Learningguild Letter

1&2.2011

Dear members and friends of Learningguild,

The ideal pattern for this magazine is that an issue related to the first half of a year should appear in August and one related to the second in the following February. Far from that, this issue for 2011 is a double one, and yet short, and it appears in September 2012. I must apologize for and briefly explain this shortcoming and delay.

In the second half of 2011, combining a rather heavy program of teaching with preparing and conducting our Learningguild examination, I became over-tired and over-anxious, and in February and early March of this year spent five weeks in a mental health clinic. In exhaustion I had become over-dissatisfied with my conduct of that particular examination, and suffered from an unreasonable sense of guilt. Five weeks of rest, with electroconvulsive therapy, enabled me to recover, and I am now back to normality and full vigour – and determined to be careful to avoid any recurrence. So far as Learningguild has been concerned, this episode meant that we did not resume our Saturday Meetings until May, were without a March exam for the first time in our half-yearly sequence of exams since September 1987, and have not produced until now an issue of *Learningguild Letter* for 2011. I humbly apologize for all of that.

My own main contribution here concerns two books. To my delight, a major theme of the first is very similar to that of the article immediately following from my old friend Anthony Cluniess-Ross. That book is *Not Quite the Diplomat* (2005), in which Chris Patten, freed from his official role from 1999 to 2004 as the European Union's much-travelling Commissioner for External Relations, covers a very wide range of countries and themes. The other book is *Battlelines* (2009), by Tony Abbott, a conservative, as Patten is, and Leader of the Opposition in Australia's Federal Parliament. I shall seek to do justice to what is especially good in each of the books and then turn to what I judge to be weaknesses.

Patten's first chapter is mainly autobiographical, and the next three concerned with inadequacies in British politicians. The second takes its title "Not tuppence for the rest" from Flanders and Swann's song:

> The English, the English, the English are best,
> I wouldn't give tuppence for all of the rest.

Conservative politicians in England, Patten says there, have too often had that underlying attitude to France, Germany and the rest of continental Europe. The third chapter may be summarized, in its criticism of many in the Conservative Party, by Patten's reference on p.75 to "the elevation of national sovereignty and the vilification of sovereignty-sharing". He judges both to be ill-timed in relation to contemporary changes in Europe and the rest of the world. The fourth ("Poodle or Partner?") has a notable combination, from which I excerpt, of the right questions and reasonable answers to them concerning the support given by Tony Blair, "who is manifestly not a bad man" (p.102), to George W. Bush on Iraq:

> Without Britain could America have definitely invaded? The answer is that she probably would have done, but the enterprise would have been more politically hazardous and it is possible that British hesitation would have encouraged doubts in the American establishment. … Choking off our own grave doubts, the sort that Foreign Secretary Jack Straw evidently put to Mr Blair at the eleventh hour, did Washington no favours. … Is it really the role of a good friend to suppress real anxieties rather than express them candidly? Supporting the Bush invasion of Iraq is probably the worst service we have paid America. (p.107)

Patten leaves us in no doubt, on p.110 and elsewhere, of his admiration for Colin Powell, as contrasted with Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld and those commonly called neoconservatives.

The fifth chapter is the one that fits so well with the article that follows this letter. Like Clunies-Ross, Patten has a deep belief in the efficacy, the future and the reasonable expansion of the EU. If I had to choose one part of the book to justify our purchasing it for the Learningguild Library and recommending it to members, it would consist of the last nine pages of this chapter, whose title is "From Brussels to Istanbul". Patten movingly brings out on p.141 what ought to be widely recognized, the success and the attractiveness of the European Union:

> … the most potent instrument in European foreign policy … is the offer of membership of the EU. It is driving reform in [the Balkans,] that war-torn region; they all want to join the EU. In earlier times it helped to consolidate democracy in Spain, Portugal and Greece when they shook off authoritarian regimes, and it cemented the process of democratization and economic reform in the countries of central and eastern Europe after the collapse of the Soviet empire. The EU has proved itself to be an outstanding agent and sustainer of regime change, rather more effective than America for all its flamboyant attachment to the notion.

Soon he reaches the question of Turkey's proposed membership of the EU and the related but wider matter of relations between the EU and Islamic nations. He makes his view plain, and it is admirable, though, as I shall soon argue, much more needs to be said about how Europe should "define itself" or conceive of and explain its own nature.

> … reconciling the West and the Islamic world, with Europe acting as a hinge between the two, is a major task for the twenty-first [century].
>
> My plea then is for Europe to define itself as a symbol of tolerance – democratic, prosperous and free – able to bridge civilizations, to prevent division (geographical and cultural) between the West and the Near East, and to demonstrate the way in which what we stand for can transform societies with very different histories and cultures. Turkish accession should be seized as an opportunity to give the EU a new dynamism and purpose.
>
> (pp. 144, 148)

In Chapters 6 and 7 Patten reviews the record of the EU in trying to reach common policies on the reconstruction of the Balkans after its failure to prevent or mitigate the conflict, and then in dealing with countries most of whose population are Muslim, in seeking a peaceful settlement between Israel and Palestine, and in dealing with Russia. Patten's concern to avoid over-simplification is evident in this set of sentences on p.197:

> Throughout the first Bush administration, we were told in Europe that Arafat himself was 'the' problem. I heard Dr Rice say it over and over again. She would brook no disagreement. Most of us found no difficulty in recognising that he was 'a' problem, and a very big, bad one indeed. But 'the' problem?

Europe is not, he says in ending Ch.7, doing enough to help Russia "towards democracy and pluralism", and should be "a strong and outspoken partner …, not a mealy-mouthed push-over".

The eighth chapter perceptively discusses marked differences among Americans, and brings out how foreign the country can appear to a British person. Patten describes individuals well, and in doing so conveys, without boasting of them, his own preferences, as on p.232:

> Mr Cheney … is an implacable presence – conservative if not reactionary – low tax for the very rich, make as much of it as you can, aggressively nationalist, conspiratorial, the patron of the Washington branch of the Likud party. I too am a conservative, but feel that Mr Cheney's conservatism is cut from timber from a very different part of the forest.

On the next and last page of the chapter he asks "how on earth" America can again be regarded and respected as a beneficent power promoting international order and peace gained by agreement. That is not a rhetorical question for him or the rest of us: it is urgent, and he discusses it in the following chapter, in which, after criticisms of both America and Europe, he concludes that Europe should support proposals for reform of the UN and urge the US to "[act] through working institutions of global governance" (p.259).

Changes in China (and Hong Kong, where Patten was the last Governor) and India are perceptively discussed in Chapter 10. A trio of sentences on p.279 deserve to be quoted for their wisdom.

> China – like other authoritarian regimes in recent years in Asia – shows that it is possible to develop an economy without

> democracy. But I doubt whether you can sustain a modern economy for long without democracy and its principal fixtures and fittings – pluralism and the rule of law. A tightly controlled and inflexible political system does not create an environment conducive to innovation and creativity.

To that one needs to add Mill's defence of freedom of thought and expression, and of the value of individuality of self-development, in Chapters 2 and 3 of *Liberty*.

After bringing out the global threat posed by climate change and the unwillingness of the then US and Australian Governments to make an adequate response, Patten returns to his hope for a better United States than that characterized by "Guantánamo Bay, Abu Ghraib, equivocation over torture, and exporting suspects in secret so that others can torture them" (p.304). He sets alongside that the colonialist neglect of human rights by the British in Kenya and the French in Algeria. Earlier, he has warned (p.288f) of Europe's "collective meanness about research and universities", which are so much better endowed, by both benefaction and taxation, in the US.

The book runs to 307 pages, but it is still *multum in parvo*. It is well written, never tedious. There are a few errors of expression. I invite readers to explain them in, and to correct, *My own mother, unlike most of my friends',* (p.5), *Did he [Mr Blair] think twice before confirming Mr Rumsfeld's views about 'old' and 'new' Europe (expressed in an article he co-authored …) with other European governments that supported America?* (113), *'Didn't you used to be Chris Patten?' was admittedly only said to me once* (150), and *If they were obliged to choose between backing Javier Solana or me* (156). (What my computer's grammar check does in reaction to all that is to advise me to write *my* instead of *My* and *didn't* instead of *Didn't*.) The index names Kant as Emmanuel: the first letter should be *I*.

Not Quite the Diplomat is a very good guide to the political world, even though the US, with Barack Obama as President, and many economic and educational weaknesses notwithstanding, is very different now and more internationalist than it was in the presidency of the second Bush.

In *Battlelines*, Tony Abbott also writes well. After explaining how, through the encouragement at Oxford of a Jesuit priest, he became "hooked" on boxing, he writes: "Another Oxford legacy, thanks to the tutorial system, was the ability to digest and assimilate texts and to produce to deadline a 1500-word essay" (p.14). Traditional Oxford tutors would not write, and would correct if they saw, *The only question that mattered was could Peter Costello do better?* (28), *Provided it never comes to the point of protagonists refusing to speak to each other* (55), and *in return for the states continuing to provide free treatment* (135). To see what has gone wrong in the second and third, it is essential to master the difference between a present participle and the kind of noun called a gerund (rather than to be told to notice, indiscriminately, "*-ing* words"), and to learn to see where a gerund is appropriate. How foolish are those who say we do not need to study grammar.

Abbott makes a good case for more room, through constitutional change, for the Federal government to intervene where the States are not doing a good job. The Rudd and the Gillard Governments have substantially, and in my view rightly, maintained the Howard Government's intervention in the Northern Territory in order to try to minimize widespread violence and sexual abuse and disease. Abbott writes on p.123:

> At the time of the intervention, Indigenous affairs minister Mal Brough had offered to fund and organise similar measures in the remote townships of the Kimberley – which had Australia's highest reported rates of sexual infection among minors – but was brushed off by the WA government.

He endorses (p.167) the realism of a leading Aboriginal, Noel Pearson: "Pearson warns that governments won't indefinitely fund settlements with no economic base and that Aboriginal people themselves will eventually have to sustain them". They agree that there is need not only of good primary schools for Aboriginal children but also of secondary schools where many students would be boarders.

There is an excellent paragraph on p.168f that deserves to be quoted in full. It is, unlike much of the book, bipartisan, it honours the work of missionaries, and its rationale is similar to that of James Wolfensohn's introduction of the policy for the World Bank that staff live in the countries they are seeking to assist, and not fly in and fly out.

> The provision of high-quality educational, health and other services to Aboriginal people requires the long-term commitment of first-class teachers, doctors and officials. The Howard Government's appointment (as part of the intervention) of resident 'government business managers' to live in remote NT

> towns and to have oversight of all government services there was a step in this direction. It was an attempt to re-create in the modern era and with modern attitudes something of the sustained commitment to advancing Aboriginal people's interests that had existed in mission times. The Rudd Government's announcement of a Remote Area Health Corps builds on work done by the previous government to make working in Aboriginal medical services as professionally prestigious as working in a big teaching hospital.

Abbott's previous sentence, however, illustrates the danger of oversimplification: "For all its good intentions, self-determination has set up Aboriginal people to fail." What must fail are attempts at self-determination without skilled advisers and implementers, non-Aboriginal as well as Aboriginal.

His remarks on multiculturalism include a welcome recognition that he was wrong to attack it in the 1980s, and these perceptive remarks (p162f):

> These days, multiculturalism has largely ceased to be a battleground in the 'culture wars'. For conservatives, diversity is no longer threatening. For the left, migrants have turned out to be too enamoured of Australia-as-it-is to be of much use in attempts to change it. A multiculturalism that means being relaxed about the pace at which migrants adapt is now taken for granted.

He rightly says, on public education, that there is need of more power for groups of parents and local leaders, and more autonomy for principals appointed by and responsible to them, and that the best teachers ought to be better paid. He underestimates the difficulty of gaining agreement on the criteria for that when he specifies "experience, professional qualifications and ability to inspire their students" (p.149f); in my view the main criterion should be the demonstrated ability to discharge heavier and/or more extensive responsibilities as a leading teacher and continuance in doing so, and therefore it may be better to think of the increase in salary as a loading and not something permanent.

What weaknesses has Patten's book? I find only one, a failure, perhaps suggestive of some complacency, to put or answer the question "What does Europe in fact value, and what ideally should she value?" At the foot of p.143 Patten imagines his daughters as asking "So what's next?" given that there has been no world war for 60 years. He then has this sentence, in which, after 'as', there is a description of Europe to which I shall propose an alternative:

> There has to be a 'next' – a difficult 'next', which will define our Europe, secure its stability and confirm our place in the world as a post-Christian society with Christian roots, a secular society that takes its values for granted.

Given that it is so common for values to be professed complacently but not examined or deeply influential, one might have expected the words after 'that' to be 'does **not** take its values for granted'. My preference for the negative partly explains why I offer a much longer alternative wording to follow 'as'. I should characterize Europe as a group of nations that has largely overcome past antagonisms, is deeply influenced by numerous forms of Christianity but has a steadily smaller percentage of Christian "believers", is tolerant of a wide diversity of standpoints in respect of religion and morals, and even, though within a democratic framework and the rule of law, of politics, and, at its best, values universal and thorough education, open and critical discussion, and responsive cooperation in assisting both its own members and other countries.

Rather than compare that account of Europe in detail with Patten's, I invite the reader to do so. Like Patten, I give tolerance a central place. He writes of "the tolerance that we prize above almost all else" (p.148), but, except in the words on the same page 'democratic, prosperous and free', has nothing to say about what other values they are that Europe in his view takes for granted. As with a family, or school, or college or university, a nation or even (perhaps especially) a union of nations needs toleration **and much else** if it is to thrive. In the last part of my description of Europe, I have included the qualification 'at its best', because there I am presenting values that are not always maintained, let alone put into practice with sufficient devotion or expenditure. There, too, I am thinking of Australia as well as of Europe.

Universal and thorough education requires the recognition that the ways in which we make learning available to children and adults are always in need of reform. More and more is available on the net and in CDs etc., and there are plenty of books and booklets; but students are too seldom enabled to learn the discipline and the discernment to make wise choices between things they discover and fruitful use, on their own initiative, of what is really good. 'Discipline' and the Latin noun '*dis-*

ciplina' come from the verb '*discere*', meaning to learn; and true learning, though often fascinating, is normally very different from enjoyment of something "entertaining". There is much to be said for different types of schools, different specialisms, and freedom for children or their parents to secure entry wherever there are vacancies, if they show sufficient merit and are willing to travel; but **every** school needs to be such that teachers and pupils are glad to be there and benefiting from it. Far more opportunity needs to be given for adults to learn and go on learning. The BBC and the ABC used until the 1970s to provide talks of up to half an hour, and talks on the former would appear in that extremely educative magazine *The Listener*; now interviews are the normal diet, and it is seldom as nourishing. In particular, there is the need that books, booklets and CDs are produced and publicized to make the study of English at different stages more accessible to non-native, and to native, speakers.

I have written already of Mill's *Liberty*, the great manifesto on the need for open and critical discussion. For forty years in Victoria, until 1983, every boy or girl in the sixth form (Year 12) had to prepare to explain the ways in which the argumentation in a previously unseen passage was faulty; now those who take the subject "English" are asked to answer such a question as (in 2011) "How is written and visual language used to attempt to persuade the audience to share the points of view in the online blog on [the following pages]", as though what matters, as Gorgias thought in Plato's dialogue of that name, is to be persuasive rather than to get at or near the truth by clear and cogent reasoning, and to be able to tell where such reasoning is lacking. One sign of what is defective in our education is the lack of scorn for shallow advertising, even when it is practised by universities.

'Responsive cooperation' is a watchword of mine: I began to use and explain it in the fourth section of my paper "Martin Buber and Davis McCaughey: Celebration and Criticism" (issued as a supplement to this *Letter*, 2.1995). The welfare state, again at its best, is an expression of responsive cooperation: where people within a country are or are liable to be in great need and cannot or would not be able to meet that need for themselves, and no voluntary body can or could meet it, the electorate has accepted that, on the basis of progressive taxation, the state should be the ultimate provider, as in the National Health Service in Britain. So too ratepayers cooperate to provide public libraries open to all, at least potentially beneficial to all, and responsive to a great range of preferences and requests. Of responsive cooperation dependent on individual volition a good example is youth hostelling, generally now including people of all ages, which spread from Britain to continental Europe and the world. (Like travelling generally, it would be better still if people practised an open friendliness rather than being preoccupied with their electronic equipment.) There ought to be far greater accessibility, even if for a moderate fee, of the resources of wealthy schools and other institutions to people less well off than most of their members. Teaching and learning, including the teacher's learning, should flourish through responsive cooperation. By tax-deductible donations and direct government aid, European and similar nations should do more and more to help one another and help people in other countries to help themselves.

I think it is plain that we must not "take [our] values for granted". I think that Chris Patten would agree that we should explore and refine them and ask self-critically how well and how extensively we are putting them into practice.

In considering what weaknesses *Battlelines* has, it is fair to recognize that Abbott is mainly concerned with why, in his view, a largely conservative approach to government should prevail in Australia. His scope, reasonably, is far narrower than that of Patten. It is, however, too narrow. He has almost nothing to say about Australia's need for closer relations with Asian countries. The predominance of English in international discussion does not justify the cavalier remark (p.161) "Overwhelmingly, the modern world is one that's been made in English."

He ends his last chapter (before the postscript) by saying he expects that

> the changes of the coming decade will be modest and incremental. That … will just mean that we've continued to be more successful at giving citizens a decent life than most other nations.

The tone is too complacent. I prefer that of the English liberal T.H.Green, who said in Oxford in 1878:

> The majority of English children are turned out into the world … without anything like a complete command of the elementary arts of reading, writing, and calculating.
>
> (*Works* Vol.III, p.450)

Over 130 years later, in Australia, we are far closer to that situation than we should be. There must be

more systematic and efficient training in those arts and more fostering of them, at both lower and higher levels. We need to focus on determining the best ways of discouraging the abuse of alcohol and the use of other drugs. We are not doing enough to enable young people or newcomers to avoid or emerge from isolation and/or frustration. This is no time to claim any general success or to suppose that we need only modest changes.

Abbott's claim in Chapter 3 to be both liberal and conservative is unconvincing. Mill is given less than one paragraph (p.57f) and Green not mentioned at all. On p.62 Abbott draws on some admirable remarks by Malcolm Fraser in 1980 about the need to "[find] that creative balance between the forces of freedom and the forces of continuity which alone allows a society to advance." The chapter reveals Abbott as more conservative in his emphasis than liberal. He does not sufficiently recognise how much conservatives the world over have tended to favour the rich rather than relieve the poor. He does not ask himself what is to be learned from Fraser (especially in the treatment of refugees) or consider the shameful fact that the Liberal Party has become such that Fraser, a statesmanlike man, has become alienated from it and thought of no account.

The title of Abbott's book reveals a tendency in his personality. He does not see parliamentary life in opposition as an opportunity to look for desirable modifications to policies followed or advocated by the government as well as, sometimes, to reject them completely. A marked difference between Tony Abbott and the man he supplanted, Malcolm Turnbull, who did negotiate with Kevin Rudd on proposed legislation to respond to climate change, comes out in this sentence (p.53):

> An opposition that negotiates with the government … in order to improve a flawed bill usually ends up sharing responsibility for legislation it basically doesn't like.

So Abbott has been persistently negative, endeavouring again and again to pull down the government. It is not an endearing characteristic, and is inconsistent with that *gravitas*, that thoughtful and constructive seriousness of purpose, quite without complacency, which serious but uncommitted voters want to see in their leaders. The book provides some explanation of why he has not convinced me, nor most Australians, that he should be our next prime minister.

Yours in Learningguild,

John Howes

The European Union: origin, controversy, expansion

ANTHONY CLUNIES-ROSS, *an Australian who is Emeritus Professor of Economics at Strathclyde University, Glasgow, is the author of* Making the World Autonomous: a Global Role for the European Union *(2005). A book written by him and two Strathclyde colleagues,* Development Economics, *was published in 2009 and reviewed in* L'g L *1.2010. Anthony, a member of Learningguild, has lived in Kinbuck, by Dunblane, since 1974.*

This article is written in December 2011 from a Europe that is recognisably in economic crisis, one that is an important component – as contributor and heritor -- of a world crisis. In that context, I write here of the hope with which the European Union began, go on to its present major controversy, and offer a hope of my own for its flexible expansion.

Why was the European Union formed?

The movement for European unity that emerged after the Second World War, and has developed into the European Union and the other European associations of today, was at first motivated to a large extent by the desire to prevent further wars -- understandably, given the origins of the 1870, 1914 and 1939 conflicts, all wars ignited wholly or largely in Europe, and notably between Prussia or Germany and France. The tactic adopted, at least implicitly, was to lead the European states to cooperate and increase their mutual dependence in as many areas of life as possible, with a natural preference for spheres in which joint action or common rules were of obvious or apparent joint material advantage, such as free movement of goods, services and capital, and, more controversially, of labour.

The slogan "toward a more perfect union" was widespread, but avoided the question what sort of union was in the circumstances most perfect. Was the most perfect the most uniform, or maybe the most centralized'? There is a suspicion that some of those most closely involved with the common institutions based in Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg are inclined to see perfection in those terms. Or should the presumption rather be in favour of 'national' (Spanish, Italian, British) or 'sub-national' (Basque, Sicilian, Welsh, or even more local) autonomy, with uniformity and centralization confined to spheres in which they seem really necessary (the principle of subsidiarity)? A pragmatic necessity might be claimed for serving common material needs, or an ethical necessity for fulfilling common ideals such as respect for individual human rights and the rule of law.

The central present controversy

The eurozone is that subset of now 17 countries (out of the Union's 27 members) that use a common currency and hence have a common monetary policy and a common money-issuing authority, the European Central Bank. The general world recession had served to plunge most governments of the rich countries both inside and outside the zone into recurrent deficits and hence fast-increasing debt. This was complicated in some states by local factors such as the property-price collapse in Ireland and sheer profligacy plus misleading public accounting in Greece. By requiring higher interest rates on government debt, "the markets" aggravated the position. They did not do so consistently for the countries with the highest gross government debts in relation to their income (which might have included the US, UK, and far more so Japan, all of course outside the eurozone, for which the markets do not seem to fear major currency depreciations). They did it mainly for highly indebted countries **within** the zone, and therefore **without** their own central banks to draw on as a last resort or the possibility of legally devaluing their currencies.

This explains why Greece (most urgently, in spite of plans for almost unbelievable austerity), Ireland, Portugal, and (less critically) Spain and Italy, have been thought to be at risk of default on their official debts and hence to need 'bail-out' funds -- from the IMF, the ECB, or member-countries of the zone or the wider Union. If governments default (say by writing down the debts they will honour by a third or a half), some of the banks that hold their debts may well themselves fail, with all the resulting severe shocks to output, income, wealth, and employment. Funds have been created in the zone, and already partly disbursed, to bail out the governments most in trouble, but there are doubts whether they will be enough, particularly whether the stronger members of the zone (notably Germany), or the ECB (under restraints imposed on it mainly by Germany), will be willing and able to fill all the critical gaps.

Four or five "extreme" possibilities are canvassed within the controversy about how best to deal with this very serious situation. One is that a number of the countries in the zone accept even greater "austerity", not to say misery, so making or keeping their own growth, and each other's, very low or negative. Some, while remaining in the zone, might default on part of their public debt, and banks depending on them might fail as a result. Second and third are that the eurozone breaks up in one way or another, either by the withdrawal of Greece and maybe some other weaker members or by the withdrawal of Germany, possibly in a group of the strong. Many, though not all, commentators think that either form of break-up would have drastic effects, and not only on the weak. Either might well lead to huge changes up or down in the exchange-value of the replacement currencies that might be brought into use at initial rates intended to reflect their purchasing-power, and to a grand revival of the very uncertainties that the euro project was intended to remove. There may be no easy return to the pre-euro world.

The fourth possibility -- advocated on the ground that the critical ingredient is confidence, on the part of the markets, in the states at risk -- is that, one way or another, credibility could be restored all round through virtually "unlimited" guarantees of governments and retail banks -- by the zone members and the ECB jointly – possibly through the creation of eurozone bonds, for which the member-countries' own bonds could be exchanged, and which all would agree to honour. (Ideally this could be accompanied by an emergency plan for coordinated expansion echoing that of April 2009, with a readiness in the short term for liberal use of "quantitative easing" so that additional purchasing-power might be brought into use, much of it directed initially toward deliberately financing **public** expenditure, the element in spending that can most easily be expanded by state action.) It would be a hopeful response, though it would have to face the same beliefs and prejudices that were generally held for decades to have prolonged the earlier world economic crisis of the 1930s. Moreover, though at present much public opinion in Germany (and with it quite possibly that of some council members of the ECB) is apparently unsympathetic to letting the weaker zone members escape some form of 'punishment',

apparently without much concern over whether the suffering would spread far more widely and whether "generosity", in allowing for more output and income all round, might be very much in Germany's own interest, as well as in that of virtually all the countries adversely affected by the crisis that began in 2008.

There is a fifth possibility, widely discussed but not an immediate solution and an expedient that might, at least until recently, have been considered impossible other than through years of complex negotiation. This is that the eurozone should become not only a monetary but also a fiscal (tax-and-spend) union, with not only (what with certain complexities more or less exists now in the EU), a democratic confederal parliament that approves a confederal budget, but also **effective executive powers** to exercise restraint on the spending and taxing of those individual member-states that are within the eurozone. Some would no doubt have liked a regime of this kind, with real centralized authority, from the euro's beginning, and might have been dubious over introducing the common currency without it. The Stability and Growth Pact, which was supposed to be some kind of substitute, turned out to be no more than a "gentleman's agreement", which Germany and France were among the first to infringe (with impunity). The EU summit in December 2011 seemed close to agreeing on a treaty (affecting on some critical points only members of the zone) that would among other things have limited the government deficits of zone members, but, because the UK made clear that it would exercise its veto as an EU member on such a treaty, the proposal remained as (at most) an *ad hoc* agreement among the zone members, together with other EU members who might choose to observe it.

My own very-long-term hope for the EU

I hope that the Union will gradually extend a sphere of internal peace, individual and minority human rights, and the rule of law, across more and more of the world, even well beyond Europe, with the common institutions valuable mainly as means to that end. The implication of such an approach is that the union should be cautious about extending its elements of uniformity and centralization, and carefully consider whether they will aggravate or ameliorate relations between and within the member-states. A straitjacket is not necessarily the best way to hold a body together. I enjoy the convenience of being able to use the same currency over all members of the zone from Finland to Portugal, and (because of the open borders of the "Schengen area" that covers almost all of the Union) to walk or drive between France and Spain with no more obstruction or even boundary markers than between Scotland and England. However, questions can at least be raised over whether the aspirations of a common currency for all, and for completely free movement of people within the union, are prospective steps too far, the first removing one potentially important element of economic flexibility, the second risking threats to civil peace in case large influxes of migrants from poorer to richer territories raise too much resentment or lead to the ghettoization of ethnic minorities. It is difficult to imagine that Turkey's accession to the Union, which on many grounds is devoutly to be wished (if only the country's civil liberties, which have been greatly advanced over the past decade, are brought fully up to EU standards), would become acceptable if Union membership were to entail completely free immigration of Turkish workers to Western Europe. A union with completely free labour movement would have virtually to remain a union of the relatively rich.

Now, however, we probably have to recognise that the single currency is a permanent fixture, at least over **almost** the whole of the present eurozone, whether or not any proselytizing fervour persists for extending it across the rest of the Union. Maybe going back would be just too painful. What we can perhaps hope is that membership of the single currency will be explicitly (as it has been implicitly) a matter of negotiated agreement between any new Union member and the rest, not an obligation on those considered to be "ready". At the same time I think it quite possible (and on balance desirable) that the ideal of a single labour market will be seriously qualified, in such a way as to remove one possibly critical obstacle to the admission of Turkey or other large countries of middle or low income. (The UK, as one of the very few pre-2004 Union members to forgo its right to delay by seven years the free admission of people from the new member-states, found that it was admitting many times more East European immigrants than it had projected.)

What I hope for the European Union is that it should remain open to states that show a clear and demonstrated willingness to accept its basic rules: democracy, the rule of law (which entails integrity and in particular abiding by agreements made within its institutions), and human rights, especially those of minorities. There should be no presumption that unwilling states should be dragooned or enticed into adoption of the common currency, or that movement of people within the Union should be free without the possibility of any imposing of restrictions by member-states. I hope that it will also remain attractive, as it has done for the successive waves of new members, whether

through direct material benefits, or through the expectation of greater security, or through the lure of the ideals that it represents. These attractions have required the acceptance of a certain amount of "variable geometry", with subgroups allowed to combine for some purposes and not for others. I hope that this combination of conditional but flexible openness and the charms of diversity will make it possible to reinforce and extend the sphere of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

What I fear is the syndrome of the Procrustean bed, the lust for uniformity and over-regulation, the ever-present risk of abuse of privileges on the part of Union officials and politicians, and the shortness and narrowness of view and the ungenerosity and self-righteousness that can make the Union incompetent to take sorely needed action. This aberrant behaviour can easily lead to cynicism about the institution rather than a determination to use it in the interests of peace and justice.

,

Students at Melbourne High School, 1946-50

JACK GREGORY, *Emeritus Professor of History at La Trobe University and a member of Learningguild, has written a memoir (which we published in 1997) called* Teaching and Learning in the Victorian Education Department, 1940-50. *Following a related talk he gave in our new Saturday series of meetings on the 4th of June 2011, he was asked to write more about his students and his teaching at Melbourne High School, with which Section V of the memoir is concerned. (Copies are still available.)*

My teaching career lasted for more than half a century. Most of it was spent at the tertiary level, in universities, but it began at the primary, moved soon to five years at the secondary, and ended, after retirement from university life, with a decade or so at the U3A, "the University of the Third Age". This "university" grants no degrees, enrols anyone of mature years, and has only volunteer teachers, not necessarily "qualified", but may still be counted as a fourth, less formal but still significant, level of learning and teaching. I feel very fortunate to have been able to experience them all, learning extensively about myself and the task of teaching in each, even if only briefly but still formatively at the first.

I expressed something of my gratitude to the organisations which helped set me on this rewarding professional and personal path in the memoir. I must add here my thanks to John Howes for that, and for the opportunity he has provided me, and many others, to talk (rather than "teach") informally to the varied membership of Learningguild, the educational and social movement he founded.

I had been a student myself at Melbourne High School from 1936 to 1939, as was John, with whose time as a student (1949-52) mine as a teacher there overlapped, though he was not in any of my classes. Many of the students I taught were of his quality and had his feel for learning, so that I commented in the memoir that my years with them "remain in my mind as my best years at any level… How could they be otherwise, given the quality of the students set before me?"

Melbourne High was then one of only three State high schools teaching up to what was called Matric (a year that enabled one to matriculate at, i.e. enter, a university) and is now called Year 12, the others being University High and MacRobertson Girls High. Students who had completed years 10 and 11 at other high schools but wished to go further to qualify for university study came for a year or two at one of these three schools, which meant that in their senior classes there was a concentration of highly motivated, capable students. I had the task of teaching the fifth-form and the Matric (sixth-form) European history courses, plus other courses in English and History for fourth-formers (year 10). Not exactly scorning delights, I certainly lived laborious days, teaching keen and able students, especially at the top level.

John has asked me "What else though? Were they showing the benefits of quite an exacting earlier education from Form 1 to Form 5?" My Matric students, many of whom I remember well, and not only those who went on to distinguished careers in a variety of fields, were virtually all highly literate, well able to absorb the arguments of the few advanced texts in the then small school library which was tucked away in the cramped tower of the building, and to write lucid brief essays about whatever questions I posed to them. They were certainly well prepared by their earlier

class experiences, but they were also obviously a quite select group. I have far less clear memories of my much larger fourth-form classes, but they are of quite challenging texts, which tested me as well as the students. The history text was the closely-argued, wide-ranging *Ourselves and the Pacific*, and in English I recall having to grapple rather desperately with the grammatical challenges posed by one of the texts (title forgotten), but also enjoying trying to expound poems such as D.H. Lawrence's *The Snake*. It was a good learning environment for both teacher and students.

Teaching at the tertiary level meant mainly lecturing to larger groups than I ever faced in a classroom, so that the kind of personal contact that is normal in school teaching was rare. It still happened, especially in my smaller tutorial and honours-level groups, and some of those I taught remain, like some of my Matric students, dear in the memory and even friends. But as a university lecturer I felt my main responsibility was to keep well up with current scholarship in my subject, modern East Asian history, and to convey as much as I could of cutting-edge scholarship to those students who had chosen to enrol with me. Overall, though a self-selected group, they varied more than my Matric students in their capacity to express their ideas, so that I look back on my university teaching experience with rather mixed feelings. But I must add that my smaller, also self-selected, U3A groups gave me at my fourth level almost as much satisfaction as I had had at my second.

I hesitate to try to generalize from all this, since dealing with student groups of such different ages and sizes complicates any comparisons. But one generalization I will risk, which is to suggest that the family background and general social background and experience from which any student, primary, secondary or tertiary, comes is likely to be as decisive as the school in determining his or her degree of literary competence and general commitment to learning. I do wonder whether the wider social influences at work now, compared with those affecting my students at the three levels (the fourth was just a kind of coda), militate more strongly against desirable outcomes. Teaching is always a challenging task, but seems to have become more so, especially in the truly "public", State-administered schools, open to all students without discrimination. Our politicians of nearly all persuasions seem reluctant to endow and support them as much as basic common sense and social justice suggest is necessary.

Recommended Book, DVD and Websites

The book and the film (now DVD) **Oranges and Sunshine**, and the websites for **Margaret Humphreys** and the **Child Migrants Trust**, deserve the attention of everyone who cares about children.

We can through all these media become acquainted with the work of Margaret Humphreys, who, since she began it in 1986, has been astonishingly devoted and resilient. We are faced with many examples of deceit, cover-ups and reluctance to face and acknowledge the truth on the part of religious and other institutions, most of them in Australia, that ran "homes", often with extremely abusive and unloving staff, to which were sent children from English institutions who were often told the lie that they were orphans. We also learn how governments in Britain and Australia supported child migration without the consent of parents or guardians, and that their successors have been very slow to apologize for that support. Humphreys' book was first published in 1994 with the title *Empty Cradles*, and in the foreword to the new edition (2011), called, like the film, *Oranges and Sunshine*, she writes of her disappointment that it took fifteen more years before there was an apology from the Australian government and a further year for one from the British.

From 1986 on, Humphreys, a social worker based in Nottingham, England, with the support of the Child Migrants Trust she directs, has endeavoured (at great cost to herself and her family) to enable children to be reunited with a mother or other relative they had not known of, or had supposed dead or out of any possibility of contact, or at least to provide information.

The book is extremely well written. It makes plain the rationale given for child migration, basically that Britain could be relieved of responsibility for some of the children who could not be looked after by a parent, and that they would grow up to benefit the countries to which they were sent, especially under-populated Australia.

On the website for Margaret Humphreys one can watch and hear an interview with her, and there is the text of another, and a *Guardian* article (respectively 10 April, 25 July and 2 April 2011). I recommend these as well as the site of the Child Migrants Trust, which gives addresses to which donations may be sent.

The book reveals what it is for children to be deprived of an identity and not to know love from anyone. It is sobering and salutary to read it. Margaret Humphreys is one who shows us how to live.

John Howes

WHAT'S A GOOD INTRODUCTION TO …

THE PHYSIOLOGY OF SPEAKING ENGLISH?

JONATHAN BURNS, *a physicist and a member of Learningguild who has tutored extensively in mathematics and science and in 2011 in English pronunciation, turns to an unusually scientific guide.*

Susan Cameron, the author of ***Perfecting Your English Pronunciation*** (McGraw Hill 2012), has the Chair of Voice and Speech at the CAP21 Conservatory, New York City, and specializes in "accent reduction". She has designed a curriculum in English pronunciation and taught thousands of students, and has now published a self-teaching manual.

The book has 231 pages in a wide format with a clear 14-point type, accompanied by a DVD and two CDs. Most of the book consists of tables, word lists and exercises; the rest is instructions and explanations. Cameron has clearly condensed her teaching experience into these succinct passages. The instructor's voice is strong: nothing is wasted. The whole text is intensely practical.

I recently began helping students of EFL with pronunciation, using John Howes's *Sounds, Words, Sentences* (*SWS*). Cameron's book immediately added to my awareness of the principles of clear pronunciation and their physiology, and how to communicate them.

Let me stress 'awareness'. Pronouncing our words is something we do without much premeditation; we "just do it", or so it seems. Before beginning to help others with their spoken English, I would have said that our pronunciation is mainly an accumulation of imitations which we have mastered, guided by "whether it sounds right" and by others' reactions to our speech.

Working with students using John's manual renewed my awareness of phonetics: that is, of particular vocal sounds and their resemblances and differences. John treats the 24 consonants and the 22 vowels in the order for each set in which they are listed near the front of the *Oxford Basic English Dictionary*. It would have been nearly impossible to keep then all distinct in my mind if each one were a special case. The symbols for the first sixteen consonants of the International Phonetic Alphabet are set out in pairs, so as to bring out relationships between the sounds: for instance that **d** is to **t** as **g** is to **k**.

Cameron's treatment of consonant and vowel pronunciations greatly extends my awareness of the physiology of speech by defining the parts of the mouth which are the key "articulators". She does this in one short chapter, in the course of six pages of student exercises for the lips, tongue, jaw and palate, and six in which she determines the sounds by identifying where and how they are made.

My understanding of how I speak becomes sharper as I coordinate it with both the IPA symbols and with Cameron's physiological exercises. It takes me back to my childhood interests in Greek and Hindi, which were inspired by the different alphabets but eventually faltered because I only had books to read.

Since then, I have thought like a physicist, with attention to the resonant cavity of the mouth and the throat. Having been exposed to several languages and many accents, I have vaguely believed that there were too many anatomical factors in play for there to be a strict classification of vocal sounds. Not so! Cameron very quickly introduces clear and useful classifications: for instance of front, middle and back vowels as determined by the part of the tongue that is lifted.

After these basic principles the next 150 pages treat thirteen "difficult sounds of English" in turn. The sound is defined and one feels out the right placement of the articulators, listening critically to

oneself. The rest of the chapter contains lists of English words containing the sound and others related to it, followed by a list of about twenty cleverly contrived sentences in which they occur, annotated with their IPA symbols, so that you can see them coming up as you read aloud.

Even a quick reading yielded new insights and revealed obvious mistakes I had been making. For instance, I had been thinking of the difference between **d** and **t** as being a matter of using the tongue with greater or lesser force. In fact the position of the tongue determines the pronunciation of **p**, **t** and **k** as voiceless plosive consonants, and **b**, **d** and **g** as their voiced counterparts.

Two following chapters are given to practising stress on syllables in words, and word stress in sentences. Again helpful insights emerge vividly in a quick reading: for instance we are misled by written English into thinking that short words, say 'and' or 'your', each have a single correct pronunciation, when in fact each word has specific weak and strong forms in speech.

Throughout the book, Cameron is so well in control of her information that she can present it without ambiguities or distractions in a short space. This is what makes immediately apparent what she wants to say. Her style of writing and speaking also helps. She uses short, plain sentences in declarative or imperative forms. There is no intention to divert or entertain: her tone is one of a teacher wholly immersed in her student's striving to master each sound. It is generally impersonal yet supportive and friendly. Evidently it has been refined by thousands of hours of face-to-face guidance.

Cameron's own face and voice on the accompanying DVD complement that impression. She makes the teacher's role pleasant without distracting from the material. Having delivered her information she introduces one of several assistants performing the exercises. Three sessions take about 100 minutes, covering the book's exercises in articulation and the difficult consonants and vowels.

The DVD sessions are not for passive viewing but for concentration on each sound. One may also practise with the book, by itself or together with the CDs on which the book's word-comparisons and example-sentences are recited. The DVD seems the best for an introduction, the book and CDs for becoming familiar with the sounds in context.

The pronunciation here is what Cameron calls "Global English", really a kind of American, and she herself has a distinctly American accent. Certain vowels vary from British and Australian speech: for instance the short **ɒ** as in 'hot' becomes the unrounded **ɑ:**, which we hear as closer to 'hut'. Such variations are treated in the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* at p.R45 of the 8th Edition. Wikipedia provides another good resource.[1]

I would expect this book to be popular, given the reasonable price of $29.95, if teachers become widely aware of it and recommend it. A beginner needs a short manual, so we use *SWS*, but later, like any of us, he or she can learn much by close and repeated attention to Susan Cameron's set of book, DVD and CDs. It is available in the Learningguild Library, and deserves to be widely borrowed and studied.

1. For these, see respectively, and beginning with http://, oald8.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/pronunciation.html, and en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Phonetic_Alphabet_chart_for_English_dialects.