

where there has previously been support for the Government's free-market policies. **The** rhetoric of the white paper, punctuated by statements conjuring up the 'modernisation of training in occupational skills', 'retraining', and 'updating skills', expresses a certain vision of the future of work. But the questions remain 'jobs for whom?', 'what kind of training and for what kind of jobs', and, more generally, 'what is the future of work?'

Behind the Government's vision of work, lies a broader vision of a laissez-faire, free for all, market economy. As well as training for technological change, stress is placed on small business development, self-employment, individual initiatives, and a training programme geared towards meeting the demands of the market. Alongside this is an emphasis on the regulation of the workforce into accepting low pay as a necessary condition for the survival of the economy. Such a policy informs the Youth Training Schemes, the MSC's Community Programme Scheme with its £60 average weekly wage, and the Young Workers' Scheme which offers an incentive to employers to pay £50 or less per week.

Since the late 1970s, when the MSC began to specialise in unemployment palliatives, a growing share of further education courses has been MSC-funded and controlled. This trend has been particularly marked in recession-hit areas, where employer-sponsored courses have almost disappeared, and the MSC has moved in. At present the MSC is believed to spend about £90m on Non-Advanced Further Education (NAFE) in England and Wales. The white paper proposes that this sum should rise by 1986/87 to £200m (about 25% of total NAFE) with consequent reductions in local authority expenditure and control. It is this which led Sir Jack Smart, chairman of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, to denounce the white paper as 'a unilateral act of imperialism'.

However there are many other aspects of the Government's proposals which need a critical response. Above all, the white paper is about making training and vocational education more 'financially attractive' to employers. Wages and allowances are to be held down. The wage-cutting Young Workers Scheme will be restricted to 17 year olds, so that employers will be encouraged to have their 16 year-olds free on YTS and their 17 year-olds cheap on YWS. Adults will be encouraged to pay for their own retraining through a new loans scheme. Employers, who have never taken training seriously in

TRAINING FOR JOBS?

The Tories' recently-published second white paper on training policy, *Training for Jobs*, has provoked a storm of protest, even

Britain, are to be given control over quality and standards and allowed to buy what they want from further education and public training agencies. This makes a mockery of the Government/MSc claim to be moving towards a standards-based training system. It also poses new threats to further education and to those Industrial Training Boards which survived the first round of closures. With the Engineering ITB under attack by Ford, the outlook seems bleak for ITBs.



As far as skill training is concerned, the Government intends to concentrate exclusively on the low quality and largely pre-vocational Youth Training Scheme. Everything else is to be left to the same employers who have failed so miserably in the past. The Government's insistence on the 'market led' approach is raising widespread doubts about the appropriateness of these policies to a modern economy.

A central question posed by the Government's proposals is 'jobs for whom?' This question is prompted by the failure of the white paper to address the issue of women's and ethnic minorities' needs and interests. Indeed, implicit in the proposals for training is the reproduction of discrimination. With the onus placed on employers to take decisions 'as to who is trained, when and in what skills', existing discriminatory practices in relation to employment are likely to continue. The provision of technical and vocational education for all 14-18 year olds, and the reshaping of further education courses towards science and technology, does nothing to challenge traditional stereotyping. It is unlikely, without a programme of positive action, that girls will take advantage of the new curriculum.¹ With the stress placed on training those already in employment, through retraining and updating skills, women, ethnic minorities, the

disabled and the unemployed generally, will suffer further discrimination.

Indeed, there is a failure within the white paper to address the unemployed in any concrete way. Though it is the role of the MSc to 'where necessary . . . provide help for training the unemployed', there is little in the report to suggest how this will be done, apart from basic training, training for those facing redundancy, and training in small business development. Alongside this, the unemployed are further hampered by the cut-back in adult education provision. Short-term, low-cost training does, of course, raise crucial questions concerning the unemployed. But in order realistically to offer re-entry into the labour market, a longer-term programme of training is necessary.

There are alternatives to the Government's programme in relation to training. Some local authorities are taking significant initiatives in building training programmes designed to offer opportunities to women and ethnic groups. The GLC, for example, spends more on women's training in London than the MSc does nationally.² In contrast to the Government's approach, these local initiatives help people acquire high quality skills and are accompanied by programmes of job creation.

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