Earlier Loves and Enlarged Allegiances

Four decades in one world, a journey

The 1970s

'I know you won't read what we write here,' a teenage boy wrote. 'You are only asking us these questions to keep us quiet.'

It was 1971. To an extent, I confess, the boy's suspicions were well founded. A colleague and I were conducting a research survey of young people's attitudes and opinions, and most of our questionnaire consisted of closed questions whose answers would produce hard statistics. We didn't expect to spend much time reading and analysing the answers we received to our open questions — questions such as 'As you consider modern society, and your own future in modern society, what are your anxieties and hopes?' We did, though, need to do something to keep young people quiet who might find the closed questions rather boring and mechanistic. So we asked them also to write answers in their own words.

However, most of the answers to our open questions were interesting, and many were staggering, humbling and inspiring. One young person, a 17-year-old girl at a school near Bristol, wrote this, as her complete answer to the question I have just quoted: 'Please read *Only One Earth* by Barbara Ward,' she said. 'It says everything I'd like to say.'

Well, I did read *Only One Earth: the care and maintenance of a small planet* by Barbara Ward with Rene Dubos, composed for the United Nations conference on the global environment that took place at Stockholm in 1972. It blew me away, for it referred to topics I hadn't previously much thought about, though many of the young people in our research were clearly thinking about little else.

In the summer of the following year, 1972, I noticed an advertisement in the TES for a post entitled Director of the World Studies Project. The task for the person to be appointed was to prepare materials and syllabuses for teaching about current

world issues in secondary schools — the kinds of issue Barbara Ward and Rene Dubos wrote about, and which had been drawn to my attention by three thousand 17-18 year-old students in the research which my colleague and I had conducted. Seeing the advertisement, I had two immediate feelings. How wonderful that such an important project was being set up. And how fortunate the person who would be appointed.

I mentioned the advertisement to my research colleague. How wonderful that this project is being set up. What a very fortunate person is going to be involved in directing it. 'Well, why don't you apply?' he said. 'Me?' I replied. 'I couldn't, I don't know enough about current global issues. Even 17-year-olds know more than I do.' My colleague urged me to apply, however, and I did, and for reasons I have never adequately understood, I had the good fortune to be appointed. By the way, the co-chair of the project steering committee which appointed and supervised me was a young MP who in those days was unknown to the general public. Her name was Shirley Williams.

I started on 1 January 1973. Several months ensued of reading, listening, conversing and consulting — and, frankly, floundering.
One day in 1974 a young teacher whom I consulted reacted to me with great exasperation. His first name, I remember, was Dave. 'You want me to teach world studies? Give me one good reason why. At present I teach boring history, boring geography and boring RE, together known as boring humanities. The kids are bored, I'm bored, give me one good reason why I should teach boring world studies instead.'

He paused — for breath not for my answer, which was just as well since I didn't have an answer. A glint came into his eyes. 'Tell you what, though,' he said. 'If you can make world studies interesting, I'll teach it.'

I didn't say anything out loud. But mentally, I'm like you're on, Dave, you're on.

I spent the next few years working out — with others, of course — how to make world studies, also known as global education, interesting. Our principal publication was a handbook for teachers, *Learning for Change in World Society*. It began with a quotation from Barbara Ward's *Only One Earth*:

> **From family to clan, from clan to nation, from nation to federation – such enlargements of allegiance have occurred without wiping out the earlier loves.**
>
> **Today, in human society, we can perhaps hope to survive in all our prized diversity provided we can achieve an ultimate loyalty to our single, beautiful and vulnerable Planet Earth.**
>
> **Alone in space, alone its life-supporting systems, powered by inconceivable energies, mediating them to us through the most delicate adjustments, wayward,**

unlikely, unpredictable, but nourishing, enlivening and enriching in the largest degree — is this not a precious home for all of us earthlings? Is it not worth our love?

In our endeavour to achieve 'an ultimate loyalty to our single, beautiful and vulnerable Planet Earth' we were guided by two brief things we happened to read. One was a passage in an obscure autobiographical book written in the 1930s that no one in those days had ever heard of, *Lark Rise to Candleford*. In it, the author Flora Thompson described life in a tiny hamlet in the England of the 1880s:

Beyond their garden in summer were fields of wheat and barley and oats, which sighed and rustled and filled the air with sleepy pollen and earth scents. These fields were large and flat, and stretched away to a distant line of trees set in the hedgerows.

To the children at that time these trees marked the boundary of their world.

Beyond their world enclosed by the trees there was, they were told, a wider world, with other hamlets and villages and towns and the sea and, beyond that, other countries, where people spoke languages different from their own. Their father had told them so.

But they had no mental picture of these, they were but ideas, unrealised: whereas in their own little world within the tree boundary everything appeared to them more than life-size, and more richly coloured.

Teaching about the distant world had to be combined, Flora Thompson was in effect saying to us, we felt, with teaching about the world close at hand, the world which in comparison with the wider world beyond the sea is 'more than life-size and more richly coloured'.

And what's going on in this world close at hand? Roger McGough succinctly says in one of his poems:

Everyday
I think about dying.
About disease, starvation,
Violence, terrorism, war,
The end of the world.

It helps keep my mind off things.

'Things', for a teenager, are questions such as these: Who am I? Where am I at? What do I really care about? How does my mind work? What catches my attention?

What am I good at? Where am I weak? What's in my way? What do other people see when they look at me? Or am I like most other people, boring and conventional? Is that what the future has in store for me — being boring and conventional? Or am I, and shall I be, a star? Does the school I go to know who I am? Does my school think I am a star? Is that what it wants for me?

Teaching about 'things', in the current context, includes much use of collaborative activities and exercises in small groups, games and simulations, fiction and drama, visual materials, stories, and engagement with local political issues. In this connection, *Learning for Change in World Society* was designed to be a compendium of practical ideas and guidance. It has for several decades been out of print. I continue to feel proud and honoured, however, to have been associated with it, and to have met and worked with the people who were involved in creating it.

(ii) The 1980s

I was increasingly aware through the 1970s that the world close at hand for many children and young people in Britain, the more-than-life-size world in which questions about personal identity and relationships are explored, is multi-ethnic. It seemed a natural expression of this awareness that in summer 1979 I applied for a post as adviser for multicultural education in a local education authority.

In such a post, I thought, I would be in a strong position to promote the methodology of world studies or 'global education', as it was now increasingly called – in all or most of the schools in one area of England, and would do so with the influence and legitimacy which, so I rather naively supposed, are possessed by local authority advisers.

I started organising curriculum development and inservice training projects. ('No curriculum development without teacher development,' said a slogan in those days.) I was rebuked by members of local communities, however. 'We don't want you to be messing about with the curriculum,' they said, 'but on producing a policy statement. Get the local authority to formulate and publish a high-profile statement, and we can then campaign to get them to implement it.'

I was extremely dubious about this, but went along with it.

The first step was to set up what we called the Advisory Committee on Multicultural Education, with substantial community involvement. At the first meeting a young man from an African-Caribbean youth club pounded the table. 'We do not want multicultural education,' he declared. 'We want equality.' It was a turning point in my professional life. In terminology which was not yet current in the UK he was maintaining and demanding that institutional racism should be dismantled, and should be replaced.

We produced a policy statement on education for racial equality and justice (not, note, on 'multicultural education'!), and incidentally this was reprinted nationally in the Swann Report in 1985. Later that year I moved to be chief inspector in a

London borough. There were many colleagues there firmly committed to discourse of equality as distinct from multiculturalism. We produced a document entitled *Equality and Excellence*, and set up a large project called the Development Programme for Race Equality. This was bitterly criticised and attacked by the conservative press and, a little later, by central government. Partly perhaps in consequence, the post which I held, that of chief inspector, was deleted.

(iii) The 1990s

I moved at the end of the 1980s to the Runnymede Trust. Here, equality was definitely the basic concept and in the field of education we created a handbook for teachers entitled *Equality Assurance in Schools*. It showed how issues of equality were relevant in each and every subject of the National Curriculum and was hence an early precursor of the much bigger and more comprehensive resource whose publication in Nottingham happened several years later, *Integrating Global and Antiracist Perspectives in the Secondary Curriculum.*

Equality Assurance in Schools was launched at a conference at the University of Warwick on Friday 23 April 1993. At the opening session news reached us that the previous evening an 18-year school student had been murdered in a savage racist attack in London. As a consequence of the unflagging love and commitment of that young man's parents and family, and of the community to which they belonged, his name will live for ever in the professional lives of all who use the book published in Nottingham, Stephen Lawrence. It is fitting that the opening words of *Integrating Global and Antiracist Perspectives in the Secondary Curriculum* should be provided by Stephen's mother, Doreen Lawrence.

(iv) From 2000 onwards

In due course there was an inquiry into how the Metropolitan Police handled investigations into Stephen Lawrence's murder, and the report of this inquiry made widely known the concept of institutional racism. Largely (but for other reasons too) as a consequence of better public understanding of how racism works, the government revised the Race Relations Act 1976. The amended Act required public bodies to be proactive in creating greater equality. It was no longer sufficient, in law, to avoid discrimination.

The amended Race Relations Act 2000 did not, alas, include attention to forms of racism such as Islamophobia. Its emphasis on public bodies being positive and proactive in the building of equality, however, was warmly welcomed by campaigners for equality in other fields, who in effect said, when they saw the Act, 'We'd like one of those, too.'

And so, in due course over the next few years, similar legal duties were introduced in relation to disability and gender. Also, there was significant legislation in relation to age, religion and belief, and sexual identity. Further, campaigners for the various strands or dimensions of equality persuaded the government to create a single new act, the Equality Act 2010. Most of this Act came into effect on 1

October 2010. The most important parts for schools, however, did not come into effect until December 2011 or April 2012.

Three days before the launch in Nottingham of *Integrating Global and Antiracist Perspectives in the Secondary Curriculum* on Friday 14 January 2011 the government announced the specific duties which schools and other public institutions would have under the Equality Act 2010. Very briefly, three sets of tasks were proposed:

- collect, analyse and publish information about progress in achieving the three aims of equalities legislation

- engage with people with a legitimate interest — including all staff (both teaching and administrative), all parents and pupils, and local groups, organisations and individuals as appropriate

- decide on certain specific and measurable objectives they will pursue over the coming years to achieve the aims of legislation, and publish these objectives.

It was reasonable to hope that every school in Nottingham, and many beyond, would use *Integrating Global and Antiracist Perspectives in the Secondary Curriculum* when engaging with the aims of equalities education.

Concluding note: looking to the future

Do you know that wonderful poem about the National Curriculum by the poet laureate, Carol Ann Duffy?

The poem starts with geography – 'Your school knows the names of places – Dhaka, Tashahi, Sylhet, Khulna, Chittagong – and where they are. Your school knows the height of mountains disappearing into cloud.'

The poem continues with history – 'Your school knows important dates, the days when history turned around to stare the human race straight in the face.'

It continues with references to each and every curriculum subject and draws towards an end saying that your school 'knows the homes of faith, the certainties of science, the living art of sport. Your school knows what Isaac Newton thought, what William Shakespeare wrote and what Mohammed taught.'

It ends saying: 'Your school knows your name – Shirin, Abdul, Aysha, Rayhan, Lauren, Jack – and who you are. Your school knows the most important thing to know – you are a star, a star.'

I think back to the school students who wrote, forty years ago this month, about what worried them and what inspired them as they considered the next four decades of their lives. 'You don't really want to know,' said one young person, 'you don't see me, you don't want to hear me. You only want to keep us quiet.'

'We can perhaps hope to survive in all our prized diversity,' said another young person , quoting from a text prepared for a United Nations conference on the global environment, 'provided we can achieve an ultimate loyalty to our single, beautiful and vulnerable Planet Earth … Powered by inconceivable energies, mediating them to us through the most delicate adjustments, wayward, unlikely, unpredictable, but nourishing, enlivening and enriching in the largest degree — is this not a precious home for all of us earthlings? Is our single, beautiful and vulnerable planet not worth our love?'

As teachers in Nottingham and beyond use *Integrating Global and Antiracist Perspectives in the Secondary Curriculum* their students will come to know many things. I hope they will hear, deep down, day by day, hour by hour, Carol Ann Duffy's most important message:

> Your school knows the most important thing to know —
> you are a star,
> a star.

Overleaf, there are background notes and acknowledgements.

1 The research of young people's views and feelings, referred to at the start of this talk, was published by the SCM Press in *Images of Life: religious belief and human relations in schools* by John Chapman and Robin Richardson. The steering committee which supervised the research was chaired by Harold Loukes and its members included Hugh Dickinson, Basil Mitchell and John Wilson. The research was funded by the Dulverton Trust and was based at the Oxford University Department of Educational Studies.

2 The handbook entitled *Learning for Change in World Society: reflections, activities and resources* was published by the One World Trust in 1976 and ran to several editions. The project's steering committee was initially co-chaired by James Henderson and Shirley Williams MP, and the project as a whole was funded by the Leverhulme Trust. The project's secretary was Patrick Armstrong.

3 The Runnymede Trust was founded by Jim Rose and Anthony Lester in the 1960s. Its principal funders included the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and the Hilden Trust. Its first director was Dipak Nandy and subsequent directors included Usha Prashar, Ann Dummett and Kenneth Leech. The steering committee which supervised the production of *Equality Assurance in Schools* was chaired by Frances Jowell.

Source: A talk by Robin Richardson at a conference on 17 January 2011 to launch *Integrating Global and Antiracist Perspectives in the Secondary Curriculum* published by Nottingham City Council.