

## Education Bill [H.L.]

3.7 p.m.

The Minister of State, Department for Education (Baroness Blatch): My Lords, I beg to move that this Bill be now read a second time.

The Bill before us gives effect to the proposals set out in consultation papers on students' union reform published in July; and in respect of teacher training in a paper published in September. It rests on fundamental principles which have inspired so many of our reforms: quality, efficiency, choice and accountability.

Part I of the Bill provides for the establishment of a teacher training agency in England and for an extension of the existing functions of the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales. These are institutional changes. They underpin the essential teacher training reforms. And they are the means by which we shall ensure that funds are well targeted and that lines of accountability are clear.

We have already taken considerable strides in reforming teacher training. We have set out new standards for all courses of initial training, which define the knowledge and skills that all schoolteachers require. Student teachers are required to spend more time in schools, and serving teachers will be able to play a full part in designing and running courses. We have said that training for primary teachers must include more time on the core subjects of maths, English and science, and, within that core, on teaching the basic skills of reading, and number. We are allowing groups of schools to run their own courses, involving higher education, if they so wish.

Excellent progress is being made with all these reforms. Training courses are already being adjusted. All secondary courses must meet the new criteria by September 1994 and all primary courses by September 1996. The first school-centred courses started this September, and we have bids for more to start next year.

For the future, we emphasised the need for wider access for good, mature candidates who may not possess A-levels but whose knowledge and skills and experience—gained through a career in industry or in nursing perhaps—mean that they would be a great asset to the profession. Just two weeks ago we announced our plans to help primary teachers with their vital task of giving pupils a good grounding in reading, writing and arithmetic—rigorous courses for classroom assistants allowing them to offer more effective support to teachers—and we encouraged the development of new course models for initial teacher training, in particular a six-subject undergraduate course for primary teachers who need strength across the curriculum.

All of those reforms are already the subject of existing circulars from the department. This Bill introduces a new teacher training agency. The time is ripe for the creation of this new body. We need it in order to create a new and independent framework to support our other reforms. At the moment we have a number of diverse bodies, all doing useful things: the Higher Education Funding Council for England, the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, the

Department for Education and the Teaching as a Career Unit. But what is needed now is a vigorous and independent body dedicated to teacher training and able to address it in all its aspects. That is the most effective way to achieve the necessary gains in clarity, accountability and effectiveness.

The importance of having such a body is evident from the objectives we set for the agency in Clause 1 of the Bill. Those are: to contribute to raising the standards of teaching; to promote teaching as a career; to improve the quality and efficiency of all routes into teaching; and to secure the involvement of schools in all courses and programmes for the initial training of school teachers. Those objectives are deliberately ambitious. They will focus the work of the agency. They will demand from it high levels of achievement. Teachers, and their training, are too important for it to be otherwise.

The creation of the agency represents an enhanced status for teacher training, not a sidelining or relegation. I am sure several speakers today will make much of the fact that a different path is being taken in Wales. There, the powers of the Welsh funding council will be extended to allow it to fund initial teacher training in schools in Wales. That path is entirely right for Wales for reasons of size. But the Welsh will be able to use the teacher training agency as a central resource; for example, to provide information about courses and career prospects in Wales as well as England. I have every confidence that the English and Welsh paths will meet at the goal of high quality training.

The agency will support the aim of high quality teaching through funding; and it will support it through providing accurate and helpful information. In the latter respect it will inherit the mantle of the Teaching as a Career Unit—TASC. The TASC Unit has been a success. It encouraged recruitment to teacher training, career switching and the return to the profession of already qualified teachers. Irrespective of the teacher supply position in future, individuals will need information about the profession if they are to consider it as a serious career option; and it will be central to the agency's funding allocation work that it keeps abreast of supply issues and reflects its knowledge through support for initial training courses and the provision of information.

The agency will encourage diversity by supporting courses run by schools as well as by higher education, as long as they meet the criteria set by the Secretary of State. The agency will also be able to ensure that there is increasing choice among courses of different lengths and design, as well as those provided by different bodies. We look forward to a steady increase in school-centred training. Numbers will certainly grow beyond the current pioneers, in secondary schools in particular. But neither the Government nor the agency will be forcing schools to take on extra responsibilities. It will remain a voluntary activity on the part of schools.

I draw your Lordships' attention to Clause 13. This reflects that we intend to give the new agency a statutory role in the accreditation of institutions. It will have to satisfy itself that universities, colleges and schools that wish to offer teacher training have the necessary commitment to the Secretary of State's criteria, and the

systems in place to deliver quality courses. All courses will as now be subject to inspection by Ofsted and the agency will be able to withdraw accreditation if courses fail to meet the criteria. It was not one of the models we put forward in the consultation paper containing our original proposals. It was an option proposed to us during the consultation period by the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education. We accepted it because it meets the key objectives of clear lines of accountability, and high quality without bureaucracy.

I said that the agency will accredit courses provided by universities and colleges, as well as schools. It is worth repeating, because I wish to make clear that we expect higher education to continue to provide teacher training and for teacher training to remain part of higher education. Our consultation paper made clear our view that there is a continuing role for higher education. We do believe that that role needs to evolve into one of genuine partnership; and I believe it is now widely accepted, as our circulars on partnership encouraged, that universities and colleges should make more use of schools' expertise and be more sensitive to their concerns.

Also on higher education, I refer your Lordships to Clause 7 of the Bill. Here, I hope noble Lords will recognise the safeguards for academic freedom which this House built into the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. We attach great importance to that, as I know your Lordships do.

Of course, initial teacher training courses have long been different from others. In this area, because of his overarching responsibilities for the education service, the Secretary of State has set, and will continue to set, national criteria. But the creation of the agency will actually remove certain decision-making powers from the Secretary of State; and the powers of the agency are as limited under this Bill as those of the higher education funding councils under the 1992 legislation.

I know that, traditionally, teaching and research generally travelled together in higher education. That is why we propose that they remain companions within the agency. Under the current arrangements of the Higher Education Funding Council for England the great majority of research funds are allocated on a formula basis. Projects do not compete for funds and researchers choose their own topics, without interference. There are quality assessment procedures, but those contain safeguards against invasion of academic freedom.

Our proposals for agency-funded research follow those current arrangements exactly. It is only proper for the agency to be able to commission a small amount of research in respect of its responsibilities. But the great bulk of research funds will be allocated by formula, as at present, and there will be the same approach to issues of quality assessment and academic freedom as now. Moreover, other funding sources, such as the Economic and Social Research Council, will have the same ability to commission education research as now.

In the context of research, I would add that this is one of a number of areas where we propose that the agency should work closely with the existing Higher Education Funding Council for England. Indeed, we may conclude it is appropriate, as we consider this in greater detail

with the council, that education research should remain within the council's current assessment system, even though the funds are channelled through the agency. There will be time for just that sort of point to be considered in detail in the course of the Bill's passage.

I am confident that the council and the agency will work closely and effectively together in that and in other areas. Noble Lords will see that Clause 9 provides expressly for the funding bodies to work together in exercising their functions. Another area where I believe joint working would be desirable concerns the Church colleges. It is clearly right that the agency should acknowledge and support the part that can be played by the specialist providers of training. Clause 6 already replicates the funding safeguard for denominational colleges built in to the 1992 legislation. The current funding council has an advisory committee for the Church colleges and has said that it might be appropriate for the committee also to be advisory to the agency. I see considerable merit in that kind of co-operative development and I hope that it finds the support of noble Lords.

Finally, on Part I of the Bill, I should like to talk briefly about in-service training for teachers. We believe there is a continuum from initial training, through induction to in-service training. We propose that the agency should, under Clause 4, be able to offer some funds to support in-service training. The intention is that the agency should support those courses, such as masters degrees for serving teachers, which are currently funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England.

We also propose that the agency should fund the current schemes for licensed and overseas trained teachers. It is logical that the funds for these schemes, which are essentially supporting initial teacher training, should in future be paid direct to schools by the agency, as provided for in Clause 13. I should, however, make clear that we are not proposing a general transfer to the agency of the specific grant funds that now support in-service training. Decisions about how best to deploy the majority of those funds will continue to be taken locally, by local education authorities and schools themselves.

I turn now to our plans for the reform of student unions. They are the product of extended discussions and formal consultations that started in November 1990. I hope it will help your Lordships if I remind the House of the objectives of our reforms and set out briefly how the Bill will secure them.

Our objectives are based on three basic principles: personal choice, democracy and accountability. The reforms are intended to ensure that these principles are universally observed in the activities of student unions. At present, as your Lordships know, students have no choice over their involvement in the collective actions of the student union at their university or college. However much a student may wish to be dissociated from the actions or policies of the student union, those actions and policies are undertaken in the name of all students. We wish to address this issue by allowing for the voluntary principle to apply. The Bill gives students

## [BARONESS BLATCH]

personal choice by placing as many as possible of the wide range of student union activities on a voluntary, opt-in basis.

At the same time we recognise that, in many universities and colleges, student unions are the channel for providing services to which all students should have access. The Bill will allow these core services to continue to be provided by student unions with public funding where the university or college sees that method of provision as appropriate. The Bill also stipulates that where these services are provided through a student union with public funding all students should have access to them. These provisions for core services are contained in Clause 20.

Outside the area of the core services the voluntary principle will apply. Student clubs, societies and other activities will, of course, continue: students will need to opt into them. They will also need to find ways to cover any costs. They may do this from their own resources or other funds that they can raise. They may also seek sponsorship. For these voluntary activities there is nothing to stop them seeking sponsorship from their university or college. The university or college will be able to support student activities outside the core, using private funds, or indeed using public funds if the student union channel is not involved. These arrangements for activities outside the core are not set out in Clause 20. In the Bill it is necessary only to confine the public funding of student unions to the core services. The Bill does not provide specifically for other activities that students may undertake on a voluntary basis, precisely because they are voluntary.

Your Lordships may know that some have argued that the Government should have gone much further. The suggestion has been made that we should secure voluntary membership for the whole range of student union activities. We did look at this approach. We decided against it for two main reasons. First, the universities and colleges argued very strongly that some student union services were essential and that universal access to them must be assured. Secondly, there was too great a risk that, if core services were dependent entirely on opting-in and funding by subscriptions, many students would be tempted to try to get by without them, with the result that they would cease to be viable. Our policy, therefore, is to provide students with a guarantee of access to core services provided with public funding through student unions, where universities and colleges choose to provide these services that way. Outside the core, the voluntary principle will operate, and students will have no automatic access or commitments, nor of course automatic membership in any real sense. They will have only those involvements that they each individually choose, and for which, as I have already explained, they pay or find sponsorship.

I should clarify what we believe should be included in the core. The most recent stage of consultations, starting on 1st July, covered the identity of the core services. We proposed that the representation of students within the university or college, welfare, catering and sport were all student union activities to which all students should have access and for which

public funding should remain available. For other activities, the voluntary principle should apply. In the light of our consultations, that remains broadly our view. The detail, however, of the core services is to be settled in regulations to be made under the Bill. May I say at once that our plan is to make a draft of the regulations available for our Committee stage debates, so that we can consider the detail then.

I mentioned democracy as the second of the principles underlying the reforms. Freedom of choice is an essential element of democracy, and the measures that I have outlined bring important democratic benefits for students. But we also intend to ensure that the behaviour of student unions incorporates democratic practices. Clause 21 provides for this, by requiring universities and colleges to draw up codes of practice to ensure democratic behaviour in their student unions. Clause 21 also includes some specific democratic practices, which reflect the best practice that already exists.

The third principle that I mentioned is accountability. This too is partly secured by the provisions to ensure that public money is used only for the core services. Here we are talking about accountability to the taxpayer: our reforms will reduce opportunities for abuse of public money; for example, for political campaigning on matters that are not specifically of concern to students. And, as with democracy, we intend to ensure that accountability is built into student unions' practices, through the codes of practice required in Clause 21. This will provide accountability to the student.

Having outlined what the Bill does and why, I hope it will be helpful if I say a little more about what it does not do. It is important to be clear that these measures do not prevent students from associating in any way or for any purpose. We would be the last to infringe the vital principle of freedom of association. Nor does the Bill prevent students, or student associations, from undertaking any activities. It does limit the range of activities for which student unions may use public funds. But no limit is placed on what may be done with private funds, either raised by students themselves or provided by their universities or colleges; and we do not seek to limit what universities and colleges may do with public funds if the student union is not involved—in other words, if the whole body of students on a campus is involved, that should be all right. I am aware of some misplaced concern that our reforms will cause various activities to cease. If these activities are valued by students, or by their universities or colleges, there is absolutely no reason for them to cease.

Finally on student unions, it may be helpful if I explain at this early stage why we are not adopting the alternative route to reform advocated by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals and also by the National Union of Students. They have suggested, in essence, that existing charity law could be built on to prevent any abuses. I welcome this recognition that reform is needed, but this approach does not go far enough, for two reasons. First, it does not provide the voluntary principle. A reform which did not give students the choice to opt into activities would not be

worth having. Secondly, reliance on charity law leaves too much of the burden of accountability outside the university or college. Our reforms are intended to incorporate democratic and financial accountability in the daily practices of the institutions and their student unions.

The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals has also argued that it would be simpler to list the activities for which public funding will not be permitted, rather than stipulating, as Clause 20 does, that public funds may be used only for specified services. It would not be simpler. Students will be free, as I said, to undertake any activities they wish outside of the core. The range of student activity is multifarious, and in principle infinite. Any attempt to define in statute all the activities that students might undertake in association without public funding would be doomed to failure. More fundamentally, the suggestion that we list the activities that students are free to undertake overlooks the voluntary principle, which is in essence permissive. Our approach, therefore, is to define the territory in which public funding of student unions is justified and leave the rest of the field free for the voluntary principle to operate.

The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals has raised concern about the possible administrative costs involved in limiting the activities for which public funds may be used. We have had useful and helpful discussions with representatives of the universities and colleges about this. They are, of course, well accustomed to accounting for the public funds at their disposal. We do not believe that extending their procedures over the public money that they give to student unions will necessarily generate substantial new administrative costs. We look forward to working together with them to ensure that the reforms are put in place in a way which minimises any administrative burden on universities and colleges and any intrusion on their affairs.

I commend these reforms to the House. Students have everything to gain and nothing to fear. These reforms will not of themselves bring to an end services and activities that are valued. But they do offer students the promise of extended personal choice, democracy and accountability. In the field of teacher training, reform is well under way. The measures in this Bill will give them new impetus and create a new institutional framework for quality. I commend these reforms to the House.

Moved, That the Bill be now read a second time.—(Baroness Blatch.)

3.30 p.m.

Lord Judd: My Lords, commentators on British politics are beginning to ask whether it is now a constitutional requirement that there should be an annual Education Bill. It is an appalling indictment of government that each year, before the ink is dry on the last Bill, another is introduced. It underlines the half-baked, impetuous nature of what the Government repeatedly put forward. It is a practice which has played havoc with the morale and effectiveness of those involved in education. At a time when we are all piously

told that public spending must be cut, the public are now unnecessarily asked to foot the bill for yet more unworkable and ill-conceived legislation.

This Bill, like its predecessors, reminds me of the lament of the king at the beginning of *Richard III*:

"Deform'd, unfinish'd, sent before my time  
Into this breathing world scarce half made up"

The need for a general teaching council to reflect and advise is ever more urgently highlighted as the Government rush blindly and wilfully on. The haste to legislate clearly indicates that the statutory gesture towards consultation was made with minds already closed rather than with a desire to reflect on the considerable and weighty advice received. Meanwhile, the Government arrogantly evade the significant proposals in the recent report of the National Commission on Education so ably led by the noble Lord, Lord Walton.

I am afraid that it is with real anger that I turn to the detail of this unnecessary and irrelevant Bill. Initial teacher training has already been reformed. Over the past decade very effective partnerships have been developed between schools and higher education institutions and the practical content of training courses has been greatly extended. In addition, lecturers involved in the supervision of trainee students are now required to have recent, relevant and successful experience of classroom teaching. Courses have been redesigned to ensure close integration between students' experience in schools and their academic studies.

In September I made visits to London inner city schools. They are splendid places. They would probably not have hit the top score on the Government's skewed and deeply flawed league tables. But they make education a challenging and desirable objective for the pupils in their care. I asked a group of children what they found the most important characteristic of good teachers. Their answer was unequivocal: commitment to their subject. The academic link with subject is important. The broader and deeper our teachers' education, the more they are equipped to adapt and develop their subject to different teaching needs.

Frankly, this is a mere skeleton of a Bill; the flesh is in the regulations yet to be seen. I note what the Minister said today. However, can she tell us why even the Delegated Powers Scrutiny Committee has not yet had an opportunity to see the Secretary of State's case for all these powers, subject only to the negative procedure? We must have proper time to consider that committee's report before we get to the Committee stage. Anything less would be to make a mockery of our proceedings.

Lord Rippon of Hexham: My Lords, I am grateful to the noble Lord for giving way. The Delegated Powers Scrutiny Committee will be considering the position on Thursday. I am sorry that we were unable to do so before then. We are committed always to trying to get a report before the House before Second Reading. As the noble Lord indicated, we await the department's memorandum.

Lord Judd: My Lords, I am deeply grateful to the noble Lord for that intervention. It underlines the appalling disgrace of the rush and the haste in which

[LORD JUDD]

such an important subject is approached. We should have had time for careful deliberation and scrutiny. We know that the scrutiny committee will do its best, and we look forward to seeing what it has to say.

From the bones we have in front of us we discover that teacher education is to be placed entirely in the hands of yet another quango—the teacher training agency. The agency's functions are not fully explained, but its establishment will remove teacher training from the quality control and assurance mechanisms established in the Further and Higher Education Act 1992.

True to form, the Government are backtracking on a measure which was passed only a very short time ago and which, at the time, Ministers told us was definitive. Despite what the Minister said today, why can the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales be trusted but not the one for England? What possible rational explanation can there be for that?

Inevitably, it will cost more to set up and run the new agency than to keep the functions with the council. There will be members and staff, duplicating for teacher education the functions which the council carries out in every other area of education. There will be a duplicated headquarters. I wonder whether it will have fountains and hanging gardens like the DFE or merely a monogrammed carpet like the now defunct National Curriculum Council? All this, I remind noble Lords, from a government pledged to eliminate waste in the public service.

Most dangerous of all, the Secretary of State is characteristically set on gathering to himself yet more powers, including decisions on essentially professional matters such as the competence required of a member of the teacher profession. The all-familial pattern is reinforced: accountability is to be reduced and power centralised.

My perspective of the Bill is somewhat different from that given by the Minister. Under Schedule 1, paragraph 2, the Secretary of State will appoint and remove the members of the agency and will appoint the chairman. I can do no better than echo what I understand were the words of the noble Lord, Lord Beloff, whom I understand to have said, "The Secretary of State will probably appoint another lot of businessmen of whom the President of the Board of Trade says only 2 per cent. are any good. The only people who don't realise this are the Department for Education".

Under Clause 3 the Secretary of State will resolve disputes. Under Clause 4 he will designate which institutions are eligible for funding. Under Clause 5 he will tell the agency to what assessment of the quality of education it must have regard. Under Clause 7 he sets the terms and conditions for the granting of money to the agency. Under Clause 8 he may give general directions to the agency by order. We learn, at Clause 22, that these are to be made by negative statutory instrument.

Under Clause 14 the Secretary of State decides how the agency shall provide information and advice. Under Clause 15 he can impose additional functions upon it

Under Clause 16—again by negative statutory instrument—he can order the transfer of property and staff of the Teaching as a Career Unit.

The qualifying activities under Clause 4, which, we must remember, will only be granted money by people appointed by the Secretary of State, include the undertaking of research into the theory, practice and management of education. While we must obviously look closely at the implications of what the Minister said today, can we really believe that objective research, which might prove how badly the Government are running our education system, stands any chance of funding through this agency?

I share with the British Educational Research Association, the fear that this will, "restrict the freedom to conduct research and damage the quality of rational discourse about education" and that,

"The possibility that educational research carried out in England could be under the political direction and control of government through a body of appointees of the Secretary of State is inimical to ideas of a healthy research community. The power of the purse could be used to punish and reward in ways that would mean that educational research could not be done without fear (or favour)".

These are massive powers. Can it be right that the future of teacher education is left so entirely in the hands of the Secretary of State and his appointees? If it were a left-of-centre administration bringing forward the legislation, cries of "Stalinism" would be ringing from the Conservative Benches. It is an amazing contradiction in an age of so-called deregulation.

If the Bill ever reaches the statute book unaltered a huge burden will be placed on our schools and their already hard pressed staff. Of course, trainee teachers, to be equipped for their profession, must spend significant amounts of their training time in schools. But practical experience, which is not grounded in a full understanding of educational theory, falls down when it meets an unknown situation. Those preparing to teach need to understand how children learn and why children fail. Our European competitors, with their enviable successful record of helping more children to learn to a higher level, have a strong input of philosophy—of "didactics"—in their teaching training. We would be alone in taking the retrograde step back to the 19th century apprentice model of teacher training. It was precisely because of the limitations of that model that the present system was developed.

And what about the schools? How are they to be equipped to deal with the additional number of trainees? The additional responsibilities to be undertaken by existing teachers from September 1994 in training student teachers will wholly undermine the effects of the expected—and essential—reduction in their workload which should follow the Government's recent re-assessment of testing. People—good and able people—who have gone into the teaching profession in the expectation that they will be educating children will find themselves spending more and more time educating adult teacher trainees. Are they equipped to do that? And are they necessarily the most suitably placed people for the task? The Government say that primary schools want to participate in such training, but they have not given us the sources for that statement. From

the overwhelming indications that I have received to the contrary, I am led to question how representative those quoted opinions really are. Will the Minister tell us candidly tonight exactly how many schools are specifically on record as supporting the scheme?

I wish to quote from just one of the organisations that are opposed to that scheme. The free Churches, whose commitment to education has a distinguished record, have stated:

"Our Churches' forefathers—who originally founded schools to provide for trainee 'monitors'—began to establish separate institutions of teacher education because they realised the essential differences in the needs of a pupil and of a trainee teacher. By increasing the emphasis on school-based responsibility for planning and providing courses, the [Government's] proposals seem to have taken a retrograde step—without providing any rationale for ignoring educational history or the best of current practice".

While recognising the shortcomings which still must be tackled, HMI itself has reported:

"Headteachers considered that initial teacher training was responding well to the new demands of the Education Reform Act and subsequent legislation".

However, by contrast, the inspectorate also stressed: "The provision and effectiveness of induction programmes [on entry to teaching] were very variable. Schools were largely unaware of their new teachers' strengths and weaknesses at the completion of their training. Few primary schools conducted structured classroom observation of the new teacher during induction. Assessment of their performance was largely impressionistic and provided an inadequate basis for identifying their professional needs".

Where is the sense in forcing teacher training away from the adequately performing colleges to the inadequate provisions of our already over-burdened and under-resourced schools?

Robin Alexander, Professor of Education at Leeds University, writing in *The Times* put it very well:

"If one views a teacher as an ask-no-questions technician—then higher education will indeed seem not only irrelevant but also dangerous. But if one sees teaching as a demanding and sophisticated activity, requiring considerable reserves of knowledge, understanding, skill, creativity, and empathy, and if one believes that children in schools, no less than students in universities, need to be challenged by the liveliest minds and keenest imaginations then higher education becomes central to teacher training".

Part II of this wretched Bill is an extraordinary example of Conservative Party conference politics transformed into a disturbing attempt at legislation. It is posturing, dogma, another form of union-bashing. It has received almost unanimous condemnation from vice-chancellors, university finance officers and student unions. This part of the Bill, too, has sinister implications. Robert Jackson, Conservative MP for Wantage and a former Under-Secretary of State responsible for higher education, writing in the *Times Educational Supplement* stated:

"Proposed legislation on student unions raises basic questions about this Government's commitment to freedom of association and expression and to the freedom of the universities. There is an inconsistency not only with Conservative principles, but also with Britain's commitment to the European Convention on Human Rights. The right of student unions to associate within the National Union of Students is a natural consequence of the principle of free association, and a natural exercise of the rights of 'citizenship'".

Mr Jackson concludes:

"A university is fundamentally a relationship between teachers and students. Government interference in this area is therefore an invasion of university autonomy in its most fundamental area".

The proposals in Clauses 18 to 21 for student unions show a complete lack of understanding of the positive work of such unions. The proposals will undermine proper and reasonable student activity. Whatever the Minister says they will be expensive and unworkable. Once again, in Clause 20, the Secretary of State reserves huge powers to himself and attempts to bypass proper parliamentary scrutiny. Of what is he so frightened? If what the Secretary of State proposes is acceptable, why not put it on the face of the Bill? If it is not acceptable, then Parliament should have a proper opportunity to debate it and if necessary to vote against it.

We do not even have on the face of the Bill a definition of core and non-core areas of funding. The noble Baroness tells us that these are likely to be welfare, internal representation, catering and sport, but we are not allowed to have this spelt out. If the Government had their way, we would not even debate it. Of one thing we can, however, be sure. The intention behind the measure is to exclude anything which could possibly be constructed as "political" activity. How short-sighted can the Government be? Our schools do not prepare our children for democratic citizenship and now our universities are to be denied the opportunity as well. Yet political debate and inquiry are part of a student's wider education and essential to the building of a healthy democracy. The Government pay lip service to the importance of citizenship but do nothing towards educating for it.

It appears possible that any campaigning which can even be remotely interpreted as "political" will not be permitted to be funded with public funds. So if a student has been attacked in a badly lit alleyway where the lighting is controlled by the local authority and the student union wants to campaign for better street lighting, will that be "political" or "welfare" activity? Who will pay for the typing of the letters from the students' union to the local authority?

Other activities which could not be called political, but which do not come directly within the likely definition of core activities, may also be affected. Affiliation fees to organisations such as the National Postgraduate Committee will be excluded. Financial support for clubs and societies will be reduced or eliminated altogether. That is at least consistent with this Government's attitude that the last thing education should be is fun. Any attempt to define core services by inclusion will inevitably leave out others which are legitimate and valuable. And what is essential in one place may not be so in another.

In any event, as the noble Baroness assured us as recently as this afternoon, so far as core and non-core activities are concerned, it appears that the Secretary of State will allow public money to be spent on non-core activities provided that it is done by the institution and not through the student union. Either the Secretary of State objects to the spending of public money on non-core activities or he does not. The Minister has certainly not convinced me. It is clear that the dual accounting procedures for core and non-core activities will be very expensive and an unnecessary addition to bureaucracy.

[LORD JUDD]

Other requirements in Clause 21 are just ridiculous. Although holding sabbatical office for more than one year does not happen often, why should it not be possible exceptionally where the student union would benefit from the experience of the person concerned? Should it not be a matter for the students, not for the Government, whether any officer is re-elected? To hold a ballot for every affiliation to an external organisation is probably unworkable. A large student union might affiliate to dozens of external organisations, mostly on behalf of clubs and societies. Is a ballot really necessary to decide whether to affiliate to the National Skating Association of Great Britain? Altogether more serious is the plight of the Open University. A ballot of all Open University students would, I gather, cost more than £50,000. The Government's requirement has so far failed totally to take account of the circumstances of a non-campus body with a membership of some 130,000.

The provisions will do nothing to enhance the life of the students in our universities, now suffering the vicious 10 per cent. cut in grant levels, to be replaced with a further dependency upon loans. They will not help our underfunded, overcrowded institutions of higher and further education. They will not prevent the break-up of British centres of excellence for research.

I greatly regret that so soon we are again faced with an autocratic, blinkered, and altogether flawed measure. Its results will be damaging for the quality of higher education and for the future of the teaching profession in this country. Worst of all, it will cramp the development of the children in our schools and of the students in higher education who together form the life blood of our future.

3.51 p.m.

Earl Russell: Well, my Lords, here we are again. We are debating the Second Reading of the 13th Education Bill in 14 years; we are doing it 41 days after the Third Reading of the previous Education Bill and 37 days from the end of the consultation period. Welcome to the next performance of "The Mousetrap". I admit that the Government have consulted extensively, and I am grateful to them, but it remains to be discovered as we go through Committee whether in the time available they have paid much attention to the results of that consultation. On the Motion that the Bill do now pass on the previous Education Bill, I said that it had taken so much time because we were conducting the consultation process on the Floor of this Chamber. I hope not to have to say that again.

I must declare an interest in this Bill. I am a university teacher in a college whose education department is gravely perturbed about Part I of the Bill and whose student union is naturally entirely opposed to Part II. I also believe that without a strong students' union my own job would be impossible. That is not just because of its contribution to welfare and other activities. It is because in recent months I have been seeing an increasing proportion of students whose very ability to be there at all depends upon the fact that they are employed by the students' union. Were the students' union to cut back on its employment, a number of them

would have to go. That could be a disaster. I am also an honorary life member of the University of London Students' Union and of King's College London Students' Union. I am very proud to be a member of both those bodies.

I am not alone in my dismay at the atmosphere of permanent revolution in the education world.

"I have been trying to grapple with making order, sense and purpose out of what can appear, often time after time, to be change after change; initial after initial; and initiative after initiative."

Those are not my words. They are the words of Sir Geoffrey Holland, now Permanent Secretary of the department, whom I should like to congratulate on his appointment as vice-chancellor of the University of Exeter.

We are courteous people in this House. When we look at a Bill, we always try, like the curate, to say that parts of it are excellent. On this occasion I am afraid that I cannot do that. The Liberal Democrats see no need for the legislation in either part of the Bill. If we have the opportunity, we will repeal it. I hope that the party on my left can say the same.

Part I is a nationalisation Bill. We on these Benches do not automatically oppose all nationalisation Bills, but the burden of proof upon those who put one forward is heavy. We do not believe that the Secretary of State has shouldered it. In fact, he has relied heavily upon one misquotation from the Ofsted report entitled *The New Teacher in School*. If the Minister disputes that, I challenge her to read in full paragraphs 3.4 to 3.6 of that report.

The Minister may say that it is not the Secretary of State but the Teacher Training Agency which will be in control; but, unfortunately, quangos do not enjoy the independence that they did when the noble Lord, Lord Dainton, was chairman of the University Grants Committee. If the Minister wants to convince us that the Teacher Training Agency is, as she said, independent of the Secretary of State, she will have to agree to the deletion of Clause 14(1) (b) which provides that the Teacher Training Agency must advise the Secretary of State.

"In such manner as the Secretary of State may from time to time determine."

That is the muzzle which was first placed upon the Universities Funding Council in 1988. Before the Minister can convince us that the Teacher Training Agency is a watchdog, she will have to take off its muzzle so that it can bark properly.

We on these Benches are chary of a nationalisation Bill which tends to nationalise thought and, therefore, to interfere with academic freedom. The proper qualifications for a teacher are a matter of academic judgment. They are not within the competence of any Secretary of State. I do not believe that he should be meddling with it. Neither is it to be expected that university departments will continue to validate qualifications over which they have practically no control. We on these Benches think, whether by good luck or good management, that the Government have now just about got right the mixture between theory and practice, and there is no case for changing it further.

The telltale word "efficiency" is scattered all over the Bill. It leaves room for doubt as to whether schools will be provided with enough money to cover the costs for training teachers. If the Government do meet the true costs, it will be the first time that they have ever done it for anything. There are still those who believe that efficiency is a good thing. If so, they should try travelling on the Central Line. Moreover, schools are faced with performance indicators which force them to give priority to examination results and will tempt them, as the noble Lord, Lord Judd, suggested, to treat trainee teachers like pupil teachers of past centuries.

The Minister pointed out that training is a voluntary activity for schools. If they are not paid the rate for the job, they may not do it. Fears of teacher shortages have already been expressed. I share those fears. The Government do not. They never know that they are not paying enough; they never will.

The Bill will also face teachers with an extra workload at a time when the local government settlement is further reducing their numbers. Last Friday at a constituency dinner of my party in the Midlands, I was listening to a teacher who told me that because of staff cuts in her school she had been seeing 500 different children each week. She had retired because of the increased workload and because, in her words, "We are being made to tear down everything we have built up and go back to where we were a hundred years ago". If the Bill becomes law, we shall have more such teachers.

Perhaps what is most extraordinary in the Bill is the proposal for the Teacher Training Agency to take control of educational research. I shall not discuss the capacity of the present Secretary of State to judge educational research for I understand that that subject is now *sub judice*. However, nothing is for ever, and one day, sooner or later this Government will be out of office. I ask the Government to consider what those powers may mean in the hands of a government of a different political colour, dedicated to conducting a purge. The Liberal Democrats are prepared to come into office committed to reducing our power. That is one reason why we shall commit ourselves to repealing this Bill. I hope that the party on my left will do the same. I was interested in what the Minister said about the clause, and I look forward to exploring in Committee how far the Government may be prepared to retreat. I hope that it will be all the way.

The amputation of educational research from its academic matrix comes at a time when educational research is becoming ever more interdisciplinary. It also prompts the suspicion that, if there is so much doubt about trendy liberal thinking, which branch of research the Government will take control of next. Might it perhaps be theology? Can your Lordships not see Mr. John Selwyn Gummer introducing such a Bill?

The Bill contains no definition of educational research. What is to happen to research in psychology? Will researchers on 15th century chantry schools have to apply to the Teacher Training Agency for funding? Why should all educational research be harnessed to the needs of teacher training? That is a functionalist and barbarian definition of research. It reminds one of Montesquieu's Indian tribesmen who whenever they

wanted to eat fruit used to cut down the tree. I am even tempted to Montesquieu's conclusion that this may serve for an emblem of despotic government.

In Part II we turn from a nationalisation Bill to a vandalism Bill. One could say of our institutions of higher education what one of my academic colleagues said of the Church on the death of King Henry VIII; that it resembled a building shifted from its foundations by heavy bombing. Among them student unions were almost the only thing still in good working order. One cannot help wondering whether that is one reason why the Government chose to legislate against them. I understand that after an immense amount of hard work the Conservative Party has discovered some abuses in the student unions. I am not surprised; there are abuses in every institution. There are certainly abuses in government. But when I look at other institutions, compared with any other I can put a name to our student unions are in remarkably good working order.

The National Union of Students and the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals have, as we have already heard, discussed proposals for dealing even with the few things that can be found wrong, relying on the doctrine of *ultra vires*, conscientious opt-outs and a code of practice. I simply do not believe that since 10th November the Government have had the time to consider those proposals and reach an adequate conclusion on whether they are workable. No Minister likes changing his Bill at the last moment, but those proposals need more thought before we have any legislation on the subject.

The whole of Part II of the Bill is based on a misapprehension. The claim that student unions are a closed shop, which is the heart of the Government's case, rests on an identification between student unions and trade unions. However, as I have heard the noble Baroness, Lady Blatch, say on many occasions—the case that I have is of 11th November 1990—students have opted out of the labour market. I do not understand how one can opt out of the labour market and have a trade union at the same time. Student unions are not trade unions; they are representative societies. Much the fairer parallel is with inclusion on the electoral register, which in this country is rightly compulsory. In the United States one is allowed to opt out of electoral registration, and that is voluntary. But its elections are a great deal less representative than those in this country. That is the change which the Government propose to introduce, and it is deplorable.

The noble Baroness also defended the proposals on the ground of freedom of choice. She showed an inability typical of modern Conservatism, though not of traditional Conservatism, to recognise the connection between choice and opportunity. She did not understand that it is no use to say that students have the freedom of choice to join the classical society if they have to do so at the price of a square meal. Last Friday I was taken to task for not making enough fuss about student poverty. The noble Baroness, who knows how much fuss I have made already, might take warning from that. The message was not coming from students but from parents. They are parents who are unemployed as a result of the economic policies of this Government, and

[EARL RUSSELL]

it is a message which needs to be listened to. We simply cannot talk about running all the societies in universities on voluntary student subscriptions until students have the money to be able to choose whether to subscribe. If that condition is not satisfied they will be societies for the rich only and we shall have yet another decline in the quality of university education.

Those issues are not necessarily unacademic. A number of my students have learnt more about how to write essays from the undergraduate journalism they undertook for *London Student* than from anything that I had ever taught them, and I was pleased to receive the benefit of that outside experience. If that should diminish, the decline in the quality of education will be considerable.

My noble friend Lord Lester regrets that he is unable to be present today. He is taking part in a Boundary Commission inquiry. I know that the Government do not agree with his opinions that the Bill is contrary to the European Convention on Human Rights. However, they might remember that in the last resort the ultimate judgment on that will not be theirs; it will be made in another place and will have to be accepted.

The hub of the Government's proposals in Part II of the Bill is a complex distinction between core and non-core services and a system of cross-charges so Byzantine that it makes the accounting of National Health Service trusts look the model of simplicity. It is the duty of a revising Chamber not merely to discuss but to vote on the details of any such proposal. All we have in the Bill is Clause 20(1) (a) which informs us that public money may be used.

"only for services of such descriptions as may be specified by regulations made by the Secretary of State".

We are told nothing about the system of cross-charging. Unless we can vote on the details of the proposals, any such suggestion is a contempt of this House as a revising Chamber.

I wish to thank the noble Baroness for the courtesy of allowing us to see the regulations before the Committee stage. That is welcome but it is only a courtesy. A courtesy is not a substitute for political power. My breath was almost taken away when in the next sentence the noble Baroness began to talk about democratic procedure and choice. If student unions are entitled to democratic procedure and to choice, why is this House not entitled to them? This House must be allowed not only to say yes or no to the whole body of the regulations but to judge the details, some of which may be right when others are wrong. If we cannot do that, I do not see what use it is having us here at all. This House does not have very many powers; we all recognise that. But among those that we have, the power to vote on amendments to Bills is the most important. If that is taken away, I do not see what useful purpose we serve.

I should like to make one further observation in reply to what was said in another place yesterday by the Secretary of State. He complained of having a meeting broken up by yobbish students. First, I offer him my sympathy. Secondly, I make him the offer which I have made and kept to the Secretary of State for Social

Security that if he should speak at my college I shall attend the meeting and do all that I can personally to guarantee his freedom of speech.

But freedom of speech, like patriotism, is not enough. It is necessary to preserve civilised politics, but there should be a hope of bringing about change by legitimate means. In this country there is a very deep identification in our minds between voting and consent. What we cannot vote on, we find very much harder to consent to.

When I think of that, I think of a letter in *The Times* in the late 1960s from Gwynfor Evans, the president of Plaid Cymru, which should have a central place in the historical documents of the 1960s. Gwynfor Evans said that all his life he had tried to persuade his colleagues that they should pursue the parliamentary route. He said that he had been elected to Parliament and had tabled over 1,000 Questions on Welsh affairs but nothing had changed; and then a few bombs exploded and a shower of concessions rained down from Whitehall. He said that that made it extremely difficult to go back to Wales and argue that violence did not pay.

If we cannot vote on any important part of the student union issue, it will be extremely difficult for me to go back to my college and tell them that the parliamentary route pays. The consequences of that are something about which I should rather not have to think further.

4.12 p.m.

Lord Sherfield: My Lords, I rise to make a few comments on this bipartite Bill. If what I say is a glimpse of the obvious or an echo of what has already been said in the debate, I assure your Lordships that my remarks will be extremely brief.

On the first part of the Bill dealing with teacher training, I am no expert and I shall leave the debate to those who are. But one cannot help remarking that, as far as I can see, the whole of the teaching profession is opposed to the provisions of the Bill root and branch, as is the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, which now represents over 100 universities and colleges.

It appears to me to be odd that this Government, having clobbered the universities and their students in the Budget—no doubt higher education had to take a cut, as did everybody else in this year—they still proceed to introduce this vexatious and harassing Bill.

I turn to the second half of the Bill dealing with the regulation of student unions. There at least I can speak from some personal experience, having had dealings with students and student bodies and their organisations over a period of some 30 years. I admit that my direct experience is confined to two or three institutions. It may be that they are exceptional but I doubt it. I have had a knock-down and drag-out public confrontation with a student union which I enjoyed considerably, perhaps in retrospect because I won a decisive but not overwhelming victory. I have been frustrated by the habit of "inquoracy" in student bodies—"inquoracy" being a word of which I had no previous knowledge. I have been disappointed by the practice of mandation, which has so often prevented student representatives from playing their full part in discussions and in committees.

But most of those experiences date back to the 1960s and early 1970s, a period of widespread student unrest and disturbances. My impression, indeed my information, is that generally standards have risen in recent years. However that may be, I have always supported and encouraged moves for representation of students on university bodies and with the few inevitable exceptions, I have found student representatives to be helpful, sensible and co-operative.

Of course there are examples of poor management leading to waste and indebtedness; of extreme or unacceptable political utterances and demonstrations; and of downright bad behaviour. But after all, we go to universities to learn about extra-curricular as well as curricular activities, including politics and administration and how to go about things. One cannot really expect from students and their institutions maturity in dealing with administration and financial management. But I believe that most stand up fairly well. They stand up perhaps better than some prestigious governmental and official bodies have done in the past—no names, no pack drill. Certainly student bodies need supervision, help and guidance which should properly be given and normally is given by the university authorities. They are close to the action. They can react and manage the situation flexibly in all kinds of disputes and difficulties. It is perfectly practical to draw up codes of practice for student unions and their representatives.

I agree with the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals that the provisions of this Bill are "damaging, expensive and unworkable". They are also well calculated to alienate the student population. They show a lack of confidence not only in student unions in general but also in the university authorities themselves. They have a whiff of some type of political correctness about them.

This Government, like their predecessors, pursue a relentless quest for centralised control of our universities in the hands of the Secretary of State, his appointees and their bureaucracies. Now, in the case of teacher training, they are adopting the tactic of divide and rule. They have brushed off what is, as far as I can see, the unanimous and strong opposition of all the parties affected and interested.

As has already been said, we have had a stand-off between the Government and the universities on various aspects of Education Bills in each of the past three Sessions. Now the Government are at it again and in aggravated form. I find that deplorable, and I shall certainly support any proposals which are put forward with the aim of trying to improve the Bill.

4.20 p.m.

Lord Beloff: My Lords, where there has been discord I propose to bring harmony. I have been trying quite hard to think of something which will unite the House this afternoon rather than divide it. I believe that what unites us is an overwhelming feeling of sympathy for my noble friend Lady Blatch who comes before us having, out of duty, to propose to us a Bill which she knows in her heart is rubbish and on which she has no alternative but to read briefs from a department whose character, as the noble Earl, Lord Russell, reminded us,

has just been illuminated by the inability of its Permanent Secretary to stay there a moment longer than he could help.

After all, such a situation is not new for my noble friend. Indeed, the same thing happened yesterday evening, although we were fewer in number, when we discussed the related topic of additional bureaucracy on universities. There, again, at the end of the debate, my noble friend read a departmental brief—quite rightly, as it is part of our convention to do so—which showed that those who had drawn it up had no clue as to what was under discussion, that they did not understand the anxieties of universities and that they were repeating by rote sentiments of either banality or inefficacy—usually both.

As the noble Lord, Lord Sherfield, reminded us, we come again to the repetition of an old sop. Again and again, during past Parliaments, we have seen measures taken to limit the autonomy of British universities. This House has occasionally succeeded in removing their worst features and in inserting a protection for university autonomy and academic freedom. We then find that Ministers claim that they were responsible for such a great dedication to academic freedom, forgetting the fact that until it was forced upon them by votes in this House they were totally and utterly opposed to it. They then come back and prove that they were totally and utterly opposed to it by putting forward Bills like the one before us today.

It has already been said that the Bill does two things: first, it removes an important part of higher education from the purview of the higher educational system itself which totally contradicts the movement which we thought was the way in which teacher training would be improved—namely, to link it more closely with other forms of education and training—and to put it under another quango with a set of personal nominees who may or may not be acceptable to the academic community or the teaching profession.

In the second part of the Bill we have an attempted revenge by a group of small-minded young people (some of whom, alas, are in the other place) who, having failed to make an impact on their contemporaries and secure election to student office, have decided to avenge themselves by destroying the institutions which gave them the cold shoulder. There is nothing in it but that; indeed, no one takes seriously the arguments in the brief of my noble friend the Minister.

However, what we have is a very expensive and dangerous way of achieving those aims. In yesterday's debate I ventured to do something which, as I said then, I rarely do; that is, to read the contents of a document to the House. I read a letter from an eminent academic illustrating the folly of the so-called "assessment work" in universities. I have with me today a great deal of material which I could, if time were of no object, read to your Lordships, but noble Lords will be glad to hear that I do not propose to do so.

However, let us suppose that I had proposed to read something. I wonder which of the letters I would have chosen to read. For example, would I have read the letter from the vice-chancellor of the University of Oxford who tells me that the university is extremely upset by

[LORD BELOFF]

both parts of the Bill and that it has no support anywhere in the Oxford academic community? Alternatively, I could have read the very moving graduation address from the vice-chancellor of the University of Glasgow, at the other end of the kingdom, which says exactly the same thing; or I might have decided that perhaps the student voice should be heard and perhaps read what I thought was an extremely telling and moving letter from the women's officer of the student union of the University of Swansea—you see, my Lords, Wales always comes into it.

All those letters, and many more, illustrate the central point that I should like to make. With many speakers on the list, I think that one point will be enough. By putting forward the Bill the Government have done something which I would have thought was impossible: they have united the entire university community from the most reactionary vice-chancellor to the most Left-wing and "with-it" student in a unanimous objection to everything contained in it. I cannot see how a government can pursue a policy which in the end depends upon the co-operation of the universities to be successful—indeed, even the Secretary of State cannot nominate a quango to run every campus—and at the same time, after a simulacrum of consultation, produce something which universities have told the Secretary of State, and will tell him again, is philosophically outrageous, intellectually disreputable and which, practically speaking, will not work.

I appeal to my noble friend the Minister to inform her colleagues that unless they wish to create a situation of permanent division in this country among the whole of the university community—and they keep priding themselves on the number of people now involved—they would do well to jettison the Bill after we give it the formal Second Reading which, at this stage, is all we can do however much we all dislike and despise it.

4.29 p.m.

Lord Glenamara: My Lords, when I was preparing some notes for the debate, I wrote down almost exactly the words with which the noble Earl, Lord Russell, started his speech. I wrote, "Here we go again, with another ill-thought-out and badly drafted Education Bill to add to the avalanche of legislation which the Government have poured on the education system during the past five years". The last Bill, on the inspection of schools, plumbed the depths of imbecility; this one is even worse. As the noble Lord, Lord Beloff, said, it is opposed by the whole education system—everyone from top to bottom.

I do not know what kind of world this Government live in. Do they not know what is going on in the education system? Do they not know that the whole system is in near uproar? Do they not know that morale is plummeting? Do they not know about that? Do they not know that teachers and lecturers are seeking early retirement in droves? I really wonder where this Government are living. What kind of government are they? Everything they touch is wrong; and this Bill is wrong. On any assessment it is a bad Bill. However, this

lunatic measure, another major irritant which no one wants—a Siamese twin of a Bill—is to be imposed on the education system.

The whole purpose of the Bill has nothing whatever to do with the reasons given by the noble Baroness. I am sorry that she has left the Chamber. The purpose of the Bill is further to concentrate power in the hands of the Secretary of State. That is what it is all about. It adds to the complete power which he now has over what is taught in our schools, and to the power which he increasingly assumes he has to determine how the curriculum is taught in our schools. It is a Bill to take authority away from the universities and hand it on a plate to the Secretary of State. Cardinal Newman must be turning in his grave.

Both parts of the Bill give the Secretary of State power to make regulations. Indeed, Part II is nothing more than an enabling Bill: it enables the Secretary of State to make regulations. Clause 15 gives the Secretary of State power to impose further functions. I wonder whether your Lordships have seen the number of times the word "impose" is used in the Bill. Clause 13 gives the Secretary of State power to impose functions concerning the qualifications of teachers which are nothing whatever to do with the Secretary of State. Clause 20 gives the Secretary of State power to dictate how public money is spent in student unions.

Clause 8 is, in my view, the most ominous of the lot. It gives the Secretary of State power to make general regulations about the exercise of functions by funding bodies. Frankly, I do not trust the Secretary of State with the power to make general regulations. Where will he obtain advice before making those regulations? He will certainly not get it from staff at the DFE. The one thing they know nothing about is education. They know all about the regulations and they can write beautiful essays for Ministers. But they do not have a clue about what happens in schools and colleges.

Will the Secretary of State obtain advice from the inspectorate? If an inspector turned up at one of the older universities, the university staff would not know what kind of an animal he was as staff in the older universities have never seen an inspector. The inspector would know nothing whatever about student unions. Where, then, will the Secretary of State obtain his advice when he is making all the regulations? He will get it from his cronies in all the little, ultra-right wing so-called education groups which have proliferated under this Government. That is where he will get his advice. Of course he will add to it his own extraordinary "Alice in Wonderland" views. In other words, there will be a purely political impact—perhaps it will not be so pure, that is the wrong word—on teacher training and the running of student unions.

The Bill is a further major onslaught by this Government on the integrity of the whole education system. The object of Part I is to put all or part of teacher training—initial training—into the schools. This is a return to the pupil/teacher system. If noble Lords do not know what that system is they should read a book by D. H. Lawrence, who was a pupil/teacher—I believe it is *The Rainbow*—where he described his life as a pupil/teacher. The system disappeared at the beginning

of this century. Under it pupil/teachers learnt the tricks of the trade. They learnt how to write on the blackboard, stand in front of a class, cast their voices, mark the register and all the mechanics of teaching. That is important, but it is not all important. There is more to good teaching than that.

Some 150 years ago the Church of England realised that there was more to good teaching in their schools than merely the mechanics. So they established teachers' training colleges. Three years ago I attended the 150th anniversary of a Church of England training college. Teachers need to learn about, and be able to discuss, the ideas and methods of great educators of the past; for example, the ideas of Thomas Dewey. I wonder whether the noble Baroness, Lady Blatch, has ever heard of Thomas Dewey. I wonder whether the Secretary of State has ever heard of Thomas Dewey. Thomas Dewey was a great American educator who developed views about the important link between education and democracy.

Teachers in training need to learn about and discuss the philosophy of education and to develop their own rudimentary philosophy of education. They need to learn about and discuss the psychology of education. In my view they need to know something about the history of education in England. I am only sorry that no one in this Government seems to know anything at all about the history of education in England. If they did they would know that they are making exactly the same mistakes as were made in the middle of the last century.

The trouble with this Government is that they do not really believe and recognise that education is a subject in its own right. They do not really believe that there is a sufficient corpus of knowledge to sustain first degrees and other degrees. They have never really accepted that. I wish they would look back a few decades and study some of the speeches of Sir Edward Boyle who in my view was the greatest Conservative Minister of Education this century. In a debate in the other place many years ago I suggested to Sir Edward that he re-christen the teachers' training colleges as colleges of education. He accepted that immediately: he re-named them colleges of education. The Government are going back on that. They do not really believe education is a subject in its own right.

The Bill will give the governing bodies of schools the right to organise courses. Imagine that! They may or may not involve the universities in those courses. In other words, the governing body of an inner city school could organise a course for the training of teachers. Can noble Lords imagine Bet Lynch, Alf Roberts and Audrey, Rita Fairclough, Dierdre Barlow and Mike Baldwin (as the statutory businessman) organising such a course? Yet these worthy people are your typical governing body of an inner city school. These are the people the Government are saying can now organise professional courses for the training of teachers. The Government believe that they are quite right to do that, just as they believe that it is right for the layman to inspect and report on the work of professional teachers. The provision will further set back and discourage the perfectly worthy and desirable aspirations of teachers to

be a profession in fact as well as in name, and the aspirations of teachers to achieve some kind of professional autonomy which other professions enjoy.

The teachers of this country will never forgive this Conservative Government for destroying those aspirations. They will never forgive the Conservative Government for depressing their qualifications and for downgrading them. They will never forgive this Government for allowing laymen to organise training courses and to inspect and report on their work. They will never forgive the Government for taking their training out of the mainstream of higher education or for pushing their profession downmarket. That is what the Government are doing. They are pushing the whole teaching profession downmarket.

By the middle of this decade, the effect of the Bill on university education departments will be near-catastrophic. That will adversely affect the supply and training of teachers in the late 1990s. Professor Ted Wragg, the head of the education department at Exeter University, stated in a newspaper article on 2nd December:

"We have all the makings of a disaster. The quality institutions are moving out of teacher training because the Government wants to shoot teacher training into schools". That is the view of one of the most experienced men in the educational world today.

Part II of the Bill, dealing with student unions, is totally unnecessary. Despite what the noble Baroness said, all that was needed was to qualify the law of charity. That would have put the whole matter right.

In the past month I visited and had a meal in the students' union of a large university with 17,000 students. The way in which that students' union was run is a credit to the good sense of the students. The union, like most other unions, provides a wide range of services—advisory services and even pastoral care. Last evening I attended a carol service in one of the bigger colleges of Durham University. I sang carols with the students. I stayed behind for a mince pie and a talk with many of the students. The principal told me that of the students 400 are involved in community work in or around Durham. As I left I had an overwhelming feeling that our excellent students—they are excellent—deserve a great deal more help and trust than they receive from the Government. The Bill states loud and clear, "We do not trust the student unions. We do not trust the universities. We do not trust the teachers." Perhaps I may associate myself with what the noble Lord, Lord Beloff, said. I hope very much that noble Lords will amend this paltry, miserable Bill out of existence at Committee stage.

4.43 p.m.

Lord Dalton: My Lords, the noble Earl, Lord Russell, reminded us that we have had 13 Bills in 14 years. I was reminded at that moment of the words of the King of Denmark in *Hamlet*:

"When sorrows come, they come not single spies,  
But in battalions".

Some years ago I wrote a book called *Chain Reactions*. If I had known that the issue would be raised by the noble Earl, I would have brought along a copy. I would then have found that I do not have an English copy but

[LORD DAINTON] only the Polish, Russian and Chinese translations, and they would not be understood, I am afraid, by the average civil servant today.

However, let me tell noble Lords the conclusions that one can draw from the pattern of frequency of the Bills. It will be only a couple of decades before the number of education Bills per Session will exclude the possibility of any other legislation, which will be a relief to some. That is based on the simple principle that every Bill brought forward is so flawed that it has subsequently to be modified; and therefore each Bill breeds at least one other Bill—and probably more—to change it.

The first part of the Education Bill which we are now discussing neatly exemplifies that principle. Having recently set up Higher Education Funding Councils for England, Wales and Scotland, the Government now propose to detach from the English council—I am sure that it is only a beginning—some of its funding responsibilities, and presumably also corresponding resources, and vest them in the new teacher training agency. That agency will dole out funds to the schools and further and higher education institutions which it deems fit (by what magic we are not told) to deliver teacher training, either alone or in partnership.

The Bill specifies four objectives of the teacher training agency. The first three—to promote teaching as a career, to raise standards and to improve the quality and efficiency of all routes into the teaching profession—are in praise of virtue and against sin. Little else can be said for them. So also is the fourth, which seeks to secure the involvement of schools in all courses and programmes for the initial training of school teachers. But the purpose of the Bill is, of course, to emphasise the latter and to down-pedal the involvement of higher education institutions, which could indeed in some cases be totally excluded from the business of teacher preparation, although the noble Baroness, Lady Blatch, stated at the outset of the debate that that was not the Government's intention. Clause 6 makes clear that the Government's intention is to shift the balance—a word which was used two or three times—more towards the school as the driving force; that is to say, as has been referred to already, that the driving force is school-centred training.

In the past I have been critical of some teacher training courses, especially the Postgraduate Certificate of Education courses, for what I would describe as their "bityness". By that I mean that on some courses there are only short episodes in the classroom. I emphasise that that is a purely personal opinion and that a survey by the newly set-up Office for Standards in Education shows that new teachers and headmasters regard the present arrangements as satisfactory. I have also been, and still am, somewhat attracted by the idea of a graduate being an apprentice—although not in the pupil-teacher sense to which the noble Lord, Lord Glenamara, referred—supervised by an experienced teacher for a considerable period of time, but only because afterwards he will encounter the more theoretical aspects of the course. The point of that

sequence is that the pupil then brings the realism of significant practical experience to those more theoretical aspects.

I am therefore predisposed—sympathetic almost—to a part of the intention of the Bill and would not object to some shift in that direction. However, these changes of emphasis can be achieved within the existing structural framework, whereas the Bill throws out the baby with the bath water. By loosening the connection with universities, it will make it more difficult to apply rigorous standards to any qualifications. It will diminish the likelihood of application in the schools of good research findings. It will detach educational research from the support that it can have and now has in a multi-faculty research institution and thereby handicap the application to it of cognate findings in scientific research.

The exact parallel to the government proposal in the Bill in other subjects reveals its absurdity. Why not detach those funds from the funding councils which at present support medical, dental, nursing and so on, teaching and research bodies, abolish the General Medical Council and kindred bodies, and establish teaching agencies in those fields instead? Of course we all know that that would be ridiculous. I hope that even at this late stage the Government will think again in order to keep teacher training in step with the arrangements for all the other major professions and in step with Scotland. Please leave the responsibility for teacher training where it is and ask all the Higher Education Funding Councils in England, Scotland and Wales to have a joint combined teacher training committee which can look again at the problems (if there are problems) of teacher training and then agree to a general teaching council which will give to the profession the status that it needs for England. In doing so, I remind your Lordships that all we have done in the past 29 years is to deprive ourselves of the advantage which Scotland already enjoys.

I now turn to Part II of the Bill, which seeks to ensure that the public money received by governing bodies in higher education institutions, via a funding council or via local authorities and passed on by those governing bodies to student unions is,

"used only for services of such descriptions as may be specified by regulations made by the Secretary of State".

That is in Clause 20(4) (a). No one in this House, I am sure, objects to the principle of student unions being accountable for public moneys, but the statement which I have quoted is completely vague and open-ended. It will not only be difficult for governing bodies to interpret and apply, but, unless the Secretary of State is prepared to be more responsive to the representations made by those who have to run student unions in colleges, who are "at the sharp end", as the modern idiom puts it, and who actually know and live with the realities of those matters (unlike, it seems to me, those who are aptly housed in Sanctuary Buildings in the Department for Education; an interesting but rather confusing preposition), only confusion, irritation and frustration will ensue. I see that the Minister is not in her usual place. Will she and her right honourable friend the Secretary of State therefore please pay real attention to

the views of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals on the criteria defining "core services", about which we have heard so much and for which the Department for Education says governing bodies would be allowed to pay?

Furthermore, in doing so, will Ministers please bear in mind two other important points? The first is the purely educational damage which will be done if core services are too narrowly drawn in the regulations. If they are based on the discussion document issued in the summer, as we were reminded today, they are currently thought to be only welfare, catering, sport and internal representation. I remind your Lordships that students learn not only from lectures, laboratories, libraries and tutorials but from a range of more active experiences in which they develop their confidence, their articulacy and the organisational skills that are vital both for their careers and, I may say, to their future employers.

If in the future student unions cannot support any clubs except competitive sporting clubs, a wide range of activities which contribute greatly to the quality of education will be imperilled. Many are subject-based societies—for example, law, engineering, medical, history, geography and other societies—not to mention the student clubs which are less disciplinary in their orientation but which also contribute to the development of confidence in students and of particular skills in music, debating and drama societies. In this connection, I note with some relief that a college may "sponsor" such societies. I shall await some explanation. At first sight the notion of public funds handed over to a public body like a university or a college to act as a sponsor for the activities of its students has a strange, if not bizarre, ring.

The second matter concerns the exclusion of external representation from core activities. That seems to me to be at the least unwise because there are many areas in which policies emanating from government departments—not just education, I may add—affect the lives of students in all universities. If there is to be no provision for co-ordination and taking account of student contributions in all relevant stages of policy formation, then those policies will not take proper account of the detailed realities of student lives and particularly of their finances.

In conclusion, I believe that I have one remaining duty, which is to draw to your Lordships' attention the fact that, while the Government set out in detail in Clause 21 the principles of democracy which the Bill would enforce on the student unions, it notably refrains from stating how the Secretary of State's powers should also conform to those eminently desirable principles. I can do no better here than quote the words of that distinguished lawyer, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford, whose words the noble Lord, Lord Beloff, refrained from conveying to the House. He is a lawyer, a Queen's Counsel and has vast experience; and this is what he wrote recently:

"The government, although clearly bent on detailed over-regulation, gives not even an outline in the legislation and asks simply in the briefest and broadest of terms, for more and more extensive powers for the Secretary of State. This is particularly serious in regard to the specification of Student Union services which may be supported from money derived from

public funds ... The Secretary of State may—if he chooses—declare certain types of expenditure by Student Unions to be legal. Everything else will be illegal. Even if the Secretary of State had power to rule things out, rather than rule them in, it would be proper that confirmation should be required by affirmative resolution. As it is, the only restraint available on the Secretary of State is a negative resolution which will rule out something which he was prepared to permit. The Secretary of State has little need to fear such intervention. Indeed he has only to stay silent, and all expenditure of public funds by Student Unions will [remain] illegal".

Therefore, we shall look with great care at the draft regulations which the noble Baroness said would be produced for discussion. I am relieved that the Scrutiny Committee hopes to give its views to the House before the Committee stage.

Nevertheless, despite all that is to be done, I think it will be a very sad day if the Bill goes through without drastic alteration.

5.52 p.m.

**The Lord Bishop of Guildford:** My Lords, there is a well established custom in the Church that during Lent we should give up some luxury or self indulgence in order to concentrate on a more fundamental purpose. Perhaps I may suggest that what we need is an educational Lent, when we give up the self-indulgence of continuing legislation in order to concentrate on a more fundamental purpose—the quality of education. That is our common aim. We have to ask whether the Bill will help that or whether it is just another bit of administrative fidgeting.

I know enough about gardening to be aware that if you keep uprooting and transplanting your shrubs, they do not grow, they just get thicker. What education needs now is space and stability, a chance to put down roots and grow. I find the Bill quite unnecessary and I should like to give it up for my educational Lent.

First, let me declare a second-hand interest in teacher education. Over 40 per cent. of teachers being educated today are in colleges below the new binary line and many of those colleges are Church colleges. I am advised that of the teachers qualifying at present about 28 per cent.—that is between one-quarter and one-third—are emerging from Church colleges—Anglican, Roman Catholic and Free Church. I have no formal connection with any of the colleges, but as Chairman of the Church of England Board of Education I have a concern for their present work, and even more so for their future.

I want to say, therefore, that if there are criticisms of the current education of teachers, the Church colleges stand ready to hear those criticisms and to change accordingly.

What are the criticisms? The Government paper on the reform of initial teacher training which preceded the Bill quotes Ofsted as saying that,

"around a third of lessons taken by new entrants into the profession were unsatisfactory".

That puzzles me. My copy of *The New Teacher in School*, published by Ofsted this year, states on page 25 that in 1992,

"The majority of headteachers considered the new teachers to have been adequately prepared for their first teaching post (94 per cent. of secondary and 91 per cent. of primary heads)".

[THE LORD BISHOP OF GUILDFORD]

HMI was more critical than the head teachers. It said that 81 per cent of new teachers were judged to be at least satisfactorily equipped for their current post. That report goes on to make reasoned criticisms. But many of the criticisms of teacher education are not criticisms of the colleges that are educating the teachers but of the schools to which the teachers go. Schools, says the Ofsted report, take too little account of teachers' expertise; are not accurately enough targeting their induction courses; and do not adequately monitor the classroom performance of new teachers. So the Ofsted report indicates that HMI is satisfied with 81 per cent of new teachers. It quite properly looks for further improvement, but among the weaknesses it notes the schools' handling of new teachers at least as much, if not more, than the colleges' education of those teachers. Where then is the evidence for the need to change the system, and in particular to change it in the direction of more school-centred training?

The education of teachers is not impeccable and beyond criticism. If there are weaknesses, improvements to be made and new ideas to be tested, let us tackle them. But, as yet, I do not see the evidence for changing the whole system, amending the Further and Higher Education Act which was passed only two years ago, setting up new school-centred training when it is too soon to evaluate the recent experiments in that direction and no evidence that schools can offer anything more or better than what is being provided by the colleges that are already doing the job.

Perhaps I may illustrate the enterprise shown by some of the established colleges of education. The teacher training strand in the Church colleges has pioneered the Urban Learning Foundation, giving student teachers experience of schools in the east end of London. Over 3000 students, nearly all of them student teachers, have now done courses at the Urban Learning Foundation. Student teachers there experience inner-city schools, take part in community projects and work alongside other students, including those training for the ordained ministry. Fifty new teachers who have recently started work in the London Borough of Newham have been through the Urban Learning Foundation. That experience was what led them to return to that deprived area of Newham. The Secretary of State opened the new buildings last year and commended that initiative. It is an example of the Church higher education colleges ensuring imaginative school-based training. Such ventures will become far less secure, and may even be less possible, if potential students are diverted away from colleges to other patterns of training.

It is significant that the Government paper and the Bill refer virtually throughout to teacher training and not to teacher education. The assumption appears to be that teaching is a technique, a trade, for imparting curriculum knowledge into helmeted skulls. But education is not the transferring of knowledge, important though that is. Education is promoting the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and in society. For that we need not just trained teachers, but educated people. To separate teacher education from other higher education

is to deprive student teachers of the opportunity of interaction with people in other disciplines; it makes more difficult access to libraries and other facilities of higher education; and it might even make teaching seem a non-academic profession.

The Bill makes provision for school-centred training of teachers. Nearly all teacher education is school-based; but should it be school-centred? Schools are there to educate young people; they are not primarily institutions for training teachers. Is there, for instance, any evidence that parents—we know the importance of parental choice—will want their children to be taught by trainee teachers rather than by qualified ones? I recall, following the noble Lord, Lord Glenamara, that in the mid-19th century at the time the Church was struggling to find the finance to set up its new teacher training colleges, some school-centred training of teachers had to be retained because the Church could not find the money to educate all its teachers in colleges. The teachers doing the short school-centred courses were in 1858 called "the teachers of a humble order". Perhaps we need to re-read our history.

The teacher training agency is to have responsibility for establishing and maintaining a balance between school-centred training and the higher education of teachers. But what is that balance? It is not defined. What criteria are to be used? If this quango is to have that power, then the Churches, which are at present responsible for educating over one-quarter of the teachers, will wish to be consulted, if not represented, and I plan to table amendments accordingly.

Another unsatisfactory element of these proposals will be the complex funding for those colleges which are educating teachers alongside others. Their funding, often for students attending the same lectures, will now come in part from the Higher Education Funding Council and in part from the teacher training agency. That must mean more complex administration and so more bureaucracy.

The most significant part of this Bill deals with the provision of teachers, but I must touch on the secondary part of the Bill dealing with student unions. Let us recognise that there are horror stories from the past. The National Union of Students has not always served its own cause well. But the evidence is that the worst is past, and student unions at colleges, including further education colleges and universities, are now generally acknowledged to be serving a healthy and constructive purpose, even if, like governments, they sometimes get some things wrong. To try to control student unions by regulations from the Secretary of State is heavy-handed to an extent which invites the invention of new metaphors. I am getting rather tired of "a steam hammer to crack a nut". Perhaps we ought to think whether this is a juggernaut being used to transplant a pansy. Or would it be better to say, "a pest controller being brought in to swat a wasp".

If the Secretary of State issues regulations as he has indicated, he needs to be reminded that he will be adversely affecting religious, cultural and, in a measure, welfare activities, because many organisations sponsored and supported by student unions cover all those activities. At the same time he will be restricting the

freedom of student unions to represent their needs to landlords, the police, local authorities and banks. And all those ministerial regulations are to be created by a Government who keep telling us that they want less legislation and seek deregulation. Even so, my concern about the proposals for the reform of student unions are modest compared with my deep anxiety about the proposals for teacher education.

If it is not already clear, I am not an enthusiast for this Bill. I think that we might with profit give it up. But if we are to press ahead with it, surely we can improve it. I am encouraged to see that there is the intention to maintain the denominational interests. I am grateful for that. I for one am ready to see some opening up of ways into the teaching profession. The Churches have always indicated their readiness to work with the government of the day and they do not wish just to be obstructive. But I cannot conceal that the comments and advice that I have received from my colleagues in the Church of England and other Churches are all quite clear in saying that this is an unnecessary Bill.

5.10 p.m.

Baroness Cox: My Lords, unlike my noble friend Lord Beloff, I rise to strike a note of discord and upset the pattern of harmony that has so far prevailed. I wish to speak in broad support of the objectives underlying the Bill. I must begin by apologising to the House. I am afraid that I shall not be able to remain in my place for the whole of the debate because I have a longstanding commitment to host a dinner. I shall return as quickly as I can and I shall certainly be here for the winding-up.

I believe that there is a genuine case for the Bill. The need for the proposed changes in teacher education has been demonstrated by evidence of longstanding and serious deficiencies in the preparation of many teachers, which is reflected in inadequate practice in too many of our schools. The proposals to change the arrangements concerning the funding of student unions are a response to a very real history of the abuse of public funds by student unions in some universities and colleges. The right reverend Prelate called them horror stories, and they were indeed horror stories for many of us. If it had not been for those problems, there would be no need for this Bill. But the problems exist; hence there is a need to remedy them, although I cannot go all the way with the details of the proposed legislation.

First I must declare an interest. I have the privilege of being Chancellor of one of the new universities, Bournemouth University. I have great admiration and respect for the achievements of that institution. It has evolved through polytechnic status to become a popular university, growing in size and stature every year and offering excellent courses, especially in vocational disciplines. That could not have happened without the commitment and co-operation of everyone concerned: the university board, the vice-chancellor and his staff, and a very responsible student body. Therefore I turn first to that aspect of the Bill which is concerned with student unions.

I admire the students' union at Bournemouth, being familiar with its activities now and previously when I was a governor of what was then the Bournemouth

Polytechnic. The students have always been meticulous in their use of funds. They make very valuable contributions to the life of the institution and to the wider community in this country and abroad. I am particularly impressed by the maturity of their initiatives in the field of charitable work. Therefore I listen carefully to their views as a response from a sector of the student population which I regard as a relevant touchstone for assessing the proposals in this Bill.

But first let me make a contrast with my earlier experiences of student union activities of a far less happy kind, when I was head of department at the Polytechnic of North London. Abuses by that student union threatened the very values on which academies should be based. Unless there is a recognition that those problems were serious, that they could recur and that there is a danger that they might do so, then those who suffer will be the responsible students for whom I have so much respect. With great courtesy, I must take issue with the noble Lord, Lord Sheffield, who is not in his seat, when he said that one did not always expect students to be responsible. Why not? Student nurses of exactly the same age are responsible for the life and death of patients. I do not see why irresponsibility should be condoned anywhere in the university sector among students.

It is not inappropriate to recall the behaviour of the students' union with which I had direct familiarity. It was typical of many highly politicised unions. The behaviour of that students' union included support for the IRA and expenditure of union funds, which are public money, on blatantly political causes. The polytechnic funded seven full-time sabbatical student union officers, the majority of whom supported the Communist Party or were further Left. They spent most of their time on manifestly political activities inside and outside the polytechnic, creating disruption and promoting "occupations" which often brought the institution to a virtual standstill.

The people worst affected were the majority of responsible hard-working students, many of whom were mature students. They were infuriated to see their contributions to union funds being spent in ways destructive of the purposes of their academic institution. But they were powerless to change the situation. Like them, I sat through interminable student union meetings. Anyone who dared to challenge the Far Left hegemony was shouted down, intimidated and threatened, while political activists filibustered for hours. Then, after a vote had eventually been taken, perhaps at midnight, and most of the responsible students had returned home to their neglected studies, those political activists cynically overturned votes relating to the election of student union officers or the use of funds in favour of their own political agendas.

That trip down memory lane is not irrelevant. As recently as last year there were reportedly problems on some campuses, still concerning political abuse of funds and threats to freedom of speech—freedom of speech which should be at the heart of the values of an academy. Thus, the legislation before us is not anachronistic. But, as many Members of your

[BARONESS COX]

Lordships' House so fiercely oppose it, I wish to offer the constructive views of one university senate and the students' union of that university

Bournemouth University Senate discussed the proposals of the Bill last Wednesday. The president of the students' union expressed deep concern over the proposed fundamental changes which resulted from the distinction between core and non-core activities. Although, as my noble friend said, four core services are envisaged—internal representation, welfare, sports and catering—other, often academically related, clubs and societies are not included. That omission is deemed to be unacceptable because those services form an important aspect of student experience. Therefore it is hoped that amendments will be moved which might allow them to be included, especially those involving cultural and communal activities. It was also clear that the increase in bureaucratic procedures resulting from those distinctions would be time-consuming and might possibly be unworkable.

The vice-chancellor stated that the operation of the students' union at that university was entirely satisfactory and there was little or no need for change at that university, although experiences elsewhere might make some changes appropriate, broadly as proposed. It was also felt that the university board should be the *locus* for any controls necessary to ensure the union's compliance with a national code of practice, including an audit of moneys received from public funding. Finally, it was pointed out that the union is not solely dependent on public funding and should be encouraged to engage in appropriate income-generating activities, which could lead to greater flexibility in the ways in which such income could be used by the union. But overall it was felt that, with suitable amendment, the legislation would allow the union to continue to operate without problems. However, the senate felt strongly that the essential and valuable services provided by the union would be seriously curtailed by the proposed reforms and that an amendment is needed to allow appropriate cultural and communal societies to be included with the core activities. Overall it was felt that the Bill was not the disaster that has been described this afternoon in your Lordships' House.

I turn to the proposals for reform of initial teacher training. It would have been so good to have been able to apply that old maxim, "If it works, don't fix it." But, sadly, there has been too much evidence in recent years that all is not well in many of our schools. I pay tribute to the many good schools and dedicated teachers who serve their pupils very well. But research has shown that far too many young people are under-achieving to a very serious degree. Research of various kinds has been undertaken and I shall give just four examples.

First, there have been research and reports on the quality of education in particular schools, such as last month's disturbing report by Ofsted, *Access and Achievement in Urban Education*. Referring to primary schools it states:

"The outcomes for many children were levels of attainment below their ability levels and which did not provide a satisfactory foundation for their experience in secondary schools"

Secondly, there is comparative research showing differences between schools. Our own work with the National Council for Educational Standards, Tomlinson's *The School Effect* and Rutter's *15,000 Hours* all show that some schools give their pupils a much better or much worse start in life than other schools of the same kind in similar or even the same areas. Recent work by John Marks shows differences increasing and some schools with as many as 30 to 40 per cent of pupils leaving with no GCSEs at all. Differences cannot be attributed to intakes or resources but largely to the leadership of head teachers and the quality of teaching.

Thirdly, research on key aspects of attainment such as reading or mathematics, and on truancy—work by Martin Turner—shows an alarming decline in the number of seven year-olds able to read; and research by Denis O'Keeffe and Patricia Stoll highlights serious problems with truancy in many schools associated with dislike of, or boredom with, lessons. How can we be so complacent? The decline in the number of seven year-olds able to read is a stunting of educational opportunity if ever there was one.

Fourthly, international comparisons show that too many of our young people are under-educated compared with those in other countries. Research by Professor Prais of NIESR found the great majority of British 16 year-olds two years behind German counterparts; and a report recently published in Canada shows Britain disturbingly low in the league of international comparison in mathematical attainment.

Those examples of research—I could mention many more—highlight the sad fact that all is not well in many of our schools. I do not impute malign motives to the teachers; many are dedicated and trying hard to do their best in difficult circumstances. But often they have been failed by their teacher training courses and are ill-equipped for the realities of the classroom or to impart the knowledge necessary for subject teaching.

The decline in reading by seven year-olds occurred alongside a shift in educational orthodoxy and teacher training away from teaching children to read phonetically to the so-called "real books" method, which involves a form of guesswork. It deliberately eschews the logical understanding of the structure of sounds and words. I saw the disastrous effects in my own family, with young children confused, alienated and frustrated by that approach to reading. I saw them subsequently flourish when they were offered an alternative approach—the traditional way of learning to read. But that traditional approach is not available in many state primary schools and many secondary schools are reporting serious reading deficiencies in 11 year-old pupil intakes, which inevitably hamper their progress in secondary education.

An article by a head teacher in this week's *Sunday Times* highlights those problems and claims:

"It certainly appears from our records that the primary education system in Lambeth is failing a considerable number of our young people"

This serious situation cannot be unconnected with current teacher education courses which leave their graduate teachers too often sorely ill-equipped to help

their pupils to learn to read—a point made by research published by the NFER. Similar problems occur in other key subjects such as mathematics. Hence the need for improvements in teacher education.

One way in which improvements may be achieved is by closer contact during training with the real world of schools. Thus I believe that the increasing involvement of schools in the education of student teachers and the increased focus on competencies in accreditation provided by recent legislation are to be warmly welcomed. The opportunities provided by recent legislation, with the article and licensed teacher training schemes, were welcomed by many mature students coming into teaching with different kinds of valuable life experience, whether in the form of parenting or other careers. Present proposals should enhance those opportunities provided that the schools involved are good schools, capable of giving a good apprenticeship experience—I am a great believer in apprenticeship learning—and provided that they are financially enabled to undertake those responsibilities.

As I conclude I should like to point out that, among the voluminous briefing from vested interests in the educational establishment inveighing against the Bill, I came across a paper from the Teacher Education Alliance claiming that the,

"Government has provided neither arguments nor evidence as to why teacher education is being treated as so conspicuous a special case"

Evidence, sadly, abounds to indicate that too many young people are being betrayed by the education system, especially those from the ethnic minorities and/or the least financially well off who cannot afford the solutions and the ways out available to the more affluent.

Many dedicated, able people are choosing teaching as a career. Many are doing the best they can for their pupils. But many of them agree that they are suffering from inadequate preparation for the reality of the classroom and/or the demands of teaching their subjects. If this Bill can help to bridge the gap between theory and practice, university and school, ideology and reality, educational so-called orthodoxy and real educational attainment, it deserves support, possibly with some modification. I hope that it will receive such support in your Lordships' House.

5.26 p.m.

Lord Howell: My Lords, I listened with interest to the speech of the noble Baroness, Lady Cox. With regard to colleges it appeared that the noble Baroness undermined her case by telling us how excellent Bournemouth is, and I am sure that we all accept that. We are sorry for the horrendous experience she suffered at the North London college, and I shall return to that in a moment. The noble Baroness properly said that the experiences she underwent there owed more to communist totalitarian approaches of students in that college than to anything else. But that cannot be the universal experience throughout the country and hardly justifies this measure.

Likewise, when the noble Baroness told us that most of the teaching in our primary schools was unfortunately

inadequate, it was rather illogical then to suggest that the solution was to bring teacher trainees into the schools to be subjected to the conditions that she felt were inadequate. That appears to be a contradiction in terms.

Baroness Cox: My Lords, perhaps I may interrupt the noble Lord. I made a distinction. Several times I said that there are many good schools. I said that when the apprenticeship system comes into play, it must be in good schools, which must be adequately supported to do it.

Lord Howell: My Lords, we all accept that, but we want to know where the good and bad schools are. We should not approach the matter with vague generalisations, which, with great respect to the noble Baroness, she did. I can find only one good word to say about this measure, having listened to the noble Baroness, Lady Blatch, today: in relation to the funds, thank goodness, sport is to be regarded as a proper core subject. But even then the noble Baroness did not say "sport and recreation"; no distinction was made. I am therefore under the impression that people in the Department for Education do not understand the difference. No doubt we can return to that later.

I want to take advantage of the normal procedures of Parliament which allow us on Second Reading to wax far and wide in what we wish to say. I start by looking at the personality of the Secretary of State for Education and the totally unbalanced and vindictive statements he continually makes in regard to the great city of Birmingham, from which I hail and which I represented in the other place for 40 years. The most modest description I can find for the Secretary of State is that he is a man becoming totally obsessed and unbalanced whenever he looks at provisions in Birmingham. His remarks border on the malicious.

I shall give only two examples and I hope that the noble Baroness will have a word with him on the matter. I tend to agree with the noble Lord, Lord Beloff, who spoke earlier, that the Bill and much of what is going on owe less to the noble Baroness—at least I hope so—than to the Secretary of State for Education. I hope therefore that she can persuade him to pack it all up.

The Secretary of State continues to say that Birmingham is spending all its education money on great prestige projects like the international convention centre. He has said it several times. He said it in another place quite recently. There is not one word of truth in that. The money that Birmingham has spent on its international convention centre came from two sources. Thank goodness, it did spend the money, perhaps the noble Baroness will kindly tell the Secretary of State for Education, because had it not done so the Prime Minister would not have been able to take the European heads of government there when the Government desperately needed to find a place to hold the last European heads of government conference in this country.

The first source was the private company set up with the National Exhibition Centre, which is a partnership between the City of Birmingham and the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce. It follows the best principles of

[LORD HOWELL]

government practice—a partnership between a municipality and private enterprise. The partnership raised most of the money. The other £50 million came exclusively from the European Community. The international convention centre did not receive one penny of education money or even ratepayers' money. It was set up in the way that I have described. So will the Secretary of State please stop libelling the City of Birmingham? I know that he is libelling other people such as our chief education officer. I cannot deal with that properly because it will come before the courts. It is *sub judice*. But at least we have to tell him to stop libelling or slandering the corporate body.

The other thing he continually says is that Birmingham is underspending on its education assessment. The noble Baroness, Lady Blatch, nods her head in agreement. It is not underspending at all except to the extent that the Government are refusing to give Birmingham the money to spend which the Department for Education says that it ought to be given. For example, our education budget this year is £412 million. The standard spending assessment is £446 million. So the underspend is £34.8 million and it is caused directly by the actions of the Department for Education. No other money is available under the standard spending assessment to be transferred to other committees and departments in Birmingham because the Birmingham budget is in line with the assessment. I shall not bore the House by going through all the figures I have with me. I took the precaution of getting them this morning. They are of course available to the noble Baroness.

Why do not education Ministers come to Birmingham to visit local authority schools? I do not think the Secretary of State has ever visited one. He came to a grant-maintained school in my constituency and did not even have the courtesy, which is normal, to tell me as the then Member of Parliament that he was coming. He refused to talk to the local education authority, although it had written to ask him to do so, and he continues to make these completely inaccurate and damaging statements. Perhaps I may say to the noble Baroness and to her right honourable friend the Secretary of State that they would be very welcome.

Education provision in Birmingham was established by Joseph Chamberlain, who before he came into national politics was chairman of the school board and built the whole of his reputation on developing the education system in Birmingham. The system has been based on agreement between the parties. The one great thing about Birmingham which cannot be said for any other city is that in all the main aspects of life—what I call in my autobiography, if I may refer to it, the Birmingham tradition—we have done things on a bipartisan basis. I have in mind the National Exhibition Centre, the international convention centre and our educational foundation, which was built up by people such as Martineau and Kendrick—great Conservative names. I had the privilege of sitting at their feet when I was a young man entering Birmingham City Council. It was all done on a bipartisan basis. That has now gone. I beg the Government to try to get back to it again

because it is out of such discussions and disagreement—no doubt honest disagreements—that we can sort out the facts and move forward.

Having said what I had to say about Birmingham, I move on to what I believe is a desperate omission from the Bill. If we are to have another Education Bill, for goodness sake let it be about nursery education, which is an area of most desperate need. Almost before reports are before us urging the importance of education, the Secretary of State is denouncing these proposals and these ideas. We all know about the report of the Rumbold Committee, which ought to find favour with this Government, and about the practicalities on the ground. I could weary the House again with quotation after quotation from the Department of Health about the importance of nursery education.

I want to look for a moment at women's participation in education and the development of one-parent families. I am sure that the noble Baroness shares with the rest of us a concern that, as more and more women go out to work, their children should be adequately provided for. Nursery education is vital. The figures I have before me show that in 1985, 35 per cent. of female lone parents went out to work; in 1987 the figure had risen to 43 per cent.; and it is still rising now. If we are concerned about education and performance in our primary and secondary schools, and even more importantly, about the deficiencies in nursery education leading onto problems in later life, we have to move over and try to provide at least 80 per cent. of such children with the benefit of some nursery education.

Local education authorities are being constrained all the time. Nursery education is the foundation of civilised life in this country. Its absence is the root of so much evil in society later on. More and more children are living in one-parent families. The figure will soon be 50 per cent. of all children. There is a dilemma for the Government. We all want to give those ladies the opportunity to go to work. I am of the old-fashioned school which believes, without wanting to tie women down to the kitchen, that where mothers are ever present in the household for their children that has a beneficial effect on the lives of their children. If women are to be allowed to go out to work—and they certainly should be—there is an obligation on the state and on local authorities to provide for the education of those children. We are getting the worst of all worlds at the moment.

I have taken longer to speak than I thought I would. I have not said much about the Bill, except that I am pleased that it acknowledges sport. I support the general view. I do not think there is evidence these days of widespread wrong-doing by student unions. I accept the view that the co-operation of student unions should be sought to get them involved in the government of their universities and colleges. That is essential. I certainly believe that schools are a place primarily to teach children and not teachers, although some regard must obviously be paid to the need for teacher trainees to have school experience.

Finally, I beg the Government to take note of the overwhelming opposition throughout the land. If the Government ever listen to anything they will take back

the Bill and think again. That would be a great signal throughout the country that they are a listening government and not one based on the principles of Stalinism, as my noble friend Lord Judd said from the Front Bench.

This is a most centralist government. I spent my early years in the trade union movement trying to rebuff the effects of communism in the country and in the trade union movement. We are well aware of tactics such as those which the noble Baroness addressed. I spent years looking at the effects of what was then called the Comintern and how it was trying to spread its pernicious totalitarian influence around the world. I am sorry to say that this Government, with all these powerful regulations in the hands of the Secretary of State, are trying to create an educational Comintern in this country which in the end will bring about the destruction of this Government just as the Comintern itself has, thank God, brought about the destruction of communism throughout the world.

5.40 pm

Lord Addington: My Lords, this Bill has not commanded a great deal of support in this House. Indeed, the only other speaker who had a great deal to say in support of it is the noble Baroness, Lady Cox, who is not now in her seat. Then she proceeded to attack one of the fundamental parts of the Bill; namely, the second part. She did so by saying that the core subjects about student union activity were far too narrowly drawn.

If one attacks the second part of the Bill when one comes to the core subjects, one is attacking the second part of the Bill. There is no way in which one can really justify the idea of having certain areas excluded, but be in favour of that part of the Bill. The Minister is in favour of the core of the Bill and one of her colleagues supports her on half of it. I shall not be dissenting from the majority on this.

As regards the first part of the Bill, other noble Lords with greater expertise than I have spoken about it at considerable length. I shall not add to that. When the Bill comes before noble Lords at later stages I shall try to encourage them to write into the Bill certain provisions about special educational needs and training and the great number of problems which arise. We should try to put into the Bill provisions in that regard. If there is anything to be gained from a piece of legislation we should try to inject such provisions into it.

My main anxiety about this Bill concerns its second part. I have been a student more recently than most noble Lords in this House. I left in 1988. The students' union fulfilled a function that was primarily built around the social qualities. It was able to help with matters such as welfare; for example, it dealt with such things as running housing for people. People attended the social gatherings and thus they had a centre in the students' union. The regulations, as we have been led to believe and expect, will remove that social function from the Bill apart from the area of sport. As the noble Lord, Lord

Howell, mentioned, sport is included and I am very pleased to see that. However, there is no definition of the difference between sport and recreation.

When I spoke about this matter during the debate on the gracious Speech, I suggested to noble Lords that there was no point at which one could separate recreation from sport and recreation from such activities as drama. Dance is a part of drama on its own. One needs recreation and gym facilities to be able to dance. Thus one has an area where confusion seems to have been generated by the discussion document.

It was also suggested by the noble Baroness, Lady Cox, that we might be able to reform that situation by tabling amendments, but we cannot. We are dealing with a regulation. Therefore, the major problem with this half of the Bill is something which we cannot address because we have no power to do so. We are in a very awkward situation.

Perhaps I may now bring up one of the great bugbears to which the noble Baroness referred. It is a pity that she is unable to be in her seat at the moment. I refer to the problem of political bias which has long been an accusation levelled against students' unions throughout the country. I believe there is one thing that can be safely said about this matter: it was always certain students' unions at certain times which had a very bad reputation for heavy political bias. It was not all of the unions at any time. I hate to have to point this out, but most of the people who were causing trouble 10 years ago at X university or X polytechnic will have left by now. Are we to re-declare war on Germany because of the Blitz? There is no point in carrying on with that attitude. The unions have changed; culture has changed and fashion has changed.

There is one aspect of Part II of the Bill which shows how badly it has been thought out. Despite the fact that sport is included—or it is suggested that we shall find it in the regulations as one of the core areas of activity—there is also the fact that if in joining an outside body you must annually, by secret ballot, decide whether to join that outside body. How on earth does one play sport in this country without being a member of an outside body? The Rugby Union, Football Association, the Rugby League and all the other bodies involved are outside bodies. It is necessary to be a member of all of those bodies unless competing totally internally, without regulation. In other words, that denies competition because without being part of a national body it is not possible to compete.

We have all finally buried the idea of non-competitive sport, but the proposal is to go through this bureaucratic procedure of taking a vote on all such activities. What happens if one does not manage to secure a quorum when deciding whether the table tennis team should join its national association? I suggest that there are one or two issues here which do not knit together properly.

Finally, I make one last plea to the Government. Everyone who has been involved with this Bill has said that, so far, the second part of it is overly restrictive. It seems to try to strangle all the good things about student activities. It will effectively place restrictions on all beneficial activities. We have already heard something

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[LORD ADDINGTON]

about the tremendous amount of charitable work which is done by the students' unions. It is not welfare work, but part of the social side and the running of events.

Students do not have great opportunities or as much individual choice, when it comes to social activity, because they do not have good funding. Students who do not find paid employment during the summer vacation will be restricted to an income of under £60 a week outside London. Generally speaking, that is less than can be expected if a student is living on benefit. That applies normally to a student under the age of 25.

With that amount of money at the student's disposal, he will need subsidised activity to be able to take part in all the functions which traditionally go with being a student. As long as we are still suggesting that students should not be home-based and should go away into a new community, as the vast majority of students in this country do in higher education, we shall have to find somewhere which is supportive. The students' unions do it effectively. Everybody involved, including the NUS, has said that the problem of political bias is one that should be addressed. The NUS has proposed that they adopt charitable status and therefore are barred from taking part in overt political activity. However, they would still be able to campaign on student issues. I believe we would agree that students should be able to campaign on certain aspects which directly affect them. That is not totally beyond the pale of reasonableness.

Will the Government please look at the second part of this Bill in particular? Will they give us something to really discuss and move some amendments towards bringing these regulations into the Bill if we are to discuss it at all meaningfully? Will they make sure that they approach this Bill from the point of view of what the students' unions are really meant to do—that is to say, to look after students' interests in a wide variety of spheres, predominantly the social sphere, which enables them to have contact and to do the other good work which the Government themselves have recognised?

5.49 p.m.

**Lord Walton of Detchant:** My Lords, as the noble Lord, Lord Judd, indicated, I have been privileged in the past two years to chair the Paul Hamlyn Foundation National Commission on Education. Our report was published on 15th November. I hope that we shall be able to debate its conclusions and recommendations in early 1994. In the meantime I express my thanks to those noble Lords who commented on it during the debate on the gracious Speech. Copies of the report, entitled *Learning to Succeed*, have been lodged in the Printed Paper Office. I wish to highlight some of our proposals as they relate to teacher training. They are of direct relevance to the Bill before the House.

I want, however, to make an important preliminary point. The commission which I was privileged to chair took a totally independent, apolitical stance throughout its deliberations. I would therefore vehemently reject the comment in one national newspaper which, in a leading article, commended many of our proposals but went on to say that others represented the full agenda of the Left. I did not inquire about the political affiliations of my

fellow commissioners although I knew that three of them supported the Labour Party. I am equally certain that at least three—probably more—were staunch supporters of the Conservative Party and that others were Liberal Democrats. Our commissioners included teachers from England, Scotland and Wales in primary, secondary, higher and further education, but also three industrialists, an economist and a Queen's Counsel. I leave it to your Lordships on examining our report to judge our independence.

I say in passing to the noble Baroness, Lady Cox, that if she examines the report in detail, she will find in it many more detailed statistics, some confirming what she said, but some supporting a different view. In particular, I draw to her attention the statistics which we produced showing that nowadays in our inner cities more young people from the ethnic minorities stay on into her higher and further education than, for example, do young white males.

Of course, we had disagreements. But we were able in the end to achieve a complete consensus. It is our belief that the conclusions we draw and the recommendations we promulgate will have to be followed by the present and future governments, of whatever political affiliation, if, by the end of this century and the first decade of the next, we are to offer our people education at all levels and training of the quality they deserve, enabling them and society at large to capitalise fully upon their individual talents.

I and my fellow commissioners fully acknowledge that all is not well in education and training in the United Kingdom today, although we also acknowledge that in several respects, notably through the introduction of a national curriculum and through improved access to higher and further education, there have been significant improvements in some sectors of late. I must also say that I personally acknowledge the fact that the legacy of the so-called "swinging sixties" with concentration upon a *laissez-faire* and undisciplined attitude towards education, perhaps with an excessive concentration upon child-centred learning, harmed educational standards.

I also wholly accept that the teaching provided by a minority of the teaching profession, coloured by their personal allegiance to the politics of the extreme Left or the extreme Right, did substantial damage, and that some local education authorities have in the past encouraged and even promoted such trends. The recent Ofsted report has shown that there is still too much unsatisfactory teaching, although much is satisfactory or excellent.

It is also plain that some of the teaching unions in their public posturing, particularly at annual conferences, have portrayed an unfortunate public image, as too have some student unions in our institutions of higher education, particularly the unacceptable behaviour of a small minority and their financial and vocal support for outlandish or extreme political causes.

I am aware that in some higher education institutions concerned with teacher training, there may have been an excessive concentration on topics such as sociology and psychology which, although important in teacher training, should never have been allowed to dominate

the curriculum to the exclusion of providing a thorough grounding in, for example, mathematics, the sciences, the arts and the humanities and, perhaps above all, classroom technique. We must also acknowledge that some societal trends, including lack of discipline, family breakdown, with consequential impaired parental guidance, and many other factors have contributed to an anti-education ethos, especially in some parts of our inner cities. Research evidence clearly indicates that universal, good quality nursery education would help in that respect, but much more needs to be done.

But while I personally deplore the strident, confrontational attitude at times adopted by some teaching unions, the present Government must in my view share some of the blame. The imposition of excessively complicated testing programmes for seven, 11 and 14 year-olds without proper consultation with the teaching profession (despite protestations to the contrary) inevitably provoked strenuous opposition from a largely dedicated profession which found itself overloaded. Thank goodness for Sir Ron Dearing and for his sensible proposals for change which we in the commission found generally acceptable and workable. I am sad to say that the Department for Education seems to have succeeded in provoking the bitter antagonism of the Headmasters' Conference and of the Girls' Schools Association. It should surely re-think its policy and enter into constructive debate and consultation with the teaching profession before issuing further diktats which can do little other than to add fuel to the flames.

The same considerations apply to the relationship between the Government and the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals. Very many of those knowledgeable about, and involved in, education at all levels in the UK have expressed powerful opposition to the Bill which we are debating today and which I must confess I find deeply flawed—a word I still find useful despite the strictures of the noble Lord, Lord Cudlipp, in yesterday's Times.

I do not propose to labour the recommendations in our commission report relating to teacher training as that would occupy too much of your Lordships' time. We do, however, stress the crucial importance of maintaining an all-graduate profession if standards are not to slip and, even more so, if they are to improve. At the same time we acknowledge the important role that can be played by classroom assistants assuming some of the inappropriate tasks which at present engage too much of teachers' time.

We support also an increased concentration on teaching within schools, provided that the teacher supervisors or mentors have the appropriate experience and receive the training needed to enable them to fulfil the task. But we are wholly satisfied that such a programme can only be properly established in partnership between a higher education institution on the one hand and a carefully selected cohort of schools on the other. The system is already developing in many parts of the country and will surely continue to evolve, but I was, however, horrified to find in Clause 11(1) (a) the suggestion that a school alone might provide courses of initial training for teachers. Surely the Government cannot be serious. In my profession of medicine, doctors

are required to undertake a pre-registration year after graduation and provisional registration. In that year, under the supervision of consultants, they learn by doing. Such an internship mechanism adapted to the needs of education is wholly appropriate in teacher training, but the suggestion that it might replace theoretical courses in higher education institutions, which are needed to provide the basic background of knowledge and skill upon which classroom practice can subsequently build, is frankly unbelievable. It would be rather like reverting to the medieval apothecary apprenticeship system. It would be equivalent to suggesting that a doctor could practise without any basic scientific training. Bluntly, that is a dangerous fallacy.

The report of my commission provides statistics showing that at present 50 per cent. of lessons in science in our schools is given by teachers without any special qualification in the subject.

**Baroness Blatch:** My Lords, perhaps I may interrupt the noble Lord so that we can clear up the confusion. The noble Lord seems to suggest that a school that organises training will be teaching people with no subject competence. The only courses that would take place under those circumstances would be for graduates who have science, geography, history or English degrees, and so forth, where the subject competence is firmly established. It is only that one year of teaching practice which they do in the schools that is organised by the schools.

**Lord Walton of Detchant:** My Lords, I am grateful to the Minister for clarifying that point. I did understand it. The point I am making is that there are theoretical considerations relating to the postgraduate Certificate in Education which cannot be properly conducted in schools and which must be conducted in an institution of higher education. I appreciate that it would be for graduates only. Nevertheless, it is an unsatisfactory proposal.

We must have improved methods of training specialist teachers, and we agree that courses leading to the postgraduate Certificate in Education for graduates should be lengthened. The commission also proposes that at the end of teacher training all teachers should have a managed induction programme for two years before being awarded qualified teacher status. We also make recommendations about staff development, the acquisition of skills in counselling and in guidance and about in-course training and teacher appraisal. Our proposals are directed also towards improving entry standards to teacher training and the status of the profession.

I do not at this stage propose to pick out for comment other individual clauses of the Bill except to say that I agree wholly with the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals that the idea of establishing a teacher training agency in England (but not in Wales) with all-embracing powers and the risk of future political domination by the Left or Right is, in my view, insupportable. The prospect of removing such training, and, above all, educational research and postgraduate training, from the control of the higher education institutions and their funding councils is seriously

[LORD WALTON OF DETCHANT]

misconceived. Surely educational research is not so different from that in other disciplines as to deserve banishment from the mainstream in such cavalier manner. In medical education, as other noble Lords have said, the funding councils have a joint medical committee to oversee the provision of high quality teaching and research throughout the UK. Why not do the same for teaching without establishing another costly and utterly superfluous quango?

While I accept wholly some of the criticisms which the Government and their supporters have levelled in the past against the teacher unions and some institutions concerned with teacher training, my experience from holding innumerable oral hearings with the representatives of such bodies, and with students, over the past two years has clearly demonstrated a sea-change in attitude among many of those bodies and individuals who now take a highly responsible and dispassionate approach. I was much impressed by the statesmanlike discussions we had with many such groups, just as I was greatly impressed by the increasing evidence to the effect that most teachers and many, if not all, LEAs have been working earnestly to improve educational standards, even if, as Ofsted reports show, there is still some way to go.

I am therefore totally supportive of the view, as are my fellow commissioners, that we need and indeed must have a general teaching council for England and Wales, comparable to the one at present in being in Scotland, in order to fulfil many of the responsibilities relating to standards of education, but dealing also with performance review, discipline and health in the teaching profession, and with many of the responsibilities imposed by the Bill upon the proposed teacher training agency. Why are the Government so implacably opposed to that proposal in the light of the cogent and responsible documents prepared by those in the teaching profession promoting the establishment of such a body? What has happened to the hallowed and cherished principle of professional self-regulation, fully accepted by government in relation to other professions?

The Secretary of State has gone on record as proposing, as an alternative, the establishment of a Royal college of teaching. True, in nursing there is a Royal college promoting the interests of a large profession, but in medicine there are Royal colleges of physicians, surgeons, obstetricians, and many others. Clearly we could not contemplate a multiplicity of Royal colleges of teachers. But those bodies have no statutory regulatory authority. In medicine, that regulatory role is vested in the General Medical Council which has a majority of elected members, elected through a detailed electoral scheme which does not require or indeed allow representation of any specific sectoral interest.

I recognise that in the election many individual bodies put up candidates. I am satisfied, from my experience in that council, that it is not beyond the wit of man to plan a constitution for a future general teaching council which would contain within its membership a substantial body of independent lay men and women as well as those nominated as candidates to

stand for election by the various teaching unions and institutions concerned with teacher education and research. Such a scheme could ensure that no single sector of the profession could dominate its affairs. I earnestly urge the Government to think again about that proposal.

Finally, perhaps I may echo what has been said by many about the part of the Bill relating to student unions. At the very least, the proposed draconian and unspecified powers of the Secretary of State must be curtailed. While the proposals are capable of amendment, not least in relation to the definition of core activities, they are unnecessary and could be handled by regulations. I shall not labour that point because, sadly, I believe the entire Bill to be so unsatisfactory that, for innumerable reasons and in the light of almost universal and implacable opposition from all sectors of education, I urge the Government—if only it were possible—to withdraw it and discard it.

6.6 p.m.

Lord Renfrew of Kalmthorn: My Lords, it is with a sense of deep gloom, and real concern, that I rise to address your Lordships on this dispiriting Bill to which nearly every university in the country is opposed, and to the second part of which every college in Cambridge finds itself in opposition and every head of house personally. As the chairman of the Cambridge Colleges Committee puts it:

"I have seldom known such unanimity".

Part I sets up what is widely felt to be unnecessary new bureaucracy (the teacher training agency) which will have the effect of divorcing education and the training of teachers from the rest of higher education. It is difficult to see how that will enhance the educational attainments or the academic standing of the teachers of the future. But it is upon Part II (students' unions) that I should like to focus.

As one who admires the present Government's success in increasing the number of students in full-time higher education and their recent commitment to continuing to meet tuition fees in full, it pains me to say that the Bill is anti-educational, unnecessary, bureaucratic, and procedurally offensive. I shall try to take those four points in turn.

As a university teacher, I believe passionately that a university student career is not just about learning one's chosen academic subject: it is about broadening your horizons, grappling with new philosophies, making new friends, arguing with them late into the night, reading a wider range of newspapers, glimpsing more of music, the theatre and the arts, seeking to excel in something—perhaps sport—in addition to one's métier, and understanding other people's politics. It is, perhaps, about having a good time and, in general, revising one's view of what life is all about. Those extra curricular activities are not trivia; they are central to the educational enterprise.

Let me say how much I admire the versatility, the extraordinary range of abilities, and the dedication, which many of our young men and women bring with them when they come up to college. One of my favourite occasions each year in Jesus College is the

freshers' concert, when newly arrived undergraduate musicians (only one or two of whom are reading music at Cambridge) play for us for the first time, often with notable accomplishment. I am impressed, too, by the persistence of the organisers of the Visual Arts Society in persuading artists of international reputation to come to talk to us about their work. If one or two of your Lordships think that I am rambling in my discourse, I would invite you to consider those activities in relation to the core activities, as so far defined in consultation documents, and I shall return to that point.

I am impressed by the professionalism with which the student committee organises an annual social event (sometimes the May Ball) or with which the JCR, which in the terms of the Bill is, effectively, our student union, sets up the activities of rag week. And I am much impressed by the dedication which undergraduate and postgraduate students bring to their charitable work for local causes, such as "Bridge" or "Student Community Action". Those activities, as well as a wide range of sports, are an integral part of university life. And of course in every university they are organised by a body occasionally and accurately designated as "the amalgamated clubs" but more often described by that slightly misleading term "the students' union". It is misleading because students are not employees. To equate students' unions with trade unions is a mistake which activists have sometimes made. However, I have the fear that underlying this Bill is an element of the same equation.

How ludicrous, then, that all the activities that I have mentioned, apart from sport, fall outside the core activities set out in the Department for Education's consultation paper published on 1st July. Those core activities are, of course, obstinately undefined in the Bill before us. But there is no misunderstanding here: in the eyes of the Government—and I mean no discourtesy to my noble friend the Minister for whom I have the highest personal regard—they are secondary activities for which financial provision will have to be made by other, rather uncertain, means if the Bill were to come into force as an Act.

Surely we should have more faith in the students of today, as I certainly have, and encourage them with all the means at our command to be involved in all those things, including student politics. How else are the leaders of tomorrow to acquire the necessary experience? When else, indeed, do you learn to make mistakes if not during your student days? In my view, if one or two donations go to one or two desirable activities that may not be the end of the world.

Nor am I speaking particularly from an Oxbridge perspective. However, it must be said that from the Oxford and Cambridge point of view little consideration has been given to student college societies—the JCRs—in relation, for instance, to the Cambridge University Students' Union. I shall not trouble your Lordships with that, which may in the broader context be a detail. From my days in Sheffield and Southampton I know the central importance of the students' union for recreation in the broad sense. In many universities pop concerts and films as well as debates and charitable work centre naturally upon the union. What on earth is

the use of bureaucratic distinctions between core and peripheral at this point? Even academic societies—for instance, the French Society if you are reading French or the Engineering Society if you are reading engineering—fall outside the core in the only definition as yet known to us. That is anti-educational and it is regarded by almost every university in the country as anti-student.

That may not be the intention—and I do not imagine that it is—but this unhappy Bill is introduced after a period of consultation; admittedly one ingeniously timed for the long vacation. Can my noble friend in reply say how many universities have positively welcomed the Bill in response to the consultation? I shall be very interested to hear the answer to that question. When I joined the Conservative Party I thought that I had joined a party which stood for initiative, self-improvement and self-reliance against the *dirigisme* of the nanny state. Being a supporter of the Government I deeply resent being labelled as anti-student and anti-education. I am sure that that is not the Government's intention, but, if not, this is governmental and political ineptitude of the first water.

Secondly, the Bill is unnecessary. As we have heard, the National Union of Students and the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals have been discussing how suitable codes of practice can be made to work. Noble Lords will remember that it was in Clause 43 of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 that provisions were introduced—in my view very necessary provisions—to guarantee freedom of speech in places of further and higher education. They have been very successful. We no longer see speakers shouted down and denied a platform by a rabid and unrepresentative minority. And if we do, that is already against the law. That measure was necessary; these measures are not. Would my noble friend care to remind the House of the government guidance to students issued by the Attorney-General in 1983 relating to limitations placed by charity law upon the expenditure of students' unions? Will she say why *Guidance of Expenditure by Student Unions, 1983* is felt to be inadequate? I believe that that is the path to protect against the undesirable activism where a militant minority can carry the day in the manner so effectively described by my noble friend Lady Cox.

I wish to quote from a letter that I received from the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne. He stated:

"We cannot, of course, be precise, but I suspect that more public money has already been expended on the preparation of the consultation (so called) about this legislation than has been improperly disbursed by Student Unions in the whole of history".

Thirdly, these provisions are highly bureaucratic. They will place upon bursars and treasurers—I am afraid mainly senior bursars and senior treasurers—the need to produce and monitor audited accounts of truly Byzantine complexity. That word was used by the noble Earl, Lord Russell, and rightly so. In my own college we shall be forced to bill students for the use of college rooms for educational purposes; for instance, talks by visiting lecturers. To be told that we can, if we choose, pay those bills ourselves provided we do not do so from public funds—I believe that we could do so from public funds—is cold comfort. This is supposed to be the

[LORD RENNELL OF KIMSTHORN]  
government of business efficiency. Yet the universities are groaning under the burden of new paperwork, of research and quality assessments, and of mission statements and Citizen's Charter provisions, as your Lordships heard yesterday evening. The last thing that we need is an additional tier of paperwork and accounting.

Finally, the Bill is procedurally offensive. Its central concept is that of the core activity, defined with that rigorous precision which is becoming all too familiar in Bills introduced by the Department for Education as: "services of such descriptions as may be specified by regulations made by the Secretary of State". That is all the indication that appears on the face of the Bill. The very central concept of the Bill remains undefined. This is not a Henry VIII clause; this is a Henry VIII Bill! Last week I wrote to the chairman of your Lordships' new Delegated Powers Scrutiny Committee to request that Clause 20 of this dispiriting Bill be subjected to scrutiny. My noble friend Lord Rippon of Hexham, who chairs your Lordships' Select Committee, kindly wrote to give an assurance that the committee will consider the matter, for which I am grateful. He gave your Lordships that assurance this afternoon.

I hope that the Government will also consider the matter—the whole matter. The defects of the Bill outweigh its dubious merits. During my short time in this House I have never felt less happy about a Bill on Second Reading. It should be no part of the Government's brief to restrict the scope—the effective scope—of student activities by tying their hands with red tape and elaborate accounting procedures. I predict that in Committee your Lordships may be invited to give further attention to Clause 20. It may be that Part II as a whole should be reconsidered by my noble and right honourable friends.

6 18 p.m.

Lord Dormand of Easington: My Lords, we are scarcely half way through the debate but we have witnessed a beating of the Government which we have not seen for many years. It will not have escaped the Minister's notice that those who have administered the beating are pre-eminent in their fields of education. We have heard in support of one part of the Bill only the lone voice of the noble Baroness, Lady Cox. It appeared to me and to my noble friends that she had drawn a generalisation from an unusual experience at Bournemouth. The noble Baroness shakes her head, but I am sure that she would not say that that experience is common throughout the country.

My noble friend Lord Glenamara said that there are 400 students at Durham University undertaking social work. He knows, and I am sure that most of your Lordships know, that that is not uncommon. There will hardly be a student union in the country which does not undertake that kind of work. I suspect that as regards the proposed student union legislation the Government believe, astonishingly in my view, that we are still living in the 1960s. I know that it got a cheer at the Tory Party

Conference and I suspect that that is the basis of the proposal. But it is absurd in 1993 to make a comparison with a situation in the 1960s.

The strongest message coming loud and clear from the schools is, "For heaven's sake, leave us alone. Let us have no more changes for a long time. Let us consolidate and implement all those changes which have been made in recent years." I find it astonishing that the Government do not heed that cry. Many Members of this House and Members in another place have made that point on many occasions but it appears that the Government do not heed it.

The Bill brings further changes, but, more than that, its two main proposals on teacher training, as has already been said by virtually every speaker, are unnecessary and unwise. In the case of the student unions the legislation is irrelevant. The latter demonstrates how accurate were the words of the Conservative chairman of the House of Commons Select Committee on Education when he said of the Government in October:

"It is in the grip of Right-wing ideologies."

Had this Bill dealt with increased provision for nursery education or the problems now confronting adult education, it would at least have been relevant and necessary. Moreover, a measure dealing with those issues would have received universal support. Instead, the Bill is opposed by all the organisations concerned with education, from primary education to universities.

I shall confine my remarks to the proposals dealing with teacher training. It is significant that the Government refer to it as teacher training and not teacher education. I submit to your Lordships that there is a fundamental difference between the two. Training is a much narrower concept and refers surely to specific tasks and to techniques, all of which are important but only part of a teacher's role.

I have been concerned for a considerable time about maintaining the academic and intellectual standards of the teaching profession. I do not for one moment say that they are low, but for a number of reasons we should maintain and raise the standards. Any scheme or proposal which devalues the academic content of teacher education would be a serious mistake. I believe that this Bill is likely to do just that.

The change to a four-year B.Ed degree was a great step forward and any further changes should be based on that foundation. It appears that the Government have abandoned the proposal for a so-called Mum's Army. If so, that is a most welcome step. Perhaps—although I am not too hopeful—it will set a precedent and they will listen when there is a public and professional outcry against such ludicrous proposals.

It is of fundamental importance that the public should see teachers not only as professional in their techniques and personal standards but also possessing high academic standards. Nothing is of greater value in providing the status which teachers need and deserve. We shall not achieve that aim with this Bill for reasons which have been explained by previous speakers and I suspect will be addressed by noble Lords yet to speak.

Perhaps your Lordships will bear with me for a few moments while I recount an incident which happened in

a school some years ago. Some of the older members of your Lordships' House may remember that teachers were not paid directly by cheque, as they are now. The cheque came from the education office to the head teacher to cover everybody's salary. The head teacher would nip down to the local bank, get the money, come back, put it in little brown envelopes and take it round the classrooms to the teachers. On one occasion when the head came in and put the little brown envelope on the teacher's desk, there was a seven year-old standing at the desk. Being inquisitive he asked, "What's that for?" The teacher said, "It's my pay". The youngster asked, "Where do you work, Miss?" I suspect that that may be an indication of what the standard of teaching was felt to be in the mind of that seven year-old.

The Teacher Education Alliance has written that teaching is too complex and good teaching is too dependent on professional awareness for preparation to be reduced to a narrow form of training based on the mere acquisition of techniques. I believe that that puts the matter in a nutshell. It must be right and I am deeply worried that the establishment of a teacher training agency will narrow the scope of teacher education. I fear—I hope that I am wrong—that the quality will suffer considerably. It will divide it from the universities, and that surely will detach it from the advanced study of educational practice and the research which is so vital if progress is to be made.

The reports by HMI published this year on the articulated teacher and licensed teacher schemes, which I suggest to your Lordships are well worth reading, show the need for something more comprehensive and thorough than the content of such courses. I am happy to say that those reports were not all bad and the HMI report on the post-graduate certificate in education reached similar conclusions. But it is obvious that something is lacking in such teacher education.

I concede readily that there is a difficulty in achieving the correct balance between what I might call education and training. In the past there was certainly too little time spent in schools and that has now been corrected. But this Government, as with most things they touch, have gone to extremes. Basic training in schools is a mistake, however good may be the work in particular schools.

As an aside—but there is no doubt about its importance—I should have liked to have seen something in the Bill about what in a number of fields, not least in the work of the training and enterprise councils, is called the training of the trainers. University and college lecturers should be able to provide the theory and academic content of teacher education, and no doubt in most cases do it well. But it is inevitable that they get out of touch to some degree with what happens in the classroom. That is something that one hears from time to time from student teachers. I believe that there is only one way to rectify that shortcoming—for lecturers and tutors to spend some continuous period in a school. A year would probably be the ideal length of time, but I realise that there are practical difficulties in that suggestion. A minimum of one term would be essential if anything were to be gained from that.

Setting theory in the context of the day-to-day running of the school would give real meaning to teacher education, apart from giving students more confidence in their tutors. It may not be expedient to include such provision in this Bill, but as it is so closely related to teacher education, the Government may consider it possible to introduce guidelines or think of some other method of doing so.

Clause 4 deals with research. I have mentioned that briefly already. Giving research funding to the teacher training agency gives rise to some anxiety, and a more detailed explanation is required. I am glad to know that I am not the first to mention that. The TTA is to be appointed by and answerable only to Ministers. It is reasonable to think therefore that we shall have government-directed research into what the Government think is desirable, which will be completely against the whole idea of independent research.

We would be justified in showing mistrust of a government who have shown such a bias towards city technology colleges and grant-maintained schools. When she replies to the debate, I hope that the Minister will clarify the meaning of that part of the Bill. Her statement during the debate on the Address on the matter has done nothing to allay the fears that many have expressed. I appreciate that she has enlarged upon that during her speech today, but I am possibly not the only one who feels that the matter has not been as fully clarified as such an important aspect of the Bill deserves.

In producing the Bill the Government have repeated a number of errors and misjudgments which educationists felt were things of the past. There is the inadequate length of time allowed for consultation, the additional burden placed upon schools with school-based training without the additional resources to provide it and the farcical decision not to allow sufficient time properly to assess experiments and changes introduced by the DFE.

The most glaring example of the latter relates to school-centred ITT. The scheme has been in operation for less than one year and has not been applied to primary schools. There should be no further development of the scheme until it can be properly evaluated. I assume that students on those courses will receive qualified teacher status without any validation from any higher education body. That is yet one more aspect which needs to be clarified. I hope that the Minister will refer to it in her response. A final example is that there is yet further centralisation—a point mentioned several times in today's debate—and yet more quangos created to deal with matters which are essentially issues for local government and higher education institutions.

In addition, to put it mildly, it is deeply sad that the Government and yet again ignoring the establishment of a general teaching council, I am delighted that the noble Lord, Lord Walton, and his committee place such importance on the matter. The case for a GTC, like the

[LORD DORMAND OF EASINGTON]

case for nursery education, is overwhelming, unassailable and not in dispute by anyone who knows anything about education. But once again the Government have deliberately ignored it.

I conclude by asking a question which I have posed on a number of previous occasions. Who do the Government listen to when preparing legislation on education? The teachers, the LEAs, the various advisers, the parents and all others all seem to be ignored. Moreover, what about Ofsted? Its survey entitled *The New Teacher in School* published this year provides an independent view and suggests quite clearly that standards of performance are satisfactory. The survey does not say that everything is fine and there is no need to do anything; but it certainly says that there is no case for any serious worry.

In all those matters, all the evidence demonstrates that new and far-reaching legislation in teacher education is unnecessary and, indeed, unwise at the present time. The Government frequently boast that they are flexible in policy, although one has to say that there is little evidence of that, but they can demonstrate it with this measure by accepting the many amendments which we shall table in Committee. I look forward to seeing their boast implemented.

6.33 p.m.

Baroness McFarlane of Llandaff: My Lords, yesterday, I was delighted to hear the Secretary of State for Education say in an interview broadcast on a one o'clock news programme that, "teachers are professionals. We value their individual judgment." I was delighted because that confirmed my own prejudice; and, because of that prejudice, I went to see teachers and those concerned with education to ask them what they thought about the Bill. I talked with teachers from primary schools, secondary schools and from the technical education sector. I also talked to a headteacher, two principals of colleges involved in teacher education, two professors of education and those involved in educational research. Without exception they expressed grave misgivings about the Government's proposals for the reform of initial teacher education enshrined in the Bill. I value their judgment because they are professionals.

I found that those to whom I talked held strongly to the view that effective teaching is built upon a body of knowledge and skills which higher education provides in partnership with schools. I believe that that partnership has been greatly enhanced in recent years with an increasing proportion of teacher training being school based and the development of improved schemes of mentorship.

I shall not deal with what Ofsted has said in its report about the products of education. But a headteacher to whom I spoke yesterday confirmed those findings so far as she was concerned: the intakes of new teachers into her school from initial teacher training were excellent teachers. They were highly skilled, knowledgeable in their subject background and skilful in classroom organisation. She was a satisfied consumer of initial teacher education.

The noble Baroness, Lady Cox, referred to apprenticeship training and her preference for that system. I was interested in her remarks because both she and I have been through systems of apprenticeship training in nursing. I know that what I have seen in apprenticeship training has very often been the exploitation of the apprentice and very little training. I am indeed glad that we have emerged from an apprenticeship system in nursing education. However, at the same time, I believe that it depends on what kind of apprenticeship training is given. Where there is effective supervision and an effective theoretical input which will give insights into one's practice, I believe that it can be good.

The noble Baroness also made reference to research in education, and her remarks were very persuasive. They painted a very black picture of the outcomes of education. I should like to look at those pieces of research in greater depth. It was not clear to me that the cause and effect relationship which the noble Baroness was drawing as regards the outcomes of education, the inputs of teacher training and the practice of education was really effectively drawn. In particular, she made reference to the learning of reading skills. As I said, I should like to look in greater depth at such research. As I look at the proposals, I am puzzled that the Government should wish to impose a totally new system with the minimum of consultation and without a real rationale and justification having been given to the profession or to the public who are consumers.

I should like to leave to one side the points that so many speakers have made in the debate about the erosion of teacher education that I see in the Bill and try to look more at the implications for the whole fabric of academic work. After 30 years in higher education, I look back on the initial steps that I made in pioneering higher education for nurses and recognise that in a university the strength of that system is the symbiotic relationship between different disciplines. I recall that, into our undergraduate programme, we put many methods of health education. At postgraduate level, we taught clinical teaching methods—that is, how you teach nurses skills—and we had an education elective in our masters programme that prepared nurses to become nurse teachers.

In all these essays into education we drew heavily on the Faculty of Education in the university in which I worked. We consulted it on curriculum development and on teaching special courses in education. We worked collectively with it on research projects and research into nursing education. That brought an immeasurable enrichment to my own department. Of course it was not only the education department that we worked with. We had service teaching from physiology and pathology and from all kinds of other departments in a medical school. We grew immeasurably by our contact with education and by the joint research that we carried out.

It seems to me that this Bill is an erosion of that seamless robe of academic work that we must perpetuate in order to have any kind of quality in our academic system. As I see it, this Bill will lead to the erosion of teacher education and its enrichment through

contact with other disciplines, but it will also lead to the erosion of the whole academic body of universities and higher education systems themselves. I, along with many others, would ask the Government to think again because I find little that I can support in this Bill. I feel that I should apologise because, despite having taken advice from the Whip's Office, I may have entirely miscalculated the length of time this debate will take and I must catch a train at 10 o'clock. If the summing up of the debate takes place before then, I shall be present; but I hope the House and the Minister will excuse me if I am not present.

6.42 p.m.

Baroness Park of Monmouth: My Lords, I shall speak only about the part of the Bill which deals with student unions. None of us can object to the idea that universities and colleges should be required to develop and implement, where they are not already in place, codes of practice governing the conduct of their students' unions, nor the need for accountability where public money is being spent. But there is no need for this Bill to achieve those simple and widely accepted ends. The CVCP has offered one possible procedure. The NUS itself has proposed the creation of a charity—the rules governing charities are strict—and indeed many, if not all, student unions already enjoy charitable status by association with their universities or other institutions. I know that the Minister has rejected those two possibilities; nevertheless I wish to refer to them.

Codes of practice already exist virtually everywhere. The Government are legislating to correct a situation which no longer exists, and has not done for some time. Student unions today are serious, responsible, professional organisations. They have done much good and have always played a valuable and positive part in the life of their institutions. It is true that some student unions have been guilty from time to time of using public money and their own power to support strange and disreputable causes—I recall the situation at the North London Polytechnic, but that was over 20 years ago—which were far removed from the proper business of students in general, politically interesting though they were to some individuals.

It is right that the misuse of funds intended for the general social needs of students should not be allowed to occur and that student unions should be fully accountable for the public moneys they receive. However, that is already being done by the institutions through which the Government pass funds to the student bodies. I urge my noble friend the Minister to think again and to heed the cogent arguments which have been put forward both by the institutions, through the CVCP, and through the balanced and sensible proposals of the student bodies themselves. The latter have addressed themselves fairly and squarely to, for instance, the voluntary principle in proposing an opt-out clause on a particular issue which would notwithstanding allow the student concerned to enjoy all the other advantages of union membership.

I wonder whether those who advise the Secretary of State have the faintest idea of what the unions actually contribute to the life of universities and, secondly, of

what the proposed legislation will entail in terms of bureaucratic time wasting for those institutions. For that there will certainly be. I take my examples for the latter from Oxford. I am aware that there is an unusually complex situation there, as at Cambridge. The university, in order to comply with the Bill, will have to negotiate on non-core activities, of which there would be many, with no fewer than 43 separate student organisations—the junior common rooms of 36 colleges and seven private halls, let alone the middle common rooms—and with the Oxford University Students Union which is responsible for distributing funds to all those bodies.

The administrative costs in terms of man hours will be absurdly excessive and the cost to college JCRs and MCRs could well exceed their whole budget. Their turnover is often less than £90,000 per annum, and for the Government to want costings of staff time, use of rooms and other matters, is absolutely absurd and makes nonsense of accountability. It is precisely because every university or institution has very different problems and solutions that it makes sense for the Government to trust them rather than to impose a nationwide strait-jacket; to continue to devolve power and responsibility to them; to continue the present internal accounting system; and to continue the existing *ultra vires* rule laid down by the Attorney-General in 1983.

In Oxford the university students' union takes its charitable status from its association with the university and it observes the *ultra vires* rule. The university circulates the Attorney-General's guidance to the students' union annually but there have never been any problems. The cost of administering the access funds and the student loan scheme is respectively £16,000, borne by the university, and £30,000, borne by the colleges on a 50 per cent. take-up of loans. Those costs are presumably replicated in all universities and we can expect similar costs in the proposed exercise. The institutions should not be asked to bear that additional expenditure on a completely unnecessary, superfluous and cumbersome exercise where the cost is out of all proportion to any possible improvement in accountability.

But, as usual, there is more at stake than money. I do not believe that the Government, who appear singularly badly advised by people who are still living in 1968, have begun to appreciate the positively valuable contribution the various student bodies make to university life. In Nottingham, for instance, they raised £100,000 last year for charity and they make a major contribution in terms of voluntary work in the community. In Oxford they have for some years now run an invaluable scheme known as Target Schools, in which junior and senior members of the university join together to work as missionaries to schools which have never before sent anyone to Oxford seeking to persuade them to think again.

The Oxford University Students Union produces an admirable student handbook for new entrants—it is a very important contribution—and runs an excellent counselling service. Working with the university it brings pressure to bear on LEAs who are late with grant payments, and provides legal advice for students with

[BARONESS PARK OF MONMOUTH]

bad landlords. It is, of course, active—I am glad that it is—in drama, music, sport and a hundred other activities that are part of the life of a university and, yes, it cares what is happening in the outside world. After all, students have a vote. Should they not know and care what the issues are? Should they not have views as citizens? We should be worried if they did not care about the world outside their university. What they must not do—they agree with this and so do we—is use public funds for political ends. There is another point. There are many universities where students may be living out, scattered in shoddy accommodation and often in poverty, far from the centre, and for them the union is their home. It is the place where they can feel they belong.

Relations between universities and their students are good today and things are working. As a former head of house and a member of council I know how vital and valuable these relations are, and how much they form a part of the success of any university. It would be a deeply retrograde step to introduce legislation which required constant, expensive and timewasting negotiations on what is a proper core activity and what is not. It would be so much simpler for the Secretary of State to proscribe in a simple communication to the institutions militant political activities of the kind that we all agree are an improper use of public funds and to leave the remainder for the universities to manage, as they have done. I hope that the Minister will consider carefully whether that would not be the best and wisest course. She would find the CVCP, the NUS, and everyone else very ready to work with her.

6.50 p.m.

Baroness Lockwood: My Lords, several noble Lords have already said that this is yet another unwelcome Education Bill. As with the previous Bills before the House in recent years, we have to ask: is the Bill necessary, and will it achieve anything? It is difficult to give a meaningful answer because much of the meat of the Bill is not yet known to the House. That will come before us in the form of regulations. In her speech today, the Minister indicated that a draft of the regulations would be published before Committee stage. That is helpful but it does not altogether meet the situation because regulations cannot be amended. The regulations would come before the House on a negative issue; at that point they cannot be amended.

I should like to refer to the two main subjects of the Bill. I start first with teacher education. My noble friends, Lord Glenamara and Lord Dormand, referred to the fact that the Government use the old description of teacher training whereas those involved in the education profession regard the subject as teacher education. That was underlined by the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Guildford.

In the context of the Bill, perhaps the Government are right to use the terminology of training because the implication underlying the Bill seems to be that teacher education is no longer necessarily to be regarded as a form of higher education. I find that somewhat strange. At a time when even the Government recognise the need

for more young people to obtain professional qualifications we are now taking a backward step and almost reducing teacher education to the old-fashioned "sitting with Nellie" type of training. I wonder what our European partners will make of the proposed changes. Our professional qualifications are supposed to be recognised by, and interchangeable with, those of other countries in the European Union. Already in most European countries the status of teachers is higher than it is in the UK. Will our partners in the future be so happy to accept our teachers as equivalent? Were they consulted during that all too short period of consultation? They have a legitimate interest in the subject.

There are a number of questions that the Government need to answer before they can be given the all-clear for the Bill. First, why do we need to have these changes at a time when the 1992 changes in secondary initial teacher education have not had time to be evaluated and, indeed, when we are in the middle of the consultation period for the reform of primary initial teacher education. Most of the universities and colleges involved in teacher education feel that the 1992 changes are working well and have enabled a good partnership to be established between them and secondary schools. Do the Government not accept that view? If not, what evidence do they have to support the contrary view? Certainly the recent Ofsted report does not support such a contrary view, as has already been indicated by several noble Lords.

Secondly, why do the Government feel that schools will be in a position to provide better courses than institutions of higher education and the colleges? The schools themselves do not claim that. The University of Leeds is greatly concerned about the subject. It wonders whether there will be any significant diseconomies of scale in school-based courses. It is of the opinion that there might be. It is, too, concerned that a further move towards school-based provision could lead to a reduction in the number of science teachers. That anxiety is based on the fact that schools with which the University of Leeds is associated and in partnership are having difficulty in accommodating the number of science graduates already coming forward to train as teachers. Will that situation be exacerbated by the changes which the Bill proposes?

Thirdly, what is the evidential basis for the Government's proposal to transfer the funding of teacher education and the funding of education research from the higher education funding council to a new teacher training agency? Can the Government show in any way how the separation of the funding of teacher education from the remainder of higher education will result in a higher quality or even greater efficiency and less bureaucracy? Again, the contrary will surely be the result.

The Minister accepted today that it is important to keep teaching and research together. However, does she not also accept that teaching and research in education are part of the whole field of teaching and research? As the noble Baroness, Lady McFarlane of Llandaff, indicated so tellingly, surely there is no clear distinction between research into teacher education and research

into education generally. Again, is not collaborative research across disciplinary boundaries important; and might that not suffer if the proposals are carried through? Could not the separation of education research from the remainder of university research lead to a narrow, less critical, focus which could have implications for the standing of research in social studies, of which education is an important part? Could it not perhaps threaten the international reputation of British education research generally? Those are important questions which the Government need to answer.

Far from being an independent body, as the Minister today indicated, there is a perception that the newly proposed teacher training agency is yet another attempt to undermine the independence of universities and to undermine academic freedom. The Government may deny that; and it may not be their intention. However, the fact is that that perception is present and it will be difficult for the Government to dispel it on the basis of this Bill.

Like the noble Lord, Lord Walton of Detchant, I can only lament the fact that the Government did not take the opportunity to establish a general teaching council rather than establishing another controversial agency. It would have given a new confidence to both the teaching profession and higher education. One must ask: why is it that the Government always seem to believe that they know better than the profession for which they seek to legislate?

I now turn to the second part of the Bill. I must say that it contains an equally bizarre and disruptive set of proposals on the subject of the students' unions. In order to try to control the so-called political activities of the students' unions, the Government are introducing legislation that would not only make it difficult for unions on university and college campuses to continue to provide the necessary services, but will also involve the institutions themselves in a whole mass of bureaucratic procedures.

Most universities—certainly the two with which I am closely involved; the universities of Bradford and Leeds—regard the campus union as a university facility, in the same way, for example, as a library is a university facility. It is open to all students and all students are automatically members of it.

The membership card of the union acts as an identity card which is the student's access to all other university facilities. If the union did not do that, then the university itself would have to do it. Many of the services that the unions provide would have to be provided in an alternative way. The Government have already indicated that apparently they do not mind if institutions spend public money on running some of the services that are already being run by the students' union, so long as the union itself is not involved. What a nonsense that is! Surely, as the noble Lord, Lord Renfrew, indicated, the activities of the students' union are a vital part of the students' education. They are a way of integrating students into the community of the campus, particularly as all students take advantage of one or more of the facilities on offer. Involvement in those facilities provides experience for a large number of students, not

just those with a sabbatical post, but many others with experience in running their own affairs. It would not be the same if the universities and colleges were to take over some of the functions of the students' union.

Like many other noble Lords who have spoken, I fear that the Government have been far too concerned about some of the activities of the students' unions in the past and are overlooking the excellent work that most of them are doing at present. In the state in which we have it today, I do not think that the Government have a right to expect us to pass such a Bill.

7.3 p.m.

The Lord Bishop of Ripon: My Lords, the Government's proposals to reform the structure and funding of teacher education rest on good principles. They include a concern to raise educational standards and levels of skill and to equip people to cope with change; a growing emphasis on the competences necessary for effective practice; the importance of training being closely linked to its practical application; the need for continuing training and development throughout working life; and increasing the effectiveness of expenditure on training. Those are good principles, but we do not need a Bill to implement them, as has been amply demonstrated in your Lordships' House this afternoon.

The first point I wish to make is simple and straightforward. The partnership between higher education institutions providing teacher training, on the one hand, and schools, on the other, is a key element in good teacher education. Indeed, I think I heard the Minister in her introduction talk about the need for a structure within which such a partnership could evolve. That partnership already exists, is well tested, works effectively and therefore should be built upon.

Teacher education in colleges and universities is not perfect, but most of it is good; some of it is excellent. It is founded upon the partnership between institutions and schools. There is a place for strengthening the partnerships and for developing better and clearer forms of it, and indeed a case for allowing schools to play a more prominent role. But that is to build on what already exists. That the Bill does not do. The proposals in the Bill would shift the centre of training to the school, a responsibility which most schools do not want and do not have the resources to undertake.

Existing partnership arrangements in the college of education which is nearest to me—the college of Ripon and York St. John—are well established. The college has a network of relationships with schools throughout North Yorkshire and Humberside. They include primary and secondary schools, Church-maintained and independent schools. Students on the four-year degree course in education spend time in each of their four years in schools. Students doing the post-graduate certificate in education are in schools for three days a week throughout their certificate year. There is already a strong emphasis upon teaching experience in schools during teacher training, and it is the partnership between institution and school which enables that to happen. The case has not been made out for the need for a new

[THE LORD BISHOP OF RIFON]  
agency to improve and develop that partnership. That improvement and development could take place as well or better within the existing framework.

My next point is the pressure that the new arrangements will place on smaller colleges, some of them Church colleges, originally founded specifically to provide teacher training, as the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Guildford pointed out. Those institutions have diversified in order to give them greater strength, but in some cases the weight of their work is still in teacher training. They will be required under the new arrangements to account to two bodies, the Higher Education Funding Council and the teacher training agency, for use of their funds, with a consequent increase in bureaucracy. That has already been pointed out by many of your Lordships. Those institutions which derive more than half their funds from the teacher training agency will face particularly difficult circumstances since presumably responsibility for the general oversight of such institutions will pass to the agency. There is a fear among some of the smaller colleges that their existence will be threatened.

I was grateful to the Minister for her warm words about denominational colleges, but I could not help contrasting them with the words which appear in the Bill. Clause 6 refers to denominational colleges and subsection (4) speaks of funding. The phrases which occur there qualify the activities of the funding agency in a most curious way. I feel that I need to read the subsection, both for its curious syntax and for the implications which it will have for denominational colleges:

"In exercising their functions in relation to the provision of financial support for qualifying activities a funding agency shall have regard (so far as they think it appropriate to do so in the light of any other relevant considerations) to the desirability of maintaining—

(a) what appears to them to be an appropriate balance in the support given by them as between institutions which are of a denominational character and other institutions";  
Could it not simply say "a funding agency shall maintain a balance"?

Baroness Seear: My Lords, I am grateful to the right reverend Prelate for allowing me to intervene. Would he say that that was a good example of basic English?

The Lord Bishop of Ripon: My Lords, I am grateful to the noble Baroness for making that point so well.

Those colleges—Christian colleges in some cases—have been established as Christian foundations, with a specific concern to provide teachers whose convictions and values were well grounded. In the light of the debate in this House tomorrow on respect for persons and the law, there must be concern not just for the professional training of teachers, important though that is, but also for their personal development. Church colleges, other colleges and all higher education institutions lay stress on the personal qualities of the teacher, nurturing self-awareness and the critical faculties, and encouraging the articulation of values in personal and social life. Some of the smaller colleges feel that under the provisions of the Bill they might well disappear.

The proposals seem to imply that teacher training is no longer to be regarded as a form of higher education. That surely must be wrong. Teachers are required to have a high level of skills, and whoever trains them must be in a position to ensure that the results are academically and professionally credible. Schools obviously have a vital part to play in the education of teachers, but higher education institutions must retain their function in respect of the formation of teachers; providing essential subject knowledge at degree level; coupling professional training with a sound research base; and nurturing the students in personal development. Surely a shift away from that emphasis will not attract people of quality to the teaching profession.

If the Government insist that school-based courses must be more thoroughly explored, surely the existing framework provides the means of doing that. The extension of such courses does not require the creation of the new bureaucracy. I listened carefully to the noble Baroness the Minister as she introduced the Bill. It seemed to me that time and again she laid emphasis upon the need for the Higher Education Funding Council and the teacher training agency to work very closely together. Indeed at one point I believe she suggested that the advisory committee should be advisory to both bodies. Surely that raises once again the question of why two such bodies are necessary. No case has been made out.

I am no supporter of professional isolation. I believe that education goes on in many ways. Teachers need to look to all sorts of other people who are involved in education to parents and to others in the community. But all of this involves a strong profession at the core, and I do not believe that this Bill will nurture it.

I do not wish to make more than one brief comment about the matter of student unions. Along with other Members of this House, I have received many briefings. I have received an extensive one from Leeds University, on whose court I sit. But the one piece of correspondence that I received that moved me above all was a letter from an individual student, a girl at Leeds University, who wrote to me explaining her involvement in community work, which had been made possible for her by the student union. She talked about the way in which the lack of that experience would have been a tremendous loss to her. As I read her letter, it seemed to me that she was talking about the possibility of a real diminution of the university experience and of the educational opportunities offered through it. As I read that letter, I have to say that my chief emotion was one of anger at the loss to that particular girl and to many thousands of other students should these provisions go through. I share with other noble Lords the hope that this Bill will,

"depart and be no more seen"

If we have to see it again I trust that we shall amend it with vigour.

7.14 p.m.

Lord Skidelsky: My Lords, I shall confine my remarks to the first and most important part of this Bill. I shall make only one comment on the second part, namely that dealing with student unions; that is, that

there is a history here, and that history has to be taken into account. It is no good saying that just at this moment in time student unions are admirable organisations which do very well by their students. There has been a history of abuse of power. The noble Lord, Lord Addington, said that we do not want to declare war on Germany just because there was a Blitz in 1940. That is quite right. But we are interested in setting up a security system that prevents those kinds of things from happening. This Bill disarms the potential of student unions to repeat the things that they used to do not so long ago, not in some dim and distant past. I was at an institution that was destroyed by a student union in the 1970s. Many outrages have taken place since then. In inserting that degree of disarmament the Government have been right. But that is all that I wish to say on that part of the Bill.

On teacher training, which I regard as being at the heart of the matter, I welcome the Government's reforms. They have been designed to create a greater diversity of routes into teaching in order to get a more varied intake. That is very, very important. They have also been designed to introduce a greater variety of backgrounds and life experiences. This area was becoming very much a monoculture, with a very narrow route into the teaching profession—there were really only two avenues. The Government have expanded the number of routes to four by setting up licensed teaching programmes and also articulated teaching schemes. Those are both school-based programmes. As I understand it, Clause 11 of the Bill simply extends the possibility of school-based initial teacher training programmes by empowering either individual schools or consortia of schools to provide that initial teacher training and give them the funds to do so. The key word is "empower", as my noble friend the Minister said—not "force" but "empower". There is no compulsion involved. And so many of the speeches that have argued that the Government were trying to force teacher training into schools away from universities have missed that simple point. They do not have the power to do so and this Bill does not provide them with that power.

I also think it is quite sensible to set up a teacher training agency in order to channel funds to a more diverse system of providers. Noble Lords have asked why the existing Higher Education Funding Council cannot provide the balanced funding between the different providers that will emerge. The answer is that its funding goes directly to the universities. Its bias is therefore necessarily, and rightly from its point of view, in that direction. There is a serious danger that school-based programmes will be under-funded unless some extra provision is made for them. At the moment the funding for the pioneer programmes comes directly from the general government fund. The Government are trying to set up a system that will provide for balanced funding over the whole range of providers. That is on the whole sensible, though we certainly need to clarify the respective roles of the Higher Education Funding Council, the ESRC and the new teacher training agency in the funding of teacher education in its broadest sense.

The gravamen of the charge against this Bill is that it undermines the professionalism of teachers and interferes with academic freedom. I want to deal specifically with those two charges.

On the first point, I was astonished when the noble Earl, Lord Russell, said (and I hope that I quote him accurately) that teachers' professionalism must be a matter of purely academic judgment. If that doctrine were accepted, government would have no power, or indeed responsibility, for what goes on in the classroom, however foolish or vile the practices. It was precisely because the professionalism of teachers had been called into question by many people who were not necessarily sympathetic to this Government that the reform of teacher training became so necessary. I remind the House that it was the noble Lord, Lord Callaghan, who in 1976 warned that unless teachers put their own house in order, there would be legislation. That legislation has come to pass because they did not put their own house in order.

There is a great deal of confusion about what we mean by teachers' "professionalism". It seems to me that there are two aspects to it. One is mastery of subjects. Everyone accepts that. Teachers have to know the subjects in order to be able to teach them. The other aspect is pedagogy—knowing how to teach. Sometimes the two are not sufficiently distinguished.

No one suggests that the validation of subject qualifications should be removed from universities. It is not suggested in this Bill. School-based courses will be for graduates or people who already have subject qualifications, qualifications given and validated by universities or other academic bodies. So there is no question of by-passing that system of validation.

When it comes to pedagogy, we have a different position and there is a different picture. Pedagogy is not analogous to medicine, law or accountancy. There is no theoretically based good practice which defines professional teaching. There are a number of arguments and approaches and they are in contention. I was struck by the touching faith of the noble Lord, Lord Judd, that full understanding of educational theory is the golden road to better teaching. If he believes that, he will believe anything. I can think of few things more destructive of effective teaching than a full understanding of educational theory. Educational theory is not in that state of development. We can still read with great profit Rousseau's *Emile*, written in the 18th century. We cannot read with great profit a medical text written in the 18th century. That is the difference. Education is an immature discipline and, because of the very strong element of politics, ideology and connection with wider social aims that are always part of the theory of how to teach, that will remain the case and educational theory will always be highly disputable.

It is at least reasonable to expect that, where experts disagree, there will be a variety of approaches. But we do not find that. As my noble friend Lady Cox pointed out, over the past 20 years there has been a dominant orthodoxy driven by ideology, fashion and assertion rather than by method and argument. That has manifested itself in all kinds of ways: for example, in the assertion that one cannot do arithmetic unless one

[LORD SKIDELSKY]

understands the concept of number; in the misuse of linguistics in order to decry the importance of teaching grammar; and in the belief that didactic teaching is so uncongenial to learning that children should spend all their time trying to reinvent the wheel. Those are all dogmas which have had enormously strong influence on primary education.

Those are not my ideas or assertions. They have been said by people who have great experience in education. The noble Lord, Lord Judd, quoted Professor Robin Alexander of Leeds University. I can quote him too. He is regarded as a highly sensible and sober investigator. He said:

"The idea that a local education authority can be the sole definer, arbiter and guardian of good practice must be abandoned. Teacher training institutions must stop laying down a 'party line'."

Ever since Plowden, there's been a pseudo-consensus—an assumption that there's no need to debate what constitutes good practice. Generations of primary teachers have been brought up to accept, whether they like it or not, that this is the way to think and that is the way to do things.

There is now overwhelming evidence that some of those central beliefs are questionable, to say the least, and that many of the most widely endorsed practices simply don't work. As a result, millions of children have had a raw deal—they've wasted such a hell of a lot of time.

That is the background against which the reform of teacher training is being attempted. It is not a culture which produces lively, inquiring minds. It is a culture in which often enough people who have come or want to come into the profession are forced out by the weight of orthodoxy that they encounter or are indoctrinated into a belief. It is a betrayal of teachers who want to devote their lives to teaching. It is a betrayal of children. To argue that everything is all right in this particular garden seems to me to be quite wrong.

That brings me to my last point about the question of academic freedom. It is alleged by many noble Lords that the Bill will stifle objective research into education, destroy a healthy research community, or destroy the sound research base, as though all those things already exist and something healthy is being cut down and destroyed by the Government. Where have noble Lords been living over the past few years? Much of that is simply fantasy. I have had occasion to study professionally much of the research that has taken place and I have also had experience in my own university. Many of the fruits of that research I would describe as an uncontrolled growth of theory, an excessive emphasis on what is called the context in which teaching takes place, which is code for class, gender and ethnic issues, and an extreme paucity of testable hypotheses about what works and does not work.

Of course that is not the whole picture. There is a lot of excellent research going on. But on many of the issues on which we want answers and on which answers are in principle attainable, there has been no research at all. Surely the Government have the right—not to stop research or stifle activities, but to ask that other kinds of research that need to be done are done.

These issues involving professional responsibility and academic freedom are very difficult. People's judgment will differ on where the line should be drawn between self-regulation and external regulation. I have

no doubt in my mind that by encouraging many flowers to bloom in this particular monoculture, the Government have chosen the right approach. I hope that they will have the courage to go forward and accept the necessary amendments to improve the Bill as it now stands.

7.28 p.m.

**Lord Plant of Highfield:** My Lords, first I should declare an interest which no doubt affects my reaction to the proposals contained in the Bill. I have been an academic for 27 years, first as a lecturer in the University of Manchester, and for the past 15 years as a professor at the University of Southampton. During that time, I have had quite a lot to do with students' unions as well as with the pastoral and administrative oversight of undergraduates. I am also married to a primary school teacher, and I shall have some observations to make about the proposals for teacher education. To those noble Lords who believe that such a background debars me from membership of the real world and turns me into a member of the much despised educational establishment, I say that in what spare time I have, I also chair an engineering company. So I feel that I have some links with the real world and some knowledge of how education interacts with the so-called real world.

I should like first to say a few words about the proposals on students' unions. From the perspective of someone who spends three hours every Monday morning with several senior colleagues at Southampton University in a committee dealing with the allocation of public funds coming to the university and monitoring the use of those funds by all the budgetary groups within the university, I find the preoccupation with students' unions very curious. I find it difficult to believe that that is now the highest priority in terms of the efficiency and effectiveness of the universities. Of course the noble Lord, Lord Skidelsky, is quite right; there is a history to this, and I agree that in some respects it has its deplorable moments; but those issues can be dealt with in different ways.

Given the Government's political priorities, the proposed reforms set out in the Bill seem to be over bureaucratic and over intrusive even in terms of securing the Government's own objectives. It is also the case that at the moment we are being asked to give a Second Reading to a Bill which, as many noble Lords said, distinguishes between core and non-core activities—core being those which can be supported by public funds and non-core those which cannot, but the distinction between the two being promulgated by the Secretary of State by means of regulation. I am pleased that I am not the only member of your Lordships' House to find that an objectionable procedure. The noble Lord, Lord Renfrew, called it a "Henry VIII" Bill; in my slightly less elevated horizon it seems to me to be more like the legislative equivalent of the nursery rhyme, "Come into my parlour said the spider to the fly."

I am worried by the distinction between core and non-core activities. I want to set the issue in the context of the rapid expansion of universities. I do not know how many noble Lords are aware of the great changes that have taken place in universities in the past few years

as a result of the welcome expansion which the Government encouraged. However, it has been difficult for universities to expand welfare and pastoral support to keep pace with the expansion. Lecture group sizes have gone up, in some cases to quite astronomical proportions, so that in the first year one is teaching several hundred students and using video link-ups with other lecture theatres, and so forth; tutorial class sizes have also increased enormously.

Students are therefore going through a much more anonymous learning experience. In addition, the modularisation of courses—a crucial feature in the more efficient use of resources in the university—means that students now do not go through degree courses as an identifiable group as they once did. When I was an undergraduate, my intake went through the whole three years as a group and we acted as a group of friends, each of us finding support from the others. That is now not a typical experience of the undergraduate, outside perhaps Oxbridge, in modular courses containing a large number of students. In those circumstances, the student union plays a vital role in providing clubs and societies in which students can develop a sense of common interest, friendship with other students and a sense of common purpose. The clubs and societies are not just forms of self-indulgence. In my view they are essential ways of providing a sense of community and a sense of identity, together with a degree of support, in universities which are becoming larger and more anonymous.

In the summer the Government indicated that sport could be funded out of public funds and thus be regarded as core. But no guarantee about support through public funds was given for religious and cultural groups, whether it be the Christian Union, Islamic, Chinese, Jewish, Asian groups or whatever else. Yet those are crucial ways of creating a sense of belonging for students who will feel very much at sea in the newly emerging, highly anonymous institutions. I thought that the Conservative Party, following Burke, was rather keen on the idea of the "little platoons" which mediate between the individual and large-scale institutions. The present proposal seems to undermine that principle.

In her opening remarks, the noble Baroness said that what was crucial was the voluntary principle; that people should choose to belong to such groups and if they belonged to them, they should be paid for by voluntary means or at least not public means. But the noble Earl, Lord Russell, was right to say that that raised not only the question of choice, but also of opportunity and how far specific students would have the resources to buy into those groups which are, as I suggested, essential to creating a sense of greater belonging within those rather anonymous sorts of institution.

The distinction between core, publicly-funded activities and non-core activities and the need to account for each strand of funding will create a bureaucratic nightmare, as many noble Lords with experience of university bureaucracy mentioned. Students' unions obviously have permanent officials and permanent employees. At the moment they exercise their duties across what would be both core and non-core activities. If the universities must be accountable for ensuring that

public funds are spent only on core activities, that will present a monumental bureaucratic problem. If the Government believe that money is being spent inappropriately, and if there is a history of that—as there surely is, as the noble Lord, Lord Skidelsky, said—the remedy is not through an enormous bureaucratic framework; it is through the reiteration of the guidance provided by the Attorney-General in 1983, and the *ultra vires* provisions in relation to the Charities Commission.

It is part of the Government's intention to restrict the sphere of a students' union activity to the institutional campus. However, that seems to me to be an undue restriction in a free society. Surely it is reasonable to believe that students have some common interests across campuses between universities and should have a right to voice those common interests. In the local community also, and perhaps more obviously, they have interests; for example, in the activities of local authorities, street lighting, physical security and housing are all issues mentioned by noble Lords. Surely it is right that students' unions should, as corporate bodies, be allowed to make representations to local authorities. To prevent them seems to be a draconian restriction on the freedom of institutions in what has come to be called recently "civil society".

Overall, therefore, I am completely unconvinced by the case put forward in the Bill in relation to students' unions. There are existing procedures which can be built upon and the Government's anxiety for accountable and appropriate public expenditure can be met in other ways.

I want to turn briefly to the problems of teacher education. I should say first that I do not hold any specific brief for what might be called "progressive" education which seems to me—the noble Lord, Lord Skidelsky, brought this out—to be the subtext of the Government's concern in the Bill. I had deep misgivings regarding many of the teaching methods that became fashionable in the 1970s and believe strongly that some of those damaged, in the public mind, the prospects for comprehensive education to which, as an 11-plus failure myself, I am passionately committed. There is no necessary link between comprehensive education and specific teaching methods. I believe that those that were in fashion for a period actually did harm to the comprehensive ideal.

Having said that, the Government's proposals in the Bill are draconian and unnecessary. I believe that the national curriculum and testing will require changes and are requiring changes in teaching practices and thereby teacher education of the sort that the Government want to see. Those institutions offering teacher education courses will need to train teachers with the skills to operate the curriculum. Even given the Government's criticism of the content of training courses, the content of the courses will change as and where they need to to meet the new demands from the schools operating the national curriculum and the testing regime without needing to invoke a new quango.

It is curious that the Government are proposing that the link between teacher training and higher education will be diluted in circumstances in which the education of nurses is being brought much closer to the university.

[LORD PLANT OF HIGHFIELD]

I am part of a group at Southampton University negotiating with the regional health authority to bring the training of nurses within the ambit of the university. That is thought by the region to be central to the growth of professional status among nurses. It is crucial to expanding and consolidating the knowledge base of nurse education. It is argued that good nursing practice needs to be kept close to research in medicine. The knowledge base, a disciplined approach to training and a link to research are thought to be fundamental to professionalisation. The proposals in the Bill, it seems to me, will threaten all of those in relation to the education and training of teachers. So while we are undertaking one strategy to professionalise the nurses, we are going down a different path which may de-professionalise the teachers.

I am also worried about the way in which the proposals in the Bill might threaten the growth of the knowledge base in education which grows—here I have to disagree with the noble Lord, Lord Skidelsky, but I do not have time to explain why—as the result of research in all those disciplines which contribute to education. I accept that there is no core subject called education, but I think that there are disciplines that bear on education and that it is important that they should be researched into in relation to how they affect the educational process. Psychology and social psychology are the most obvious examples.

The Bill seems to put the control of the funding of educational research into the hands of the teacher training agency—controlled by about 10 people all appointed by the Secretary of State. The noble Baroness said in her opening remarks that that was a mistaken assumption and the TTA will fund educational research through the normal formula funding. If that is so, I welcome that point. However, I would hope that at some point it will be put directly into the Bill because I cannot see it there at the moment.

The noble Lord, Lord Skidelsky, referred to schools being empowered but not required to enter this arrangement and process. That may be so—and I accept that—but given that the distinction drawn by the noble Baroness and other speakers between, as it were, good schools which would be encouraged to participate and those which would not, I wonder how far the good schools that might be encouraged to participate and might want to participate have the resources to do so. I have an example close to home. It could not be closer to home. It is the example of my wife's school. She has a class of 35 five-year-olds. It is a successful school. It meets all the criteria of success that the Government would want. There are other classes of 37 in that school. Apart from the fact that one can hardly get through the door into the classroom because of bodies, I wonder how far schools will have the resources to undertake this kind of activity if they are good schools, and whether the parents who are anxious to send their children to the kind of school that my wife teaches in because they think they get good teaching will be happy about their children being taught, for presumably quite long periods, by those who are undertaking this apprentice ship, as the noble Baroness, Lady Cox, called it.

Last month, if I may finish on a slightly lighter note, in her pay-slip—this happened to all the teachers in the school—my wife not only got the print out of her pay but a letter from Hampshire Education Authority offering courses on stress management. If the Bill goes through, and if some of the provisions contained in the Bill become law, I am sure that she will be taking it up.

7.43 p.m.

Lord Elis-Thomas: My Lords, I want to follow the noble Lord, Lord Plant, and indeed the consensus in the debate—an almost unbroken consensus—against the Bill. I want to speak strongly against the second part of the Bill and strongly in favour of one clause of Part I of the Bill. It is a clause which I shall call the Welsh Office opt-out because, in case noble Lords have not noticed it, Clause 1 provides that the teacher training agency, "shall not do anything in relation to Wales, or institutions or students in Wales, except at the request of the Secretary of State". That is the part I strongly support. I shall return to it later.

In the Charter for Higher Education booklet entitled *Higher quality and choice*—purely for brevity's sake I shall quote only from the English language version, although clearly both versions are to be treated on a basis of equality following the Welsh Language Act—the Government tell students:

"The Government has proposed new rights for you in connection with your student union".

That seems to be the height of irony when we read Part II of the Bill. What we are seeing is not rights for students but regulations by the Secretary of State. We are debating today in advance of the regulations but we are looking forward to seeing them before we debate the Bill in Committee. I am certain that that will have an effect on the way in which the House will view the whole of the Bill. It is an extremely odd way of proceeding with legislation to specify the coming of regulations, then to be debating the principle and then to be faced with detailed regulations which may well be going beyond the principle of the Bill.

We know already, on the basis of the discussion document, that the regulations may refer to this notion of core services. It seems to me that here we have a complete misunderstanding of the nature and role of student unions. I speak as someone who has been an official of student unions, a university and college teacher and has worked closely, particularly with the NUS Wales, over 20 years. As other noble Lords have said, student unions are not trade unions. That is a completely false analogy. I will concede one point to the extreme Right. I concede the point that many of us in the past and many student union leaders since then—certainly in the sixties and seventies—did pretend to behave as if student unions were trade unions.

Baroness Blatch: Some still do.

Lord Elis-Thomas: My Lords, I do not think that we should be legislating for the small minority of extremists in any camp. But I shall come to the Bill as the revenge of the FCS later on.

The point I want to make here is that student unions are a social combination. They are part of the

community of scholars on a campus. They represent the students, just as the staff associations and the governing bodies represent the colleges or the universities, whatever structure we are talking about. Their role of social provision, their role of external provision indeed, is inherent to their very activity. Therefore, to think that one can distinguish between a core activity which is suitable for public funding and an activity which is not suitable for public funding is completely to misunderstand the nature of the organisation.

On that I want to put down a marker for later in the debate and ask whether it is the intention of our Secretary of State—if I may so call him—the Secretary of State for Wales, to prepare guidelines which are specific to the position of student unions in Wales. I ask that because of my interest as chairman-designate of the Welsh Language Board which comes into existence later this month. The Charter for Higher Education refers to the Welsh language legislation and to the requirement for public bodies to propose language schemes. It states:

"All higher education institutions in Wales will have to produce schemes which will set out the services and courses available in Welsh and to make this information available to you on request".

Clearly, the Welsh Office is already indicating that there is a dimension to student union activity in Wales which is specific and special. I ask the Welsh Office to consider when looking at regulations whether it is appropriate for the Welsh Office to exercise an opt-out here as well as in Part I of the Bill.

I mention that specifically because the National Union of Students in Wales, as a national organisation within Wales, and its constituent unions and bodies have been very much in the forefront of developing bilingual policies. Indeed, from the sixties on the single organisation in Wales in the education sector that has done most to develop the use of the Welsh language both in administration and in campaigning for Welsh medium teaching is the National Union of Students in Wales—*Undeb Cenedlaetol Myfyrwyr Cymru*. It has provided courses for students. It has emphasised to students coming in from outside Wales the nature of the national and regional culture and so on. All that activity in no way comes under the core funding, yet it seems to be crucial to the kind of activity that a learning community should be involved in.

I turn to a letter of 3rd November from my right honourable friend the Minister of State at the Welsh Office in another place—I think I can still call him my honourable friend—the right honourable Sir Wyn Roberts, to Glyn Williams, President of NUS Wales. Glyn Williams was questioning him about how the regulations will operate. The Minister of State replied:

"Institutions will remain free to support union activities outside the core, though if they wished to do so with public funds they would not be able to use the student union channel".

That is very revealing. It is important that we should be told, if these institutions decide to support non-core activities with public funds, how they intend to do that. Are they to be in the business of setting up some alternative organisation which clearly would not be cost-effective? If they are not going to use student union channels, what channels are they to use?

We have seen in this whole debate about the second part of the Bill not only a misunderstanding of the role of student unions within the education community but an attempt by government to legislate in an area where no legislation should be required. I feel that none of the speeches from this side of the House this evening has justified the need for legislation. Surely that could be done in other ways.

We should have allowed for the exploration of the issue of charitable status to be taken much further. We should have allowed for the autonomy of the governing bodies of colleges and of student unions to sort this matter out. If there are difficulties, it is up to the political organisational skills of students and governing bodies of our institutes, colleges and universities to deal with them. I fail to see why it is necessary to legislate in this area at all. Surely this is an attack on the very basis of academic freedom, which is the autonomy of institutions to be self-governing and in a democratic way.

That brings me to the point that, as far as I can see, this Bill is indeed the revenge of the FCS. It is the revenge of that small fringe of young Conservatives which decided to take on a campaign within and against student unions in the 1980s. It is very regrettable that the Government should be bringing legislation to this House dictated from that sector of their supporters. As other noble Lords have said, it is a piece of party conference rhetoric and it should have stayed at that level.

I now come to the one other issue which is very important; it is in relation to core and non-core funding. We are now in a position where student support is being reduced. The Government have done so again in the recent Budget. So the idea that somehow students are going to be flush with money to be able to contribute voluntarily to all the non-core activities is completely false. I declare an interest because I have a son who is a student at the University of Wales. No doubt his middle brother will want to follow him somewhere, and probably outside Wales.

The young people of his generation are not in a position to make choices about whether they are going to spend their money on core or non-core activities. When one comes to the non-core activity, as the noble Lord, Lord Plant, said, we are talking about the national organisation of student activity and the representation of the student voice at the national and international level in relation to government and other institutions. In addition, we have the issue of the community activity in which students are involved.

The noble Lord, Lord Callaghan, is the president of University College Swansea. He reminded me earlier that about 600 students in Swansea are directly involved on a continuing basis in community work. We have activity in the area of social clubs, service facilities and the commercial activities of the student unions. We also have the rag activities. For example, only last year the rag at Aberystwyth, which is not the biggest of university colleges, raised over £300,000. I am sure that noble Lords can produce similar figures for their

[LORD ELIS-THOMAS]

institutions. We are talking about a community contribution from students, which is an inherent part of their education.

It may be of interest to some noble Lords to reflect that, had I not become involved as I did as a student union official in the 1960s, I probably would not be in this House. That might be regarded as appropriate in the view of some people opposite. But it is that very activity which is part of the educational experience—the learning to be a social animal, a citizen, and learning to participate in dialogue and debate and to win arguments against the extreme Left or extreme Right in student politics. If the Conservative Government are really concerned about the position of extremist students, they should be training their own student supporters to take on in a non-combative way the extreme Left, if that is their concern. That is how we should be dealing with this issue.

We should be enabling and empowering students themselves to be politically effective in ensuring that no institution is taken over by an extremist organisation, not having a government legislating in an extremist way to deal with the issue. That is a part of the Bill with which I disagree, in case somebody has missed that point.

I come finally and quickly to the teacher training provision and the teacher training agency. I am very concerned to see in this context the separation of teacher training from the rest of higher education at a time when other services, including the nursing service and the social work service, are being increasingly professionalised. Higher education is being seen as the right place for this training to take place and the right context. Yet it seems that in the work of the teacher training agency we are pushing that out. We are going to create that very separation between theory and practice which those of the Right tendency have been criticising in so-called progressive education. It is the unity of theory and practice which will provide for relevant and effective teaching.

I welcome, as I say, the Welsh Office opt-out. I welcome the fact that the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales is going to be the funding agency for institutions within Wales. I know that at the beginning the Minister told us that this was a matter of scale. For me it is not just a matter of scale because we already have 15 higher education institutions and only about 2,000 schools. It is also a matter of very effective principle. It will be an advantage to us in Wales that we can plan our initial teacher training with the rest of our higher education. It will be an advantage to us that we can maintain the strong links between HE schools and the funding council, particularly in the area in which I am charged to take an overview, the development of Welsh medium education. For those reasons I welcome this opt-out.

I welcome too the fact that, since the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales will have that responsibility for initial teacher training in Wales, it will mean that the criteria for initial teacher training courses will be set by the Secretary of State for Wales rather than by the Secretary of State for Education. I welcome

that yet further example of the devolutionary policies of the Conservative Government, at least as far as administrative devolution is concerned. That relates of course to a different curriculum in Wales and the different needs of the schools. I welcome that very strongly. But I feel sad for the education system in England, which is going to be saddled with this teacher training agency.

7 58 p.m.

Lord Quinton: My Lords, I do not plan to detain noble Lords very long. I believe that all my best horses have been shot already in the previous stages of the debate. In some ways I shall speak to rectify the balance a little, not perhaps nearly as far as my noble friend the Minister would like, but at least perhaps give a more broadly sympathetic view than some of those which have been expressed.

It is quite evident—is it not?—that the two main elements in this Bill do address genuine problems. The first problem is that somehow the teacher training colleges are not doing what they ought to do. The second problem is that students are liable to turn nasty. I say "liable" but accepting the point that major student disturbances are a thing of the past. Today we have what one might call student-related student disturbances—Mr Portillo's eggs and the Secretary of State being besieged somewhere in his constituency by a howling mob of Balliol men. Admittedly, that is a terrible thing to endure, but it is altogether on a much less frightful scale than what happened in the past.

I make this remark because nobody has made it: the interesting thing is that as far as I know the students' union is an entirely British phenomenon. In France you emerge from the lecture hall, or from lecture hall No. 3, where you have seen a lecture on the video, as the noble Lord, Lord Plant, said, and then go immediately to a commercial café with your coat over your shoulder and engage in ardent discussion of some up-to-date fashionable topic. There is no students' union or any provision of that kind. I do not believe there is anything of that sort in Germany. There are, of course, social provisions of various types in the United States. My point simply is that the existence of students' unions certainly does not seem to exacerbate student unrest but, if anything, the opposite.

Our student unrest is a very meagre affair compared with what went on in France in *Les événements de Mai* and in the United States, so it does not seem to me that students' unions are a serious problem in themselves or are the point at which to take precautions against dangers of repeated student uprising. One has to face those things as they come. No amount of adjusting the arrangements governing the public funding of students' unions, which I hope will continue, will deal with that.

I turn now to what I think is the much more serious issue of teacher training. As I said a moment ago, rather in the style of Admiral Beatty observing the poor conduct of our battleships at Jutland (in language which I shall not repeat in your Lordships' House), our battleships are not doing very well. As was stated earlier, our young school leavers of 16, 17 and 18 are markedly lower achievers than their age-mates—their

correlates—in France and Germany. Where do we look for the explanation of that? We certainly do not look to heredity. It must be something in the surroundings. Is it that our public culture is very hostile to education? I should have thought that there was something in that. It was not always so—particularly in Wales. Perhaps Wales is a little different. That may explain the different arrangements, but there is still an old-fashioned, 19th century idea permeating the whole community there that education is a wonderful thing to get hold of.

Nevertheless, it is impossible to suppress the thought that the way in which teachers are prepared for their tasks is somehow not working well. It is not a matter of indoctrination. One usually reacts negatively to indoctrination. After a good deal of Church and King—as it was in those days—between the years 1942 and 1944, I was an ardent Trotskyite. It did not lead to anything much, but was, I think, a simple reaction to rather heavy indoctrination at school with compulsory chapel, corps, and all that stuff. One gets over that because an indoctrination such as I am talking about is overt and explicit and one cannot avoid being aware that it is going on.

Altogether more insidious is to work in an intellectual environment where certain assumptions are made but never very elaborately spelled out because there is nobody to criticise them. This is where I take issue with the noble Lord, Lord Glenamara, who referred in a praising manner to Dewey—I am sure that it was John Dewey he had in mind—as a great contributor to educational theory. Many people in the United States regard him as having had a more disastrous influence on the intellectual level of American school pupils than anybody else. He is the force somewhere behind "projects"—"fooling about", broadly speaking; the enlarged and variegated forms of finger painting which replaced old fashioned, definite instruction in an activity where there is a clear difference between getting it right and getting it wrong. Here I agree with my noble friend Lord Skidelsky that Dewey is a pretty paradigm educational theorist.

In the formation of teachers—in Britain at any rate—there seem to be three ingredients. Noble Lords have adverted to them already. First, there is the subject, which may already have been sufficiently accommodated in an earlier phase of the proceedings in an ordinary first degree course. Then there is the practical classroom experience, which is the nets, as it were, the vital part of the whole thing. There is then a need for something else—and that is educational theory. As has been pointed out, there is not all that much to educational theory. There are some quite useful bodies of theory from which something can be learned, but educational theory proper is nothing serious at all.

The noble Lord, Lord Walton of Detchant, compared the situation of a person studying to be a teacher with that of a person studying to be a doctor as if the bodies of scientific doctrine that were associated with and nourished the clinical or pedagogical work were strictly comparable. Of course, they are not. What one has in the field of educational theory is a number of poets, model makers and fantasists, from Rousseau onwards. There is no theory there. In fact, what occupied the place called

"educational theory" was an insidious ideology of intellectual permissiveness which said, "You don't have to get anything right. Let it all hang out. Do what you feel. Spell it any way you like. That is a fine, lively, natural and impulsive way of speaking". To be taught how to organise one's sentences properly does not necessarily prevent one from using other sentences behind the teacher's back. It is not destructive of a child's individuality to be taught how to do something effectively, but that was the assumption of a great deal of educational theory.

That seems to have worked itself through into the classrooms and to have led to the manifestly ill-prepared output of an enormous number of our schools. And that has happened with people with the best will in the world. Many of our teachers are anxious to do the right thing but have somehow been conditioned (by the way in which colleges of education operate) into providing pap and failing to cultivate capacities while simply massaging the little burgeoning egos.

Is the Bill well adjusted to deal with that? I think that I see what the Bill is doing. It seeks more classroom activity so that there will not be any room for the malleable soapy water of educational theory. However, that seems a rather roundabout way of doing it. It would be much better not to push teacher training away from the universities, but to associate it ever more closely with the universities so that the intellectual standards that one gets in a serious academic department of physics, botany, medieval history, or whatever, will leak over into the education department where hard, seriously theoretical and verifiably and confirmably theoretical discourse will be encouraged, rather than vague ideological musings.

Therefore, while I am sympathetic to what I call the underlying aims of the Bill, it does not seem to me that, as constructed at the moment, the Bill is particularly well designed to bring them about or to remove the enfeebling element in current teacher training—and I am sure that that is there. It is a general point of conversation among people on the fringes of the education industry.

Equally, I think that we must always be ready for any kind of student disturbance. I think that it was the noble Lord, Lord Sheffield, who said of some aspect of this legislation that it showed little confidence in the universities' capacities to manage their own affairs. That lack of confidence is fully justified. The ability of the universities to cope with student uprisings or to protect ideologically unpopular speakers is absolutely hopeless. They are no good at it. America's recourse was to the police and eventually, at Kent State, to the National Guard. That is not very desirable. There is no obvious solution to that although one solution might be a students' union where there are plenty of connecting links between the authorities and the students. I still retain some belief that the existence of students' unions has a peace-making rather than war-making purpose. It is not a lens which focuses on hostility, but provides a set of areas in which human beings meet each other which is liable to diminish and defuse that hostility.

Equally, however, I feel that the present system of pushing teacher training further away from universities

[LORD QUINTON]

rather than drawing it closer is just what is calculated to enhance—here I agree with the underlying sentiment—the things that are wrong with teacher training 8.8 p.m.

Lord Redesdale: My Lords, I start by congratulating the Minister on her opening speech. I was amazed when she presented the Bill because it sounded like a logical and fairly sensible measure. It was not until I looked back at the Bill itself and at Clause 20 that I realised that one can make this Bill as rational as one likes because the real meat and drink of it comes in the regulations which are not in front of us. I shall have to speak on this issue with a great deal of ignorance because we do not know what will be in the regulations. They have not been put before us. We do not even have any draft regulations. On the third day of debate on the gracious Speech, I asked the Minister if she intended to put draft regulations before the House, and she said that she would. I hope that she will.

It is disappointing that the regulations have not appeared before today's debate. There would have been a great deal more to discuss. As they are not before us, I shall make just a short speech. I apologise for that, but I hope to make up for my brevity by the amount of work done in Committee.

It is not so long since I was a student. A great deal has been said about students' unions, but they are only a vehicle by which students make their lives acceptable through university. The students' union is a focus for student activities through societies, groups, welfare and a number of other activities such as catering and bars. In some university towns, students are not liked. They need a students' union so as to be among their fellow students.

It is unfortunate that an institution that works well at the moment will come into direct conflict with the bodies with which it functions so well—the universities themselves. I am aware that the Minister has given assurances that there will not be a great deal of bureaucracy. Yesterday, she pointed out that the Government are committed to the principle of academic autonomy and to freeing, as far as possible, universities from bureaucratic constraints. I go along with that sentiment. After listening to so many vice-chancellors and others today, I feel that in universities there is a real danger, and fear that a great deal of expensive and wasteful bureaucracy will be created. The legislation is unnecessary.

I must admit that as a student I did not find the students' union to be an insidious political organisation. It took me a while to work out what students' unions stood for. To tell the truth, apart from the activities the students' union organised, I was not much worried. It provided a bar, welfare and a number of other activities. That is what most interests students.

On the issue of opting into clubs, the action of walking into a club and trying to become a member is a voluntary action showing that one wants to take part in that club. One of the dangers about having subscriptions to societies is that students are offered a great array of societies to join when they first go to

university. A student may join four or five societies before deciding which will take up most of his time. A student will then settle into a hobby and make friends in that society. If societies are so restricted by financial constraints that they have to charge a subscription before the student can find out what he wants to do—the only way a society obtains money is when the student first walks through the door, because it will not get it afterwards—that will impose a self-regulatory system upon a society. There will therefore be far fewer societies, which would be a great shame.

One of the saddest aspects of the Bill is that it shows a remarkable lack of faith in students themselves. Students have told me that if the students' union was taken over by a politically active group it would be for a short time only because the students themselves would vote it out. That has happened at a number of universities. We are taking away from students the right to choose, if the proposal is forced upon them.

My view of the Bill can be illustrated by a joke which went around our university. The proverb was that a lecture was a means of getting information from the lecturer's notes to the student's notes without their going through the mind of either. It seems that this piece of legislation has not been thought about.

8.15 p.m.

Lord Rix: My Lords, many of your Lordships have turned to drama to describe the latest in a long line of Education Bills. The noble Lord, Lord Judd, opted for *Richard III*, the noble Earl, Lord Russell, went for *The Mousetrap*, while my noble friend Lord Dainton chose *Hamlet*. The noble Lord, Lord Addington, referred to drama as part of education. I shall refrain from the obvious response of referring to a Whitehall farce, although the title of one of them, *She's done it again!* springs to mind. I prefer to stick to Macbeth when contemplating all those Education Bills because I know how he felt when he saw in his nightmare the long line of ghostly kings and inquired somewhat anxiously whether the queue would stretch out to the crack of doom.

As I am sure your Lordships know, *Macbeth* is looked upon with a certain degree of suspicion, even dread, by my fellow Thespians. Ill fortune is said to follow a production. It would indeed be ill fortune if any government were to follow Lady Macbeth on the occasion of the passage of this Bill through your Lordships' House and our suggestions and amendments were ignored with those contemptuous words:

"What need we fear who knows it, when none can call our power to account."

But I am certain that the noble Baroness, Lady Blatch, is no Lady Macbeth and, as is her wont, will listen most courteously and closely to all that your Lordships have to say and, we hope, will act upon the same. Dumping the Bill, or amending it significantly, would seem to be the preferred option tonight.

Perhaps I may jump into the fray and suggest two points which I believe should be looked at now and to which I shall return at a later date should the Bill come forward in its present state. First, I support the noble Lords, Lord Elis-Thomas and Lord Redesdale, in their

tribute to the work of Student Community Action and, like many of your Lordships, trust that the Government's anxiety to curb public funds being spent by student unions on the purchase of rotten tomatoes to hurl at visiting Ministers will not also act as a curb on student union fund-raising activities—rag weeks and the like—which support so many deserving causes, MENCAP included, and which encourage young people to become involved in their local communities. I cannot imagine that the Bill is intended to put a stop to such "decency and consideration for others".

However, unlike the noble Lord, Lord Beloff, I should like to quote a few lines from Sir William Fraser, the Principal Vice-Chancellor of Glasgow University, who can put this far better than I:

"Among the many characteristics of a real university—and certainly of this university"—Glasgow, of course—

"are the opportunities opened up to students to organise themselves, to form clubs and societies and to gain thereby experience to make themselves useful citizens—and, in some cases, leaders in our society. Here in this University we have the Students Representative Council, three Unions, the Athletic Club and innumerable groups—innumerable in the sense that some of them coalesce and disappear over such short periods that they cannot be enumerated. Most of these organisations receive some financial support from the University, either directly or through the SRC... What, you may ask, is a core function? Will the Drama Club, the Cecilia Society, the Exploration Society, the Chess Club, be core activities? We don't know. Will the SRC be allowed to use part of its grant from the University to write on student affairs to MPs or newspapers? Possibly not—but we don't know."

And why in any case should we have to bother? Has there been some great scandal? No. Are the accounts of the main student societies not already audited? Of course they are. Is the University powerless to blow the whistle if students misappropriate funds? Of course not. So why, when there are so many serious issues in higher education, is the Government pressing on with this legislation in the face of almost universal opposition?

Perhaps I may turn to something which may be more important from my personal point of view as chairman of MENCAP; that is, the teacher training agency. I cannot find anything in Part I of the Bill which states that members of the agency should have experience of disability or of children with special needs. I fear that the lack of any specific mention will mean the lack of any specific action. Unless teachers in mainstream schools can recognise and support children with special needs in those mainstream schools, those children will get integration without education. Conversely, unless teachers in special needs classes and/or schools—or those providing back-up in mainstream schools—have the special teaching skills which they need, large numbers of children will get segregation without education.

We know what children with special needs can achieve given proper support. We know what teachers can achieve given proper training. If we do not provide specialist training for the teachers of children with special needs we betray the teachers and we betray the children. Anyone who imagines that ordinary teaching, taken slowly, will do is making the same mistake as those who believe that speaking English slowly will do instead of learning a foreign language. Perhaps I may quote the Scottish play yet again:

"You see, her eyes are open"

"Ay, but their sense is shut"

8.21 p.m.

Baroness Carnegy of Lour: My Lords, the noble Lord gives me as a Scot a wonderful entrance and I am grateful. Amid the cannon-fire directed at the Government Front Bench from all parts of the House, we should remind ourselves quietly from time to time that there is a good deal of anxiety across the country that means should be found to improve the training of teachers, in particular primary school teachers. It is clear that many people who are not involved professionally, and indeed some who are, believe that far too many new teachers are being let down by the nature and quality of their training.

Continuing evidence exists in comparisons of the performance of children in different classes taught by different teachers in the same school. It exists as those same children move into higher or further education. It also exists as they move into the world of work. The CBI, which represents employers, is deeply anxious.

Of course, many teachers cope extremely well. Many enter the profession with the understanding, the skill and the commitment necessary to succeed as a teacher. The National Association of Head Teachers reminds us of the most recent Ofsted report which suggests that the performance of new teachers has at least been maintained since 1987, if it has not improved. It may well be that there is heartening news; we all hope so. However, I do not believe that the Government should be condemned for deciding to do something. The life chances of too many children are at risk.

On the face of it, I can well understand the decision that the way most likely to provide an improvement in teacher training is the setting up of an agency specifically charged with that task. The Minister in her clear introduction to the debate all those hours ago appeared to see few problems in the Government's approach. I have three main worries. Noble Lords will be comforted to know that I shall be brief because all those worries have all been mentioned tonight.

I worry seriously that a body set up by and answerable to the Secretary of State, a body specifically designed strongly and directly to influence the training and education of teachers, will be a ready-made channel for political manipulation should any future government wish to see it in that way. The Minister told us that safeguards exist in the Bill. In Committee we shall need to look carefully to ensure that they are strong enough.

My second worry stems from my experience and from what I am told by the Open University, by the CVCP and by individual universities. It is the wisdom of giving the new agency responsibility for research. I was glad to hear what my noble friend the Minister said about a possible change of heart by the Government in that respect. That is indeed sensible news. We must look carefully at the implications of any government amendments tabled to the Bill.

I share my third worry with other noble Lords. It is the danger that under the arrangement for England, if not for Wales, the education of teachers may become isolated from the education of other professional people.

[BARONESS CARNEGIE OF LOUR]

Clause 4(1) (b) gives responsibility to the new agency not only for research but also for funding the provision of higher education in

"the theory, practice and management of education"

The dangers of that have been spelt out by many noble Lords

I wish to add what I regard as a further danger. Teachers need the respect and support of the parents of the children whom they teach. For that, parents need not only to see and to know that teachers have proper classroom skills but they need to appreciate that teachers are professional, educated people. Teachers are not just skilled technicians, although people want that, but they should be people with academic standards whom parents can trust. Teachers need to be involved in courses together with other professionals. Too much separation could be damaging as well as unnecessarily expensive. We shall need to look at that danger during the Committee stage.

Before leaving Part I of the Bill, I wish to ask my noble friend a question. In last night's debate there was a good deal of mirth and serious evidence about the paper generated by the new higher education funding councils. However, instead of setting up a free-standing agency, have the Government considered requesting the Higher Education Funding Council for England to set up a special committee within its own structure to do the job? Surely that would be a better use of resources. It would reduce or remove all three of the problems that I have mentioned. I believe that it could be done without new legislation. Did the Government consider that and, if so, why did they not adopt it? I do not believe that the suggestion put forward by the CVC for a joint committee of all three funding councils will work. It would involve Scotland, where the training of teachers and the arrangements for that are very different.

I turn briefly now to Part II of the Bill. I agree with my noble friend Lord Skidelsky that we must remember that there is a history here and that history can repeat itself. I believe that in the view of most people it is unacceptable that student unions should spend taxpayers' money on party political campaigning across the country outside the university. That is widely regarded as unacceptable. It is also regarded as unacceptable that student unions should victimise individuals or individual unions, that they should run themselves in an undemocratic way and so forth.

The proposition in Clause 21 is sensible, but the proposition in Clause 20 is very much less so. It suggests that under the negative instrument procedure Parliament will decide, with little discussion, what student unions can do with public money, and that they must somehow find the money for everything else. For many years I have been closely in touch with student unions at a variety of universities and colleges. Last month I and other members of the governing body visited St Andrew's University and we spent some time seeing the many services and activities that its student union organises. The imagination boggles at the work and cost of the bureaucracy which will be involved in separating core and non-core. I agree with noble Lords

who have said that something must be done about Clause 20. In my view, Clause 20 as it stands is out of the question.

Unlike the noble Lord, Lord Judd, I feel that Clause 21 is much more reasonable. It lists various requirements for the democratic and accountable conduct of student unions and requires an institution's governing body to produce its own code of practice accordingly. The list needs careful examination in Committee. Clearly, for example, the Government have not yet taken account, as another noble Lord said, of the views of the Open University, in which to ballot the 130,000 members every year would cost £50,000 each time. That is utterly impossible. Nevertheless, the approach in Clause 21 is practical and sensible.

Could not the purpose of Clause 20 be achieved in the same way? There could be a broad statement on the face of the Bill as to what Parliament requires should not be financed out of public money and the requirement that every governing body should implement that through its own code of practice. That would work and it would allow for different circumstances in different institutions.

I know that the public and their elected representatives like to know that there has been proper consultation and that the Government's action which results, at least on practical mechanics and workability, pays some attention to what those consulted have said. As regards Clause 20, the Secretary of State has not taken the advice that he received. The Government need to help higher education institutions and students. They need to be their friend. It is unwise to attack them and hem them in when it is quite unnecessary to do so. Resources are scarce. Universities are bastions of our democracy and they are trying very hard to do a good job in difficult times. I believe that Clause 20 at least must be radically altered and I ask the Government to think again about that.

8.32 p.m.

Lord Monkswell: My Lords, at this late hour and after 25 speakers in the debate so far with, at my tally, a ratio of two to the Government and 23 to the rest of the House, there is little more that I can add. I wish to say just a few words about Parts I and II of the Bill and then speak a little about what we might do with them.

Part I is about downgrading the teaching profession. That was the way in which my noble friend Lord Glenamara described it, and I believe that will be the net result. I was extremely interested in the contribution made by the noble Lord, Lord Skidelsky, in which he seemed to suggest that there was room for improvement in the theory and practice of teaching. I believe that we all agree that there is always room for improvement in professional practice.

I thought it rather curious to hear someone who is a professional economist saying that the profession of teaching is not a real profession. I thought that was a rather curious contribution. However, I agree that there is a need to look at ways in which to improve the theory and practice of teaching, but I wonder whether we shall achieve that by centralising the organisation of teacher education and training and educational research. I

should have thought that it is far better to have the pluralistic regime that we have at present through various different teacher training colleges, universities, the activities of a whole range of local education authorities and different practices in schools up and down the land. That gives us a tremendous degree of diversity and the ability to identify good practice and work on it.

What is most important is the need to reinforce that sense of professionalism in teaching and to ensure that those people engaged in the teaching profession have an adequate amount of academic and practical training.

The reality is that over the past 20 to 25 years, we have seen the teaching profession going from a profession which was, broadly speaking, trained or educated through a three-year full-time course to one which effectively received its teacher education and training in a one year course. I recognise that that one-year course is a post-graduate course. But again in this regard I disagree with the noble Lord, Lord Skidelsky. He seemed to think that in order to teach, one merely needed a knowledge of the subject. I suggest that it should be almost completely the other way round and that the most important requirement for teaching is to have the professional expertise, knowledge and ability to teach. Someone who has that professional expertise can teach almost any subject under the sun. There are obviously difficulties about that in some areas and subjects; but, broadly speaking, I suggest that is true. Therefore, the Government's proposals in Part I will not be supportive of the teaching profession.

As regards Part II, if one looks at the provisions in Clauses 20 and 22, powers are given to the Secretary of State which would make a nanny blush and Stalin smile in appreciation. They are immense dictatorial powers which confer the ability to determine matters in the minutest detail. For example, the Bill states that orders or regulations:

"may make different provision for different cases, circumstances or areas and may contain such incidental, supplementary or transitional provisions as the Secretary of State thinks fit".

That confers on the Secretary of State the power not only to determine what happens to a very precise level but it gives him the power to determine different things in different institutions in different parts of the country. Effectively, it gives him the ability not only to be broadly dictatorial, which would be bad enough, but it gives him the power to be dictatorial in terms of one area of activity in one part of the country. In effect, that gives him the power to be discriminatory and unfair. That is the way it is written on the face of the Bill. I do not know whether that is the Government's intention; but I suspect that they would not wish to think that it would be interpreted in that way.

The Bill before us is two sows' ears. I wonder what we should do with it now. One option would be for us to decline to give it a Second Reading. The net result of that would be that the Government would introduce it at the other end of the building and the majority in the House of Commons would rubber stamp the main provisions and we should have great difficulty in significantly modifying it. But if we give the Bill a Second Reading (which by custom and practice we

generally do in this place) it then goes into Committee and we shall have the opportunity to advise the Government in fairly radical ways. Indeed, one of the provisions that we might write into Part I of the Bill is the formation of a general teaching council, which was mentioned by several speakers in today's debate.

There are also various other ways in which we could radically change the Bill. We could effectively use it like a shell company and be entrepreneurial in our advice to the Government. It is to be hoped that the Government might listen to our advice and modify their views on the training of teachers, the operation of students' unions and the positive development of education that we need to see in this country.

8.40 p.m.

Lord Northbourne: My Lords, at this late hour I shall deal with only one issue which relates to Part I of the Bill. As a governor of various schools over a number of years, I have often wondered whether education was not too important an issue to be left to the educational establishment. After all, most children are being educated for life and not for academia.

There is something to be said for an escape from the domination of the academic establishment. However, I am a little worried about what we are getting instead. Are we getting a kind of Arts Council—that is, a group of faceless men and women making bad decisions and not answerable to Parliament? If so, I wonder whether we should, like Jim,

"Always keep a hold of Nurse  
For fear of finding something worse".

Will the Secretary of State take responsibility for the decisions of the teacher training organisation? Will he and the noble Baroness answer questions at the Dispatch Box about it and accept responsibility for its actions? I know from bitter experience that that is not the case with the Arts Council. One of the objects of the teacher training agency (indeed, it is the only object which really mentions teaching) is stated in Clause 1 (2) (c):

"To contribute to raising the standards of teaching".

But teaching what? For example, there is no requirement in the Bill for the agency to balance subject courses which it finances with the demand from schools. What price the Government's policy of parental choice? Parents, through governors, will not be able to make a choice if there are no teachers there to teach the subject. Therefore, it will be the teacher training agency which eventually chooses the subjects (outside the core curriculum) to be taught, in our schools, not the governors or parents. I put it to your Lordships: do we want the subject mix taught to our children to be decided by eight faceless men and women who are not even answerable to Parliament?

The noble Lord, Lord Walton of Detchant, referred to the significance of family background in influencing school failure. If we are to improve the quality of family background which our young children enjoy, we must be prepared to have specialist teachers trained to develop a better understanding in young people of the needs of young children and of the responsibilities of becoming a parent. That will have to be done through discussion, videos and all sorts of special teaching

[LORD NORTHBOURNE]

methods in secondary schools. It will also need specialist teachers. What reason do we have from the Bill to be confident that the eight faceless men and women will decide to ensure that teachers are trained for that work?

Finally, what about ethos and values? What provision is made in the Bill to make sure that the teacher training agency ensures the proper moral, spiritual, social, cultural and physical development of pupils? The right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Ripon referred to personal qualities of teachers. What confidence do we have from the wording of the Bill that the agency will be concerned about such matters?

Clause 6 refers to denominational institutions. I welcome that reference. As the right reverend Prelates suggested, there are amendments that we shall want to table on points of detail. The fact that denominational institutions have been taken into account is, as I said, to be welcomed.

Are decisions about the education of our children to be taken by another kind of Arts Council making confused and unsatisfactory decisions and shielded from query or criticisms by its quango status? Alternatively, will the noble Baroness and her right honourable friend be prepared to come to the Dispatch Box, answer questions and accept responsibility for the acts and omissions of the teacher training agency? I have to point out that I believe I have given the shortest speech today.

8.45 p.m.

The Earl of Limerick: My Lords, I have been searching for a kind word with which to greet the Bill and I have found one which is at least neutral. The Bill is briefer than those which preceded it on the subject of education. But there, I fear, my welcome has to end. I shall say little about Part I of the Bill because that lies largely outside my experience. However, what strikes me is that the argument for a separate training agency seems strange and, it might be said, even perverse.

Teaching is a graduate level profession and one would assume that standards in teaching are best set and delivered by teachers. If the argument is sound—and I listened to what my noble friend said in her opening speech on the subject—I am still not quite able to understand why it is proposed to create a training agency for England but to leave the responsibility in Wales with its funding council. The proposal seems to flow against a counter-tide under which, for example, the Minister for Health wishes to link nursing training with higher education.

What then is the rationale for distancing teacher training from higher education, where logic would seem to place it? Surely there must be extra costs involved. Further, what precedents do we signal from that intention? Today it is teachers; tomorrow, will it be lawyers, engineers, veterinarians, or what? The signal for higher education is not a positive one.

I turn now to Part II of the Bill. The words that I have to use to describe my reaction to those clauses are "frustration" and "dismay". "Frustration" because little or no regard is paid to considered advice from those

responsible for running our higher education institutions. Here I must declare an interest as I am chairman of the board of governors of one of the new universities, a position that I have held for more than 10 years.

There was, to be sure, a period of consultation. Universities replied collectively through the CVCP and CCUCab. I have seen their responses which reflect the approach taken by the Bill. I was present on 23rd October at a meeting of CCUCab at Warwick University at which the feelings on the subject ran strong and also ran quite unanimously. Old and new universities, large and small universities and universities from the north and south of England were all against the proposals which have been spelt out in the Bill.

I have a concern about the process of consultation. It has been remarked that the time allowed for it fell substantially during the summer vacation. However, that time was extended. I wrote to the Secretary of State on behalf of my own university on 29th October, just before the end of the consultation period. I received his reply with quite remarkable and, one might say, unusual speed. It was dated 8th November. I have to say that the reply barely addressed my concerns; but, more significantly, attached to the reply was a departmental paper which was dated November 1993 which, in essentials, foreshadowed the proposals in the Bill. The Bill itself received its first reading on 23rd November. What conclusion can one draw? One could suppose that minds were not open at the end of October. The Secretary of State has said that he wants to listen. There is, I fear, no evidence that he has heard anything at all.

I turn now to the dismay that occurred when the Bill was published. However, I had one moment of hope. We made the point that the legal status of students' unions was in need of clarification. Clause 18 has the promising rubric "Meaning of 'students' union'". It runs to 37 lines. It contains such memorable wording as:

"In relation to an association or body which is a students' union by virtue of this subsection, references in this Part to 'all students' are to all the students who by virtue of subsection (1) or (2) are comprehended by that expression in relation to its constituent or affiliated associations or bodies."

That is quite so. But what of the power of the student unions to contract and the power to incur debts? What of their status as employers? There is not one word about those matters.

Here I pause to ask a question of my noble friend Lady Blatch. If there is no immediate answer I shall quite understand, but it would be helpful to be told whether I am on the right track. The Explanatory and Financial Memorandum, under the heading "Financial Effects of the Bill", states:

"The provisions in Part II of the Bill for the reform of students' unions will have no effect on the public funds available for further and higher education."

At present students' unions are funded substantially from the grant given to the universities by the funding council. A literal interpretation, therefore, would be that, if under Clause 20 the funds passed onto the union were reduced, the balance would be available to universities to fund particular activities on a voluntary basis or by sponsorship of the unions. I see my noble

friend nodding her head. The point is not insignificant and it would be helpful to have confirmation that that is indeed the case.

However, the most important aspect of these proposed changes, and the aspect which to me makes them most unacceptable, is the diminution in the responsibility placed on students individually and collectively. For 10 years now in our own institution I have witnessed the effect on young people, and on some who are not so young in an institution with more than 50 per cent. mature entry, of being given responsibility for budgets, employees, running committees and organising activities. Generally they respond well. Being immature, they respond occasionally in a surprising or even an inadequate manner, but they are generally quite readily persuaded to take the necessary corrective action. That is a part, and a vitally formative part, of the development of maturity. This process should be encouraged and the opportunities should never be diminished. Those 40 lines of print in Clause 20 regrettably have the effect of discouraging responsibility and diminishing opportunity.

Most of us, I suppose, have had the responsibility for raising children, usually our own but sometimes other people's. I suggest that none of us approaches this awesome task—for once the word is used in its literal sense—in such a nannyish manner as does this Bill. The Bill says in effect, "We will give you in due course, and at our sole discretion, a list of the things you may do, and all else will not be supported by us, your parents". Surely it is an irony to adopt this approach for young people collectively. The 10 Commandments start "Thou shalt not" and leave individuals obeying these prohibitions to develop their talents and their careers. That is why, in essence, Part II of the Bill is unwelcome as well as being, in my opinion, unnecessary.

Those are my own conclusions based on experience in my own institution. Now I find myself in complete accord with those responsible for other universities and that makes me ask whether it is just possible that all of us are right and the Secretary of State is wrong. Is it just possible that Clause 20 attacks the wrong target, long after it has ceased to pose any threat, at the wrong time and with inappropriate weapons? I shall not take time at this hour in spelling out my objections to Clause 20. They are on record in correspondence and in general they have been referred to by earlier speakers. Whether or not there will be adequate merit in other clauses of Part II I do not at the moment wish to judge. I do not know whether they will become useful with amendment. It has been commented—I agree with this—that there is some useful substance in Clause 21. Whether or not that is the case, I believe that the nanny approach underlying Clause 20 puts it beyond redemption.

8.56 p.m.

Baroness Warnock: My Lords, speaking near the end of a long debate it would be extremely unlikely, not to say miraculous, that I should have anything new to say. Nevertheless I wish to explain, if your Lordships will bear with me, why I oppose this Bill most strongly.

On the second part of the Bill concerned with student unions—that is itself not perhaps the most world

shatteringly urgent issue—I want only to support what has been said as to the unlimited powers that are apparently to be taken by the Secretary of State, who, as the Vice-Chancellor of Oxford put it, has only to keep silence to render any expenditure of money by the unions illegal.

Students—I have seen a deputation of them today—believe strongly (and I think they are right) that they are still tarred with the brush of the late 1960s and the early 1970s. Here I agree strongly with the noble Lord, Lord Renfrew. "My experience, which is comparatively recent, is that they have changed radically since those days. I believe that Part II of the Bill is grotesque as it stands—the word "bizarre" has been used elsewhere in this connection—and is based on an outdated perception.

The first part of the Bill contains more serious misconceptions perhaps, and certainly more serious threats. I wish briefly to address the first part of the Bill from a somewhat egocentric point of view. But before I do so I must express the hope that when she comes to reply, the noble Baroness, Lady Blatch, will clarify the meaning of Clause 11(1) (a) about which I intended to say something but I cannot now do so as I have discovered I do not understand it. As far as I can see, this clause says nothing whatever about the limitation of school-based courses to graduates only. But I understood the noble Baroness to say that this was how it was limited. If such courses are not limited to graduates, then I think the clause might well be a signal for the reintroduction of the Mum's Army which was apparently so recently repudiated by the Government. I would be extremely grateful if the Minister could clarify that clause later.

I shall embark briefly on some egocentricity. In 1985 in the BBC Dimbleby lecture of that year I spoke in favour of a shift towards training teachers in a certain way. I entirely agree with the noble Lord, Lord Skidelsky, that there is an ambiguity in the expression "teacher training". I am using it in the sense of pedagogy. I spoke in favour of this pedagogical aspect of teachers' education to be held in certain designated schools analogous to teaching hospitals. I argued then—I still agree with my argument—that in such schools some of the senior teachers should be allocated to the supervision of students, both in the classroom and outside it, and should be paid for that as part of their job. However, some of the supervision, in the form of tutorials or seminars, might be given in the related university or higher education college departments where the designated teachers should also be part-time members of staff.

The reasons I then advocated such a scheme—I still wholly believe in them—were threefold. First, it would make what teachers learnt in their training more practical, more realistic and more up to date. I have no doubt that those aims are shared by government. Secondly, it would provide for some teachers a professional career structure which would not force them out of the classroom into pure administration. Finally, it would enhance the status of the school teaching profession by encouraging the collaboration of school teachers as equals with university staff. I

[BARONESS WARNOCK]

believed that that enhancement would go along with the creation of a statutory general teaching council under which teachers would be empowered not only to set their own professional standards but to see to it, on the ground, that those standards were fully understood, aspired to and accepted by students and by teachers in their probationary years.

The twin pillars on which such a scheme would rest are, first, the establishment of a statutory general teaching council; and, secondly, the close and structured co-operation between schools and institutions of higher education such as university departments of education or colleges. On the first of those twin pillars I shall say nothing because the Bill is silent on the general teaching council. However, I wish to say a little about the second.

My conviction that joint training schemes shared between higher education institutions and schools would work and be productive of the best trained professionals was based on the observation of what was going on, and has increasingly gone on since, in the places where such an arrangement had been started. Sussex made it work. Oxford—where the sadly maligned Professor Brighouse, as chief officer of the local education authority (as he then was), was responsible for the school side—made it work. When Professor Brighouse became Professor of Education at the University of Keele he made such a scheme work in Staffordshire.

I recognised in 1985, as I do now, that the funding of such joint schemes was somewhat complex. However, the problems are not insoluble given the common aims and good will on both sides.

I relate that past history simply to point to what I believe is an indissoluble connection between the education of teachers, including pedagogy, and higher education as a whole. To separate them, as will be the effect of the Bill, is totally to undermine the utility of school as a place of training. The training of teachers to a considerable extent may best be carried out in school itself. But to bring that about, to make it a proper training, higher education must be brought into the classroom, and equally the experience of the classroom must be brought into higher education. They must be interwoven. The people involved on each side must be equals. Otherwise the training of teachers will become little more than a practical apprenticeship, as has been suggested—the pupil-teacher system of old.

It is not only that there must remain some reflective elements in the training of teachers. I prefer the words "reflective elements" to the word "theoretical" because theoretical education or educational theory has an extremely bad name, although that dates from long ago. I believe that there must be reflective elements in the training of teachers. They must have time to stand back to see what they are doing and why they are doing it if they are to understand whether they succeed or fail in the classroom. More importantly, the training of teachers, as with any professionals, must not be a static concept based only on tradition. It must essentially be based on research—and especially now, when there are so many changes both in educational content and techniques.

In that context, research must be independent, academic research, much of which will inevitably be inter-disciplinary. It will have recourse especially to the academic expertise of psychologists and linguists, perhaps other social sciences, mathematicians, people who are interested in the history and philosophy of science and many others. Such research must be funded along with other academic research, not hived off to a department of its own under the auspices of a government-appointed funding council or agency.

Of course it is true that there is provision in the Bill for the new funding agency to collaborate, if it so wishes, with the other funding agencies. But it is beyond belief that that would be the most efficient or cost-effective way of funding research into education. If research were so funded, it seems more than dubious whether it would be wholly disinterested and not affected in any way by current government policies.

From my reading of the Bill it is not clear that any research whatsoever will be forthcoming from the new teacher training scheme, much less that the training in schools, separately funded, will necessarily be based on such research. To split off the pedagogical training of teachers from the remainder of higher education must be to the detriment both of the standing and, more importantly, the effectiveness of teachers. There appears to be no argument in favour of the establishment of the new and separate funding agency, and it is on that ground that I must oppose the Bill.

9.8 p.m.

**Lord Pearson of Rannoch:** My Lords, I propose to concentrate my words of welcome for this very necessary Bill on its first part, which deals with teacher training. I do not have so much personal experience of student unions, although I feel sure that the Bill is right when it seeks to make students' involvement in their unions' political activity voluntary. I am also encouraged by the fact that the two Vice-Chancellors with whom I have discussed Part II of the Bill both tell me that their universities can easily live with it.

However, I believe that my experience over the past 10 years as the representative of commerce on the Council for National Academic Awards, or CNAA, entitles me to welcome the changes proposed for teacher training in somewhat greater detail. For the record, I should perhaps remind your Lordships that the CNAA was the validating and degree-awarding body for the polytechnic sector and for many higher education courses from 1964 until it was closed down earlier this year. In that capacity it validated the majority of teacher training in England and Wales.

Your Lordships may be aware that this lonely experience has given me a fairly jaundiced view of at least the softer subjects in most of our higher education system. Although, of course, I am sure that there are many sparkling exceptions, I fear that too many of our universities do not add enough value to their students' knowledge acquired at A-level, at least in the humanities and social sciences, to justify their enormous cost to the taxpayer. I believe that many of the academics employed in those areas are among the most spoilt people in the public sector.

During our debates on earlier Education Bills I have compared the employment terms of lecturers and others in our universities with, for example, those of nurses and others in the health professions, so I shall not repeat it all now. Suffice it to say that I have since become aware of a history teaching don at Oxford University on full pay and generous conditions who runs an antique shop full time. I have also become aware of a sociology student at Edinburgh University who cannot find herself more than four hours' work a week unless she invents her own reading list. Of course, if your Lordships are familiar with many of our modern sociology courses, which share much with our teacher training courses, you may feel that she is well advised to do just that. But one cannot help thinking that something pretty fundamental must be wrong with a system which permits these sorts of excesses at taxpayers' expense.

Of course, I accept that much is also excellent in our higher education system, especially in the harder subjects such as medicine and science generally. But we are discussing teacher education tonight, which is a very different kettle of fish.

If my experience as a non-academic on the CNAA for 10 years was a lonely one, I can assure your Lordships that criticising higher education in this House is not only a lonely business; it is also extremely frightening. One cannot help noticing that your Lordships' House is peculiarly well endowed with vice-chancellors and other luminaries of the system, not all of whom seem to declare their particular interest in our debates. When we disagree, as we usually do about higher education, I am often struck by the impression that we must be looking at a completely different animal. Perhaps it is just because we look at it from different angles.

Indeed, I am glad to see that my noble friend Lord Beloff is in his seat. He revealed the other day that he always disagrees with everything I say about education. I have given some thought to that and have to suggest that it may be because our experiences in higher education—his very deep, immensely creative and successful, mine comparatively superficial and extremely frustrating—were gathered at the opposite ends of the higher education spectrum.

To prove my point, I think I have only to remind my noble friend that the CNAA refused to validate Buckingham University—

**Lord Beloff:** My Lords, will the noble Lord give way? That is untrue. Buckingham withdrew its application to the CNAA because it thought that the CNAA's methods of validation were wholly unsatisfactory. I think it was before the noble Lord's time, but he must not repeat something which is wholly untrue and which the CNAA has admitted is not a fact.

**Lord Pearson of Rannoch:** My Lords, I am most grateful to my noble friend for that intervention. I think it proves the point of what happens when you come at things from opposite ends of the spectrum. I was going on to say that the fact that the CNAA did not end up validating Buckingham University—in Buckingham University's version because it did not want to go on with it, but in the CNAA's culture, the version I have

given; but for whatever reason—was what allowed it to go on to become such a beacon of extraordinary excellence in our system of higher education.

Before I move on from this general background to focus on the teacher training aspects of the Bill, it would be very wrong of me if I did not pay tribute to much of the work of the CNAA from 1964 to 1993. Although I have some harsh and, I trust, disturbing things to say about its validation of the majority of teacher training in this country, its system of peer review was often innovative and rigorous. It did much to make particularly the "technic" part of the polytechnic experiment successful. My doubts lie more with the "poly" side of things, but even here the CNAA did much good work.

Before I go on, I should also like to pay tribute to the many dedicated and hard-working teachers in our schools today. It is just that I believe that those teachers are succeeding in spite of their teacher training and not because of it.

Your Lordships will be aware that the 35 polytechnics were miraculously transformed into universities upon the demise of the CNAA. They were all therefore given their own degree-awarding powers, and your Lordships will not be surprised to hear my fear that many of them were not yet ready for that great responsibility. That theory is based on the fact that the CNAA had only granted what we called "accreditation" to the polytechnics within three years before their miraculous metamorphosis. "Accreditation" meant that even the CNAA's often cosy and always bureaucratic peer review was handed over to the institutions themselves. The idea had been when we granted accreditation that we would continue to go round our institutions every five years or so to make sure that they were indeed sticking to the internal validation procedures which we had agreed with them as the condition for our grant of accreditation.

I have to say that this whole process of accrediting the polytechnics was indecently and dangerously hurried, because by granting accreditation almost wholesale we hoped to stave off the political pressure for our closure which was being orchestrated by the polytechnic directors seeking autonomy from what they naturally regarded as our yoke. That meant that we had to take too much on trust, in my view, and I can confirm to your Lordships that I went on a number of accreditation visits. Worse still, our closure this year means that we shall not be able to find out for a very long time whether our trust has been justified or not.

I was delighted to hear from my noble friend Lady Cox, who is a shrewd and experienced observer of these things, that accreditation and university status have indeed borne the intended fruit of good academic quality at what is now Bournemouth University, of which she has the honour to be chancellor. But I fear that that may be more the exception than the rule, at least in the faculties which worry me.

Having just given some of the reasons for my worries about quality in higher education generally, I come to teacher training itself and its reform as proposed by this Bill. The CNAA carried out its peer review and validation process through subject sub-committees. I sat

[LORD PEARSON OF RANNOCH]

on its Teacher Education Committee (as it was known in the jargon) for six years from 1984 to 1989. They were years of constant dismay and growing apprehension. I quickly saw that the teacher educators formed a large, powerful and introverted establishment who did not mix much with real teachers.

To give your Lordships some idea of its size, in 1992 there were some 60,000 students on teacher training courses. About three-quarters of them would have been on four-year Bachelor of Education, or B Ed., degrees and about one-quarter would have been on one-year postgraduate certificate of education, or PGCE, courses. The CNAA, before its demise, validated rather more than half of the whole system.

As well as being validated by the CNAA, our courses were inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectorate, with whom my committee found itself in easy affinity. Both these processes took place under the influence of Teachers' Branch at the Department of Education and Science, whose advice to the Secretary of State on appointments to our council seemed to make sure that dissenting voices thereon were few and far between. I was clearly a ghastly mistake.

After 1984, the courses were also accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (or CATE, as she has become known), because by 1983 my noble friend Lord Joseph, who was Secretary of State at the time, had realised that none of the quality assurance processes in teacher training was working properly, if at all. My noble friend has said recently in this House that his greatest regret about his time as Secretary of State is that he did not do more to improve teacher training. How right he was to say so.

Two other important factors were working in the background against the possibility that our courses might actually teach our students how to teach. First, the word had gone out that our teachers had to be an all graduate profession, even if that meant that they only possessed one of our useless B Ed. degrees, having been accepted for their course with as little as two Es at A-level. Small wonder that their subject knowledge was so weak when they eventually faced a classroom.

Secondly, the teacher educators were determined to turn teacher training itself into a profession, and so they conveniently forgot that the profession is in fact teaching, which they therefore did much to harm.

Be all that as it may, I have to tell your Lordships that the CNAA never validated a teacher training course unless it conformed at least ostensibly to our criteria, and those criteria required a clear bias towards issues of gender, race and class at the expense of anything more useful to a teacher. They also required a clear aversion to all aspects of our traditional culture. For instance, and most serious of all in my view, we regarded as an anathema any course which might have required our students to give at least equal weight to the phonic method of teaching children to read as opposed to the look-and-learn method so favoured by all our trendy socialist educators.

Please remember, my Lords, that I am now describing the systematic control of the majority of our teacher training courses, certainly during the six years in

which I took part in the process but also, I suspect, over some 25 years. Let anyone should think that that state of affairs was confined to the polytechnic sector, let me say that I have always been assured that most of the university courses in teacher training at that time were as bad as ours. Such evidence as I gathered at the time confirmed that. So I for one am not in the least surprised when I hear that some 6 million adults in the United Kingdom are now functionally illiterate and innuinate. What a terrible indictment of the state system of education in this country!

I wish that I could agree with those who will claim that I exaggerate, that I am out of date, or that CATE has done much to put those matters right. But in preparation for this debate I put my ear to the ground as to what is happening now at the chalk face in this sector. I regret to say that little seems to have changed. The course profiles may now be somewhat more disguised than they used to be, the reading lists may be a little less obviously biased, but to anyone versed in the jargon, the sorry picture is still there. I am tempted to name the half dozen institutions where I have been able to check that nothing much has changed at the chalk face. But I do not think that it would be fair to pick on just a few when the whole system remains so endemically cancerous.

Perhaps I may draw towards my conclusion by saying a few words about academic freedom, in response to those of your Lordships who appear to think that the Government's attempt to improve teacher training might interfere with that cherished concept. As I have pointed out before, academic freedom carries with it the duty to avoid bias. Seldom can that duty have been more widely betrayed than in our teacher training departments. The result is plain for all to see.

So I urge noble and academic Lords who have protested that academic freedom might be violated by the Government's proposals to look closely into what I have said. If possible, they should talk to students who have recently completed their teacher training courses but have not gone into teaching. They are the people who can speak most obviously and fearlessly. I hope that noble Lords will not dismiss my suggestion as worthless unless they already accept the broad thrust of what I say.

I make the suggestion because for most of the past 10 years I have tried to discuss what I discovered about teacher training courses with serious academics in our great universities and to ask them what they intended to do about it. The reaction was always the same: a vague, disinterested smile would greet me, accompanied by a statement such as "Teacher training, old boy? I'm afraid it's not vaguely a serious subject. You can't possibly expect me to have anything to do with it".

When I tried to discuss what I had learnt with Ministers in the department, their civil servants always persuaded them to treat me as though I was saying that I had just seen the Loch Ness monster. I can understand that many noble Lords who work or have worked in the purer realms of higher academe would prefer not to look too closely at the troubled waters of the loch. But I have to tell them that the monstrous teacher training establishment is still alive and still devouring student

teachers, who will therefore continue to fail to learn to teach too many of our children how to read, write, add up, subtract and divide.

So that is why I welcome the Bill. It seems to me to have at least a sporting chance of slaying the baleful beast of teacher training which has done and is doing so much irreversible damage to so many of our children in our state system of education.

9.25 p.m.

Baroness Seear: My Lords, I must express the deepest sympathy with the noble Baroness, Lady Blatch, who has sat through a barrage of criticisms with such good temper. I fear that I shall add to that barrage although I almost hesitate to do so in view of the quantity that has been hurled at her. I find it difficult to decide whether I sympathise with her more over the quantity of the criticism or over the quality of the support she received.

As mentioned by a large number of your Lordships—but it cannot be too often repeated—the Bill is yet another example of the centralisation of this Government and of control being given to the Secretary of State unchallenged by Parliament. I am surprised that the noble and learned Lord, Lord Simon of Glaisdale, has not been present. We would no doubt have heard one of his powerful indictments of the Government for the way in which they are taking power, consciously or unconsciously, to decide matters which ought to be decided democratically. I refer to both the proposed appointment to the teacher training agency of eight individuals named by the Secretary of State and, of course, the enormously important regulations which are only to be dealt with on a negative basis. That is simply not good enough.

We in your Lordships' House have complained again and again that this Government are undermining Parliament as a whole and your Lordships' House in particular. The ability to amend is our primary task, and in a matter as important as this not to be able to amend because of the negative resolution proposal is an outrageous affront to the House.

That said, I join with those who have expressed grave anxiety in regard to both parts of the Bill. We know that not everything is as it ought to be with teacher training; no one pretends that it is. It is perfectly true that far too many are leaving school unable to accomplish simple arithmetic, reading and writing. My mother was a primary school teacher with classes of 60. She always said—I assume that she was speaking the truth, she usually did—that at the age of seven her children could do the four arithmetics, read and write. She had been through teacher training. What has happened to it since those days of long ago I do not know.

No one is saying that there is not room for improvement; there is. But I cannot believe that the improvement needed will come from the proposals put forward for the teacher training agency in the Bill. One of the weaknesses has been the segregation of teacher training from the universities; the separate teacher training colleges. Although many have now disappeared, in the past a number of teachers probably did not receive the kind of training they needed in those

colleges. One could have improved teacher training courses in education departments along the lines suggested by the noble Baroness, Lady Warnock, through a proper working together of people on the more academic side with those on the applied side. That is happening in professional, academic teacher and nursing training, in management training and in the best of social work training where there is close collaboration. I was involved in that, as were many others, including the noble Baroness, Lady McFarlane. It is a skilful business finding people in the professional field who can work closely together so that what goes on in the practical area illuminates what goes on in the theoretical area and vice versa. That is what is needed, and that is what we see in the best departments. We need more of that, not less.

To some extent I go along with what was said by the noble Lord, Lord Skidelsky, regarding the nature of the academic subject of pedagogy. I do not quite know what that is, but I know that a number of academic subjects were developed in the universities to a high level that are relevant to people who will teach. To be able to convey information, to communicate, to study how people learn, to study behaviour, to study human development; all are absolutely vital for people who intend to teach. After all, that is what psychology courses are all about. If we did not have psychology courses in the universities to give to people going into teaching, we would set about inventing them. This is one of the great disadvantages of leaving it to happen in the schools. People will make up their own homespun psychology in place of what is available in proper academic study in the universities. They will make remarks about how people learn and why they behave the way they do—and very odd a great deal of it will be.

We hear it all the time—mother's knee stuff—because people make generalisations. They have to. They have to have some idea of how they convey facts and ideas and stimulate thoughts in the people they are teaching. They invent their own psychology, not knowing that there is a great deal that they can already learn. If that had been going on in good education departments in universities, some of the nonsense taught—and there has been nonsense taught—would not have been taught. In the rightly sceptical atmosphere of a good university, that nonsense would have been challenged, and challenged far more effectively than it has been in the past. It is that kind of integration between the professional in the field and the academic study applied in that field that we need.

Lord Pearson of Rannoch: My Lords, one of the points I was trying to make is that a majority—and perhaps a large majority—of teacher training takes place in departments which are a part of universities, as they all are nowadays. The fact is that the rest of the institution has not been interested in what was going on in the department concerned. We would not be where we are now if, in the CNAA, we had been able to get serious philosophers, serious psychologists and others onto the course teams in question.

Baroness Seear: My Lords, I agree that one needs more of this. I do not believe that one does not get it everywhere. I am sure that one does get it. But one needs more. I agree with that. For once I almost agree with what the noble Lord, Lord Pearson, says. That is where we need the development to come. I find the idea of doing it by apprenticeship extraordinary. Apprenticeship is suddenly being viewed again with great respect. Although the best of apprenticeship in the skill trades was superb, the worst of it was awful. Apprentices were always decried, and with justice, as teaboys. One could have teaboys' equivalents in the teaching world if one did all the training inside teaching establishments. Only the very ablest of teachers are able to contribute at a practical level to training of the kind that we need. Yes, we need improvements in teacher training but the way indicated by other speakers—notably, by the noble Baroness, Lady Warnock—is the one we should follow. There is no indication of that in the Bill before your Lordships.

I simply cannot understand the attack on the students' union. I was at the heart of the storm of student riots in 1968. I had the privilege of being a staff representative on the LSE standing committee while the riots were going on. I had a whole day when a choir sang, "We shall overcome" outside my office door. If there had not been a Welshman in very good voice I do not know what would have happened. But there were even then some justification for it. It was not entirely without reason that those riots took place. They forced reforms in France which were long overdue. It was not the right way to do it but they expressed something which very much needed to be expressed.

The Government seem to have lost all awareness of the value of what goes on in student organisations. The core subjects given in the Bill reflect English anti-intellectualism at its very height. You are to be able to finance welfare, food and sport but you are not to be able to finance out of public money music, religion, art or political discussion or debate. Of course, it can be got out of the students' exiguous amounts of money which they have to spend. If we are to be told the contrary, that will be very good news but we understood that it was welfare, food and sport which was to be included in the publicly financed resources of students' unions.

Any of us who have been undergraduates or who have worked in universities know the enormous educational value of student activities. We ourselves and the students we dealt with learnt a great deal by following up our enthusiasms as members of committees which got organisations going and by taking an active part in them. In many ways they are much more valuable than a great deal of lecture courses. Those involved learnt a tremendous amount of what goes on through their own activities in organisations.

As we are turning universities more and more into glorified crammers, which the Government seem to want to do, we need more and not less in the way of student activities which can add genuine, educational experience of an extremely valuable kind to what goes on inside universities. The standards of our universities have been one of the crowning glories of this country, but they will go down and down. I have heard people in

a very good position to know say that if we go on as we are, in 20 years' time there will not be a university of world class in this country. At least let us not undermine the students' activities which maintain the standards of our universities.

9.37 p.m.

Baroness David: My Lords, in my 15 years in this House I do not believe that I have been present at such a remarkable Second Reading of a Bill. There have been extremely powerful speeches by powerful speakers and the great majority have been very strongly against this Bill. I believe that the noble Baroness, Lady Cox, and the noble Lord, Lord Pearson, were the only two who had absolutely undiluted support for it. Rather like the noble Lord, Lord Beloff, I always disagree with the noble Lord, Lord Pearson, and I do so again today.

The noble Baroness, Lady Cox, is more of a mystery to me. I have great admiration for her in all she does. She is not here at this moment although she did appear at the Bar of the House a short time ago. I always admire very much what she says about health, nursing and the National Health Service. But when she speaks on education her judgment seems to go somehow. I feel that her anecdotal accounts of what goes on in schools do not altogether stand up to the test of—perhaps "truth" is the wrong word. If you go into them more deeply, you find that perhaps there is not quite so much in them. I was interested to hear that the noble Baroness, Lady McFarlane, who has had to leave the Chamber, had some doubts about what the noble Baroness, Lady Cox, said concerning research.

The great point which has come over in this debate is that this Bill is totally unnecessary. I like the right reverend Prelate's words that it is "administrative fidgeting". That is what I believe it is. Why are we wasting our time on this when all the Government really want to do could be done by other means? That is a great shame.

Another point which has come over is that there are too many delegated powers. I believe that almost everybody has said that. We do not really know what is in the Bill. I was very glad to hear the noble Lord, Lord Rippon, say that the delegated powers committee will be meeting later this week, so we hope to have a report from it before we come to the Committee stage.

A formidable opposition has gathered to fight this Bill. If the Government have any genuine belief in listening to consumers, as they make out that they do, they must think again about this Bill. The Teacher Education Alliance, which has been formed to fight it, is made up of parents, governors, schools, colleges, universities, teacher organisations, researchers, local authorities and Churches. They are united in their approach. Their declared aim is to enhance the quality of initial and continuing professional development of teachers which will improve the quality of teaching in our schools. That is what we thought the Government wanted. No justification is offered as to why a separate teacher training agency is thought necessary. Its creation to fund and accredit courses would set teacher education apart from the rest of higher education, inviting universities to regard it as different and inferior, thus

weakening the status of teaching in comparison with all other major professions. If Wales still needs university support and the funding there continues to be managed by the HEFC, why, oh why can't England? I did not think that the Minister's defence of that in her opening speech was convincing.

Students thinking of becoming teachers—and the supply side may well prove difficult again in the future—will not find a non-university-based training nearly as attractive. The fun of meeting other students from different disciplines with the width of experience that that brings will have gone. Again, the noble Baroness, Lady McFarlane, spoke of that. The plan to allow people to receive qualified teacher status from the Secretary of State without any intervention from higher education will put this country in a unique position in Europe. Nearly all the developing countries of the Pacific Rim are rapidly upgrading their teacher education and are closely relating it to higher education.

We hear that teacher education is to be shortened from four to three years. Again, that is bad for students who need that time to acquire both subject knowledge and the confidence and skills to work in difficult conditions. There is also the fact that many students do not come up well prepared. In many cases, their educational performance is modest and they need those four years.

The only evidence cited in the DFE Green Paper—or "Blue Paper" as it is sometimes called—for radical reform of teacher training comes from Ofsted and refers to a recent inspection that was carried out by HMI and published as *The New Teacher in School*. Sir Peter Newsam pointed out in *The Times Educational Supplement* how that has been misrepresented. The actual reference in the consultative document is:

"The need to raise the level of professional skill of new teachers has been pointed out by recent evidence from OFSTED that around a third of lessons taken by new entrants were unsatisfactory. That is too high a figure for comfort." But HMI has never claimed that a third of lessons by new teachers are unsatisfactory; nor has it given the impression in any of its inspection reports that teacher education generally, and initial teacher training in particular, is in such a serious plight that it is in need of radical reform.

I have been sent a paper which is headed,

"What HMI really said about standards in initial teacher training".

It was compiled by Eric Bolton who until fairly recently was Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools. In the paper, Mr. Bolton quotes from a number of reports that were produced between 1988 and 1991 in which, of course, there are some criticisms—and we have all agreed that there is room for some criticism—and in which he states:

"The general picture is encouraging. Institutions continue to respond constructively to the requirements of the Secretary of State's criteria for teacher education, and the work of CATE. However, greater flexibility and variety in the routes into teaching should not put at risk the real gains in quality made over the past few years, nor threaten the even higher expectations of teacher training implicit in the thrust to raise standards in our system generally."

That was written in 1990, I believe. In February 1991, these comments were made:

"The majority of ITT courses are doing a satisfactory, or better job. They have continued to develop closer working relationships with schools to the benefit of their students. ITT courses are no longer over-loaded with educational theory or the history, psychology or sociology of education. So extensive are the working partnerships between colleges and schools becoming, beyond the long-standing arrangements for teaching practice, that the demands upon some schools are now very heavy. The tricky question of how to fund the schools, or in some way recompense them for their time and effort is now a pressing one. If not resolved satisfactorily, the goodwill of the schools will begin to evaporate to the detriment of effective teacher training."

The initial training of primary and secondary teachers is satisfactory or better in most institutions. In several, in both the university and public sectors, the quality is good, or outstanding. Of all the work inspected, 85 per cent. was judged satisfactory or better."

A good partnership has been built up and more schools are becoming involved. The training is becoming much more school-based. I wonder whether some of the criticisms from the noble Lord, Lord Dainton, for one, and the noble Lord, Lord Skidelsky, and, perhaps, the noble Lord, Lord Quinton, have caught up with how much change there has been in the past few years. Why put all that at risk by pushing through Parliament these ill-thought-out plans for schools-centred training when there is such opposition and no need? We should remember that university and college courses now provide 60,000 places, and the so-called pioneering schools-centred courses only 250. From 250 to 60,000 is a long haul.

But it is in the sphere of research that there is the greatest unease. The noble Earl, Lord Russell, was powerful and entertaining on that subject. That responsibility would be assumed by the TTA, with its eight to 12 members appointed by the Secretary of State, including,

"persons who appear to him to have experience of, and to have shown capacity in, industrial, commercial or financial matters". Will that encourage researchers? If the TTA takes over the funding and control of research, some fundamental principles will be violated, and substantial practical difficulties will be created. One important principle is that research should be independent of government. Academic freedom, fought for so often in the House, would be threatened, and in no other field of study will a Secretary of State be able to exert such direct control over the pursuit of knowledge and the dissemination of its results.

Educational research is essential for continuing professional development and the vitality of teachers and other practitioners. Educational research is strengthened by its links with social service research and other scholarly activities in universities. Recent years have seen a massive increase in research into, and therefore our knowledge of, children's development and learning and the conditions most conducive to its maximisation. In order to ensure the application of that knowledge in the classroom, students need knowledge of it during their preparation as teachers. That cannot be given them by existing practical teachers, although they can of course assist intending teachers in their induction into class organisation and teaching techniques. But only those thoroughly conversant with the new knowledge will be able to develop the new pedagogy, (teaching strategies and tactics) that present circumstances demand. The problem of truancy comes to mind.

[BARONESS DAVID]

The danger is that research sponsored by the TTA will focus too narrowly on applied research relating to the specific objects of the agency, whereas the main purpose of educational research is to improve the quality of education as a whole. Perhaps I may remind the Minister what the 1992 ESRC working party report *Frameworks and Priorities in Education* made clear:

"Educational research is a large-scale and complex national enterprise, properly based in universities, necessarily closely linked to social sciences; dependent on growing international links, concerned with many different aspects of education, at practical and theoretical levels and at all the stages, already highly self-critical and self-developing."

The transfer of educational research to the TTA is more likely to undermine than to enhance the quality of research undertaken. The noble Baroness, Lady Warnock, wondered whether any research would be undertaken.

Part II of the Bill relates to students' unions. Other noble Lords have made strongly the points I should have wished to make, so I shall try not to take up time repeating them. The Government's aims are purely political. If they had wanted to de-politicise some people in some unions, all they had to do was to make some activities *ultra vires*. That is a simple situation, and it could have been done. If the core/non-core division remains, much excellent work and good experience will be lost. I shall quote from a letter I received from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Bristol University:

"The drawing of any line will always give rise to argument about what should be on each side of it (and rugby in/outrules out, may seem odd or unjustifiable to some). But that one area, in terms of our experience of it here at Bristol, might be outside seems astonishing. I refer to Student Community Action. The 'action' is marvellous unspectacular voluntary social work for the elderly, homeless and disabled in the city, work praised by our city fathers as it must be elsewhere too. The prospect that this work might stop or be gravely impaired because it is ineligible for core funding is unattractive indeed. Besides this specific area there is the general point that such divisions of funding will unavoidably introduce a large number of separate recording and accounting procedures, which is to no one's benefit in terms of efficiency or time spent."

The right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Ripon made the point about community action. The final point made by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor about the accounting procedures is important. Much valuable time will be wasted in producing multiple accounts and bureaucracy will be taking over.

I wish to ask a few questions about students' unions in further education, which has hardly been mentioned. The Government emphasise the need to involve all students. Bearing in mind the substantial number of part-time students in FE, have the Government considered the cost, complexity and bureaucracy attached to arranging secret ballots for all students on at least an annual basis? A ballot would need to last for a whole week if it is to allow the participation of part-time students who study for only one session a week. What is meant by students "at" an establishment, which appears in Clause 18(1)(a)? Many students studying at FE colleges are enrolled at universities. Are they to be included? Many FE students study at their place of work but are enrolled at an FE college. What is their position?

What legal mechanisms will be established to ensure that the codes of practice apply uniformly to all students in FE, whether they receive public funds or not?

The association for colleges believes that by including students' unions in FE, against which there is apparently no argument, within the terms of this legislation the Government are in real danger of creating a costly bureaucratic Act which in practice would be extremely difficult to enforce. I hope that the Minister can clarify the position in her reply. Many people are puzzled about the Government's intentions and I have given the Minister warning that I shall be asking that question.

I estimate that this Bill and accompanying measures are of major importance. It is a crucial part of the drive to ensure centralised control over all aspects of education and, in particular, to destabilise and threaten the role of the universities within that system. Like the continuous attack on local authorities and their control of relatively autonomous systems of schools, this Bill paves the way for excluding universities from their role in the whole field of teacher education and puts their research role at risk. I see it also as another attempt to destroy what the Government are pleased to call the "education establishment"; that is, those who know something about education.

The clear purpose of the Bill is to take the bulk of teacher education out of the hands of universities and to hand it to the schools; it is to substitute an apprenticeship system for teacher education. That would be an enormous step backwards. Indeed, it was on that basis that the monitorial system was erected in the early 19th century. My noble friend Lord Glenamara and the right reverend Prelate the Lord Bishop of Guildford referred to the system with better knowledge than I. The failure of that led to the development, first, of teacher training colleges and, later, of the involvement of universities in teacher education. It began just over 100 years ago. Now this Government are deciding to go into reverse and to destroy all that has slowly been built up.

No wonder the whole educational world, parents and governors are presenting such a united front to oppose the Bill. I hope that after this debate the Government will see fit to withdraw it or to dump it, as the noble Lord, Lord Rix, suggested. That may be too much to hope for. However, it will become clear that there is strong opposition to the Bill and there will be a difficult time in Committee. Strong opposition will be put forward. I hope that the Minister will use her influence in the department to achieve as many changes as possible, and perhaps she will have an easier time in Committee.

9 55 p.m.

Baroness Blatch: My Lords, the noble Lord, Lord Rix suggested some parallel between my role and that of Lady Macbeth. I suppose that I should be grateful that he did not compare me to one of the witches. As I have listened to the debate today, the words that have been rattling around in my brain are:

"Double, double toil and trouble,  
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble!"

However, I must say that it will not be possible to answer all the points raised in the debate today. Those points which I do not address will either be addressed in detail at later stages of the Bill or I shall write to noble Lords. I shall place in the Library copies of any letters which I write so that they are available to all.

The noble Lord, Lord Rix, was concerned about the training for special needs teachers. As in nursing, we regard it as important that all teachers should receive basic initial teacher training, and that that should be on a par. Beyond that, it is important that anybody training to teach special needs children, whether they be, for example, deaf or blind children or those with a mental handicap, should go on to further courses of study. I promise the noble Lord that I shall discuss the availability of such courses and return to the matter at a later stage.

The noble Lord, Lord Judd, said that it was a disgrace that there had been no report from the Delegated Powers Scrutiny Committee. First, I welcomed the intervention of my noble friend Lord Rippon. The Delegated Powers Scrutiny Committee report states that, "the Committee's aim would be to ensure that its views would be available to the House before the Committee stage on the bill or perhaps, in some cases, earlier if feasible." We have been told that it is not feasible. We have been given a date. My department has issued a memorandum in time for the committee to consider the Bill on Thursday, 9th December, which is in plenty of time for the report to be available to noble Lords before the Committee stage.

The noble Lord, Lord Judd, queried the Secretary of State's powers as regards membership and work of the teacher training agency. The provisions in the Bill are modelled on those of the HEFCE's powers which are contained in the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. The Secretary of State's powers are the same as those which he already has under that Bill and he would retain them if the HEFCE were to continue to fund initial teacher training. Therefore, they are not extra powers. They are the same powers being used for this body rather than the HEFCE.

Noble Lord, Lord Judd, asked how many schools were interested in supporting school-centred training. Some 200 schools have bid for funds in either 1993-94 or 1994-95 under our new school-centred training scheme. That is a modest but worthwhile start. We look forward to a steady increase in other schools volunteering to come forward. However, as has been pointed out already in the debate, it is a voluntary activity on the part of the schools and we have no intention of forcing them into that role.

The noble Lord, Lord Glenamara, was concerned about the centralising of power. Traditionally, Secretaries of State confer qualified teacher status and they have had a long-standing role in setting standards. My right honourable friend the Secretary of State will retain those duties. HMI has traditionally inspected the departments of education, and will continue to do so in all universities old and new, to advise the new agency.

The noble Lord, Lord Glenamara, was concerned also that the objective of the Bill is to put all training into schools. The objectives of the Bill are as set out in

Clause 1. The agency will be able to fund courses run by schools provided they meet the criteria and the objectives of high quality and efficient training. I have seen at first hand school-centred courses and I suggest to noble Lords that they may wish to visit some of those schools to see the work in practice.

The noble Lord, Lord Glenamara, was concerned about the objectives of Part I; again, about teachers being trained in schools. Noble Lords will look in vain if they expect to find the objective that all initial teacher training should take place in schools. Clause 6 explicitly talks about the teacher training agency, not the Secretary of State, determining an appropriate balance. Therefore, that fear is groundless.

The noble Lord, Lord Walton of Detchant, was concerned about post-graduate courses. Again, that does not apply to schools alone. I fully accept that not all schools could take on the important task of training graduate teachers, but groups of good schools with the necessary finance can do so. I repeat again, I have visited such a consortia of schools and I urge noble Lords to do likewise. I am confident that if the noble Lord does make such a visit, he will be extremely impressed. I invite him to speak with the graduate trainees and ask them why they chose such a course. I would ask him to ask them how the theory of education is being covered by the course and to ask them how it is fitting them for the challenging career of being a teacher. I would also ask him to make his own judgment about the quality of the provision made by those schools and to make a judgment about the suitability of such schools for that purpose. I have no doubt that the noble Lord will be impressed on all counts.

The noble Lord, Lord Dornand of Easington, was concerned about school-centred courses not being validated. Courses leading to qualified teacher status (school-centred courses) must meet the criteria which we set out for all courses. Whether or not they are validated by higher education institutions is a different issue, but most current courses are taking the route of higher education institution validation. However, I do not think that we need require them to do so as long as the students—and this is the important point—reach the necessary standards for qualified teacher status.

The right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Guildford was concerned—as, indeed, was the noble Baroness, Lady David, and other speakers—and took us to task for using the results of the reports of the HMI Inspector of Schools to support the case for a change in teacher training arrangements. I regret the unfortunate rounding of the figures in our consultation paper. I shall now refer to paragraph 3.4 of the Ofsted report, *The New Teacher in School*. As I said, I regret the rounding up of the figures, but the percentage of lessons taught by new teachers which were unsatisfactory was 29 per cent. in secondary schools and 27 per cent. in primary schools. Those figures fall a little short of the round one-third which was mentioned in our paper, but they are still not very encouraging. Over one lesson in four taught by a new teacher—that is, over one lesson in every four received by his or her class in a typical primary school—is not satisfactory. If the number of unsatisfactory lessons is not thought to be significant,

[BARONESS BLATCH]

the evidence that only just over one-half of new primary teachers feel well equipped to teach reading or that 10 per cent of all new teachers were, in HMI's opinion unsuited for the profession should at least give us all pause for thought. Today's first annual report from Her Majesty's Chief Inspector sounds a suitable cautionary note. The new agency will not be able to put the matter right overnight. But, in applying the new criteria for courses and funding the best providers, the agency will be a powerful force for higher quality.

My noble friend Lord Beloff talked about initial teacher training courses leading to extra workloads for schools. The reforms upon which we have already embarked have drawn considerable commitment from schools. Strong partnerships are already being formed and schools are seeing the benefit. After all, as I said earlier, there is no compulsion on them to be involved.

The noble Lord, Lord Dornand of Easington, wanted clarification on research as proposed in the Bill. I am delighted to give the noble Lord that clarification. The great majority of funds are now allocated on a formula basis, not for projects. That will remain true under the teacher training agency. Academics currently choose their own topics, not the Higher Education Funding Council. That will also remain true under the teacher training agency. Assessment of research and research quality currently involve peer reviews and safeguard independence and academic freedom. All of that will remain the same under the teacher training agency.

The noble Lord, Lord Howell, in answer to much that was said by my noble friend Lady Cox, asked where we would find such good and bad schools. Well, if noble Lords support us in the establishment of a systematic approach to inspection of the quality of teaching and learning we shall learn a good deal about where the good, bad and indifferent performance is in fact taking place. We now have a system of measuring performance and we will have to make a judgment on the suitability of a school, university department, and/or college, to provide initial teacher training. My noble friend Lady Cox has always brought to our debates her own experience—which I believe is considerable—of training not just in education but also in health. I welcomed all that she had to say tonight.

The noble Lord, Lord Howell, was concerned about nursery education. No doubt we will return to this matter in some detail but it needs to be repeated that over half of all three and four year-olds are in education. With other group provision, mainly pre-school playgroup provision, the figure rises to over 90 per cent. Some 82 per cent of all four year-olds are in nursery or primary schools and that does not include rising fives. When one includes rising fives, one can see that almost all of them are in school.

The noble Lord, Lord Walton of Detchant, talked about research. It is clear that it is over the agency's research remit that passions run fairly strong in this House. I share the view that it is important that we get this aspect right. First, I wish to remind your Lordships of how we see this bit of the agency's remit working. This is something I touched on in my opening remarks. It is not quite as proposed in the consultation paper and

it may be that some noble Lords are not fully aware of what we intend. We do not propose to split education research as between the Higher Education Funding Council and the agency. We propose that all the £26 million now allocated to education research should transfer to the agency. We do not propose to alter the dual funding system in any way. The teaching training agency will not take any funds, or any part of the role, of the Economic and Social Research Council in funding education research.

We do not propose to require the agency to allocate funds on a project basis. Indeed, we would expect it to allocate funds, as the Higher Education Funding Council does, on the basis of a formula driven by research quality. We do not intend to suggest that quality should be defined in this area in a narrower, or more utilitarian, or less rigorous way than in any subject area. Indeed we see attractions in the Higher Education Funding Council's suggestion that the agency should share the council's assessment arrangements to that end. If, despite these assurances, noble Lords still remain concerned, there will be every opportunity at the next stage of our deliberations to return to this very point.

Our position remains, as far as a general teaching council is concerned, as I stated in a reply to the noble Lord, Lord Judd, at Report stage of the then Education Bill on 21st June at cols 39 to 42 of the *Official Report*. I stated that we believe that a body for advancing the professional development and interests of teachers should come from the teachers themselves and not from government. As regards criticism of this being a centralising measure, I have already said that the TTA will remove the Secretary of State's direct responsibility for funding school-centred courses. It will give statutory independence to the functions of the Teaching as a Career Unit, currently carried on by a limited company set up by the DFE, and it will remove the Secretary of State's current direct responsibility for approving every course of initial teacher training offered in every university and college.

The noble Baroness, Lady McFarlane, was concerned about the splitting of teacher training and other topics concerning higher education. A different funding agency in this area will not lead to fragmentation. Universities and colleges are used to their activities being funded from a number of sources. Initial teacher training already has a distinctive funding methodology within the Higher Education Funding Council for England because of the need to cope with the national intake targets. Initial teacher training and related courses form part of a distinctive academic subject category within which both teaching and research are separately assessed and central funding decisions taken.

We were accused of destroying partnerships between teacher training and higher education and schools. The agency will not destroy good partnerships. It will not force schools to take the lead responsibility in training. It will, as the right reverend Prelate would wish, build on good practice wherever it occurs which may be in volunteer schools as well as in higher education, and it will be obliged to act to improve overall quality.

The right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Ripon made important points about denominational and non-denominational providers. I will look again at the wording. I have listened with care to the points made by the right reverend Prelate. As we promised in our consultation paper, we have replicated faithfully in the Bill the safeguards for denominational provision which were secured through the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act.

It is true that the wording differs slightly as between the two provisions. The fact that school-provided courses are in their very early stages suggested that we should allow for an appropriate balance to be established as well as maintained. But we have not tinkered with the wording of the denominational provisions, not least because we do not want by comparison to down-play the duties on the English funding council. That council will continue to have important responsibilities for funding the voluntary colleges. I expect that we shall hear more about the case for a stronger statement on denominational provision in our Committee debates. I shall, of course, wish to see the important role which the voluntary colleges have played, and must continue to play, as specialist providers of teacher training given the necessary consideration by the agency. The very fact that there is to be a specialist funding agency in that area should give those colleges some reassurance that their particular contributions will be recognised.

The noble Lord, Lord Plant, made the very important point that national curriculum assessment and testing is changing initial teacher training. First, it is important to preserve the integrity of each subject—it is a factor that suffered over those years and it was rightly criticised by the noble Lord. We need better subject knowledge. We need teachers to be more skilled in the craft of teaching in the classroom in addition to having a wider knowledge of education. However, I despair when a professional association states, as one did recently, that it is unrealistic to expect a seven year-old to know the alphabet or to be able to write 30 simple words. High expectations of children are essential for teachers, and that has to be addressed in initial teacher training.

My noble friends Lord Quinton and Lady Cox referred to the importance of some structure in the system—the move away from the philosophy of leaving children to do their own thing and to determine their own readiness to learn. That is a belief which prevailed for far too long: that somehow children learn by osmosis. It is said that creative children do not need such a structured approach. Even creative children need basic skills of reading and writing in order to give full and exciting expression to that creativity. However, other children who are not naturally creative need those basic skills of reading, writing and basic number in order to live their lives competently and confidently. Therefore, the importance of and the case for the proper teaching of basic skills to our young people is absolutely crucial.

The teacher training agency was referred to by my noble friend Lady Carnegie. She asked whether it would prove to be a possible political channel for influencing teacher training in the future. I should like to say a

categoric no to that question. First, the agency must ensure that providers of teacher training conform to criteria which will be concerned with the skills, competencies and quality of teacher training. It will, of course, be subject to inspection and continuous monitoring.

My noble friend also asked why the Higher Education Funding Council should not be required to do the job. The bureaucracy referred to in the debate yesterday evening was the fault of both the Higher Education Funding Council and the Higher Education Quality Council—a creature of the higher education sector. I hope that those bodies were listening as eagerly as I was to some of the criticisms made in this Chamber.

My noble friend was also concerned about Clause 20, as were some other noble Lords. I appreciate my noble friend's desire to help with the structure of Clause 20. However, I fear that attempting to list all the activities that students might wish to undertake and which should not be publicly funded would be an enterprise doomed to frustration. The range of student activities is too diverse. I fear in addition, that such a structure for Clause 20 would not provide for the voluntary principle. It would not achieve the Government's objective of extending the area of student choice.

The noble Lord, Lord Northbourne, asked whether we shall gain a kind of Arts Council. Absolutely not, my Lords. First, the measures are subject to the Secretary of State's criteria, as I have said. The quality of provision will be monitored and inspected. The quality of the teachers as they qualify and take up their posts will continue to be the subject of supervision and indeed of external inspection. My right honourable friend and ministerial colleagues will be answerable to Parliament for the measures. The noble Lord, Lord Northbourne, also referred, I believe, to the content of the courses. I can assure him that all the things he mentioned will be addressed by the criteria governing the content of courses, including the ethos and moral and spiritual underpinning of education.

The noble Lord, Lord Monkswell, was concerned about Clause 22 conferring dictatorial powers on the Secretary of State. The intention of the clause is to allow for flexibility in different parts of the United Kingdom, rather than laying down conditions for each individual institution. That will permit variations to reflect any differing circumstances, for example, in England, Wales and Scotland. It is the plan, in any case, that each institution should draw up its own code of practice in the light of its own situation.

The noble Lord, Lord Northbourne, was concerned again about the teacher training agency. It will have to take account of the Secretary of State's forecast of demand for teachers for which he will answer to Parliament. That is secured under Clause 5. He will also be pressing the need to govern the content of courses.

As for accountability, the agency will not only be accountable to the Secretary of State, as some noble Lords claim, but the chief executive will answer as accounting officer to the Public Accounts Committee for the spending of public funds. The agency will also be liable to judicial review of any of its decisions in the light of its statutory powers and purposes. The Secretary

[BARONESS BLATCH]

agency—properly focused and replacing the present fragmentation of the Higher Education Funding Council, the Department for Education, the Teaching as a Career Unit and the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education. Despite the level of misunderstanding, I shall do everything possible to address the anxieties of noble Lords by discussion and by the exploration of ideas during the passage of the Bill.

With regard to Part II of the Bill, I registered all the concerns of noble Lords from all parts of the House. There was much overstating of the case. Where were the arguments supporting the principle of democracy? How can the interests be served of those students who do not wish to be associated with the higher profile and sometimes unacceptable activities of the students' union and indeed the National Union of Students? Where were the arguments supporting the principles of accountability? Whether core or non-core activities, substantial sums of public money should be accounted for and should be subject to audit. Where in the debate was the support for personal choice where students have no interest, or, indeed, more seriously, wish to dissociate themselves from a specific activity? Is it such a bad thing, if a mechanism is established, to recognise the importance of personal choice?

I take extremely seriously the examples of the practical difficulties presented by noble Lords, many of them more imagined than real. Nevertheless, no stone should be left unturned to find a way to introduce those principles of democracy, accountability and choice in a way that does not inhibit the important extra-curricular activities of students in further and higher education.

Many suggestions were made during the course of the debate, especially from my noble friend Lady Carnegie. To that end I shall continue to discuss the measures in this part of the Bill with my right honourable friends and colleagues in the department, the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals and other interested groups. I finish as I started, with the noble Lord, Lord Rix: my eyes are open, and so too are my senses. I commend the Bill to your Lordships.

On Question, Bill read a second time, and committed to a Committee of the Whole House.

### New Towns (Amendment) Bill [H.L.]

10 32 p.m.

Lord Finsberg: My Lords, I beg to move that this Bill be now read a second time.

I can be brief because this is a repeat performance of what I said on 26th May this year (at cols 254-56 of *Hansard*). The noble Lord, Lord Graham, gave me unqualified support on that occasion and he has told me that I may still count on that support. I am grateful to him for that.

Briefly, almost alone of the public authorities, the Commission for New Towns, of which I am deputy chairman, does not possess delegation powers. That was brought to our notice and discussions followed with the Minister after legal advice had been obtained.

When the Housing and Urban Development Bill was going through this House, we attempted to include a clause which would cover this point, but the Long Title prevented that. My Bill, which had your Lordships' support, reached the other place too late for action—hence my efforts today. I hope that I shall not be like the late Dame Nellie Melba, having more than one repeat performance.

The commission deals with numerous transactions which now require ratification each time by the full board. For example, today when we had a board meeting 50 cases could and should have been delegated in a proper fashion—the undertaking I gave to the noble Lord, Lord Graham, on the last occasion—to the property committee or to a senior official. With the property market looking up the need will grow.

Only this month the Department of the Environment issued a publication, *Responsibilities of Board Members of Non-departmental Public Bodies*. It is dated December 1993 and states:

"Board members serve part-time and, to the extent that the NDPB's founding legislation provides the necessary powers"—ours does not—

"must in practice delegate to officers authority for most decisions for the day to day operation of the NDPB. In some cases authority may also be delegated to individual Board members, committees or sub-committees... Any delegation of authority must therefore be properly documented and approved by the Board". That is the intention of our board.

The Bill is identical to my last effort, although I suppose I should be accurate and say that I have incorporated some major changes required by the parliamentary draftsman. In the Bill I presented in May of this year one of the clauses was headed "Power of delegation". That has now been altered to "Delegation of powers".

The other very important amendment required by parliamentary counsel is to paragraph 8(a) which used the words "either generally or specifically". That now reads "whether generally or specially". Those are earth-shattering alterations, and those of us who have been Ministers know that we are all too often at the mercy of the parliamentary draftsman and parliamentary counsel, who do their best to make our Bills totally incomprehensible to the ordinary man in the street. But one has to comply from time to time. I have had to do that.

I stress that the Bill is wholly non-political and wholly non-controversial. I commend it to your Lordships.

Moved, That the Bill be now read a second time.—(Lord Finsberg)

Lord Morris of Castle Morris: My Lords, on this matter I speak personally and not on behalf of the Labour Party. We have indeed passed this way before—last May—as the noble Lord, Lord Finsberg, says, and your Lordships—such of you as remain—may allow yourselves the modest luxury of a sense of *déjà vu*. Indeed, were it not for the fact that what may well be described as a little local difficulty in another place halted proceedings, we may very well have passed this Bill some time ago, which would have given the Commission for the New Towns a happy issue out of all its afflictions.

### Inshore Fishing (Scotland) Bill [H.L.]

Lord Campbell of Croy: My Lords, I beg to move that this Bill be now read a second time.

The Bill amends the Inshore Fishing (Scotland) Act 1984, which is the main statute governing fishing operations in Scottish inshore waters—that is, within six miles of the Scottish coastline. It is an enabling Bill which gives the Secretary of State power to control the use of vehicles and equipment, including tractor dredgers, for the taking of shellfish, particularly cockles, from the foreshore in Scotland. The Bill also extends the enforcement powers of British sea fishery officers to such vehicles and equipment.

The 1984 Act allows inshore fishing within the six-mile zone of Scottish waters to be controlled by order. Fishing carried out from vessels can be controlled through prohibitions in respect of one or more species in certain areas, and at certain times of the year. It was not visualised that land-based fishing operations would need to be covered. In fact, there was very little activity of that kind in Scotland in 1984.

In recent years, however, there have been developments round the Scottish coast, particularly in the Solway, Cromarty and Dornoch Firths, of tractor dredging for cockles. This method has become particularly attractive to tractor fishermen over the past year as a result of a steep rise in the price of cockles.

Recent monitoring of the cockle stocks in the Solway Firth has shown that they are in a poor state. While those stocks can fluctuate considerably for natural reasons, the heavy fishing pressure, brought about largely by the influx of tractors, has undoubtedly had a significant impact on cockle mortality. An order did come into effect in October 1992 which prohibited vessel-based fishing. But because the scope of the 1984 Act only extended to vessels at sea, nothing could be done in that order to control tractors.

The tractor's activity is damaging for two reasons in particular: first, heavy dredging on the foreshore means that very few cockles remain untouched. Secondly, that dredging takes place at low tide which means that other aquatic organisms dredged up will be left high and dry, and that may kill them. That has a detrimental effect on the food chain for marine and shore wildlife.

The mass removal of shellfish has a damaging effect on another and important form of wildlife—birds. Shellfish are an essential part of the diet of certain seabirds including oyster catchers, eider duck and knots. Over-fishing of cockle and mussel beds would so deplete stocks as to reduce seriously the wild birds which depend on shellfish. I can tell noble Lords that the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds is a strong supporter of this Bill, and so are the shell fishermen who use traditional methods from fishing boats, now prohibited until stocks of shellfish are considered to be satisfactory again.

As I mentioned, the prohibiting order under the 1984 Act has been in force for over a year, but it cannot apply to tractor dredging which was not contemplated in that Act. I understand that in England and Wales sea fisheries committees already possess powers to control shellfishing with tractors. It seems that they could

The New Towns Act of 1981 obviously does need amendment since for reasons which are now lost in the dark backwood and abyss of time incomplete provision seems to have been provided in it for the normal processes of delegation which one would now expect. The amount of work which the commission has been required to do has also increased to an extent which would have been unforeseeable in 1981 and it is therefore undesirable and unnecessary to require the whole commission to deliberate upon every question that comes before it. If the commission is to complete its work by the wind up date of 31st March 1998, it will need surely to parcel out its activities, and this seems to be all that this modest Bill seeks to achieve. It will, if your Lordships agree to its Second Reading, increase the efficiency of the commission without in any way, so far as I can see, endangering the proper exercise of its powers.

We on these Benches are well content to support the Bill and I hope that your Lordships will permit it to proceed to its Committee stage, which I trust will not be long delayed and will not, so far as we are concerned, be long protracted.

Viscount St. Davids: My Lords, it may be helpful if at this point I give the Government's view on the Bill. The Government support the Bill, which gives the Commission for the New Towns specific powers to delegate its responsibilities. This will increase its efficiency, thus helping to achieve the wind-up deadline of 31st March 1998 set by my right honourable friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, while also reducing running costs by facilitating the more effective use of its paid officials.

My noble friend has introduced the Bill because, as the New Towns Act is silent on the matter, the board feels constrained to deal personally with every minor issue relating to the disposal of the commission's assets. This is clearly not an effective use of board members' time and prevents them from deploying staff in the most efficient way. It is making it difficult to conclude sales of property and potentially impeding the rate at which the commission can dispose of its assets. Thus, as the sale of the commission's assets provides a valuable return to the Exchequer, your Lordships will appreciate that the Government are anxious to ensure that such an obstacle is removed.

I hope that the House will therefore give the Bill a Second Reading so that it can proceed in the usual way for more detailed consideration in Committee.

Lord Finsberg: My Lords, I am most grateful for what has been said. Perhaps I may make one thing clear. The board took the decision to ask for legislation on grounds of legal advice. We were not prepared to run the risk of being taken to court for exceeding our powers. I ought perhaps to confess that, although I cannot remember the date, it may well be that I was the Minister in charge of new towns when the 1981 Act went through. If so, I apologise for the gap that now appears.

On Question, Bill read a second time, and committed to a Committee of the Whole House.

[BARONESS BLATCH]

of State's own powers to direct the agency are subject to parliamentary procedures. It is simply not true that the agency will lack independence or accountability. Both are guaranteed by law.

There was great confusion, certainly on the part of the noble Baroness, Lady Warnock, between circulars for primary education and secondary education teacher training and the Bill, which deals with the setting up of an agency to oversee both the funding and the quality of Degree courses will continue to be provided by higher education. Postgraduate courses will be provided by higher education. Higher education is working in partnership with schools, open university courses and consortia of schools only. The only exceptions are licensed teacher schemes which have been in place for some time and, I have to say, without criticism.

I have to put on record a retort to the noble Earl, Lord Russell, who quoted my Permanent Secretary, Sir Geoffrey Holland, in the course of his speech. First, because it is important to put it on record, I wish to read to you Sir Geoffrey's own words in response to that printed criticism, the printed words of his. It is a letter written on 3rd December:

"Dear Madam,

Those who were present at the Girls' Schools Association Conference which I addressed will hardly recognise your report (TES, November 26) with its selective quotations taken out of context, its innuendo and a headline for which neither my presentation nor any of my subsequent comments provide the slightest justification. Far from attacking or criticising Government policy I was concerned to explain the relevance of everything that Government is attempting in the education and training field to the urgent need to create a world class education and training system in this country. I started by saying that so much had been happening in the worlds of education and training in the last 10 years that those engaged in any particular part of the sector often felt that initiative was following initiative, with no coherence or pattern. That was not the case. I sought to demonstrate that every action taken by Government in schools, further education and higher education was addressed to key major aims."

The letter goes on, but it refutes everything that was said and repeated by the noble Earl, Lord Russell.

I should like to write to the noble Lord, Lord Howell, perhaps at some length, but he was wrong about Birmingham. Birmingham spent below its SSA and has done for some time. I need to make the point because it is important. The SSA is not a spending target. Birmingham chooses to spend well below SSA on education; that, of course, must be its free choice. But the independent commission said that the council could free up money within its existing budget by improving the efficiency with which it spends its money including better budget planning, streamlining the LEA's bureaucracy, rationalising adult education to end wasteful duplication, selling surplus lands to finance repairs to schools.

Perhaps I may give the figures for just three years: in 1991-92 it spent 14 per cent. below SSA, £64 million. In the following year it was £57 million, 11.8 per cent. This current year it is £29.6 million, 6.6 per cent. It is, of course, free to choose, but it was spending below SSA and spending well above on other areas of its spending.

The noble Lord, Lord Judd, and other noble Lords were concerned about core service details which should

be on the face of the Bill. The use of regulations is appropriate to allow eligible services to be set out in the necessary detail, and to allow the list to be amended, if necessary, in the light of experience. The detail of the core is still to be settled. I repeat my assurance that we plan to make the regulations available in draft form for the Committee stage. They will be published in draft form for consultation before a definitive set of regulations is put before Parliament for approval. The noble Lord, Lord Judd—

Lord Judd: My Lords, will the Minister give way? I am very grateful. Will she just confirm that what the House is in fact being asked to do is to support legislation before the Government have decided what that legislation is for?

Baroness Blatch: My Lords, I said that the purpose of the regulations was to set out the distinction between core and non-core activities. I said that they will be before the House before Committee stage, and it will be for the House to make a judgment about them.

The noble Lord, Lord Judd, went on to say that he was worried about my honourable friend in another place, Robert Jackson, and the reference to human rights and freedom of association. Our proposals are intended to protect freedom of association. Students will be able to associate for any purpose that they choose in any way that they choose. Our proposals are entirely in keeping with the European Convention on Human Rights and with the principle of freedom of association.

The noble Lord went on to say that he was concerned about the funding of higher education and about our proposals on grants and loans and the balance between the two being accelerated. I have to say to the noble Lord that the Labour Party is agonising over the funding of higher education. It knows that the equation simply does not add up. It wants, as we want, to see expansion in higher education. It knows, as we know, that it is a very expensive option. Expenditure is met by the taxes of many who will not qualify for higher education. Therefore other measures need to be explored and there is no fault in that.

The noble Lord, Lord Judd, was concerned about ballots on affiliation to external organisations on an annual basis. He said that they were unnecessary. It is unacceptable that students do not have the opportunity to decide regularly whether they wish their student union to affiliate in their name to external organisations of which they may not approve. The Bill will give them that opportunity to have a say.

The noble Earl, Lord Russell, was concerned that the activities will cease, or students will not be able to offer them. Indeed, that was the misunderstanding in all parts of the House, including, uncharacteristically, the noble Baroness, Lady Seear. I said that societies can be paid for by the moneys that presently go to universities, but for by the moneys that presently go to universities, but not necessarily through the students' unions. Public funding currently provided will remain available to the universities and the colleges—there will be no reduction in those funds—and they will be able to deploy those funds to the benefit of students outside of the campus students' union channel, but they will be there to support students generally.

We were told all the way through the day that somehow or other students are all very righteous creatures now, and there are no examples of the kind of behaviour that we saw in the 1960s. Michael Portillo, my right honourable friend in another place, was jostled by university students and had eggs thrown at him, which hit a member of his staff, during a visit in Liverpool only last week. Noble Lords will also recall a similar incident earlier in the year when my right honourable friend Peter Lilley was also attacked by students. Some 100 students, mostly members of the Socialist Workers Student Organisation, invaded and occupied the registry office of the University of East Anglia on Friday. They were removed only at 10.30 a.m. on Monday, when a writ was served on them.

A representative of the National Union of Students, attending a subsequent meeting of the student union at the University of East Anglia, likened the position of students today to that of the suffragettes and told the meeting that obeying the law never achieved anything. The police had to be called on Friday to help my right honourable friend the Secretary of State for Education to leave the parish hall where his constituency surgery was taking place. Students had surrounded the hall and were hammering on the walls and windows, inducing fear in constituents, who included—

Earl Russell: My Lords,—

Baroness Blatch: My Lords, perhaps I may finish—who included in that room an elderly helper, a parish councillor in his 70s.

Earl Russell: My Lords, when the Secretary of State for Social Security visited my college on 23rd November, the meeting was entirely uneventful. Security was provided by the students' union. Will doing that in future be counted as a core activity?

Baroness Blatch: I was saying that such things still go on. If the noble Earl wishes to know whether rioting and attacking people is a core activity, I should like to think that no public money is spent in supporting such activities.

I see that the noble Earl wishes to intervene again. I wonder whether he will forgive me. We will spend a great deal of time on this Bill and I am trying to do justice to the debate.

The noble Lord, Lord Dainton, had some concern about subject clubs, arts societies and so forth. Our intention is that the voluntary principle should apply over as wide an area as possible. For the core we have identified those services to which we believe all students should have access where they are provided through a students' union. That is not to say that we believe that the activities outside the core are not worthwhile. However, we think that the principle of opting in should apply to them and we believe the public money can be spent on them. It is a matter of making them available to those who want them.

My noble friend Lord Renfrew, asked how many universities positively welcomed the proposals. We have received about 3,000 responses to the consultations. Most of the institutions that responded commented on certain aspects of the proposals while

remaining silent on others. The majority of institutions criticised the proposals for distinguishing between core and non-core services but many have welcomed the code of practice.

My noble friends Lord Renfrew and Lady Park asked why the guidance given by the Attorney General in 1983 is not adequate. I have made the point that reliance on charity law leaves too much of the burden of accountability outside the university or college.

The right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Ripon was concerned about community service. Those sorts of activities must continue. If the universities regard them as valuable and the students also regard them as valuable, there is no impediment whatever to funding them. It is just that the funding channel will not be the students' union.

The noble Lord, Lord Plant, was concerned about student representation beyond the institution. Again, I appreciate the students' desire for representation beyond the institution. What we have proposed will not prevent that. But it will ensure, as must be right, that when students wish to undertake campaigning on a national scale, they will not be able to use public money. I take to heart the noble Lord's comment about representation funded by public money in the community around the institution on such matters as local transport. We shall be able to debate the detailed boundaries of the core at Committee stage.

The noble Lord, Lord Elis-Thomas, talked about matters Welsh and said that there were different regulations for core services in Wales. I made the point that the issue is about size—it is a more manageable size in Wales. One is not adding too much to the burden of that organisation. He also asked how institutions will support activities outside the core. I believe that I have answered that point.

My noble friend Lord Limerick addressed Part II of the Bill and was concerned about moneys. I have made the point that there will be no reduction of moneys for either core or non-core activities. He was concerned also about the legal status of unions. Generally speaking, students' unions are the creatures of universities and colleges. If they feel that the status of their students' unions are unclear, the remedy is very much in their own hands. The purpose of Clause 18 is not to give students' unions new status; it is merely to provide a means to identify students' unions.

The noble Baroness, Lady David, told me that she was going to ask questions, but she did not tell me what she intended to ask. I hope that she will allow me to write to her with the answers.

There is clearly much that is misunderstood about Part I of the Bill. Secondly and more depressingly, there is a lack of confidence in the best schools and the best teachers to play a real role in teacher education and the training of their future peers.

My noble friends Lady Cox, Lord Skidelsky, Lord Quinton and Lord Pearson have made it their business to look across the field of initial teacher training. They have seen not only the benefits generally to initial teacher training but the specific merits of addressing teacher competences, skills and wider education, overseen by a single body—the teacher training