Learningguild Letter

1.2010

Dear members and friends of Learningguild,

Again and again we have to ask the pair of questions "What is going wrong?" and "What is needed?" In mid-year, at the home of one of our members, Margaret Roobol-Hill, I fortunately came across a notable article "What are universities for?" by the Oxford historian and former President of Corpus Christi College, Sir Keith Thomas. In fact, along with a valuable survey of the history of British universities, Thomas sets out the extent of the recent decline of the humanities in them. On July 16th I invited the attention of our Friday-evening group to his article, which appeared in *The Times Literary Supplement* for May 7th.

In this letter I summarize and illustrate a contrast he draws with the recent past, ask what might be added to it now in Australia and elsewhere, consider what the main needs are, and invite attention to what Learningguild is doing, albeit as yet on a small scale, towards meeting them.

Higher education in Britain, says Thomas, will suffer from the cuts certain to be made in public expenditure. Already the humanities are poorly funded by comparison with the so-called STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). Posts and courses are being cut. However, the malaise is worsened by increasingly dominant assumptions, in particular that the worth of individual academics is to be judged by their rate of publication and their winning of research grants. By contrast, in what now seems to Thomas "a golden age of academic freedom" after the Second World War, scholars could concentrate on long-term projects of great value and on their teaching, an activity that is now underrated and often reduced to a minimum. Nor is much credit now given, as it used to be, to "talking to schools, writing textbooks for students or addressing … the general public".

I can illustrate one side of his contrast from my own experience of better years and ways. As a senior secondary and then a university student, and as a young academic, I greatly valued the BBC's journal *The Listener*, which, mostly providing texts of broadcast talks, was one main vehicle through which scholars (such as Margery Perham: see p.13) shared their discoveries and thoughts with a wide audience. In the years 1965-68, as a lecturer at Melbourne aged between 29 and 33, I was free to engage extensively in teaching and talking with students, and to run with MUAC, and published only one article while I worked on my Ph.D. (which I could relate to my teaching), edited the Australian Student Christian Movement's journal *Crux*, and gave my Philosophy I students extensive duplicated notes on Plato's *Republic*, including many improvements, as I believed, to Sir Desmond Lee's Penguin edition. Later, when Lee happened to come to Australia, we met, and those notes became the initial basis of what he called "a cooperation from which we have both learned", one which underlay the revised edition of 1974.

Thomas's indictment of present tendencies certainly applies to Australia. What might be added to it? He mentions "the barbarous prose" in which "university administrators … and government agencies announce their diktats", but does not raise the question to what extent present education in the humanities does in fact typically engender two of the certainly crucial qualities he associates with it: "linguistic sensitivity" and "the capacity to evaluate an argument". The Editor-at large of *The Canberra Times*, Jack Waterford, not unreasonably wrote on July 11th of his and his fellow-editors' view that

> any discipline [in universities] invoking the nature of "cultural studies" involved only post-modern twaddle and hogwash, actually inimical to clear thinking.

I well remember a postgraduate student I was asked to assist in 1992. He had obtained degrees in Engineering and in Arts at Melbourne, but, as the supervisor of his Master's thesis said, he could not write proper sentences. His Arts courses had included some ideological ones that probably lacked exams. He worked hard with me, and not only gained his Master's degree in transport research but went on to take the half-yearly exam for the Learningguild Certificate in Reasoning and Expression about ten times, reaching an upper B. The competence he developed was indispensable to his career in preparing and writing reports.

Many senior executives lament the fact that few graduates write well. "What I want", a prominent financier has said to me, "is someone who can write a good two-page report." The traditional requirement that a course end with an exam no longer applies in four of the five first-year courses in History at Melbourne. In about 1990 Professor Wilfred Prest wrote to *The Australian* of his regret and that of his colleagues in History at Adelaide that they had had to drop exams because other departments had done so and hence had more favourable enrolments. A good exam requires a student to build up the knowledge and alacrity to be able to respond relevantly, without further help, and in a limited time, to some of a set of carefully-worded questions not seen before.

About ten years ago the late Barry Taylor of the Melbourne Philosophy Department said to me that the level we once expected of students at the end of the four-year Honours degree was now that achieved at least a year later, at the end of the MA. Obviously the dropping of the old four-year Honours Arts arrangements, so that 'Honours' came to name merely a year added on to the pass degree, had much to do with that. However, the decline is also related to the lowering of the level of requirements in the last year of secondary school, which I observed when asked to comment over several years c.2000 on draft exam papers in Latin for the Victorian Certificate of Education. There has been (except in Specialist Maths) a failure to provide a more demanding and engrossing curriculum for abler and keener students. Another factor is the undemandingness of much that is now the fare in those early and middle secondary stages which, whether one has them at 11-14 or much later, are crucial to educational development and enthusiasm. I have written and given to two of my grandchildren Chapter One of a book I have begun called *Latin and Philosophy from Cicero*.

An area of frequent aridity and/or narrowness is that of postgraduate degrees. In 1936, when E.R.Dodds gave his inaugural lecture as Professor of Greek at Oxford, he warned that concentration by a young graduate on a narrow area with a view to a doctoral degree was far inferior to the development of scholarship by wide reading, teaching and discussion. I once had a colleague in Classics at Queensland who in a Sydney MA had been expected to work on an insignificant Latin writer because, I think, his Professor had wanted to know more about a group of such writers contemporary with Virgil. In 1999 my wife Margaret and I entertained a Chilean philosopher who had completed an MA and a Ph.D. in the University of London, both on Boethius's interpretation of Aristotle! He was still not a fluent speaker of English.

Two professors of theology give us substantially the same clue to what is so often missing at various levels of education. B.F.Westcott of 19th-century Cambridge once said:

> I would give a man a degree for asking twelve good questions.[1]

Leonard Hodgson of 20th-century Oxford wrote:

> Anyone who has had much experience of university and post-graduate teaching knows … something of the despair one feels over the too docile pupil, the pupil who will do nothing but receive and repeat at second hand what he is told, who … asks only to have his open mouth fed further from the same spoon.[2]

What does education at all levels most need? I suggest first a combination I used to recommend in those notes for Philosophy I students in the late 1960s: that of **reliability and adventurousness**.

Adventurousness in education comes through the asking of questions and the finding of some of one's own material, usually by exploration in more than one library. Both of these vital activities may require considerable patient but firm encouragement. Reliability is best shown and required in relation to texts, such as the *Republic*, that deserve a not uncritical respect. One such book is hardly known in universities these days, let alone schools. The writer of the essay on p.4, having become acquainted with it, is sure it should be widely used in both. It is Sir Ernest Gowers's *The Complete Plain Words*, still available as a Penguin Reference book. It was long a standby in the British

Civil Service, and has twice been revised by other writers. Its appreciation, however, requires an earlier learning of grammar, so that the reader knows, for example, what is meant by 'clause' and 'relative clause'. I have written already in this *Letter* (1.2008) of the great need for the restoration of the *trivium* of grammar, logic and rhetoric to the secondary curriculum. Unless that is done tertiary education cannot flourish.

Along with the willingness to ask questions and a growing ability to ask fruitful ones is an understanding and appreciation of **criticism**: why we all need it (from others, where practicable, and from ourselves) and how it best proceeds. (Ch. 2 of Mill's *Liberty* can be a marvellous stimulus.) Apart from the corporate life of particular universities, which may vary greatly in quality from year to year, their prestige, and the networks they may offer for the future, the benefits that their students may hope to derive lie largely in the inspiration they may receive from outstanding enquirers, scholars and teachers, including personal attention (both critical and encouraging) given through individual tutorials or in association with, e.g., seminars. That there is too little of such attention is the main present weakness in Australian universities. As Thomas has indicated, it is under threat in the UK. Appeals for funds from governments, foundations, old members and other individuals are important, but many of them are unlikely to be very successful unless there arises what we should aim for in any case: **a much wider appreciation, gained through ongoing experience, by both teenagers and citizens of our countries, of the methods and delights of questioning and critical study, both individually and in groups**.

In 1906 Edward Caird, Master of Balliol College, Oxford, wrote about T.H.Green, whose close friend he had been since they had studied together there in the 1850s. Green's influence then in Oxford and Britain was wide and deep, though he had died at 45 in 1882. Caird noted

> the intimate blending in him of idealism and practicality,

but added a third quality: Green

> could not tolerate the thought of privilege, and constantly desired for every class and individual a full share in all the great heritage of humanity.[3]

In the last lecture he gave, "The work to be done by the new Oxford High School for Boys", he roundly criticized the traditional exclusiveness of his own university, and of "the extravagant system kept up at the universities" and at "certain schools which had misappropriated the name 'public schools'". He put before his listeners the facts that

> of our people the majority over twenty-one are still uneducated … in the simple sense that they cannot read well enough to have free excess to the literature of their own language, and that they cannot write it clearly and correctly

and that

> the Oxford citizen finds that somehow he has no share in any of the direct advantages which the university has to offer.

Nevertheless, he maintained his idealism as well as his practicality:

> Our high school … may fairly claim to be helping forward the time when every Oxford citizen will have open to him at least the precious companionship of the best books in his own language, and the knowledge necessary to make him really independent.[4]

When we ask what our universities are doing to foster ongoing education for their many graduates who do not wish to undertake a postgraduate degree, and for the much wider society, the answer is generally unimpressive. Will their work and delight include, as it did for A.D.Lindsay, a later Master of Balliol who followed in Green's tradition, fostering communities of enquiry, whether housed in university facilities or further afield, in various effective forms of adult education (with encouragement of reliability and adventurousness, wide reading, and questions and criticism), as well as helping schools? I am not confident that it will. In any case, other agencies are needed.

Given that I am determined that Learningguild's advertising be limited to what is strictly true, I shall in conclusion refer to the descriptions of our publications and activities to be found on our website and on p.16. Suffice here to say that our main educational aim is to help both native and non-native speakers of English to develop their powers of speaking and writing and of engaging in questioning and critical study.

Yours in Learningguild,

John Howes

NOTES

1. Owen Chadwick, *Westcott and the University*, CUP 1962, p.18.
2. *Christian Faith and Practice*, Blackwell 1950, p.72.
3. Preface to Green's *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 5th ed., p.vii.
4. *Works of Thomas Hill Green*, Vol. III, pp. 456f, 471, 475.

A student's frustration in Year 12

This is a slightly revised version of an essay that gained a mark in the A grade in the March 2010 examination for the Learningguild Certificate in Reasoning and Expression. I requested that we publish it, and the author agreed on the condition that it be anonymous. The topic chosen was "Explain why you do or do not feel broadly satisfied with the range of courses you had ***in a particular year*** *at school or university." The essay deserves attention not only for its description of what went wrong but also for all that is implied about what a good education requires. JH*

I studied for the Higher School Certificate in 1987 at a high school in Melbourne's south-east. It was rather impoverished, as evidenced by the grounds, the buildings and the lack of subject choices, particularly in the later years. Besides the standard fare of English, Maths, some sciences, Australian History and a few other options, there was very little to choose from. Those students who were mathematically gifted (not me!) had to go to another school to undertake Advanced Maths, as did those who wished to study English Literature, languages other than English, or subjects such as Politics.

I remember that in my first year of university, I met a girl who had attended one of the most prestigious private schools in Melbourne. I was absolutely amazed when she told me that she had studied Medieval History as part of her last year at school. That would have been unthinkable at mine.

Compounding the lack of choice was the set of completely uninspired, and uninspiring, teachers we had at senior level. When I was in the junior and middle years, I loved Maths and was one of the more able students. But by Year 11 this had changed dramatically, as we were given the most appalling teacher I have ever had. She could barely describe the concepts she was supposed to teach without continually checking the examples and answers in the textbook. The whole class suffered as a result. Consequently, when I entered Year 12 Maths I was already behind the eight ball. What was once a subject I loved became an object of contempt. I could barely disguise my lack of engagement and motivation.

English was little better. That too I hated. Even though I loved to read in my free time, reading the novels required for the class became an unbearable chore. I didn't like being told what to think or what to focus on in a particular work of literature. I wanted to absorb the words and produce my own opinions and reflections on what I had read. Unfortunately the English teacher was so didactic that she could not bear any student's disagreeing with her interpretations. She would give us an essay topic each day and then tell us what we had to write. Those who adhered to her interpretation were rewarded with good marks; those who didn't were penalized. I remember once trying to write an argumentative essay that was "outside the square", i.e. outside the prescribed boundaries set by our teacher. I think that piece of work attracted the lowest mark I ever received for an essay. I understand that all students need to be given boundaries, but this particular teacher was the cause of tears among some of us and even discouraged one student so much that he simply walked out of school, never to return.

Other subjects that I took were Economics, Legal Studies, and Human Development and Society (a cross between Biology and Psychology). It was an uninspiring set. If they had been available, I would have studied Medieval History or Politics. However, our school was too impoverished and had too few students in Year 12 to offer a wide range of choice. That is a great shame. I wonder how many more of us would have been inspired to pursue tertiary education if we had been presented with broader options. After my dispiriting experience of Year 12, I am surprised I chose to go to university at all.

We should be glad of other responses to this essay-topic, or discussions of what makes for good secondary or tertiary education. May we have them by the end of the calendar year? JH

John Pottage

John died at the age of 85 in February this year. He was a member of Learningguild. Dorothy, married to him for 61 years, and I have combined to write this tribute. JH

Mathematics, its history and how it is best taught were John's main fields of enquiry and teaching, but all was set in a wider context of education and human development. Among the books John gave last year to the Learningguild Library was his own *Mathematics Education: A Wider Perspective*, published in 1994 as, in the first instance, a text for a Deakin University course in the teaching of mathematics. The students must have been astonished by the range of areas introduced, including Greek philosophy as well as many mathematical discoveries. John's views on the teaching of mathematics were held within an awareness of the widespread failure in secondary schools to be flexible and to foster imagination. So, in Section 5, entitled "Educational Challenges", he writes:

> Students who fall by the wayside, retiring beaten from the forced route march, rarely find self-fulfilling work to do. Dissatisfaction with school tends to perpetuate itself in the workplace. …. What is at issue is the development of the imagination and of intellectual vigour. …. Our job is not to teach [students] to tolerate boredom; rather it is to initiate them into the joys of the life of the mind ….

He well understood what often goes wrong in schools, as can be seen from the Prologue:

> If students are expected to become thoughtful, vital and self-directed, it is important that the ethos of the whole school, at all levels, be conducive to that end. Schools must resist the tendency to become mere dispensaries of compulsory 'education' where the examinable, the memorisable, and the scissors-and-paste assembly of ideas (or simply the conclusions) of others become the norm.
>
> (p.9)

He would have agreed with Douglas Gasking's contention that exams should themselves stimulate and reward thoughtfulness, vitality and self-directed reading.* At the end of his Epilogue, he shows how flexibility and the encouragement of high achievement can be combined, and the combination deserves to be commended to those who have been asked to come up with a "national curriculum":

> Uniformity, rigid policies and national curricula are not wanted. Greater freedom of choice and flexibility of curricula in schools might nevertheless be supplemented by a system of voluntarily attempted national standards.
>
> (p.159)

He illustrates that first from running and swimming, proposing that there be "national challenges" to run 400 metres, for boys and men in 60 seconds and for girls and women in 70, and to swim the same distance in six and seven minutes respectively, and to perform other feats. He then turns to challenges consisting of examinations, in different areas of English literature and of mathematics, and in the Appendices provides such a paper in geometry and a set of solutions. The papers should "test real understanding", and should be "unpredictable", though test papers and examiners' reports, with answers where appropriate, and changing "outline[s] of examinable topics" would provide a guide. Such papers, he says, though they would be taken successfully by "only a small percentage of the population", would be a valuable stimulus to senior secondary and university students, and also to older people. We can be proud of the fact that Learningguild sets an exam, half-yearly and repeatable, in reasoning and expression, one that is constant in form and nature but tied to no course and not predictable in content. The question is worth asking whether the emphasis should be, as with Learningguild, on producing something equally relevant to English-speakers in any country rather than on attempting something specifically "national". Similarly, one might take a world-wide view of the athletics and swimming challenges.

We may conclude this brief presentation of John's educational ideals, in which we rely mainly on his own words, with the second-last sentence in the book. (One might use the words 'exemplification to' rather than 'inculcation in'.)

> Educators are now faced with a daunting task of the highest practical value, namely the inculcation in as many persons as possible of a preference for the getting of understanding and wisdom rather than for more and more of the 'goods', 'services' and 'entertainments' that are being continually promoted by those whose business or political interests have rendered them blind to the perilous effects of their actions, and of their inactions.

In 2010 the emphasis placed on entertainment is still greater and more widely evident than in 1994; but entertainment as such seldom assists us towards understanding or wisdom – or mutual help, or satisfaction with our lives.

John was an active athlete. He could be seen in the 1940s and '50s, a tall and almost gaunt figure, at the front of an interclub or university three-mile race with the diminutive Ron Stuart of Old Scotch just in front or behind. He broke the Australian record for twenty miles. In those years he was a vegetarian, eating food as raw, and as low down in the food chain, as possible.

He trained as a mechanical engineer at Swinburne, and during the Second World War worked at Fisherman's Bend, designing machines used in the making of Wirraway aeroplanes. He went on to wide experience as a schoolteacher, and then for many years taught, read and wrote in the history of mathematics in the Department of History and Philosophy of Science at Melbourne, where he gained his Ph.D. (conferred in 1972) and became a senior lecturer.

After his retirement he studied art at the TAFE College in Frankston, and joined the Peninsula Arts Society. His principal works have been in mathematical art, and his major pieces in colour. A reproduction of his first painting (1993) is inside the copy mentioned above as now in our Library. It combines a range of spaces defined by curved and straight lines and a variety of warm colours. Colin Johnson, an art judge, said he had never seen or heard of such original work. John also lectured at the Frankston branch of the University of the Third Age (U3A) on the human condition in the twentieth century.

He said he read *Learningguild Letter* from cover to cover. A substantial donation enabled us to support the work for handicapped children and for child labourers of the group in Bharatpur, Rajasthan, to whose school, Holy Mother, we have given guidance and materials for the teaching of English. We are very grateful for his donation of many books to our Library: they include the eight volumes of Edwards's *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Glover's *Humanity*, Monk's biography of Wittgenstein, and Coady's *Testimony*.

John was resilient, and characteristically did his best to deal intelligently with the prostate trouble that afflicted him for many years. A heart condition was diagnosed too late: he died from the bursting of the mitral valve. Though he had many projects in mind, he said he did not wish to live if he could not achieve something of worth each day. At his request his body was given to science.

He will be fondly and gratefully remembered by his many students and friends, and with deep love and pride by his wife and their family. In the succeeding generations are their son David and his partner, their daughter Rosemarie and her partner, three grandchildren, one step-grandson, and two great-grandchildren.

* See Gasking's booklet *Examinations and The Aims of Education* (Melbourne University Press, 2nd edition, 1954), in the Baillieu Library's Special Collection at 371.271 GASK. It was reviewed in *L'g L* 1.1999.

Public transport: praise and proposals

ERIC SIBLY, *a member of Learningguild, has been a station master for thirty-five years. This article springs from a talk he gave at our Friday-evening meeting on March 5th.*

I am now an Annual Leave Relief Stationmaster for Metro Trains and based at Ringwood. Public Transport not only provides my full-time job but is also my passion and abiding interest. I greatly enjoy the study of its history. I delight in using it, and have never owned a car. I was a tram driver

from 1961 to 1965, working from Camberwell and Kew Depots.

I wrote most of this article in June at Juneau, capital of Alaska, as one of 38 Australian participants in a tour organized by the Association of Railway Enthusiasts. In Alaska and Canada we travelled on steam- and diesel-hauled passenger trains before flying to the USA to ride trams, light rail, trains and buses for more than a month.

I'm proud to advocate public transport. Walking and jogging to its stops is healthy, and travelling with friends and strangers on its vehicles promotes community well-being and is good for our souls. Usage of public transport is environmentally healthy, without the pollutants put by cars and trucks into the air we breathe.

The movement away from widespread reliance on public transport began in about 1955 with Premier Henry Bolte's first budget. Until then the tram fare in Kew from Burke Road to the intersection of Glenferrie and Cotham Roads was one penny, and there was also a penny section on the St Kilda Beach tram from Cotham Road to Glenferrie Station. However, if you were going to travel on both these penny sections, the conductor sold you a special transfer ticket for one and a half pennies! Bolte's budget abolished transfer tickets and moved the end of the section from Burke Road by one stop to the corner of Belmont Avenue and Cotham Road, thus doubling to threepence the fare to Glenferrie Station and the nearby shops and cinemas.

Such weakening by government of the attraction of public transport may be seen in the context of the prevalent purchasing by the North American motor industry, after the Second World War, of fixed-rail public transport systems and their conversion to bus systems. Many previous travellers on trams and suburban and interurban rail lines then preferred to use private cars.

How could public transport in Melbourne be made more attractive? Within the existing train network, those trains that are not now allowed to carry passengers as they go from suburban terminals to stabling yards (at, e.g., Upper Ferntree Gully, Ringwood and Camberwell) should be altered to do so. On a few tram routes, conductors should be reinstated on a trial basis. If income increases, then, allowing for the cost of conductors, but also a decrease in vandalism and anxiety, put conductors on all routes. In Sydney on July 26th, I travelled on two trams which each had two conductors.

However, we must in Melbourne follow the successful example of the Western Australian Government's policy of building extensions to Perth's railway network. The money proposed to be spent on further freeway construction in Melbourne should be used to extend and improve the tram and train networks. The 1969 Melbourne Transport Plan recommended the extension of the North Balwyn tram (48) to Doncaster Shoppingtown, but it still terminates at Balwyn Road.

Louis Fouvy, the former Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board engineer, has in his retirement proposed an excellent "General Scheme of Suburban Rail Development for the Melbourne Region", and given it to the Victorian Government. On April 6th this year he wrote:

> Implementation of the general Scheme would include renovating all stations and railway properties as required to bring them to a high standard of user-friendliness, so that people are encouraged to travel, rather than being discouraged from travelling, by public transport. The determination by means of a General Scheme of Suburban Rail Development of a greatly enlarged system of radial and ring trunk routes capable of serving the whole, rather than merely 20%, of the developed urban area would provide the appropriate opportunity for the local-feeder services operators to reorganize their tram and bus routes to match the enlarged trunk route system and ensure that trunk and local-feeder services are coordinated to the maximum degree for passenger convenience at all transfer points.

Louis recognizes that his General Scheme would have a cost of $3 billion annually for about 20 years, but points out that an average of $2 billion would be earned from the extended operations of public transport, and that Melbourne now loses $4 billion from transport congestion and $2.85 billion in remedying damage from road traffic crashes.

I fully agree with Louis's proposals.

Staying at an unusual Youth Hostel

JIM RICHARDSON, *another who wants to see public transport in Melbourne extended, writes about the creative use made of a disused building. Jim is a retired engineer and a member of Learningguild who has made several contributions to our* Letter.

The Railway Square Youth Hostel is one of nine hostels in Sydney, four in the city and five in the suburbs. It is located in an historic building, the former Parcel Shed (1904) of the NSW Railways, right next to Sydney's Central Station. It even includes four rather ancient railway carriages, permanently suspended above old railway lines right next to and parallel with Central's No. 1 platform! One could not be more centrally located in Australia's largest city. The hostel was opened about seven years ago.

I always stay there when I'm in Sydney (at least once a year). The interior features much of the original timber and brick. Great wooden beams support the corrugated iron roof, rustic bricks form the main walls, and bluestone paves the entrance. One thinks back to the time when burly men pushed trolleys through the shed laden with parcels to dispatch. To convert the shed into the hostel, extensive interior changes have been made, including a second floor to provide additional sleeping quarters, laundry etc. On the ground floor are a spacious kitchen (open at all hours), a large lounge, and a television room, as well as internet sites, a kiosk, and reception.

In July I made my sixth visit, and it was my pleasure to "welcome" John Howes, who was there for the first time. We happened to meet in the kitchen. John had come to Sydney primarily for the annual conference of the Australasian Association of Philosophy. I had come mainly to attend a couple of birthday parties, for a sister and for one of her sons.

At around $32 a night for shared accommodation (four or eight to a room) it's good value as well as extremely convenient for train travellers such as John and I. Other arrangements at other prices are also available. In my room, in one of the railway carriages, the other three guests were a Chinese from Shanghai, an Englishman from Portsmouth, and an American from Kentucky. I had good conversations with them all. In addition, the Wimbledon tennis championships happened to be on, so I was able to watch two magnificent contests while relaxing on a beanbag in the television room. Each day I would head off somewhere by train, with a start just around the corner.

On my return trip to Melbourne, a journey which normally takes about 11½ hours, another surprise meeting with a Learningguild member awaited me. John Drennan boarded the train at Cootamundra on his way home. He had been visiting friends in Canberra and had taken the bus. Later in the week, John Howes would do the same, after staying with his second son's family. I was pleased to hear that John Drennan had stayed at a Youth Hostel while in Canberra. We three members clearly share an attraction to both trains and Youth Hostels.

John Stuart Mill's emphasis on open examinations (rather than, say, on membership of particular schools or universities or any requirements of course attendance) and the need to satisfy the public [an informed public?] of the worth of any form of assessment:

… I think, with Wilhelm von Humboldt, that degrees, or other certificates of scientific or professional acquirements, should be given to all who present themselves for examination, and stand the test; but that such certificates should confer no advantage over competitors other than the weight which may be attached to their testimony by public opinion.

(*Liberty*, Chapter 5, at the end of the 14th of the 23 paragraphs)

A long-lived discussion group

RON RYE, *a longstanding member of Learningguild, has been for even longer the convener of a group which I have invited him to describe. Ron, now 86, graduated in engineering at Melbourne, and worked for many years in radio engineering with the Department of Civil Aviation. In* L'g Letter *1.1992 he described journeys he made in Queensland with a folding bicycle. JH*

One day in 1972, Margaret Howes phoned Ron and Beryl Rye, whom she had known some years before when they shared the same street in Oak Park. She invited them to a group begun not long before by Eddie and Jenny Beacham and John and herself, which met monthly on a Sunday. The group was made up of university students who studied philosophy guided by John, and other like-minded friends. Members brought food, which was shared for lunch, and a discussion followed on a topic which had been selected at a previous meeting, usually following a suggestion by a member of the group.

Ron in particular was fascinated from his first attendance by the informal, friendly, but erudite atmosphere concerning topics in the humanities which he had never encountered, because his mental energies up till then had been directed entirely to very demanding studies in science, engineering and mathematics. He attended every month for the next 38 years, except for a few times when he was overseas, and once when it clashed with an important choral rehearsal.

John chaired the meetings until his departure for South Africa in 1975. The group wished to keep going. The conventional way would be to form a constitution, elect office bearers etc., but no one seemed willing to start up this procedure. The position of convener seemed to fall naturally to Ron: there just seemed to be a consensus that he was the right person at the right time. He used to say that the group ran itself. At each meeting someone offered to introduce a topic next time, and someone would offer his or her home as a venue. No regular newsletters or financial contributions were necessary. Initially about twenty used to attend, all by word-of-mouth contacts. The first time the group advertised was in *The Age*, probably in 1975.

It is easy to understand that some 370 meetings, with topics in nearly every category found in a public library, and friends made with very varied life experiences and education, have considerably enriched Ron's life, just as the lives of the many other participants have been enriched.

As of September 2010 the group is still functioning well, although now requiring more inter-meeting organizing by the convener, who has prepared a document, available from him, called "Chairing an informal discussion group". No one has ever left without good feelings. Some of the older members, including some who had experienced the Spanish civil war and Nazi aggression, have passed on. Others have moved, or been caught up too much in other things. Some present members have been attending regularly for over twenty years.

It is inevitable that some topics have been repeated, usually with a different emphasis from experience accumulated, and as new people joined. Since 1975 Ron has kept a diary of topics discussed, and those attending. Types of discussions have ranged from those requiring an introduction of five or ten minutes to those begun with a presentation by a visiting expert, lasting up to 45 minutes, or an edited version of a video documentary: for example, one in which Peter Ustinov acts as Galileo being interrogated by the Catholic Inquisition.

A perusal of the diary brings back memories of many other rewarding occasions. There was lunch on a sunny terrace at a Dandenongs hilltop home, followed by an art discussion illustrated by slides borrowed from the CAE library. Malcolm introduced parapsychology at a home in Menzies Creek and the whistle of Puffing Billy provided a haunting background. Ron gave a simple explanation of how a computer works. Gwen told of her experiences door-knocking to conduct questionnaires. There were three visits by MPs. There have been many searches for a meaningful world view.

Recommended Books

Long Walk to Freedom, by Nelson Mandela

MILAN RADOS *writes the first of two reviews that begin a new series. It complements the "What's a good introduction …?" series that has run since our first issue in 1989. Milan is a graduate of La Trobe University, where his main subject was politics. He has his own brick-cutting business. References are given to chapters (because there are different editions) and then to pages of the Abacus edition published in London in 1995.*

Just like Nazism, Fascism and communism, apartheid in South Africa was one of the sinister political forces of the twentieth century. (The word is pronounced like 'apart-hate', and means apartness or separation.) Although there had been widespread *de facto* segregation in earlier decades, it was the Nationalist Government elected in 1948 that systematically legislated against any civil participation by others in a society dominated by whites. Even the so-called Coloured people, of mixed race, who had previously had some voting rights, lost them. Africans had ahead of them a long and bloody struggle for their freedom and dignity. Many fought courageously and heroically for their ideals, but the person who on an almost superhuman scale campaigned against the racist system was the leader of the African National Congress, Nelson Mandela. In 1994 his autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom* was published, and it has been reprinted many times. It is the story of an indomitable human being engaged in a struggle against oppressors who imprisoned him from 1964 to 1990.

The family in which Mandela was born was connected to the Thembu royal house and he was expected to become a counsellor to the kings of that Xhosa tribe. He was privileged to be in a position to pursue the study of law and consequently obtained a position in a law firm. During his work on various legal cases he became aware of the enormity of the injustice and brutality of apartheid. For an African

> it was a crime to walk through a Whites Only door, a crime to ride a Whites Only bus, a crime to use a Whites Only drinking fountain, a crime to walk on a Whites Only beach, a crime to be on the streets past eleven, a crime not to have a pass book and a crime to have the wrong signature in that book, a crime to be unemployed and a crime to be employed in the wrong place, a crime to live in certain places and a crime to have no place to live.
>
> (Ch.16: p.172)

Although warned by his employer against getting involved in politics, Mandela found that because of the gravity of the situation in South Africa, it was "hard for a man to ignore the needs of the people", and he held the same view even when, in prison, he counted the cost to his own family of his involvement (70: 529). He decided to join the ANC, the organisation which since 1812 had struggled against racism, and eventually became its leader.

The ANC initially affirmed the principle of non-violence and confined its activities to protests and appeals, but the invariable reaction of the regime was prosecution and violence. During the peaceful protests in Sharpeville in 1959 the security forces killed 69 people and injured many others. It was always clear to the ANC leadership that "an oppressive system cannot be reformed" (98:664). "If the oppressor uses violence, the oppressed have no alternative but to respond violently" (93:641). Non-violence and passive resistance were ineffective, and, since "there is no moral goodness in using an ineffective weapon" (17: 183), the ANC included armed struggle in its programme.

Although Mandela had no military experience, he was charged with the formation of the clandestine ANC army. For that reason he secretly travelled to friendly countries, acquired some weapons and organized military training for a group of ANC members. On his return he had to live underground, and for a considerable time evaded the authority's attempts to capture him. Eventually he and some other ANC leaders were captured and subsequently charged with treason, a

crime that carried the death sentence. During the trial he and his colleagues decided to use it as a platform to express their opposition to apartheid. They defended themselves more in moral than in legal terms and decided that in the case of the death sentence they would refuse to appeal, in order not to undermine the message of the moral character of their struggle. They were fortunate to escape the gallows and instead were sentenced to life imprisonment and taken to the notorious prison on Robben Island, off Cape Town.

"It is said that no one truly knows a nation until one has been inside its jails" (23: 233). The prison on Robben Island was a microcosm of the country, with the same racist attitudes and heartless repressive methods. The harshest and most humiliating treatment was reserved for the Africans. Sadistic authorities would devise and apply methods that would make the lives of the African inmates as unbearable as possible. A long period of punishing isolation, crushing physical work and meagre rations made up the order of the day. A heavily censored letter from a family member was allowed once in six months, and rare visits were frequently sabotaged by the shortness of notice, so that the travelling arrangements were impossible. Sometimes years passed before a visit of a family member. Outside the jail Mandela's wife, Winnie, was constantly harassed. She was subjected to humiliating police searches, forced out of work, sent into internal exile, and occasionally imprisoned. Although Mandela put on a brave face in front of the prison authorities, awareness of the persecution and suffering of his wife and his family members was for him the most agonizing mental torture. The prison authorities also placed hardened and callous criminals among the ANC prisoners in order to insult and terrorize them.

One also reads about senseless behaviour by people who should have known much better. During the visit of a Red Cross representative, Mandela complained that African prisoners did not receive bread in their diet. The representative replied that bread was bad for their teeth and mealies were better for them (65: 489). A visiting representative of the American Bar Association, perhaps affected by alcohol, responded to Mandela's complaints by saying that some American prisons were much worse than Robben Island and suggested that Mandela and his group were lazy (62: 471f). Robben Island was in fact a hellish place for them, subjecting them to monstrous treatment in order to stamp out their humanity, dignity and individuality.

Robben Island was an extreme test of character, where only the strongest personalities could preserve their integrity and evade the debilitating loss of a faith in humanity. Mandela always drew strength from the awareness that he was "fighting with and for [his] own people" (77: 562). Inherently an optimist, he never doubted that one day he would be free, and never contemplated giving up the struggle against the oppressor. The prison was for him a place where he had to "fight on different terms" (60: 464). He and others were "always looking for ways to stand up to the authorities" (64: 485).

Mandela had great faith in education. He saw it as "the great engine of personal development" (20: 194), and pursued it to the extent that he wrote papers for a set of London University examinations for his LL.B. a few days before the verdict at his treason trial, which could easily have condemned him to hang. There was an urgent need to combat the authorities' relentless racist propaganda that had its effect on the African people; Mandela found that even he had "fallen into the apartheid mind set" (46: 348) when in Khartoum he felt uneasy when he found that the pilot of his plane was black. Education for Mandela was "the enemy of prejudice" (85: 601), and he always tried to help his fellow South Africans to understand the evils of apartheid. He also "always tried to be decent" towards his white prison wardens (66: 497), because he believed that every person was capable of changing for the better. Mandela was justified in his attitude when "perhaps the most callous and barbaric commanding officer" they had had (73: 549), Badenhorst, on his departure to another post, showed his human side and wished Mandela and his friends good luck. It became clear to Mandela that it was the system that foisted inhumanity upon Badenhorst, and many similar to him, because it rewarded them for nastiness.

During the last decades of the twentieth century it became increasingly clear to the masters of white South Africa that it would not be possible for them to maintain apartheid. They began negotiations with the ANC and Mandela in particular, and eventually, after "ten thousand days of imprisonment" (p.673), he walked out of prison a free man. The ANC finally achieved its aim and a general election, one person one vote, was held in

1994. The ANC won and Mandela became the President of South Africa. He assumed this powerful position with dignity and humility. There was no desire for revenge against his persecutors, and he evaded the temptations and minimized the trappings of power as many others in similar circumstances failed to do. He offered the hand of friendship to the white South Africans and told them how much the country needed them in order to create a decent existence for all its citizens.

The most important guiding principle for Mandela was love, which, according to him, "comes more naturally to the human heart then its opposite" (115, the last chapter: 749). A lack of love leads to many evils, among them the oppression of one human by another: "The oppressed and the oppressor alike are robbed of their humanity" (115: 751). Mandela saw the liberation of the oppressor as well as the oppressed as his mission, because "to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others" (115: 751). In doing so, he became the champion of freedom and a globally recognised symbol of tenacity in the pursuit of an open society and forgiveness of one's enemies.

Long Walk to Freedom is a story of exceptional courage told in modest and simple language, where a man in the most unfavourable and threatening circumstances goes on fighting for his ideals. Mandela's life story is also a lesson in devotion, selflessness and forgiveness, expressed in conditions that required great moral stature. In his political dealings Mandela is direct and has none of the petty cunning that is notorious in politics. Instead of being preoccupied with any private advantage, he displayed political wisdom that was likely to bring long-term benefits for his country. Any reader stands to benefit from the example of courage, wisdom and decency which this book presents.

SINGLED OUT, by Virginia Nicholson

MARGARET HOWES *spoke about and read from this book at our Friday-evening meeting on March 19th. Here she shows again why it deserves a very wide readership. She refers to the Penguin edition of 2008.*

This book is a study of how lack of opportunity to marry, as well as views and customs concerning marriage and class, affected younger British women who, at the end of the war, far outnumbered the men of their generation, after so many had died. Virginia Nicholson's opening sentence is:

> The First World War deprived Britain of nearly three-quarters of a million soldiers, slaughtered on the Western Front and elsewhere.

In extensive research she has explored the various ways in which women coped in a society where the expectation had been simply that they would marry. She read over 200 books and interviewed some women in retirement homes. The book covers just about every aspect of what was regarded, by the end of the war, as the difficulties faced by "two millions of superfluous womenfolk": so an editorial in *The Times* called them (p.23). Nicholson draws on the 1921 National Census: "In England and Wales there were 19,803,022 females and only 18,082,220 males ─ a difference of one million and three-quarters" (p.22).

The most notable feature of the book is its account of particular women, with revealing quotation. I begin with two of the writer's examples of women whose husbands-to-be were killed. She opens her first chapter with Margaret (May) Jones, who began an autobiography in 1978 when she was 85. She had been the eldest of three children and, at the age of ten, had had to run the household when her mother was ill. She writes lovingly of the delights, before the war, of her five-year courtship by Philip, a Quaker who, after winning a scholarship to Cambridge, became a stretcher-bearer in France. She waited for his letters and at last received one saying that he was due for leave.

> Then everything was shattered: a letter came from the War Office to say he had been killed in action. The shock and loss was terrible, I felt I had lost half of myself, or was it my twin soul. I knew then that I should die an old maid.

The autobiography ends there, and was never published, but Nicholson says that May added in pencil at the end "I was only twenty years old."

Most of the bereaved women were very lonely. Between p.14 and p.20 there is much about Vera Brittain, whose fiancé Roland had died of wounds in France in 1915, again just as he was about to return to her on leave. Nicholson quotes in full a poem she wrote two months later, and also her words "But who will look for my coming? Who will seek me at nightfall?" She had gone to Oxford in 1914, contrary to her parents' wishes – they had, she said, wanted her to be an "entirely ornamental young lady" – and worked as a nurse before and after Roland's death, amid the extreme suffering of wounded soldiers. She returned to Oxford after the war, to a room "at whose door nobody ever knocked", and later became a notable writer and political activist.

The book provides what that example typifies, an intensely moving record both of anguish and of achievement not easily won. Such achievement is well illustrated in Nicholson's presentation (pp. 243-50) of Rosamund Essex, born in 1900 and never married, who, after a degree in classics at Oxford, became a journalist on the *Church Times*, campaigned about poverty, adopted a boy of 2½ when she was 39, and was editor of her paper for ten years until 1960. In 1977 she published her memoir *Woman in a Man's World* (Sheldon Press, London), of which Nicholson makes good use, introducing her on p.20 with an account, obviously largely Essex's own, of a speech in 1917 about what would prove to be the background of any such achievement by unmarried women of her generation, slightly younger than those whose husbands or fiancés had been killed. She was one of the sixth-formers, "nearly all of whom were dressed in mourning for some member of their family", who at Bournemouth High School for Girls were addressed as follows by their senior mistress:

> I have come to tell you a terrible fact. Only one out of ten of you girls can ever hope to marry. This is not a guess of mine. It is a statistical fact. Nearly all the men who might have married you have been killed. You will have to make your way in the world as best you can. The war has made more openings for women than there were before. But there will still be a lot of prejudice. You will have to fight. You will have to struggle.

Essex added sixty years later:

> How right she was. Only one out of every ten of my friends ever married.

The achievement occurred in many fields, as the following examples given by Nicholson in the course of the book illustrate: there are many others.

Oxford and, more reluctantly, Cambridge were starting to open their doors to women. Barbara Wootton's husband, with whom she had spent only thirty-six hours of marriage, had died in France when she was studying in Cambridge. Later she wrote (p.261):

> One of the most comfortable jobs, and one of the most sheltered lives open to an unmarried woman, is that of a don on the staff of one of the women's colleges in Oxford or Cambridge.

She became a professor and eventually a Baroness. Margery Perham, after a visit to Africa following a nervous breakdown related to her brother's death in 1916, became an expert on that continent, working from an Oxford base, and was made a Dame. That first African visit and her life are well described on pp.213-6.

Some went into a career that would have shocked their families. When Victoria Drummond, whose father was a high-ranking retainer in the Royal Household, turned twenty-one, he said to her "Victoria, now you are twenty-one, you can choose your own career." "I'm going to be a marine engineer", she replied, but she doubted that he realized she was serious. As it was wartime, she was able to become an apprentice at a garage in Perth, with her family's approval. However, she went on to be tenth engineer on SS *Anchises*, Blue Funnel Line, and spent her life in marine engineering (p.108).

During the war, "the housemaids and shop girls became stokers, tool-setters, ticket clippers, van drivers, landgirls and butchers". But when it ended the men wanted their jobs back, and in 1919 three-quarters of a million women had lost their positions. However, an irreversible change had occurred: "they had been given a taste of financial autonomy and personal freedom", and single women now needed to earn enough for their food, clothing and accommodation (p.108f).

Women who had taken up office work during the war fared better, as a higher proportion of white-collar workers had volunteered for the army than in any other sector, and, inevitably, a higher proportion had died (p.109).

There were the standard careers for women of nursing and teaching. Women teachers were paid less than men, and had to resign if they married. It is clear from comments quoted that the efforts of many of them were deeply appreciated. One former pupil said:

> It was a terrific privilege to have been taught by them. They in their turn taught us that it was a privilege to be alive, and that it was our job to feed something back into society. I owe it to them that I can't pass a piece of litter without wanting to pick it up. They were gifted, educated and cultured, and they had exacting standards. They also taught us that it was our civic duty to vote; they were from the generation that had fought for that right, and we had it drummed into us that you betray it if you don't exercise it.
>
> (p.136f)

Becoming a nanny was another option. Some nannies became part of a family and were involved with family members all their lives (pp.166-73).

Other women used their imaginations and started completely new enterprises. Gertrude Maclean, who had enjoyed being an aunt to various nephews and nieces, set up "Universal Aunts" (pp.235-8), for whom an advertisement appeared in capitals in *The Times* with the words "ladies of irreproachable background" and this description of the range of work: "care of children, chaperonage, house furnishing, shopping for the colonies [and] research work". All applicants were interviewed and notes were made such as these for Miss Phyllis Beckett:

> Age 30. Young and sporty. Knows all about 'footer' and white mice. Guaranteed not to nag. Can slide down banisters at a push. This lady will be one of our most popular aunts and be in great demand.

This is certainly a book to be recommended without reservation because it invites our close attention to a part of history that is both saddening and inspiring. The many detailed accounts of the lives of young women of the post-First World War period make vivid their difficulties, suffering and achievements. Nicholson well says that "humanitarian instincts, moral courage, conscience and kindliness are qualities that distinguish many of the women whose huge range of activities I have been describing" (p.263).

WHAT'S A GOOD INTRODUCTION TO …

DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS?

Anthony Clunies-Ross is a member of Learningguild who was Professor of Economics at the University of Papua New Guinea and since 1974 has been a professor at the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow. He and two colleagues there, David Forsyth and Mozammel Huq, have combined to produce a textbook called **Development Economics** *(McGraw Hill 2008, now in paperback). Here it is reviewed by* **STEPHEN HOWES,** *also a member of Learningguild, who after ten years with the World Bank, including six and a half in India, was Principal Economist with AusAID and is now a professor of economics at the Australian National University.*

This massive book (771 pp) is a wonderful introduction to development economics. Its strength lies in its breadth and structuring of subject-matter, and its presentation, in a balanced but interesting way, of a range of perspectives. From it one can gain a good understanding not only of development economics itself but of the history of this discipline, which did not come into being until after World War Two.

The first of six parts, "History, ideologies and methods", gives an overview of the field and evolution of development economics. Solid and sympathetic summaries are generously given to fields such as structuralism and dependency which have subsequently turned out to be dead-ends. The book is also fully up-to-date, and not only reports on, but has clearly been influenced by, the work of the 2008 Growth Commission.

The second part, "Governance", explores the institutional dimensions of development. The rising importance of this area is perhaps the biggest change in the field of development economics over the last few decades. Gerald Meier's *Leading Issues in Development Economics* (4th edition, 1984), which I used as a post-graduate, has none of the words 'corruption', 'governance' and 'institutions' in its index. An article from around that time on "The Spread of Economic Growth to the Third World: 1850-1980", by Lloyd Reynolds of Yale University in the *Journal of Economic Literature*, concluded with the hypothesis that the "single most important explanatory variable" for the much greater success of some countries than of others in the growth stakes is "political organization and the administrative competence of government". Writing in 1983, Reynolds was happy "as a properly modest economist" to "disclaim further responsibility and pass the problem to my political science colleagues". Economists are no longer so modest, and much of development economics today is really about political science and sociology, disciplines that are well captured in this second part of the book.

Parts 3 and 4 of the book cover specific topics. Part 3 tackles the big questions, including the following. Is globalization good? How important is growth for poverty reduction? Are we on an environmentally sustainable growth path? Part 4 tackles the perhaps more conventional topics one would expect to find in a development textbook, such as population, agriculture, and industrialization. Chapter 15, within this part, deals with the increasingly emphasized theme "Gender and Development".

Part 5 groups together under the heading of "Finance" a range of topics including cost-benefit analysis, aid and remittances. I teach a Master's course on Aid and Development Policy, and found the chapters on aid, remittances and debt relief very useful for it. My course is about what rich countries can do to help poor countries develop. "Give them aid" is one obvious answer, but it is far from the complete one. As this book notes, international remittances sent by migrant workers to their families, friends and relatives now exceed aid in value: roughly there is about $US 100 billion of aid, but $200 billion of remittances. The importance of international migration for development is an emerging issue, and the textbook does a good job, in Chapter 24, of summarizing the new literature on this topic. It acknowledges both the costs and the benefits of migration, but comes out underscoring its "development potential". I agree, and wish that figured more prominently in Australian discussions of migration.

Part 6, "Conclusion", is Chapter 25, entitled "Guidelines, judgements and possibilities".

Books of this type often fall into one of two traps. Either they can veer too much in the direction of advocacy, and fail to present opposing views with equal seriousness, or sometimes at all, or they can become mere lists of positions and views, and bore the reader. *Development Economics* avoids both traps. It is balanced, but insightful. It constructs arguments, but avoids dogma.

As an example, consider the book's treatment of the "East Asia Miracle". The achievement of high growth by Japan, then Taiwan, Korea and Singapore, then other south-east Asian countries, then China, and, now, most recently, India has been more influential than any other both in reducing world poverty and in changing the way we think about development. Some argue that the East Asian route is now closed to other, still-poor economies (that Africa cannot compete with Asia in, for example, the production of labour-intensive manufactured goods for export to the West); others that the East Asian path is a universally applicable route out of poverty. Anthony Cluniess-Ross and his co-authors concede that "we have no formula for generating really fast growth on East Asian lines", but argue that there are, nevertheless, "in many countries potential policy measures by which the rate of growth can be increased". The lessons of growth from East Asia include the need to suppress and reverse "over-regulation; insecurity of property; restriction of foreign trade and investment; lack of appropriate investment in human capital …; inadequate investment in … infrastructure; and kleptocracy and all varieties of macro-corruption that deplete resources" (p. 709 for this and other quotations in this paragraph). That list captures succinctly but comprehensively what has been learnt about the success of East Asia, both old and new.

I have very little critical to say of this book. Perhaps there could have been more on government expenditure. From an Australian and regional perspective, one would have preferred more on the special problems facing small and often fragile states, such as PNG and the Solomon Islands, and

less coverage of technology. The authors summarize unduly favourably, I think, the evidence that aid in general induces growth. There is little on the growing use of randomized evaluations in development economics.

These are minor quibbles when set against the great merits I began by noting. I'm sure that *Development Economics* will be widely used. I'll certainly be continuing to use it for my course.

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At 'Certificate' are the five examination papers set between March 2008 and March 2010 for the Learningguild Certificate in Reasoning and Expression, and a detailed report on each of those examinations, the most recent in a half-yearly and continuing series going back to 1987. These documents show what kinds of abilities the examiners regard as needing to be developed (at any age) by the end of secondary education, with a view to fruitful work at any tertiary or postgraduate stage. Concerning matters of grammar, punctuation, wording etc., reference is often made to Gowers's *The Complete Plain Words* (see p.2f of this issue) and Burchfield's *New Fowler's Modern English Usage*, and also to John Howes's book *Making up Sentences*, published by and obtainable from Learningguild and soon to appear in a third edition. Its first two chapters explain the parts of speech, and they and the other four chapters offer those who will study the book, doing its exercises, a level of familiarity with grammatical categories that would help them to write well and also enable them to understand references to those categories in Gowers and Burchfield.

Section 4 of the examination maintains the tradition of "Clear Thinking", which was a part of Victorian senior secondary English for forty years until 1983, with its requirement that candidates examine an argument put before them and say in what respects it is sound or unsound. John Howes's booklet *Reasoning* is a guide to this indispensable kind of work. It is obtainable from Learningguild for $2.20 (which may be sent in stamps), along with the green leaflet that describes the examination.

Professor Peter Singer of Princeton and Melbourne has written this year:

> *To get an A, or an upper B, in the examination for the Learningguild Certificate shows abilities to write clearly, reason well, and see what is wrong with unsound arguments. Across a wide range of fields, these skills are in short supply, urgently needed and yet seldom directly tested. I recommend both to students and to report-writers that they visit the Learningguild website and take up the challenge of this exam.*