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A Tale of two committees: Newbolt illuminated through the Cox models.

Introduction

The historical moment of Newbolt, and what gives it enduring significance, is that it defined English as the business of the state and the key to the state of the nation. The Committee had an extraordinary brief, which it developed into a remarkable mission to transform 'English' from its pitiful place in education oppressed by 'The Classics' to the paramount subject charged with the salvation of the nation. Despite the inevitably elitist nature of its members, it argued for an emancipatory model of English to benefit every class of society. How could anything as bureaucratic as a committee produce such an evangelical and missionary manifesto? Almost 70 years later, the Cox committee, used much more subdued language. However, with a *Newbolt* legacy that had promoted English to the key subject in schooling, Cox set out a vision of English for ages 5-16 with the same emancipatory principles. The Newbolt and Cox Committees have a remarkable affinity that deserves recognition and analysis, beginning with the notion that the committee phenomenon itself is a remarkable historical agent in the history of the subject English.

The phenomenon of the 'committee'

One way to chart the history of the subject of English, especially at school level, would be to examine the numerous reports, commissioned by the government to examine the subject's status with an imperative to recommend change. These reports have a remarkable consistency in the *modus operandi* that drives them. This book takes Newbolt's remarkable report of 1921 as its keystone. There were many other reports related to English — for example The Newsom Report (1963) or John Dixon's seminal *Growth Through English* (1967), effectively a personal report of the Dartmouth conference (Goodwyn 2018a) — but the key subsequent reports were, arguably, Bullock (1975), Kingman (1988) and Cox (1989). This chapter develops a detailed argument for this selection, although their importance would be hard to dispute. Their other commonality was being radical and forward looking. However, their importance was one of influence, not of legislative impact.

A common basis for all these official documents is the phenomenon of the committee or 'working group'. This topic and its historical importance would fill an entire book. For the purposes of the chapter this phenomenon I interpret and describe with the following characteristics:

1. It is commissioned by the government;
2. It is typically in reaction to some form of alleged 'crisis'; Bullock was initially set up to investigate the 'decline in reading standards' — a decline as perceived by Minister of Education, Margaret Thatcher, but which the committee stated they could not find, producing instead the influential 'Language Across the Curriculum' document;
3. This reactive element acts as a time specific imperative to produce a report urgently, an approach in marked contrast to Royal Commissions and more investigative

projects that take many years; this 'quick fix' approach has dominated educational reform over the last 100 years;

4. It has terms of reference — for Newbolt these were:

To inquire into the position occupied by English (Language and Literature) in the educational system of England, and to advise how its study may best be promoted in schools of all types, including Continuation Schools, and in Universities and other Institutions of Higher Education, regard being had to

(1) the requirements of a liberal education;

(2) the needs of business, the professions, and public services; and

(3) the relation of English to other studies. (Newbolt 1921: 1)

5. It selects a 'key figure' as chair and as a quasi-representative of the government — in these four instances they clearly 'got the wrong man' (they are all, unsurprisingly, men);
6. Most of the committee are white and male (e.g. Kingman 5 female, 10 male; Cox 3 female, 7 male);
7. It appoints an 'expert' group; members do not apply, they are selected; 'expert' does not mean educational expert — a significant proportion of the group will be from a different field or a quasi-related field (consider Roald Dahl on the Cox committee (who lasted only one meeting) or Keith Waterhouse (described as 'journalist, novelist and dramatist') on the Kingman Committee);
8. It is supported by a secretariat drawn from the Civil Service — typically with educational expertise, some HMI, some from the Ministry;
9. It gathers evidence — chiefly via 'witnesses' who are invited to come and speak, from written submissions from authoritative bodies and individuals and, more rarely, through visits (Kingman 1988: 87-88);
10. It produces a Report which becomes permanently associated with the Chair's name, but the authoring of the report is a different matter given the variable inputs of the committee members (e.g. James Britton's clear influence on Bullock or Kenneth Baker outrageous changes to the order of the Cox Report (Cox 1991)) and the inclusion of the submitted evidence — *Newbolt*, for example, includes long verbatim quotations from individuals throughout the Report;
11. The key part of the Report is the 'Recommendations';
12. The Reports have strong similarities in presentation, structure, organisation and addenda but they are not at all uniform — Cox has no page numbers, the Bullock Report is the size of the Bible, Kingman is fewer than 100 pages;
13. They receive a great deal of media attention when they are published;
14. They often 'generate' other texts of significance — Newbolt Committee member George Samson produced *English for the English* (1921) and Brian Cox produced *both Cox on Cox* (1991) and his autobiography *The Great Betrayal* (1993);

15. Most recommendations are never officially implemented, though they may, over time, become effective as policy or through teacher endorsement — Bullock's *Language Across the Curriculum* mantra was enthusiastically taken up by schools and Kingman's recommendations were turned into action through The Language in the National Curriculum (LINC) project (Carter 1990) which was subsequently banned by the government in 1992 (Carter 1996).

Newbolt and Cox; the surprising progressives?

To begin with two simple parallels, both *Newbolt* and the Cox Report were remarkably progressive documents for their times, and they have much in common. The two Chairmen were given the task of running their respective committees and producing their reports because they were seen as neither progressive nor radical, but both had become so by the time it came to publish their recommendations for the future of English. A brief biographical outline is valuable.

Newbolt, a trained lawyer, was a thoroughly literary man but held senior advisory positions with the government — especially during World War 1. He was very famous in his time for his patriotic verse, such as 'Drake's Drum' and '*Vitai Lampada*' which, with its mnemonic refrain 'Play up, play up and play the game', made him a household name (Newbolt 1897). He was essentially misconstrued as a stalwart patriot and reliable nationalist. By the time of writing the Report, and after the impact of the Great War, however, tired of being misconstrued, he was in a radical position. The language of *Newbolt* is emotional and imbued with rhetoric, it is a passionate love affair with literature, and especially English Literature. It is a highly charged document, striving for a new national unity — a concept that exists in tension between national pride (in both the heritages of the English language and its literature) and a deep anxiety about current disaffection in the working class and indifference in the middle class.

Cox was a distinguished academic, invited to join the Kingman Committee by Kenneth Baker. There are no published reasons for this choice but Cox himself suggests:

I was well known as the chief editor of the Black papers (1969-1977) supposedly traditional and right wing in their views on education. I presume neither Mr Baker nor Mrs Rumbold was aware that over 10 years I had been conducting a campaign to make creative writing a central feature of the English Curriculum. (Cox 1991: 4]

This insight is useful but partially misleading. The Black Papers were not 'supposedly' right wing but notoriously vitriolic, attacking progressive and child centred aspects of education in the 1960s (Simon 1990). Cox somehow (Cox 1992) was absolutely transformed and had completely changed his views on education and was an even more passionate advocate of 'multi-cultural literature' than of creative writing. Bizarrely Baker and fellow conservatives — unhappy with the Kingman Report, having demanded a return to traditional grammar teaching (something roundly opposed by Newbolt) — chose Cox to chair the committee that would define the whole of English for all children in state schools. Baker thought Cox was still 'one of us', employing a similar logic in selecting Roald

Dahl who, according to Cox, was included because ‘Mr Baker had met him on a social occasion and had been impressed by his traditionalist views’ (1991: 5).

These two Chairs share a strange comparability as genuine progressives, lovers of literature for the people, misconstrued as trustworthy establishment figures who produced remarkably defining documents both in tune with the radical mood of their times.

In *Newbolt*, the great majority of witnesses and cited authorities had long advocated for a total change to the teaching of English and for the huge weight of The Classics to be displaced. There was deep opposition to formal grammar teaching and philology at school level. Literature had to be connected to the lives of students and this included local literatures and dialect. In modern parlance, learning had to be active, involving speaking and listening and the use of dramatisations. The overwhelming body of evidence for *Newbolt* was a for a vernacular and dynamic approach to literature and language.

Cox rode on a similar a wave. The seminal intellectual work of The London School of English of the late 60s and 70s (Goodson & Medway 1992), bolstered by the Bullock Report, developed a personal growth approach to English (Goodwyn 2016, 2017). As right wing assault gained momentum, the practice of English teaching had become the temple of the London School. The comprehensive movement meant 90% of schools in the 80s were all inclusive neighbourhood schools. The binary GCE ‘O’ level and CSE assessment systems were abolished, and in their place came the unified GCSE with coursework, oral assessment, creative writing, media work, multicultural literature and the removal of highly prescribed set texts from the Cultural Heritage. The only prescribed author in the Cox curriculum would be Shakespeare. This combination of the alignment of the beliefs of English teachers, the nature of the curricula and the forms of assessment have been characterised as the age of ‘Harmonious Practice’ (Goodwyn 2020). It is clear, in retrospect, that the Cox Report — like *Newbolt* — had listened to the voices of the profession and was in true harmony with its beliefs.

Tracing the progressive relationship – Newbolt to Cox

As observed previously, one characteristic of the Committee phenomenon is its reactive nature *Newbolt* reacts to World War 1 and the national crisis engulfing the country in its aftermath. This was a multifaceted crisis including, for example, the disaffection of the working class and the very poor quality of the teaching profession. (Shayer 1972). Superficially Cox looks different, and the nature of its reaction to a crisis needs more elaboration. The circumstances in this case were fundamentally political. A steady momentum to ‘get a grip’ on education and take control of state schooling had built during the Thatcher premiership (1979-1990), and English and its teachers were central to this mission. Sir Keith Joseph, Minister for Education (1981-1986), was legendary in his absolute loathing of the state schools (Ball 1990; Ribbins & Sherratt 1997). One of his key drives was *The Technical and Vocational Education Initiative* (1982-1997), the first major intervention by central government in curriculum development in England. Its name speaks for itself.¹ Under pressure from the right wing momentum of the 1980s, the supposedly independent HMI produced a series of influential curriculum documents which formed the basis for the argument for a National Curriculum, mandating content and modes of assessment. HMI produced two English documents in 1984 and 1986, arguing for a return to a more grammar school model of English (HMSO 1984; HMSO 1986). This ‘imprimatur’ from the once independent HMI gave Baker, one of Thatcher’s favourite

¹ *Newbolt* was absolutely against ‘commercial education’.

ministers, a 'green light'. By 1988 he had put through the Education Reform Act which hugely disrupted Local Authorities and the comprehensive school system (Benn & Chitty 1996).

The final straw was *The Kingman Report*. Despite having selected the Committee and its Chair the notable mathematician and University Vice Chancellor, Sir John Kingman, as reliable right of centre establishment people, the Report firmly rejected 'a return to old-fashioned grammar teaching and learning by rote' (Kingman 1988: 3). Very strikingly the Report begins with a quotation from *Newbolt*: '...the danger confronting English today is not so much indifference as distraction' (Newbolt 1921: pp. 20-21) and then states:

Those words from *Newbolt* strike a chord nearly 70 years later. The Newbolt Committee was discussing the risk that much of English as a distinctive subject might be crowded out of the school curriculum by the demands of other ways of developing children's abilities, aptitudes and experience to meet adult life. (Kingman 1988: 1)

This rather misreads *Newbolt's* main concern which was that English needed to force its way into the curriculum, but the spirit of agreement is clear. Equally, Kingman salutes the lasting influence of The Bullock Report, its ideas still salient in 1988. Kingman draws significantly on the themes of the progressive ideals of English. When it became clear that Kingman's recommendations were to help children develop Knowledge About Language (KAL), not to 'do grammar exercises', there was a huge sense of relief in the English teaching profession (Goodwyn 1992)] and real shock and outrage in the Conservative government and the right wing press (Cox 1992). English teachers warmly — if a little nervously — welcomed the idea that they would be provided with in-service training on KAL and that new materials would be created for an active approach to understanding language, but what actually happened was a travesty (Goodwyn 2020; Carter 1996). Cox's Committee was formed in the context of a ferocious assault of government on state education. Incensed by Kingman and associated media reaction, Baker rushed through the legislation for a highly prescriptive National Curriculum (NC) for all subjects but demanded that English be the very first subject to be defined.

Before examining the relationship between *Newbolt* and Cox it must be stated that, just as LINC was derailed, the NC for English, broadly welcomed by the profession in 1990, was very soon aggressively revised. Research has shown (Goodwyn 1990; Goodwyn & Findlay 1999) that the story since then has been of remarkable dislocation between English teachers and the subject they teach with Michael Gove applying the *coup de grace* with a return to terminal examinations. *Newbolt* and Cox have much to say about the dead hand of examinations, especially on the teaching of literature. *Newbolt* with a prescience for 2021 observes variously:

Now, as then, there is the danger that a true instinct for humanism may be smothered by the demand for definite measurable results, especially the passing of examinations (Newbolt 1921: 55)

'Every teacher knows,' says Mr. Hartog, 'that examinations do effectively control the class-rooms of our Secondary Schools.' We are satisfied, then, that in most schools the teaching of literature is bound to ally itself with the examination system. Yet this alliance should involve no subserviency on the part of the teaching. (300)

We think that an examination on set books should leave the teacher of literature as free as practical considerations allow to draw up his own syllabus and to adopt his own methods. The absence of a syllabus by no means precludes the possibility of cramming; there is, indeed, a danger that, unless the papers are set with exceptional care and skill, such absence may lead to a discontinuance of steady reading and the substitution of lessons that attempt to anticipate the examiner's questions a worse and duller form of cramming than even the unintelligent study of a text-book. (304)

Apart from the language these words might have been written in England in 2021.

Cox draws heavily and regularly on Kingman and occasionally on Bullock, but there is no explicit reference to *Newbolt*. However, the next section will attempt to trace the nature of the relationship between Newbolt's and Cox's Reports.

Themes and models in *Newbolt* and Cox

The main focus here will be the drawing out of the parallels between the Cox models and conceptualisations of English in *Newbolt*. These elements might be considered as the key building blocks, the foundations of subject English. Another aspect, for briefer consideration, might be described as the common threads that bind each Report together. *Newbolt*, and some its preoccupations, are absolutely of their time. At a factual level, it is astonishingly detailed and exact, dealing with every conceivable type of school (including the public schools), college and university. A profoundly knowledgeable record of its times, its range is tremendous, covering everything from elementary schooling to evening classes and Adult Education to the needs of business. Although its liberal tone is occasionally patronising and betrays slips of the elite into prejudice (for example its mixed messages about women), but it is remarkable for how little those slips diminish its currency. The Cox Report for all its more direct importance to the lives of all young people aged 5-16, operates with a much more modest scope and ambition.

Visible threads emerge in both reports. Perhaps most striking of all is the emphasis on the 'oral', the importance of spoken language and listening. Although one of *Newbolt*'s 'slips' is about the correction of provincialisms, yet fundamentally it expects children to be 'bi-lingual' in Standard English and local dialect and indeed it promotes the importance of local language. Closely allied to the oral is the concept of dramatising and reading aloud of all texts.

Cox famously proposed the 'Five models of English' suggesting that English teachers recognised them all and that they were of equal currency. Research has demonstrated that is a simplification of the views of English teachers (Goodwyn 1992, 1999) both at the time and subsequently, but they serve here us useful lenses to examine *Newbolt*. For example, this analysis reveals how clearly three of them were implied throughout *Newbolt*: Personal Growth, Adult Needs and Cultural Heritage. The model of Language Across the Curriculum (LAC) as expressed in Cox receives very significant treatment in *Newbolt*. Cultural Analysis which was received as 'new' in 1989, also appears interestingly in some rather prescient references in the 1921 Report. The following analysis draws very selectively on quotations from the wealth of evidence supplied to the Newbolt Committee and makes the case for a genuine resonance between the Reports with inevitable differences of emphasis given the differences in their scope.

Personal Growth (PG)

A 'personal growth' view focuses on the child: it emphasises the relationship between language and learning in the individual child, and the role of literature in developing children's imaginative and aesthetic lives. (DES, 1989, 2:21)

The Cox Report is thoroughly imbued with PG and *Newbolt*, using different terminology, is equally so with strong emphasis on the 'local' in life, an important aspect also in Dixon, who championed PG:

The most valuable for all purposes are those experiences of human relations which are gained by contact with human beings. This contact may take place in the intercourse of the classroom, the playground, the home, and the outer world, or solely in the inner world of thought and feeling, through the personal records of action and experience known to us under the form of literature. (Dixon 1967: 8)

Cox's emphasis in PG is on 'developing' not 'appreciating' literature — although in *Cultural Heritage* it is appreciation. In *Newbolt* a similar emphasis stresses the voyage of the mind uncluttered by literary analysis:

No doubt the connection between language and thought is a very intimate one, but we are strongly of opinion that in dealing with literature the voyage of the mind should be broken as little as possible by the examination of obstacles and the analysis of the element on which the explorer is floating. (Newbolt 1921: 10)

The phrase 'the explorer is floating', captures the PG sense of the individual journey across the sea of literature [small 'l']. There is considerable tension in *Newbolt* between ensuring that standard and conventional spoken English is taught in schools but that it should not imposed as both Cox and Kingman insist:

We do not, however, suggest that the suppression of dialect should be aimed at, but that children who speak a dialect, should, as often happens, become bi-lingual, speaking standard English too. Every dialect has, for those who have been brought up to speak it, intimate associations of its own, and, side by side with standard English, dialect will probably persist and be used in the playground and the street. (Newbolt 1921: 68)

Here there is a nod to Adult Needs and securing Standard English but a more fundamental pointer to 'intimate associations' of the personal and the local.

Perhaps the most important connection in *Newbolt* is that relentless emphasis on literature as an experience that must connect to real life and the individual's direct knowledge of life:

Literature ... becomes real to the student. His intellectual curiosity, his sense of wonder, is quickened. He realises that it is not a collection of historical facts, nor of critical opinions, not merely a number of more or less unintelligible classics but instead, a body of live thought which relates to his own life and is of value to him in achieving his own ends in denning the ends which he wishes to achieve. . . (Newbolt 1921: 82)

Newbolt emphasises how literature helps the individual grow and develop, a remarkable element in it progressive thinking.

Cross-curricular (CC)

A 'cross-curricular' view focuses on the school: it emphasises that all teachers (of English and of other subjects) have a responsibility to help children with the language demands of different subjects on the school curriculum: otherwise areas of the curriculum may be closed to them. In England, English is different from other school subjects, in that it is both a subject and a medium of instruction for other subjects. (DES, 1989: 2:22)

Perhaps the closest 'fit' between a Cox model and *Newbolt* is that every teacher is a teacher of English. Part of Newbolt's radical and progressive agenda was to dislodge the ancient dominance of Classics as the benchmark of heritage text, more specifically the teaching of Latin and Greek which powerfully diminished the place of the vernacular language:

This will be even more true of an education in English than of any other; for two reasons. In the first place the teaching of English as the instrument of thought and the means of communication will necessarily affect the teaching of every other subject. Whatever view is taken of specialisation in schools, it is evidently desirable that the general education of every teacher shall be sufficiently good to ensure unceasing instruction in the English language. The teachers of all special subjects must be responsible for the quality of the English spoken or written during their lessons. (Newbolt 1921: 23)

Cox, was essentially following on from Bullock (1975), but *Newbolt's* prescience was remarkable and might be seen as a genuinely emancipatory concept also linked to the tradition of PG as an instrument of social justice and a very evident assault on the privileges of the public schools and class elites:

We prefer to emphasise again the point that every teacher is a teacher of English, because every teacher is a teacher in English. The whole of the timetable is, therefore, available for the teaching of English. If every teacher showed realisation of this in his actual practice, the results achieved in our

schools would, we are convinced, undergo a great change. The undue isolation of English has often made the teaching, not only of English but of other subjects, ineffective. It is impossible to teach any subject without teaching English; it is almost equally impossible to teach English without teaching something else. (Newbolt 1921: 63)

Goodwyn (1992) shows a remarkable resonance with *Newbolt's* belief. English teachers firmly rejected LAC as a 'model of English'. However, they completely endorsed the idea that all subject teachers should accept a responsibility for teaching and developing English, following on directly from the recommendations of The Bullock Report (1975).

Adult Needs (AN)

An 'adult needs' view focuses on communication outside the school: it emphasises the responsibility of English teachers to prepare children for the language demands of adult life, including the workplace, in a fast-changing world. Children need to learn to deal with the day-to-day demands of spoken language and of print; they also need to be able to write clearly, appropriately and effectively. (DES, 1989: 2:23)

Both a strength and limitation of Cox's presentation of the models is their discrete separation, avoiding some real complexities. For example, in defining Cultural Heritage Cox states: '...it is the responsibility of schools to lead children to an appreciation of those works of literature that have been widely regarded as amongst the finest in the language' (DES, 1989, 2:24). This implies that once appreciative of the finest literature by age 16, having been 'led', not inspired or challenged, the *proto* adult heads into 'the workplace'. *Newbolt* was passionate about the place of literature in adult life and evangelical that education was never to be driven by vocational imperatives. It acknowledges, like Cox, the need for being able to use Standard English and he might have amended Cox to say that adults need to learn to deal with the day-to-day demands of spoken language and of print; they also need to be able to write clearly, appropriately and effectively.

There are several chapters in *Newbolt* about this topic, not least because one of The Committee's terms of reference was: '(2) the needs of business, the professions, and public services' (Newbolt 1921: 1). They took this mission extremely seriously, but they stuck absolutely to their radical guns in two ways. First was an insistence that English, at whatever level of education, should not essentially be about vocational outcomes, here commenting on the views of Business witnesses:

Yet, as their vigorous denunciation of Commercial English showed, they were very far from demanding that education should be the bondman of vocation. Rather the implicit assumption which underlay their requirements was that British trade would be efficient and successful in proportion to the amount of intellect and imagination brought to bear upon it, and that the schools would best serve the needs of business by developing to the utmost the intellect and imagination of those about to enter the business world. (134)

Second, the importance of literature to adult life:

It was refreshing to find the teaching of literature advocated as an essential preparation for a business career; yet this was the burden of a large number of the replies we received; and the claims of literature could hardly have been expressed in more absolute terms than in the following sentences: 'I would advocate an extensive reading course for all students.' Commercial English is not only objectionable to all those who have the purity of the language at heart but also contrary to the true interests of commercial life, sapping its vitality and encouraging the use of dry, meaningless, formulae just where vigorous and arresting English is the chief requisite. (136)

There are a number of discussions in *Newbolt* about the nature of working life especially that of the working class. The perspectives reveal a profound tension between arguing for the need for an emancipatory social cohesion around a national identity and an expectation that much of the nation will live a life of daily drudgery from which the proper sharing of national culture and extended provision of adult education will offer some salvation. Newbolt argues passionately for the need for the universities to lead on providing a literary adult education. Cox resisted Conservative imperatives surrounding the Technical and Vocational Educational Initiative and other narrow views of English and kept the AN model to a simple focus on 'communication'.

Cultural Heritage (CH)

A 'cultural heritage' view emphasises the responsibility of schools to lead children to an appreciation of those works of literature that have been widely regarded as amongst the finest in the language. (DES, 1989: 2:24)

In 1990 English teachers reacted quite strongly against any imposition of a traditional set of 'classic texts', fiercely defensive of the freedoms won by the GCSE. (Goodwyn 1992). They quickly recognised that Cox was firmly endorsing this view and was advocating the value of multi-cultural literature and the importance of English teachers selecting texts that worked best in their schools, linking to the PG importance of the local communities of actual students. Cox was emphatically rejecting the momentum of the Conservative government to impose 'traditional' approaches to grammar teaching and literary study.

Newbolt is in some ways similar, although it is addressing a different set of conservative structures and values. The main thrust was dislodging the dominance of The Classics, the texts of Latin and Greek literature chiefly residing within the all-powerful public schools. In discussing their form of education he states:

The education which they have thus provided has, in general, been superior to that provided by the State, but it has been the privilege of a minority only, and has widened the mental distance between classes in England. Matthew Arnold, using the word in its true sense, claimed that 'Culture unites classes'. He might have added that a system of education which disunites classes cannot be held worthy of the name of a national culture. (Newbolt 1921: 5)

He is equally emphatic about the value of the literature of the vernacular:

... we state what appears to us to be an incontrovertible primary fact, that for English children no form of knowledge can take precedence of a knowledge of English, no form of literature can take precedence of English literature : and that the two are so inextricably connected as to form the only basis possible for a national education. (14)

Such a feeling for our own native language would be a bond of union between classes, and would beget the right kind of national pride. Even more certainly should pride and joy in the national literature serve as such a bond. (22)

English teachers in 1990 all 'recognised' CH and its power as a model, but their feeling was it should be reduced. For *Newbolt* the radical argument was to establish a universal entitlement to the enjoyment of a vernacular literary heritage. If The Committee's work has a lasting influence then it must be that English Literature became a key subject in schools and universities. It was adamant that literature be connected to real life and to be enjoyed before it was examined critically:

The belief which inspires every paragraph of the present Report is that this much desired spiritual unity in the nation and the equally necessary uplift in the whole level of the popular imagination can only come through a general acknowledgment of the paramount place which the native speech and literature should occupy in our schools and in the common life of our people. (277)

Both Cox and *Newbolt* see literature as part of a national heritage, but their emphases are different. *Newbolt* was an evangelist to create such a heritage, while Cox addresses the concern that the English literary canon had become dominant in the same way that The Classics had prior to *Newbolt*. For this reason, he sought to position CH as one model – not **the** model – of English.

Cultural Analysis (CA)

A 'cultural analysis' view emphasises the role of English in helping children towards a critical understanding of the world and cultural environment in which they live. Children should know about the processes by which meanings are conveyed, and about the ways in which print and other media carry values. (DES, 1989: 2:25)

Chapter 9 of The Cox Report includes a short chapter on 'Media Education and Information Technology', both a timely recognition, in 1989, of societal change and of deep change within subject English and its teachers. The chapter opens with a quotation from Kingman:

Round the city of Caxton, the electronic suburbs are rising. To the language of books is added the language of television and radio ---- the processed codes of the computer. (Kingman 1988: 2.7)

It might seem unlikely that this rather quaint metaphor about the 'city of Caxton' could resonate with *Newbolt* in 1921. However, it was part of its radical and progressive character, that the place and importance of popular culture were recognised and that 'the role of English in helping children towards a critical understanding of the world and cultural environment in which they live' (DES, 1989, 2:24) was in their thinking.

We do not suggest that only the recognised English classics should be included. The lesson will be a failure if it is not really a recreation, and the teacher who means the effect of his work to be lasting will start from what the children themselves enjoy, recognising that even though what they read may be rubbish, their being willing to read at all is a definite asset. If he sets about it in the right way, he will soon be able to wean them from the merely mawkish or blood-curdling to read wholesome boys' and girls' books, simple ballads, and so onwards. But if he takes the line that to read trash is a moral offence, and if he coerces rather than persuades, he will be doing them a mischief in spite of his good intent. (Newbolt 1921: 84)

The term 'rubbish' reveals a partially elitist position but, crucially, they recognise the teacher must not 'coerce'. English teachers, described as the *Preachers of Culture* (Mathieson 1975), have long struggled with embracing popular culture in the classroom (Goodwyn 1992), but the evidence is clear that in the period 1989-2005 at least, many enthusiastically did embrace it, many becoming specialist media teachers (Goodwyn 1992, 2002).

Equally *Newbolt* in the following passage endorses students writing in the new media, the second sentence adding a dimension of cultural studies:

School magazines have multiplied, and if some of them are mainly athletic chronicles, others encourage literary ambitions in a way that recalls the *Microcosm* of Canning and his contemporaries at Eton. And if the broad principles of criticism are to be properly illustrated, reference should frequently be made to the other creative arts, music, architecture, painting, etc., and the English lesson will thus become a gateway to both literature and other artistic interests. (332)

Brute physical facts in a newspaper are far more unwholesome than the same facts in the pages of Shakespeare or of Cervantes. In such books as these they are conveyed by the sanest of voices and set by the greatest of observers in their due place in human life; they are treated naturally, fearlessly and without self-consciousness, whereas in the police news the reader's mind is concentrated upon their criminal aspect and unhelpt by any influence which could make for judgment or a sense of proportion. (337)

In an intriguing comment they echo some of the work of the Media Studies specialists in the post-Cox era who saw children and young people as active and critical consumers.

The fear that the children of to-day are being demoralised or exposed to evil suggestion by the penny stories and penny magazines which they devour in such large quantities is, in our belief, a mistaken one. We have examined for the purpose of this inquiry a number of the most popular of these productions, and have found some of them surprisingly well conceived and well written. Such publications as *The Children's Newspaper* and *My Magazine* are, in their own way, excellent, and attractive enough in themselves to need no recommendation from authority. Others which are more definitely written down to the children are yet comparatively harmless. (339)

It is most prescient that *Newbolt* notices what was to become the trend of moral panics about comics and magazines², for example, in the mid twentieth century, and dismisses their potency. This confidence in young people is still mixed with what became known, before Cox, as inoculation theory (Goodwyn 1992):

Our practical policy will be to secure this intimacy for the teacher and this introduction for the child, and we may be certain that if we can do this the dangers of print, which cannot be eliminated, will be more and more easily repelled, as the germs of disease are repelled by vigorous health. (Newbolt 1921: 340)

The work of The Committee is remarkable in having foreseen the importance of popular culture and of the emergent power of the media in relation to the teaching of English and in expecting English teachers to take it all seriously but not to 'coerce', not to be morally censorious.

Conclusions

This chapter has placed The Cox Report in a historical line with *The Newbolt Report*. In providing an illumination of the radical and progressive nature of *Newbolt*, it has taken the Cox models of English (1989) as refractory lenses through which to view some key themes in *Newbolt*. The massive ambition of *Newbolt* was to provide a panoramic vision for English, including every type of institution, teachers at every level, from cradle to grave. Cox had merely the curriculum of English 5-16 to determine, but their fundamental ideologies and mission prove remarkably similar.

They view literature as life-affirming and personal, a key part of the nation's heritage but an emancipatory and egalitarian resource. They concur in considering English the most important of all subjects and in some respects view all teachers as teachers of English. Both celebrate the notion of vernacular language including dialects and local culture. English provides personal growth to all the population, *Newbolt* stressing this as a life-long dynamic. They emphasise the oral, the use of dramatisation, reading aloud and bringing texts urgently to life in the classroom. The ideal teachers of English are well-trained, profound subject specialists with a love of literature and driven by the needs of students, not examinations or regulations.

² See Nelson-Addy, this volume, for a further consideration of how the range of literary texts and forms considered valid for study might usefully be broadened.

The two Chairs were chosen to follow a party line that they had long left behind them. In their hugely influential Reports they shared a vision for an emancipatory form of English in which literature was to be primarily enjoyed, rather than merely appreciated, and read as of life-long value.

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