Reviews Section

CHE GUEVARA, PAULO FREIRE, AND THE PEDAGOGY OF REVOLUTION, edited by Peter McLaren. Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, MD, 2000, 220 pp, $22.95 pb, ISBN 0 8476 9533 6.
Also available from: 12 Hid's Copse Road, Cumnor Hill, Oxford OX2 9JJ.

Of all his extensive repertoire, Peter McLaren has excelled himself, producing a work that weaves, in powerful prose accentuated by vivid use of metaphor, the biographies of two outstanding revolutionaries into an incisive, analytic discourse of transformative action against poverty and injustice. This is a work of profound insight that marks a turning point in the literature of critical pedagogy.

The socio-economic context has reformulated under global capitalism. The prosperity/poverty divide has assumed an increasingly multi-dimensional form of exploitation which permeates the local and global in complex ways, feeding the greed of the powerful and prosperous at the expense of the need of the growing ranks of the poor and marginalized. The free market has elevated the economy above the rest of life, giving the illusion that its ebbs and flows are inevitable and, thus, free from any moral accountability. The age of commodification has targeted anything capable of being packaged, sold and consumed. Education has fallen prey to the vagaries of the market in just this way, and now schools, colleges and universities find themselves in competition to sell that form of education which has been repackaged in technicist wrapping, sold as training, and measured by skills and competence. Those of us who would describe ourselves as educators in any sense of the word should be concerned about the role that we play in this process; at no time has there been a greater divide between education and social practice. Peter McLaren's challenge to those of us who would wish to consider ourselves critical pedagogues is that critical pedagogy has ensnared itself within dominant pedagogical practices, abandoning its struggle and contenting itself with a dialogical engagement within the existing structures, rather than against them.

Peter McLaren throws down the gauntlet to those who promote modish social theories that fail to engage with human suffering. He also reminds us of the cost of the liberal importing of disjointed Freirean concepts which sound good, but which, disembodied from the whole, merely give the illusion of addressing capitalist social relations. At the same time, he names the cynicism that has lapped as a tide of despond amongst progressive educators, creating hopelessness out of hope.

His approach to this book exemplifies his commitment to praxis. By exploring the biographies of these two renowned revolutionaries, he

threads lived experience as the warp, and political analysis as the weft, into a cloth of undeniable insight and inspiration.

In our attempts to understand social reality, Peter McLaren suggests that we fall foul of a false dichotomy if we set class relations against cultural insights. 'Individuals and groups live class relations through difference (that is through raced and gendered experiences), and live difference through class relations'. He advocates a re-reading of Marx with the insights of identity politics if we are to attain any coherent theoretical challenge to the reformulation of capitalism in its global phase.

Through a process of agency, encounter and conflict, revolutionary pedagogy creates a narrative space in the everyday. Knowledge is transformed through an epistemological critique, which not only examines the content of knowledge, but also its mode of production. This process is only possible when we live critical practice at the level of the everyday. Critical educators and students, community activists and the people, come together in dialogical relationship in the process of collective action for social change; a living praxis.

Peter McLaren's revolutionary pedagogy presents an ontological and epistemological challenge that strikes at the very heart of our understanding of the world and the way we engage with it. The process he identifies is one of radical educational praxis; 'dialectical comprehension of reality and a dialogical unity with the people'. He warns of the dangers of reformism as a partial or obtuse response to social injustice when it leaves the very structures of society which perpetuate human suffering intact. As educators, we are located at the heart of the struggle, and cannot fail to seriously reflect on our responsibility in the light of this challenge. As the role of education in the sustenance of global capitalism is denounced, so it has the potential as a key site in the creation of a new society liberated from social injustice. However, we cannot transform by understanding alone: the knowing meets the action through new revolutionary movements that have the collective power to challenge and transform the ideological foundations of society.

For me, by juxtaposing the biographies of a renowned 'ethical-pedagogical' revolutionary and a 'political-epistemological' revolutionary, Peter McLaren skilfully locates the profoundly political aspects of everyday encounters. Together with penetrating insights into the nature of global capitalism, he formulates an unselfconscious pedagogy of critical love as the embodiment of a reciprocal mutual struggle for the emancipation of all humanity.

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POVERTY FIRST HAND: POOR PEOPLE SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES, by Peter Beresford, David Green, Ruth Lister and Kirsty Woodard. Child Poverty Action Group, London, 1999, 202 pp, £9.95, ISBN 0 946744 89 0.

If this book did nothing more than present its wide selection of quotes and views from those who are experiencing poverty themselves, it would be a useful and challenging read. The people who've contributed their stories, feelings and opinions on the publication provide a range of telling insights and comments. They draw on real life at the sharp end, as lone parents, disabled people, young offenders, and those struggling to make ends meet on benefits and low income. Areas covered in Poverty First Hand include 'stigma'; 'raising children'; 'relationships'; 'stress and anxiety'; and discussion group participants' reactions to sensationalist newspaper stories about 'the underclass'.

As the book emphasizes, such voices and views are heard too little in the course of policy debates. The poor are talked about. 'Their' problems are defined and addressed from privileged locations by bureaucrats and officials, some of whom can only see those whose lives they are concerned with as either 'bad' or 'sad'. Listening to the people who are the objects of policy is the least that needs to be done in developing initiatives to address their needs.

Beresford and his co-authors recognize this, but go further still, arguing that research processes should seek to involve people with experience of poverty as fully as possible, and that projects aimed at addressing the problems of poverty and social exclusion will be most effective and make most progress where they are shaped in ways which include peoples' first hand views.

Doing this is not as easy as it sounds. But the careful research which led to this book was certainly shaped by these values. The appendices which set out and discuss the methodology used should become starting points for further processes of participatory research and action planning which engage people who are actually living through the 'social problems' being looked at.

Evidence is provided that poor people are entirely capable of going beyond reporting their own personal experiences, and can offer well considered analyses and ideas on policy issues. The authors of Poverty First Hand take care to organize and discuss these proposals carefully, and there can be no suspicion that quotes have been selected to simply fit into a predetermined agenda. This is a book which communicates how the researchers themselves learned in the process of their work.

The authors also provide a useful context for the material from the group discussions by starting off with a chapter on 'conventional approaches to the analysis and politics of poverty'. This includes a summary of the established debates around poverty, in which poor people themselves are often

cast as objects of concern, contempt or hostility. The authors introduce their own work with an informative discussion of other attempts to involve people with experience of poverty in research and campaigning work.

Overall, this book is not only useful for a considerable amount of telling empirical information and reflection on what it is like to be poor in Britain at the turn of the millennium. It also provides inspiration and practical pointers for those who want to ensure that poor people have real opportunities to speak out about their situation, develop self-confidence and understanding, and contribute to the development of strategies and policies that can overcome the scandals of deprivation and social exclusion.

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THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT HANDBOOK – HOW PEOPLE CAN SHAPE THEIR CITIES, TOWNS AND VILLAGES IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, by N. Wates. Earthscan, London, 2000, 230 pp, £14.95, ISBN 1 85383 654.

Given that the notion of 'community' within the context of 'development' has been somewhat out of fashion in the later half of the twentieth century, it is curious to find a book with the above title. Given also the impressive list of 'advanced praise' for the book on the inside cover – fifteen citations, of which two are from India and Hong Kong – the reader is similarly favourably predisposed to the book before even opening a page. Fifty years ago in many parts of the world 'Community development' was a thriving subject matter and in many countries large government departments sought to promote the development of urban and rural communities and to build such supposed good qualities as 'self-reliance', 'resourcefulness', 'good citizenship' and so on. Community development became the means whereby emerging states built the infrastructures of their scattered populations and welded them into a 'nation'. It was also a political tool of 'containment' and of ensuring that the masses did not step out of line and destabilize the established order. Indeed community development became a very emotive term and some would argue that, as a strategy of planned social change, it has much to answer for in terms of the continued poverty of rural and urban 'communities' in so many parts of the world.

Hence my surprise at opening the book and exploring the contents. Essentially Wates's book is an A–Z of how to 'do' community development in resource rich countries in which we can make several assumptions about the population, its level of literary and familiarity with the terms and its ability to critically engage with Planning and other Community Development type departments of local and national government. In this respect the

book clearly deserves the advanced accolades. It is most professionally laid out with good use of a whole range of visual means of displaying issues and summarizing steps and procedures. It is a Handbook in the true sense of the term: logical, well organized and with issues presented in a step-by-step manner that is clearly understood. Would that all community development practice could be laid out in such a neat and non-controversial way. The Handbook makes extensive use of illustrations, although the majority are from what we might call the 'developed world' where presumably there is a greater chance of some order in statutory procedures.

The Handbook curiously opens with a section entitled 'Why get involved?' and deals somewhat superficially with several weighty concepts such as 'empowerment' and 'building community'. It is then divided into four main sections: General Principles, A–Z of Methods of CD, alternative Scenarios of CD and a series of Appendices concerning such issues as a Strategy Planner and an Action Planner. The General Principles are almost taken as given and mask some monumental challenges; for example, 'agree rules and boundaries', 'involve all sections of the community', and the use of 'professional enablers'. The principles are not discussed or analysed, merely stated as though they were universal truths. The Methods section is by far the largest of the Handbook and impressively details every conceivable tool or instrument that could be used to promote CD. It draws heavily from general instruments of group involvement and from the current fashion for Participatory Rural Appraisal. But for a busy CD worker running around her/his patch, it might be a godsend to be able to pull out the handbook and get an instant fix on the appropriate method. The Scenarios section refers to alternative settings for CD: housing, inner city regeneration and urban conservation although, given the general tone of the handbook, the 'shanty settlement upgrading' seems a bit out of place here.

The handbook is probably a planner's delight, but it might dismay the active CD worker. Furthermore we must take issue with the sub-title that suggests that it is a Handbook to show how people can shape their cities, towns and villages *in any part of the world*'. (my italics). Clearly some of us have missed the plot and never had a handbook to show us the way! The whole notion of 'community planning' in the handbook is that of externally driven planned social change and it has sanitized all references to the political dimension, 'community' as purely a geographical construct, community divides and the idea of planning within the context of survival strategies. The Handbook might be a useful tool within the context of statutory procedures and professional guidance and support. But in the completely unpredictable, resource-poor and divided contexts in which most of the world's poor seek to secure the livelihoods of their families, Handbooks are not much use, and there are no magical formulae. The book is a glossy and attractive resource on all that is predictable in CD: it has little to offer those for whom CD is a possible strategy to build a minimum of security in their

lives. Simply there are no universal prescriptions for CD and this Handbook is more relevant to the needs of the more fortunate.

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PRIVATE TROUBLES & PUBLIC ISSUES: A COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT APPROACH TO HEALTH, by Jane Jones. Community Learning Scotland, Edinburgh, 1999, 152 pp, £9.50, ISBN 0 947919 40 6.

The book is intended as a practical resource and is aimed at community activists, practitioners and policy makers. It is topical since community development approaches are currently central to the Government's strategy for tackling health inequalities.

The book follows the progress of a community health initiative in Scotland between 1984 and 1994. Chapter One begins with a whistle-stop tour of the development of community development approaches to health in Britain. The remainder of the chapter provides background information about the book's case study, the Pilton Health Project, including its shifting aims, objectives and process of development.

The next chapter then discusses the community development approach to needs assessment. The methodology employed within the Pilton Health Project is described, as are the differing definitions of health held by those community members who took part in the needs assessment exercise. Chapter Three looks in more detail at the aims of the case study and discusses the ways in which they set about achieving these aims. The way in which participation in one aspect of the project led individuals to become active in other areas of this and other community-based projects is also reported.

The issues of conflict and co-operation are discussed in Chapter Four. The barriers facing community health projects, particularly if regarded as challenging the power, authority and knowledge of health professionals, are discussed. Furthermore, the conflicting models of health employed by health professionals and communities are highlighted and the impediments to change arising from these competing models discussed. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the effectiveness and limitations of different forms of community action, drawing on the Pilton Project case studies as illustration.

The next chapter considers the problem of evaluating community health projects. The disparity between the indicators of success employed by many funders and by those involved in the development of such projects is highlighted. In particular, Jones emphasizes the need to include process measures as well as outcome measures in any attempt to determine success,

thereby ensuring that attempts to combat social exclusion and build capacity amongst individuals and communities are recognized as valuable outcomes.

Chapter Six considers the impact of power upon health. Theories of power are outlined with the main focus being on the way in which those with power attempt to circumvent attempts by those without to gain control. Following on from these discussions of power, the next chapter discusses Paulo Freire's community development approach to education. Numerous examples are given of how this approach was incorporated into the practice of the Pilton Health Project. The final chapter looks at what involvement in the Pilton Health Project meant for local people. A number of individuals tell their 'story' of participation and how it has benefited them.

The book is well laid out and includes relevant references at the end of each chapter. It is extremely accessible and suitable for those with no previous knowledge of community development approaches to health. Its practical focus makes the book of particular relevance for practitioners but of less interest to those seeking a theoretically grounded review of community development approaches to health. A more detailed account of the policy context within which the project was operating and a discussion of the opportunities and constraints this placed upon those involved in community development in health may have made the book of more interest to policy makers. Overall, a useful book for activists and practitioners as there are many lessons that can be learnt from examining the processes employed in Pilton.

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PLANNING WITH CHILDREN FOR BETTER COMMUNITIES, by Claire Freeman, Paul Henderson and Jane Kettle. Policy Press, Bristol, 1999, 155 pp, £15,99 pb, ISBN 1 86134 188 1.

This book had its genesis in a workshop in Manchester in 1996. At the time of that conference, it is likely that the notion of planning with children, that is, involving children intimately in the detail of planning – broadly interpreted – was likely to have been regarded as an interesting, challenging but rather marginal activity for welfare and planning professionals. True, some community development workers had undertaken projects with children but these again were on the margins of practice. The last four or five years have, however, seen a seachange and the fact of the workshop, leading eventually to this book, is a reflection of the mushrooming literature examining ways of involving children and young people in policy-making. This literature, as I discovered when reviewing it for a

forthcoming publication,[1] is both wide – geographically (I found interesting and challenging material from all over the world with the most effective work being done in contexts characterized by the deepest poverty such as Ecuador and Bangladesh) and in terms of policy contexts – and increasingly deep, in the sense that writers are beginning to develop a body of theory and methodology for others to draw on.

I suspect that the fact that this book took four years to produce may well reflect the growth of interest in this subject since it must have seemed difficult, during the period of its gestation, to keep up with the growing literature and examples of work in progress. This has worked somewhat to the disadvantage of the authors since it now sits alongside several books covering similar terrain and its impact has thus been somewhat diluted. However, and to their credit, the authors also chose to involve groups of children and young people in developing material for the book, through a process of group consultations; this enriches the book as the authentic voice of children is heard.

The structure of the book is, for those familiar with the literature in this field, fairly familiar. The introduction sets the scene, explaining how the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child provided a strong impetus for work in this field (although it has led to some contradictory messages, not least between the notions of child protection which dominate social work practice, and child empowerment which most community development workers would intuitively lean towards). The contradictory pressures on children are spelt out – for example, on the one hand to act as adults in relation to consumption (driven by clever and cynical advertising targeting), on the other, reflected in much policy and political rhetoric which merely nods towards the significance of children, in reality to remain in a passive dependent state. More contemporary debates on the best way to promote the interests of children – a Children's Minister, a Children's Commissioner, Children's Charters, are also touched on in the context of a review of the political arguments for promoting children's participation. This is where the contradictions in present and past UK government policy are most acute since it is the point at which young people become adults that policy towards them becomes most harsh and excluding, undermining much of the rhetoric about active citizenship.

Later chapters review – through short boxed case studies – some of the UK experience (and a few examples drawn from elsewhere) of professionals working with children, particularly in the context of regeneration and the physical environment. This seemed to me to be one of the weaknesses of the book; there is, as my own review of the literature shows, hardly any policy issue in which it is not possible – using appropriate methodologies – to involve children and young people in developing

1. G. Craig, (2000), *What works? in community development with children*, Barnardo's, Ilford, Essex, UK.

policy. Some issues – typically the kinds of issues covered by this book – are rather more easy to engage the interest of children and young people; others are more difficult but more pressing and there is growing evidence that such work can be undertaken.[2]

This relates to another difficulty which is the boundaries of childhood. The authors somewhat duck this complex issue arguing simply for flexibility; it is not helpful, however, in developing theory or practice to talk about the age range 5–18 in an undifferentiated way. The contribution of social research over the last 30 years has been considerable in teasing out the necessarily differing ways in which work can and should be done with children and young people – through play, through vignettes, through drama or as young adults, for example – and it would have been helpful to have had pointers for the unwary reader. Given that part of the rationale for the book was to convince professionals of the importance of involving children in 'planning' issues, it does a disservice to the debate not to confront these tensions more explicitly.

Despite these criticisms, however, there is much in this book, written in an accessible and clearly structured way, which will add impetus to an increasingly critical element of public policy debate. Those interested in thinking about the issues raised will find the good bibliography, the range of examples provided and the underlying political rationale valuable tools in promoting the issue of children's participation in policy-making. The challenge for adults – implicit in both this book and other recent literature – is whether that participation is directed towards incorporating children into 'how things are done' or can be used in an emancipatory way to promote different ways of doing things.

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HEALTH REFORM: PUBLIC SUCCESS, PRIVATE FAILURE, edited by Daniel Drache and Terry Sullivan. Routledge, London and New York, 1999, 366 pp, £65 hb, ISBN 0 415 20235 3; £19.99 pb, ISBN 0 415 20236 1.

Everywhere in the contemporary world health systems are under pressure. In the first three decades after 1945 the preoccupation was with expanding access, in most instances (the USA the most notable exception) through citizenship based systems of entitlement to health care. There was an assumed virtuous circle in which state-sponsored economic growth was assumed to create resources which would enable increased spending on health care. An inherently efficient alliance between doctors and state bureaucrats, with the British NHS as the 'model' example, would produce

2. M. Wilkinson, (1999), *Involving young people in anti-poverty work*, The Children's Society, London.

increasingly better health. Now all that has changed. The confidence in both the economy to produce growth and the health system to deliver health have been seriously dented since the 1980s. The solution to both , apparently, is more market efficiency and accountability to managers and consumers.

It is in these circumstances that health economists have sought to bring a stricter calculus to bear on health care provision. They have particularly challenged two notions, (1) that more medical intervention necessarily produces better health, and (2) that health care is a 'public good' distinctly different from other commodities. Backed by institutions such as the World Bank and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), they have called for a mixed system of provision involving decentralization, more private provision and explicit rationing of health care. Within this new policy paradigm there have been increasing efforts to rein in spending, shift priorities from hospital to primary care, and exert managerial discipline over medical professionals. The assumption has been that this will create 'lean and mean' health systems that will deliver more for less, increase health gain and produce greater consumer satisfaction.

These nostrums have increasingly become an orthodoxy subscribed to by governments of both right and centre-left in advanced capitalist countries, pursuing 'reforming' or 'modernizing' agendas. Many academic texts on international health reform also take much of this discourse for granted and talk of the 'inevitability' of rationing and growth of private provision. The merit of the current collection is that it sees health reform as an explicitly political and ideological process. The authors challenge the notion that the shift to the market and away from the NHS model or equivalents to it is functionally necessary. They show that the emerging market model has high transaction costs, generates new inefficiencies, and has perverse distributive effects. Although all health systems are under pressure, and the centralized and paternalistic 'public' model is in need of reform, they argue convincingly that it remains the soundest framework for delivering health policy.

This analysis is generated from a strong focus on the Canadian health care system which has come under intense pressure from the nearby market health system of the USA, and the fiscal pressures generated by the impact of globalization on its welfare state. Despite having to respond to this, Canada's single payer insurance system is judged to be infinitely superior to the grossly inefficient, inequitous and inflationary system across the border in the USA. This critical analysis is then broadened out to a consideration of other 'Anglo-Saxon' systems, notably those of Britain and Australia, with useful analyses on the problems that neoliberal inspired reforms have generated.

Overall, this is an interesting book and a significant contribution to the literature on the politics of health reform. It will be of most relevance to those who wish to understand, in a comparative context, how the Canadian

health care system is coping in a neoliberal climate. However, analysis of the Canadian case is used as a launching pad for discussion of general issues about the politics of health care reform, and the authors are clear about the need to develop an equitable and socially based approach to health care as a counter to the market model. The book will therefore also be of general interest, bringing a welcome critical focus to bear on processes of international health reform. My only criticism is that it would have benefitted from a rather stronger articulation of the critique of neoliberal health economics and the analytical and policy alternatives to it.

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THE ECONOMICS AND POLITICS OF NGOs IN LATIN AMERICA, by Carrie Meyer, Praeger, Westport, 1999, 196 pp, $47.95 hb, ISBN 0 275 96621 6.

Non-government organizations (NGOs) are very much part of the development landscape and discourse in Latin America, as they are in most parts of the developing world. From the earlier benevolent societies in the 40's and 50's they mushroomed in the 1960's with Kennedy's Alliance for Progress that was intended to buttress weak democratic institutions in the face of the supposed communist threat. While in the 1960's the Alliance ushered in several of the North American Private Voluntary Organisations, 'heavies' – Americans apparently have a distaste for the notion of an NGO – such as the InterAmerican Foundation, Catholic Relief Services and CARE, the overall panorama soon began to change. In the late 1960's and throughout the 1970's and 1980's we saw the emergence of a whole new genre of Latin American NGOs. The inspiration behind this emergence were the ongoing opposition to military rule and the Freireian school of thought that gave the NGOs a new and more political perspective. Today NGOs dot the landscape of development initiatives in most Latin American countries, and indeed in some such as Peru, Nicaragua and Guatemala, NGOs have positively mushroomed.

Carrie Meyer, therefore, has a very rich field of actors and scenarios for her book and she employs necessarily a broad brush. Her focus is continental wide if a bit biased towards North American PVOs, the USAID, the World Bank and other multilaterals. She is concerned particularly with Latin American NGOs and their increasing involvement in complex relationships with both Governments and the Private Sector for the production of public goods. She is less concerned with some of the broader roles of NGOs in terms of advocacy, community development and organization, for example, and more with their involvement in producing public goods and services on the basis of complex contractural arrangements with

both the State and the Private Sector. Her text is a mixture of regional overviews interspersed with particular case studies from the Dominican Republic, Ecuador and Costa Rica. Different chapters deal with Latin American NGOs' economic role in the agricultural sector in the Dominican Republic, the role of NGOs as entrepreneurs and as both producers of public goods but also generators of employment, institutional development and technological transfer. Similarly Latin American NGOs work in partnership with the private sector and they also invest economically in the development of the region's human capital.

Carrie Meyer's study is an interesting and somewhat different perspective on NGOs at the end of the millennium when much of the debate on them is tied up with notions of civil society and NGOs as 'contractors' for state services. In a way her focus is so wide ranging that it is not easy to get a firm grip on exactly what she is saying or advocating. She has tended to concentrate a bit of some of the old dinosaurs of Latin American NGO community and there is some disjuncture in the relationship between her field work in the Dominican republic in 1990 and her review of NGO issues at the end of the decade. Furthermore her identification of a new emergent species of NGO – Yuppie NGOs – left one with little clear picture of whom these beasts are! Finally her conclusions are quite disappointing and one would have hoped that such a topic might have merited more than two and a half pages of summary.

But Meyer's book was a good and informative read and she has broken new ground in exploring the particular economic role of NGOs, their relationship with key national economic indicators – employment, for example – and their role as entrepreneurs. She has left us with a lot to chew on but also a plea not to include too many references that tend to hinder the flow of the narrative.

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