

Political Education for
Adults.

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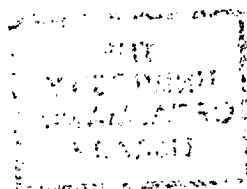
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ABSTRACT.

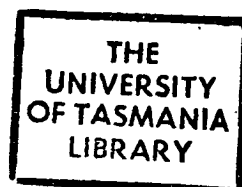
This paper investigates the provision of political education for adults. The author seeks to answer the questions of what skills, knowledge, resources and attitudes are required to make adults effective in the wider political arena - and how to deliver these.

The main body of evidence is provided by a survey of the literature; supported by the author's reflections upon his own experience as an active citizen.

The paper opens with a consideration of a number of relevant definitions. In order to place the study in context, the author presents information on the history of political education and the perceived attitudes of contemporary society towards politics.

Subsequent sections consider the special features of adult learning and the most suitable learning methods for adult use.

The paper closes with the author's summary of his findings and his proposed personal agenda for providing a range of political education through a variety of channels to the community.



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Chapter One.

Politics and Political Education; Some Definitions.

This paper will investigate the provision of political education for adults. In order to do this, we need to define politics, political literacy, adult education and political education.

Politics and Political Literacy.

Dahl discusses Aristotle, Weber and Lasswell's ideas of politics (1963,5.) He cites Lasswell's definition:

"Political science, as an empirical discipline, (as) the study of shaping and sharing of power" and " a political act (as) one performed in power perspectives" (1950,xiv.)

Dahl then proposed his own definition of a political system:

"... Any persistent pattern of human relationships that involves, to a significant extent, power, rule or authority."

Dahl specifically mentions business, unions and private associations in this context.

Runciman stated that: "Social organisation presupposes that some people must have some power over some other people which is recognised by enough of all the people as legitimate; and thus competition for power must somehow be regulated or institutionalised." (1969,29.) Runciman also refers to Pareto's concept of an elite: "The elite is subdivided into the governing and non-governing elite, and there is the

further distinction of a smaller, choicer class (or else a leader or a committee) that effectively and practically exercises control."

Pateman addressed the idea of participation in politics:

"...participation in the workplace - a political system - can be regarded as political participation in its own right. Thus industry and other spheres provide alternative areas where the individual can participate in decision making in matters of which he has first hand, everyday experience, so that when we refer to 'participatory democracy' we are indicating something very much wider than a set of institutional arrangements at national level." (1970,35.)

Freedman thought that:

... politics can be seen as being about the way in which decisions are made that determine the direction and content of people's lives. It is about power, conflict and change in any social situation - be it the local community, the country, the world, the school, university or place of work. It is something that describes key aspects of their present and future life - situations whether they care to acknowledge this or not. The deterioration of their housing estate, fathers thrown into unemployment [or being so themselves], rising prices, the condition of the old people they meet on welfare work, the condition of their school relative to the ones in the neighbouring slums and or suburbs. (1974,10.)

Stradling and Porter define politics as: "The process through which conflicts of interests and values within a group are conciliated ... scarce resources are allocated ..." In this context scarce resources include material goods, power, status, skills, time and space. Stradling and Porter thought that political activity was less likely to occur in voluntary

groups - they would simply break up if conflict becomes too severe (1976,1.)

As an example of this, the Launceston Walking Club had an internal conflict in the mid 1970s, when the Lake Pedder issue was active. A group of members tried to turn the club into a political action group, which many members resented as they were interested only in the walking and the social aspects of club membership. The club lost members as a result.

Hennessy and Slater state: "Wherever there is disagreement, there lies a potential for politics; for aggregating issues, organising support, arguing, propagating, settling difficulties. There is 'politics' in this wide sense in every club, society or classroom..." (1978,6.)

Crick and Lister state: "Our theory of politics is much broader than many conventional views of politics - broader in two ways:

- a.) it stresses that politics is inevitably concerned with conflicts of interests and ideals, so an understanding of politics must begin with an understanding of the conflicts that there are and of the reasons and interests of the contestants ...
 - b.) it stresses the differential distribution of power there is in any society and the differential access to resources."
- (1979,84.)

Finley points out that: "...all known democratic societies, have been composed of a plurality of interest groups, ethnic, religions, regional, economic, status, party or faction. On any proposed course of action, these groups may differ sharply either over tactics or, more significantly, goals. And when, as is often the case with larger issues, any or all of these groups are each faced with a conflict among their own goals, the difficulty of decisions is much intensified." (1985,92.)

There appears to be a consensus amongst the above writers that politics occurs throughout every section of society; wherever decisions have to be made on scarce resources distributed. A person, or group of people, who wishes to participate in the political process needs to be politically literate. The following writers have considered what goes to make up political literacy.

Arnstein considers citizen participation:

My answer to the critical what question is simply that citizen participation is a categorical term for citizen power. It is the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future. It is the strategy by which the have-nots join in determining how information is shared, goals and policies are set, tax resources are allocated, programs are operated, and benefits like contracts and patronage are parceled out. (1969,216.)

Crick and Lister consider political literacy to be a compound of knowledge, skills and attitudes to be developed together:

Politically [a] person must be able to use his

Knowledge, or at least see how it could be used ... desire to participate must be informed by as much Knowledge of what he is going into and what consequences are likely to follow from his actions as is needed to make participation effective and justifiable. All actions affect others so he must be aware of what effects his actions are likely to have, and then also be able to justify them ... A politically literate person will know what the main issues are in contemporary politics as he himself is affected, and will know how to set about informing himself further about the main arguments employed and how to criticise the relevance or worth of the evidence on which they are based and he will need as much, but no more, Knowledge of institutional structures as he needs to understand the issues and the plausibilities of rival policies ... The politically literate person must be able to devise strategies for influence and for achieving change. He must see the right means to an end he can justify... (1979,83.)

This is a valid comment. It is pointless to try to fill up citizens with intricate details of Parliamentary functions, as if they were going to act as Clerk to the House. Active citizens need Knowledge, skills and attitudes relevant to their needs. It is useless to know the theory, without being able to apply it in practice - although such Knowledge could be given by an advisor or a consultant.

Brennan (1981:134) quoted from 'The need for political education in Britain', a policy statement discussed and endorsed by the 1980 National Conference of the Politics Association (U.K.): "By political literacy is meant a compound of Knowledge, skills and attitudes which will enable an individual to be politically effective. At the most fundamental level a politically literate person will possess the basic information necessary to understand political problems and will have the confidence and ability to contribute towards their resolution should he choose to do

so. He will be capable of something more than enlightened self-interest: he will realise the effect of his actions upon others and will understand their different viewpoints. More precisely political literacy means:

- * A critical awareness and understanding of our system of government.
- * Widespread Knowledge of the important issues of the day.
- * The ability of individuals to participate in the political process.
- * A general acceptance that it is perfectly legitimate for others to hold and pursue political views and political policies different from one's own.
- * The recognition that in an interdependent society political problems must be resolved by rational debate within the framework of law, (1981,134.)

Lister summarised political literacy as:

1. Issue focussed.
2. Having a broad concept of politics (schools, colleges, firms, factories and the environment.) Include local, national and international issues.
3. Concerned with skills and action, as well as with knowledge, skills and reflection.
4. Affirmed the values of freedom, toleration, fairness, respect for truth and reasoning (1986,6.)

The Australian Senate Standing Committee on Employment,

Education and Training investigated Education for Active Citizenship in Australian Schools. They concluded that active citizenship required more than: "... someone who has simply accumulated a store of facts about the workings of the political system." They concluded that active citizenship was "A compound of knowledge, skills and attitudes: knowledge about how society works; the skills needed to participate effectively; and a conviction that active participation is the right of all citizens." (Aulich 1989.)

Holderness-Roddam defines the politically active person thus: "The politically active person attempts to influence decisions made by bodies and / or individuals that affect other people's lives. The politically active person may act either as an individual, or as a member of one or more groups of people." (1986b,1)

It is quite clear from the foregoing comments that political literacy means far more than having a knowledge of the workings of Parliament and the Constitution, etc.; what used to be termed 'Civics'. The politically literate adult should have the knowledge and skills to be effective in the decision making process and the attitudes that give them the belief that their actions can be effective. They also need to be tolerant of opposing points of view.

Adult Political Education.

Lovett, Clarke and Kilmurray refer to a report of the

Universities Council for Adult Education in Great Britain on Education for Participation. This report points out that political education is essentially an adult education activity. Perhaps this is an opportune time to consider what adult education is (1983,10.)

Edgar takes a very traditional view of adult education when he defines it as "... the education of persons who are beyond the age of compulsory school attendance, with special characteristics when it takes place outside the award scheme." (1987,20.) This is clearly an attempt to cover all possibilities, without any consideration of the philosophies behind adult education. Bearing in mind the historical roots of adult education, ie., the Mechanics' movement and the Workers' Educational Association, Edgar's definition needs considerable refinement. Jarvis seems to acknowledge that there is more to adult education than simple transfer of knowledge and skills, etc. He suggests that adult education is: "Any planned series of incidents, having a humanistic basis, directed towards learning and understanding in the participants who are accorded the social status of adults." (1985,27.)

Brookfield quotes Lindeman, who takes an even stronger line: "... the goals of adult education are to be social in nature. Adult Education, wherever it has become a live issue and wherever it has succeeded in something more than a quantitative sense, has been thought of and pursued as an instrument for social change and not merely as a means for

increasing the efficiency or the smartness of a few elected individuals." (1987,5.)

Clearly Lindeman recognised that political education was a legitimate - if not essential - component of adult education. It should be available to as wide a spectrum of the population as possible.

The U.K. Advisory Council on Adult and Continuing Education established a committee to investigate political education for adults. This committee adopted the following definition of political education: "The provision of the information and skills which enable people to understand political processes and to participate in the determination and administration of public policy." This definition reflects a practical approach to political literacy and seeks to raise the level of understanding of citizens' rights and responsibilities (1983,1.) Lovett et al. point out that political education could also mean providing equipment; such as typewriters, duplicators, video cameras, etc. (1983,10.) This is a very important point, ignored or overlooked by most writers. Many people, particularly the poor - and therefore powerless - lack the basic resources to enable them to communicate effectively with the decision makers. These resources include typewriters, photocopiers, tape recorders, video equipment and cameras, etc.

Summary.

In order to summarise this section I suggest that the basic philosophy of adult political education is to give adults the ability to influence the decisions which affect their lives. It provides the Knowledge, skills, resources and attitudes to enable people to participate effectively in a society where there are conflicting views and competition for scarce resources. An essential part of being a politically literate adult is to be able to recognise that there are responsibilities to the community, as well as rights. The politically literate person must also be able to tolerate opposing points of view; and be able to appreciate that an individual's personal 'baggage', acquired since birth, will give us all a certain outlook which differs from others.

Chapter Two.

History of Adult Political Education.

Introduction.

A cynic could well claim that there has been little political education for adults, so there can be no history. Certainly political education for adults has had a mottled history, with plenty of opposition from the establishment.

Whitelock considers that the Lollards of Wycliffe were possibly the first examples of liberal adult education in British history. He quotes from an Act of 1401 for the burning of heretics: "[The Lollards]... hold and exercise schools, they make and write books, and they do wickedly instruct and inform people and as much as they may excite and stir them to Sedition and Insurrection." (1974,14.)

That quotation neatly sums up the attitude of many traditional power holders to political education for adults. If you give people skills and attitudes, they may take your power away. Whitelock subsequently refers to the Puritans: "... Puritan publishers and writers circulated critical pamphlets ... John Milton ... thundered denunciations of censorship, corruption, and anything else that seemed to him offensive to God and man ... amid this ferment of instruction, propaganda, reading and questioning lay the embryo of liberal adult education." (1974,19.)

Cippola refers to the opposition to basic literacy teaching. He quotes De La Chalotais in the 1760s: "... even the working people want to study ... and after a poor education that teaches them only to despise their father's profession, they turn to the cloisters and join the clerics; they take posts as officers of the law, they often become persons harmful to society." (1969,100.) About 1766 the French Attorney-General claimed:

... the good of society demands that the knowledge of the people should not exceed what is necessary in their occupation. Every man who sees further than his dull daily round will never follow it out bravely and patiently. Among the common people it is really only necessary for those to learn reading and writing who live by means of those accomplishments or who need them in their daily tasks. (Cippola, 1969, 65.)

Of course, the French establishment were not alone in their fear of the illiterati becoming literate. Cippola quotes the President of the English Royal Society in 1807:

However specious in theory the project might be of giving education to the labouring classes of the poor, it would be in effect be found to be prejudicial to their morals and happiness; it would teach them to despise their lot in life, instead of making them good servants in agriculture, and other laborious employment to which their rank in society had destined them; instead of teaching them subordination it would render them factious and refractory ... it would enable them to read seditious pamphlets, vicious books and publications against Christianity. (1965,65.)

There is a relationship between literacy and politics. If a person is unable to read or write, he/she is unable to share information and ideas which may help them to effect the decisions which concern them. The power-holders clearly

believed that any development of literacy amongst the general population would threaten their power.



The Mechanics' Institutes.

Probably the first movement that had real potential to provide political education was the Mechanics'. This movement originated in England in the early 1800s and quickly spread to other parts of the World.

Sadly the movement just about everywhere was hi-jacked by the middle classes for their own purposes, including that of ensuring the workers learned only what the establishment wanted them to know. Whitelock and Styler outline the sad story:

Since the Reform Bill at least, many workmen had become interested in political movements and associations. There was in fact a forlorn attempt made by Francis Place and other radicals to ensure not only working class control of the Infant London Mechanics' Institution but also lectures on politics and economics. Birkbeck and his followers soon snuffed out such moves. Politics, economics, and religion were specifically anathematised as controversial subjects and banished from the lecture halls of the institutes. (Whitelock, 1974,27).

Men had better be without education ...than be educated by their rulers; for their education is but the mere breaking of the steer to the yoke; the mere discipline of the hunting dog, which by dint of severity, is made to forego the strongest impulse of its nature, and instead of devouring his prey to hasten to the feet of his master." (Thomas Hodgskin in manifesto announcing the formation of the London Mechanics' Institute in 1823. (Styler, 1984,24.)

Styler mentions an attempt by Lord Brougham and Charles Knight to found a society, similar to mechanics' institutes,

to diffuse political knowledge. This society did not last long. (1984,23.)

The first Mechanics' Institute in Australia was founded in Hobart in 1827. This was soon followed by others. Whitelock quotes a letter from Burke to Lord Stanley, 23 October 1833:

The Sydney Mechanics' Institute has been lately established on the model of those in the Mother Country. It appears to have been already somewhat successful in promoting a taste for mental cultivation among persons in the middle ranks, thereby greatly tending to check those coarser pursuits unhappily too common in this Colony; and there appears to be no reason to fear that it will ever be perverted from its legitimate object to any of a political nature. (1974,103.)

Whitelock refers to a debating class formed at the Sydney Mechanics' Institute in 1838. "... any discussions verging upon Religion or Politics were suitably anathematized." (1974,100.) He quotes the 1840 annual report:

Were it once to acquire the character of a political or debating club, or become the arena for any sectarian discussion, would cease to deserve either encouragement or support, and might even justly become an object of apprehension or dislike on the part of the public." In May 1841 the committee was suitably scandalised when informed that at the last meeting of this class a Mr Cochrane had tried to justify the principles held by the Socialists. (1974,99.)

Whitelock continues:

In the late 1880s and early 1890s, however, the institute was still vital enough to reflect some of the political and social controversies of the time. Annual reports for this period show that the radical, William Holman, who became Labour premier of New South Wales in 1913, was active in both lectures and debates; that in 1886, for example, the debating club held 41 meetings with a total attendance of 12,000; and that enthusiasts crowded the smoking room to hear debates on such topics as 'That no democratic government can ever be justified in declaring war' and 'That State Socialism is

practicable.' (1974,114.)

It seems as if, notwithstanding Whitelock's assessment of the Institute being vital, that the members were only interested in debate. Action was not on the agenda, as Whitelock himself reveals. He quotes William Reid, President of the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts in 1901, in response to a proposal to form a political science class. "... It is not proposed to deal here with practical politics ... nor shall we in the slightest degree imperil our Government subsidy by forming a class for 'Political Science'." (1974,115.)

Clearly, with a few possible exceptions, the mechanics' institutes failed to provide any worthwhile political education. Were there any alternatives?

The English Sunday Schools and Working Class Clubs.

Simon refers to the Sunday Adult Schools being established in the decades 1810-1830 in England. Initially their aim was limited to teaching the 'labouring poor' to read the scriptures. There was some controversy whether these schools should teach writing. Most decided not to. These schools were revised in the 1880s, largely by the Quakers. These taught both reading and writing (1965,75.) Simon also refers to the rapid expansion of the adult schools after 1899: "In response to a new demand Adult Schools now greatly extended their scope to provide ... a much broader education covering historical, political, literary as well as religious topics."

(1965,303.) Simon also comments that by the early 1900s the Socialist movement was now producing its own tutors. For example the Social Democratic Federation concentrated upon Marx's work. (1965,298.)

Styler states that Robert Owen founded the Association of All classes of All Nations in 1834 and established 'Social Institutions' or 'Halls of Science' - what he considers to be the first independent working class adult education (1984,24.)

Mansbridge refers to the People's College founded at Sheffield in 1842, "... Locally, the College has furnished members of the Town Council, invaded the Aldermanic Chairs and the Magisterial Benches, and given to the City not the least able of its Mayors." (1920,3.)

Styler refers to the London Working-Men's College, founded in 1854 by Frederick Denison Maurice. Maurice believed free discussion of politics was desirable in the college, however political science and history attracted very few students (1984,24.)

Simon refers to the development of working class clubs, including Radical Clubs and the National Secular Society, "... where the issues of the day were hotly debated ..." He refers to the Radical Clubs as "... successors of a long line going back to the days of the Corresponding Societies of the 1790s." (1965,19.) In 1884 the Secular Society in Leicester

had a debate which marks a turning point in the history of ideas in that, before a large audience, the basic principles of socialism versus individualism were argued out point by point by the chief protagonists of each view." (Simon, 1965,27).

The University Extension Movement.

Another potential source of political education was the university extension movement. Styler states that university extension was pioneered by James Stuart (1843-1913). Cambridge introduced extension activities in 1873. However, Styler considers this had little political significance - the chief contribution to political education was in classes dealing with political economy, especially the Durham and Northumberland coalfields (1984,25.) Simon adds that these courses started in the coalfields in 1879. In 1880 1,300 miners attended lectures in five centres. Topics included science, literature and mining technology. Unfortunately this movement was quelled by the four months miners' strike in 1887. Miners could not afford books (1965,89.)

Styler picks up the story again when he refers to J.R. Seely and the Reverend Henry Solly:

The idea that the working-class should be educated for participating in political life remained a continuing theme in spite of the discouragement it encountered at the hands of its potential students. One of its advocates was J.R.Seely, Regius Professor of History at Cambridge, who believed the study of history should be the basis of political education. ... [With support from Seely] Reverend Henry Solly, founder of the Club and

Institute Union, who attempted to create a Workmen's Social Educational League with the object of 'promoting a knowledge of social economy and political science, and the thoughtful discussion of questions relating to capital and labour, trade, peace, co-operation, land, colonies, government, law, and national well-being generally. (1984,26.)

Unfortunately the organisation was short lived.

Ruskin College.

Perhaps the attitude of the universities can best be illustrated by the story of Ruskin College, Oxford. Five of my sources deal with Ruskin College in varying detail: (Strong, 1908; Mansbridge, 1920; Simon, 1965; Styler, 1984 and Johnson, 1988.)

Ruskin College was founded in 1899, by Walter Vrooman: "...the only institution of its kind, bringing together relatively mature and experienced working-class students ... for a two-year course of study, in the main of economics, sociology and politics ..." (Simon, 1965, 311). Mansbridge quotes Vrooman in 1899:

We shall take men at Ruskin College, who have been merely condemning our social institutions, and will teach them instead to transform them, so that in place of talking against the world, they will begin methodically and scientifically to possess the world, to refashion it and to co-operate with the power behind evolution in making it the joyous abode of, if not a perfected humanity, at least a humanity earnestly striving towards perfection. (1920, 7.)

Strong briefly describes Ruskin. Each student spent two hours per day cleaning. There were no examinations or creed tests

(religious or political). Courses included political economy, history, sociology, local government and public administration. Classes also covered essay writing, English grammar, logic and arithmetic. Each student was expected to complete a 700 word essay per week. Between 1899 and 1906, 232 students had attended, most for more than one year. Strong also points out the vast array of jobs in Trade Unions, Trade Councils, industrial relations, Friendly Societies and Co-op Societies. He considers the paid officers of these groups would benefit from an Oxford education: "... facilities should be offered them for studying questions which are not strictly economic ... such as those of local government, political geography, the contact of races, the government of dependencies..." (1908,9.)

Styler refers to the 1909 revolution at Ruskin. The Principal, Dennis Hird, and some students wanted a Marxist form of teaching. This group failed in their aims and left Ruskin to establish a rival - the central Labour College, supported by the South Wales Miners' Association (1984,34.) Simon records that the Plebs League was formed in 1908 by students at Ruskin, to oppose moves to incorporate the college into Oxford University. It was this group that formed the rival college. This was formed at the first AGM of the Plebs League in 1909:

The Labour College teaches the workmen to look for the causes of social evils and the problems arising therefrom in the material foundation of society; that these causes are in the last analysis economic; that their elimination involves in the first place economic changes of such a character as to lead to the

eradication of capitalist economy. (Simon, 1965,330)

Johnson records that the Central Labour College moved to London in 1911. The Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants and the South Wales Miners' Federation took over the college management in 1915. The National Council of Labour Colleges was set up in 1921, to oversee development of the movement (1988,49.) Styler commented that this was a Marxist workers' education institution which, "Stressed need for independent working class adult education, untainted by money coming from the hands of the capitalist establishment." (1984,24.)

The Plebs League was taken over by the National Council of Labour Colleges in 1927. The Central Labour College closed in 1929, when the National Union of Railwaymen withdrew financial support because of the depression. (Johnson, 1988,53).

University Extension in Australia.

Whitelock covers the university extension movement in Australia, with some evident disdain.

Like the bourgeois institute managers before them, the bourgeois dons avoided like a drunk on the pavement, controversial subjects such as religion and politics. But they also avoided the mistake of explicitly anathematizing them. In its headstrong youth, in 1893, the Sydney board had allowed Professor Anderson to lecture on Socialism, but this was exceptional. (1974,161.)

Whitelock refers to the Sydney University Senate inquiry in 1918 which altered the constitution of the Joint Committee

for the Supervision of Tutorial Classes: "Probably many of the board members were glad that it was rid of the worry of thinking about tutorial classes, especially when they saw Atkinson and the others plunge into politics, economics, and even public controversies, such as that over conscription."

The Workers' Educational Association.

Well, if the Mechanics' movement and the university extension services were not committed totally to political education, who would be? The Workers' Educational Association was formed by Albert Mansbridge in 1903 in England. Mansbridge quotes Camille Riboud, who investigated the WEA as a subject for a PhD. in Paris in 1910. "What they need first of all is education in citizenship, without which the political and economic power which they yield is only a danger, both for society and for themselves." (1920,58.) Simon said, "Mansbridge held the view that higher education for the working class should be concerned fundamentally with their spiritual development and not with immediate political or practical issues ..." (1965,3.) Whitelock cites The Register of 9 July 1913, which reported Mansfield as saying: "If democracy is to succeed it must be educated ... Labour and Learning are walking arm in arm as comrades." (1974,176.) Mansbridge himself considered: "England ... was making step after step in the direction of political and social democracy ... the education of the people should at least keep abreast of the opportunities which they were acquiring for participation in government." (1920,8)

Mansbridge visited Australia in 1913 and several branches were formed as a result. The WEA had a fairly short period of success in Australia. In 1930 questions in the Queensland Parliament referred to an alleged left-wing bias in the WEA. A committee of inquiry cleared the WEA of undue bias and recommended more funds and better accommodation. The Queensland government effectively killed that branch when it stopped the annual grant in 1938 (Whitelock, 1974, 201.)

Whitelock also refers to what became known as the "B40" affair. In the early 1940s P.H. Partridge - subsequently Professor of Social Philosophy and Dean of the Research School of Social Science at the Australian National University - ran a discussion course, "Political Theories and Movements of Today" (course no.B40). Partridge stated the Soviet Union was not a workers' state as workers did not "directly control and administer their own political and economic affairs." Many left wing unions disaffiliated because the WEA refused to withdraw the material. The Australian Communist Party issued a leaflet, "The WEA Exposed." (1974,204).

The Newcastle Trades Hall Council planned to form a labour college after disaffiliation from the WEA. Proposed courses included politics, economics, journalism, industrial advocacy and trade union leadership. None of this appears to have actually happened. (Whitelock, 1974,204).

In 1945 Howard A. Deakin, WEA tutor-organiser in Launceston, announced he was intending to set up a model parliament. The purpose was to provide a forum for public discussion and serve as a demonstration of citizenship training. (Hobart Mercury, 16 Jan. 1945,7). The WEA was, even then, entering its final stage as an effective organisation in Tasmania. The Adult Education Board was formed in 1948 and the WEA was virtually neutered.

Styler sums up the WEA's provision of political education in the U.K., when he questions their 1975-1977 Biennial Report that: "Throughout its history the Association has provided people with an education not otherwise available to them that equipped them to play leading roles in the political and social life of the community." Styler comments:

"Illustrations it gives to support the statement are far from convincing: provision in two of its Districts for prospective and newly elected parish councillors, classes for managers and governors of schools, and courses for playgroup leaders." (1984,29.) Styler's comments could apply equally well to Australia.

Armed Services Education.

Some political education was provided by a surprising source, as outlined by Whitelock. In Britain the Army Bureau of Current Affairs was launched in 1941. It published two bulletins, 'Current Affairs' and 'War'. It also published 'The British Way and Purpose', a pamphlet. This was not

without some opposition from establishment politicians: "... some prominent Conservatives, such as Lord Woolton, showed a suspicion - shared with R.G. Menzies in Australia - of army lectures and discussions and blamed radical army educators for the British electoral disaster in 1945."

(Whitelock, 1984.)

In the Australian Army Education Service lecturers were free to talk on controversial topics; for example before the 1944 federal referendum campaign. Controversial issues were popular, they were also covered by the publications, 'Salt' and 'Current Affairs Bulletin'. CAB was launched in 1942 and went on to become an adult education institution. In 1971 it had a circulation of over 40,000; going to all Australian states, New Zealand and 40 other countries. It is still published in 1989.

The Statutory Boards.

As previously mentioned, the Tasmanian Adult Education Board was formed in 1948, about a year after the Victorian Council of Adult Education. This was the start of a new era in Australian adult education. Whitelock assessed the impact of the statutory boards thus:

[The Tasmanian and Victorian boards] ... have show [sic] considerable more spirit and imagination [than Queensland]. Nonetheless, they are touched by the bureaucracy, and the freedom of their program has inevitably been restricted. ... the rise of the boards in isolation was unfortunate in that it gave the politicians almost complete control of the adult education of their states. ... the joint committees ...

could have been reformed and strengthened ... they could have stimulated the boards' growth and offered the public a diversity of programmes ... they could have ensured that sensitive political and social issues on which people required information could not be ignored by monopolistic cabals within the public service. (1974,286.)

The Tasmanian Adult Education Board was disbanded in 1975. Adult Education became a part of the Education Department, initially as a Division of Adult Education. This was only a temporary move, as Adult Education was soon absorbed into the Division of TAFE. I will comment on the effect of this at a later stage in this paper.

Conclusion.

The history of adult political education - such as it is - is sporadic, with few successes to its credit. This started with outright opposition and hostility to any attempts to give the subservient classes literacy skills which could raise their horizons and enable them to threaten the power-holders.

This deep opposition, although never completely removed, subsequently gave way to the more subtle hi-jacking of working class education by the middle classes. This was particularly the case with the mechanics' institutes, university extension and the Workers' Educational Association. These groups were particularly susceptible to pressure from the funding bodies.

It would, however, be unfair to blame this lack of political

education for adults on the power-holders, totally. We have seen that few people took advantage of the political course offered through Ruskin College. The other problem was the divisions within the working class movement itself.

Chapter Three.

Perceived Community Attitudes to Politics.

This generation will have to repent not so much from the evil deeds of the wicked, but from the appalling silence of the good.
(Martin Luther King Jr.,nd.)

This chapter seeks to assess community attitudes to politics, from the infrequent act of dropping their paper in the ballot box to a more active participation. If we are aware of attitudes, and the reasons for these attitudes, we may be in a better position to provide more effective political education. I will compare perceived attitudes in the U.K. and the U.S.A. with Australia and then look at possible reasons.

Dahl cites Aristotle referring to citizens having to be paid to attend the Town Meetings in the assembly in Athens. Dahl also refers to the poorly attended Town Meetings at New Haven in 1642 (1963,59.) Nothing much seems to have changed in over 300 years. The Economist detailed how the annual Town Meeting at Clinton, Massachusetts, had to be postponed for lack of a quorum. Only 268 of the 7,400 electors attended (30 April 1977.) Dahl concludes that "... human beings ... are not necessarily interested in politics, nor do they always care what happens in politics."

England has a proud history in the development of parliamentary democracy. However, Rousseau was not unreserved in his praise of it:

The English people think that they are free, but in this

belief they are profoundly wrong. They are free only when they are electing members of Parliament. Once the election has been completed, they revert to a condition of slavery: they are nothing. Making such use of it in the few short moments of their freedom, they deserve to lose it. (Maddox, 1973,65.)

Finley refers to indifference and ignorance of a majority of the electors in western democracies. They cannot state the issues, do not know what the Common Market is, do not know what the United Nations is and cannot name their representatives or their candidates (1985,3.)

In the U.K. Runciman comments upon, "... the surprising apathy of the electorate ... voters are largely ill-informed and even uninterested about the issues which they are supposed to decide." (1969,97.) Hampton asks "Who participates in public life?" He suggests that the answer is disproportionately male, middle-aged and middle-class. They are home-owners, well educated, members of voluntary organisations, predominantly white." (1983,29.)

Biddle and Loureide conclude that: "Those who give time to the planning and to the making of responsible decisions will usually be less than five percent of the total residents of an area, at any one time." (1965,73.) Doty, a former State senator for Minnesota, exclaims:

It is a constant source of amazement to me at how little our citizens really know about government and the process involved in solving problems at the government level. I am convinced after serving two terms in the Minnesota Senate that very few people understand the government process ... It is not an exaggeration to say that faced with an increasingly complex governmental structure at all levels, the average citizen is totally

confused and helpless to act. (1978,52.)

Pateman states that citizens, particularly in the lower socio-economic groups, are generally uninterested in politics and political strategy (1970,3.)

Smith and Bullock state:

Popular disaffection with both the exclusive nature of institutionalised access and with the distancing of the leaders from the led has been widespread among those who see themselves as disenfranchised in one way or another by the modern system. Public apathy and electoral volatility are among the more discernable reactions, while the rise of militancy in the form of direct action and political violence provide further evidence ... (1976,6.)

The anecdotal evidence cited so far claims that citizens are apathetic and ignorant of the political process. This attitude extends right across the scale - from voluntary organisations, through unions and local government to state, federal and central government. Are there any quantitative survey results to support this anecdotal evidence?

Higgins and Richardson provide figures on election turnouts for both general elections and union elections. The elector turnout for the three previous general elections were 72% (1970), 73% (1974) and 79% (Feb. 1974). Five percent of the U.K. electorate are members of a political party, but only a small proportion of party members are active in policy development, etc. (1976,12.)

Participation in union elections was:

- * TGWU 20-24%.
- * NUR 32%.
- * ETU 30%.
- * Co-op societies, 10/12% - 0.3%.

Higgins and Richardson refer to Almond and Verba. Only 19% of British people consider they belong to an organisation which is politically active. Only 24% of U.S. citizens believe so. seventy eight percent of British correspondents felt they could do something about a 'local regulation' to which they might object, but only 18% of those questioned had so acted (1965, 67.)

Brennan cites a number of authorities, claiming that U.K. citizens are politically ignorant. These are Stradling (1977), Abrams (1967), Blumler (1974), McKenzie and Silver (1968), Nordlinger (1967) and Greenslade (1979). Hennessey and Slater make a statement that seems to dispute some of the other sources:

... the ability of individual citizens to understand, much less actively to influence the decisions of central government appears to be diminishing. Thus there has been a rapidly increasing pressure for participation in small, often local, units of decision-making; trades unions, factories, schools, and pressure groups. People are seeking and claiming, their right to discuss and to choose. (1977, 2.)

This suggestion that people are joining smaller political units is questionable. It does not appear to be supported by the evidence given by Higgins and Richardson above; these show low participation rates in union and other

organisations. However, it seems logical that people who wish to participate select a level where they may feel less threatened and would be effective. As these gain experience and confidence, some may move up the political ladder to increased responsibilities.

Does the U.S.A. have a higher level of political interest than the U.K.? Dahl relates the 1956 presidential election voter turn-out to degrees of interest, concern and participation. There was a high correlation between turn-out and expressed interest. Dahl (p58) also refers to a study of voters in New Haven, which showed that those who were highly informed or interested were most likely to be active. He concludes that there is no precise boundary between the political stratum and the apolitical stratum. Many citizens are: "Apathetic about politics and relatively inactive." (1963,57.)

Dahl identifies four groups. These are the apolitical strata, political strata, power-seekers and the powerful (1963,56.) Nader classifies people into one of the following groups:

1. Know their needs, but are unable to attend to them.
2. Apolitic, "... you can't fight city hall ..."
3. People insensitive to opportunities, eg. migrants.
4. Burned out activists.
5. "Constant thorns", eg. those who are always criticising.

[Whingers in Australian parlance!] (1988,1.)

Dahl and Nader are, of course writing from different

perspectives. Dahl is a political scientist. Nader is probably the most effective citizen advocate of the century.

An article in Australian Society discusses voter turn out in recent U.S. elections. Half of the eligible citizens voted in the 1988 Presidential elections, only 33% voted in the mid-term, non Presidential elections in 1986 (1989,5.) The article cites a new book (Riven and Cloward, 1989), Why Americans Don't Vote. The authors blame the complex voter registration laws, which discourage minorities.

Clearly community apathy and antipathy towards politics and citizenship is widespread in the U.K. and the U.S.A. How does Australia compare?

The Australian Experience.

Biggins, Cornock and Witford prepared a submission to the Morris Board of Enquiry into adult education in 1945. On their first page they state:

... yet the only participation undertaken by the majority of adults is the occasional dropping of a piece of paper into the ballot box. And this is not always 'enlightened'.

Edgar warns, "... many of our adults lack the self-confidence and motivation to change themselves or to play an active role in the changes being forced upon them." (1987,1.) The same year political journalist Alan Reid, in an ABC Radio series

'The Red Fox' said, "... 10% of Australians are political animals, the other 90% ... have no desire other than to go to the races, buy a house, live well, enjoy their families, kids and so on and have no real interest in power ..." (1987.)

Johnson and Hinton prepared a report on adult education provision in Australia:

It can be surprising to discover how many Australians, not only immigrants but those long established, are ignorant of the rights due to them, the resources available to help them in need, where to seek assistance, how to vote, how to use public transport and other such elements of life in our society. (1986,45.)

Four of my sources quote from surveys. These serve to support the preceeding anecdotal evidence.

Beazley reported on an Australian Electoral Office investigation to Federal Parliament. The research revealed a frightening level of apathy amongst the younger citizens:

The qualitative research of the attitudes of Australians particularly those of the young and the young unemployed, shows that they are becoming increasingly alienated from the political process. More than 30 percent of those aged 17-19 in this country are unenrolled and it is estimated that 62 percent of the half million or so unenrolled are under 30. Many young Australians believe the vote at Australian, State and local elections has no intrinsic value in itself and no relevance to them, their lives or their future. (1983,3.)

Frederico and Puckett cite a 1965 study by Wilson and Western of a sample in Brisbane. The results were:

- * 41% followed political news in daily papers, every day.

- * 12% discussed politics every day.

- * 14% followed politics closely outside election times.
- * 27% followed politics closely during elections.
- * 33% had signed a petition.
- * 10% attended a political meeting often.
- * 11% were past or current members of a political party. (1988,21.)

Mahoney refers to a national survey of over 18 year olds:

- * 21% could not name the House in Parliament of the Prime Minister and opposition leader. (17% nominated the Senate.)
- * 11% said voting methods for both Federal houses were the same, 13% did not know.
- * 23% could not name even one house of Parliament (1988)

Davis provides a detailed analysis of information gathered in the National Social Science Survey. Some of the results are:

- * 71% consider they have little control over elected politicians.
- * 18% consider they have some control.
- * 66% do not believe the average citizen has considerable influence on politics.
- * 16% think they have considerable influence, 18% are unsure.
- * Just over 50% of the electorate think that the average person will get nowhere by talking to public officials.

* 27% think that talking to public officials could get results.

* 23% were not sure.

* 78% do not believe that the average person has a great deal of influence on significant government decisions.

* Just under 10% think they have a great deal of influence over government decisions.

* 60% believe they have little influence over the running of local government.

* 58% are interested in local government matters. [But they don't bother to vote at council elections!]

* 25% report no interest in local government matters.

* 29% of voters think they have something worthwhile to contribute to government.

* 43% feel they cannot make a contribution to government.

* 39% believe that government is responsive to public opinion, but 39% do not believe so, either.

* 79% of Australians believe they have little control over their elected members.

* 66% of Australians believe they will not get anywhere by talking to politicians.

* 37% of Australians believe their government has too much power.

* 16% think government has too little power (1988.)

The Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training established an enquiry into Education for Active

Citizenship in Australian Schools in 1988. Their report (Aulich, 1989:10) cited several submissions giving examples of community apathy and ignorance:

- * A 1987 survey showing only 54% of Australians were aware we had a constitution.

- * The Municipal Association of Victoria referred to a 1987 report, 'Young People's Perceptions of Locally Delivered Services.' This showed that young people do not know which levels of government are responsible for particular services.

- * The Queensland Council for Civil Liberties stated, "... people do not know which department to contact - they have no knowledge of government organisation or function."

(Aulich, 1989, 10.)

Clearly the situation in Australia is neither better nor worse than comparable countries. Osborne quotes Torney et al., "... nowhere has the system proved capable of producing the ideal goal of a well-informed citizenry, with democratic attitudes and values supportive of government policies and interested in civic affairs." (Why must well-informed citizens necessarily support government policy?) (1980,1.)

Reasons for Political Apathy.

What are the reasons for this lack of interest? Some of the answers suggested so far include the distance of leaders from the led and the complexity of modern government. Pateman refers to Adam Smith. Smith states that job boredom results in individuals who are unwilling and unable to participate in

decision making. She contrasts the lack of control of textile workers and their lack of self-confidence with workers in the chemical and printing trades, where their greater control over their jobs results in greater self-confidence and participation (1970,51.)

Dahl offers three reasons for what he refers to as the 'apolitical stratum' being so large. He suggests that an individual is unlikely to become involved if:

1. He/she places a low valuation on the rewards to be gained from political involvement relative to other activity.
2. He/she thinks the probability of influencing outcomes of events, changing balance of rewards by political involvement is low.
3. He/she believes the outcome will be relatively satisfactory to him without his/her involvement (1963,60.)

Pateman refers to Dahl, who considers that the lower socio-economic groups are barred from equality of political control or power due to relatively greater inactivity and lower access to resources (1970,9.) Pateman cites

Knupfer who:

... emphasises the importance of psychological factors in this process and suggests that the commonly found lack of effort to control their environment by lower SES groups may arise from deeply ingrained habits of doing what one is told. Economic underprivilege is thus linked to psychological underprivilege and engenders: "a lack of self confidence which increases the unwillingness of the lower status person to participate in many phases of our predominantly middle class culture beyond what would be a realistic withdrawal adapted to the reduced chances

of being effective". (1970,9.)

Essentially, what Knupfer is saying is that failure breeds failure. Alinsky is also convinced that socio-economic background and powerlessness is responsible for citizen apathy:

Here we are desperately concerned with the vast mass of our people who, thwarted through lack of interest or opportunity, or both, do not participate in the endless responsibility of citizenship and are resigned to lives determined by others. To loose your 'identity' as a citizen of democracy is but a step from losing your identify as a person. People react to this frustration by not acting at all. The separation of the people from the routine of daily functions of citizenship is heartbreak in a democracy. (1972,xxv.)

The same theme is picked up by Finley, "... far from being a healthy necessary condition of democracy, apathy is a withdrawal response to the imbalance in the access of different interest groups to those who make decisions ..."
(1985,105.) Tranter also points out that low income groups are just too busy earning a living to be interested in public participation (1985,10.) Tjerandsen noted:

... a growing sentiment to the effect that citizens are unable to influence their government, regardless of level, in any meaningful way. They no longer have a feeling of belonging to a community in a way similar to what they experience toward such small groups as the church congregation or lodge of which they may be a member. Related to this is the feeling that problems are just too big or change too rapidly for their efforts to matter. These account in part for the widely recognised withdrawal or apathy on the part of many citizens (1980,11.)

Foley provides further evidence:

People moving into new housing estates in the suburbs of big cities are often without social networks and

physical facilities like telephones, transport, shops and footpaths. The lack of physical facilities is felt most urgently: if there is no telephone there is no way of calling an ambulance to get a pregnant woman to hospital, the absence of footpaths endangers children's lives, women without nearby shops or a bus service are isolated. The lack of physical facilities is compounded by lack of social support - the families and friends of new residents are generally miles away, there is usually no childcare provision in the estate. Initially people respond to such situations in individualistic ways - by turning to neighbours, by saving for a second car. There is a disinclination to take collective action. (1987,29.)

Beazley, when presenting the Australian Electoral Office report to Federal Parliament, stated:

... there was identified criticism amongst young people that the education system has failed to provide them with the information, education background or forum they need to discuss, understand and accept the need for a democratic voting system, a fairly elected government and a political process designed to work in their interests. (1983,4.)

Brennan summarises the U.K. situation and refers to a Report of the Royal Commission on the Constitution.

... The unease expressed was vague but deeply felt. Government was felt to be too remote and the bureaucracy was perceived as being insensitive to people's wishes and grievances. There were complaints about secrecy and an absence of effective guidance to the public on how to deal with the multitude of government organisations and inadequate machinery for appeals against administrative decisions and the remedy of grievances. (1981,23.)

Davies sums up the situation:

Our research confirms the results of other studies: Class and income are the main factors in determining which citizens participate, which citizens and which groups have influence.

When lower class people seek to organise, to participate, to share power, they typically must use the only major resource they have: numbers ... quantities of people - and they often use styles and tactics which the

rest of us don't like. The result is crisis and controversy, and reaction by the haves to assure that the distribution of power and resources remains largely unchanged. (1979,53.)

Conclusions:

The evidence supports the view that the majority of citizens are not particularly interested in politics. Given the option, many do not bother to vote. Few are members of a political party, although I feel that many active citizens choose to avoid being identified with a specific party.

This lack of interest is confined neither to Australia, nor to this period of history. Even the Athenians, citizens of what is generally regarded as the cradle of democracy, were tardy in their democratic obligations.

There are six main reasons offered for citizen apathy:

1. Too busy surviving to become involved.
2. Government is too complex. People do not understand the system, so they keep away. (Fear of the unknown.)
3. Decision-makers do not encourage public participation.
4. Poor groups lack basic facilities, such as 'phones and access to other resources available to middle class activists. These include typewriters, photocopiers, computers and video equipment.
5. People who have failed to achieve success in previous actions will be cautious about future involvement. It is time consuming and the return on energy expended is uncertain.
6. A lack of basic citizenship preparation during compulsory

education.

Future chapters will consider how to increase political involvement, particularly amongst the lower socio-economic groups.

Chapter Four .

Political Education for Adults; For and Against.

Introduction.

An educator must be aware of the reasons for his/her actions, if only to be better able to justify them when challenged or seeking support for resources. Therefore, it is important to look at the arguments in favour of and against political education.

The arguments in favour tend to fall into four categories:

1. To safeguard democratic society.
2. As a counter to indoctrination.
3. To enable citizens to keep the government accountable.
4. To enable individuals to participate effectively in the political process.

Those who would oppose political education for adults cite the following reasons:

1. It does not help the underdogs, it simply enables the better educated and more articulate to use the knowledge and skills to their own advantage.
2. It is used by the capitalist system to bolster its own power. (Presumably this group considers revolution to be the only viable course.)
3. It is a left-wing plot to destroy the capitalist system.

4. Citizens will have their hopes unduly raised, as they will not be given the ability to change society.

The Case for Political Education.

1. As a safeguard for democratic society.

One of the most influential writers on adult education as a safeguard for democracy is Eduard Lindeman. Lindeman was active in American adult education from the 1920s into the 1950s. He wrote one book and a considerable number of papers. Lindeman's work has recently been rediscovered, thanks to two authors who wrote separate books on Lindeman and his work in 1987. These are David Stewart, 'Adult Learning in America' and Stephen Brookfield, 'Learning Democracy'.

Stewart discusses Lindeman's views on adult curriculum, and quotes: "Adult Educators should build into their programs components designed to serve the values of democracy."

(1987,230.) Brookfield's book consists of a number of reprints of Lindeman's papers. He quotes from 'The Sociology of Adult Education':

Adult Education is a laboratory for democratic experience. Adult Education is integral to the democratic struggle. Indeed, it is difficult for me to see how we can hope for the survival of democracy unless the so-called common man learns to use his collective power intelligently and wisely...(1945.)

Stewart states that Lindeman considered adult education to be the chief instrument of the democratic process. He quotes

from Lindeman's 'Dum Placem Peream', "I do not see how it will be possible to secure intelligent participation in the control of our affairs unless we can produce a larger number of socially sensitive, healthy-minded, progressive adults." (1987,171.) Brookfield refers to Lindeman's 'Education for a New Democratic Era':

... democracy and education are inseparable. Where the people are consulted, where the governed are also the governors, the people must be informed. They must be so educated as to realize their responsibilities and duties. The price they must pay for the freedom democracy grants is informed citizenship ... (1987,164.)

In Britain Clyne states, "The prime purpose of political education, in the context of adult education generally, is to enable the population of Britain to move from a representative democracy to a participatory democracy." (1983,37.)

Closer to home, in Tasmania, Morris states:

All are familiar with the argument that a greater extension of adult education is needed if democracy is to be preserved. No one disputes that, if public opinion is to be merely the expression of what an unthinking public have been persuaded to accept by propaganda or other means, democracy is a mere sham. It has become a tritism [sic] that democracy can only really exist if there is a substantial number of people who are not led in this way but are prepared to seek information, to consider rival points of view, and to reach a reasoned decision. (1944,5.)

Also in Tasmania, former Director of Adult Education, Kenneth Brooks, refers to a statement of philosophy prepared in 1961. Two points from this statement refer specifically to democracy and citizenship:

The main concerns now seem to be:

- . To bring home to people that the continued existence of our democratic society depends upon the quality of the people who are part of it and demands constant preoccupation with the condition of their society and its improvement.
- . To train men and women to be citizens of the highest level, for the continuing education offered by the Board is education for public responsibility. (1987,49.)

An editorial in the Mercury sums up the case for adult education for democracy:

Simply being given the vote is not enough to make a democracy work. People must also be educated enough to understand the political processes and also properly informed on any issue so they can make a considered judgement. (22 October 1988,13.)

2. To counter indoctrination.

Brennan introduces the case for political education as a defence against indoctrination. He quotes the U.K. Newson Report (1963:163), "A man who is ignorant of the society in which he lives, who knows nothing of its place in the world and who has not thought about his place in it, is not a free man even though he has a vote. He is easy game for the 'hidden persuaders'." (1981,42.) Brennan subsequently cites Brown. "A politically literate adult population produced by a systematic programme of political education in our schools and colleges is the best guarantee against indoctrination. Fear of indoctrination should not be a barrier to political education but rather a stimulus to its introduction and development." (1981,85.)

3. To keep governments accountable.

A number of sources address the role of adult education in keeping governments and their bureaucracies accountable to their electors. Blumler summarises: "... complacency about mass political ignorance is inappropriate because it can give rise to undesirable policies, ineffective government and manipulative politics." (1974,91.) Richardson concludes that:

Our responsibility as citizens remains that of communicating to government our insistence on being heard, our willingness to take the trouble to be intelligent on the issues on which we seek to be heard, and to let it be clearly understood by those who hold government responsibility that we understand that they hold that responsibility in trust for us. In the end the answer depends on a continued awareness that in a free, self-governing society there can be no they; there is only we. (1975,237.)

Maddox continued in the same vein:

The more people there are who, though not themselves in the party oligarchies, are prepared to discuss at length and in some depth the activities of government, the less likely it is that abuses of power and cases of specific injustice will pass unnoticed. (1973,71.)

Simey is rather more specific when she states:

"The encouragement of political sensibility must be matched by greatly increased opportunities for sharing public responsibility in every aspect of life, from council tenancies and school management to the integration of members of the public into the actual administrative system as advisers and collaborators. There must be an imaginative programme of action-education aimed at improving the general level of 'politeracy'. (1976,226.)

Brennan refers to Stradling: "... a democratically relevant reason for improving the general level of political knowledge and involvement is that a well informed electorate will tend '...to make governments more accountable to it and

consequently more representative." (1981,27.) He subsequently stated:

... generally public involvement in participation [sic] has been extremely limited. Elected office-holders and administrators alike have been concerned to safeguard what they see as their proper prerogatives and disinclined to submit themselves to the kind of searching enquiry which such participation frequently involves. Participation procedures are undoubtedly time-consuming and presuppose that the 'expert' view is open to alteration in the light of convincing argument. It is also true that where such procedures have been seriously embarked upon it can be shown that the experts are not omniscient and that ordinary people can make an important contribution to enlightened decision-making and the creation of a more satisfied community.
(1981,118)

Tjerandsen prepared a very detailed report on a number of projects funded by the Emile Schwarzhaupt Foundation in the field of citizenship education. He expressed his view on the need for citizenship education thus:

... elections occur only at extended intervals; the need for study and action on public questions is continuous. This process ... obviously depends on communication among citizens as to what their problems are, the various alternatives for dealing with them and whether or not the action agreed upon is working out as expected.(1980,12.)

More recently (1989) the Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training investigated the provision of Education for Active Citizenship in Australian Schools. Although the emphasis was on school based political education, many of their conclusions are relevant to adults, for example:

...a situation in which accountability is weak and where power may be concentrated in the hands of a few. They are a warning that the quality of democracy may be under threat.(Aulich,1989.)

4. Community empowerment.

Notwithstanding the foregoing arguments in favour of political education, the majority of sources cited empowerment for effective participation as individuals or group members.

Brookfield cites Lindeman. "It is obviously one of the functions of adult education to furnish citizens with material which will help to dispel their confusions and keep them in a participant mood with respect to public issues."

(1987,158.) Dahl states:

... the best reason for improving one's skill in political analysis, however, is that it helps one to understand the world he lives in, to make more intelligent choices around the alternatives he faces, and to influence the changes, great and small, that seem to be an inevitable aspect of all political systems. (1963,3.)

Dahl subsequently points out that individual citizens belong to more than one political system. For example, Federal, State, local government, school districts, firm, trade union, church, lodge, political party, etc. (1963,35). Maddox states, "... there is great scope for teachers in the adult education sphere to help prospective community activists become aware of the available ways for making the voice of the 'ordinary citizen' heard where it counts." (1973,71.)

Maddox then cites Entwistle:

A citizen who wishes to influence government policies must learn the most efficient ways to make his opinions

felt ... The influence of interest and pressure groups upon government policy is apparently often ignored in public discussion of congressional action and in the school curricula ... the citizen could act more realistically and effectively if he had such information. (1973,73.)

Hennessey and Slater in their paper on Political Competence state their aim, "... is to give pupils knowledge and tools for informed and responsible political participation."

(1978,7.) Tjerandsen quotes Saul Alinsky:

The purpose ... to build ... an organisation in which the preponderant number of citizens in the community participate - in which individuals acquire a sense of belonging, of dignity, of self-confidence and a realisation which grown-up people must achieve and that is that nobody is going to take care of their problems except themselves ..."(then, p308 talking about the Chelsea Community Council in the U.S.A.) "The issue ... is getting people involved - providing the opportunities and means for citizen participation so that individuals can secure through democratic participation the best hope for realising themselves as individuals. (1980,285.)

However, not everyone agrees with Alinsky, who was well known in the U.S.A. for his conflict style of action. Neumann, Bertocci and Landsness consider the idea is not to produce a group of activists, but to give those who wish the skills to participate in citizen action effectively. This is an important philosophical difference (1977,6.)

Alinsky believed that you needed to create confrontation in order to motivate the disadvantaged. If the opposition were seen as being 'not such a bad bunch', then the motivation to tackle them would be lacking. One could describe Alinsky's style as being akin to that of a football finals coach. Give no quarter!

Alinsky was an activist, an advocate. He was not tied to a government adult education agency. He was, therefore, free to employ methods which a public servant would be reluctant to use - at least if he/she wished to keep their job! Even adult educators who are not government employees may find that their dependence upon a range of grants and subsidies could result in pressure to avoid radical activities.

Cordon refers to Wright:

The democratic process in this country [U.K.] depends for its vitality upon voluntary activity of people in pressure groups, community groups, voluntary organisations, political parties and elected bodies of varying kinds. The imbalance in information and resources between such people and the professional bureaucracies with which they have to deal is considerable and should be redressed as much as possible. (1983, 58.)

This reference to the imbalance in information between the powerless and the power holders is crucial to political participation. How often have we heard backbenchers and political journalists refer to the 'mushroom club'? If they feel kept in the dark, how does the rest of the population feel? I address access to information in a subsequent chapter.

The Committee to review Australian Studies into Tertiary Education agreed with Cordon and Wright. It pointed out that citizenship is not confined to our relations with state machinery: "Australia's concept of democracy extends to involvements with a host of voluntary organisations from

Parents and Citizens Committees to trade unions, from Rural Fire Brigades to disarmament marches, from churches to sporting bodies. Most Australians perceive such groupings as more important in our lives than the functions of the state ... Duties towards the state and involvement with the community do not exhaust the range of activities that are involved in citizenship." (1986,23.) Kimberley states:

Community providers are committed to combatting the inequalities inherent in our society. Through their education, social justice and community development activities they enable greater access to economic resources and expanded opportunities for participation in the decision-making that affects people's lives.(1986,5.)

Edgar urges that: "People of all ages must be encouraged to learn and to demand skills, information and understandings which will enhance their power to control and multiply their life options and to improve their potential contribution to society." (1987,3.) A Victorian Government report, People and Opportunities, says:

... the exercise of citizenship does not end with the casting of a vote at the ballot box. It involves respecting decision making by individuals and groups, so that they are more directly involved in decisions affecting their daily lives and the lives of their families, their communities, or people in similar circumstances.(1987,12.)

Frederick and Puckett claim that three fifths of social workers are committed to political action. These need to know how to be more effective. They need to gain skills as individuals and as members of a professional group.(1988,229.) Arguably the person who has had the greatest impact as a citizen activist is Ralph Nader. He

addressed a Canadian Adult Education conference in 1988 on the topic of Strategies for Training Citizen Advocates. He stated:

In our societies [Canada and U.S.A.] the imbalance in power between citizens and special interests is increasing, and our lives are affected by events beyond our control. The level of skill and true commitment of citizens has to increase to keep pace. (Nader, 1988, 2).

The Case Against Political Education.

As mentioned at the start of this chapter, there are people who argue against political education. Brennan refers to these criticisms and recognises they come from both left and right. "On the one hand, political education was seen as a subtle device for bolstering up a decaying capitalist system and on the other, as a left-wing plot to destroy the fabric of British Society." (1981, 12.)

Another argument is that political education tends to favour the more highly educated, the joiners and those who are articulate. Higgins and Richardson state as an example the House of Commons is over represented by lawyers, journalists and teachers (1976, 8.) They cite a number of references to support this argument - Stringer and Taylor, 1974; Dennis, 1972; Ryan and Isaacson, 1974; Donnison, 1970.) They state that people must be free NOT to participate. Higgins and Richardson (1976:8) unfortunately throw some doubt on their case when they ask: "What would happen if all citizens wished to actively participate?" (1976, 9.)

What would happen? For a start, not everyone would want to enter Parliament. Most people seem to be able to recognise their own limitations, and work within them. In my own experience, as a local government councillor for over ten years, even elected members find their own level. Certainly on the New Norfolk Council there were really only four or five out of fifteen who consistently took the initiative. The rest were followers.

If we look at members of pressure groups, unions or parliaments, most act as 'backbenchers'. They are happy to leave the action to the leaders. I believe this answers Higgins and Richardson's question. Simply, there is little chance that 'everyone' will want to become active participants. We have already seen that did not happen in ancient Athens, where citizens were largely spared the daily toil of earning a living, thanks to their ownership of slaves. Even so, by no means all used their time to play an active role in the Assembly.

Finley refers to Morris Jones, 'In Defense of Apathy': "... many of the ideas connected with the general theme of a Duty to Vote belong properly to the totalitarian camp and are out of place in the vocabulary of liberal democracy." (1985,4.) Ridley refers to objections on the grounds that citizens will be frustrated by attempts to participate unless major change occurs in the political system as a whole. Of course, it could be argued that any worthwhile political education would attempt to provide the knowledge and attitudes required to

change the political system!(1983,9.)

Jarvis suggests that some elites feel threatened by education which may encourage 'the practice of freedom'.(1985,149.)

This point is picked up - tongue in cheek - by Ken McKinnon in an address to an adult education conference in 1988:

Education is a subversive force, effective adult education is particularly subversive. Perhaps governments are distrustful of adult education for that reason. Especially literacy is not a matter of just filling an empty vessel: and you sort of feed the hungry, submissive and uncritical people. If you feed them they won't be uncritical and they won't be submissive and they will have tools in their hands they can use ... even in developed countries, you find that adult education creates more lobby groups, more advocacy, a population characterised by activism and not by passive conformity, and governments are not necessarily well disposed towards that.

Conclusion.

The majority of sources cite empowerment as the main reason for providing adult political education. There is, however, a philosophical difference between supporters. One group, exemplified by Alinsky, states that citizens should be actively encouraged and helped to use their knowledge and skills to create community change. These are the radicals. The other group considers that the knowledge and skills should be simply made available for those who wish to use them. These may be considered to be proponents of liberal adult education.

The majority of opponents of political education argue that this will give even more power to the powerful, rather than

to the powerless. Therefore, our job is to ensure that our efforts help the powerless. This does not mean that we ignore the needs of the power holders, however. If their skills in policy making and decision making can be improved, then society as a whole should benefit.

Chapter Five.

What is Political Education?

It has been demonstrated that the vast majority of people are apolitical. (See chapter three.) They may follow events with an idle interest, but do not become active unless they are directly threatened.

Those who are 'political' may be regarded as activists and/or power holders. The activists may act either as individuals, or as members of one or more groups. The power holders include those who run big business, big unions and members of one of the three tiers of government. Power holders may also hold senior positions within government bureaucracy. Some power holders may also be activists. I consider Dr Bob Brown MHA to be a power holding activist.

Types of Activists.

Whilst it may be convenient to classify activists as a broad group, it would be a mistake to ignore the sub categories. I would nominate the following sub groups of activists:

1. Occasional, when interests are directly threatened. For example a consumer who is seeking redress for faulty goods.
2. Gatekeepers, who control other people's access to information and other resources. These include librarians,

Community Advice Bureau (CAB) workers, journalists, adult educators, and social workers. They may not regard themselves as activists, but they are working in a political environment, whether they acknowledge it or not.

3. Advocates, who work on other people's behalf. They may be professional or 'occasional amateurs', helping friends.

Wickert differentiates between gatekeepers and advocates. She considers that gatekeepers restrict exploration of knowledge and use materials produced by the dominant culture. Advocates use plain English and aim to develop individuals as independent learners (1985,5.)

It is certainly within many individuals' power to choose between the advocate or the gatekeeper role. For example, the hack journalist will copy a story straight off a news release, or from the fax. On the other hand the good investigative journalist will leave no stone unturned to obtain the facts and report them.

4. Committed activists, engaged on an on-going basis upon one or more project. Examples include 'Price Watch' volunteers, active members of the conservation movement, Parents and Friends State Council, etc.

Aims of Adult Political Education.

What should be the aims of adult political education? What

information, skills, knowledge, attitude and behaviour are needed?

Lister introduces the concept of a politically literate person. He suggests they should possess certain knowledge, attitudes and skills. Under the Knowledge heading Lister placed the ability to understand the political dimension of a given context. The literate person would be able to assess what information was lacking and how it could be discovered. Politically literate people would know how to judge political questions (1976,4.)

Lister considered the following attitudes as being essential for the politically literate person:

1. A critical stance towards political information.
2. Toleration, fairness and respect for truth and reasoning.

Lister nominated skills in the following areas:

1. Information, the ability to critically analyse and evaluate political information and to reveal underlying prejudices or ideologies behind arguments.
2. Action skills for positive action and the capacity to participate in and change political situations.

Hennesy and Slater classify the content of political education, under three broad headings:

1. Understanding of the machinery, not only of central and local government, but also industrial relations, the education system and the contribution made by pressure

groups.

2. It must include an understanding of issues over which the people disagree. Disagreement may be over:

a. Goals, (Where are we going? what purposes would a given action serve?)

b. Values. What way should we act or not act?

c. Methods. How should we do it?

d. Results. Was it the right outcome? The fairest? The best?

Issues must be related to concrete examples, eg. the welfare state, motorways, comprehensive schools, capital punishment, abortion, strikes, etc.

3. There must be knowledge of the groups who are involved in political decision-making, eg. political parties, the trade-unions, the CBI, the press and interest groups ... But political understanding in the end must evolve from an awareness of the close interaction of political machinery, with issues, and the likely grouping of those who support or oppose them (1978,6.)

Tjerandsen acknowledges Fenton, who suggested five kinds of goals appropriate to citizenship education in the high school. (This paper is dealing with adult political education, but Fenton's list is relevant.):

1. To gain knowledge about the political system and how it works.

2. To develop intellectual skills for problem solving.

3. To develop participatory skills related to action in a

democratic society.

4. Develop a value system essential to functioning in a democratic society.

5. Develop self-esteem essential to feelings of worth which are prerequisite to participating effectively as a citizen.

(1980,647.) Allen also refers to Fenton:

Good citizens require participation skills which can be classified at two levels. The first level of data gathering and communication skills essential for playing an active part in any civic organisation. The second level uses these basic skills for negotiation, working out comparisons, or influencing political decision-makers ... (1980,6.)

Brennan quotes Crick and Porter:

To have achieved political literacy is to have learnt what the main political disputes are about, what beliefs the main contestants have about them, how they are likely to affect you and me. It also means that we are likely to be disposed to do something about the issue in a way that is at once effective and respectful of the sincerity of others and what they believe. (1981,7.)

Barrett recognises that the politically literate person is able to use their knowledge and skills:

Being politically literate is more than having a superficial understanding of the operation of the structures and functions of government, or of political parties or of civic rights and responsibilities. All these may well be important learnings in themselves, but what counts is how a person integrates such knowledge with their own experience of life, how equipped with appropriate skills and how motivated they are to participate in political aspects of life. (1986,10.)

Flanagan, Gruber, Morrison and Shulman are four Canadian adult educators. They are currently (1989) members of a network of people preparing guidelines for citizen training projects. This network was formed as a result of a paper presented by Nader at a conference at Lennoxville, Quebec

(1988.) They have identified four types of civic learning:

1. Learning the techniques of public interest advocacy and how to enhance organisational effectiveness.
2. Providing unbiased information and clarification of issues.
3. Facilitating full civic participation by Canada's multicultural communities and amongst new Canadians.
4. Reaching out to marginalised populations to build basic skills and promote confidence to engage in citizen action.

Specific Knowledge and Skills Required.

So far we have a reasonable consensus between sources that people need information gathering and communication skills and an attitude that they can influence decision-makers, together with understanding of and toleration for others' views. What are the specific knowledge and skills required? Clearly, not every individual requires identical knowledge and skills. Neither can we realistically expect an individual to master all the skills required in a particular situation.

I propose to consider the skills required under the following headings:

1. The apolitical.
2. The activist.
3. The power holder.

1. The Apolitical.

It is unlikely that the apolitical person is going to seek any kind of informal or formal political education. The best that can be done is to make them aware of their rights and that they are able to take action to protect their interests. Accordingly I suggest that they need assertiveness and self-esteem raising skills. Tjerandsen describes the effect of increased self confidence upon a group:

... expanded self-confidence encouraged them to believe that their views were of value; hence, others should be willing to listen. They had grown to a point where they had the confidence, a belief in the 'rightness' of efforts to try to lead the organisation in the direction which other members would support. (1980, 652.)

The apolitical person also needs to know how and where to obtain information. These would include government agencies, CAB and libraries. They would also need to be aware of sources of help against authority; including the Department of Social Security (DSS) appeals system, Administrative Appeals Tribunal, the Ombudsman and Consumer Affairs offices. As Scott says:

The ability to use a service depends on knowledge of its existence and having the confidence to apply. For many people this is not the straightforward procedure it is for the English-speaking middle class of Australia. The division of responsibility for health, housing, migrants and a wide range of welfare services among many departments, levels of government and voluntary administrations, and the various eligibility criteria, create a maze for bewildered applicants to negotiate. (1981, 25.)

I will investigate information needs and delivery more fully in a later chapter.

2. The Activist.

As suggested earlier, activists range from the occasional through to the full time activist, highly committed to one or more movements or projects. They include gate-keepers and advocates.

The occasional activist is, in many ways, similar to the apolitical person. They only become involved if they perceive a direct threat to their existence or immediate environment. In addition to the skills and knowledge required by the apolitical, they need to be able to communicate with individuals and groups to get their point across. This means they should be able to write to newspapers and decision makers and participate in meetings, etc.

An occasional activist may become a regular activist. This is particularly likely if their early attempts at participation have been reasonably successful.

I now propose to consider the specific skills that an individual or a group of people may require to participate effectively in the decision-making process.

Many sources nominate communication as an essential skill. Alinsky stresses that the ability to communicate within people's experiences is essential. He gives the example of an airline captain quoting fuel consumption during take-off as

equivalent to vehicle use during a drive from New York to Chicago return, with detours (1972,81.) Spiegel and Perlman state that, "'Improving communications' between target area residents and the decision makers frequently failed because the messages were being misread or simply ignored."

(1981,31.) Referring to written material, Scott says:

The style of presentation of argument and proposals is critically important but generally overlooked. Writing style and graphic design can mean the difference between a proposal being dismissed as another roneoed hand-out, or viewed as a refreshing and interesting presentation of ideas and argument.(1981,143.)

Scott proceeds to give the example of a report by the Brotherhood of St. Laurence being edited by a journalist, to increase acceptance.

My wife and I fostered a little boy for about three years. During this time the Foster Parents group used to send us their newsletter, through the DCW. The newsletter was produced by an enthusiastic amateur on a home computer, using one of the newsletter software packages. The result was a most difficult publication to read. Layout was non-existent. Narrow margins, minimal space between lines and text wrapped firmly round numerous irrelevant illustrations. I suspect that an awful lot of copies went unread!

What are the skills we need to become effective communicators? We need to realise that communication is a two way process. It is not just us talking or writing. We must be able to 'receive' effectively too. We need to be able to communicate

with individuals, small groups and possibly a larger audience through the mass media. I suggest that the basic communication skills we all require are:

- * To use simple English, in writing and speech.
- * To be able to listen actively, showing empathy with the speaker.
- * To be able interpret body language, particularly that which is not congruent with the spoken message.
- * To be able to assess the accuracy of information and to read between the lines.
- * To be able to write to decision-makers.

Of course, every individual should have these basic skills, but they are fundamental to the effective citizen.

The mass media have had a considerable impact in the political arena over the last few years; thanks to investigative journalism. Some examples include:

- * Resignation of Richard Nixon as President of the U.S.A. in 1973.
 - * Instigation of the Fitzgerald Inquiry in Queensland
 - * Resignation of Dr William McBride as Director of Foundation
- 41.

Many of the skills of investigative journalism could be used by activists in their search for information.

The rise in community newspapers, produced by local groups has been noted by Armstrong and Davies. They refer to Mercer who claims that these newspapers aim to stimulate thinking, particularly on local problems and features, as well as instructing, entertaining and informing the community (1977,150.) Kirkwood details the origins of a local community newspaper. It was selling 3000 copies by the third edition (1971,173.) Paulston and Altenbaugh refer to a tabloid newspaper, The Black Panther, launched in 1967 (1988,132.)

Many groups produce their own newsletters. These would be enhanced with access to desk top publishing resources and proper training in layout, etc.

- * Use alternative media, particularly video and computers.
- * Decision-making, including setting objectives and priorities.
- * Participating in meetings.
- * Administration, including book-keeping.

Use of Video Cameras.

Since the 1970s portable video cameras and recorders have become available. They have rapidly improved in quality and portability. Wooley suggests the era of cottage craft television production will permit good low budget, but not

broadcast quality, programs to be produced (1988,16.)

Holderness-Roddam surveyed the use of mass media in community education. He was particularly interested in the following two examples (1984,36).

Childs reported the use of portable video gear by Carpenter in Appalachia, U.S.A. to combat strip mining. He recorded interviews with local communities in Tennessee about the problems and then replayed the material in other communities - a visual newsletter. Carpenter also taped interviews with residents concerned about the strip mining. He then filmed the actual mining; edited the tapes to combine the interviews as commentary for the mining footage and sent copies to Congress members (1973,16.).

The other example of community video use was given by Callanan. This details how video tapes were used to communicate between isolated groups in Newfoundland and the Transport Minister, when discussing proposed new snowmobile regulations (1977,22.)

Zeisel and Godschalk briefly describe a citizen self-survey where residents conducted neighbourhood interviews which are recorded on videotape and compiled into tv programs for community viewing. The Sunday Tasmanian (13 Nov. 1988:3) reveals that CROPS was planning to prepare a video cassette on the Wesley Vale region, to gain support for the anti Wesley Vale Mill cause (13 Nov. 1988,3.) The ABC Radio

program, Science Bookshop, reviewed a book by Christian, Disappearing World. A group of Brazilian Indians were using video to record their negotiations with the Brazilian Government, because they [The indians] were illiterate. (18 Feb. 1989.)

My final point to support the need for activists to learn how to use video equipment is provided by Wilson. He describes how journalists disguised as tourists used hidden video cameras to record chinese troops. "... the past two weeks taught the Chinese Government what the western world learned in Vietnam - that television and modern broadcasting technology cannot be ignored and has changed the nature of modern warfare and politics." (1989,7.)

Kimberley lists the following skills as being helpful to community participation:

- .Communication skills.
- .Helping skills.
- .Counselling skills.
- .Decision-making skills.
- .Meetings skills.
- .Administrative skills.
- .Lobbying skills.

(1986,55.)

Draisen suggests skills in bargaining, mediation, setting priorities and identifying goals (1981,43.)

Non Violent Action.

There is another major area of skills required by activists, if they are serious about their desire to change the world. Diwell refers to Dr Bob Brown MHA, addressing the 8th. annual conference of Labor Lawyers, as calling for non-violent protest methods to be taught in Tasmanian Schools (1986,1.) What are non-violent protest methods?

The Tasmanian Wilderness Society published the Franklin River Blockade Handbook. This quotes the late Dr Martin Luther King Jr as saying non-violent action, "seeks to dramatize the issue so that it can no longer be ignored." The handbook classified non-violent action into three categories:

* Protest and persuasion.

Marches, rallies, picketing, petitions, vigils and street theatre.

* Non co-operation.

Strikes, boycotts, draft resistance, civil disobedience, hunger strikes, refusal to pay taxes and withholding rent.

* Non-violent intervention.

Sit-ins, occupations, disruption of office business, etc. (1982.)

3. Power Holders.

Earlier in this chapter I stated that the power holders

included big business, big unions and members of one of the three tiers of government. This list is not exclusive, but it does cover most cases.

The author posed the question to municipal councillors; Are You An Effective Elected Member? (Holderness-Roddam, 1987:312) He offered the following definition of an elected member:

The effective elected member works with fellow elected members, staff and the community to objectively assess community needs and to set and regularly review priorities in order to meet these needs.

This definition was developed from the perspective of local government, where party politics is less overt than in state and federal systems. Community in this case need not refer to a geographic community. It may refer to a union's membership, for example.

Elected power holders are in their position for a variety of reasons. They may not have the skills required to make them effective. In addition to the previously mentioned communication skills, they need the higher order skills of negotiation, decision making, policy making, resource allocation and conflict management.

Summary.

The majority of people are apolitical. They are unlikely to become involved unless directly threatened by some decision. Even then, most will avoid the situation rather than seek to

act. The skills and attitudes required by these people are basically self-confidence and knowledge of where to obtain information and help.

Those who are political range from the occasionally active through to the highly committed activists. A few of the occasionally active may become committed to a project. The political also include the information gate-keepers and advocates, such as social workers, etc.

These activists need well developed skills in the following areas:

- * Obtain and assess information.
- * Communicate in both directions.
- * Meeting participation.
- * Gain access to the broadcast media.
- * Administration.
- * Decision making and policy development.
- * Negotiation.
- * Change management.
- * Computer skills, including desktop publishing.
- * Video camera use.
- * Non violent action.

Power holders need the skills outlined above for the activists, with the probable exception of non violent action. However, they particularly need the higher order skills of negotiation, decision making, resource allocation and policy development.

Chapter Six.

Adult Learning Styles.

This paper is about political education for adults. If we are to provide effective political education, we need to consider how adults learn.

There are two schools of thought on adult learning. One school, epitomised by the American adult educator Malcolm Knowles, distinguishes adult learning from that of children. Adult learning is referred to as andragogy, children's learning is called pedagogy. The other school says there is little real difference, that adults and children learn in much the same way.

My own observations, having five children ranging from 18 years down to two, tend to support the second view. There seems to be more difference between my individual children's learning than that claimed to exist between adults and children. Indeed, I progressive teachers ever since Dewey have advocated the use of so-called andragogy methods with children. What cannot be disputed, however, is that there are differences between adults' and children's situations that need to be allowed for when helping them to learn. I prefer to use the active term, learning, rather than the passive term of being taught.

Those who favour the andragogy theory include Stewart, who cites Knowles:

1. The adult learner is "self directed."
2. Adults enter education with a greater volume and quality of experience.
3. Adults become ready to learn when they experience a need to know or do something in order to perform more effectively in some aspect of their lives.
4. Adults enter education with life-centered, task-centered or problem-centered orientation to learning.
5. Motivators for adult learning are internal - self-esteem, recognition, better quality of life, greater self-confidence, self-actualisation, etc.(1987,27.)

Tennant refers to Scott's assumptions about adult learning:

1. Adults have different learning styles.
2. Adults have different starting points for learning.
3. Each starting point usually involves a need to develop new knowledge, skills and attitudes which have arisen from practical experience.
4. Adults like to be able to immediately apply their learning.
5. Adults like to be recognised as independent and responsible.
6. Some adults may feel anxiety and uncertainty when returning to study.
7. Adults will be judgemental and think about how well a course meets their needs (1985,21.)

A number of other writers provide similar lists. These include Morton (1987,65); Even (1987,23); the University of

Nottingham (1979); the Trainer Training Service (1980); the South Australian Department of TAFE (1980) and Zemke and Zemke (1984).

Meyer puts the alternative viewpoint:

... there appears to be no case for a special 'science' of adult education (in spite of a vast literature which attempts to establish such a special science.) The conditions for learning are the same for school pupils and adults alike. In adult education, however, it is not possible to succeed without careful attention to these conditions since adults require 'instant success', that is an immediacy of application of newly acquired knowledge and skill. (nd.2.)

Jarvis quotes Ruddock:

... the student in Further and Adult Education often expects the teacher to expect submissive behaviour. Further, when it becomes clear the teacher welcomes self-assertion on the part of the student, a class may show their disapproval, because their role expectations have been upset. (1985,218.)

These views are supported by Davenport, who cites Hartree:

As many adult tutors would recognise, the experience of school has left many adult students with both an expectation of and a 'felt need' for dependency and tutor direction (although they may experience the need to be seen as adult by others as a conflicting pressure.) The view of the adult learner as self-directing, then, is often more a pious hope than a description of his or her learning ... (1985,18.)

Niemi refers to a 1972 finding by an educational testing service. Twenty eight percent of would-be learners preferred lectures or classes. Thirty five percent of enrolled learners preferred lectures or classes (1985,8.)

What are the ramifications for people seeking to provide

political education?

Firstly, any program has to be appropriate and flexible. Content, method and timing must be designed for specific groups or individuals.

Only provide enough background theory to enable people to be able to apply the knowledge and skills learned. Most learners do not want long lectures, they want to be able to get into action immediately. Therefore programs should be 'hands on', with a practical outcome.

Use as much as possible of participants' previous experience.

Use group members as a resource for case studies, etc. Saxe suggests:

... cooperative learning methods with a great deal of peer interaction increase student achievement more than do traditional classroom methods and that group incentive structure is more effective than individual incentive in increasing achievement ... adult learners taught with a high level of peer interaction perform better than those taught with moderate or low levels and that group incentive is more potent than individual incentive when using cooperative learning designs. (1988, 50.)

Conclusions:

Adults, like children, employ a wide range of learning skills. In terms of adult education, as opposed to those committed to post secondary qualifications, those attending courses are intrinsically motivated. If they feel the course is not providing what the need (or want) they will simply

stop coming.

Adults can be expected to have a wide range of knowledge and prior experience. Teachers must realise this and assume the role of facilitator, rather than the fount of all knowledge adopted by so many school teachers.

Many writers point out that group work is more effective with adults. They interact with each other and develop their abilities with the help of their peers. This is certainly true of many adults. However, my own experience is that I learn most effectively when I am free to plan and conduct my own learning.

I identified a number of different groups of adults in chapter five. These were the apolitical, the gatekeeper, the activist and the power holder. It is possible to consider likely broad distinctions between some of these groups.

The apolitical are more likely to come from the poor groups. Their previous experience of education may not have been positive. They are, therefore, unlikely to seek adult education unless they feel a pressing need. They are likely to be conditioned to expect didactic instruction, such as lectures. They may well feel threatened if forced to participate in discussion or group activities too early.

Gatekeepers are likely to have some specific training as, for example, librarians, journalists, social workers. They will,

as a group, have experience of post secondary education. Their expectations will be very different from those of the apolitical.

It is more difficult to postulate about the backgrounds of the advocates. However, most appear to come from the middle class. One likely exception to this could be union activists, although even these are tending to come from white collar backgrounds today.

The final major group identified is the powerholders. Most of these would have post secondary education, many have university degrees. The problem is often to find the time for these people to attend courses. For this reason many are more likely to attend one day seminars, rather than a series of regular courses or workshops.

How Do We Deliver ?

Safman and Crocker investigated adult learning styles, in order to develop a curriculum for inservice training of adult educators. Their research included a survey of adult educators in Utah and a review of the literature on adult development and learning. The curriculum was successfully pilot tested. They concluded that certain types of teaching were more effective than others. They listed these types, with the most effective at the top:

1. Action. (Simulation, discussion, roleplay, field trips.)

2. Laboratory experience. (Solution, discovery.)
 3. Drill and practice.
 4. Demonstration.
 5. Sound / motion pictures.
 6. One way communication. (Lectures, verbal illustrations.)
- (1984,20.)

I do not intend to analyse all the available teaching methods. Instead, I will provide examples of, and suggestions for using, those methods considered to be most effective.

Direct Experience.

A variety of sources stress the need for practical learning.

Zander refers to training law students:

It would seem fairly obvious that exposure to real-life situations might make a contribution to legal education. On the simplest level, it would teach the student, through personal observation, something about how the law operates in practice. Frequently, it would reveal the critical difference between what is written in the books and what actually occurs. More often, it might teach him [sic] things that are never dealt with in the books at all. (1975,90.)

Osborne also supports the need for practical learning:

... the involvement of students in community or political action. Two arguments underlie this: one, learning about politics means very little if the knowledge is not converted into useful action; two, in politics as in most other things, learning is best accompanied by doing. (1980,2.)

Both these arguments seem to be in accordance with learning theory, discussed earlier. Whilst there are people who value knowledge for its own sake, I consider it is more likely to

be valued if it can be applied in the field.

Longstreet suggests that:

The way to help students become competent in the decision making of citizenship is to have them engage in such decision making ... For instance, when we study environmental problems we should work with an environmental regulatory agency or with an industrial company trying to meet new environmental standards ... (1989,45.)

A considerable number of other sources express similar sentiments. These include Runciman (1969); Brockington (1975); Davies (1979); Tjerandsen (1980); Brennan (1981); Dorfman (1983); Lovett, Clarke and Kilmurray (1983); Stewart (1985 and 1987) and Aulich (1989).

Roleplay and Simulations.

If we are not able to provide direct experience, then simulations and roleplay provide the next best thing. Webb suggests that "Games and simulations may thus be to political skills what practice in the nets is to cricket", but proceeds to caution that net practice will not give practice in avoidance at being caught. He states that games and simulations are limited - they are "a useful supplement to involvement in political action in authentic contexts, but not a substitute for it." (nd.,20.0

In 1979 I was a member of the New Norfolk Council. Council's health inspector had discovered a problem with the milk supply. This appeared to be caused by unsold milk being

transported between the town and the supplier in Hobart, unrefrigerated. It took a long time to get any action. Eventually the Director of Public Health agreed to attend a Council meeting, to hear complaints and answer questions. One of my colleagues was extremely forceful and persistent. He was not rude, but very assertive in making Council's point of view known and asking the Director of Public Health what he was going to do about it. This particular councillor was always very effective, but even so, I was surprised by his excellent performance. How did he do it? He roleplayed the scenario with his son the previous evening.

Simulations and roleplays have been used in a variety of situations. Munday describes a simulation of negotiating a constitution for the African country of Colonia (nd.)

Colonia has been ruled by a dominant white tribe, DOMTRIBE, which has 30% of the population. SUBTRIBE, 70% of the population, comprised of the indigenous natives, declared civil war. The United Nations acts as a broker for the cease fire and subsequent negotiations. Munday compared this simulation with the actual Rhodesia/Zimbabwe negotiations at Lancaster House.

Cave refers to a roleplay, "taking a case to the county court with the students taking on the part of plaintiff, defendant and witnesses." Clearly students can not take a practical part in courtroom work. Therefore the alternative is roleplay. A properly conducted roleplay would help people to

assess their likely reactions, and understand the reasons, in areas of potential conflict (1976,11.)

The author has conducted courses for council candidates. One of the most important points to make is the value of door knocking the electorate. We usually conduct a roleplay exercise where participants knock on doors. Those who answer the door have specific roles to respond to the candidate with. These roles vary from the apathetic through the downright rude to the householder who insists upon the candidate consuming yet another cup of tea or coffee.

The Tasmanian Wilderness Society offers advice on conducting roleplays. They also provide examples:

- *Arrest.

- *Reaction to pro-dams outsiders.

- *Police aggression.

- *Dealing with the media.

(1982,53.)

Stradling, Noctor and Baines describe a roleplay to illustrate Gerrymandering. The group is subdivided into two of unequal size. Three constituencies are drawn up, with the smallest group holding a majority in two of the constituencies (1984,25.)

Brace gives the following instructions for gaming and simulation workshops:

- * Decide upon the learning area you want to illuminate.
- * Look at existing games for ideas.
- * Discuss the situation with others.
- * Identify the roles required.
- * Work out the structure.
- * Write the role briefings.

(1977,7.)

Lister, in a talk, stated that cooperative simulation games are needed. Simulation games are often divisive and can sometimes be destructive. Participants should be given more opportunities to develop skills of cooperation, mediation and accord. In the real world the skills are often needed if conflict is to be resolved (1986.)

Theatre and Drama.

Theatre and drama is similar to roleplay, although there is usually less opportunity for the actors to develop their roles individually. I would suggest that roleplays are principally for the benefit of participants, whilst theatre is for the benefit of observers. I would not, however, deny that the actors in drama benefit from their participation.

Catalyst, the journal of Student Initiatives in Community Health, advertised a forthcoming conference. One of the items would be on the use of street theatre as a form of political action (1986.) The journal Focus, published by the Office of Multicultural Affairs, refers to the play KIN, "... developed

by Sydney based Sidetrack Theatre, to combat racism and prejudice ... a series of interwoven stories that go behind daily school life to show ... the stresses and strains that immigrant families must cope with." (1988.)

In Tasmania the Zootango Theatre Co. offers action workshops in assertiveness and confidence building for women, "... incorporate drama games, roleplays and discussions which give the participants the opportunity to talk about issues which affect them, and to find positive and constructive ways to deal with them." (nd.) Tjerandsen describes the Hyde Park - Kenwood Community Conference. "... A series of socio-dramas, arranged by professor Herbert Thelen, director of the Human Dynamics Laboratory of the University of Chicago, explored various aspects of the problem in the community." (1980,353.)

Eastman reviews the play, Stinking Houses, presented by Back to Back Theatre from Victoria. The play was part devised and presented by intellectually disabled people. It tells the story of a brother and sister separated and placed in different institutions. "... a passionate plea for the closing of outdated, insensitive institutions and is based to a large extent on recent events involving the Caloola Centre in Victoria." (1989,6.)

Issues, the Laboratory Angle.

I have cited many sources in previous chapters who have mentioned the value of looking at relevant issues in

political education. What do we mean by issues?

Stradling and Porter define issues as disagreements over goals, values, methods or results. A political issue creates conflict with a group which results in political activity:

- * Disputes over the allocation of resources, or other values.
- * When disputing members demand a common decision, binding on the whole group.
- * When the common decision has to be taken for the group to continue.

(1976,2.)

Wright refers to issues: "Research indicates that the educational impact of the mass media is most effective when it deals with issues which people have already identified as relevant and important. This means we should think more about 'issues' and less about 'courses' ..." (1980,9.)

Johnson and Hinton sum up the need for issue based education.

It is less easy for institutions to respond quickly in providing sophisticated and reasonably dispassionate public debate on major topical issues. In the last year or so the debate on Asian immigration, fees for tertiary education, the quality and structure of secondary education, youth income support and employment, environmental questions and taxation reform have all been conducted at a disappointingly low public intellectual level. All these issues have involved academics of the highest ability as protagonists, but the discussion has been almost entirely in the newspapers and on talk-back radio or TV interviews with a maximum of confrontation and emotion. If the institutions of higher education are not to arrange courses and forums for such issues to be considered at length and in depth, with some calmness while they are

still topical, nobody else is likely to do so and society is the poorer as the field is left to partisan and single-issue organisations. (1986,19.)

Whilst many sources believe that issues are a good way to deliver adult political education, some warn against their use. For example, Shipway found that Tasmanian adult education officers were divided about the value of issues debates. Some felt they would be divisive, catering to opposing groups. Clearly issues have to be selected carefully, with the group's needs and eventual outcomes to be considered (1987,69.)

Stradling points out some potential constraints. These are:

1. Teacher.

- lack of knowledge.
- perceptions of acceptable subjects.

2. School constraints.

- structure, eg time-tabling.
- Students' beliefs and prejudices.

3. External constraints.

- Fear of disapproval by parents, governors, local education committees or influential local interests.

(1984,124.)

At first sight these constraints may not appear relevant to adult education. This is not the case. Substitute 'tutor' for 'teacher' and 'centre' for 'school'. I will mention my experience with external constraints when I consider

controversial issues.

As mentioned previously, organisers need to select appropriate issues. Aulich refers to Atkins. Atkins had organised a group of grade 10 students at a Tasmanian high school. The selected issue was the non availability of a CES office in the town, some 40 Kilometres from Hobart. Students wrote to the CES and politicians. Their lack of success reinforced students' antipathy towards the politicians (1989,52.)

Because the description of the case was so full I was able to identify the school as being in my local town. I had served for almost ten years on the local council. I was therefore familiar with previous attempts to obtain a CES there. I therefore 'phoned Mr Atkins and discussed the matter with him. It turned out that he had had relatively little to do with the matter. One of the students had suggested the issue and he had told them they could tackle it.

The point I want to make is that this issue was not properly researched before permitting the students to engage it. A single 'phone call to the Council Clerk would have revealed that a similar attempt by Council had failed. There would be far more suitable issues for grade ten students to tackle in a small town. These should preferably involve the Council, so participants can gain valuable experience dealing with councillors and staff. Suitable issues for secondary students to pursue would include provision of bike paths, skateboard

rinks and alcohol free entertainment.

This is not to suggest that students are not interested in other issues - but local issues are dealt with by local decision makers. They are, therefore, more accessible. The final decision about the location of CES offices is almost certainly made by a Canberra based bureaucrat. He or she is going to be difficult for Tasmanian secondary students - or adults - to lobby.

Controversial Issues.

Gibbons and West briefly describe an exhibition, 'Disarmament and Development', mounted at an English adult education centre. This was a contribution to the Greater London Council's Peace Year. The centre also ran a concurrent course, 'Rich World, Poor World'. This examined inter-relationships between world poverty, politics, economics and the military. The public response was hostile. The authors conclude:

1. Adult education students object to being confronted with controversial issues.
2. Controversial issues need to be discussed in groups which know each other.
3. Institutes need to plug into their local communities and help to build up community networks.

(1984,148.)

By definition all issues must have an element of controversy. But some generate so much heat that they need particular care. Stradling, Noctor and Baines define controversial issues as: "...those problems and disputes which divide society and for which significant groups within society offer conflicting explanations and solutions based on alternative values." (1984,2.) Wright recognises that: "Political education will always be controversial and perhaps especially so in an adult educational context in which adult citizens confront real issues ... this does raise very real problems of bias, balance and approach ..." (1980,6.)

The Politics Association defines bias and prejudice:

Bias is a tendency to behave as if certain views are right while other views are wrong, when a more objective view would recognise less certainty in the judgement (nd.)

Prejudice is an unwillingness to take the more objective view - unwillingness to concede any merit to views differing from one's own.

An issue may be controversial in a particular place and / or time, but not at another. For example, conscription for the Vietnam war was a very controversial issue in Australia in 1971, but not in the U.K. in 1970 or in Australia in 1989.

Issues come and go. Some lie dormant to emerge if prodded

into life by some action. For example the recent Supreme Court decision in the U.S.A. saw abortion return to the agenda. In Australia gun control legislation leapt to the national attention when a series of mass murders was committed in Victoria and the Northern Territory. Sale of fireworks is an annual issue that raises its head in Tasmania. It tends to generate a lot of heat!

I would like to be able to say that adult educators should be able to regard no issue as taboo. Earlier in this chapter I referred to Stradling who listed potential restraints, including external ones (1984,124.) My own recent experience supports his comments. Late in 1988, when the state of the Derwent River was just beginning to become an issue, I planned an independent study group to be launched in March, when the Adult education term started. About fourteen people attended the preliminary meeting. This meeting decided that the most appropriate response was to organise a Derwent River Seminar. This was planned for August 1989. As a result of the publicity, I was asked to provide information for a reply to a 'Ministerial' about the seminar. The seminar subsequently proceeded without further comment.

I consider another recent experience to be more serious. Aware that a state election was due in Tasmania within a few months (early 1989) I prepared a proposal for a series of lunchtime election forums to be held in the Hobart city centre. The idea was that an appropriate Minister, and the Opposition spokesperson, would be invited to speak for about

ten minutes on the issues in their portfolio. The floor would then be thrown open to the public for questions. My submission was duly forwarded through the Education Department hierarchy, for consideration by the Minister. Sadly, the Director-General of the day refused to place the submission before the Minister for Education. The comment was that there were more appropriate bodies than Adult Education to conduct such activities! I am still awaiting an answer to my question, "Which?"

Clyne cites the U.K. Russell Report (1973): "... However, society needs an educational forum in which controversial issues can be studied, and we believe adult education should be free to explore such areas completely..." (1983,34.)

How do we deal with issues? Options include direct involvement (manning the barricades), debate and case studies. The Trainer Training Service seminars advise that case studies have the following benefits:

- * Promote consideration, analysis and discussion of significant factors in a situation.
- * Develop judgement, decision making and problem solving abilities.
- * Deduce principles of management and leadership.
- * Build human relations skills.
- * Provide a vehicle for trainees to consider the application to their own real-life situations of points (1) and (4) above.

(1980.)

Stradling and Porter suggest some questions to ask when analysing an issue:

1. In what forms is the dispute expressed?
2. What are the sources of the dispute?
3. What is the nature of the issue?
4. Who are involved in the dispute, and what are their positions?
5. What opportunities are open for them to influence the outcome of the dispute?
6. What methods of influence do they or can they use?

(1976,15.)

Issues may, of course, be used in combination with other methods. For example, as I write the closure of a number of Tasmanian schools has been foreshadowed. Parents and students are actively involved in writing to the papers and to politicians. Some are planning deputations to the Minister. They would benefit from roleplaying the situation as a part of their preparation.

Safman and Crocker considered that drill and practice was an important method in the adult education curriculum (1984,20.) Personally, I would not usually employ this method as it seems to have little application in political education. It is more appropriate in manual skills areas.

Films and Videos.

Films and videotapes certainly have a role in the curriculum, although they should not be used simply to fill in time. Excerpts from news and current programmes may be videotaped and used as discussion starters when dealing with issues. Strictly speaking this probably breaches copyright regulations. However, I doubt whether broadcasters would act against people using recordings in this way. (The real problem is when people sell illegal recordings, or charge admission to view them.)

Lectures.

Lectures have a limited role in political education. Given that the average person's maximum concentration span is said to be 20 minutes, lecturettes of about 15 minutes are more appropriate. These may be used to introduce issues, explain roleplays or introduce a new skill, such as how to write a news release. Lectures are acceptable for providing facts and figures, but the temptation to provide an overload of information must be avoided. The bare facts should be provided as handouts, as well.

Summary.

Delivery methods need to involve participants, give them 'hands on' experience and provide relevant skills for

immediate use.

If they are not able to participate, then simulations, drama, roleplay, case studies and issue analysis are suitable alternatives. The aim of this chapter has been to point out the benefits of the methods covered, rather than provide a broad coverage of all the possibilities.

Chapter Seven.

Community Information - Access, Needs and Delivery.

It has been pointed out that adults needed knowledge, skills and resources in order to influence the decisions which affect their lives (chapter one.) This chapter considers the provision of the information to members of the community: why they need it, how they obtain it, existing programmes and some suggestions for improving community access to relevant information.

What is community information? Young defines community information as: "Information that is necessary for individuals and groups to recognise the availability of resources in the community and to use them effectively." Clearly this reference to individuals and groups includes those involved in political action, given the wide definition of politics used in this paper (1988,1.)

Why people Need Information.

Why do we need information? A number of sources stress the need for information to enable people to be effective. Upsall and Bailey describe the open door policy of the Bradford City Council. Public access to information is clearly fundamental. There can be no involvement in the workings of local statutory bodies without public access to information. The meaningful exercise of rights depends considerably upon adequate information being available (nd.) Wright considers:

The imbalance in information resources between such people [people in pressure groups, community groups, voluntary organisations, political parties and elected bodies] and the professional bureaucracies with which they have to deal is considerable and should be redressed as much as possible. (1980,10.)

Harty outlines Ralph Nader's background and actions and refers to his concept of 'Concentrated Intelligence'. Get angry about a problem and go out and get the information. "With the anger to motivate you and the information as your tool, you can change things and solve problems." (Harty, 1982,14.) Clyne recognises that provision of information can lead to demand to be able to use such information - eg. by resident and tenant groups (1983,34.) Beauchamp relates the experience of the Rupert public interest group in 1976:

... in having ... prised open the doors of Federal Government and let the vital blood of democracy - information - spill out on the streets for all to behold, to piddle about in and so on - we then found that as ordinary citizens took this information into their starved civic minds, they wanted to do things about the issues it addressed ... (1986,66.)

Gilson, a CAB worker, addressed a seminar in Hobart for community information providers:

... although there is this big mountain, or bank of information provided for everyone to use we know that there are so many people unaware of information sources, don't think of them as being available for their use, perhaps are wary of using them, many who lack the necessary skills to use information when they are given it, or cannot understand it anyway, don't like to admit that they don't understand it and are too shy or self conscious to ask for further help or information. (1988,9.)

How People Obtain Information.

How do people obtain their information? Simple, they use a library, read it in books and journals or ask an appropriate agency. Wrong! That may be true for the professional classes, but many Australians (not only migrants or those without basic literacy skills) are unable or unwilling to use professional information sources. Rothstein refers to the 'Knowledge gap' hypothesis. This states that people from higher socio-economic groups tend to acquire information faster than those in lower groups, therefore the gap increases. He suggests the following reasons:

- * Differing communication skills.
- * Difference in existing knowledge from prior exposure.
- * Different amount of social contact relevant to the topic.
- * Different exposure to and retention of information.
- * Middle class orientation of print media.
- * Differences in access to new communications technology.
- * Different motivation.

(1978,8.)

Young suggests, "There would always be a large number of people in the community who don't have good networks, don't know what their information needs are or how to assess particular information bases, programs or processes."

(1988,1.)

How People Obtain Information.

The National Consumer Council in the U.K. investigated the

bureaucracy. They found that 20% of those seeking advice did not get the advice needed, whilst between 5% and 11% found the advice unhelpful. Professional and managerial families were the most likely to seek advice AND most likely to get it. The unskilled and those on the lowest incomes were the most likely to need information, BUT failed to get it. Up to half the survey respondents did not know of local sources of advice (1981,22.)

Young refers to McCaughey and Faber ("mid 70s") in Victoria. "... people generally turn to family, friends or known professionals for information ... this network is vanishing for many people ... complexity of information is growing rapidly." (1988,2.)

Rawlinson surveyed 15 - 24 year olds in the Sydney Metropolitan area. They placed considerable importance on friends and parents as sources of information. Their information needs were:

- * Choosing a job or career.
- * Finding out how the government works.
- * Starting a business.

Eighty percent were able to correctly identify sources for finding a job. Only 11% felt the government was successful in communicating with young people. Their methods of contact with government agencies were:

- * In person ... 57%
- * Telephone ... 8%
- * Mail 4%
- * Combined 31%

Communication channels used by Sydney youth were:

1. Television 71%
2. Government offices 67%
3. Leaflets 62%
4. Community centres 60%
5. Unemployment schemes .. 53%
6. Newspapers / magazines. 53%
7. Posters 52%
8. Radio 50%
9. TAFE information 36%
10. Schools or colleges ... 36%
11. Information offices ... 35%
12. Bumper stickers 9%
13. Annual reports 6%

(1985,3.)

W.D. Scott and Co. surveyed the information needs of migrants in Australia. They found that the major information channels were, in order of assessed helpfulness, 'other officials', 'government agencies' and 'close people'. Face to face contact was the most effective approach in all cases. 'Close people' tend to provide inaccurate information and have a low awareness of other sources. This reduces the effectiveness of 'close people' as a source of information (1980.)

Newly arrived migrants in Hobart preferred to receive information from people (79%) as opposed to leaflets and other non personal, passive sources; such as 'phone

directories or newspapers (19%). Of the 79% who preferred to obtain their information from people, 45% preferred formal (government?) sources and 34% preferred informal sources, such as families and friends. (Eldridge, Lee and MacKay, 1986,19)

A common response to the need to provide information to the community is to print a range of brochures and place them in display racks. Tjerandsen reports that the Citizens' Information Service of Metropolitan Chicago decided that information racks containing leaflets were ineffective (1980,452.) My own experience supports this view. In 1986 I built an information rack at the then South Hobart Adult Education Centre. The aim was to provide information from a range of agencies for members of the South Hobart community. The first people to visit the display was a team from the University of Tasmania. They were surveying community information resources! Since the racks were installed, relatively few leaflets have been taken. Such racks appear to have limited uses.

What Do People Need to Know ?

Hodgkinson investigated advice-giving through local radio. Sixty seven percent of the requests were classified as general, with almost any area covered. Of the remaining 33%; 31% were related to health or medical issues, 26% were on consumer issues and 21% were on legal matters. The remaining 22% were on a variety of issues, including education,

employment, housing, personal issues and welfare rights
(1982,7.)

The Hobart Mercury reported that the Women's Information Service received 1 000 inquiries a year from women about divorce, property settlement and child custody. The seminar for community information givers held in Hobart (1988) concluded that, "Legal Information is a crucial issue [and that] the form of dissemination is crucial ..." (29 November 1988.)

The W.D. Scott & Co. survey categorised the needs of migrants as follows:

- . Health - 63% how to get help, 27% health funds.
 - . Finance - 23% loan sources, 22% income improvement.
 - . Employment - 62% how to obtain, 10% job training.
 - . Everyday matters - 18% where to get cheap food and clothing, 10% where to find suitable tradesmen.
 - . Immigration - how to bring family and friends to Australia.
- (1980,18.)

Information Provision.

How do we provide information to the people who need it? We have already seen that many people, particularly migrants, do not get their information by reading. They get their information from family and friends. Other sections of the

community obtain their information through the media, particularly television. Information needs are fairly diverse. They include health, law, finance, employment, education, consumer issues, housing and welfare rights.

The need is to provide reliable information to the various groups so they they may understand and USE it when they need it. I do not exclude written material but it should be in simple English. The gatekeepers and the advocates should be able to explain it to the non fluent readers.

The activists, including gate-keepers and advocates, will have different needs from the apolitical. They will need to be able to obtain a lot of information quickly.

Some of the options for information dissemination are:

1. Drop in centres.

These include the Women's Information Centre and community legal services. These are staffed by paid and/or voluntary advisers. They provide information on a face to face basis and are able to refer citizens to other agencies. The disadvantage is that their effectiveness diminishes with distance from the centre.

2. Leaflets and posters.

These can be produced relatively cheaply and distributed through existing networks. However, many of the networks are middle class oriented, such as libraries or adult education centres. They must be written in simple English and well laid

out. These materials could be made available through the 'close people' and intermediaries in the community. Examples of such intermediaries include nurses, doctors, priests, welfare workers, meals on wheels workers and migrant English tutors.

3. Community information networks.

The City of Glenorchy operates a telephone information service. This is based upon a computerised database which contains information from the State Library and the Department of Sport and Recreation. There is also a published 86 page directory. This directory has a comprehensive contents listing and index (1988.)

Jones describes the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thame's "Kingtel" viewdata database. There is full public open access on local authority material, local organisations, health authority information (doctors, dentists, opticians, clinics, etc.) what's on file and election results, etc. (1985.)

4. Radio advisory services.

Hodgkinson looks at the provision of advice on local radio in the U.K. He identified eight types of advice program:

- * General 'phone-in programmes.
- * Specialist 'phone-in programs, eg. medical.
- * Mutual aid programs. Listeners give advice.

- * Simple information slots, no listener 'phone in.
- * Information slots with temporary off air support.
- * On air slots linked to permanent off air support.
- * Direct integration between radio station and advice-giving agency.
- * Other methods - for example the Radio Clyde Mobile Information unit for the Scottish Association of Citizen Advice Bureaux.

Hodgkinson questions the effectiveness of advice offered through radio. He states:

- * The listener may mishear.
- * Listeners may misinterpret.
- * Some advice is given on a matter of conflict, such as legal or consumer matters. The advising agency has only the listener's side of the story, so the advice may be inaccurate.
- * Listeners may apply advice given to one person to their own, different, problem.

Hodgkinson concludes:

Advice programmes are effective at providing simple information, raising issues of general interest and publicising the work of the advice agency involved, but ineffective at providing detailed individual advice - unless linked to additional off air support. (1982,32.)

5. Alternative literature.

The Hobart Mercury covered the launch of Streetwise Comics.

These are sponsored by the Youth Affairs Council, DCW, the

Law Foundation and other community groups. The article quotes Peter Keil, the co-ordinator, as saying; "... the language most information comes in is irrelevant for youth and very boring ." (1988,7.)

Gibson refers to two case histories of community involvement to introduce The Neighbourhood Fact Bank, Action Packs and case history folders. These packs are simple sets of boxed cards providing information on a variety of community resources.

These fact banks are printed on thin cards, about 10cm. X 15cm. Each card contains related facts or advice. Cards are grouped into categories and colour coded for easy location. They are housed in small plastic wallets or cardboard boxes.

6. Group discussions and seminars.

Edgar outlines two examples from the Health Department of Victoria. Finding a Voice was a "... series of group discussion programs aimed at improving participants' knowledge about health care and the health system." Heath Wiz is an information service which will provide descriptive information about health services and statistical information relating to health matters (1987,98.)

Waters refers to seminars arranged on Freedom of Information legislation:

The first large seminar ... attended by several hundred people, including both potential FOI users and

bureaucrats. ... over the intervening years, PIAC staff have given many talks to a wide range of groups who could use FOI, including welfare workers, public administrators, anti-nuclear groups, conservationists and law students ... (1987,18.)

The Hobart Mercury referred to a round table family law seminar organised by the Womens' Information Centre. Speakers were from the Legal Aid Service, private legal practice, Family Law Court counselling and a child support agency. (29 November 1988.)

However good, community seminars can only really reach the activists and power holders. Many of those who need the information will not even be aware of the seminars. Their main value is giving the information to the gatekeepers and advocates.

7. Libraries and resource centres.

Specialised libraries, information and resource centres have been used by a wide range of groups. Whitelock refers to the Army Education Service libraries. He identifies seven different types:

- * Standard reference libraries. These consisted of 37 collections of 2 000 volumes, located in large hospitals, major HQs, etc.
- * A central reference library in Melbourne, 6000 volumes.
- * Special pocket library boxes of 70 paperbacks, mainly Penguins. (300 copies of each Penguin published were

purchased.)

- * Special fiction libraries.

- * Field reference libraries. 120 volumes in each, to every Army Education Officer in the Field.

- * Drama, art and record libraries.

(1974,235.)

Marson outlines a proposal for a labour media resource centre. This would have three functions:

- * Record all relevant articles, publications, video and audio programs.

- * Prepare articles for the media on ALP related topics.

- * Train union and ALP staff in radio and TV production for the community stations (nd.11.)

Lovett, Clarke and Kilmurray describe what they refer to as a modest research and information centre in Belfast. It provides:

- * A small library, open to the public.

- * Evening classes in local social research.

- * Specific research projects.

They considered restraints were the location in an academic institution (Magee College), lack of funding for library books and lack of contacts with outside resource people (1983,98.)

Paulston and Altenbaugh refer to community information centres opened by the Black Panthers, "... primarily as a base in the community for people to identify with, work in and claim as their own." (1988,130.)

An innovative type of library / information centre for farmers is described by Kassay. He describes what he calls a, "user friendly self-service information centre" for the farming community at Nambour. A "Browser-friendly arrangement of resources, aimed at making the information accessible to users with a wide range of backgrounds and farming experience." (1989,179.)

The organisers assumed that many people using the centre would have very little experience of using libraries or solving their own information needs. The system was designed for non catalogue use. Instead, classification systems were developed to permit:

- * Ease of use and access by the public.
- * The lay enquirer to be able to find information unaided, with a minimum of effort.
- * No catalogue or index.
- * Direction by signs.

Leaflets on similar topics were grouped in loose leaf binders, allowing addition and removal of material. There were two classifications:

- a. Crop based, eg. strawberries.

b. Specific activities, eg. irrigation.

The centre was opened in 1988. It has information on 146 different crops. There are 10 000 leaflets, 200 text books, 23 journals and 30 videos. A VCR and monitor are provided to enable visitors to view the videos.

This is clearly a very user friendly set up, which could be adapted to community use, particularly for gatekeepers and advocates. Two sections could include information on 'issues' and 'skills', respectively.

Conclusion.

Many people are not as happy with printed material as the professional and managerial classes. The illiterate, migrants and poor are disadvantaged by the reliance of government agencies upon printed materials.

If printed material is used, it needs to be expressed in simple English. Alternatives include Streetwise Comics, designed particularly for the unemployed and / or homeless youth.

Many people rely upon family or friends for information. One solution could be to make sure regular visitors, such as doctors, nurses, priests or meals on wheels workers have relevant information.

Simple, special purpose, information resource centres may be practical for some people who would not use a regular library with catalogues on cards, computers or microfiche.

Chapter Eight.

Conclusions and Recommendations.

What is Political Education?

After surveying a range of definitions I concluded that adult political education should give people the ability to influence the decisions which affect their lives. An excellent current example (November 1989) is the recently foreshadowed decision by the Tasmanian government to close 25 schools. This has resulted in a wave of protest from concerned communities.

Political education should provide the Knowledge, skills and resources to enable people to participate effectively in a society where there are conflicting views and competition for scarce resources.

We must, however, also be able to recognise that there are responsibilities as well as rights. These include accepting that people carry a considerable amount of 'personal baggage' acquired during their life. This baggage colours their attitudes and view of the world. They are entitled to have these attitudes and views respected.

Politics is not confined to the various levels of government. Politics is pervasive and ubiquitous. Wherever groups of human beings congregate, politics will intrude into the

workplace, unions, churches, schools, clubs and societies.

History of Adult Political Education.

The history of political education is sporadic and not particularly successful. In the early stages the powerholders openly opposed political education, as they recognised that their dominance would be threatened. Subsequently they adopted the attitude of, "If you can't beat them, join them." This resulted in the Mechanics' Institute movement being hijacked by the middle classes, which ensured that any move towards political literacy were strangled at birth.

Even when some determined efforts were made to provide political education, as at Ruskin College or through the W.E.A., the students themselves failed to take advantage of the opportunity and in-fighting between union sponsors virtually torpedoed the efforts. The Army Education Service, in both Australia and the U.K., seems to have played a key role in post war political awareness, such as it is.

Community Attitudes Towards Politics.

The evidence, both anecdotal and quantitative research, seems to support the view that the vast majority of citizens are not interested in politics at any level. A number of reasons have been suggested. These include the fact that people are just too busy earning a living and raising families to become involved in politics, unless they are directly affected. The

example of threatened school closures, cited above, has certainly motivated a number of people to attend meetings and write letters to the newspapers!

Other reasons cited for this lack of political interest include the complexity of government, lack of encouragement from decision-makers, discouragement due to previous lack of success and lack of resources for the poor - including typewriters, photocopiers, computers and video equipment, etc.

Rationale for Political Education.

Those who support the concept of political education cite the need to empower the disadvantaged. People who oppose political education claim that it will only increase the effectiveness of the more articulate and better educated. It is seen as either a capitalist plot to bolster its own power, or a left wing plot to destroy the capitalist system.

Amongst the supporters of political education, there are differences over the means and ends. The liberal adult educators consider that the knowledge and skills should be made available, but that citizens should not be actively encouraged and supported to pursue particular issues. The radical adult educators, exemplified by the late Saul Alinsky, insist that we should actively encourage and help citizens to become involved in issues.

What Skills, Knowledge, Attitudes and Resources do Citizens Need?

The skills required by citizens depend upon their level of involvement. The apathetic and uninvolved are difficult to help. Instead, all we can practically do is provide a safety net so that they know where to seek help when it is needed. This is best achieved by ensuring that the gatekeepers and the advocates have the skills to help and lead the apathetic. I was involved in the recent effort to ensure that Ogilvie High School was not closed or amalgamated. Over 400 people attended the special parents and friends' meeting called to decide upon action, but most of the work was done at a smaller planning meeting attended by about 15 people the week before. The members of this planning group knew who made the decisions, where to obtain information and how to apply pressure in the appropriate places!

Activists need a broad range of skills in order to be effective. These include obtaining and assessing information, communication, media liaison, decision-making, administration and non violent action.

How Do We Provide the Knowledge and Skills?

Expert opinion is divided over adult learning methods. Malcolm Knowles and his disciples contend that there is a difference between adult and children's learning styles. Their opponents state that there is no such difference. My

own observations, as a parent of five children, indicate that there are possibly more differences between individuals in either group. What can be stated about adults, however, is that they are not a captive audience. They are free to walk away from adult education if they do not like what they are given. Adults also have a wide range of abilities, backgrounds and individual experience which they bring to their learning.

Any programme of political education must be appropriate for the participants and flexible. It is generally accepted that the most effective learning happens when the participants are actively involved, rather than passive receivers of lectures. If practical, on the job, experience is not available roleplay and simulation are suitable alternatives - particularly if they are used in conjunction with actual issues.

Information Provision?

One of the critical questions facing political educators is how people obtain information and how to provide it. The people who most need information are the disadvantaged. These are frequently the poor, illiterate and migrants. Rather than read the plethora of brochures and leaflets provided by a variety of agencies, they tend to turn to friends and relatives for advice. These people often do not have the answers. I consider that the best way to tackle the problem is to ensure that any printed material should be acceptable

to the proposed audience - like Streetwise Comics. The other method is to ensure that the gatekeepers and advocates who deal with the non reading groups have access to this information.

Some Possible Curricula.

My investigations show that relatively few people are sufficiently interested in politics, even in the broad arena described, to attend courses or workshops.

Our clients come from a range of backgrounds and have different needs. It is not possible to organise a range of courses and consider that political education has been provided. Not only do our clients have different needs, but an individual may have a variety of needs at different times. We need to provide a range of ongoing provision which people can select from to suit their particular needs at a particular time.

The main thrust must be to ensure that a core of gatekeepers and advocates - the activists - have access to the information, skills and resources when they need them. Political education does not have a finite starting and stopping point. It must be like an escalator. People must be able to hop on and off at will, as often as they need.

I therefore suggest that the following options be considered when organising a range of political education for adults:

1. Single Concept Leaflets.

Experience shows that people often do not ask for information until they have an urgent need. One recent example is a person who was given the job of taking minutes for a series of monthly meetings. She had no idea where to start. There is a need for a range of simple leaflets outlining the basic skills. These would be made widely available to gatekeepers and advocates, who would in turn use them to help people acquire the skills and information.

Topics covered should include:

a. Meeting procedures.

These would cover:

Chairing a meeting, how to propose motions, duties of a secretary, duties of a treasurer and facilitated meetings.

b. Media skills.

These would cover writing a letter to the editor, preparing a news release, writing community service announcements, being interviewed on radio and television and how to organise news conferences. Other media skills to be covered include using a camera, using a tape recorder and using a video camera.

c. Lobbying.

Titles in this area would cover preparing petitions, organising deputations, writing to members of parliament and preparing submissions.

Other titles needed will cover networking, using telephone trees and advertising.

These leaflets should be written in simple English and distributed widely to gatekeepers and advocates. They will be encouraged to copy the material for other people. One possibility is to provide good quality 'originals' to State Library regional headquarters, so that groups from branch libraries in each region can obtain copies quickly and cheaply.

2. A Series of Articles on Relevant Topics.

Last year the Ansett in flight magazine, 'Panorama', published an article on how to participate in a meeting from the floor. At least one teacher from Hobart Technical College copied the article for her class and a member of the 'Friends of the Museum' gave copies to other members, as she felt their meeting procedure could be improved. The editor of 'Practising Administrator' requested permission to use the article. An ALP Education Officer wanted to use the article for his ALP activities and also with a community radio association and a CYSS project.

A series of articles on the various skills covered by the single concept leaflets above could be used by a range of people.

3. A Series of Citizen Action Workshops.

These may be offered in a variety of formats. They may be conducted as normal Adult Education courses, where people attend for, say, two hours per week for ten weeks.

Alternatives include weekend workshops and 'in house' sessions for particular groups.

The aim is to help individuals and groups to plan, conduct and evaluate their own projects. Instead of giving a series of lectures, participants will be divided into groups of four or five to work on their own issues or problems. This way the workshops will be of direct relevance to the participants. They will discover a range of processes and skills they can use in any situation.

The tutor will be a facilitator, guide and resource person; rather than dispenser of knowledge. One of the benefits of offering these workshops to all comers is that there will be a range of issues to work on. This will provide wider experience than 'in house' sessions for a single group.

4. Workshops on Citizen Advocacy.

The purpose would be to provide people who recognise that they have an advocacy role within the community with information regarding sources of information and help. The concept provides for experts to speak on a range of topics, including the Department of Social Security appeal system,

the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, Freedom of Information, The Ombudsman's role, Community Advice Bureaux, needs of the intellectually handicapped.

5. Special Purpose Workshops.

Adult education already provides a range of specialist workshops in Tasmania. These include Public Speaking, Dealing With the Media, Meeting Procedure, Dealing With Your Council and Win an Election. These should be continued as needed and further options offered.

6. A Community Lobby Kit.

Many groups are formed to deal with a particular issue. Members may not have the skills to be effective and they may waste valuable time reinventing the wheel. There is a need for a workbook to help groups to organise their campaigns.

The workbook should start with a series of questions, to ensure the groups have obtained the information they need. Subsequent sections should help groups to select the most appropriate methods to achieve their aims.

7. A political Education Resource Directory.

A survey of relevant books, journals, films, videos, audio cassettes, organisations and government departments. The directory will have two sections. The first section would

cover the basic skills, such as meeting procedures, media liaison, information, lobby methods, etc. The second section will be subdivided into issues. These include consumer, legal services, tenancy, environment, etc.

8. A Community Action and Resource Centre.

This centre would provide the information, skills and resources required by individuals and groups to participate effectively in the community decision-making process.

The centre would provide a variety of facilities, including a library and information centre, meeting and training rooms, photographic darkroom, videotaping equipment and simple print production facilities for brochures and reports, etc.

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