

REFLECTING ON A REFLECTION OF 2009

USING EDUCATION AS A PRISM FOR DISCOVERING

The Values of New Labour: a discursion on its approaches to schooling in England and to government and politics in general

Here is the link to the original document. As it is fifty-eight pages long perhaps I need to work at persuading potential readers to even skim it. Skimming should be easy because any item in the contents can be clicked on.

http://www.criticalprofessionallearning.co.uk/assets/The_Values_of_New_Labour.pdf

Meanwhile, here is my reflection upon what I wrote in 2009. I shall try to be brief. ...ish.

Although most of it was written in the UK I edited a lot of it sitting just yards from where Yitzak Rabin was murdered for being insufficiently Zionist, some of it in the residents' lounge of the Dan Hotel, Tel Aviv, where I asked the receptionist why Shimon Peres was wearing makeup (I was told that he always wore makeup), some in a pub just where Tel Aviv becomes Jaffa and some in a restaurant in Jaffa itself that overlooks a mosque, is adjacent to a Franciscan monastery and a Greek Orthodox church plus a small synagogue and a school for all run by the Church of Scotland.

It was my last trip of almost forty over thirteen years working with people of so many different cultural backgrounds: working in a country that when presented with the choice between imperfect humanity and perfect inhumanity has seldom hesitated to choose the latter.

I do not address any of this directly in the document but, given that the Palestinians had to suffer Tony Blair's disgracefully biased pretence of being a Peace Envoy, I see it as useful background to understanding the Values of New Labour. For me it was a deceit practised upon too many of us at home and abroad.

Iraq looms largest when we think of Blair and New Labour. That is often counterbalanced by reference to all the 'good' stuff that was done at home. And there was some. It did not, however, close the gap between rich and poor. It merely slowed its growth. A literally huge mess was made of education in England and constant use of the words 'reform' and 'choice' did

nothing to disguise that. When Blair said that his single priority was EDUCATION, EDUCATION, EDUCATION he was inviting us to examine his record through that lens. He ought, of course, to have said SOCIETY, SOCIETY, SOCIETY. As, however, he reduced public participation in politics to the implementation of policy poor old society had to learn to be reactive rather than proactive.

Possibly the document contains too much of my old obsession about how young people are measured and labelled. I have, however, added an activity at the end to help critique what I wrote. My intention was to encourage critical conversation.

And yes, as I believe was said by David Hamilton, schooling is what we do to horses.

Cliff Jones, 21st. December 2017