographs 22 & 23



(22) A Board School in Helmington Row becomes a private nursing home



(23) In recent years Bishop Auckland has been the site of quite serious public disorder. This is rumoured locally to be a result of local gang fights. There is much written evidence of such gangs on buildings in Bishop Auckland. For example, the 'Low Life' legends



Photographs 24 & 25



(24) And the Vespa of Aycliffe lay claim to territory in Bishop Auckland town centre as do



(25) The Bishop Auckland Skin Heads

Photographs 26 & 27



(26) Much of the graffiti of the Bishop Auckland Skin Heads is aimed at the local Police. How much of the public disorder is caused by such gangs is not clear



(27) It is not only old buildings in Bishop Auckland which become disputed territory for street gangs. Both the bus station information kiosk and

Photographs 28 & 29

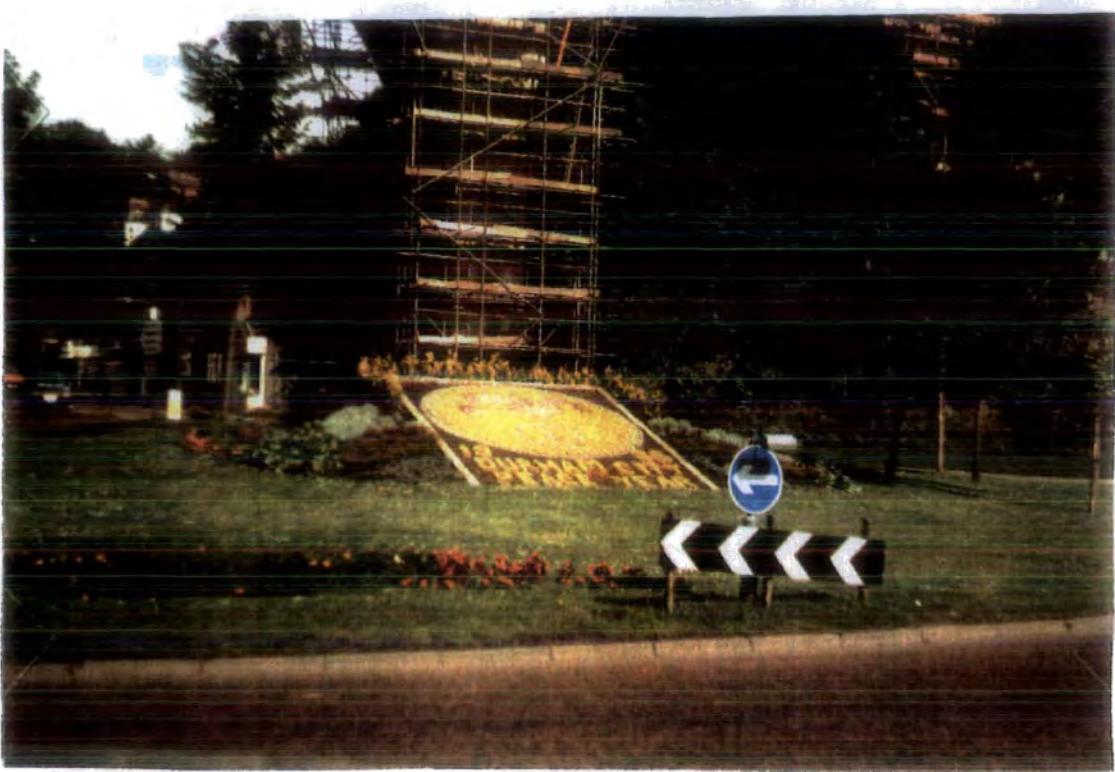


(28) The railway station at Bishop Auckland are new buildings



(29) The Wear Valley while becoming self-consciously and stylistically 'rural' in many ways stretches from the barren land of the North Pennines to

Photographs 30 & 31



(30) The university city of Durham where the ornamental flower beds testify to the presence of a strong Peace movement



(31) It is not easy to say whether the Wear Valley is rural or urban. In Stanhope and its immediate environs, the local people want the benefits of urbanisation and industrialisation. The yellow plastic pipe will when concealed underground carry mains gas to this area for the first time



Photographs 32 & 33



(32) When 'rural' Weardale reconstructs its past it does so as an industrial museum. Seen here is the wheel at Killhope in the process of restoration. The work was carried out mainly by volunteers and Manpower Services Commission trainees



(33) Leisure is the basis of economic regeneration in the Wear Valley. Often older forms of leisure provision are not replaced by the new but left to decay at their side. This childrens' lido has been derelict since before 1982

Photograph 34



(34) It is adjacent to the Glenholme  
Leisure Complex

Photographs 35a & 35b



(35 a & b) Informal Leisure activities in the Wear Valley frequently take the form of 'salvaging' the past as these photographs from an annual vintage car and tractor rally show



Photographs 36a & 36b



(36 a & b) Formal leisure provision is often high tech and designed to provide for large numbers of people in a few purpose built centres. Traditional adult education is seen as giving way to this type of provision



Photographs 37a & 37b



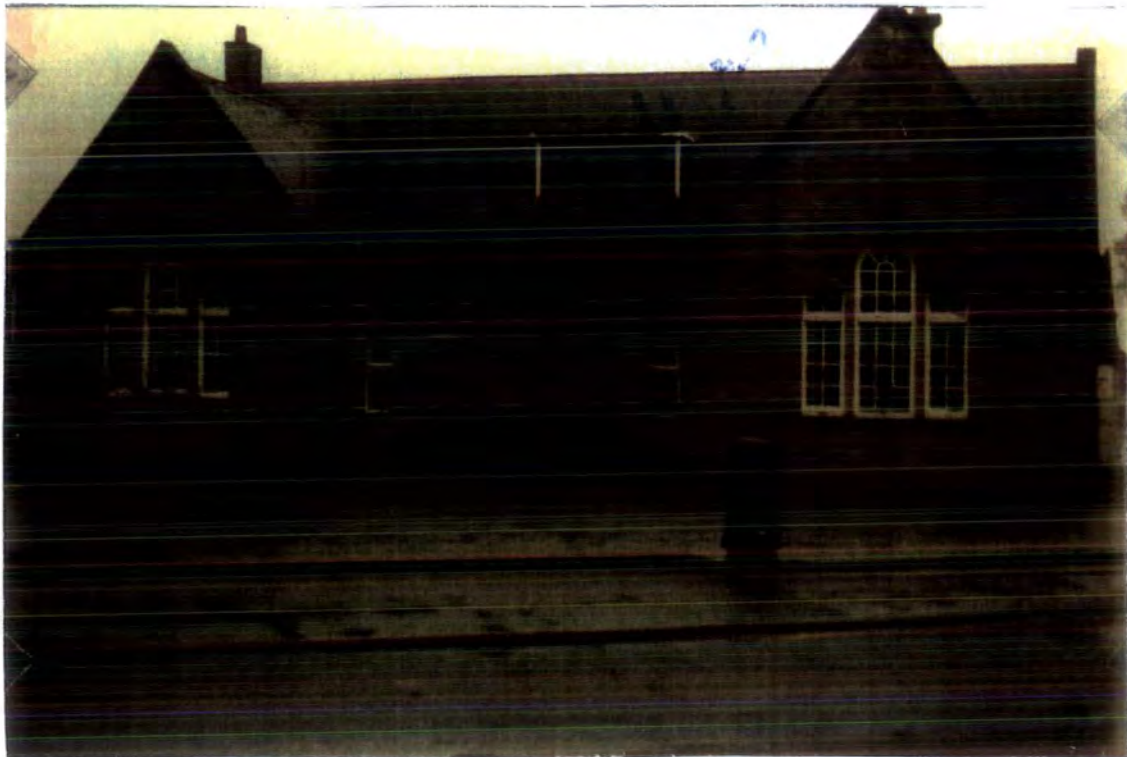
(37 a & b) Leisure provision is a structural part of plans to revitalise the economy of the Wear Valley. The future of these young people in Crook Market Place - yards from the new Civic Centre - depends, in large part, upon its success



Photographs 38 & 39



(38) The literature of adult education is pre-occupied with bricks and mortar. Adult education takes place in a variety of settings in the Wear Valley including village halls and community centres



(39) This is a typical Wear Valley building. Stone built and grimly imposing the St.Catherine's Church Community Centre was cold, dirty and unwelcoming when I visited it

Photographs 40 & 41



(40) Hartside Community Centre and School is a purpose built 'shared use' facility. Its interior is clean, bright and inviting



(41) A large amount of notices and prohibitions make it appear less welcoming

Photographs 42 & 43



(42) There was little adult education activity in the Hartside Centre when I visited it. The focus being placed on youth clubs. Despite this children regularly play on the gates outside



(43) And on the roof



Photographs 44 & 45



(44) Helmington Row village hall  
was destroyed in an arson attack



(45) The new village hall was erected  
alongside the burnt out shell of  
the old one

Photographs 46 & 47

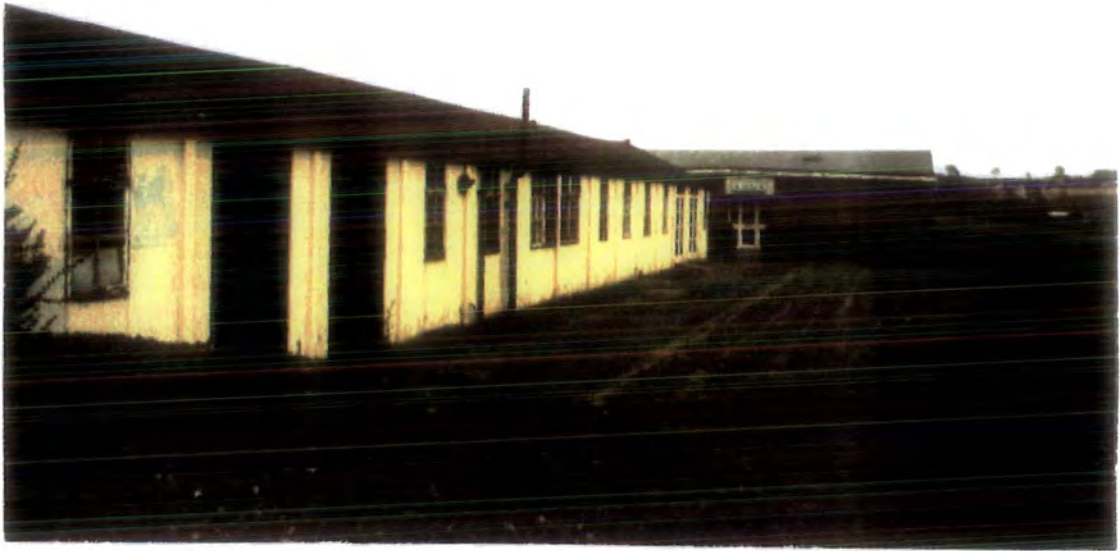


(46) The Community Centre at Stanhope above the Police Station

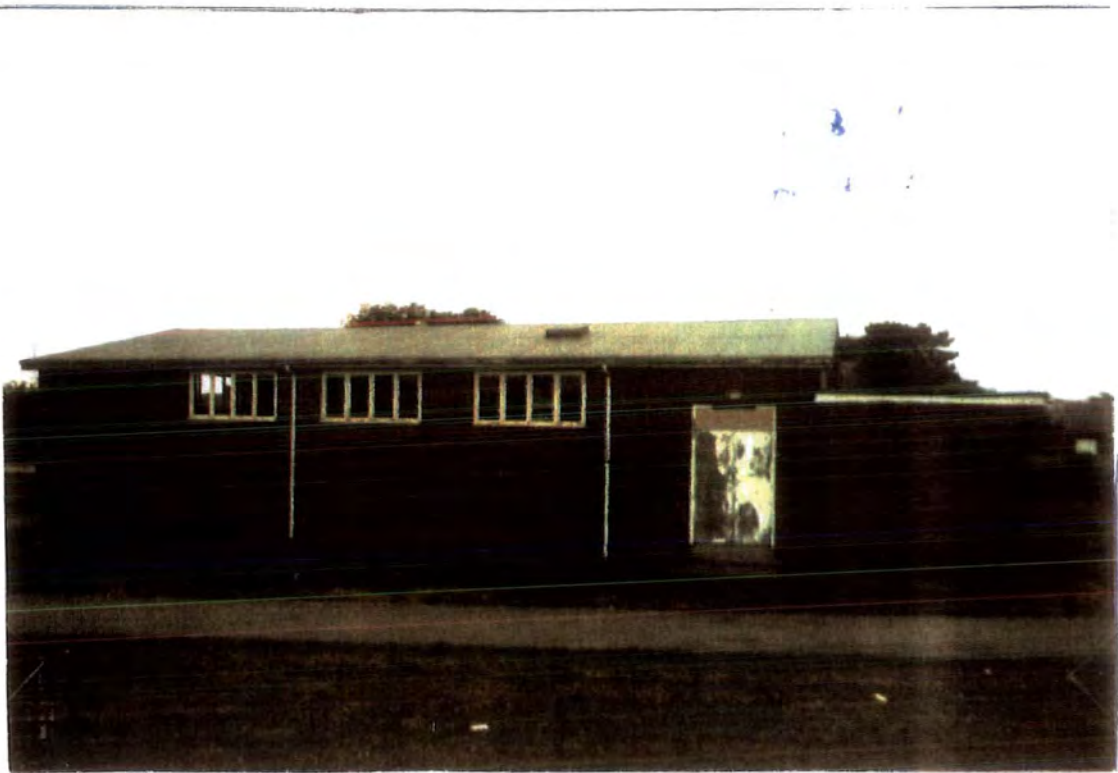


(47) The village hall at Wearhead. The notice in the window advertises one of its most popular activities - Bingo

Photographs 48a & 48b



(48a) The Glenholme Boys Club  
in Crook



(48b) 'One of the best buildings  
for adult education'

Photographs 49 & 50



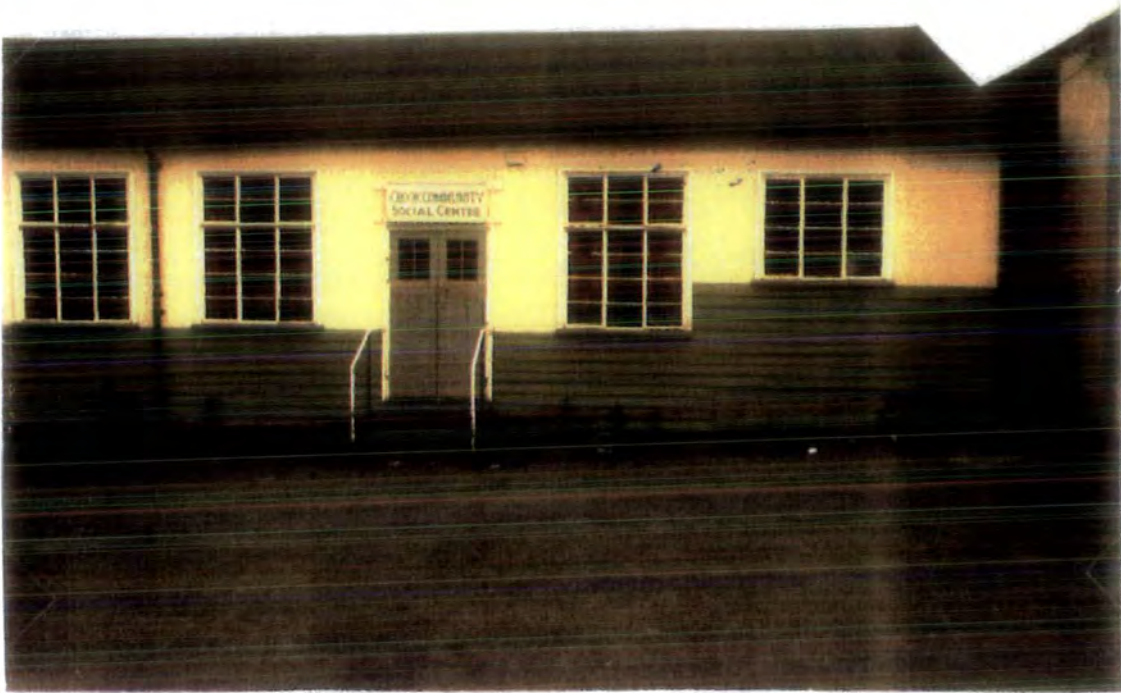
(49) The Further Education Office in Bishop Auckland at the bottom of a pleasant, tree-lined road



(50) The trees are in the grounds of Bishop Auckland School and Community Centre. The 'jewel in the crown' of Wear Valley Adult Education provision



Photographs 51 & 52



(51) The Community Centres of the Wear Valley are varied. The Community and Social Centre in New Road Crook dates back to the 1930's Depression



(52) It, too, looked uninviting: cold and cheerless with a pile of junk, including a tin bath in its window, it looked out of place in the 1980's and was little used

Photographs 53 & 54



(53) As this research ends the community and social centre 'building only' at New Road Crook is for sale



(54) The adjacent garage is now owned by 'Q8' and a major war in the Gulf seems inevitable

Photographs 55a & 55b



(55a&b) Entrance to the Tindale  
Crescent Estate, named 'Fort  
Appatchie'



Photographs 56 & 57



(56) On the weekend that the photographs were taken for the 'your community' adult education project, the entrance to one of Wear Valley's largest employers was defaced



(57) The factory is owned by people of Jewish origin. The abuse shown in this photograph is clearly anti-Semitic as well as threatening



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