

Finding our voice

The power of community education,
organisation and development

Charlie McConnell

Finding my voice:

**The power of community education, organisation and
development**

By Charlie McConnell

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Contents

Chapter 1 Learning to juggle

Baby boomer • An inconvenient youth • 1968 Je participe
• My politics teacher was a fascist, so I went to Russia
• The Far Left was just mouthing slogans • A lace doily among
the dark satanic mills • To study politics is to study power •
Discovering the power of community • Tanzania or Todmorden?
• Meeting the Red Clydesiders – old and new • ‘It’s the best
fucking thing we’ve got’ • Alexander the great • First publica-
tions • Red train to China • Salt panners and droughts • Spare
Rib and Achilles Heel • Big P Politics • 1979 Ugh • Lost deposit
• George and Guy • Big Bob and Big Bang

Chapter 2 National and international affairs

European Parliament? • Or gun running in Latin America?
• Empowering consumers • Trojan pony • Ralph and the
consumer movement • Gender politics, Bhopal and moving
beyond the local • Penang and Borneo • Specialist technical aid
• Community enterprise • Building a home • Breaking down
walls • Up yours Delors! • African diary • An international
association

Chapter 3 Hale Bopp

Vespers • Russia in the 1990s • Dacha Sacha • Into the
Kremlin and the Livadia Palace • Little Boy and Gira
• The Council • Youth issues • Sustainable and joined-up
Community practice • Celebrating lifelong learning
• Controversy • 1997 hoorah • Citizenship education • PAULO
• Investing in people • Braveheart • Osler Cosla Barista

• Picking up the pieces • Ireland and islands • Making inequality history, saving the planet and opening borders

Chapter 4 The purpose of getting power is to be able to give it away

Radicalising trust • Land ownership • Preparing the troops
• The right to a voice • Name-dropping • A very personal engagement with the climate • Comin thro' the rye • Colorado or Devon? • Small is beautiful, well come on, not that small!
• This blessed plot • In search of warmth • Another look at the land • Finding myself looking back • Don't agonise, organise
• A tale of optimism, juggling and military strategy • From Olympian heights • We can be heroes

In memory of Pete Seeger
'We shall overcome'

Foreword

I retired in 2012 after nearly forty years in community education, organisation and development work in the Britain and internationally, twenty-five of those at a senior level, from being head of a national community education agency, to being the director an international college, from running an international non-governmental organisation, to being chief executive of an independent foundation and European director of another foundation that supported this work. I considered myself a community activist throughout my paid working career, before that as a student and now that I am retired. Retirement has given me more time to do three things I enjoy – to walk with my dog Poppy, to become a volunteer in my local community and internationally and to write.

I had a few moments in the limelight – once as a child model wearing an astronaut suit not long after the Russians had launched Sputnik, then again when I stood for Parliament. I have written other books, educational textbooks in my professional area. This book started as articles for the International Association for Community Development, the *Journal of Contemporary Community Education Practice Theory* and the Scottish Standards Council for Community Learning and Development, reflecting upon my work over four decades. I have expanded these, adding the journey of why I got involved in this work, the result of teenage delinquency and the discovery of democratic socialism, two sides of the same pathological activist personality trait. It then follows the history of community education, organisation and

Finding our voice

development in Britain and, in part, internationally and aims to set this within the socio-economic and political currents of the day.

It looks, in some detail, at the attempts to create what in one of my previous books I had termed the ‘empowering profession’ and an officially recognised professional sector for this work. But primarily, it traces how this has played an important role in grassroots democracy building, environmental protection and the social, cultural and economic renewal of communities around the world. There are many, many job titles in this diverse field - community worker, community education worker, community development worker, community organiser, development worker, development educator, community based adult educator, youth worker, youth and community worker, to name but a few! In Britain these occupations were officially recognised by the government, in 1999, as a single employment sector – called community learning and development. And for the sake of simplicity, I have mostly used the generic term community education and development worker to describe who does this work, irrespective of their job title.

The government’s recognition brought together this wide range of community education and community development occupations for the first time as a single employment sector. The government wanted to acknowledge and support the sector to play an ever more important role in promoting some of its key policy agendas here and internationally. These were concerned with tackling social exclusion (the 1990s word for poverty), and for building stronger, safer, educated, enterprising, tolerant and resilient communities. This included work to promote health education, environmental action, residents’ participation in rural and urban regeneration, community relations, youth information and empowerment, inter-community conflict resolution, crime prevention, consumer and citizenship education, adult

literacy, community arts, job creation and social enterprises, digital inclusion and generally strengthening civil society. As a political scientist, my primary interest was in ways in which we could increase people power.

This is a personal journey, but one shared with many others. I appreciate that in large part it must appear that I was like Zelig, in Woody Allen's marvellous film of that name, the character that always seems to pop up at every historic moment. My sincere apologies if it reads that way. I was however enormously fortunate to have worked during a period when a new profession and a style of empowering professionals was taking off in Britain and other parts of the world. In many instances, I was merely a fly on the wall, in others one of the architects and builders. Whenever, I owe an enormous debt to all those I have worked with and for and mostly, the communities I have had the privilege to support and to learn from.

The book also includes anecdotes and stories that cover other parts of my life. For example my attempts to become a member of the British Parliament and the European Parliament and which, in one way or another shaped or were informed by my professional career, and of relationships and friendships that have also influenced me. It is a biased book, in the sense of my political alignment on the left. But it is not uncritical of the left and, in a British context, of decisions made by Labour governments, devolved governments and local authorities, which in my view were not supportive of this work. It also acknowledges that in some cases Conservative governments, and in the case of Scotland, the Scottish National Party (SNP), have been supportive. In the latter part of the book, it covers my growing concerns about environmental issues and criticisms of the current British Conservative/Liberal government's negative views towards public services and, in particular, its savage cuts in expenditure upon community education and development when, more than

Finding our voice

ever, communities need help to become more resilient at a time of economic recession and even more seriously, in the face of changes in the earth's climate and the impact of this upon vulnerable coastal communities.

It is mostly a story about working in Britain. But it also covers my visits to Eastern Europe, Russia, Mongolia and China in the 1970s; to Latin America, and then my secondment to work in Penang in Malaysia to work on international consumer education, in the 1980s; my work with the Council of Europe in 1989 and managing pan-European programmes throughout the 1990s and 2000s, including my experiences of Russia post Gorbachev; my involvement with community development in Southern Africa in the mid 1990s; and my active involvement with the International Association for Community Development, which I ran for several years and was on its Board for fifteen. This gave me the opportunity to work with, and to observe the work of, practitioners in North America, the Middle East, Europe, South East Asia, Southern Africa and Oceania. And, most recently, it covers my work running an international college supporting social and environmental activists around the world.

I know I will have omitted many with whom I worked and shared my life, and my apologies for that. My thanks to relatives, friends and colleagues who reminded me of many things forgotten and censored some things remembered. And thanks especially to Poppy and my daughter, Holly, who put up with me talking to myself, and to Iris Steen for supporting me more than she knows.

Charlie McConnell
Dartmoor, Edinburgh and Putney, 2014

Chapter 1

Learning to juggle

Baby boomer

I stammer. It's not that bad these days, in fact pretty rare. Sometimes it occurs in meetings or, worse, when I am speaking at a conference. I'm told it's an attractive trait. But when I was a child there were many times when I could hardly speak at all as a jumble of words would pour into my head but dam up as they reached my mouth. The worst of the dams were Hs and words that sound as though they start with an H, such as 'who' and 'why', that require a strong exertion of breath. Stammering has affected my life. I should have liked to be an investigative TV journalist with the BBC, but instead I set out on a different journey.

In the summer of 1951, when I was born, the Festival of Britain was in full swing. After the difficulties of the immediate post-war years, Britain's first majority Labour government under Clement Attlee was in power and the government felt that people needed cheering up after the wartime and post war austerity. The spirit of '45' and Labour's post-war vision and drive were transforming Britain, bringing the creation of the National Health Service and national parks, town and country planning and a significant welfare state. They undertook huge slum and war damage clearance programmes, began the process of ending the Empire and introduced Keynesian economics, including the public ownership of significant parts of previously declining and often

Finding our voice

unsafe industries. Under Attlee's government Britain turned the corner, leading, in large degree, to the affluence of the 1950s and 1960s. In October 1951 Labour secured the largest popular vote of any political party in British history but, due to a quirk in the voting system, lost the election to the Conservatives. The seventy-seven-year-old Winston Churchill was back in power.

Over the next thirteen years there were improvements in people's lives, but Britain's economy stagnated by comparison with Germany, France and the Benelux countries, which in 1957 had created the European Economic Community. Britain decided to stand apart rather than play a formative role in shaping the EEC, creating the far smaller and peripheral European Free Trade Area. The American Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, said in 1962 'Britain has lost an empire and not yet found a role'. And when in 1963 Harold MacMillan, the Prime Minister, sought entry to the EEC, the French President De Gaulle said 'Non', a response, it is said, to the way he felt Churchill had snubbed him during the war. He wanted France and not Britain to shape the new Europe. It would take another ten years before Britain joined. Perhaps this was the inevitable heuristic attitude of an upper class that had run a quarter of the world. What can at least be said is that the Conservatives did not try to dismantle the achievements of the Attlee government and, until Thatcher in 1979, accepted much of the post-war consensus. MacMillan, the predominant Conservative leader during much of this period, represented Stockton in County Durham and had seen first-hand the worst of the pre-war slums, unemployment and poverty and was on the liberal wing of the Conservative party.

My parents, Charles and Sue, were middle class and for several years I attended a private fee paying boys' school in the British Lake District. It was stuck in an Arthurian (both King Arthur and Arthur Ransome) past, with a limited curriculum

and an exclusively middle and upper middle class social mix. The place felt more like living in an Arthur Ransome book. Indeed Ransome lived nearby. He knew the headmaster and gave me a signed copy of his book *Swallows and Amazons*. Ransome had led something of a double life, writing nostalgic children's books and being a radical journalist who knew Lenin and Trotsky and had experienced the Russian Revolution first hand. The school's mission was "... to promote Courtesy rather than Cleverness." Its curriculum was narrow and dated. On the plus side, it was small in scale, with class sizes of around 15. The teaching staff, most of them former army officers, made full use of the surrounding Lake District countryside as a living classroom. One, Brigadier Osmaston, had mapped some of the Himalayas before the War and climbed with Tenzing Norgay. For those children who had parents with money, there was no barrier to moving on to a private 'Public' school and to their place on the summit.

In 1964, Labour, under Harold Wilson, narrowly won the general election. Wilson was the MP for Huyton, the original location of my boarding school before the War. I recall just one boy in my class supporting the Labour Party and it wasn't me. I also recall the headmaster being clearly unhappy that Wilson might have some association with the school. I was still a Tory when Churchill died, in 1965; his funeral watched in mourning by all on the one black and white TV we had at the school. By the 1966 general election Labour landslide, I was a Labour supporter, handing out CND (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) leaflets at school.

For a couple of years I went to a state school. My father had retired and could no longer afford the school fees. It was a tough introduction to social and educational inequality and, for me, a profound eye opener. The school was next to the town's gas works and similar to the one in Ken Loach's wonderful film *Kes*. Class sizes were almost double those at my boarding school

Finding our voice

and, while there were many dedicated teachers, you had a sense that for most it was merely a case of keeping control. The most inspiring teacher I had was my music teacher. He introduced me to Stravinsky, the final part of *Firebird* being the first piece of music that made me cry publicly, a propensity that I still have. He took the mere five of us who were studying music to choral and organ recitals in Ripon cathedral, to Mozart at the Opera House in Leeds and to see Sir John Barbirolli, just before he retired as principal conductor of the Halle Orchestra. I also went to see the great classical Spanish guitarist Segovia at the Free Trade Hall in Manchester.

Back at the age of 11, while at boarding school, we had all been entered for some sort of IQ test. This, as I later learnt, was called the 11 Plus test and would select us out for our future lives. It was a crude and flawed way of assessing a child's intelligence and all British children were required to sit it. I have never been very good at passing IQ type exams, perhaps being left handed has something to do with it. I just tend to look at things in different ways – generally I am far better at seeing the bigger picture than the detail. Anyway, what this meant was that in my mid teens, I now went to what was called a secondary modern.

An inconvenient youth

The school was predominantly working class and its curriculum largely vocational and technical, aimed at training a workforce for factories and the service sector. All the children who went there had failed the 11 Plus and many were on free school meals, indicating families on or close to the poverty line. These were publicly identified by having to stand up in front of us all in class at the beginning of the school year. I had to use all my wit and wiles not to be hit for speaking with a posh accent, more so because I still had the stammer. One lad lost an eye in a fight

when another stabbed him with a screwdriver. Nevertheless, I soon made friends. Among them was Sid, who lived in a council house. It was the first time I had ever been to one. He was a good mate and together with another pal, an American called Gordon, who was addicted to pinball machines, we often skived off, stole from antique shops and were pretty semi-detached from school. It is remarkable, looking back, that the antique shops around Montpellier, the wealthiest shopping district in Harrogate, did not question my regularly bringing in some silver dish or old coins to sell, stolen from a neighbouring shop. My line was that my granny wanted me to sell them for her. Gordon later returned to the US after being arrested breaking into red telephone cashboxes. His father was a high-ranking officer at the nearby US base at Menwith Hill secret listening station. They left in some disgrace as his offence was reported in the press.

I had been away at boarding school for five years, so it was not easy for my parents to have an increasingly delinquent youth in the house, playing louder and louder music and growing ever longer hair. The Lego days of childhood were gone. My father suggested that I might enjoy the Air Training Corps and with my memories of happy days marching at boarding school and my quiet pride about my father's and grandfathers' service, I joined and actually quite liked it. I had my hair cut, did the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and for a brief time thought I'd quite like to join the RAF. Dad talked to me about whether I'd like to go to the Duke of York's military boarding school in Dover. But my interest was short-lived.

Throughout my time at secondary modern I refused to wear a school uniform. I am sure that the main reason was the stigma of being seen as a secondary modern pupil. My recollection is that only Gordon and I refused to wear them and as a result were regularly hauled in front of the headmaster. Conservative Harrogate was late in going comprehensive, notwithstanding the

Finding our voice

influence of Yorkshire West Riding Council's innovative Chief Education Officer, Sir Alec Clegg, who was one of the pioneers of the non-selective comprehensive system in England. The school became a comprehensive just after I left and then simply by combining it with the adjacent High School, to become one of the far too many factory-sized secondary schools which still prevail across much of the country.

The Labour government's position on comprehensive schools was one of the main reasons I became a Labour supporter, then a member. The Labour government, re-elected with a large majority in 1966, was committed to increasing equality of opportunity. For the education system this meant change and expansion, and for the first time ever a British government was spending more on education than on defence. When I heard of this I felt that I had discovered the issue that would later shape my career. I had experienced two schools, both of which I felt very personally had failed children. But it was the system that had failed the children, not the children who had failed, and it was a system that I felt passionately I wanted to change.

Both schools were indeed part of the same system: the British class system and the iniquitous classification and selection of children at 11 to either a grammar or a secondary modern. The 11 Plus lowered the aspirations and talents of millions of young people. The rich, of course, had the money to ignore the 11 Plus, by sending their children to private schools. This selective education reflected something that was deeply wrong about British society in the 1960s - the class system. The Labour Party, committed to equality of opportunity, made a commitment to change this. As a fifteen-year old my stammer had largely gone following speech therapy and what followed was a bursting out of opinions and challenges.

I developed a tendency to soapbox and to criticise. One day the headmaster walked into morning assembly with a broken

toilet seat around his shoulder, like some wreath, demanding to know which filthy boy had broken it. I laughed loudly and was sent to his office after the assembly for an interrogation. I stood outside for what seemed like hours, daydreaming of being Rudolf Nureyev and of machine-gunning those in authority. Instead I was caned in front of the full assembly. I was caned another time for asking too many questions and being seen as lippy, ironically by my history teacher, whom I quite liked and in whose class I excelled. I left school when I was 16. With the help of my local further education college and night classes, which I had started going to in 1967, I eventually got my A Levels, the entrance qualifications to higher education in Britain.

1968 Je participe

1968 was the iconic year for my generation, with young people demanding the right to a voice. I did my first sit-in demonstration that summer. I was just seventeen and it was on a British-Dutch youth exchange. Perhaps it was seeing the anarchist Provo movement in Amsterdam or the opportunity to wear my John Lennon sun glasses inside as well as out. The protest was rather lame in comparison with what was going on in Paris, but it planted the seed. For me Lindsay Anderson's film of that year, *If* captured my adolescent emotions completely. Lots of anger, but it was also the beginning of a political education that challenged much of my upbringing. This was also the year of the assassinations of Bobby Kennedy and Martin Luther King. For me these more than JFK's assassination five years earlier, are the ones that I not only recall much more vividly, but which made my gut ache and my eyes cry. Both were hugely inspirational leaders who, had they lived, could have truly changed the course of world history. I loved much of what America represented – its glorious music, the peace, civil rights, environmental and social

Finding our voice

action movements – and friends of mine took the pilgrimage to San Francisco. I however wanted to go east to visit Russia.

The Vietnam War politicised many young people, but it did not destroy Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson's reputation in the way Tony Blair's was over Iraq. Had Wilson succumbed to President Johnson's pressures to send British troops to Vietnam, and had conscription been reintroduced, similar to the draft in the US, I might have been sent to fight. As it was I marched against the war and supported Ho Chi Minh and the right of the Vietnamese to unification and self-determination. Labour's domestic educational and social reforms, in relation to equal rights – for women, homosexuals, disabled people and minority ethnic communities were ones I strongly supported. Later as a student I saw Wilson speak at a Labour Party rally, he was a good orator but with a whiney voice. He was a technocratic moderniser who wanted to sweep out the fustiness of Britain's establishment. His government made many mistakes, but were the generation tasked with seeing Britain through the period of transition from imperial power to a more modern, forward-looking social democracy and in the latter 1960s did much to take the country in that direction.

My politics teacher was a fascist, so I went to Russia

One of my A levels was called British Constitution. This was basically an introduction to Britain's political system at central and local government level, to political parties, how parliament worked, reform of the unelected House of Lords (something the Labour government was then trying to do, but was defeated by an unholy alliance between Michael Foot on the left and Enoch Powell on the right). Enoch Powell had just made his infamous 'Rivers of Blood' speech, seen as an incitement to racism, and had been sacked from the Conservative shadow cabinet by Edward

Heath. I went to a Powell rally in Birmingham, intending to heckle. The place was packed, with a praetorian guard of thugs. I listened, then quietly exited. He was a remarkable speaker but flawed politically, somewhat like Oswald Mosely, leader of the British Union of Fascists in the 1930s. My British Constitution teacher was Andrew Brons, who later became the first member of the neo-fascist British National Party to be elected to the European Parliament.

It took me two years of Saturday and holiday jobs, including grouse beating for the wealthy, to save up enough money to make the long summer trip behind the Iron Curtain. My parents were horrified when I told them that I wanted to visit Russia, and it was such a rare trip for a young person to make at that time that the local paper wrote an article about me. My politics by then were that of a social democrat rather than farther left, but I was on a learning journey, a sponge keen to soak up different ideas. And Russia and communism both fascinated me. Why had we forgotten the contribution Russia had made during the Second World War? Why was the West so against communism? Why were we living in an age of mutually assured destruction in relation to Russia?

We flew to Moscow. What hit me was how huge it looked. It had boulevards of a width I had never seen before, with few white markings between the lanes. I was told that this was because although they were the first to get a man into space, they could never quite develop a paint that stuck to the road. Perhaps for the same reason there were many pre-revolutionary buildings that looked as though they hadn't been painted since Lenin's time, enormous Stalinist monstrosities, the bestial beauty of the Kremlin, the exquisite St Basil's cathedral and Lenin's lumpy mausoleum in Red Square. The Moscow metro was incredible, not just the glory of its stations, but its grumpy staff and tired looking, but generally friendly passengers – workers, intellectuals

Finding our voice

and Rasputin-like characters dressed in long black cloaks.

It was so refreshing not to see adverts for consumer products all over the place. Instead there were communist wall posters highlighting heroic looking workers. There was also an absence of shops. You had to search to find one, and when found it was almost impossible to find something to buy. They were clearly having problems with the centralised planning process of production, distribution and exchange.

I exchanged pounds, an out-of-date one-year passport and a Rolling Stones LP on the street for a bucketful of roubles, which I stuffed down my underpants only to discover on leaving Russia that it was a non-convertible currency. I worked hard at the Cyrillic script using my Intourist guide and with pride bought a bottle of wine, which turned out to be olive oil. I did, however, manage to see Moscow Spartak play against a Ukrainian team in the magnificent Moscow football stadium. I had gone to Russia with a friend who was fanatical about Leeds United, then at its height, and had seen the 1966 World Cup. Sadly, we had little opportunity to talk with young Russians. One evening we got into a club, drank too much vodka and spoke with some, but they were keen to find out more about the West, than to talk politics.

We travelled on from Moscow by train to Kiev in the Ukraine, where my memory is of endless fields of sunflowers; Romania where Bucharest looked like Paris, before Ceauşescu had ripped it apart; Bulgaria where we went to a wonderful folk concert that included a choir of the most moving women singers, and drank too much cherry brandy with some students; Yugoslavia, where I slept in my striped pyjamas (always a must for a travelling Brit) at Zagreb bus station. By then long-haired and unshaven, I must have looked as though I had just been released from a prison camp. Then Czechoslovakia, where Prague was glorious, despite this being not long after the Russian tanks had rolled in and

you could clearly see the bullet holes in Wenceslas Square. We visited underground jazz clubs and talked with Czech students in hushed tones about Dubcek and the lost Spring; the first serious political discussions we managed to have.

We also went on to Greece, then run by the right wing military. After central Europe, I wanted to sleep on the beaches, and hopefully meet some sun-tanned Swedish girl. Instead I got head-butted by a cafe proprietor. I must have said something offensive to the proprietor, as he went for me with a knife and I was hit in the face. As we were walking away, a large black Cadillac pulled up with four identical-looking Americans in starched military shirts and dark glasses. We suspected they were something to do with the CIA. Communism's enemies were our friends then and the US, in the name of freedom, installed or propped up some appalling right wing regimes at that time. They said that I should report the attack to the local police station a kilometre down the road. I did, and four heavily armed policemen took us back to the cafe and beat up the proprietor. They then told me to get a haircut and waved down a lorry going to Athens to give us a lift.

Later, while drinking a beer in a bar and bemoaning my swollen lip, a guy with a camel coat draped over his shoulders and a couple of young women in tow came over to shake our hands. He loved the British. We had saved Greece from communism after the war. The following day we saw a group of Orthodox priests gathered round a small outdoor TV as one of the Apollo moon landings was taking place. The first, in 1969, I'd watched with my parents in the middle of the night, my father reminiscing about how he remembered horse-drawn carriages and seeing his first car in 1909.

The 'Far Left' was just mouthing slogans

I read Mao's *Little Red Book* at college in 1968. It was through being introduced to Marxist historians such as EP Thomson, Eric Hobsbawm and AL Morton, as an undergraduate politics student, that I saw how the history I had been stuffed with at school and enjoyed was little more than the story of the elites, the haves in society and of the myths of the benign British Empire, from which we had lately departed, in some cases leaving chaos and in many parts of the world artificial borders that, to this day, have led to ethnic division and conflict. And I began to understand more about the social history of Britain, the terrible poverty in the Victorian industrial cities, the Highland Clearances in Scotland, the Enclosures and land thefts by the wealthy, the Irish famine, the Luddites and the Tolpuddle Martyrs. But also more about the story of my own family – of our little contribution towards Britain's imperialism, of being poor in London, of the causes of the Great War and the Great Depression that had so affected my grandparents' lives – and of the Second World War and the post-war world that had affected mine.

The McConnell family had, as I discovered, only entered the middle class through my grandfather's promotion as an officer during the Great War. They were an Irish family who had left in the 1840s, as over a million had, because of the famine, and settled in Canada. His parents had then moved to England, where he had been brought up, living in Graydon Street, Plumstead. The street is mentioned in Charles Booth's great poverty survey of London, as 'a neighbourhood of drunkenness and prostitution'. His father had died of tuberculosis at the age of forty-two, leaving his wife with four young children. My grandfather became a boy cadet in the Royal Artillery at the age of eight. My mother's family, the Hogbens, were English from Kent and Sussex and had a background as masons and, on my

grandmother's side, as small farmers. My mother's father set up a general store in Dover, but he went bankrupt during the Great Depression. My grandmother caught Spanish Influenza after the war and became profoundly deaf. They eventually divorced.

By the 1970 general election I had not only become a Labour voter, one of the newly enfranchised eighteen year-olds, but had become a National Union of Students elected representative. Jack Straw, future Foreign Secretary in the Blair government, was NUS President at that time. In the early 1970s, I shifted further to the left, largely as I saw what Nixon and Kissinger were doing in South East Asia, with the carpet bombing of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia and the overthrow of the democratically elected socialist Salvador Allende in Chile. So I grew a beard, bought a leather jacket and looked like Che Guevara. I attended a meeting of the Trotskyist Revolutionary Socialist League and was invited to join. The meeting discussed how best to protest against Margaret Thatcher, the then Conservative Education Minister, who was visiting Birmingham, and whether to flour bomb her. But I saw no point in gesture politics. Though I sent off an application for membership of the Communist Party, I decided not to join. I still felt more aligned with democratic socialism, inspired by what had been created in Scandinavia and by people like Willy Brandt in West Germany. I felt strongly that the only organisation capable of redistributing power in Britain was the Labour Party, but a renewed party that connected with young people and with the new social, civil rights and green movements.

Had I been born in Latin America or other parts of the developing world, I hope that I would have had the courage to join the liberation movements there. And generally when it came to what was happening in these regions, I was much more in sympathy with the role that Cuba was playing than I was of the US. But I also believed that former generations had struggled for human

Finding our voice

rights, social reforms and parliamentary democracy and that real gains had been achieved in Britain. There remained huge inequalities and a class system that was still denying genuine equality of opportunity, but significant advances had come out of the Second World War and the post-war Labour governments. And we should build upon these. The affluence that had come out of the post-war Keynesian world had improved the lives of millions and frankly, from what I had seen in Russia and central Europe, I preferred living in the West. So I wanted reform, not revolution. But I knew it would be hard work. People with power don't give it up easily.

My father never liked the fact that I read politics as a student, and for a time he refused to help me with my student grant. I know these must have been difficult times for my parents: they were semi-retired, and having a son who had 'gone over to the other side' must have upset them. The political arguments at home began over the Rhodesian Unilateral Declaration of Independence in 1965. My father, who had been an officer in the RAF during the War, thought the then Rhodesian premier, Ian Smith, was a decent chap because he too had been in the RAF. My parents didn't want me to put up a Labour poster in the window at home in 1970 general election because of the embarrassment this might have led to with the neighbours on the very 'blue' Duchy estate where they lived. In Harrogate you would rarely see a Labour poster.

A lace doily among the dark satanic mills

Harrogate, in North Yorkshire, had always been a rich spa town. In Victorian times it was where the owners of the industrial 'dark satanic mills' preferred to live. I was once told that if Hitler had successfully invaded Britain, Harrogate would have become Britain's Vichy. It was stuffy politically and had a faded, 'end of

Empire' atmosphere. I remember elderly, gentile ladies listening to palm court string quartets playing Schubert in the Lounge Hall where people went for turkish baths. This image was later captured gloriously by Alan Bennett, in his BBC film *Dinner at Noon*. Like much of the rest of Britain after the War, and especially the north, the town had become tired and it was not until the late 1960s that it took off once more as a major conference centre and tourist destination. Harrogate was by no means as depressed as the industrial smoky cities sixteen or so miles to its south, Leeds, Bradford and Halifax, but when I was a teenager it was a stifling place to live.

I am the youngest of four and by the mid 1960s my two sisters and brother had left home. My oldest sister, Pat, had married Campbell Walker a Scot from Ayrshire in 1960 and had three children quite quickly. Pat was someone who most certainly could have gained a degree, but she and my brother Ken, who had been to grammar school, were the wrong side of the baby boomer generation and the expansion of higher education in the 1960s. There is a wonderful film called *Made in Dagenham*, about the Ford strikers there in the late 60's and she reminds me then of the wife of the plant manager. She is a gifted artist, a very caring person and much more liberal than she lets on. She keeps our clan together.

Ken got married in 1964, to Pam Wardle, the daughter of an RAF squadron leader. My brother, who is a Conservative, is not a traditional Tory. He hated public school elitism; bought the magazines *Private Eye* and *Which?* and wore Hush Puppies in the 1960s; then signs of quiet radicalism. *Private Eye* was funded by satirist Peter Cook and *Which?* the magazine of the Consumers' Association had been founded by the socialist Michael Young. Ken also had a wonderful selection of blues and jazz LPs and introduced me to the glories of Dave Brubeck, Astrud Gilberto, Xavier Cugat, Django Reinhardt, Elmore James and Sonny Boy

Finding our voice

Williamson (the first 45 record I bought). I later saw Gilberto, Brubeck and Grapelli live and although, sadly, none of the black blues giants, I did get into the white British blues scene of the mid 1960s, seeing John Mayall and Eric Clapton. My brother plays a mean blues guitar.

Sue, my other sister, was very much the rebel. She hated school, but discovered a love for making music – initially the banjo, then guitar and dulcimer. She has a beautiful voice and became part of the early 1960s folk revival scene, with which I also got involved, going to the folk club in Harrogate and seeing such local acts as the Dransfield brothers. Sue worked at Cecil Sharp House for the English Folk Song and Dance Society, had visited folk singers in the Appalachians, made an EP folk record and was active in CND. It was through my sister that I discovered the protest music of Ewan MacColl, Pete Seeger and the early Bob Dylan and the glorious voice of Joan Baez, whom I saw in concert. It was on an Aldermaston protest march that Sue and Mike Pemsil shared a sleeping bag. Mike was the son of the principal of Harrogate College of Arts. They married in 1966 and went to live near Hebden Bridge, where Mike taught art at Calder High School. Later they bought the ten acre Backrough Farm and transformed it into a residential arts and music centre called Red Water Arts. It ran courses for printmakers and music makers and for people with special needs. Sue also worked as an outreach community arts worker.

To study politics is to study power

I was very keen to do a degree in politics. There was a new degree in Birmingham, which particularly attracted me because it also offered a final year course in community development. I wanted to understand how power works: the economic, sociological, psychological and philosophical analyses of power. I avidly

studied Plato, his allegory of the cave gave me an understanding of how we live our lives in shadows, not really understanding the insights that those who leave the cave can see, but also how those who become more enlightened have a duty to help others to get out. Marx, Hobbes, Machiavelli and Saul Alinsky, the person who wrote the Machiavellian primer for the have-nots – *Rules for Radicals* all opened my eyes. One political philosopher I particularly absorbed was Karl Popper. His *Open Society and its Enemies* influenced me hugely. Popper was a political refugee from Austria, who had left as the Jewish pogrom began. He was a social democrat, critical of both the totalitarian left and right and of all ‘closed’ ideologies. He was a renowned philosopher of science who argued that only in open democratic societies will rationality flourish.

Other books that influenced me at this time were Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, *Only One Earth*, with its iconic picture of the earth from the moon on its cover, and Fritz Schumacher’s book *Small is Beautiful*. The first introduced me to radical outreach adult education. The last two brought into my thinking the green notion of sustainable development. But I never warmed to Schumacher’s ideas of intermediate technology for the Third World and poor communities. This notion in my view ghettoised the poor, who instead should have access to the best technologies available and thus ‘leap’ the development journey. My graduate dissertation was on the theory and practice of participative democracy. This introduced me to many of the American and European texts emerging post 1968 and, to the limitations of our representative democracy that simply required the X mark of the illiterate from the electorate every four or five years and little by way of political literacy and active involvement in the decisions that affected people’s lives.

The main campus during my first year was in the centre of Birmingham. Student political activism was at its height, with

Finding our voice

boycotts and marches at the drop of a hat. The authorities clearly perceived that those studying politics might be part of some clandestine cell, as they packed the whole course off to a tiny out of the way building next to Bourneville model village in the south of the city. We were the only degree course there. Actually I quite liked it. A part of me loved English middle class suburbia, and Birmingham had some beautiful wooded suburbs, in contrast to its ugly concreted city centre. Bourneville 'village' had been built in the last decade of the nineteenth and the early part of the twentieth centuries, by George Cadbury for his workers at the chocolate factory close by. These Arts and Crafts cottages had large gardens and there was a village green. It became a blueprint for many other model village estates around Britain and for some of the better inter-war council estates. Cadbury was a temperance Quaker, so no pubs were allowed in the village and, because the campus site was on Cadbury land, we had no licensed student bar. The authorities had indeed 'contained' us.

Student living in Birmingham in the early 1970s was much like that portrayed in the film *Withnail and I*. There was no student accommodation available in Bourneville, so I lived in a succession of awful flats in Birmingham's red light districts. The first, in Rotten Row, I shared with an old friend from Harrogate Pete Hooley. Its name summed it up. The place was damp, with a revolting kitchenette in a cupboard and a shared bathroom. The woman in the front flat kept sending her three-year-old round with pornographic magazines and called me 'lovey'. Her man was a bouncer from Hull. Pete and I had a huge argument about something and we parted. Pete later went on to become a senior political journalist with the right wing *Daily Express*, although we have remained very close friends. I went to live with some other friends, one being Richard Bath, who went on to work for ITV as a radio and then TV presenter. For a short while he presented PM on BBC Radio 4. Richard eventually ended

up as the anchorman of regional TV in South West England and hated it. Richard and I and a couple of other mates lived in Trafalgar Road, also a red light district, and the house was always freezing. I'd sleep in bed under mounds of coats, including my father's RAF officer's greatcoat, which I'd purloined, him insisting, however, that my mother remove the insignia badge buttons and put on ordinary ones, and my mother's long fur coat. It stank of mothballs but looked cool. Richard eventually found us a posh flat in a huge Victorian villa in Mosley. He took the largest bedroom; mine was like a broom cupboard. He too was no socialist.

Over the years I kept in touch with only a handful of student friends. One, Martyn Evans, succeeded me as chief executive of the Carnegie Trust thirty-five years later. Martyn, like me, became an activist in the consumer and citizens' rights field and we kept bumping into each other professionally over the years. Another, Dennis Cosgrove, was the first openly gay man I had met. Dennis was from an Irish Catholic family of a dozen children who lived in Widnes, near Liverpool. Widnes, Dennis told me, was the place where Paul Simon had written the song *Homeward Bound*. I'm not surprised: he clearly couldn't wait to get back to America. Dennis had a great scouse accent, was a good working class socialist and outrageous. He was constantly falling for middle class public school guys and I think saw me as a possibility. There was a fashion for tall leather boots for men at the time and I also sometimes wore a leather jacket and a black beret. He never made a pass, but did introduce me to the glories of Guinness. Dennis went on to become a BBC Producer, winning a Bafta for the series *Secret Society*. I was his best man at his civil ceremony marriage to Peter, his long-term partner, in 2004.

Discovering the power of community

My politics degree had given me insights into the nature of power, but not a job. My negative experiences of school had put me off being a teacher, but I had enjoyed college and initially thought about becoming a politics lecturer in further education. My final year course in community development, together with one on politics and international development had, however, whetted a keen interest in going to work in what was then called the Third World. My post-graduate Masters degree is in community education and development. This is about organising education and development programmes primarily in disadvantaged communities. The United Nations advocated community education and community development as instruments for promoting democracy, through encouraging local community mobilisation, and for helping poorer countries with their education, social and health programmes and their economic development.

In the 1960s, the US Democrat Administration under President Kennedy had begun funding community education and development programmes as part of its War on Poverty in the urban ghettos and the 'Deep South', in large part because of the race riots and civil rights movement there. In Britain, there was also a growing awareness that the safety net of the welfare state had not abolished poverty and certainly not inequality. Research by the highly respected academic Peter Townsend, and TV programmes, such as *Cathy Come Home*, had brought the scale of relative poverty in Britain firmly back into the limelight, with the pressure groups Child Poverty Action Group and Shelter being formed at this time. There were also fears about issues of community cohesion, with growing racial tension following Powell's speech. And the Labour government began to embrace a commitment to encouraging public participation in planning, because of a concern with how many local

communities were reacting negatively towards the major urban regeneration and road building programmes of the time, that were tearing through towns and cities.

I looked at what was going on in the US, at outreach adult education and development work in Africa, at the 'barefoot' doctors and teachers in China, the 'animateurs' movement in France and at the community education work in Liverpool led by Eric Midwinter, Keith Jackson and Tom Lovett and the government's Community Development Programme (CDP).

The CDPs were local action-research projects set up by the Labour government around Britain in 1969 for ten years. I had already come across Hillfields CDP in Coventry, through an article written by its project director John Bennington. I visited Hillfields in 1973 and felt strongly that I wanted to do this sort of work. Community education and development work was in many regards the product of a more progressive, confident era, of the Kennedys in the US and social democrats in Britain, both committed, in rhetoric at least, to democracy building and to tackling poverty domestically and overseas. It arrived on the scene later than the social work profession, but like social work, it was the child of a belief in a pro-active welfare state, that would employ professionals to turn disadvantaged communities around. Of course it had earlier pre-war origins, including the Workers' Educational Association and the University Settlements movement of the early part of the century in Britain. In many senses it was on the cusp of informal adult education and social work, heavily influenced also by youth work and by community activism.

The British Ministry for Overseas Development, the Education and Social Services Ministries, the Home Office and local authorities were all beginning to support community education and development work from the late 1960s and giving grants to non-governmental organisations to support this work

Finding our voice

in deprived neighbourhoods and with particular disadvantaged groups. As funds became available for governmental and non-governmental organisations to employ people to do this work, job opportunities were beginning to bloom here and overseas. As with all such developments, the jobs preceded the professional training. There were few courses around and most practitioners were not trained but learned on the job.

My initial thought was, like many idealist young graduates, to try to get a job in Africa. My father never really understood why, other than saying “It all sounds very worthy.” I came over as holier than thou, and as a *Daily Telegraph* reader he probably had an intuitive sense that working at the grassroots was not really where you would influence things and certainly where as a career you would never earn much money.

Tanzania or Todmorden?

I wrote to the British Council seeking a post in Tanzania. I had read an interview with Julius Nyerere, the President of Tanzania, and was inspired by the outreach adult education and development work there. They advised me that they were looking more for agronomists, engineers and people who could build things and to go and get further practical experience. In hindsight it was good advice. I knew in my head and heart that I'd be more useful trying to change things in my own country than being another young white development worker unable to speak the local language. But I'd had enough of being a student. So I went to work in a community school in Todmorden, in Calderdale, West Yorkshire, with teenagers from disadvantaged backgrounds. The economy in that part of Yorkshire was post-industrial; to put it more plainly, the mills and factories that had shaped Britain's industrial revolution were empty shells or closing rapidly. The north of England in the early 1970s was seriously depressed, with

significant socio-economic and environmental problems. And Todmorden had some of the worst of these.

I had had mixed feelings about Calderdale when I had first visited there in the mid 1960s. I recall saying that the best thing you could do would be to flood it. But I came to love it. The local people were hugely generous and friendly. There were only a couple of mills left and I can remember the sound of clogs on the cobbled lanes as people went off to work. I bought a pair, which nearly ruined my feet for life but made me feel authentic. The stunted trees of the hillsides and the moors and the palimpsest of ancient winding paths and field systems had a haunting beauty. You could see, feel and smell Victorian England. It was also an inspiring place politically, with the Rochdale Pioneers and the early English co-operative movement being founded there in 1844, forming the prototype for consumer co-ops around the world.

Todmorden and the nearby small town of Hebden Bridge in the late 1960s and early 1970s had been emerging as the centre for alternative living that along with places like Totnes in Devon and Findhorn in Scotland, subsequently put them on the map. Sue and Mike, who also lived in the area, were in at the beginning of this movement. We had long discussions about the merits of dropping out of the mainstream and of setting up alternative communes, or of staying within the system to change it from within. I veered towards the latter view, not because I was cynical about alternative living – much of it I found attractive – but because I felt even then a sense of the globalised influence of the mainstream, and that it was naïve to think you could live in a bubble of alternative values and not be influenced by the world outside.

Buying cheap houses with a little bit of land around Todmorden and Hebden Bridge was easy then. It was still possible to purchase a cottage for under a thousand pounds. I

Finding our voice

very nearly did and life would have trod a very different path had I stayed in the Calderdale. As it was, I helped Mike build an extension, lugging huge millstone grit lintels into place, and ruining my back for years. Close friends, Norman and Di, had completely gutted an old farmhouse nearby. Indeed the whole valley and hillsides were teeming with middle class Gerrard Winstanley's seeking an alternative lifestyle, and rapidly picking up building, plumbing and carpentry skills to put on roofs and to put in indoor toilets and bathrooms, helpfully assisted with government grants. Norman was one of the few Marxists I knew. Most of my other friends were libertarians and greens. Their houses have since increased one hundred times in value.

I worked at Dobroyd Community School and also taught adult education night classes at Burnley College of Further Education. The teenagers I worked with were a pretty hard bunch who had all been in trouble with the police. Bruce Lee was their idol with Kung Fu the big craze. When I asked one lad to show me how to do it, he kicked me in the testicles and I was down for a several minutes, feigning not to have been hurt. All were from working class areas and the school just hoped to contain them until they left at 16. I was part of a team of social workers, working with the teaching staff. My job was basically youth work, focussing upon social education and 'life skills' and what they called home-school-community links. We also did some environmental community work, helping to clear up the canal that had been unused for years.

I felt a lot of empathy towards the young people I was working with. Frankly the education system had written them off and most had difficult family backgrounds. One was a thug who bullied the others at every possible moment. I had a show down with him brick in hand more than ready to smash it into my face. But my recollection is that all of the others were a nice bunch and not at all dissimilar to how I had been at their age. All had

been involved in petty crime. I had too, but just not been caught. Some had real street savvy and I hope will have got on well in life. The majority needed help with building up their self-esteem and view that they were not failures. Misguided person that I was, I volunteered in the staff room to produce the school's Christmas review and was surprised when no other staff member put their hand up. But the kids got stuck into it, rehearsing sketches and bits of music. A mate of mine, Roger Cox, was a Spanish guitar player and agreed to perform and somehow I managed to get Calderdale's version of Pans' People, the hottest dance group on *Top of the Pops*, to come and perform on the stage. Roger's pieces didn't go down that well, but the dancers' did when one of the girls' bras broke and shot into the audience. There was universal agreement among the boys and male staff that it was the best school review they had ever been to.

Roger and I lived in Sue and Mike's place while they were away for several months in France. Roger was a portrait painter and spent part of each year travelling around the South West and Brittany, knocking on people's doors offering to do a painting. He did a Graham Sutherland-like portrait of me in return for a leather jacket. It hangs like Dorian Gray's in my attic: sadly to reverse effect. A close friend of Roger's was John Renbourn, who stayed with us. John had become famous as one of the guitarists in the group Pentangle and I had liked his music for years. So, I decided to make my own contribution to the world of the creative arts, by writing a novel. It was at this time that I met Rowena Buckeridge. Near where I worked was Lumb Bank, the former home of Ted Hughes, the Poet Laureate, and a residential centre for writing and poetry run by the Arvon Foundation. It is a beautiful place just outside the village of Heptonstall and not far from the glorious Hardcastle Crags. I visited to see if I might go on a creative writing course. Rowena was a member of staff there. She was a gifted artist, had a great sense of humour

Finding our voice

and loved the blues. She had worked with Johnny Winter, the American white albino blues singer. We started living together. I spent many evenings scribing away and produced a couple of chapters of the book, but somehow could never finish it and it remains thus. It was set on an island, where people lived individually in wardrobes. And where the only person they saw was themselves reflected in the mirror on the inside of their wardrobe door. They communicated with others, similarly each in wardrobes, by shouting babble, and came out at night to forage. I had lived in Hebden Bridge for too long.

Meeting the Red Clydesiders – old and new

In 1975 I moved to Scotland. Economically Scotland was then going through a difficult time, with its heavy industries in decline. Socially it was experiencing a cultural revolution. The social reforms of the late 1960s were fundamentally changing the country. When I arrived in the west of Scotland its pub culture was almost exclusively male; there were still men-only bars, children were allowed nowhere near and the outside windows of the pubs were darkened and glazed so that you couldn't look in. We were still decades from the café culture of the noughties. And drink was the only way through which too many Scots expressed their feelings. The pubs were quite simply places where you got drunk, many still with sawdust and spittoons, hardly altered since the 19th century. It was also a paternalistic culture in another sense. The State probably owned your house and employed you. In rural Scotland it was the same, although there, the paternalism was that of the large landed estate.

Moving to Glasgow was like arriving in a foreign country, despite my part-Scottish family origins and our periodic visits to in-laws in Ayrshire. I had climbed in Scotland in 1968, staying in the idyllic Sheildaig in Wester Ross, listening clearly

each day to Radio Free Europe from Prague when the Russian tanks rolled into Czechoslovakia. But although my grandmother's family had come from the Western Isles, I did not know Scotland well. It would eventually become my home for most of my working life and my daughter would be born there. I went to work in Strathclyde (the region around and including the city of Glasgow), in what the European Commission had designated as some of the most deprived urban communities in Europe. This means that the people living there had few life chances, families were on very low incomes or on benefits, and they had poorer quality housing, worse health, higher crime levels, fewer educational qualifications and higher child mortality than non-deprived areas. They were in a word, poor.

I had managed to get a job teaching part-time on a social work course at Clydebank Further Education College and also as an action-research worker with the Scottish Local Government Research Unit (SLGRU). I worked a day or two, a week lecturing and also finished off my Masters thesis. SLGRU was an independent think tank, established to provide councillors and council officers with some 'out of the silo' ideas and training. It was the brainchild of a handful of Labour councillors who had recently been elected to the new Regional and District councils. All were lecturers – including Ron Young, Tony Worthington and Ken Collins. Ken went on to become a Member of the European Parliament, Tony an MP at Westminster. Ron however was the creative spirit within SLGRU and a prolific writer whose influential articles were published in *Community Care* magazine (at that time a significant British publication for social workers and community workers) and in local government periodicals.

Another SLGRU colleague was John Hubley, who had just returned from working in India with his wife Penny. We became good friends. John introduced me to much of the Gandhian literature on community development work and went on to become

an international expert on health and community development. He was also a talented photographer whose pictures were used by Oxfam and other non-governmental organisations. John Pierce, who was doing pioneering work around social enterprises and Ashok Ohri, who was one of the founders of the Federation of Community Work Training Groups, were also involved with the SLGRU at that time. We also had close links with the CDP in Paisley, one of the community development action-research projects set up by the government.

My interest in social history had led me to read about the Red Clydesiders and John Maclean's popular socialist adult education work at the time of the Great War. I met Harry McShane, who had worked with Maclean, was one of the last of the Red Clydesiders and who had led the unemployed workers' movement and hunger marches in the 1930s. McShane was giving a talk about Maclean, explaining how his supporters had to secretly chalk the pavements at night during the war to direct people to his public talks, as MacLean would have been arrested. He was an inspiring speaker and several hundred people would regularly come and listen to him speak and give lectures. Well into his eighties, Harry McShane was also a riveting speaker. At the same meeting I met John Maclean's daughter, Nan Milton, who later sent me some of his original letters and papers. John Maclean is a fascinating but forgotten person in British history. He was a Marxist teacher and opposed the Great War, regarding it as an imperialist struggle that the working classes of both sides should unite to oppose. He was imprisoned during the war and died of pneumonia in 1923. His reputation in Russia on the other hand was high, and Lenin appointed him as the first Bolshevik Consul for Scotland. I also met Jimmy Reid, the inspirational leader of the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders 'sit in' at the Clydeside shipyards, which had played a role in the Conservative government losing the general election in 1974

‘It’s the best fucking thing we’ve got’

My action-research work was in a local ‘deprived’ community in Greenock, where I was taken under the wing of the community centre warden whom the local kids worshipped – thankfully, as I was shot at with an air rifle on my first day there. He had worked in the shipyards and had terrible emphysema. The estate, called Strone and Maukenhill, was one of those pretty awful post-war council housing estates ubiquitous in Scotland. In the mid 1970s there were more people living in public sector housing in Scotland than in any eastern European country outside the USSR. ‘Free Dubcek’ was painted in large white graffiti at the bottom of the hill from the estate, on the wall of the shipyards. There was a community newspaper called *The View*. It was named that because, as he said, “It’s the best fucking thing we’ve got” – the view across the river Clyde to Argyll.

This local project was part of a Joseph Rowntree funded community action programme, chaired by the then former leader of the Liberal Party, Jo Grimond. I got involved in two main issues. The first was a programme to extend opportunities for what at the time was called second chance learning for adults who had left school with few if any qualifications, in order to help them both to get jobs, against a backdrop of rapidly growing unemployment, but also to enjoy learning for learning’s sake, through the provision of a range of non-vocational activities within the community. Here our partner was the local further education college, which had some inspiring lecturers keen to provide outreach programmes in deprived communities, designed with local people. This was at the time pretty cutting edge and led to a successful lobby to remove fees for adult learning for all adults living in designated deprived areas across the region. The second area was around environmental issues. There were concerns that the soot emissions from a nearby coal

Finding our voice

fired power station were landing on the estate. Here we brought in an environmentalist who advised the local community and we went to visit the power station. They argued that any emissions would land in Scandinavia, not Greenock! I also worked with Tony Gibson, from Nottingham University, who had just devised a game called *Planning For Real* and wanted to pilot it with some tenants and young people. It was a technique for involving local people in the planning decisions that affect their estate, enabling them to envision what the estate might look like, as they would like to see it. We invited 7/84 to come to the estate. They were a socialist theatre group set up by John McGrath, committed to taking theatre out to the council estates, with performances addressing issues facing working class communities. The community hall was packed.

I did some work on another estate in Glasgow called Drumchapel, as part of a campaign to improve adult literacy. With more than 40,000 residents, it was the size of the city of Perth but had only a few graffiti-sprayed, grilled-up shops, pubs you didn't want to go in, schools, but no health centre, college or library. I took a local family I became friendly with out to see Loch Lomond, just thirty miles away. They had never seen a Scottish loch. Something had clearly gone disastrously wrong with public sector housing, so far was it from that vision of cottage-style municipal houses built between the wars as a result of John Wheatley's tenure as the first Labour housing minister in the 1920s and under Attlee's post-war health and housing minister Nye Bevan.

A fine example of public housing at its best is the Dover House estate in Putney, which I now know well. This was built by London County Council in the interwar years, influenced by the Garden City and 'model' village movements like Bourneville. It has clusters of pretty cottage-style homes, each with their own private garden and with the houses set around green communal

squares –for children to play safely and for street parties. Shops, schools and allotments were all built, giving it the feel of a village community. In the 1970s the community campaigned to ensure that the allotments were not lost. More recent schemes built by housing associations have followed a similar vernacular. By contrast, the nearby Alton estate, built in the late 1950s and 1960s, is public housing at its worst and was used as the film location for the 1966 film *Fahrenheit 451* as the backdrop for a bleak dystopian society of the future.

Keith Joseph was the Conservative government's housing minister in the 1950s, and it was he who first introduced system-build high-rise flats. These helped realise Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's annual assertion as to the hundreds of thousands of council houses the government had built each year. Quantity not quality was the order of the day, perhaps understandably to deal with the immediate urgency of war-damaged towns and cities and slum clearance, and it is easy in hindsight to criticise. Local Labour politicians too had a loathing of the pre-war slums they had been brought up in and wanted to knock them down and replace them with new housing with indoor bathrooms as quickly as they could. Too many of these system-build flats however were of poor quality and proved much more expensive in the long run as they had to be pulled down, from the damp Corbusier style high rise flats in the Gorbals in Glasgow, designed by Sir Basil Spence, to the Ronan Point high rise tower in Newham which collapsed. It was as a reaction to the poor standard of 1950s and 1960s housing that many community action campaigns had begun and with which I became involved in the early 1970s. And it was as a result of local action that there grew a renewed interest in the idea of 'community', just as so many working class neighbourhoods were being ripped apart by urban regeneration.

Alexander the great

I was keen to look at how effective community education and development work could be in mobilising local people and public agencies to work collaboratively, rather than in conflict, in order to bring about real improvements in people's lives and in the physical and social fabric of these communities and, most importantly, where the residents would have a genuine say in designing the places where they were living. I had arrived in Scotland a month after the publication of the Labour government's report *The Challenge of Change*, from a review chaired by a wonderful socialist and educator Sir Kenneth Alexander. He was later appointed Chairman of the Highlands and Islands Development Board and Vice Chancellor of Stirling University. Alexander's report led to the creation of local authority Community Education Services across Scotland and coincided with the launch of Strathclyde Regional Council's community development policy, as a key part of its strategy to tackle multiple deprivation and for regenerating the city and wider region.

Ron Young and Tony Worthington were among the policy's chief architects and political advocates in Strathclyde. By the latter half of the 1970s, this was the largest financial investment in community education and development by any municipality in Europe, with several hundred community education and development workers being employed at its peak by the council. Strathclyde Regional Council had come into being in 1975 following the most radical reorganisation of local government in Scotland since the late 19th century. It covered half the population of Scotland and besides the city of Glasgow and its wider urban conurbation included rural Argyll and the island of Arran. In many ways it was a bizarre construct, as indeed was the new map of local government across Scotland. This included Highland Regional Council, which covered almost half

of Scotland's land mass. The re-organisation was the result of legislative reforms by the Conservative government of Edward Heath during its brief tenure between the Wilson years. The Heath government was a reformist, modernising government. Its main achievement being to negotiate Britain's membership of the European Community. It too had inherited, from the Wilson years, a belief that bigger was better and the new regional authorities were big, with significant power being taken away from local communities. But an additional factor was their crude attempt to gerrymander boundaries that might reduce Labour's longstanding predominance over municipal Scotland.

After just three and a half years, Edward Heath unexpectedly lost the general election, but by then these reforms were in motion. Labour won Strathclyde by a landslide and as a priority set out to tackle the longstanding socio-economic problems of its most deprived urban and rural communities. With the approval of the new Labour government, 114 such communities were identified for what they termed "priority treatment". This quasi-medical language was very much in vogue in Britain in the early 1970s. It reflected an analysis of the causes of deprivation which spoke of cycles and cultures of poverty. In other words, it argued that poverty was passed from generation to generation, with families trapped in a culture lacking aspiration. This paradigm had been strongly promoted by none other than Sir Keith Joseph, Heath's, Cabinet Minister with responsibility for health and social services, as a way of focussing attention upon the behaviours of the poor, rather than on the inequalities in society and the behaviours of the rich. The right wing press, led by the *Daily Mail*, pushed a constant line criticising what they termed 'welfare junkies' and the 'general public', when asked, held the view that such people needed to be helped to pull themselves up by their bootstraps. This was in effect a view that blamed the victim rather than look at the inequitable distribution of power

Finding our voice

and financial resources in society, where the poor were in effect capitalism's cheap pool of labour.

The Rev Geoff Shaw, the convenor of Strathclyde Regional Council, Ron and Tony rejected this 'blame the victim' view and the associated belief in the need for a good dose of 'treatment', but ironically still adopted some of its language. Shaw was a committed Christian socialist well versed in the left's critique of capitalism. He had been a church minister and lived in the Gorbals area of Glasgow, one of the worst urban slum areas in Britain. His radical ministry had led him into socialist politics. Ron was one of the new generation of corporate managerialists. He felt strongly that there was also a 'systems failure' within the management and delivery of the services of local government and other public agencies such as the NHS and the police. This was a lack of agency co-ordination, joined-up multidisciplinary interventions and of an inability to engage the users of such services in their planning and delivery. While it was for the Labour government, if possible, to redistribute income and wealth through the tax system - to, as Denis Healey, Wilson's Chancellor of the Exchequer, put it, squeeze the rich until the pips squeak - it was for local government to take the lead in bringing agencies together and in building their capacity to listen and to encourage public participation. And it would be community education and development workers, working at the grassroots within these priority areas, who would help these communities to find their voice, including if needs be, to be critical of the local authorities and other agencies.

First publications

In 1977 I got involved in launching a magazine called *Scottish Radical Education* and became its editor. Other than the more establishment *Times Educational Supplement* and some rather

turgid academic journals, there was little then available for practitioners who were keen to write in a less academic way about more progressive approaches to learning and teaching. *Scottish Radical Education* was a forum for progressive school, college and community educationalists, and others, largely in the creative media in Scotland. It offered a critique of the formal institutionalised system and presented alternative approaches from around the world. Scotland had a proud record of achievement in education, but it was clear to us that the Scottish educational system was failing far too many from disadvantaged communities. And although the Scot's belief in the poor but talented 'lad o pairts' was deeply embedded, its record in tackling adult illiteracy and in promoting continuing education was poor when compared with other OECD countries. Its secondary education was all too often quite traditional and over didactic; we felt it created a sense of failure among large numbers of young people who were not deemed to have achieved academically. The notion that schools might promote education for democracy was anathema.

My first book, *The Community Worker as Politiciser of the Deprived*, was also published in 1977. The main theme of the book, as its clunky title suggests, was that it was the responsibility of community education and development workers not simply to support those who were being failed by the 'formal' education system, but to help young people and adults from these deprived communities, to pull the wool from their eyes, to understand that their supposed failure at school was not their fault. The book then examined the issue of political education and the failure of schools, but also community education and development workers to play a more explicit role in this. I wrote about the importance of political literacy and education for democracy as a feature of development work and the challenges this presented for the educator. This theme became a strong thread of my subsequent

work on consumer and citizenship education. I also became the Scottish correspondent for *Community Care* magazine in the late 1970s and began writing chapters in others' books.

I was strongly of the view that poverty and wider deprivations such as poor health were primarily the result of socio-economic inequality within society, with those at the bottom suffering almost all of the worst indicators. Influenced by Ron and others, I had also come to the conclusion that we needed to reform the training and practice of public service professionals and to have a new type of public service that would operate in more empowering and listening ways. In other words, local government and other agencies should not merely provide top-down services and large chunks of the welfare state, but should work in partnership with local communities in the design and delivery of these services, and in the design and planning of their neighbourhoods.

This was a time when some on the left were increasingly vocal in their criticism of the paternalistic model of the welfare state and in particular of local and central government planning, transport and public housing programmes that had allowed motorways to tear through local communities, and local authorities to operate housing allocation policies that had, in effect, created sink estates. Labour councils had often been the most patronising. I was a student in Birmingham when Spaghetti Junction was built and the city's Victorian heart was ripped out. I campaigned at the time to try to prevent the demolition of its beautiful central library; when I lived in Glasgow they were doing the same. We had to challenge the dominant view among too many that 'big is best'. I wanted a more enabling and decentralising socialism that supported people's participation in the decisions that were being made about their communities and that really addressed not just socio-economic inequality, but the issue of people power.

Rowena and I had split up not long after I had moved to

Scotland and I met a German student called Christine Edgar. Christine was politically radical and went on to become a progressive lawyer. We marched in London with the Anti-Nazi League, against the rise of the National Front and growing xenophobia among the right wing of the Conservative Party and papers like the Daily Mail, The Sun and the Express. We were rewarded after by Ian Drury, Tom Robinson, Elvis Costello, X-ray Specs and a host of other politicised punk bands. Christine was doing some research on German trades unions. I visited her in Düsseldorf and duly paid homage to the Engels museum in Wuppertal. Concerns about nuclear power were growing in the seventies and the anti-nuclear power movement was taking off in Germany at this time, a portent of the emerging force of the Greens there. My work in Greenock had introduced me to practical environmental issues and I had long been interested in green issues, but was more of a social than an environmental activist. My gas guzzling car, however, was soon proudly wearing 'Nuclear power? Nein Danke' stickers.

Red train to China

In the late seventies, Christine and I visited the People's Republic of China. Red China, as it was called at the time, was not yet on the tourist trail. This was at the height of the Cold War, but the communist east was split. Russia and China were no longer a single foe and Richard Nixon and Edward Heath had made overtures to cultivate the Peoples' Republic. This was a key part of the wider geo-politics to weaken communist Russia. Russia's enemy was our friend. Indeed communist China was at that time fighting a short but bloody war with communist Vietnam, not long after the latter had bettered the Americans. The criterion for being on the China trip was that we were all broadly on the left, of one hue or another. On the ten-day train

Finding our voice

trip out from Moscow to Peking, via Ulan Bator in Mongolia, we started earnestly, with reading circles in the cramped sleeping compartments. By the time we had reached the Urals, most of us were reading pulp fiction and, like some Agatha Christie novel, wanted to bump off some fellow travellers, a reflection of the splintered nature of the left.

The long trip across Siberia was magnificent. Eric Newby had just published his wonderful book, *The Big Red Train Ride*, which captures the feeling of travelling on the Trans-Siberian railway perfectly. We had bureaucratic hassle; but also a wonderful conductor, delicious Russian tea from the samovar perched in the carriage corridor, and starched white linen sheets replaced daily. We stopped off at places like Omsk, Tomsk, Novosibirsk and Irkutsk, and in some cases were able to leave the train and walk around a town for several hours and to see Lake Baikal, then pristine and crystal clear. As we left Russia, the Chinese dining staff chucked all the bottles and waste out on the Russian side. Clearly the Russians did the same on the way back as the border was a mountain of litter. In Mongolia we crossed the Gobi desert and promptly stopped. Hours passed by, a day and then two. Besides us, there was a group of Romanians, who always had much better food served in the dining car and were drunk most of the trip. The Romanians under Ceausescu were cosying up to the Chinese at that time.

Also on the trip was Mike Noble, then a young lawyer in Oxford, the brother of Adrian Noble who ran the Royal Shakespeare Company. Mike was dabbling in community development and wanted to become a welfare rights lawyer. He went on to become an Oxford University professor and an advisor to Blair's government on the measurement of social deprivation. We had become soul mates and always made it our socialist duty to go in to first sittings with the Romanians. The only other passenger was, I think, a Finnish diplomat, who stayed put in

his carriage the whole trip. Being British, born leaders and stupid, Mike and I felt that we needed to do something about the stopped train, not least as all the staff including the driver had scarpered. The toilets, at best gruesome, were by then better kept closed and food and water were running low. So we decided to walk along the line to get help. This was the middle of the Gobi! My boarding school brainwashing had prepared me to be the actor Kenneth More in the train across the North West Frontier. I recall Mike and me singing the *Eton Boat Song* as we walked along the tracks. Before long a couple of Mongolian soldiers came riding up, sabres in hands, and ushered us back to the train. Meanwhile everyone else on the train, led by the Romanians, had found a river on the other side of a large sand dune and were bathing. Some hours later the train driver and crew returned. Where they had been we were never told.

On arrival at the Chinese border we were led into a meeting hall at the station to watch a film about Mao and how he was bringing electrification to the country. Everyone we saw was dressed in either blue or green Mao suits. It was George Orwell's *1984*. Mao was not long dead and the Gang of Four were on their way out too. Our trip there had been organised by the Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding and lasted for five weeks. We met with barefoot health workers and visited hospitals. I saw one patient undergo surgery to put his toe on his hand to replace a lost thumb, using acupuncture as an anaesthetic. We visited an open-hearth steel mill, where the workers wore plimsolls and little by way of protective clothing. Here we were placed in the centre of the factory and given a feast of food and drink while the workers looked on pretty gobsmacked and eating some sort of grey rice gruel in tin billy cans. It was appalling. We then went to a cotton mill, again with workers wearing little protective clothing, with music blaring out and rosettes for the top workers; and to schools, where there were performances of gymnastics

and songs by incredibly trained seven-year-olds.

The countryside was teeming with workers building roads and irrigation schemes. Here we visited rural collectives and at one, met with village artists known for their iconic patriotic paintings of Mao doing this or that extolling the achievements of the revolution, and which were reproduced as posters across China. I had bought one in the early seventies as a student and it adorned my study wall for years. I also had a huge poster of Lenin, arm outstretched, pointing towards the sun, with the slogan Ленин жил, Ленин жив, Ленин будет жить! I loved communist revolutionary art and had done so since the time of Che in the late sixties. This is not a genre that ever took off in Britain. I could never imagine a poster of Harold Wilson extolling the virtues of the white heat of the technological revolution, but I would have liked one of Nye Bevin opening the NHS. I did have prints of posters from the guild socialists, associated with William Morris, who in the late 19th century had produced some really beautiful work. Perhaps the nearest political public art we had were trade union banners and more recently wall murals, an important feature of the community arts movement that took off in Britain in the late 1960s. My brother in law, Mike, taught for a while at Rochdale College of Art with Walter Kershaw, one of the pioneers in Britain of wall murals.

We attended what felt like a seven-hour revolutionary opera, being given the honoured front-row benches. I noticed everyone else had cushions and had brought along camp cookers and food hampers for the performance. By the third hour we, the honoured visitors, were contorted in our sitting positions and either asleep or sliding off the benches. But I loved the music and the smoky atmosphere as people cooked and listened and chatted incessantly. A tear still comes to my eye when I play the opening movement of the revolutionary classic Youth; a tear at what might have been. We later visited a circus, where they

took great pleasure in using sledgehammers to break slabs of what looked like millstone grit lying on some poor man's chest. We also saw some of the older history of China, the Great Wall of course and the Forbidden Palace, where I noticed children wearing pants with slits in the back, presumably so they could excrete without taking them down. On our bus trip to the Wall the Chinese tour leader was keen for us to sing songs from the *Sound Of Music*, clearly well off the Party line. We didn't see her again. In Tiananmen Square we saw Mao in his Mausoleum and older women with the cruelty of bound feet from the days before the revolution, and we experienced a beautiful sunset over Peking's then low-rise skyline, with fields still close to the city centre, and of course thousands of cyclists. I remember feeling strongly that I hoped China would not take a Western development path of urbanisation and industrial pollution.

Wherever we walked we were followed by hundreds of people wanting to touch us. We visited several towns and cities across China, where we were told we were among the first Western visitors for years, including Xiang, where we lived in some pre-revolutionary bungalows, the same that some of the Kissinger entourage had stayed in. Here we were given a choice of visits – to see the house where Mao had stayed on the Long March or to visit a recently discovered archaeological site where they had found some sort of terracotta soldiers. I chose the house. I was interviewed by a Chinese radio journalist and said how much I hoped that China would open up more to the rest of the world and democratise. I doubt it was broadcast. Most of the group had food poisoning on the trip. One poor guy, a trade union official with ASLEF, held his bottom tight throughout our time in China and was constantly going behind some wall. I lost a stone and was pretty slim when I went back to Scotland. I returned with very mixed feelings about communist China. In part inspired, especially by the health workers and teachers, but

appalled by the clear lack of independent trades unions, able to fight for better working conditions for factory workers.

Creating a new profession?

In 1977, as a result of the Alexander Report, the Labour government established a committee to examine professional community education training in Scotland. In a spirit of cross party consensus, the Labour government had invited Elizabeth Carnegie, a moderate Conservative politician from Tayside and later a Conservative peer, to chair the committee, and its report became known as the *Carnegie Report*. It proposed a new qualification and in effect a new profession. I had by then moved to Dundee College of Education to be part of the teaching team in the newly created Department of Community Education and Social Work that would design the first community education professional training programme in Scotland. Edinburgh University had offered an entirely theoretical degree in this area for a number of years, but without any practical placements, and it was not recognised by the public sector employers as a professional vocational qualification. Our aim, at Dundee, was to design an undergraduate programme attractive to school leavers, mature students, with few formal qualifications and a postgraduate certificate, for graduates with, for example, a social science degree or other qualification such as teaching or social work. Dundee already offered social work and youth and community work qualifications, but following the Alexander and Carnegie Reports, we were now tasked with creating a new professional qualification for community education and development workers.

In those days our profession was still so young in Britain that we moved from practice into training after barely a handful of years in the field. These were exciting times and I felt that

we could make a difference to disadvantaged communities by training skilled community educators who would work with local people, of all ages, to educate and organise for improvements, and who would also be skilled at working with and within local councils and other agencies, to help them to work more in partnership, rather than conflict, with local communities. But, more than providing them with knowledge and skills, we would help students going into this professional field to have values and passion sympathetic to progressive social change. I recall feeling very strongly, that on this latter point, how important it was to select applicants at interview for the training, who had a strong sense of social responsibility. One indicator of this, which I used, was to enquire of all applicants what they thought was the cause of poverty. Those suggesting that it was caused by fecklessness among poor people, would not get on the course.

I won't go so far as to suggest that we vetted applicants politically. But we probably got pretty close to this. I remember talking with my colleague Laurie Bidwell, who taught sociology and welfare rights on the new courses, about the extent to which any graduate course could actually change people's values? Training would certainly provide knowledge and skills, but changing a person's values is much more complex. Deep down my values, which I expressed as being socialist and democratic, were in effect values of empathy towards others. The challenge was whether a course could instill such values, on both the college-based part of the training and the fieldwork placements, which, as with teacher training and social work training, would be an integral part of the programme. On this latter point, it was important to secure good placements, with supervision from a fieldwork practitioner who really could help expose a student's feelings and values in real world settings. The new courses started in 1978 and included a three year graduate course for school leavers, a two year diploma for mature students, and a

Finding our voice

one year post-graduate certificate. In the first year there were around a dozen students on each course. I taught community development and community-based adult education.

Salt panners and droughts

Another of the recommendations of the Alexander Report had been to create a national development centre to support practice and to advise Ministers on policy. The Scottish Community Education Council (SCEC) was established, given quasi-governmental status and government funding. Its first director was Ralph Wilson, a former secondary head teacher and advocate of community schools. SCEC provided a wide range of publications and information resources for practitioners, some of which I wrote for. It also ran European educational exchanges and visits for practitioners.

Together with Marc Liddle, its deputy director and about a dozen other Scottish community educators, I went on one such study visit to Brittany to see community education and development projects there. We met with salt panners who were campaigning to stop a motorway ploughing through their salt marshes and with community education and development workers on an appalling Le Corbusier housing estate. Our most memorable night however involved lots of cider and folk dancing. Their dancing was wonderful. It was called the gavotte. Ours was somewhat the worse for drink and more of a garrote. We taught them *Strip the Willow*, but Gerry Cairns, one of our party, who was from Ireland and a great folk musician was wicked. He taught us all a fake Scottish folk dance which we danced with earnest seriousness in a circle, each wearing one sock and waving the other round and round our heads, whooping. I fear that this dance now forms a regular part of the Breton folk dancing repertoire. Gerry later became an HMI for community education.

In 1982, I was invited by the Scottish Community Education Council to join its national training committee. This committee, chaired by Geoffrey Drought, Director of Education for Tayside Regional Council, was remitted with reviewing progress on the professional training of practitioners since the Alexander and Carnegie committee reports and, whether there should be some sort of Central Council to oversee and endorse professional training, similar to the Central Council for the Education and Training of Youth and Community Workers in England. I was asked by Geoffrey to chair its sub-committee on improving the quality of the fieldwork practice element of the training. The Drought committee recommended that a Central Council should indeed be set up. This was subsequently called the Community Education Validation and Endorsement Committee. Its first very able head being Lyn Tett, an assistant director at SCEC, and who later went on to become a professor in community education at Edinburgh university.

The main recommendation of my sub-committee was that the fieldwork placement element of the professional training programmes, some 30 per cent of each course, run in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen, was pretty haphazard in terms of quality and needed to be improved. The four colleges of education were all now running community education graduate and postgraduate programmes, and Edinburgh University was running a postgraduate degree, but for all, the practice element was pretty poor. At Edinburgh University, it was non-existent. Fieldworkers did not receive in-service training on how to supervise students on placement with them. It was assumed that because they were qualified practitioners they would also be good at supervising the students by osmosis. Many students had excellent supervisors and rewarding placements, which enabled them to learn and test out their knowledge, skills and values, working in a real life situation within local communities, with

young people, adult learners and community action groups. But very many did not. Students too often found their placements unrewarding and felt that either they were being chucked in at the deep end with little preparation, or used to do pretty mundane support work.

There were many issues at stake here. The universities and colleges usually paid the fieldwork agency to take the student on placement, but it was not much. There was however an added value to any agency, especially a small voluntary organisation, in having an extra pair of hands. Some local authority community education teams were quite large, and here a student could receive a wider range of experiences and meet with a number of professionally trained community educators. For a smaller non-governmental organisation, the student might only meet one, and that one might not be that good. From the training provider side, we were always scrabbling around trying to find good placements, with skilled practitioners who would give quality time helping the student learn the craft.

Alan Barr was one I worked with closely over many years. Alan had been appointed specifically as a fieldwork teacher linked with a team of local authority community development workers in Inverclyde. He had previously worked with the Oldham CDP, written a book on student community action, and was an excellent mentor. He went on to run the community work strand within the social work course at Glasgow University, and later became the co-director of the Scottish Community Development Centre. Another supervisor I used was Richard Bryant, the head of the Crossroads Youth and Community Project in the Gorbals, Glasgow. Crossroads was a really inspiring non-governmental project, set up in one of the most deprived and notorious parts of Glasgow. Richard wrote a superb book on a successful campaign the project had led, mobilising the local community to fight against the dampness in their flats and to embarrass the Labour

council and their local Labour MP and junior Minister, whom they called 'Frank the Wank', to do something about it. Their flats were those designed by Sir Basil Spence barely a decade before. They were later demolished. The Labour council's initial response to the campaign, however, was to dismiss it by saying that the flats were ok and that it was the heavy breathing behaviour and use of gas heaters in the flats, by the tenants, that was causing condensation. The internal walls were wet, causing considerable ill health among families and it was clear that this was a construction fault. Richard was a superb supervisor and went on to run the community work course at Ruskin College, Oxford.

Richard was succeeded by Stuart Hashigan, a trained planner who had also previously worked as a community worker in Strone and Maukenhill, Greenock, and whom I knew quite well. Stuart was an excellent fieldwork supervisor, and went on to become the manager of the Community Development Foundation's Scottish office and co-director of the Scottish Community Development Centre. Stewart Murdoch, who ran the Maryhill Community Hall in Glasgow, located in an inner city part of the city, was another supervisor whom I rated very highly. He later went on to become head of the community education service with Tayside Regional Council, a member of the Scottish Community Education Council Board and chair of the Community Education Validation and Endorsement Committee. Both Stuart and Stewart had huge dedication to their craft and to helping new entrants to the field really understand how to do it.

In all four cases, these were experienced practitioners who were part of a wider team that gave dedicated time to supporting students on placement, ensuring they would receive high quality supervision. There's after all was a vital part of the professional training process, providing challenging experiences for

Finding our voice

the student, in terms of testing out their skills, adding further knowledge and, being exposed to situations that really would test their empathetic values. Our sub-committee advised the Drought committee that there should be an investment in creating fieldwork training units across Scotland, broadly based upon the models developed in Inverclyde and at Crossroads, and which was the approach then being adopted to support the training of social workers. The Drought committee supported this, but sadly such units were never replicated as this required public funding, which by the early 1980s was getting tighter and tighter. It did however lead to the first national fieldwork supervisor training programme in Scotland and resources for fieldworkers, to support them to do their work better.

Spare Rib and Achilles Heel

I met Claire Valentin at a pub in Dundee. She had cycled there from Errol, a village half way to Perth, where she was living with her boyfriend. Their relationship was coming to an end and mine with Christine had ended. Claire wore dungarees and reminded me of a song that was doing the rounds at that time called 'Monica wants to be an engineer'. She worked for Women's Aid and was a feisty feminist. There was a magazine she read avidly called *Spare Rib*, and supportive men could join local Achilles Heel groups, to bond and discover the feminine sides of our personalities. I joined one, hoping this would get me closer to Claire. It was pretty appalling and we ended up male bonding through drinking beer. I am not against discovering my feminine side, but not in some psychoanalytical group session.

Anyway it must have worked, and my waif-like body (post China) and the fact I had been to China led to us getting together. We were soon living in a cottage several miles outside Dundee in the rural county of Angus. It was up a farm lane in

the middle of nowhere. I had been driving a Morris Traveller when I rented the cottage, although by the time I met Claire I had sold it and as a good socialist was using the almost non-existent public transport available in Angus. The rent was £5 a month and the cash box meter for the electricity had no lock, so you could just keep recycling the same coin. The cottage was absolutely freezing and had no central heating and no hot water on tap. Why the hell we lived there I don't know, but it had a huge front garden and I was into my self-sufficiency vegetarian phase. We bought two old Fiat 500s, so things were looking up. But Claire liked her luxury and before long we had bought a house together in Broughty Ferry, a former fishing village on the edge of Dundee.

In 1981 I had been appointed as an advisor to the multiple deprivation officer/member Group on Tayside Regional Council (which covered the region around and including the city of Dundee). There we introduced many of the approaches that had been developed in Strathclyde. This was the first time I had had the chance to work directly in an advisory role with senior local authority officials and elected politicians. The 1981 census was producing some fascinating statistics about the clustered nature of deprivation, and one indicator after another was clearly showing the inter-relationships between poverty and other problems people had to face if they were poor. There were limitations with this approach, as not all poor people lived in poor neighbourhoods and not everyone living in a poor neighbourhood was poor, but the correlations were so clear that targeting help and resources to such areas could have an impact, especially if staff from different departments and services worked together.

The thing about poverty and multiple deprivation, of course, is that people suffering these do not conform to a simple stereotype and certainly do not fall neatly into the ways in which public administration is arranged. A child with a learning

Finding our voice

difficulty could also be a child living in a damp house, so you needed staff able to get outside their professional silo and to work together as part of a multi-disciplinary team – a teacher working with a housing officer, a health worker with a social worker and so on. This may seem self-evident, but at that time this was not the way the welfare state usually operated.

Dundee City was an interesting place as it had earlier been designated by the then Labour government as what they termed an Educational Priority Area (EPA). This was another Wilson government initiative and was the first programme to introduce the term ‘positive discrimination’ into British public policy. Multi-disciplinary teams would target additional funds, staff and resources at particular areas to try to lift them out of poverty. Positive discrimination was an idea imported to Britain from Kennedy’s War on Poverty, as indeed was much of the early literature at that time about community education and development. The EPA programme had also argued that all schools should become community schools, in effect educational centres for both children and adults and where the school curriculum would engage much more with the realities of the school’s local neighbourhood.

It was a fascinating experience being an adviser to a group of senior local authority officials and elected members. Tayside Regional Council was at that time controlled by the Conservatives and one of their senior councillors, Sir Alan Smith, chaired the group looking at multiple deprivation. Smith was a businessman and rather like Alan Sugar was only interested in results. I liked his ‘can do’ attitude. I liked the fact that he was pragmatic and basically interested in getting things done and in tipping apple carts if needs be. I think he really thought that he could solve the problems of multiple deprivation across the region at little cost.

Big P Politics

Since 1968 I had had a yearning to go into big P politics as my long-term ambition. I had even sketched out a future charting the dates when I would enter Parliament, become the Minister for Overseas Development and then who knows what. I dreamed the dream. Politics is a fickle suitor, however, and losing means the dustbin of political history. I had leafleted in 1970 British general election and had canvassed in the two 1974 elections and in 1979 – for Jimmy Reid, the Labour candidate in Dundee. But I was not from a Labour Party family. Politically my mother was a Liberal - she loved the Liberal leader of the day, Jo Grimond. My father was a One Nation Conservative.

My aunt Muriel had married the son of a Conservative MP, but my uncle Roy's second wife, Alice, had been an active communist and had had a child with William Rust, the first editor of the Communist Party newspaper the *Daily Worker*. Rust was the paper's correspondent with the international brigades in the Spanish Civil War. And my mother told me that we were also related to Lancelot Hogben, the Marxist mathematician and scientist whose popular books included *Science for the Citizen* and *Mathematics for the Millions*. But they were very much the exceptions. I was however very active in the Scottish Co-ordinating Committee of Socialist Organisations and had built close links with the Dundee trades unions, through my work as a tutor with the Workers' Educational Association (WEA). I was teaching a night class on worker participation and eventually became chair of the Dundee WEA branch. I was also involved in setting up the unemployed workers' centre in Dundee. By 1982 unemployment levels were soaring and together with the city council, churches and Trades Council we had set up a resource centre providing adult education, welfare rights and other support. Through the WEA we produced a film about the growing unemployment and

poverty in Dundee, contrasting it with the collapse of the jute industry in the 19th century. We used the powerful and moving Dundee Weaver's Song to introduce it: *'Oh dear me the world's ill divided. Them that work the hardest are the least provided'*.

From the early 1970s the world economy had been tipped into high inflation by Nixon's decision to break from the post-war Bretton Woods Keynesian consensus, and the OPEC countries beginning to flex their muscle as an oil cartel. This hit post-imperial Britain hard. Some of the right wing neo-con ideas were first tested during Heath's period in office, and his Chancellor, Anthony Barber, had created the first inflationary rise in house prices. As inflation soared in all Western countries, thanks to Nixon's reckless policies and the enormous hikes in global oil costs, Britain, with much of its old industrial infrastructure still not replaced, and an entrenched class system that was stemming social mobility and with it talent, was ill placed to weather the storm.

The new universities and polytechnics built in the late 1960s and Labour initiatives like the Open University, were only just seeing their graduates and postgraduates enter the labour market in the early 1970s. MBAs from the new business schools, another development from the Wilson years, were beginning what would subsequently become a significant baby boomer influence upon the way in which business, and indeed the public services in Britain, would later be run, with management by objectives and targets, an emphasis upon empowering management and investment in staff development. Yet this expansion in higher education needed time to have influence.

I had been quite active in the Fabians during the 1970s. They were a socialist debating society, although also produced some influential pamphlets; one I recall was by Tony Benn on participative democracy and the use of technology to enable people to vote from home. Former members included George Bernard

Shaw, HG Wells and GDH Cole – a strong advocate of more local and municipal forms of socialism. The Fabians were named after a Roman general who rather than taking on his enemy directly, chipped away at the sides and used guerrilla tactics. The opposition – capitalism, big business, the rich, the Conservatives, had much more money after all, and they were far more powerful and far more unscrupulous. Politics throughout the 1970s became more nasty, polarised and ideological. So-called free market, anti welfare state and privatisation policies, tested out first in Pinochet's Chile, were finding traction through the right wing think tanks and among politicians like the newly elected leader of the opposition, Margaret Thatcher and her guru, Sir Keith, he of the high rise towers and culture of poverty, Joseph. A Tory leaflet in 1974 had portrayed Wilson as Stalin; and by the time Margaret Thatcher had become Prime Minister the Conservatives were far more ideological and wanted to root out the social democratic gains made since 1945.

It was through the Fabians that in 1977 I became the Secretary of the Scottish Co-ordinating Committee of Socialist Organisations. This was a forum for those organisations, affiliated to the Labour party, which represented socialist lawyers, planners, environmentalists, social workers, educators and others. In 1978 we produced a manifesto for Scotland with the intention of feeding in new ideas to the party as it prepared for the soon to come general election. In our view Labour in Scotland seemed ill-prepared in terms of new policy ideas compared to the Conservatives; the latter informed by think tanks such as the Adam Smith Institute at St Andrew's University – one of the intellectual forces behind privatisation in the Thatcher era. As unemployment and inflation rose, the trades unions had gone into defensive mode to protect their members, and the right wing media had succeeded in portraying them as the cause of the problems, whereas their reaction to inflation and job losses

Finding our voice

was a symptom. This successful portrayal damaged the Labour party's chance of re-election and the unions did the government no favours by going on strike just before the general election - another example of divided labour shooting itself in the foot.

The 1974-79 Labour governments introduced significant equal opportunities legislation and laws to protect workers and the more vulnerable in society such as the disabled. My heroine at the time was the fiery government minister Barbara Castle. She was a change-maker with regards to equal opportunities legislation and improved state pensions. I also quite admired Dennis Healey, as Chancellor, although many on the left loathed him. He had significantly reduced the inflation inherited from the Heath government, that was ruining the lives of pensioners and others on low incomes, but had had to take a loan from the International Monetary Fund. This was portrayed by the right wing press predictably as Britain having gone to the dogs under socialist inept management of the economy even though the huge rise in inflation had begun under the Conservatives. Wilson's brief successor, Jim Callaghan, even with a pact with the Liberal Party under David Steel, had huge difficulty securing a parliamentary majority and on the vote to create a Scottish Parliament, in which the Scottish National Party (SNP) voted against, the Labour government fell.

1979 Ugh

The Labour party split following the victory of the Conservatives under Margaret Thatcher. The main reason for this was around Britain's membership of the European Community, which had proved toxic for the Tories and was now proving equally so for Labour. While I was on the 'soft' left, I supported EC membership, had voted Yes in the 1975 referendum and wanted to see closer European union to act as a counterbalance to the power

of the US and USSR – and hopefully to be third way between the extremes of free market capitalism and state communism. But under our new leader, Michael Foot, the party became anti EC. I was hugely saddened that Roy Jenkins, Labour's former reforming Home Secretary and returning President of the European Commission, David Owen, our former Foreign Secretary and Shirley Williams, Secretary of State for Education, who while honourably pro-Europe, split the Party that had made their careers. Shirley Williams in particular had been held in much affection within the Labour Party. Above all, I was amazed at the naiveté of Jenkins, Owen and Williams that they felt that they could create a political movement in a couple of years that would somehow be able to defeat the Conservatives. Millions of people got caught up with the euphoria of their short lived Social Democratic Party, fuelled by a right wing media delighted to see the left split. My position was that we should remain together, unity being strength, and embrace difference without breaking the party. Sadly that was not the case and we were out of government for eighteen years.

There were other fissures too, which were really to do with a lack of democracy within the Labour Party and which were largely promoted by the highly articulate Tony Benn. I saw Benn and Michael Foot, Labour's leader, speak several times. Both were remarkable orators, committed democratic socialists and fine parliamentarians. And, for this reason, they were a threat to the establishment, which through newspapers like the *Sun*, *Daily Mail* and *Express* set out to character assassinate them with venom. I joined a Bennite group called the Labour Co-ordinating Committee (LCC), just failing to be elected to its national executive. LCC had been set up to reinvigorate and democratise the party. As well as being a Labour Party member, I had also joined the Co-operative Party and had become Chair of its Dundee branch. The Co-op Party was the only party

Finding our voice

within a party which Labour had allowed since its foundation, and there were then also around thirty joint Labour and Co-op Party MPs. Interestingly this was the time when 'entryism' by so-called Trotskyists became a huge issue, with Labour Party leaders, most stridently Neil Kinnock, Foot's successor, arguing that there was no place for another party within the party. Anyway the Co-op Party was ok and it chimed with my 'community scale' socialism.

A new co-operative movement had been emerging in Britain in the 1970s, closely linked with community politics, the green agenda and with local enterprise initiatives set up around organic food. In the cities community enterprises and co-ops were often supported by what was called the Urban Aid fund. This had been set up by Labour to tackle poverty and to subsidise job creation projects in poor areas. I became chair of the steering group of one such scheme which we established in Dundee. Tony Benn, as the Labour Secretary of State for Industry, had given strong support to co-operative enterprises in the 1970s. The traditional Co-op, while somewhat tired and struggling to compete with Tesco and the other supermarkets, was still in the early 1980s a significant farming, wholesale and retail outfit. It ran an ethical bank and in some parts of Scotland, such as the Fife coalfields, looked after you from cradle to grave. My passion at the time was to see if the Labour Party could reinvigorate itself as a broader rainbow, embracing these newer social and environmental movements, and to rediscover its co-operative past. I advocated this, writing in *The Scotsman* and in the Scottish Co-ordinating Committee of Socialist Organisations' manifesto.

Thatcher's victory shook the Labour Party to the core. It was clear that this was a new type of conservatism, far more ideological and fundamentally different from that of MacMillan or Heath, who were consensus seekers. It was an older type of tribal conservatism, closer to that of the 1880s and some nostalgic

notion of a new Victorianism, unshackled by the post-war social contract, by Beveridge, Keynes, Attlee, the Unions, the NHS, the '60s and the whole baggage of social democratic reforms that Thatcher felt had ruined the country. Angered at what was happening I decided to move from the backroom to have a go at a seat in Arbroath, a Tayside fishing town famous for its glorious 'smokies'. It was already held by Labour, but the local branch wanted a new candidate and I won the selection, replacing the sitting Labour member.

Three years in a row I was to fight unsuccessfully for Regional and Westminster seats and for selection to contest a European Parliamentary seat. I narrowly lost, by just 39 votes, despite having increased Labour's vote. The deselected Labour member had decided to stand as an independent and split the vote. I was disappointed, of course. We had a good manifesto. I had chaired the working group that had prepared what we would do on the educational front and, had Labour taken over the administration, I had expected to become Education Convenor. Neither was to happen. The SNP took the seat; we would have won handsomely had our vote not been split. When I attempted to enter Parliament, in 1983, it was, to say the least, a difficult time for the left. Progressives were split between Labour and the new Social Democratic Party. Thatcher had also 'won' the Falklands War and was riding a tide of populist media-manufactured patriotism. No wonder she had a parliamentary landslide despite only winning forty-two per cent of the popular vote, less than she had won in 1979. The opposition was split down the middle. Michael Foot, whom I voted for and admired as an honest democratic socialist, a great parliamentarian and a decent man, was not a strong leader. Notwithstanding far higher levels of inflation and unemployment than 1979, the Conservatives won with a larger majority of MPs. The SDP got barely a handful of seats and Labour its lowest vote since the 1930s. It was a bleak time.

Lost deposit

The general election campaign was ineptly organised nationally by Labour. Not that I would ever have won the seat, Angus. This was either Tory or SNP territory, but it was poor and rural and Labour should have been working to win such seats and to support people living and working in rural areas. It had retreated to its urban heartlands and even then lost much of those. As an aside, the largest number of votes achieved ever for Labour in Angus was by the actor James Robertson Justice after the War. He is best known for the character Sir Lancelot Spratt in the 'Doctor' series of films of the 1950s and 1960s and is reputed to have spoken twenty languages.

I had a red Russian Lada car at the time and with megaphone on top and *Vote for McConnell* posters plastered all over it I drove the length and breadth of this large rural constituency imploring people to vote Labour. On one occasion a guy in front of us on a bike dropped his pants and bared his bum, nearly causing an accident. Another time, canvassing in Carnoustie, I remember walking up to a group of mothers with prams. I bent down to look at the baby and then for some reason got lost for words, exclaiming: 'What a beautiful er-um thing you have'. Having already fought the Arbroath seat within the constituency, I had some local profile there. We had worked that seat hard and I owed much of our near success then to Graham Whiteside, my election agent. He was a fantastic organiser and burnt the candle at both ends. Graham also acted as my election agent in the 1983 general election.

It was my first and only attempt at a Westminster seat, although I was invited to the selection panel for one of the London seats in 1987. My contemporaries who did get in in 1983 were Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. I had earlier met Gordon Brown when he worked as an economics reporter for Scottish

Television and was doing a piece on deprivation in Dundee. He too had considered fighting the Angus seat I was contesting. We met again during the 1983 election, when all of the Labour Prospective Parliamentary Candidates were invited for a group photo shoot. All were male, an appalling indictment upon the party in Scotland. Brown sat aside as the photo was taken and is the only Scottish Labour candidate who does not appear. He sat in the corner biting his nails and thinking of greater things to come.

In the Angus constituency the party faithful were mostly elderly and it was clear that Labour had lost the youth vote to the SNP. The highest turnout at one of my campaign meetings was organised by the Co-op Women's Guild, with an average age of seventy if not more, but of women who saw it as their duty to vote. This greatly influenced my strong belief that voting must be compulsory. It was earlier generations that had had to struggle for the franchise, men and women, and we owed it to them, if not to ourselves, to have the responsibility to vote. Democracy is something you have to be vigilant about and it can be easily lost through apathy. It was at that meeting that I spoke with an eighty-five year-old who had met Kier Hardie. He had slept in her box bed during the Great War. She also told me a tale of the first election hustings she had attended in her twenties and at which she had not been allowed to vote, then being under thirty. The Tory candidate was asked what his Party's policy was on housing. He was some aristocrat who owned much of Angus, which was clearly seen as an hereditary fiefdom. His answer was that he did not know, but could sing *Scotland the Brave*, which he then did to tumultuous applause. He got in!

George and Guy

Being in the wider region of Tayside, the constituency came under the empire of George Galloway, the Labour Party secretary for Dundee and Tayside. George spoke on an election platform in support of me but had little interest in Angus –understandably, as we all knew it was a lost cause and the real the challenge was to win the two Dundee seats. My first spat with George was when I was a member of the Tayside Region Party General Management Committee. He had proposed that we disaffiliate from Amnesty International because Jeremy Thorpe, a former and somewhat disgraced Liberal Party leader, was to become its director. I had spoken up against the motion. Not the thing to do. George had the Party strongly in his hands. But he was at the same time a good populist speaker. Galloway was a maverick and loved being courted by the celebrity world. Somehow he then managed to become the general secretary of the British international development ngo War on Want, although had no background experience in development work. Indeed his only job had been as the secretary of the Party in Dundee. I had many international development colleagues who were highly critical of his tenure there. In 1987, however, he defeated Roy Jenkins, the SDP leader as MP for Hillhead in Glasgow. He later left Labour over the Iraq war and set up his own Respect Party and is still an MP. My respect for him rose a little when he spoke eloquently against the Iraq war at a US congressional hearing, but generally I found him egotistical and far from being a democrat in his socialism.

Just prior to the general election I was invited round for dinner with Peter Clarke, to whom I had been introduced by my friend Laurie Bidwell. Peter was a journalist with *The Scotsman*, and a libertarian. He had a wicked sense of humour and I liked him. He had invited Michael Forsyth, also a young parliamentary

candidate in 1983, and some others I cannot recall, around for a meal at Peter's castle outside Dundee. We got to talking about Thatcher's push on privatisation. Michael boasted about how they would soon be selling land and buildings then in public ownership. Peter had introduced me as a prospective parliamentary candidate, and perhaps Michael had assumed I was a Tory. I had not said anything at that point to enlighten him. Peter then disclosed I was a socialist and Michael departed pretty sharpish, feigning to enjoy the joke. At the Conservative Party conference in 1986 Peter, standing as their candidate for East Lothian, said "*General Pinochet must be our inspiration. He is always caricatured by the left as merely an expert in electrifying people's testicles*". Peter didn't get elected. Michael went on to become Secretary of State for Scotland in John Major's Conservative government.

I had liked but never really trusted the libertarians when I was a student. They were all for decriminalising drugs, Frank Zappa and *Oz* magazine, and now they wanted to asset-strip public resources and institutions which were owned by all of us and destroy the very welfare state that had reduced inequality and hugely enhanced people's educational opportunities, health and wellbeing. They won, and from the early 1980s inequality increased enormously, reversing the trend of the previous forty years. These were difficult times, with the Conservative government dismantling the post-war social democratic consensus.

The coal miners' strike became the totemic issue highlighting the struggle of traditional working class communities at this time, with the demise of heavy industry in Scotland. I took a group of students over to Fife coal mining communities to give help with welfare rights and community organising advice. Frankly, on the latter we learned far more from them! Our visit coincided with a delivery of sacks of grain and crates of huge sausages from Russian and Ukrainian miners. *An Englishman Abroad*, a BBC television drama about the spy Guy Burgess, played by Alan

Finding our voice

Bates, was made in 1983. They used the Caird Hall in Dundee as the backcloth for 1958 Moscow, with huge banners of Marx, Stalin and Lenin hanging from the building and the adjacent City Chambers. I heard a couple of Labour councillors had got jobs as extras acting as Russian guards. The banners were there for weeks and I vividly recall seeing a contented group of what I assumed were retired shipbuilders or weavers sat on a bench in the square, living in hope! The Labour party did however organise a Labour Friends of Cuba Burns Night in the Caird Hall, which I attended. The guests included the ambassadors from Cuba and Nicaragua and the gravelly Mick McGahey, the Communist leader of the National Union of Miners in Scotland.

Big Bob and Big Bang

It is easy now to forget just how damaging and divisive those eighteen years were for so many in Britain. The libertarian neo con revolution was a central ideological battleground for many in the new Conservative government and it fundamentally shifted the balance in favour of the rich and powerful. It was a highly divisive period, with street riots in Britain's cities and a growing North/South divide. Poverty increased by several million in Britain, yet disappeared from the official lexicon, as if by not recognising the word, the poor had disappeared too. The government cut funding for development programmes domestically and internationally and Thatcher downgraded the Ministry of Overseas Development, which under Labour had been in the cabinet. Government funding for social development programmes almost ceased, replaced by much smaller funds with an emphasis upon promoting enterprise.

Overnight community education and development workers and local community groups had to become adept at highlighting local enterprise targets as the main reason behind their funding

application. With rapidly growing levels of youth and adult unemployment, many communities were certainly concerned about ways in which jobs might be created, and this was the spur that led to the development of community and social enterprises, but the jobs created were tiny set against the numbers of jobs being lost as a result of government policies. As one wit put it at the time, the Conservatives encouraged the creation of many more small enterprises in the 1980s, the problem was they used to be big enterprises! It took pop stars like Midge Ure and Bob Geldof, who founded Band Aid in 1984, and the BBC, to embarrass the government into doing something about the growing levels of poverty in the 1980s. I was living almost next door to Midge Ure at the time. Band Aid was a hugely influential phenomenon, combining the global media reach of the BBC, with pop celebrities wanting to do something about the famine in Ethiopia, and later extending this to raising money to support development projects across Africa. It was followed a year later by Comic Relief, which has since become Britain's annual telethon, combining celebrity power with local fundraising by communities across Britain, to raise money for development aid in Africa and at home.

Not all Conservative ministers were tribal and unreasonable to work with. While I was a Director with the Community Development Foundation in the late eighties, I worked closely with the Welsh Office on programmes to regenerate the south Wales mining towns following the pit closures. Peter Walker, the Secretary of State, was a listening, consensus building moderate. I attended a meeting he was at as part of his Welsh Valleys' Initiative. Also there was Kim Howells, a former firebrand student leader in 1968, then working for the National Union of Miners and later to become a Labour minister under Blair. He and Walker got on well and you felt that pragmatism, rather than fixed ideologies, might enable a sensible dialogue and action

over what was to be done. And there were Conservative peers in the House of Lords deeply concerned about the cuts. One, Baroness Carnegy of Lour, who had chaired the committee on community education training in the 1970s, was a leading light there helping to defend expenditure on community education, as part of a British wide campaign to protect public expenditure for lifelong learning, led by the National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education, with a wonderful campaign strapline – *‘if you think education is expensive, try ignorance’*. Despite my dislike of the institution of the House of Lords, it was there and we needed to mobilise cross-party political support to keep the knives at bay for what was already a Cinderella service, receiving barely one per cent of educational public expenditure. Elizabeth Carnegy was a consistent supporter of community education and advised those of us outside the Conservative circle. I was told that when Michael Forsyth, a Thatcherite and a snob, became Scottish Secretary of State, she quietly advised him to keep off. Whether this story was true or not, public investment in community education and development work in the 1980s and 1990s, though reduced, never suffered the level of cuts it would a generation later under the hands of the Conservative/Liberal coalition.

The period following the fall of Margaret Thatcher after 1990, at the knife of her own colleagues, was not quite as divisive. I met with John Major, when he was Prime Minister, in the mid-nighties, when I was running the Scottish Community Education Council. We had been asked by the Scottish Office to design and manage a national voluntary scheme of community service for young people, called Make a Difference. He was personally friendly, and neither as off the wall, nor as belligerent as Thatcher. I was especially supportive of his policy to break down the binary divide in higher education, allowing polytechnics to become universities. He had also just initiated Britain’s National Lottery. I was at first unsure about the Lottery, because

of its association with gambling, and the fact that most of its revenue came from the pounds spent every week predominantly by working class folk, in the distant hope of winning the jackpot and becoming instant millionaires. Otherwise Steve Bell's glorious underpants wearing cartoons of Major in the *Guardian* summed him up well, as a dull, uninspiring Prime Minister. The Thatcherites had wanted to return to a pre-Second World War approach, whereby it would be charity that addressed social 'ills' and not the state, other than financing law and order. This was an ideology I disagreed with profoundly. I was certainly not against charitable giving, but this was not the way to fund a decent welfare state, capable of abolishing poverty, caring for those in need, funding the NHS, providing free education, protecting the environment etc. This required a progressive taxation system that was compulsory and enforced. It had been part of the civilised social contract agreed after the Second World War.

British people were hugely generous and, proportionately, it was those on lower incomes who gave the most. This reflected a decent, predominantly left leaning Christian (and other faiths') social ethos that existed in Britain and which had led, for example, to the foundation of organisations like Oxfam and Shelter and, in the 1980s, to the Faith in the City movement, so critical of the government's neo con policies, which the churches saw first-hand were damaging the fabric of poorer communities across the country. I knew many people working both in the British Isles and overseas for organisations funded by charities. They did tremendous work. But I knew no-one working in the development field who did not also feel strongly that the prime source of development funding should come from the state, by way of progressive taxation, with charitable and philanthropic giving complementing this. We did not want the American approach to welfare in Britain, which the Conservatives were now promoting hard and trying to implement.

Finding our voice

The 1986 Big Bang, with deregulation over the City of London, the banks and finance world, together with the lifting of credit controls, and the demutualisation of the building societies, led twenty years later to the bubble that burst, throwing much of the West into the most serious depression since the 1930s, when my mother's father went bankrupt. The gloves were off as noblesse oblige was replaced by City greed and market rigging. Indeed, greed was good. The government wanted us to become little capitalists, hungrily enjoying huge increases in our house prices and privatised shares with little effort. With the asset stripping of what even the former Conservative Prime Minister MacMillan critically called the "*selling of the family silver*", those that could afford to bought into the 'shareholding democracy', buying on the cheap public assets that all of the people already owned. This meant primarily the rich. Previously publicly owned industries, utilities and services (i.e. owned by all of us) were sold off well below their financial value, only within days to increase in worth, enabling British and overseas hedge funds, corporate interests and the individually better off to make a killing. While it is true that many shares were purchased by the middle classes, these were a small proportion of the share value of these now large privatised companies. For those who couldn't afford to buy, and with soaring levels of unemployment and poverty, that meant millions of people, the country became increasingly polarised. This was the most significant legalised theft of public 'commons' since the land enclosures of the early nineteenth century. It was a huge reversal of social democracy.

While I am not a believer in the theory of having Conservative governments elected from time to time to reinvigorate the left, some very interesting counter currents did emerge in those depressing years at local level, and community education and development work had a part to play in that, supporting popular planning and decentralisation programmes. Labour-run

councils such as the Greater London Council, South Yorkshire and Strathclyde Region saw it as their responsibility to try to intervene where central government was not. They used their local tax raising powers to finance social and economic development programmes, until these powers were capped and the councils then scrapped by the government. Thatcher hated them so much she abolished the councils of all of the major conurbations, including London.

Scotland, to an extent, managed partially to avoid some of the excesses of Thatcherism. Privatisation of some of the public utilities, for example water, did not take place and the idea of a pro-active welfare state survived, albeit much weakened through under-investment and a general belittling of the public service professions. Scotland was not a place for the Conservatives in the 1980s and 90s. They had few MPs and had not had a majority of votes there since the 1950s. It was a Labour country. The Secretary of State at the Scottish Office was more like the Governor General of a troublesome colony. Nonetheless they did abolish the Regional Councils and again tried to gerrymander the boundaries of the new councils that replaced them. Thatcher's introduction of the poll tax in Scotland proved to be highly unpopular with voters. It was seen as unfair hitting poorer households disproportionately and reducing local taxes upon rich households. The government's reduction in direct income and wealth taxes did not however mean that people were less taxed. They transferred that burden of tax upon indirect VAT and the Poll Tax, regressive taxes that hit the poor more as it meant that prices for consumer goods and services increased. And with unemployment levels going up dramatically and growing fears of public disorder, the government needed to increase these indirect taxes to pay for social security benefits and the police.

The previous Labour government had only just failed to

Finding our voice

introduce a devolved Scottish Parliament in 1979, following the referendum in which I had campaigned and voted yes. By the early nineties devolution was once again firmly back on the political agenda. Labour was strongly supportive, as were the Liberals and with the SNP growing in strength. The Conservatives were wiped out in Scotland at the 1992 general election and to this day have never recovered. But they still managed to hang on to government. I was in Budapest in 1992 when the general election results came through and was gutted at the outcome. Labour should have won. But as the right wing newspaper headline asserted – *“It’s The Sun Wot Won It”*.

Chapter 2

National and international affairs

European Parliament?

I had one more stab at a seat, seeking selection as the Labour candidate to fight the North East Scotland European Parliamentary constituency in 1984. Despite being on the left, I disagreed strongly with the party's position on withdrawing from the European Community. I had supported Britain's entry, in the 1975 referendum, and it was my view that we needed to pool our sovereignty further when it came not only to economic matters, but also to cover social protection and environmental issues. A more united Europe was needed more than ever in a world then dominated by the Cold War rivalry between the USSR, which had just invaded Afghanistan and, the US and the ever-bellicose President Regan, with his Orwellian rhetoric of Evil Empires and Star Wars. I supported the idea of having some kind of European confederation and had said as much in my selection interview; not a good line to take within the Labour Party at the time.

Such a position may seem as odds with my deep commitment to decentralisation, but in my mind, believing in the importance of people power was not something restricted to localism. Working at the local level and being an internationalist were two sides of the same coin, that of acting and thinking both locally and globally. All local communities were influenced by the international economy and increasingly by the impact of environmental

Finding our voice

pollution that would not respect national let alone local boundaries. And as a social democrat, it was clear to me that if we were to move beyond the black and white, bipolar frozen positions of the US (i.e capitalism) and the USSR (i.e communism), we needed other centres of political gravity and insight. I prepared hard, but the candidate choice had clearly been made by the unions before the selection interviews took place. Frank Doran, a decent young Dundee lawyer, contested the seat for Labour but lost. In 1987 he went on to win a Westminster seat. In 1989 Henry McCubbin won the European parliament seat for Labour for one term, losing in 1994 to the SNP. Henry was a neighbour, a member of the local branch in Broughty Ferry and together we had run a WEA course for community activists called Using the Media. He was then a cameraman for Grampian TV.

I was by then exhausted. My depression at what the Thatcher government was doing, and finding myself fed up with lecturing, led me to resign my job and to head with backpack to Latin America. I was 33 and having an early midlife crisis. Claire and I had sadly split up and we had sold our house. We remained close friends and I was also very close to her family, indeed shared a flat with her brother, Peter, when I later moved to London. But before that I bought a flat in Dundee and shared it with a friend, Jean-Paul Gardner, and the odd sheep or pig. Jean-Paul ran Dundee's city farm and regularly brought its residents home as pets. We had a piglet that was far more intelligent than any dog I've had. He loved playing and snuffling around the lounge and bedroom trailing his precious little blanket. The sheep was less animated, but Jean-Paul would let it sleep in his bedroom, from which you heard the sounds of nightly grunts and bleating. He walked the sheep to work in the morning, along Dundee's High Street

Or gun running in Latin America?

Since my student days, I had been a supporter of both the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, and of the anti-Pinochet campaign in Chile. Both were totemic issues for the left and Dundee had long been a welcoming home for left wing activists who had to leave these countries. A Chilean community education friend, Lilly Van Der Schraft, and her husband had escaped not long after the military coup that had overthrown the democratically elected socialist government of President Allende in 1973. Along with much of Latin America, Chile was under the influence of the US, which still had its nasty habit of installing or propping up some pretty appalling right wing governments, as a counter to perceived communist contagion, but also to ensure access for its mining and other interests. In the early 1980s there was a slight thawing by the Pinochet regime and Lilly wanted to take her young daughter Vanessa, who had been born in Britain, to visit elderly relatives in Santiago, the first time she had been back since the coup. I decided to visit them, as the starting off point for a trek north I had already planned to make through Chile, Bolivia and Peru. I flew first to Buenos Aires in Argentina not long after the end of the Falklands War, and felt the hostility. But in Chile I was warmly welcomed. The junta had assisted Britain in the Falklands War, and Thatcher was a more than sympathetic supporter of General Pinochet. Clearly we had to be careful and not to be seen to engage in anything political. Chile was a police state, not dissimilar to the Greece I had visited when I was a student. We met friends working in the shanty barrios on the outskirts of Santiago, where the levels of poverty were very high and where community organisers could end up being beaten up by the police or worse.

We listened to the banned music of the folk singer Victor Jara, murdered by the junta and one evening went to an arts cinema

Finding our voice

and as the lights went down, the whole place reverberated with a quiet chant of “*Vive Allende*” – supporting the deposed President. It stopped as soon as the lights went on. But a confidence was growing in the barrios and among a new generation of students. This tended to take the form of pots and pans being hit loudly as the military passed by. I moved on from Santiago and before travelling north, stayed in a clapper board house by the south Pacific coast. I wanted to see where Nobel Laureate Pablo Neruda the writer and poet had lived. His house was boarded up, but clearly a place of homage. Neruda was a close supporter of the Allende government. He was hospitalised with cancer at the time of the coup and three days later died of heart failure. Many believe the junta had a hand in his death.

I headed north for Bolivia and Peru. I wanted first to see Lake Titicaca and the archaeological site of Tiwanaku and then go via Cusco to walk the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu. I love archaeology and have done since a school trip in the early 1960s when we visited Hadrian’s Wall. Machu Picchu was not yet on the list of places tourists could easily travel to and my Rough Guide indicated that the train was one of the most dangerous journeys in Latin America for thefts from backpackers. It took me some days to acclimatise to the altitude in La Paz, Bolivia. But walking round Tiwanaku I was given coca leaves which helped, and offered cocaine, but thought the better of it. I also vividly recall visiting a coffee house in La Paz, hazy with cigar smoke and talking with Bolivian students, who told me in whispered tones that several presidents and vice presidents were in the place. Bolivia had changes in government almost annually. There was a student rally going on outside the university, and I joined it, campaigning against US imperialism. I felt liberated.

When I arrived at the Peruvian border, the guards were drunk and one of them started firing off shots. Getting quickly onto an old bus I found myself next to Katrin Franz, who had

been working on a German-funded development aid project and was now heading back to Germany. At first I thought she said she had been growing mice to increase food production among the indigenous population, but this was her accent as she was talking about maize, but it took me a while to realise this and I didn't want to appear stupid. Katrin had been working for a Catholic aid agency in the Chaco, with the Guarani indians, trying to get them not to eat all of their harvest, but to keep some for winter time and for the next sowing, together with general work on health education. We travelled together to Cuzco. She had already been to Machu Pichu, so I went on alone to walk along the Inca Trail and to visit the abandoned city. There was certainly something incredible and uplifting about the place as you entered it from the Trail, not just because the Incas had built it on such precipitous terrain, but its sense of utter tranquillity.

After spending a few days in Cuzco, I now needed to get to Lima. I had an appointment at the Oxfam office there to discuss the possibility of working for them. Travel by bus through the Andes was dangerous, as this was the time when the Shining Path Maoist guerrillas were seeking to overthrow the Peruvian government and there was fighting going on in the region. So we decided to fly. It was a bad mistake. The only plane available looked as though it had come out of some old World War 2 American movie. It had no passenger seats and at the far end of the fuselage you could see the pilot flying the plane. He had a leather jacket and dark glasses and it was clear they were carrying crates of weapons. Instead of oxygen masks there hung down strings of plastic tubes, which presumably you put up your nose. Along each side of the plane on the floor crouched terrified-looking passengers, among them Katrin and me. We held sweaty hands tight throughout the journey.

I met with the Oxfam director in Lima, but not being fluent in Spanish, let alone Quechua, doing grass roots education and

Finding our voice

development work would be challenging. But I felt strongly that I now wanted to work for a non-governmental organisation that was doing something practical and to get out of the world of think tanks and training. Katrin had returned to do a postgraduate environmental studies degree at Gottingen University and we met a few times after that. Hanging around her communal student flat, while it had many attractions, wouldn't have worked for long. I was tempted, and spent some time doing up an old farmhouse some friends had bought just outside the city. Most of her student friends were not that much younger than I was, as in Germany student life can go on well into your thirties. But I was running out of money and it was time to get a job.

Empowering consumers

I had been offered two jobs. The first was as the Senior Professional Advisor with the Central Council for Youth and Community Work Training. The second was heading up work on consumer education at the National Consumer Council. I wanted a change from the world of professional training. NCC had an impressive reputation as an influential advocacy organisation and its work on consumer education had previously been led by Eric Midwinter, whose books on community education and community schools in the early 1970s had attracted me to work in this area. Eric had gone on to become one of the founders of the University of the Third Age and was then the Director of the Centre for Policy on Ageing. He was a powerful advocate for the voice of older people and a reminder that education and organising goes on for life. He was also a wonderful polymath and wrote several seminal books on cricket, on keeping allotments and the wonderfully titled *Make 'em Laugh; Famous Comedians and their Worlds*. I got to know Eric at this time and he was always generous in his help and advice.

I worked alongside John Ward. John had been involved with the Labour government's Community Development Projects in the early 1970s and was the founding secretary of the Association of Community Workers. Of all the people I have worked with, John stands out as a great mentor. He had common sense and wisdom. Other colleagues included Jill Pitkeathley, who worked on community care consumer interests and was later made a Labour life peer by Blair in 1997 and chair of the New Opportunities Fund, one of the British lottery programmes. Jill's long-time partner and eventual husband, David Emerson, became a good friend and colleague when I later ran a philanthropic foundation. Also at NCC at the time was an excellent young lawyer, Richard Thomas, who later became Britain's first Information Commissioner. And I linked up again with an old colleague from my SLGRU days, Ken Collins MEP, who was now the Socialist group's spokesperson on consumer and environmental issues in the European Parliament.

The consumer movement had a clarity that the community education and development field lacked. One of John's initiatives, (with others) had been to set up the Plain English Campaign. And the first publication I initiated was a layperson's guide to community development. For those of us in the development world surely what we were about was helping people to understand, to have knowledge and skills to be able to change things and thus genuine people power. A continuing stream of interest in my education and development work had been political education. This was more than just political literacy - about parliament and prime ministers, but about learning about power, how power is accumulated, wielded and abused. And chiefly how ordinary people can begin to take power into their, our, hands.

Another initiative was to produce some guidelines, together with the government's school curriculum standards authorities for England and Wales and Scotland, for the content of

consumer education in both primary and secondary schools. We saw consumer education as playing a key role in empowerment, helping young people to gain the skills, attitudes and knowledge they needed to be able to make choices in their interests, in relation to both public services and private purchases. Here I worked closely with Graham Atherton, the Scottish Consumer Council's hugely able senior policy officer and the clearest writer I had come across. Our challenge was how to equip young people to become more assertive and politically aware? We knew that the Thatcher government would never allow civics or politics education in schools. But consumer education chimed with their free market world view and their support for financial literacy and better money management by those on low incomes.

The Conservative government wanted to introduce a national curriculum for all schools, for the first time in England and Wales, and we wanted to try to influence this. I met Kenneth Baker at this time. He had been appointed Secretary of State for Education, and was the chief architect of this. I had always found Baker an oily character and can't say I especially warmed to him, but, like Anthony Crossland, Harold Wilson's Education Minister in the 1960s and David Blunkett, in Tony Blair's government, Baker was one of the few Education Ministers with clear vision and drive. Another government Minister I met was Michael Howard, the Consumer Affairs Minister, a particularly obsequious politician. Howard was a junior Minister at the Department of Trade and Industry, the Ministry with responsibility for consumer affairs. He also had responsibility for regulating the financial dealings of the City of London. He played a central role in the bonfire of government banking regulations, which subsequently caused such damage to the British economy, together with the vandalism and carpet bagging associated with the de-mutualisation of the building societies, part of the earlier history of consumer co-operation and self-help. Later as

Minister for Local Government, Howard introduced legislation prohibiting local authorities and schools from the promotion of homosexuality, infamously called Section 28. Howard stood for everything I loathed about the right wing of the Conservatives.

Trojan pony

Consumer education had historically been associated with the teaching of domestic science or home economics and almost exclusively to girls. It was not a compulsory subject and very often targeted at less academically able pupils. Home economists, I soon discovered, were a much more progressive group than I had appreciated, similarly organisations like the National Federation of Women's Institutes and the Institute of Trading Standards. These were organisations I had never previously worked with in community education and development. They were increasingly concerned at the dangers facing young people and consumers generally, with ever poorer public services and dangerous consumer products, about growing levels of financial poverty and related issues, such as unhealthy diets as a result of the heavy promotion of junk foods. This was a time when economics was also not a compulsory subject in British secondary schools and rarely taught prior to A Level at the age of 16.

The teaching of civics or citizenship education was barely to be seen, although it was well developed in some European countries. The teaching of what was called social and life skills was generally left to youth workers to organise outside school hours. This situation was an indictment also of past Labour governments, which had concentrated their reforms more upon form (i.e. creating comprehensive schools), than content, other than their anxieties about what for some dyslexic reason they called the three Rs – Reading, Riting and Rithmatic. Knowledge is power, or at least one of the elements that gives people a voice.

Finding our voice

Yet key knowledge about how to survive in the real world was being denied young people.

We saw consumer education as a potential Trojan horse, where we would work with sympathetic progressive educators in the curriculum development bodies, the teacher unions, head teachers and teachers across a number of subject areas, plus others involved in community education and development work, such as youth workers. The government might be Thatcherite, the education profession, for most part, was not. With the imprimatur of the English, Welsh and Scottish curriculum development bodies, we were able to circulate guidance to every primary and secondary school in Britain, on how to go about helping young people to acquire consumer skills, including the key skill of how to organise. These guidelines, published in 1987, also had some influence internationally through dissemination to the members of the International Organisation of Consumer Unions' Consumer Education Network. I was a member of the network and spoke on our work at the IOCU Madrid conference in 1987. Linked with the guidelines I wrote a report on the training of teachers and community educators, outlining how they could incorporate consumer empowerment, knowledge and skills in their existing work, and encouraging joint working between schools and youth workers, so that practical projects would be organised out in the community that would bring this knowledge alive.

Ralph and the consumer movement

In 1985 I became the National Secretary of Britain's Consumers' Congress. This was the embryonic consumer movement's equivalent of the Trades Union Congress. It had around 150 member organisations, ranging from more local community action organisations, to bodies representing single issue groups

e.g for the disabled and public (or rather by then increasingly privatised) utility consumers. We doubled the membership of the Consumers Congress in my near three years as National Secretary, bringing into it organisations like the National Union of Students, the National Tenants Federation and the Claimants Unions. Despite the Labour Party's background in the co-op movement, the consumer side of socialism had been seriously neglected by the party. For some reason consumer activism was seen by many on the left as a middle class activity. Perhaps there were some feelings of treachery when Michael Young, founder of the Consumers Association, left Labour and joined the Social Democratic Party.

This lack of the consumers' perspective by the Labour movement was, I believe, one of the reasons that Labour voters began to move away after Thatcher bought them off with the 'Right to Buy' municipal council house sales scheme. Opinion polls undertaken in the late 1970s, for example, had not shown municipal houses to be unpopular, far from it; but they had shown that tenants were getting fed up with the patronising ways in which local authorities were treating them and, as we have seen, there was a growing anger about the state of the built environment across much of urban Britain. While I was National Secretary of the Consumers' Congress, I had a meeting with Brendan Barber, at the Trades Union Congress to explore ways in which we might work together. I came away hugely disappointed at his lack of interest in collaborating with the consumer movement. Barber went on to become General Secretary of the TUC. I did, however, have more success through having some hand in writing a policy pamphlet for the Labour Party, by then led by Neil Kinnock, on the importance of connecting with the consumer perspective. I got Ken Collins MEP to launch this at a fringe meeting at the Consumer Congress' annual gathering. Carol Pearson, the wife of Kinnock's Chief of Staff, Charles Clarke, worked for

Finding our voice

NCC at the time. Kinnock seemed more attuned to the consumers' perspective, and as a former Workers' Educational Association tutor, understood the value of community education. However it was not really until Tony Blair took over the leadership of the Labour Party ten years later, that consumer and communitarian ideas really began to influence Labour government policies after 1997.

It was at this time that I met the American consumer activist, Ralph Nader, one of my heroes in the late 1960s, when he had taken on the motor manufacturing companies in the US. Nader had come to prominence with the publication of his book *Unsafe at Any Speed*, a critique of the safety record of American automobile manufacturers. He was a hugely impressive public speaker, a clear writer and one-to-one a good listener who you really felt wanted to learn from you. He had set up a network of Ralph Nader Associates and invited me to become one. I later joined the millions who felt that he had split the anti-Republican vote by standing for the Green Party as a Presidential candidate, denying Al Gore the US Presidency in 2000, someone who understood more than any other Democrat the serious challenge of global warming.

Gender politics, Bhopal and moving beyond the local

My thinking around community education and development work was changing radically at this time. I had become increasingly frustrated with localism and also with the seeming inability of those working in the field to organise themselves. There seemed to be endless navel gazing and a holier than thou attitude existed in some of the literature and at conferences of the Association of Community Workers. I had been chair of ACW in Scotland in the late 1970s and early 1980s and had organised the British ACW conference in Glasgow. Nearly three hundred

members had attended, but the conference had ended daggers drawn between the socialist, predominantly Scots men and the feminist, predominantly London women, as the latter ran on stage and ripped to shreds a rubber sex doll used as a prop in the after conference dinner political theatre review. I don't think the Scots knew what had hit them.

Gender politics had become enormously influential in community education and development work in the 1980s, 'the personal is the political' being its mantra. Writers, like Marj Mayo, were documenting practice with women's groups and the leading role that women had played in community action. This had been a strong tradition in Scotland too, going back to the Glasgow tenants' strikes during the Great War. What feminism also brought into this work was a huge scepticism about what were perceived as patronising organisational structures, including trades unions and professional associations. This together with an already strong libertarian streak in community education and development work had turned organisations like ACW almost into an 'anti-profession'. A recurring debate was whether being a professional would be elitist and build barriers with working class communities. Some of the national Community Development Projects' reports had basically concluded that local community development was probably a waste of time because the problem was global capitalism. The feminist and the CDP critiques of our practice were powerful and we needed to be able to address them. But in ways that strengthened our impact and effectiveness in tackling structural class and gender inequality.

Meanwhile the numbers in poverty and unemployment in Britain were increasingly rapidly, as the neo con policies of Regan in the US and Thatcher in Britain were moving us away from the Keynesian post-war settlement. Local communities are not isolated from the wider regional, national or indeed international economy. I had long felt that we must encourage closer

Finding our voice

collaboration between communities and development workers in Britain, with communities suffering disadvantage and exploitation in other part of the world and the development agencies and workers there. My practical engagement in both local and European politics was shaped by the recognition that many of the problems facing each had common causes. The economy of Glasgow had, since Victorian times, been connected with the global economy, or at least the British Empire part of it; as imperial protection had evaporated, Glasgow and Clydeside, once one of the world's major trading ports and shipbuilding centres, had collapsed with catastrophic impact.

It was the Bhopal disaster in 1984, more than anything that slammed home to me the need for international community networking and combined action. The Bhopal disaster occurred at an American owned pesticide plant in Madhya Pradesh in India. Over 500,000 people were exposed to methyl isocyanate gas and other chemicals. The leak seriously affected the health, many subsequently for life, of the people living in the shanty towns located near the plant. The company, Union Carbide, makers of Eveready batteries, tried to deny responsibility for its failure to protect its employees and the nearby communities from the leak. And it was clear that it would require a concerted boycott of and litigation against Union Carbide, in both India and the West, to get it to accept its responsibilities and to compensate those affected. In order to scale up our work, we needed to use all the tools available to collaborate internationally, and to harness the power of Western communities and consumers to support poorer communities in the global south and indeed vice versa.

In the mid 1970s, I had come across an organisation called the International Association for Community Development (IACD). IACD had done much over the years to raise the profile of community development globally. It had consultative status with the UN and its agencies such as the International Labour

Organisation and the World Health Organisation. In its early days IACD had been quite influential, highlighting the importance of grassroots community participation in the social and economic development programmes of developing countries. It had published an international Journal called *Comm* which I had used when teaching community development students. I had joined IACD, but by the early 1980s, it had become much less active, and my impression was that it was in need of re-energising. I made repeated attempts to get involved in its board and even went to its HQ, in Belgium, but found its Secretary General pretty lacklustre and, it was clear to me, that it had become seriously unaccountable to its membership. Indeed, its membership globally was almost non-existent.

In 1985, I joined the editorial board of the international *Community Development Journal*, published by Oxford University Press. CDJ had an energetic editor, Gary Craig, who had worked for one of the CDPs in the 1970s. Gary and I subsequently worked closely on rebuilding IACD. The Journal was a stimulating forum for those working in the community education and development field across and between the developed and developing world. But it was an academic journal and, at that time, not closely linked with a practitioner network of development workers and agencies on the ground, nor indeed read by the vast majority of them. What was needed were ways of building cross national networks for practitioners, as clearly IACD was now failing to do this. This was before the take-off of the ICT revolution in the 1990s and the subsequent explosion of social networking in the noughties. So, my thinking then was still around the need to re-build an international membership organisation where practitioners would actually, rather than virtually, meet, learn and work together. Again it was in the consumer movement that I saw a model of what might be created.

Penang and Borneo

In 1986 I spent some time working with the International Organisation of Consumer Unions (IOCU), of which we were a member organisation. IOCU was one of the leading and most effective global civil society organisations. Their office in Penang was headed up by the inspirational consumer activist Anwar Fazal. In 1988, Anwar was presented with the Global 500 Award by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for his work on consumer protection and the environment. He had gathered around him a wonderful team of advocates, researchers and activists working to expose the bad behaviour of multinationals and governments.

Two NGO's established by Anwar, with which I had some links, were HAI - Health Action International, a coalition focusing on pharmaceutical issues, and PAN - Pesticides Action Network, a global coalition working on the danger of agrichemicals. It was at IOCU that I also worked with one of the journalists for New Internationalist magazine. I had been a reader of New Internationalist since I was a student and had always seen it as an important resource for those in development work. It had publicly exposed companies from Nestles to MacDonalds and published an invaluable barometer of each country's track record in promoting equal opportunities, democracy, civil rights and environmental protection.

While working with IOCU, I went over to Borneo, keen to see some local development work there. As we flew in over northern Borneo you could see the huge damage being done due to the logging industry and general deforestation of the rainforest. Palm oil plantations were being developed and rapidly encroaching on the last remnants of primary rainforest. We reached local villages far into the interior involving a long canoe trip. I had leeches attach themselves to me, found a scorpion in

my boot and came eyeball to eyeball with a spider the size of my hand. We arrived at a village, where the people all had long ear lobes and the men went hunting with four-foot-long bamboo tubes from which they fired deadly poisonous blow darts.

These communities of Dayaks were also seriously endangered. The more populous Malays and Indonesians were taking over Borneo, and the elites in both countries, together with largely Western logging and mining companies as partners were destroying these minority cultures. Already Western consumerism had found its way into Borneo. I could buy the ubiquitous Guinness, Nestles baby milk powder and Uncle Ben's rice, imported from the US, far inland. Despite my love of Guinness, there was something enormously depressing about this homogenisation of Western products, some of which were seriously damaging people's health. While the destruction of the rain forests and introduction of monoculture agriculture and GM crops was destroying the capacity of local communities to create sustainable economies and environments and to protect biodiversity.

Organisations like IOCU and domestically, a very active and radical consumer action movement were trying to tackle the worst of multi-national corporate misbehaviour and the power and corruption of the local elites, but it felt a losing battle. While I was with IOCU, I worked most closely with Grada Hellman on the role that teachers and community education and development workers could play in raising international awareness and on sharing practitioners' experiences and resources. Grada went on to become the Director General of IOCU and a passionate proponent of education for people empowerment. I wrote a number of publications including a critique of the behaviour of multinational companies that sponsored educational materials – a practice strongly encouraged around the world during the neo con years. Much of this was blatant product advertising

and biased misinformation. We tried to get it regulated, but the response in particular of the US and British governments was that it was an open market, and that IOCU, Greenpeace or Oxfam or indeed the Open University could produce materials just as well as MacDonalds or the British Sugar Corporation. As usual the key point they chose to miss, was that the latter were far richer than the former, and thus far more able to afford to sponsor educational resources and to market these to cash-strapped schools and those working in community education and development.

I believed strongly that we needed to harness the power of the mass media in our work. I had first got involved in community media in the mid 1970s through a friend, Martyn Auty, with whom I shared a house, and who then managed the Glasgow Film Theatre. Martyn had introduced me to a colleague who was piloting community TV broadcasting in the city and had organised a showing as part of a seminar at the GFT. It was, I have to say, like watching paint dry. I did however introduce him to colleagues working with the CDP in Paisley, with a view to broadcasting the residents' experiences as part of the project evaluation. Martyn also introduced me to Greg Philo from the Glasgow Media Group. They were doing cutting edge monitoring of BBC and ITV newscasts and had clearly demonstrated an editing bias against the labour movement, and deference towards the establishment, especially royalty. I had then got involved in the production of open learning resources while in Dundee. Dundee College of Education was at that time the centre of excellence in Open Learning in Scotland and I had produced a short film in 1980 and some material for the Open University. I had also been active, through the Dundee WEA, in bidding, for the contract to run the local community radio station. With the consumer movement, I worked closely with the community education team at the Open University, producing

training material for consumer activists, and secured funding to set up a consumer education resource unit at the Community Education Development Centre in Coventry.

Specialist technical aid

My consumer education and organising work had led me to closer engagement with some of the more enlightened corporate social and environmental responsibility practices. In researching for the publication on commercial sponsorship, which in large part was highly critical, I had come across people working in companies that were trying to behave more responsibly and ethically and, with corporate social responsibility (CSR) staff who were equally appalled by what had happened at Bhopal. The 1980s was a time when the prefix 'community' was being increasingly adopted by a number of professions keen to support disadvantaged communities – community architects, community lawyers, community planners, even community accountants. I worked closely with a number of organisations that promoted this approach. Community education and development work had always required specialists with technical expertise beyond that of the community organiser. It is also a set of methodologies and approaches that a wide range of professionals can adopt in order to work in empowering ways with disadvantaged communities.

One of the key skills of community education and development work is to know how to identify what expertise, legal, logistical, financial assistance a community group requires, to help it realise its projects and campaigns, and where to find sympathetic professionals willing to give that help pro bono or at little cost. The first of the groups I worked with was the Association of Community Technical Aid Centres. ACTAC was a network of radical architects set up in the mid 1970s. They used community education and development approaches with local communities

Finding our voice

to redesign their estates. It built upon many of the Planning for Real ideas, piloted by Tony Gibson, on the estates in Greenock I had worked in back in the 1970s. My friend, Laurie Bidwell, had played a lead role in setting up one such technical aid centre in Dundee in the mid 1980s. This provided free technical planning and design advice to residents and tenants associations in the run down inner city. Its Director, Bob Barnes, was a community architect who had earlier worked on similar schemes in Liverpool. It was Bob who had convinced me to go to Latin America to recharge my batteries, something he had done a couple of years before. I worked with community architects quite a lot in the 1980s and 1990s, becoming a member of the Royal Institute of British Architects/British Urban Regeneration Association community architecture awards panel and one of the founder non-executive directors of the Scottish Urban Regeneration Forum.

The second was the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS). I had come across the TPAS in Scotland, while looking for student placements, when I was a lecturer in community work. TPAS was a technical support service for tenants' associations on council estates and housing associations. Led by Willie Roe, from the Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations and Rowena Goodlad, a professional planner, who became its first director. I had known Rowena since the late 1970s as she too had been active in the Scottish Co-ordinating Committee of Socialist Organisations. TPAS provided free advice on how to take over the management of council estates. The estates would remain in social ownership, but the residents would make the decisions concerning how they would be run, refurbished and even on housing allocations. This in effect transferred housing management decisions to the people who lived there, rather than by council officers. The housing management budgets and some staff were also transferred. This was a radical departure

to how council owned estates had been run to date, yet retained the houses in public ownership. When I had moved to NCC, I proposed to the Department of the Environment that they fund a similar scheme for England and Wales. I chaired the steering group which secured the funds and TPAS England and TPAS Wales were set up in 1987. Sadly by then much municipal housing stock had been privatised, but TPAS was able to give advice and support to third sector housing associations and co-operatives.

Community enterprise

The third was an organisation called Action Resource Centre. I worked with ARC for several months to identify and engage with socially responsible companies and professions, to encourage them to second staff to work pro bono with community education and development projects. It was through ARC that I was asked to chair a national working party, reporting to St George's House, on ways in which corporate social responsibility could assist communities seeking to create community-owned social enterprises and co-ops. St George's House was a respected think tank, which brought together people with influence in different sectors to explore contemporary issues. Our report had some influence nationally in highlighting the potential of community owned and managed social enterprises, together with calling for government and CSR companies to fund management training for the community volunteers and staff to run such enterprises. With ARC, I organised a national seminar in 1988 on the community ownership of enterprises, at which a new organisation was launched, called Community Enterprise UK, to network local enterprise initiatives around the country.

Back in 1968, Harold Wilson had launched an organisation called the Young Volunteer Force Foundation, as a sort of Peace Corps encouraging young people to volunteer in the community.

Finding our voice

By the late 1970s it had changed its name to the Community Projects Foundation (CPF) and broadened its focus beyond involving young volunteers, to looking at the wider challenges facing predominantly deprived local neighbourhoods. Despite its name, the Foundation was semi-governmental – a quango, with its Board appointed by the Home Secretary. It had become a direct funder of local demonstration projects across Britain, usually set up in partnership with a local authority and each lasting several years, not dissimilar to the CDP programme. It ran around a dozen at any given time. CPF employed a local staff team for each project, who tended to have a specialised focus e.g. to demonstrate how local economic development could be supported in a rural area.

CPF also had a central research and dissemination team. This would monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of each local demonstration project, and publish these findings in order, hopefully, to encourage replication elsewhere by others. In the 1980s the central team included Gabriel Channon and Marilyn Taylor, who contributed significantly towards British community development research. I had become involved with one such local demonstration project in the early 1980s, when I became the chair of a steering group in Dundee seeking to encourage CPF to partner with the city council, to establish an employment-related project in a designated deprived part of the city suffering high levels of unemployment. Called Workstart, it employed a team of community and business development officers to help local people establish job-creating community enterprises. I was surprised when the then Director of CPF asked how many cars we would require. It seemed that all CPF demonstration projects had a fleet of cars for their staff.

Things had clearly moved on since my foot sloggling action-research a decade before. Workstart had a catchment area embracing several council estates, and I could see the possible

value of not having to spend days walking around each estate, but on the other hand it had, at the time, negated what I felt neighbourhood work should be about, becoming and being seen to be a part of the community. This was mirrored in the debate then going on as to whether the police should all be in panda cars or should walk the beat, like the BBC police drama *Dickson of Dock Green*. Some years later, Alan Barr undertook research on what community development workers actually spent their time doing each day. One of the main activities appeared to be driving between meetings!

I also did some collaborative work with Business in the Community. BIC was one of Prince Charles' charities promoting CSR, set up in 1982. I had been, and remain, somewhat sceptical about the depth of the heir to the throne's commitment to social justice. He was a huge property and landowner and immensely wealthy and the institution of the monarchy was at the apex of a British class system that I felt was both holding the country back and making a mockery of the rhetoric about equality of opportunity. Personally, as a believer in democracy, I would like to see both the monarchy and the flummery and privilege of the aristocracy abolished. They are, after all, merely the respectable descendents of the medieval thugs and later oligarchs who, as now in Russia, asset stripped the land and still have huge power. They are superbly adept at managing the media, the established churches and other institutions to ensure the general public's deference and indeed reverence. I live partly in Putney, in London, close to the church where in 1647 the basis of England's quasi democratic constitution was created by the early English socialists, the Levellers and others, leading two years later to the country's brief period as a republic, known as the Commonwealth. But Prince Charles was becoming increasingly vocal especially about global environmental concerns and, through his various Trusts, and his ability to attract business

Finding our voice

and government funds, provided support for a wide range of community enterprises across Britain.

Building a home

The Gulbenkian Foundation was also a significant supporter of British community development work for many years. Wealthy philanthropists are a fascinating species, more of which later. Foundations are an interesting type of organisation and I later went on to run one. They are usually independent of government and funded by way of an endowment left by some wealthy capitalist. And it is the 'new rich', like Andrew Carnegie and Bill Gates, who leave far more of their wealth for philanthropic purposes, than the landed monarchy and aristocracy. For nearly forty years the British branch of the Gulbenkian Foundation funded a large number of reports and publications on community work. I contributed towards two Gulbenkian-funded books, the first entitled *Deprivation, Participation and Community Action*, the second, *Community Work in the 1980s*. Gulbenkian had also established two highly influential Commissions of Inquiry - one into community work and social change and another on professional training, published in 1968 and 1973 respectively. In the early 1980s they funded a consultation on whether there should be a British centre or institute, to support good practice. I chaired the Scottish consultation that supported this and was later part of the team that created the national centre.

In 1982 I brought out my second book with Laurie Bidwell, entitled *Community Education and Community Development*. This was the first published volume of entirely Scottish articles and case studies. We wanted to gather together some of the innovative thinkers and practitioners to write about purely Scottish policy and practice, which, significantly, had aligned radical educators far more with community development than was the case in

England. There, it was the National Institute for Social Work, *Community Action* magazine, the Directory of Social Change, the Open University, the CDP programme, the Association of Community Workers and the publisher Routledge, who were contributing to create a rich canon of teaching and learning resources. The excellent infed, established by a group of lecturers at the YMCA George Williams College in London, provides an on-line information 'library' of the many publications, articles, government and foundation reports, covering the whole of the community education and development sector, since the 1960s. It is accessed over 6 million times a year.

In the early 1980s, there was a heated debate among practitioners in Britain, about whether we needed some sort of national institute or centre to promote community development policy and research and to provide resource materials and training to support those in the field. The Scottish Community Education Council in part, provided that sort of role north of the border, and there was already the Community Education Development Centre (CEDC) in Coventry. But CEDC, and indeed the concept of community education in England, was almost exclusively about promoting community schools, and supporting school teachers to work more with their pupils out in the community. CEDC's Director was John Rennie, a larger than life, dynamic character, and its chair was Eric Midwinter. They published some great material for community schools and also hosted the International Community Education Association, a network for community school practitioners. But CEDC did not provide much by way of support for community education and development workers doing neighbourhood and community organising work. In Scotland, SCEC did, although not as much as I would have liked.

The Gulbenkian Foundation provided funds for David Thomas, from the National Institute for Social Work, to scope

Finding our voice

the idea of a national centre among practitioners and others, such as local authority and non-governmental employers. David, together with Paul Henderson, from NISW, was a prolific writer on community and neighbourhood work and his subsequent report, recommending a national centre, was published in 1983. I was at that time the chair of the Association of Community Workers in Scotland. We supported the proposal for a British centre and worked closely with David to organise a major national conference in Dundee for Scottish community education and development practitioners, project managers, trainers and others to consult on the idea. The majority were broadly in favour of the idea of a British centre, although also felt that SCEC should be its arm in Scotland.

However a number were also concerned that as community development was about questioning the power imbalance between disadvantaged communities and 'the system', including professionals such as town planners, they did not want to see professionalization entering community development practice, nor a government-sponsored agency determining what good practice ought to be. I argued that we were an emerging profession, and as such needed to be able to demonstrate high professional standards and, that both practitioners and policy advisers could gain from having a national centre to support them with this work. Where I shared their concerns was in ensuring that the national centre be neither controlled by the government, nor hold a narrow view of determining what 'good' community development should look like on the ground.

A further conference, held in London, brought together the feedback from the consultations around the country and at the next meeting, in Birmingham in 1987, it was agreed that in parallel with discussions that should take place with CPF, the government, employers and the professional associations regarding establishing a national centre, we should also establish a Standing

Conference for Community Development to represent practitioners' interests. SCCD was set up in 1987, supported by CPF, the Association of Community Workers and other practitioner networks such as the Federation of Community Work Training Groups. I was SCCD's first organising national secretary. The organisation subsequently secured funds to employ a national development officer, Graham Partridge, and later changed its name to the Community Development Exchange. It ran events and training workshops and became a national forum for those working in the field.

The British centre for community development was finally established in 1990, taking over the resources and staff of CPF. It also took over CPF's quango status, which meant that its board would still be appointed by, but would be independent of, the government, akin to the status of the Equal Opportunities Commission. David Thomas had become CPF's director in 1987 and Paul Henderson and I became the two assistant directors a year later. David and Paul's work at NISW had been strongly supported by its director, David Jones, who, with Marj Mayo at Ruskin College, had edited several excellent publications of case studies with the Association of Community Workers. Marj had a background in community development going back to the 1960s and had written some key texts on the origins of community development, adult and community education and on women and community development. We were both members of the international *Community Development Journal* editorial board, and she later became an active board member on the International Association for Community Development. Now the professor of community development at Goldsmiths College in London, Marj is one of my unsung heroes in this field.

The first national centre for community development in Europe had been set up in the Netherlands by Wim Van Rees and other colleagues there. So with the Gulbenkian report's

findings, NISW, SCEC and the Dutch model we had a good idea as to what it was we wanted to create.

Our challenge was to transform CPF into Britain's national centre for community development. David became CDF's first CEO and remained so until 1993, when at the age of 50 he announced he was retiring to go and live on the Pembrokeshire coast to write a book on Dylan Thomas. His tenure, though short, set the foundations for the new national centre and he deserves huge credit for its existence. It would have intellectual clout, think European and have an infrastructure of regional offices across Britain. David was at first hesitant as to what we should call the new body. He and Paul were concerned about alienating community workers on the ground, after some bruising encounters during the Gulbenkian consultations, where some had been adamantly opposed to a national body. I was more bullish, and felt we should grab the moment and show leadership. Being a bridge with the Association of Community Workers and the newly formed Standing Conference for Community Development, I felt we would be able to allay their concerns by demonstrating in practice that we would strengthen the field. I encouraged Sarah Bosely, a *Guardian* journalist and wife of my old friend Pete Hooley, to write a small article, which flagged up that we were creating the National Centre for Community Development, and the lack of negative responses to the article gave David the confidence to change the name. So we came up with a prosaic compromise calling it the Community Development Foundation.

As a director, I was initially responsible for establishing most of the regional offices. These were based broadly upon the nations and regions of Britain and were intended to provide a practice support resource for each of those regions. An example of one of the regional offices was the Scottish Community Development Centre. Each regional office would have a manager and eventually a small team. The regional managers met regularly with

the CDF directorate team and, by consulting with the field (i.e. the Standing Conference and other practitioner interests) and with our sponsor government department, the Home Office and our Board of trustees, we planned our annual programme. The board was chaired by the very able Alan Hazlehurst. Alan was a Conservative MP, but on the left of the party. He was the MP for Saffron Walden, where I later moved to live. He had succeeded Rab Butler, the architect, with Harold MacMillan, of the post-war more centrist Conservatives, so despised by Thatcher. Alan went on to become a highly respected deputy Speaker in the House of Commons during the Blair years.

With a strong team, I also had lead responsibility for developing CDF's information, consultancy and publications services and for co-ordinating work on community regeneration across the country. We continued to run local community development demonstration projects, as CPF had done, and to have a research and dissemination capacity, but we saw our additional roles as being a national resource centre for the several thousand local projects and practitioners working across the country and, as a body capable of informing and promoting public policy in this area, through working with politicians, civil servants and the local authority associations. We launched an innovative online information service in 1990 for practitioners that gave access to CDF's extensive library and resource centre, set up by Kevin Harris, the head of information, followed by a parliamentary and government information service, to improve dialogue between local practice, policy advisers and policy makers. We ran in-service training programmes, organised conferences and practitioner workshops. We also examined whether there should be a body to endorse professional community development training courses in England, similar to the role the Scottish Community Education Council had for professional training in Scotland and that the Central Council for Youth and Community Work had

Finding our voice

for youth and community workers. I wrote the report on professional training with David Jones, who had by then retired from NISW. It recommended that a national body for validating professional community development training should be set up.

Wearing my broader hat for public affairs, I also led on our link with the local authority associations in Britain. The Association of Metropolitan Councils and the Association of District Councils were the two national bodies representing all of the local councils across England and Wales, together with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. AMC and ADC were very supportive that their members understand community development ideas and approaches, and we assisted them in publishing two influential reports and guidance circulated widely to their member councils. This in turn opened up opportunities for CDF regional centre staff to advise councils and support local authority staff. It was through my work with these bodies, that I made links with the Council of Europe's Committee of Municipalities and Regions, which, in 1988 had established a working group to examine community development.

Breaking down walls

From 1989, I had begun to take a lead on developing the Foundation's pan-European work. I organised a European conference on community development that year and got closely involved with the Council of Europe and the passing of its first *Resolution on Community Development*, attending the debate at the European Parliament and working closely with the Council's staff and the Committee of the Municipalities and Regions to promote it. My earlier involvement with the European Parliament meant that I had some knowledge of the workings of both the Council of Europe and the European Union and Commission. The Council of Europe's resolution highlighted

the value of community development and requested funding and support for this work from member countries, municipalities and regional authorities across Europe. The Council of Europe was wider than the EU. Its remit, which was purely advisory, was to promote co-operation between all countries of Europe in such areas as human rights, democratic development, and cultural co-operation. The best known part of the Council of Europe is the European Court of Human Rights, which enforces the European Convention on Human Rights.

These were heady times, with the fall of the Berlin Wall, and opportunities were opening up for engaging with development workers across both Western and Eastern Europe. I worked with the Council of Europe, the European Commission and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), organising conferences and publishing reports highlighting what was going on across the continent. Through the EU's PHARE programme and the British Charity Know How fund, we were able to forge joint projects with civil society activists and organisations in Eastern Europe for the first time. One of the most inspiring was the Hungarian Association for Community Development, an incredibly hard working group of activists and intellectuals who had for many years during the communist era been engaging in community education and development work, with a strong emphasis upon cultural renewal. CDF worked with several such agencies, including the national centres in the Netherlands, Ireland, Hungary and in Sweden, to establish a European bureau that enabled us to apply jointly to the EU for funds to support pan-European networking, training events and research.

The pending Single Market Act and then the fall of the Berlin Wall gave added impetus for the need to advocate community development approaches across various EU and Council of Europe programmes. CDF played a lead role in bringing together

the initial partners at the 1989 conference we organised. Initially called the Combined Bureau for Social Development, it changed its name to the European Community Development Network and remains active today. Through this work, I met with inspiring practitioners such as Hans Anderson from Sweden, who was instrumental in establishing the Nordic Community Development Network, and Ilona Vercseg, joint founder of the Hungarian Association for Community Development. It was through Ilona that I also made links with the embryonic Romanian Association for Community Development. Similar networks of community activists, radical educators and citizen organisers were emerging across central and eastern Europe, with whom we were now making contact.

When the Berlin Wall was breached in 1989, I went there climbing onto the Wall and being told at gunpoint by an earnest East German guard to get off. Like the others around me, I felt ecstatic that ‘people power’, and the courage of Michael Gorbachev, had changed things. I saw Gorbachev speak not long after he too had fallen from power. As with Nelson Mandela, you felt you were in the presence of someone who had indeed changed the world. It was in 1991, that I also attended the Council of Europe’s first West-East civil society conference, held at the Hungarian Parliament. This brought together parliamentary and non-governmental delegations from all member countries. I represented CDF and witnessed one British Conservative politician make an appalling speech about how the West had won the Cold War. I took to the lectern saying we had much to learn from the East! At this conference the pending crisis in Yugoslavia was brought to our attention through a passionate and moving speech from a Yugoslav delegate. Within weeks the civil war there had begun.

The subsequent break up of Yugoslavia was tragic on a number of fronts. Primarily because of the huge number of deaths, rapes

and ethnic cleansing that civil wars generally bring. Yugoslavia had been a founder member of the non-aligned group of nations, along with India and was generally seen as a pretty liberal form of communism. Many on the left, including me, had admired much of their work on co-operatives. Sadly the European Union members did not take a united line on how to deal with the civil war. Germany, for example, positively encouraged the breakaway of Slovenia and Croatia. Serbia had strong support from Russia and the Bosnian muslim communities suffered most of all. Socialist President Mitterand and then Labour's Prime Minister Tony Blair, took the lead along with President Clinton in intervening to end the war. I knew many colleagues at the time who worked with development aid projects in Bosnia and later Kosovo, trying to help to rebuild shattered and divided communities.

Together with the Fondation de France, CDF supported the creation of the European Social Action Network in 1991. This had two main roles: to link social action organisations and to seek to influence EU social policy from the bottom up. This was the time of the Delors presidency, and there was a much more open door on funding for anti-poverty and social inclusion programmes than we were likely to get from the Conservative government at home. I was elected ESAN's first secretary general, organised its first general assembly and established its office in Brussels, at an agency called the European Citizens Action Service (ECAS). I worked in Brussels almost monthly, necessitating the move of home to Saffron Walden, to be closer to Stansted airport. The channel tunnel was not yet built and my consciousness of the size of my carbon footprint through air travel was low. ECAS was the brainchild of Tony Venables, with whom I had worked five years earlier, when he headed up the Consumers in the European Community Group. ECAS was and is an inspiring organisation that provides shared advocacy

Finding our voice

and research advice for civil society organisations engaging with the European Union. I joined its board, then chaired by Des Wilson, a renowned citizen activist since the 1960s. ESAN remains an active pan European advocacy voice for social action organisations.

Brussels by the early 1990s was looking more and more like Washington in terms of the number of lobbyists setting up shop. There were already several thousand, largely representing business corporations and farming interests. Today there are an estimated twenty thousand, but still with barely a handful representing the least powerful, although civil society interests are far better organised these days, especially those concerned with the green agenda. But in the early 1990s, the EU was witnessing high levels of unemployment and poverty among its member states, and there were serious concerns about social exclusion and xenophobia and the re-emergence of the political far right parties. The European Social Action Network aimed, among other things, to lobby for a more coherent social policy across the EU, with a particular interest in advocating for more citizen participation in decision-making.

Back in the 1980s and early 1990s my involvement with environmental matters had been predominantly around the built environment. I was not an environmental activist in the green, natural environment sense, other than through some of my educational work with IOCU around pollution and the appalling behaviour of some multi-national companies in marketing dangerous products. Social activists' networks and environmental activists' networks in those days worked in two different silos. This is less the case these days, with a growing understanding of the social impacts of climate change and global warming. I attended an inspiring workshop on green consumerism at a conference in 1988 in Rome, hypocritically with my air fare paid for by the CSR manager at British Petroleum. The after-dinner

speaker was the actor Peter Ustinov, who also attended the workshop, participating actively. My other abiding memory is of the person who sat next to me at the dinner, the Editor of *Reader's Digest*, regular reading in the toilet at home when I was a child.

Up yours Delors!

The European Presidency of Jacques Delors between 1985 and 1994 was the most radical in the history of the European Union. It coincided with the end of the Cold War and the beginning of a new relationship with the countries of central Europe, leading ten years later to most joining the EU. Delors oversaw the introduction of the Single Market Act and closer joint working around social policy issues, the British Conservative government being the only EU member to opt out of the latter. And in 1992, under his Presidency, the Maastricht Treaty was signed, changing the name of the European Community into the European Union and putting in place the building blocks that led to the creation of the single European currency, the euro. Delors was a socialist and throughout this time was decried in the British right wing press. It was also the period during which the Labour movement began to change its stance and became more pro the EU. Kinnock who had been passionately anti in 1983 eventually became a European Commissioner and Vice President.

Working with officials at the Council of Europe, the OECD and within the European Commission gave me a much closer insight into the power that such supra-national bodies can deploy to achieve change, and how social activists can similarly use this power to influence national policies. The first two bodies are more advisory in terms of their influence over member states, but both provide a forum for politicians, senior officials, advisers and sometimes civil society activists to meet together to share ideas about policy and practice. The European Commission

does have legislative clout, but generally not over community education and development. These are seen very much as areas of subsidiarity, or outside the competence of the EU other than, for example, where it involves workforce training and the recognition of qualifications from different countries, so that a practitioner trained in France can practice in Germany.

I wanted to work with these officials to profile more participative approaches to community regeneration and social inclusion. I also wanted to highlight the role that community education and development could play in addressing the democratic deficit across Europe. I organized a major pan European conference called 'Towards a Citizens' Europe', with support from both the Council of Europe and the European Commission, that looked at issues around the 'democratic deficit' and, a major OECD sponsored conference, where we highlighted case studies of successful community-led regeneration programmes. I also presented papers on this theme at OECD seminars in Madrid and Dublin. With the European Commission, we were helpfully supported by Bruce Millan, the European Commissioner for Regional Affairs. Millan had been the Secretary of State for Scotland in the Labour government, when the Alexander Report was published in the mid-1970s.

I met Angelika Kruger at this time. She had co-edited an excellent book on community education practice around the world. She worked in Berlin and had been instrumental in establishing a community education institute in Germany. I visited just three years after the Wall had come down and saw the enormous changes that were taking place there. I particularly wanted to see Kreuzberg, a high-rise estate close to the Wall. I had heard of this estate and of the inspiring work of Ekhart Hahn. Kreuzberg had a long history of alternative culture, self-organising and urban experimentation. Hahn and others had transformed these urban towers through the introduction

of ecological architectural features and community gardens. The results were beautiful, with the high-rise buildings covered in foliage from top to bottom – municipal hanging gardens of Babylon. They provided a model which could be replicated across the soulless tower block estates of the world.

African diary

For people on the left, a trip to South Africa during the right wing apartheid regime was out of the question. But with Nelson Mandela just released from prison, I wanted to make the trip. Similarly in the early years of his government, I had been quite impressed by what Robert Mugabe seemed to be implementing around the inequities of land ownership, where the vast majority of Zimbabwe's farming lands, still lay in the hands of a tiny minority of wealthy white landowners. I had a Dutch doctor friend working for an International Labour Organisation community economic development project in the countryside not far outside Harare. The project used community education and development approaches and community drama, to encourage black women to have the confidence to establish small social enterprises. One I recall made soap, which was sold to local villages. Unlike the whites, who still lived in British style suburbia around Harare or on large farms, the adjacent black villages were poor. The one where the ILO project was established had one water tap for the whole village.

Zimbabwe had not yet fallen into the economic mess we witnessed in later years and Mugabe was still generally respected and his land reform objectives not unreasonable. It was while on this trip that I met with a black primary school teacher who told me of his concerns about what the Mugabe government was doing to silence people critical of the government and how it was cutting funds for schools in districts not supportive of the

government. The Commonwealth Heads of Government were meeting in Harare at the time and issued the Harare Declaration, which affirmed: "Internationally, the world is no longer locked in the iron grip of the Cold War. Totalitarianism is giving way to democracy and justice in many parts of the world. Decolonisation is largely complete. Significant changes are at last under way in South Africa. These changes, so desirable and heartening in themselves, present the world and the Commonwealth with new tasks and challenges."

We had a hiking holiday next to the Mozambique border. While camping one night we were awoken by the sound of a crackling fire and getting out of the tent saw that all of the surrounding scrub and bush was alight. Small trees were shooting up in flames and we had to run along the riverbed to get clear. We later travelled to Victoria Falls, and into Botswana. Botswana and Zimbabwe are stunningly beautiful countries. We walked close to elephants, rhinos, and giraffe and took a little boat to see hippos. We stayed for a few days, high on an escarpment. I have always been an early riser. Waking at five and seeing the wild animals and birds far below, slowly winding their ways through the Savannah to the river and a small lake was breathtaking. It was a scene that had not changed for millennia and I felt privileged to be there.

I did have one other place to visit before I left Zimbabwe and that was the archaeological site of Great Zimbabwe. On a visit to the Grand Canyon with Claire, I had gone off route especially to visit Mesa Verde, the 12th century stone built villages built in high cliff escarpments by the Anaasázi peoples. This had been a complex urban culture, with small towns and roadways across a large part of what is now New Mexico and Arizona. Archaeologists believe that it was generally abandoned due to dramatic changes in the world's climate in the 13th century, which made the region more arid. I even overcame my fear of

heights by climbing a rickety ladder to reach the main village high in the cliffside. Here in Zimbabwe was a contemporary civilization that had probably been abandoned for the same reason. It is close to the Chimanimani Mountains and the Mozambique border and was built by the Gokomere culture in the 11th century. It had a population of around twenty thousand and was the centre of a network of smaller stone-built settlements across a wide region. Its stone walls are impressive, standing over thirty feet high. There is evidence that the people traded with the Arabs and perhaps even the Chinese in the 13th century. During the years of British colonialism and UDI, the white supremacists refused to accept that the indigenous peoples could have built such a complex civilisation.

En route then to South Africa, I spent a night at a hotel in Harare, a bustling city originally built by the British. Because of the Commonwealth conference, the only hotel I could find was seedy and it was in the bar that I was approached by a young black African woman in her late teens or early twenties. She was pretty, but worn out and had a slightly glazed look. I thought she probably had HIV. It was clear that her pimp was close by as she was on edge. We had a drink together and I asked her about her life, which sounded tragic. She had a child and clearly the only money she could get was from prostitution. I quietly gave her some cash and hoped she would be able to keep most of it. I went to bed feeling pretty hopeless. HIV, which had taken the life of a gay friend in New York in the late 1980s, was becoming rife and later became a pandemic affecting around two million people in Zimbabwe alone.

From Harare I took the train to Cape Town to visit my cousins. On the train I got into an argument with an Afrikaans man, twice my size, who was totally against the freeing of the socialist and, in Margaret Thatcher's eyes, terrorist, Nelson Mandela, which had just taken place. My cousins are wealthy

liberals living in Constanica, a beautiful part of Cape Town. Eve, my cousin David's wife was active in the Black Sash white women's resistance organisation, and had demonstrated against the Pass Laws. Her uncle had been the Defence Minister under Ian Smith in Rhodesia.

I returned to South Africa in the mid 1990s, for an international community development conference on conflict resolution, which I had been actively involved in organising, wearing my hat as a Board member of the International Association for Community Development, which was co-sponsoring the event. We heard from inspiring speakers involved in the Truth and Reconciliation process and also from Rwanda, where as a European I could only bow my head in shame that the EU had not intervened collectively to stop the genocide. I was by then also the chair of the British-South Africa Community Development Exchange. This provided funds to support the exchange of community development practitioners between the two countries. We partnered with the South African Development Education Programme. This was training community organisers as part of President Mandela's Reconstruction and Development Programme. I attended a moving presentation of certificates to community work students at the University of the Western Cape. The participants, many of whom had been active in the banned ANC, in the trades unions, youth and women's movements, were delighted to have this training accredited. And this reinforced my strong belief that the accreditation of good quality training and practice was highly valued by those wanting to work in this area and by the communities these people were serving. It was hoped that Nelson Mandela would attend to present the certificates, but sadly he was unable to. It was nonetheless uplifting, watching the British Ambassador, who did attend, clenching his fist as we all sang *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika*.

An international association

In the early 1990s one word more than any dominated the development lexicon, 'globalisation'. With the 'defeat' of 'communist' Russia and the end of the Cold War, the economy increasingly became global and capitalist, dominated by Western multinational companies, with the outsourcing of production to cheap labour economies and often adopting appalling labour standards, including the widespread use of child labour and banning of trades unions. This period of US global dominance was however to prove short-lived: within barely two decades 'communist' China had leapt to become the world's third largest economy after the US and EU. Indeed the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) countries were emerging as multi-polar centres of political gravity challenging the West, but still wanting Western capitalist investment and technology. After the Cold War's limited access to Western capital and technology, Russia and China now opened up with great rapidity. A partnership between the established Western neo con financial capitalists and the new quasi criminal oligarch capitalists in Russia and China was changing geo-politics.

Globalisation had provided opportunity and challenge for international development agencies. Western NGOs now started to operate in Russia, China and the former USSR countries, although were eventually curtailed in their activities when they were seen to raise political and human rights issues. And while the language of the empowerment of disadvantaged communities had long been adopted by the UN and bodies such as the World Bank, in reality the approaches to supporting the social and economic development of poor areas and countries still remained primarily top down and with neo-liberal conditions imposed upon poor recipient countries by the major donors. From the 1980s these emphasised the need for liberalisation,

deregulation and privatisation. Development programmes funded by the World Bank too often were associated with reduced investment in public health and education, and with negative social and environmental impacts.

In 1989, I had eventually managed to join the Board of the International Association for Community Development. IACD was badly organised with membership levels low. Once on the Board I intended to change this. International networks are interesting constructs. Unless people had the money to network internationally, and few working in poor communities had, there was a danger of the iron law of oligarchy setting in and the associated silting of leadership. This had happened to IACD. It took a group of us to bring IACD back into the much more dynamic organisation it is today. I played quite a central part in this. But it took me several years. Its president was a Hungarian, called Rudolf Rezohazy. Rudolf was a gentleman; immaculately dressed he always wore a bow tie. He was of the old colonial school of community development, and had spent much time working in Franco-phone Africa. The IACD Board had clearly not changed in composition for years. It was all male. I was seen, at 38, as the Young Turk. I lived up to the name, becoming active in every part of the organisation, and taking over responsibility for editing its membership publication.

It was through this that I led what was in effect a putsch at its South African conference, ironically the one on conflict resolution. Using all my community organising skills, I secured new members onto its Board, which tipped its composition, and it was agreed that I would take over as its secretary general in 1998. I transferred its office from Belgium, to Scotland, securing resources and funding for it to operate, first from the Scottish Community Education Council and later with grants from the Carnegie Trust. I created a link with the International *Community Development Journal*, thus helping to bridge practitioners and

academics working in this area more closely together. The CDJs former editor, Gary Craig, became the new president. We greatly increased the association's membership and ran several conferences during my term – in the Middle East, Europe, New Zealand, the US and Canada and in 2000 I chaired the community development session at the UN World Summit for Social Development civil society assembly in Geneva.

Marge Scotts, the IACD Board representative from Oceania, who worked as a community development adviser with the New Zealand government, was keen to host IACD's first conference there. Together with support from the local authorities in Rotorua, and huge input from practitioners across the Oceania region, we organised what I believe was the first gathering of community education and development practitioners from New Zealand, Australia and the Pacific islands. Over three hundred attended, together with participants from across IACD's wider global membership. As with all of our events, we organised field visits to local community projects. We were hosted by Maori community leaders at the main Rotorua Marae, a sacred meeting area in front of their long communal meeting house and called to a 'hui', the ceremony for guests, where the elders welcomed us to their community. Here we had to wait until they were sure we had come with peaceful intentions. This IACD conference helped forge a strong network for practitioners in the region, cemented further by a second IACD Oceania conference held in Brisbane in 2009, attended by several hundred participants.

We co-organised a community development conference in the Middle East in 2000, at which both Israeli and Palestinian, Jewish and Muslim community development workers participated and at which I delivered a keynote about IACD. After the conference I visited development projects in the Palestinian territory and also in one of the new Jewish settlements on post '67 occupied territory. This was at the time of President Clinton's

Finding our voice

Peace Initiative and there was guarded optimism on both sides among people working at the grass roots at least, that this time compromise, peace and a sort of reconciliation might just work. I visited the home of a baby boomer fundamentalist Israeli, who was most certainly not on the left, but he loved Van Morrison and U2, which gave me some hope that the global village might just have opened up his thinking. Sadly it was not to happen.

The Israeli/Palestinian conflict is one of the most totemic failures of the post war years. The British had conquered what was then called Palestine in 1916 and it had been a League of Nations Mandated addition to the Empire for thirty years. My father had lived there briefly in the early 1930s. It became independent in 1948, with partition and the creation of the Israeli state. For many this was seen as an historic right in light of the appalling brutality the Jews had been through with the Holocaust. But an historic wrong was done to the Palestinians, with the loss of land and displacement of millions. President Clinton came closest to finding a solution whereby two states might coexist. But in the end it was not to be and the Palestinians have endured further years of pain and suffering, the Israelis too, but to a lesser scale in terms of lives lost. Israel with its huge influx of immigrants from Russia has since shifted markedly to the right and become more and more intransigent and this has been mirrored on the Palestinian side. It was clear that compared to South Africa with its Truth and Reconciliation process and with no one of the wisdom of a Mandela, both sides lacked true leadership. Development aid agencies, as ever, tried to pick up the pieces.

We organised a conference with the American Community Development Society in Mississippi, on community economic development. This was the 'deep south' and despite the huge improvements in civil rights since the 1960s, you could feel and see the divisions in wealth and opportunity between white and

black communities. We visited rural community development projects in the state and it felt very much like South Africa. The extremes of poverty and wealth were still, thirty years after the civil rights movement, there to be seen. A politically powerful black middle class certainly existed in the cities, but the rural south felt more like the global south. The US Community Development Society was doing some good work, networking primarily rural practitioners, researchers and trainers. But it too felt somewhat conservative, with a small 'c'. In the US it was clear that the radical community organising tradition that had developed since the 1960s was quite separate from the community development practice world, whereas in Britain they had been much closer.

At the end of the conference I was keen to have a break and with Gary Craig drove to Graceland, Elvis Presley's home. I'd loved his music since I had played a tennis racket in front of a mirror and slicked my hair back with Dad's brylcreem. I was quite moved by Graceland. It was not as glitzy as I had feared. And it was good to see Marxist Gary buying Elvis memorabilia in the gift shop next to the house. I then drove on to New Orleans to see some live jazz, blues and Cajun bands with Gilles Beauchamp, a Canadian community activist friend from Quebec province. Gilles had previously organised an outstanding international conference in Montreal, with which IACD was associated. Community development in Quebec was strong, and in many areas radical. Gilles had been actively involved organising poor communities in downtown Montreal. Indeed I got involved in one demonstration while there about the demolition of a poor housing district. It was at this conference that I also took the opportunity to visit Fort de l'Île Sainte-Hélène, where my great, great grandfather, William, had lived after coming to Canada in the 1840s.

It is a paradox that the Americans who run gas-guzzling

Finding our voice

cars have such low speed limits, not least on almost perfectly straight roads that run for hundreds of miles. It was along the main highway through Louisiana that out of nowhere appeared a police car flagging us down. I thought this was our Pulp Fiction moment. When I went to take my drivers' licence from my pocket, the smaller officer pulled his gun out and we were spread across the bonnet and searched. The smaller one did the talking while the other looked on hungrily. He said they were going to take us back to town to check my licence. A shard of brilliance entered my brain. We had just invaded Afghanistan and Tony Blair was becoming well known across the TV stations in the US as the one leader who had come out after 9/11 to stand shoulder by shoulder with our closest ally. I mentioned this, and after a call another car appeared with the Sheriff. We were photographed together, shoulder to shoulder, comrades in arms. We drove slowly after that. The cock crowed thrice.

Chapter 3

Hale-Bopp

Vespers

I met Natasha Valentinovna at an International Community Education Association conference in 1992. She was presenting an inspiring paper on community schools in Russia. Later that year, Natasha wrote to me inviting me to Moscow and St Petersburg to visit community education projects. While in St Petersburg, then just renamed, we had dinner with an opera singer friend and her elderly mother. The mother was still a proud Communist Party member. She had fought in the siege of Leningrad and, when she recalled that period, was in tears at the terrible ordeal its citizens had been through and during which one million civilians died.

Natasha was a teacher at one of the first community schools in Moscow and taught both children and adults. She also taught English at one of Moscow's institutes of higher education. Her earlier career however had been in acting and she had been in a couple of films in the early 1970s. She came from Saratov in southern Russia, east of the Ukraine, on the River Volga, not far from Volgograd, the former Stalingrad. Her mother's surname was French, and one of her ancestors had been in Napoleon's Grande Armée, which had invaded Russia in 1812. After victory at the Battle of Borodino, Napoleon reached Moscow, by then largely burnt by the departing Russians, but because of the

extremes of the Russian winter he had to retreat back to France. Many French soldiers deserted and stayed in Russia. One of which being an ancestor of Natasha's. I later visited a small palace outside Moscow where seemingly Napoleon had slept one night and Marshall Kutuzov, the Russian Commander-in-Chief, the next.

In April 1995 we got married at Edinburgh Registry office. This was followed with a blessing and in effect the large family gathering, in Kentmere, in the Lake District. Since the late 1960s, my sister Sue had friends, Morley and Sue Dobson, who owned a beautiful, if isolated, home there called Powt Howe. Morley was somewhat eccentric and reminded me of my former headmaster Major Butler. He introduced me to the songs of Alfred Dellar as we played chess. I had already fallen in love with the valley and surrounding fells, as it was just on the other side of the hills from my boarding school. I became friends with the couple's daughter, Olivia, (Morley being her step-father) whom I first met in 1967. Olivia was related in some way to both Virginia Woolf and Ralph Vaughan-Williams and was at a progressive private school near York. She, Chris, her boyfriend, Rowena and I, later shared a large Victorian house in Glasgow for a year or so.

Our 'third' wedding was in a monastery in Moscow. Although an atheist, I have nonetheless long been interested in religion. It has been used as an opiate of the masses by elites throughout history and, at its worst has been brutally cruel and exclusive; at its best, it has been a force for social cohesion, education, welfare and the arts, as Alain de Botton's fascinating book *Religion for Atheists* highlights. I especially loved the beauty of Russian church music – Rachmaninov's sublime *Vespers*, to be played at my funeral with full choir. Rachmaninov, according to the background notes on my 1965 Melodiya recording, was also not a religious man in the conventional sense and not a churchgoer for much of his life. But this music moves me deeply.

Natasha's seventeen-year-old son, Teimor, had been prevented from getting a British visa to attend the earlier wedding, so we wanted to share something with him. He, like Natasha, had been among the millions of Russians who had 'rediscovered' the church after the fall of communism. Out of respect for them we had an orthodox wedding and the ceremony and ritual were beautiful. Paulo Freire, who had influenced me in the early 1970s, worked for the World Council of Churches and was both a Marxist and a Catholic. I have known many colleagues in the development world who are Quakers or who work for faith-based foundations and agencies promoting social development.

We had huge difficulties getting a visa for Teimor to come to live with us in Edinburgh, even though he had been accepted for a degree at Herriot Watt University and I had married Natasha. He was incredibly able and had been offered a place straight onto the second year of a degree in computer science and advanced mathematics. I met with my MP, Alistair Darling, and something must have oiled the wheels as the visa came through just before our daughter, Holly Isadora, was born, on 13 September 1995. Before then we had interviews with social workers, checking to ensure ours was not a marriage of convenience and that my application to adopt Teimor was not a ruse. We were certainly concerned to get him out of Russia before he turned 18 in January 1996, as he could have been conscripted to serve in the brutal Chechen War.

Russia in the 1990s

I had visited Russia twice in the 1970s during the Brezhnev years, once in the mid 1980s, while Gorbachev was in power, and almost every year or two from the early 1990s until 2010. I loved the country and had travelled across much of urban and rural Russia. I was fascinated by it. Despite Stalin's dictatorship

and warping of socialism and the sclerotic Brezhnev years, Russians had much to be proud of, over and above their heroic struggles during the Revolution and the Second World War. It had world class scientists, high literacy rates, a generally good and free health service and its housing reconstruction programmes, after the almost total destruction of whole towns and cities by the Nazis, had been incredible. They had however adopted the same system build Corbusier-style housing estates, seen across Western cities, but built with very poor materials and most were seriously run down. Rural Russia looked as though it hadn't changed since the nineteenth century, with simple, yet beautiful wooden dachas. This was misleading however, as what villages there were, were usually attached to some state owned mega-farm and, while farming was not as technological as the West, they were certainly industrial farms on a grand scale, with high use of chemical fertilisers. For some years, however, Russia had to import grain from the West and its centralised state managed economy was clearly inefficient.

President Gorbachev was undermined by Western conservative governments in his attempts to move the centralised USSR economy gradually towards a more Scandinavian social democratic model. While Reagan and Thatcher would praise him for being someone they could work with – in other words he was open to transforming the 'evil empire' through Perestroika and Glasnost, and for ending Russia's military grip on central Europe, they were certainly not going to let him create a more humane and democratic socialism, just as they were busy dismantling that in their own backyards. Gorbachev failed to secure the Western financial support that might have allowed him to transform the Soviet economy and the state apparatus more gradually, and thereafter it suffered badly and at home he was seen as weak, a despised trait in a Russian leader. This allowed the constituent states and their leaders, primarily Yeltsin,

to walk, or in Yeltsin's case climb, on the tanks and into the limelight as nationalist saviours.

As the USSR broke up, Russian nationalism and xenophobia came to the fore. When we visited after 1992, it was noticeable that the black economy was rapidly taking off, with little market stalls and small enterprises mushrooming, but there was also a proliferation of BMWs and four-by-fours with dark tinted windows for the new wealthy elites. Following the model of the neo con 'revolution' in the West in the 1980s, there was mass privatisation of public housing stock and of nationalised industries. The new oligarchs, usually former soviet apparatchiks, together with Western financial partners asset-stripped the lot. During the Yeltsin and Putin years huge wealth was made by a tiny number of people, while the weakest, the disabled, pensioners and minority ethnic communities lost out badly. My mother-in-law Rima, who was a retired military aircraft designer, had the real value of her pension slashed to a handful of dollars a month. These were difficult years, with many older people hankering for the stability of the soviet period. Russia became a more dangerous place.

As with the central European countries, a new civil society emerged and we were keen to make contact with community activists there. A new civil society was developing, financially assisted and encouraged by Western philanthropists, governments and non-governmental organisations. Some of these supported local community action and I met with several community education and development workers over this period. Natasha and her close friend Helena Kolobova had been active in setting up Moscow's first community school, with advice from the International Community Education Association, based in Britain, and the Mott Foundation, based in the US. Helen's husband, Boris, ran a community puppet theatre. I recall one marvellous woman who had organised residents of former state

housing to create some sort of co-operative, similar to the tenant management schemes we had developed in Scotland.

During the Putin years Moscow became one of the most expensive cities in the world to purchase a house and the new gated communities that were being built were out of reach of those on low incomes. On the streets were the poor, the elderly, disabled ex-servicemen and ethnic minorities begging or selling meagre produce, cigarettes and clothes. These were not easy times for civil society and especially for community activists and, in the later Putin years, there was a crack-down on Western funding and tight regulation of civil society organisations. A colleague, Lilia Shevtsova, a political analyst, who worked for the Carnegie office in Moscow, when I ran Carnegie UK, and whom I brought over to Britain to speak with activists here, wrote an excellent book called *Putin's Russia*, which demonstrated once again the corrupting nature of elites with too much wealth and power. By the mid noughties, Putin controlled most of the country's media and independent broadcasters and newspapers had been closed. I still watch developments there closely, as my son Teimor and his young family live in Russia. There have been significant improvements in the lives of many, but poverty and the mortality rates among the poor have increased. The gap between the super-rich and the poor is, tragically, as great as it was before the Russian revolution. As I write, Russia has once again become both nationalist and expansionist, taking over the Crimea from the Ukraine. And nationalists on both sides are seeking to divide communities that have lived together for centuries. The US and EU are also being somewhat duplicitous, on the one hand wanting to expand the EU, on the other, as with Turkey, not really wanting Ukrainian citizens to join.

Dacha Sacha

A middle class did emerge, although in reality it had been there for years. We had very close friends who had a dacha just north of Moscow. Built in the 1950s, it was a huge and very comfortable detached house in which you could live all year round, with a large surrounding garden. The father of the family, who lived well into his nineties, had been quite a famous Russian biologist and it seems the whole village was made up of intellectuals – scientists who had decided to work with the system. Sometimes we would stay with friends at an artists' village, where the residents of all the dachas were painters, sculptures and the like. In effect these were villages segmented by occupation. Natasha's father Valentin had been quite a successful theatre and TV actor, but he had not towed the party line and was not a party member. She suspects that this was one of the reasons why she failed to progress in her own acting career. Valentin died of cancer a few years before I met Natasha. We visited his grave in Ulyanovsk, the birthplace of Lenin – someone he had often played and a man he respected. Valentin took Shakespeare to Siberia, acted in Russian TV crime series and performed as Father Frost in the Kremlin. Clearly he was a versatile and talented actor.

Over these years I became friends with teachers, artists, theatre producers and scientists. What I loved about going to their homes and dachas was that in Russia the intellectual class had survived. Their apartments were lined with books; they all played instruments, spoke English, and enjoyed endless discussions and debates, sitting outside on the veranda at a long table eating glorious dishes one after another and drinking too much Russian and Georgian wine and, of course, vodka and all smoking like chimneys. They were critical of life under the Communist Party, particularly the lack of an independent media, and of the 'blat' system of day-to-day corruption, which had become part

Finding our voice

of the very neurology of soviet life and now continued under capitalism. Yet they also recognised communism's strengths in its arts, education and science and felt a certain degree of loss. Most were critical of Putin and fearful of what he was putting in place. Some, like Natasha, turned to the church to find answers at a hugely traumatic time of social and economic change.

I especially liked Natasha's brother Sacha. He was an engineer. A very practical man, he had decided to build his own dacha as a weekend and summer hobby (over twenty years!). Luba his wife thought him mad. When I first visited them in Saratov, Sacha took us swimming in the Volga and, one dark night, we went out in a boat looking for people illegally fishing for sturgeon, the fish from which you get caviar. We paid off the police control with a bottle of vodka. It was from Sacha that I was really introduced to the depths of vodka. Vodka, like whisky, has many brands and flavours. Hundreds. And while knocking back in one freezing gulp what seemed like scores, I danced one evening to the accordion and also drank Russian champagne. This is a lethal mix and frankly I can't remember the next forty-eight hours. Luba's father was a remarkable man. He had fought at the battle of Stalingrad. He sang and played the accordion movingly and it was lovely just listening and watching Natasha's mother Rima and Luba's mother dance and teaching Holly, our little daughter. On New Year's Eve he always took out his Stalingrad rifle and fired a few shots out of the window. Like most Russians they lived in a high-rise apartment, so God knows if he ever hit anyone.

Into the Kremlin and the Livadia Palace

We managed to get into the Kremlin Christmas party one year. Natasha's father had played Father Frost, the soviet equivalent of Father Christmas, during Khrushchev's time and she used this

to wangle tickets to the inner sanctum of the Kremlin. All the trimmings had been there under communism – Father Frost, dressed in blue rather than red, decorated fir trees and snowmen. It's just that they were atheist Santas, trees and snowmen! There were puppet shows, ballet and singing, and of course mountains of presents. I felt slightly nervous at first as we handed over Holly, then aged four, to an elf and didn't get her back again for several hours. Actually we crept into the back of the theatre to check and she was perfectly happy, chatting to everybody in Russian.

Just before Holly's birth we went with friends Boris and Helen to Yalta in the Crimea. We stayed next to the Livadia Palace, where Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill had agreed the post-war order and the division of Europe sixty years earlier. It was there that the infamous Percentages Agreement was made between Stalin and Churchill about spheres of influence in central Europe. Churchill had suggested that the Soviet Union should have 90 per cent influence in Romania and 75 percent in Bulgaria; the UK should have 90 per cent in Greece; and in Hungary and Yugoslavia they should have 50 per cent each. Churchill wrote this on a piece of paper which he pushed across to Stalin, who ticked it off and passed it back. *"Might it not be thought rather cynical if it seemed we had disposed of these issues so fateful to millions of people in such an offhand manner? Let us burn the paper"*, said Churchill. *"No, you keep it,"* replied Stalin.

While in Yalta we wanted to visit the house where Chekhov had gone to try to recover from tuberculosis, dying there in 1904. We had an incident on the way to Chekhov's house. Clearly the taxi driver had no idea where it was and tried to drop us off in the middle of nowhere. I argued and he pulled out a gun. My irritatingly stupid gene took over and I said he wouldn't get a kopek until he tried to find the place. We compromised! Later we visited Chekhov's beautiful country estate of Melikhovo, about forty miles south of Moscow, where he had lived with his

Finding our voice

extended family. I was very keen at the time to see if we might buy a dacha there and to get involved in restoring the village and museum, which was pretty run down. Chekhov was a doctor and as well as organising relief for victims of famine and cholera outbreaks, he built schools and a clinic and was clearly an early community education and development activist.

Little Boy and Girla

We decided to bring Holly up to be bi-lingual. She was inquiring, chatty and imaginative. I made up long stories for her about two tiny characters, little boy and girla, who went on magical adventures. These stories went on until she was 12! The only characters who came this close in terms of Holly's attention were Harry, Hermione and Ron. The phenomenon that is *Harry Potter* was slightly older than Holly, although she caught up chronologically as the JK Rowling's books became tapes and films, to be devoured as soon as they came out. Holly too was a great storyteller with a vivid and often bloodthirsty imagination. I have a video of her aged four walking the lanes of Robin Hood's Bay, near Whitby in Yorkshire, recalling how one by one each of our relatives had died – aunts, uncles, the lot, including her alter ego and imaginative friend Isadora. Count Dracula, that other creation from Whitby paled by comparison.

Our new house in Perthshire was a former manse, or vicarage. It had a large walled garden and backed on to the Lomond Hills, with the beautiful village of Falkland about six miles away on the other side. We ate borscht, rye bread and gherkins and drank Georgian wine and vodka in the garden when weather permitted, creating the feel of a Russian dacha. Holly, usually barefoot, and I often walked or cycled to Falkland, with little boy and girla as our constant companions. And with Natasha we learnt the skills of mushrooming, returning home for a feast

of nature's gift. We didn't watch TV much, preferring Russian cartoons and films made during the soviet era. They were incredibly creative and far more beautiful than the Disney genre I had been brought up with. Natasha also introduced me to the films of Nikita Mikhalkov and we saw the moving *Burnt by the Sun* premiered at the Edinburgh Film Festival. The film depicts the story of a senior Red Army officer and Revolutionary hero killed during the Great Purge of the late 1930s.

The Council

I had spent several years at the Community Development Foundation, working alongside tremendous colleagues. We had established CDF not only as Britain's national centre advising on policy and practice, but also as a significant European project development agency and think tank. But in 1993 the opportunity had arisen to become the Chief Executive of the Scottish Community Education Council in Edinburgh.

I had mixed feelings about the move. I had greatly enjoyed working with CDF, especially the international work, and at my interview I emphasised that I wanted SCEC to have an extensive international profile and programme. I was also keen to see if we could at last bring together the two traditions of community education and community development, which had developed in Britain and internationally as slightly different, though complementary areas of practice. For me they had long been a part of the same process, concerned with people empowerment at the grassroots. They were separately quite small occupational areas in terms of the numbers of practitioners. As I had written ten years earlier, combined they would have a stronger voice and more influence in terms of public policy. The challenge was to forge that synthesis and there was no better part of Britain to realise that than Scotland. Like CDF, SCEC advised the government

(in this case, Scotland's) and supported fieldwork practitioners and managers. It did not run local demonstration projects. But it did have the additional government appointed responsibility for endorsing and validating professional training and, unlike CDF, it ran national public education programmes. Indeed for a while it had its own recording studio and radio programme, and we published a regular magazine supplement in the Scotland's largest selling newspaper, the *Daily Record*. This continued my now firm belief that community education and development practitioners should link up with local and national media. At SCEC, we regularly did this, harnessing the power of the mass media to promote and publicise campaigns, which local workers could work with on the ground. Newspapers like the *Daily Record* and the BBC were tremendous partners, enabling us to reach numbers of people local action alone would never reach. Band Aid and organisations like Greenpeace had long recognised this.

In many senses it had far better antennae with the field than CDF. It provided the secretariat for a number of national practitioner bodies, including the influential local authority community education senior managers. Scotland of course had a tenth of the population of England, and far fewer organisations involved in community education and development, so it was possible to forge much closer personal relationships far more easily. This included with government ministers and senior civil servants. It also had proportionally far more practitioners employed by local authorities and I had the advantage of having worked in Scotland already and knew many of these key players. I did however have a dilemma. I had just spent five years setting up Britain's national centre to promote community development, and indeed been on the panel that had appointed the Manager of CDF's Scottish office, Stuart Hashigan. Both SCEC and CDF's Scottish office, subsequently called the Scottish Community Development Centre, sought to be the agency that would advise

government, community education and development employers and fieldworkers. We quickly agreed a complementary modus operandi, whereby SCEC would be the main interface with the government's Scottish Office in Edinburgh, being a Scottish quango. SCDC, as part of CDE, being a British-wide quango, would be the main interface with its sponsoring department, the Home Office in London. SCEC would oversee professional training and the links with the main employer networks, while SCDC would lead on research and we would both publish and provide an array of short courses and events to help promote good practice. On the publications front, SCEC took the lead, during my time as CEO, in publishing three refereed journals and a magazine for practitioners called *CONCEPT*. Over the decade I headed up Scotland's national community education agency, we almost always worked collaboratively on policy advocacy, publications and training with a wide range of partners.

For our work advising ministers and bodies like COSLA (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities) and supporting community education and development practitioners, we had three main specialist teams – for work with young people, for work with community groups, and for work around community based adult learning, including what was then called adult basic education, or literacy education. We had a library/information centre and our head office was centrally located in Edinburgh, in the same building as COSLA. In addition to these teams, the first new development I introduced was an international unit run by Bob Payne, whom I appointed as our International Director. Bob built upon work initiated by Marc Liddle, my deputy CEO, around youth information and participation. This work came to the attention of the European Commission and in 1994 the Commission provided us with the funds to open SCEC's second office, in Brussels, as the hub for what became a European-wide network of Eurodesk information centres. Eurodesk, now an

Finding our voice

independent non-governmental organisation, is still active with offices across all Council of Europe member countries.

On the international front we managed an educational exchanges grants programme, enabling young people to have experiences of visiting and working in communities in other parts of Europe. We also organised the first Commonwealth Youth Forum, in 1997, securing the funds to bring a hundred and fifty young activists from the Commonwealth's 53 countries to Edinburgh, to devise and present a declaration on what they saw as the key challenges facing young people to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Edinburgh and in so doing to meet President Mandela. The Commonwealth Youth Forum has since gone from strength to strength and is now a permanent feature of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and is supported by the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Youth issues

Marc Liddle was also the inspiration behind Young Scot, a youth information service provided to all school leavers; the Scottish Youth Parliament and local youth councils; and of the Scottish Youth Issues Unit. The intention of the Youth Issues Unit, was to identify the sorts of issues young people were concerned about and then to support their involvement in tackling these, working with youth workers, other public service professionals such as the police and health workers and with the media. Young Scot and the Scottish Youth Parliament and local youth councils became hugely successful and over the years these ideas were replicated widely across Britain and Europe.

The empowerment of young people had always been a strong feature of community education and development work. My first job in a community school had been with teenagers and I had always seen youth and community work as very close in

practice. Some of the most innovative participatory techniques and education for democracy programmes were designed with young people. And it was these teenagers who within a couple of years would be in the workforce or, during the Thatcher years, probably unemployed. With high youth unemployment and the collapse of apprenticeships in the 1980s, too many young people were also not being introduced to the world of work or to trades unions, a major source of political education and organisation since industrial workers first started to '*educate, agitate and organise*'. Young Scot, the Scottish Youth Parliament and local youth councils could perhaps fill this learning and action gap.

As I had witnessed most clearly when standing for Parliament in 1983, the Labour movement, trades unions and co-ops, once so central to the lives of Scottish working class communities, now held little attraction to young people. According to sociologists, one of the paradoxes of the post-war welfare state and affluence, was that the very organisations that had struggled to achieve these and had knitted communities together, now started to fall dramatically in membership, due also to the Thatcher government's anti-union policies and the pleasures of the mass media – why go out to a meeting, when you could stay at home watching football, a soap or laugh at some comedian? It made a lot of sense. Or did it? Young Scot and the Youth Parliament and local youth councils, demonstrated that, while albeit a minority, young people still wanted to meet and to discuss issues of importance and to take joint action around them.

Traditional youth organisations had fallen in membership, but new ones, often around single issues, were emerging. And organisations like the Scouts and Guides were modernising and were willing to tackle social issues previously seen as political. It was in the late 1980s that it also began to dawn on me that the ICT revolution, and what later came to be termed social networking, could become one of the most powerful tools for

community education and development work with young people.

Young people were leading the way. Their interest in single issue organising, such as the environment, and expertise in information technology was growing and might perhaps be the key to them becoming more widely aware and active in their communities and beyond. The ICT revolution was well underway by the 1990s, thanks to Briton Tim Berners Lee's gift of the World Wide Web and the penetration of the user-friendly Windows operating system developed by American Bill Gates. These two are an interesting contrast. Both are my generation. The former gifted the Web to humanity; the latter, became the richest man in the world and then preceded to give most of it away as the greatest living philanthropist. Together they stimulated a revolution in communications far more rapid than the industrial revolution. As an undergraduate the computer I had used had been the size of a car; wire-less phones were for the wealthy and, if available, could barely be used in the garden, as you needed to be near the house to pick up a signal and anyway were the size of a brick.

For those of us working in community education and development work, these new technologies presented huge opportunities and SCEC played an important role in promoting them in Scotland. I was appointed by the Labour government to Chair the Scottish National Grid for Community Learning Committee. One output of this was the launch of Scotland's online Community Channel. The National Grid for Learning was launched by the Labour government in 1998, to ensure that the educational benefits of information and communication technology were available to the wider community. The growing digital divide had become a major concern as poorer people were unable to purchase the new technologies. Digital Inclusion Champions' teams were set up to accelerate the roll-out of ICT in deprived communities and we ran in-service training programmes for

community education and development workers to help them to become more IT savvy. We were also able to connect several thousand homes in disadvantaged areas to the internet and, to make hundreds of free laptops available to community groups in deprived neighbourhoods.

Sustainable and joined-up

I appointed Alex Downie as director to lead on community development. Alex had previously worked for the Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations in Perth and was keen to expand our work around rural and environmental issues. He wanted us to build a close link with two organisations in particular. The first was the Advisory Group on Sustainable Development and its small staff team. The Advisory Group, which had been established by the Secretary of State for Scotland, had begun to influence the government, local authorities and others in promoting the sustainable development agenda. In 1997 the Labour government had set out a challenge to each local authority to have a Local Agenda 21 plan by the end of 2000. Alex and his unit did work with them and with rural local authorities in ensuring that local communities were mobilised to be partners. We also supported the work of a new sustainability education initiative led by one of the community education lecturers at Strathclyde University, Geoff Fagan, called CADISPA (Conservation and Development in Sparsely Populated Areas). This encouraged community education and development workers to help people in rural Scotland to build more sustainable and resilient communities. We organised a national conference on environmental and sustainability education and Alex launched a series of Research and Practice Papers.

Alex was also successful in securing for SCEC the secretariat, plus a staff member, for the Scottish Association of Community

Councils. Community councils in Scotland are similar to parish or town councils in England. These councils have little money or service delivery functions, but they do have statutory consultative rights with regards to town and country planning issues, as elected representatives for their communities. They were set up gradually across Scotland from 1974. Indeed I ended up chairing the one for my own community. They each covered a specific geographic area and a population of several thousand. In urban areas they represented identifiable neighbourhoods. Sadly few people voted in community council elections and they were not well publicised or known about. We worked with the Association to increase public interest, including seeking to create a single election day for all community councils, as with District and Regional Councils, in order to increase voter turnout.

All of this work started our interest in the notion of community planning. Community planning was an idea born out of a mix of corporate management and community participation theories and practice. In Britain, as in many countries, it is local government that is responsible for planning, delivering or increasingly monitoring and regulating public services for their area. Local councils are after all democratically elected. In the 1980s there had been a huge tension between the Thatcher government, which perhaps paradoxically was highly centralist, and defiant local areas that kept electing Labour councils. Her solution was to either abolish the councils, as she had done for London, or to re-organise and gerrymander their boundaries, as the Conservative government had done for such councils as Strathclyde. And, in addition, they had taken functions and responsibilities away from local councils and passed them over to unelected private companies and charities. Rather than coherent planning and service delivery, this had often led to increases in costs, reduced employee salaries (excepting senior management) and duplication, as the so called 'market competition' model was

brought into the delivery of local public services.

Labour, when returned to office in 1997, had a different approach, but was unable to afford to undo eighteen years of privatisation and fragmentation. Britain's democratic socialism had long been infused with two strong principles – local democracy and, hopefully, a rational and co-ordinated approach to town and country planning. Before the first majority Labour government, in 1945, the party had strong representation for fifty years at local council level and been the pioneers of municipal socialism. Fabians such as GDH Cole, who had influenced me greatly as a student, had been among the strongest proponents of this approach. Some others in the party at that time, notably Herbert Morrison, were advocates of national State planning and nationalised ownership of what had previously often been privately owned or run by municipalities. In terms of the public utilities and major industrial and distribution sectors, national ownership, planning and management won the day. But the role of local councils was also always seen as central to Labour's post-war approach to building a social democracy.

The Attlee government's town and country planning legislation created the post-war planning profession, with town planners employed by local councils. At its best this was to be a more rational and co-ordinated, or now, in New Labour's language – joined up, approach to strategic and local land use planning and to the planning and delivery of public services for a given geographic area. At its worst, it had led to some of the pretty awful social engineering and urban planning disasters of the 1950s and 1960s. Generally when it went wrong, it was because we had planning but little public participation in the planning process, or because of local political corruption, such as the Poulson scandal. By the 1960s, the planning professionals had too much power. The Wilson government had tried to redress this with the 1969 *Skeffington Report* on public participation in planning;

an early set text for those working in community development.

By 1997 a new idea was gaining currency, called community planning. The key difference between community planning and past approaches to town and country planning, in the 1960s and 1970s, was that since the Thatcher government had privatised so many previously local council run services as well as almost all of the public utilities, it was now much more difficult to get a joined up approach between all of these various public, private and charity players in serving the public. Non-governmental charitable organisations were service providers in a big way, especially in the housing and social care fields and there were a myriad of for-profit private sector service suppliers and providers. In Scotland, community planning was piloted and advocated by the dynamic Chief Executive of Stirling City Council, Keith Yates. Alex knew Keith and was keen for SCEC to be playing a public education role in promoting community planning, and we organised the first national conference in Scotland. We were subsequently asked by the government to run a staff development programme across Scotland for all local councils and their agency partners, on the role that community education and development could play in engaging active community involvement in the community planning processes for their locality.

Community planning envisaged the role of the democratically elected local authority as the orchestrator, conducting these often disparate players, to move from a so called 'free market' cacophony, to a more cost effective, joined up melodiousness. But as well as forging greater agency co-ordination, the key principle was the engagement of local people and service users. This was where community education and development was so vital. Subsequently community or neighbourhood planning has been adopted across Britain. The recent savage cuts in community education and development posts by the current Conservative/Liberal government has made efforts to engage local people

and service users in the planning process much more difficult. The current British government now only allocates meagre £7 million across the whole of England for public participation in neighbourhood planning.

Community practice

Our work on community planning highlighted more than ever the need to add community education and development skills and insights to the training of the many professionals who impacted upon people's lives – from health workers, to town planners and architects. While I believed strongly that we needed people specifically trained as community education and development workers, and whose sole job it was to work for local communities. We also needed to support many other professionals who were players in poverty reduction, urban and rural regeneration, democracy building and environmental protection. David Thomas's excellent book *The Making of Community Work*, had asserted that community work was most closely linked with social work, rather than community education. For years there had indeed been a sort of turf war between those who came more from a radical education tradition and those from a radical social work tradition, as to whether community work was more one or the other. Of course it was both, and indeed part of a radical planning, radical health and a radical arts tradition too, and more. Community education and development was an approach that emphasised people empowerment rather than dependency, and where highly skilled professionals would not seek to mystify the people they were working with, through elitist jargon and professional distance.

The challenge was how best to enhance their ways of working in empowering ways. When I had been involved in designing the first professional community education courses in Scotland

Finding our voice

in the 1970s, our thinking was that people already trained in one discipline, might do a second, post-graduate, course in community education, in the way that a graduate historian or geographer, might go on to take a second post-graduate teaching certificate, in order to teach that subject in schools. But for most professionals in work, and especially from the 1980s on when unemployment was growing, they needed more flexible ways of accessing in-service and continuing professional development support. This was very much the approach we had adopted at the Community Development Foundation. But none of these bite sized bits of training were externally validated and it was difficult to tell the quality of the training provided. Dozens of independent organisations and consultants sprung up at this time offering such training support. Some of it was excellent. Some pretty poor. We wanted to be able to signpost people to the best. In my view this suggested some sort of kite-marking, not to monopolise training provision, that would be impossible, but also not to devalue the hard won currency of years of good community education and development practice, by organisations offering poor training.

Paul Henderson, still at CDF, proposed that we should adopt the term community practice, to describe this wider range of people with other professional disciplines, who wanted to work in this way. I thought this was a good idea and agreed that through SCEC's role in validating and endorsing professional training, we should publish guidance for training providers in this area and provide a way of endorsing their training programmes. The term community practice never really got traction and not long after we published the guidance, I had moved jobs, but this initiative did influence parallel work we were doing to develop occupational standards.

Celebrating lifelong learning

Our third team focussed upon promoting community based adult learning. The director I brought in here was an old colleague from the Workers' Educational Association, Colin Kirkwood, who was an inspiring adult educator and writer. I had known Colin since the mid-1970s, when he had written a positive review of my first book back and later an obnoxious review of my second. He is a dear friend and fellow hill walker. Colin sadly only stayed with SCEC for about a year, before moving to Edinburgh University. He was, however, instrumental in bringing together a working group that produced a highly challenging report we published in 1995 called *Scotland: The Learning Society?* This was critical of what we saw as the complacently held myths about the Scottish education system. The report was co-written by Professor Tom Schuller, from Edinburgh University. Tom had worked for the OECD on lifelong learning, been a Labour councillor in Glasgow, and was part of the same walking group. Another co-author was Fraser Patrick, then an Assistant Director of Education with Tayside Regional Council. A strong advocate of Paulo Freire's work, Fraser had brought Freire over to Scotland to meet with community education and development workers. Fraser was also a SCEC Board member. The report caused quite a stir, with positive articles and editorials in the Scottish broadsheets and the educational press. This report became the manifesto for SCEC's work on adult education.

Another timely part of our profile-raising was the European Year of Lifelong Learning. I have written already of the useful role that the EU can play in influencing national government policies and programmes. Each year the EU, or other international bodies such as the UN, designated a year for this or that issue. The Conservatives, under John Major, were still in power. Part of their governor-generalship of this unruly socialist

province was Lord James Douglas-Hamilton, the Minister of Education in Scotland. Douglas-Hamilton was a noblesse oblige aristocratic Tory, who on every occasion I ever heard him speak, reminded the audience that he had caddied for the Vice-Chair of SCEC's Board. Caddying for the uninitiated is the carrying of a golfer's balls and clubs! We appointed Fiona Blacke to replace Colin. And it was Fiona who took the initiative in ensuring that SCEC became the lead player to organise the European Year of Lifelong Learning in Scotland. This was quite a coup. We, after all, represented the poor cousin of the Scottish education system. Besides schools, the big players were the universities and the FE colleges. Fiona did a wonderful job forging together a partnership with all of the key agencies and, in doing so, highlighted the critical importance of community-based education in helping those who had been failed by the formal system back onto the ladder of lifelong learning.

Fiona's deputy, Fiona Boucher, also ran the Scottish end of a Britain-wide celebratory programme called Adult Learners' Week. Initiated by the National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education, this week in the annual education calendar was what it said on the tin, a celebration of adult learners and of the joys of learning for individuals and communities. It was wonderful seeing these learners' faces highlighted on the sides of buses and in posters across the country as part of our national publicity campaign. Linked to this work the BBC presenter, Kirsty Walk, compered a major international conference we ran at the International Conference Centre in Edinburgh. Many such celebrities supported our work in raising the profile of the importance of second chance adult learning.

Controversy

When the Conservatives were in power, we had difficulties around the issue of profiling disadvantage. During the Thatcher years, words like poverty and disadvantage rarely appeared in the public policy lexicon. I wanted to challenge this. We published an excellent book by John Nesbitt and Joyce Watt on educational disadvantage in Scotland. This highlighted the growing levels of disadvantage and educational inequality in Scotland, examined the nature of social exclusion and explored the various strategies used to reduce it. It proposed new priorities around early education, school and community education. The book received positive reviews, but not from government ministers nor from the chair of my Board.

I was determined that we should be publishing the evidence for growing inequalities, however embarrassing for the government, but my problem was that SCEC, as a quasi-governmental agency, had a board appointed by the government and some, including my chair, were uncomfortable that the agency was becoming too radical. Fortunately, the research was evidence-based and well argued. But it was clear that my Conservative government-appointed chair, Barbara Vaughan, was not happy and she told me so. I should say that in other areas Barbara was very supportive and personally we got on well. After that I made a presentation on our work to the Conservative Party education group in Scotland, using all of my boarding school social skills.

Another area where I incurred criticism was just prior to the 1997 general election. I was keen to encourage a public discussion about the policies of the main political parties on community education and development in the lead-up to the election. We published a front-page piece on Labour's approach and it was considered to be partisan – although we did likewise for the Tories, Liberals and the SNP. And I had mischievous fun

Finding our voice

at the first SCEC board meeting after the 1997 general election, in formally proposing that the new clause four of Labour's constitution should guide our work *"by the strength of our common endeavour, we achieve more than we achieve alone, so as to create for each of us the means to realise our true potential and for all of us a community in which power, wealth and opportunity are in the hands of the many, not the few"*. I was certainly not neutral as a CEO and did all I could to provide resources and a platform for progressive writers, policies and practice at SCEC. When a Labour government returned to office after eighteen years, there was much to do to and I was determined to position the agency as pro-actively as possible with the new Ministers. I was particularly keen for us to focus upon three major policy areas: increasing opportunities among disadvantaged people for lifelong learning; addressing growing inequalities and social exclusion; and having a real push on promoting active citizenship and citizenship education.

1997 Hoorah!

Two important events happened in 1997. The first was Hale-Bopp the comet; the second was the election of a Labour government after eighteen years. Both lit up my life. Labour was elected with a landslide and it was people of my generation who were leading it. For months Hale-Bopp shone brighter than any star and its dust tail stretched across the sky. And then came May 1997. We were living in Gordon Brown's constituency and together with Holly, aged nearly two and smothered in a red rosette, we met him on Election Day, mobile in hand, no doubt ringing the Bank of England.

Much has been written about the Blair government, less as yet about the Brown years. I found Blair, with his charisma, catching; Brown less so although he was clearly a huge intellect. And I was glad that it was Gordon Brown who was around when

the bubble burst in 2008-09. Paul Krugman, the Nobel Prize winner for economics, has written that Brown probably saved the world's financial system through the actions he convinced the major economies to take – somewhat a tad hyperbolic, but he was certainly the right man for the moment. It is only tragic that Brown and other progressive leaders did not re-regulate global finance capitalism much earlier. It might just have been possible, when Bill Clinton was in power in the 1990s, to have put in place a new Bretton Woods global agreement and to have prevented the quasi-criminal activities of the bankers and finance sector. But, with the neo cons controlling the US Congress in the latter Clinton years and the Presidency, under George W Bush from 2000, such regulation would have been blocked by the conservatives there. Indeed it has been one of the great Conservative hypocrisies that Labour should take the criticism for failing to regulate financial capitalism. It was the Conservatives who had deregulated it in the first place in the 1980s, and, through the right wing press and in parliament, it was they who constantly harked on about regulation as red tape and how it should be further scrapped. Labour should have regulated it, but in the context of global financial capitalism in the noughties, would never have been able to so, much as those of us on the left had long been arguing that this casino greed was heading us all towards the rocks.

Much had happened in the Labour Party to renew it in the years since 1983, when I had stood for Parliament. It had become far more democratic and had begun women-only selections for MPs, to right the wrongs of generations of male domination of the party and parliament. It had successfully reached out to a younger generation and embraced communitarian ideas. A large number of the new intake of Labour MPs had been community activists or had worked in the community education and development field. Tony Blair put *“Education,*

Education, Education” at the top of his domestic policy agenda and was strongly committed to strengthening communities through a New Deal for Communities and to what the government now termed social justice. These were not new priorities for Labour, but they were dressed in a new language.

New Labour was impatient, and wanted to see ‘outcomes’. For community education and development work, outcomes meant, for example, more jobs created, children taken out of poverty, environments cleaned up, and adults taken out of illiteracy. The spotlight would now be upon community education and development to deliver and the government’s funding would be linked to this both within Britain and through its overseas development aid. Blair and Brown were in the lead of international leaders pushing for concrete and measurable UN Millennium Development Goals. In Scotland, we were well-placed, as a quasi-governmental agency, to be asked to take a significant role in these areas working with others.

Citizenship education

One example perhaps highlights our influence at this time. This was around citizenship education. In England the Labour Secretary of State for Education, David Blunkett, had been a strong supporter of community education and development when he had run Sheffield City Council in the early 1980s. I had taken a group of students from Dundee to visit Sheffield then and, like many, I had warmed to him immediately. Blunkett established a national committee under Professor Bernard Crick to advise on how primary and secondary schools could play a stronger role in enabling young people to become more politically literate and active within their communities. Crick had taught Blunkett politics as a student and had been the external examiner for my politics degree, when I had first met him. This was a thorny

policy area, with predictable criticism in the right wing press that Blunkett was pushing left wing political ideas through schools. In one sense he was; a politically literate and active society had long been a keystone of democratic socialism, where young people really do understand the practical importance of such values as democracy and their rights and responsibilities within their communities and to the wider global community.

Scotland had a separate educational system and had different Ministers in charge. They were slower off the mark, being largely taken up with preparing the legislation that would create the new Scottish Parliament in 1999. There was also what I felt was some complacency among much of the educational establishment, (including the teaching unions) that we didn't need such an initiative in Scotland and certainly not a new subject called citizenship education that would somehow take time away from the Scottish obsession with passing exams. It was argued that through what was called modern studies, there already existed a subject on the school curriculum that covered citizenship education, but it was not compulsory, so not all young people took the course.

A working party was set up to examine the issue, chaired by Professor Pamela Munn, a progressive academic at Edinburgh University whom I had worked with before. Its secretariat was Learning and Teaching Scotland, a national quango with responsibility for supporting the school curriculum and teacher staff development. I was invited to join this working party and, being eighteen months or so behind the Crick Committee, we had the advantage of being able to use much of the Crick research and work on curriculum content. This influenced our thinking on what knowledge, skills and attitudes we felt that Scottish schools should be imbibing. Where the Munn Committee differed with Crick was in not recommending a new core subject for all children called citizenship education. Rather, we argued that

modern studies had to be updated and that other subject areas, such as history or even maths, should also have a responsibility and role in supporting young people to become more politically literate and active citizens. For me in some sense there was a déjà vu feeling in terms of similar work I had been involved in around consumer education. But this time the government was far more determined that, whatever we called it, education for citizenship and indeed active citizenship, should be taught in all Scottish schools.

We also went further than England by establishing a parallel committee, convened by SCEC, which focussed upon the complementary role that community education and development workers would play, in partnership with teachers, to create meaningful opportunities for young people's involvement in practical community action. In other words, that citizenship education would not end up as some boring abstract classroom-based subject to be run on a wet Wednesday afternoon and not taken seriously by either teachers or students. Bernard Crick, who by then had moved to live in Scotland, was a member of the SCEC committee and I wrote its report. Teachers in primary and secondary schools would now be positively encouraged and supported to work with community education and development workers across Scotland, to help young people to become more politically literate and active in their communities. It was over twenty years since I had written my book on politicising the poor, ten since my work on consumer education, and now we had at long last managed to get this into the education mainstream. Radical education for me was never simply just about creating comprehensives and widening access into lifelong education: it was also vitally about the curriculum content and how learning was more applied in the real world.

I also argued that the government should go further, by introducing a programme of one year's compulsory community

service for all young people to be carried out from the age of 18. As Prime Minister, Gordon Brown dabbled with a version of such a scheme then dropped the idea. I had long felt that this would not only support communities in Scotland and overseas – from environmental initiatives to inter-generational social care projects, but would bring together young people of different social classes. This included requiring 18 year-olds from private schools having placements in poor communities, thus raising their awareness and, hopefully, empathy towards the realities of poverty and wanting to do something to abolish it. This would, I argued, help young people to acquire practical skills, mature them and give them an experience that would change their lives. Britain had agencies, such as Voluntary Service Overseas and Community Service Volunteers, with huge experience in this area and, I had no doubt, such a scheme could have been introduced had the government had the will to pay for it – and it would not have cost much. The rewards for individuals and communities would have been more than worth the investment.

PAULO

One of the most important initiatives I was involved in during the New Labour years was the establishment of Britain's first national occupational training standards body for community education and development workers, established after two years hard negotiations in 1999. SCEC already had responsibility for the validation and endorsement of professional graduate and post graduate training and for the recognition of all professionals practicing in Scotland, but there were also practitioners who moved to work in Scotland and who had not been trained there. Being part of Britain and the EU, there was a need to have in place reciprocal arrangements that ensured free movement of labour, and so that people trained in Scotland could practice

anywhere across the EU. Thousands more, trained here, worked overseas. Having worked for CDF, I knew many of the players in other parts of Britain and had already cultivated strong partnerships with the unions, professional associations and employer bodies. The main trades union, the Community and Youth Workers Union, had in its general secretary, Doug Nicholls, a fellow spirit, and we worked closely to ensure that professional staff interests were well represented in the new British-wide standards body. Other key players were Dick Ellison, from the Federation of Community Work Training Groups, who like me wanted to include community development alongside other community education occupations rather than with the national body for social care that was also being established; and Pat Ledwith and Anthony Lawton, from the National Youth Agency, who likewise felt strongly that youth workers should join this group. These three led with me on presenting our submission to the government.

The Labour government had put high on its agenda for economic renewal and for getting people out of poverty, the need to create jobs and to enhance skills training in the British labour market. This was again led by the British Secretary of State for Education and Employment, David Blunkett. He announced that National Training Organisations (NTOs) would be set up for discrete occupational sectors, that they would have the power and the funding to set occupational and training standards for their sector, and carry out futures forecasting to identify the training needs of practitioners over the coming decade. Here at last was the opportunity to get community education and development practice out of the shadows and officially recognised as a discrete professional sector. I took the lead on this from Scotland, and we successfully forged together a British-wide coalition of employers, unions, professional associations and training interests to form the new body. In January 1999

Blunkett formally recognised PAULO, the NTO for community learning and development. The civil servants thought it was an acronym. It was of course named in honour of Paulo Freire. I served as its first chair.

At last we had an organisation, recognised by the British government, all the devolved administrations, the employers, trades unions and professional associations, concerned with the professional training standards of an occupational sector that employed some 30,000 full-time and over a quarter of a million part-time paid staff across the country. PAULO embraced community educators, development educators, community development workers, youth and community workers, youth workers and community-based adult educators. Social workers had already achieved recognition as a profession in Britain in the 1950s, and teachers many decades before that. Now we too had a recognised professional employment sector. This was, to my knowledge, the first body of its kind anywhere in the world. My book, *Community Learning and Development: The Making of an Empowering Profession*, documents the emergence of this new profession.

It was not long after we established PAULO, that a Scottish Cabinet Minister took me to one side after a conference, where I had spoken of the need for a community education and development approach to inform the work of all government ministries. She said that this was just what she wanted to hear and that the Cabinet was thinking of setting up a new executive agency, that would bring together the work of a number of quangos and civil servants to drive the regeneration of the country's deprived urban and rural communities – and she wanted us in it. I was assured that we would be an important part of the new agency and that I was not to worry about the bonfire of the quangos, which the new Labour/Liberal government in Scotland had just announced and which included the national community education agency of which I was the CEO!

Finding our voice

However, by the time the new agency, called Communities Scotland, had been set up, most of my staff had to be made redundant or had departed for other jobs. Frankly the whole exercise was handled ineptly by the civil servants. We managed to create three new non-governmental development centres to continue some of the national community education agency's work, but a brilliant team had been dismantled and there was collateral damage in the sense of reduced support for the field for several years thereafter. A handful of my staff transferred to Communities Scotland and they punched above their weight, but their influence overall was limited. I became the Head of Community Learning and Development in the new government. It was a hugely depressing low so soon after the high of the creation of PAULO. Communities Scotland was closed five years later by the SNP government when it came to power in 2007.

Investing in people

During the Blair and Brown years, the Labour government invested significantly in education and in programmes, to support the regeneration of Britain's neglected inner cities and peripheral housing estates and, to support community cohesion after the difficult days of the inner city race riots in the 1980s. Britain's towns and cities were transformed during Labour's 13 years in office. Local communities across Britain were supported, as never before, to be engaged in and consulted about these regeneration programmes, assisted through the creation of large numbers of community education and development posts (with a myriad of job titles). Most of these posts were created by way of funding programmes for the non-governmental sector, as well as directly by local authorities, through programmes such as the government's New Deal for Communities.

Largely due to a buoyant economy and to public-private partnerships, these years witnessed major investments in infrastructure – new and refurbished schools, colleges, community learning centres, after years of neglect under the Conservatives. PAULO was central to Labour's skills strategy for ensuring well trained community education and development staff and for preparing the sector to invest in its 'people', through labour market forecasting and continuing professional development. In 2002, PAULO came together, as a discrete pillar, with the NTOs for higher education, for further education and for the libraries and information professionals, into what was called the Lifelong Learning UK Sector Skills Council. Labour's aim of supporting more people into continuing education, both vocational and academic, hugely increased the percentage of young people going to colleges and universities. In the 1960s fewer than one in seven of school leavers had gone on to get a graduate level qualification, now almost 40 per cent of young people were doing so. The political right argued that Labour had simply dumbed down school and post school qualifications, but there is little evidence that this was the case. In effect these expanded educational opportunities enabled more and more young people to discover their talents and thereby to enrich society, the economy and themselves.

This expansion, however, presented challenges. The first was the capacity of colleges, universities, community and workplace learning - to take on the huge increase in the number of people continuing their education; in terms of the physical places – the buildings and the staff. The buildings took time to build or to be modernised and now remain a significant legacy. New staff were trained and recruited, but again this took time. Staffing levels and training budgets had been severely cut in the 18 years of Conservative governments. Managers in the public sector were also now encouraged, through programmes such as IIP (Investors

in People), to adopt enabling management styles. And this was where bodies like PAULO and the lifelong learning Sector Skills Council played such a vital role. In advocating, as we had done for many years, for a more participative democracy, this way of looking at the world also needed to influence the ways in which the expansion in public services, were delivered and managed. PAULO and the lifelong learning Sector Skills Council played a central role in influencing and supporting this change in public service culture.

Braveheart

In Scotland the progress was similar, although from 1999 – 2007 we had a Labour/Liberal coalition government, and from 2007 a Scottish Nationalist one. Scotland was an exciting place to live and work in the late nineties and noughties. I had colleagues and friends who were members of the Scottish Constitutional Convention, which drew up the proposals for Scotland's first parliament for 300 years. Scotland was going through a renaissance culturally, with a tremendous sense of pride in its history and its future. I recall seeing the premiere of the film *Braveheart*, about William Wallace, who fought the English in the early fourteenth century. When it was shown in Edinburgh, the audience not only applauded but also hooted and cheered at the end. It had caught the zeitgeist and by the time Labour was in power, devolution for Scotland was at the top of its policy commitments. We had a strong belief that this would bring government much closer to local communities than a distant Westminster parliament in London ever could and, that there would be a new compact with civil society that would create a more open style of governance.

A key part of Scotland's approach towards devolution was the introduction of proportional representation in the election of MSPs (Members of the Scottish Parliament). This had led

to a Labour/Liberal coalition government, which introduced new ministries – including the Ministry for Communities, which we had publicly called for. One of my former community education students, Margaret Curran, eventually became the Cabinet Minister for Communities. I was appointed the first Head of Community Learning and Development in the Scottish Government, giving me some influence over profiling the importance of community participation, education and development across the government's policies, Green and White Papers and in some cases legislation, over such areas as social inclusion, lifelong learning, community regeneration, community planning, rural and health issues and land reform.

I have to say that my experience of working within government was pretty mixed. I had the power of the pen as I advised ministers and wrote policies. Through allocations to local authorities and non-governmental organisations, the government spent more than £100 million a year in Scotland supporting community education and development, and I had some influence over the sorts of issues we wanted it spent upon. Working at the new government building in Victoria Quay was appalling. It had just been built, was fascistic and seemed about a quarter of a mile long, all metal and glass. The windows wouldn't open (for fear no doubt of losing civil servants who couldn't take it any more). The inside walls were metallic and the clothes hook was a magnet, so if in winter you had a heavy coat it would gradually slide down the wall during a meeting. There were no light switches. You had to ring some central control to have the lights turned on and if you were too silent and still, they went off automatically during a meeting. Unless you were right at the top of the pyramid or needed a meeting room, it was all open plan.

One looked the full length of the building to see row after row of atomised policy and administrative staff staring at computer screens all day long. In effect, joined-up government

Finding our voice

meant commenting upon some other civil servant's draft policy paper via email. I could if I wanted receive dozens each day. Being a masochist I did. One policy paper I picked up, on the future of Lifelong Learning in Scotland, made copious references to further education colleges and universities but none to community-based learning, the Open University or the role of libraries. Had we not spotted this, finances might not have been made available. Another time, I was asked by a civil servant in a unit responsible for nuclear waste disposal if I could advise them on how to get communities to take the stuff. Government is indeed challenging. I would convene joint meetings of civil servants from different departments – Health, Rural Affairs, Enterprise and Lifelong Learning, Development et al – to look at ways in which we might all work together to support community learning and development. It was as though they had never been let out of their hutches before. They scampered around enjoying the freedom of a brainstorming workshop.

Osler Cosla Barista

Two key policy areas I was responsible for related directly to the future of community education and development and the professional training of practitioners. In 1997 the incoming (pre devolution) Labour government had established a committee chaired by Douglas Osler, the Chief HMI, to review community education. This was the first government review since the 1975 Alexander committee report, although much less thorough and, it has to be said, pretty quick and dirty. The Osler committee, of which I was a member, and still at that time the CEO of SCEC, met over five months. The Alexander committee over five years! *The Osler Report* was not especially radical in its recommendations, generally describing what was going on. It did however highlight the need for professional staff to be able to address the

new Labour government's priorities in relation to promoting lifelong learning, social justice and active citizenship.

The committee report was largely written by Duncan Kirkpatrick, a longstanding senior HMI for community education, who had earlier in his career been a development worker with Oxfam in Biafra. Duncan was a radical, but in my view hesitant in recommending policies which would have both increased investment in community education and development or indeed safeguarded its provision. He would not for example support my proposal for making community education and development support a statutory right for local communities, in the way that the provision schools and of social work was enshrined in statute. I remember at the time saying to Duncan that 18 years of Conservative governments had created a mind-set of small 'c' conservatism among civil servants and the HMI.

Osler avoided arguing for more resources, although it did recommend yet another committee to look at professional training. It also made some somewhat confusing statements about community education being a process and not a profession, which caused quite a concern and which I publicly distanced myself from, stating that this had neither been discussed nor intended. It was of course both an educational approach and a professional sector. The Osler committee ran in parallel with a review of the provision of local authority community education and development, commissioned by COSLA at SCEC's instigation and chaired by Cllr Brian Oldrey from Renfrewshire. I was the rapporteur to this committee and wrote the report. It was the Osler and COSLA reports, both published in 1998, that together gave direction as to where central and local government would now focus its work. These priorities were then endorsed by the first devolved Labour/Liberal government in 1999 and by the SNP government when it came to power in 2007.

The new committee on professional training was chaired by

Finding our voice

Fraser Patrick, a radical educationalist, with whom I had worked at SCEC. It was a good committee, open and challenging. Duncan and I were both members. It was clear that Labour was going to put more investment into the regeneration of Scotland's deprived urban and rural communities and into education. The workforce forecasting being undertaken by PAULO projected that the community learning and development workforce would therefore increase, both for generic community education and development staff and for specialists with underpinning community education and development skills. So there was a need to train more people, more quickly. In light of this, the Patrick committee called for a thorough overhaul of training provision, with a greater emphasis upon work-based training and more flexible ways of accessing training, full and part time, especially for community activists who might not have had an opportunity or desire to do a university degree in this discipline, but who nonetheless would have liked some type of recognised credential. It called for both generic and more specialist training courses and also for an increased investment in continuing professional development, so that existing practitioners were up to date and able to take on the new government's policy priorities. These priorities were after all quite different from the previous Conservative government.

Picking up the pieces

With the break-up of the national community education agency, the Patrick committee also needed to address who would take over its responsibilities for validating and endorsing professional training programmes. It recommended that a new national body be set up, funded by government, taking over the functions of the Community Education Validation and Endorsement Committee (CeVe) and with an additional remit for the

professional registration of qualified practitioners. The Patrick committee followed PAULO's lead in calling for a change in the name of the professional sector to community learning and development. In my new role, as Head of Community Learning and Development in the government, I then had the enjoyable task of recommending to the Cabinet what the government's response should be. The government's policy, published in 2003, was called *Empowered to Practice*. This set out the future direction for professional training and continuing professional development for the subsequent decade. The government agreed with the Patrick committee proposals that the profession be called community learning and development, that qualified practitioners should be registered, and that there should be a much more flexible approach to training provision.

We wanted to introduce a credit and qualifications framework, whereby people would be able to build up a professional training qualification by way of accredited modules accumulated over a number of years, rather than necessarily going to a university for three years before getting a job, although full time professional training courses were also supported. We wanted to encourage people who were in a community education and development type jobs, but without a professional qualification, to acquire one, but without having to give up their job. We provided a £1m seed corn fund to support workplace learning, whereby unqualified activists could have their experience accredited, together with being supported by in situ training provision. This approach had been around for a number of years in Scotland, piloted by an organisation called the Linked Work and Training Trust. And we encouraged further education colleges to run accredited training for community activists, again widening access to training and to jobs.

Finally the government agreed that a body to replace the Community Education Validation and Endorsement Committee

should be set up and with increased responsibilities for overseeing all of this training and for the national registration scheme. This was eventually established by the SNP government, and called the Scottish Standards Council for Community Learning and Development. It was chaired by Duncan Simpson, Head of Community Learning and Development with Fife Council, whom I had long admired since I first met him as a community education worker in the mid 1970s. Its director was the hugely experienced Rory McCleod, a former SCEC programme director, head of the Community Education Service in Scottish Borders Council and chair of CeVe and his very able head of policy and practice development, Colin Ross, the former head of policy at the national community education agency. The registration scheme was finally introduced in 2013. It is, as yet, the only scheme for registering community learning and development professionals within Britain.

Such developments were the more positive outcomes of my time working to shape the government's policies towards the sector. But I was still angry that Labour Cabinet Ministers, some of whom I knew quite well, and who had been professional community education and development workers, had allowed the closure of the national community education agency and the failure to plan a more central and influential role within the new Executive agency Communities Scotland. The closure of the national community education agency after twenty years was public policy vandalism and I was hugely disappointed that it was a Labour/Liberal Administration that had done it. I also found the civil service's conservatism and risk aversion, and the time it took to get policies into action, hugely frustrating. It took ten years to set up the professional registration scheme and there was a hiatus of several years before the Standards Council was to be established. This was inept.

The civil service is full of departmental silos and among

senior civil servants there was a dilettantism, which at one level I admired, these are clever people, but it also led to a shallowness of understanding and a lack of institutional memory. I was one of the very few specialists. Ministers spoke about joined-up government but were so inexperienced that, frankly, they really didn't stand a chance against the 'No Minister' officials. Much more should have been done to support the wide-eyed newly elected MSPs who, though some had been local councillors and thus had some experience, most had never been 'big P' politicians before; and Labour's big hitters still preferred Westminster. Something like the Scottish Local Government Research Unit, which I had worked for in the mid 1970s, would have been enormously helpful in providing independent advice and training. Few in the senior civil service were socialists, as far as I could ascertain; indeed, many came from the Scottish elite and frankly knew very little about what life was like for the majority of Scots – certainly not those living in disadvantaged communities. The elected Labour politicians did, but as ministers were quickly surrounded by the suffocating praetorian guard at New St Andrew's House of senior civil servants.

The Scottish government's greatest success, in terms of the redistribution of power, was around land reform. I had some involvement with the civil servants working on the legislation, with respect to community engagement. Dealing with landed wealth was one of the few areas where, in Scotland at least, there was progress. In Perthshire, where I lived, a handful of hugely wealthy families still owned most of the county's land and had done so for generations. The 2003 land reform legislation enabled Highland and Island communities (sadly not Perthshire), to buy out these landowners and to own their areas themselves. Millions of acres of land were transferred to community ownership. Alastair McIntosh's beautiful book *Soil and Soul* narrates this community movement wonderfully.

Finding our voice

The work we did in government on community regeneration and community planning was also a practical way of supporting agencies operating in poorer communities, to work together and to listen and engage with the residents more effectively, highlighting also the central role of community education and development staff. But none of this was particularly new and had been similar to the strategy adopted thirty years before in regions like Strathclyde. The difference was the myriad of public, private and non-governmental agencies now around the table. I am perhaps being too critical here. Joined-up government at national, let alone local, level is very hard work and requires a significant change in organisational and professional culture. Community education and development ideas had gained considerable traction since the mid 1970s. And across a broader range of public policy we had a higher profile than ever.

Ireland and islands

One of my last jobs with the government was to help in the preparation for the British-Irish Council Summit in New Lanark in 2002. The theme was social inclusion and the venue historically symbolic. New Lanark was the creation of Robert Owen, the enlightened mill owner and co-founder of the British Co-operative movement, an honour shared with the Rochdale Pioneers. It is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. I had not in my career had much to do directly with Ireland or Northern Ireland, despite my surname and partial ancestry. I had trained development workers who came from and went back to work there and through SCEC, PAULO and the International Association for Community Development I had often linked up with Irish colleagues and had spoken at conferences there.

A community education and development practitioner for whom I have the highest regard is Avila Kilmurray, director of

the Northern Ireland Community Foundation. She upheld the best of our tradition of not taking the limelight. She had been an unstinting labour and community activist for forty years and was one of the founder members of the Ulster People's College. Bringing peace and much closer reconciliation in Northern Ireland was one of the great successes of the Labour government, for Blair, Clinton, and so many others, but it could not have been achieved without the longstanding work at the grassroots led by people like Avila.

This ended four decades of civil war in a part of the British Isles and forged much closer links with the Republic of Ireland. I often go to the northern part of Ireland, my partner being from there. You don't even notice a border these days. As a small aside, the British-Irish Council Summit was also the first time I met social inclusion activists from the Channel Isles and from the Isle of Man. This is, I think, the only forum where they have a voice as part of the wider British Isles. I had always seen these islands as places where the wealthy go to avoid paying tax. This is true. But they are also places where there are poor people and where there are community activists concerned to support them and to campaign for greater fairness and social justice.

Making inequality history, saving the planet and opening borders

Through a greatly enhanced international development budget, support for community education and development programmes overseas also increased hugely during the thirteen years of New Labour. Britain under Blair and Brown became the most committed G8 country advocating the tackling of global poverty, the Millennium Development Goals, the ending of the debt of poorer countries and for promoting sustainable development. The government supported the non-governmental *Making Poverty*

History campaign, led by the film Director Richard Curtis, which built upon the work of Band Aid and Comic Relief and, with huge support from the BBC, generated significant new funds for development work. Of course a one year campaign could not achieve what its wonderful slogan implored, but such celebrity supported initiatives did highlight the issue of global poverty in the public's consciousness, especially among young people. The challenge was to keep it there.

The Labour government did much in terms of tackling child poverty and in focussing the government machine and resources upon social justice issues across Britain. It invested thousands of millions of pounds in targeting multiple deprivation, using social indicators developed by my old China trip friend, Mike Noble, who had become a professor at Oxford University and an adviser on social policy. This new funding greatly improved the physical fabric of deprived areas and local projects that strengthened social capital, the buzz word that spread virally across government domestic policies and programmes in Britain and in Scotland in the noughties. Everyone became financially better off. But the rich got even richer during these years, and my biggest criticism was of the Labour government's unwillingness to increase progressive taxes upon the wealthy who now had the ability to transfer this wealth overseas, at the press of a button, and seemed beyond the control of national governments. The biggest failure during these years was to control the power accumulating to the wealthy, especially in the financial sector in the City of London, and their ability to transfer much of that wealth offshore. Brown, as Prime Minister, eventually began to do something about this after the crash of the financial sector in 2008, but it was too little and too late.

The government also failed to do much about my *bête noir*, the (largely inherited) landed wealthy. Farm subsidies and land values, especially for property development, shot up enormously

during the noughties. Here was an area where the government could and should have done something, as this wealth by its very nature, being land, could not be transferred overseas. When Blair introduced his modest reform of the House of Lords, removing most of the hereditary peers, it was said that one hundred of them were descended from the Plantagenets! But despite having huge parliamentary majorities over its 13 years in government, there was little redistribution of wealth within Britain. The consequences of the abuse of the power of the wealthy became fully apparent after Labour left office, with the exposure of the criminal behaviour of many in the City and an out of control right wing print media, personified by Rupert Murdoch.

One area where New Labour did make more of a positive and lasting impact, however, was around the environment. Blair established the Sustainable Development Commission, chaired by Jonathon Porritt, a former leader of the Green Party. This became an influential watchdog scrutinising progress on meeting the government's targets on sustainable development. Blair also set up the internationally influential *Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change*, which examined the effects of global warming on the world economy, concluding that climate change was the greatest and widest-ranging market failure ever seen. The Stern Review's main conclusion was that the benefits of strong, early action far outweighed the costs of not acting. In response, Gordon Brown, by then PM, set up the world's first Cabinet post for climate change. Although Ed Milliband, as Climate Change Minister, would still not accept the argument that the planet could not sustain endless economic growth, he worked hard, but unsuccessfully, to secure an international agreement at the UN Climate Change Summit in Copenhagen in 2009.

Sadly, I fear it will take some huge tragedy such as a tidal surge down the North Sea and the flooding of London before any serious action is taken. Even then, as the flooding of New York

in 2012 and the communities just west of London in 2014 demonstrated, things soon returned to business as usual. Influenced by people like the environmental scientist James Lovelock, I had by the early noughties become a reluctant supporter of nuclear power, alongside the need for a major investment in renewables and greater energy efficiency measures. It was naïve to think that the developing world, rapidly led by the BRIC countries, would not want economic growth and greater material prosperity. The challenge was for that growth to be economically, socially and environmentally sustainable and not to follow the carbon emitting industrial revolution that had fuelled the wealth and power of the West, (and the USSR), who for nearly two centuries had been spewing greenhouse gases into the atmosphere from factories, automobiles and industrial farming.

After Stern and the evidence presented by the UN's International Panel on Climate Change at Kyoto and Copenhagen, there was some recognition, (more in the EU than the US), that the West had to reduce these emissions proportionately much more extensively than the developing countries. But people in Britain would not be willing to change their habits and standard of living quickly, not least those on low incomes and already suffering fuel poverty. Environmental education and local community resilience measures had a vital role to play and I had long been a proponent of these and had continued to be so while working within government. Because of the urgency of climate change, we required to harness all the non-greenhouse gas emitting technologies we could. These were challenges I returned to when I went on to run the Carnegie UK Trust and then Schumacher College.

The Labour government was also a leading advocate for the accession of the central European countries into the EU. This resulted in a hugely enriching movement of largely younger people from those countries to work and live in Britain. Community

education and development had an important role in ensuring the positive integration of citizens from these accession states within British communities. I was involved in organising the International Association for Community Development conference in Budapest at the time of the 2004 accession. We were considering the role community education and development could play regarding European cohesion and inclusion. This conference was a significant milestone for the association, with the publication of what we termed *The Budapest Charter*. The Charter called upon the EU, all national governments, regional and local authorities to support community development, echoing the Council of Europe's Resolution in 1989. It called upon all member countries to appoint Ministries for Communities, and to implement action plans relating to local communities being supported to be engaged in rural and urban sustainable development, lifelong learning, cultural development and, in particular, social inclusion.

Back in 1989, when the tanks had been rolling into Tiananmen Square and the Berlin Wall had been breached, who could have predicted that two years later the USSR would collapse and that just over a decade after most of central Europe would become part of the EU. The unification of Europe has probably been the most significant historical event in my lifetime. It began the year I was born, barely a handful of years after the horrors of the Second World War. It had dominated British politics and split the main political parties more than any other issue. This was not surprising, it had after all been a seismic change for Britain, which in my father's youth was still the world's number one imperial power, and with the receding echoes of this in mine. The EU had, with the recent exception of the breakup of Yugoslavia, made our continent a far more peaceful and prosperous place. It was the world's largest economic bloc and its seemingly unstoppable economic, social, cultural and political

integration was creating a hesitant super power. But with over four hundred million citizens it had serious deficits with regards to its democratic accountability. Building a participatory and not simply a representative democracy within such a huge construct was an enormous and urgent challenge.

Those involved in community education and development had a vital role to play in raising awareness among young people, and Europe's citizens generally, of the importance of voting in the European elections, and of calling the EU to be a force for democracy building and human rights, within and beyond Europe, and for promoting social justice and inclusion, rather than becoming a wealthy capitalist bloc and a xenophobic fortress. With large numbers of continental Europeans from the former soviet bloc, now able to move to live and work in Britain, this presented new challenges for community education and development work in Britain. Most were young, intelligent and got low paid jobs. But they needed help with housing and some with English. As the economy generally was growing and the high unemployment levels, the legacy of the Conservative years, became a thing of the past, this influx did not at first lead to much discrimination in British communities. But there were very many examples of poor employment conditions particularly in the farming sector. I saw this first hand with the large number of young berry pickers in Perthshire from central and eastern Europe. Here they lived in poor conditions in shanty caravan villages on the farm. Natasha helped some with translation and interpretation.

A strong theme running through community education and development work since Powell's Rivers of Blood speech in 1968 had been around improving community relations and cohesion. Initially this was about supporting Afro-Caribbean and Asian, largely Indian and Pakistani, immigrants from the Commonwealth who had been moving here in larger numbers

since the 1950s. In the 1970s the Heath government accepted tens of thousands of Asians thrown out of Uganda, and the Wilson government accepted asylum seekers from Vietnam, Chile and other countries. These people needed housing and work, at a time when the British economy was suffering from high levels of inflation and growing unemployment. Many also needed help with English language education, and this was reflected in the large number of adult education programmes designed for new immigrants. The right wing National Front and later the British National Party, however, represented and stirred up anti-immigration and racist views especially among white working class communities.

By the 1980s, with unemployment soaring, community relations had become severely strained, with race riots in several inner cities. As second and third generation immigrants settled in Britain, often doing very successfully in education and in business, and as the economy in the 1990s began to improve, politicians spoke positively of Britain as a multi-cultural society. Certainly in places like Nottingham, Bradford and Leicester you felt a much greater sense of confidence and pride in being part of an African, Asian or Latin American community and of being British. By the time the eastern Europeans arrived, Britain had become a much more tolerant place to live. They were of course white. Since 2008 negative attitudes towards the later Balkan EU countries and asylum seekers from North Africa and the Middle East have hardened, promoted by the right wing UK Independence Party (UKIP) and the right of the Conservatives.

Thousands of community education and development workers trained in Britain worked in the global south, for British and international non-governmental organisations. Britain had a strong tradition of development assistance and it is a sign at least of some political consensus, that the current British Conservative/Liberal coalition government largely retained the

Finding our voice

levels of investment in international development set by Blair and Brown, and continued our commitment to the UN's Millennium Development goals. When we created PAULO in 1999, as the voice for the whole of the community learning and development sector in Britain, we were very keen to include within that, development educators and to ensure that practitioners working overseas were also well trained and their practice shared.

The final report I wrote for the Scottish government was on the international dimension of community learning and development. The Scottish government did not have devolved responsibility for international development, this remaining with the Department for International Development, although DfID had its HQ office in East Kilbride, just outside Glasgow. The new Scottish First Minister, Jack McConnell, was, however, personally very interested in supporting development work especially in Africa. The report called for a closer link between the universities and colleges training people to practice in Scotland, with those training people to work overseas, together with many more international practice exchanges. Sadly the Scottish government made no additional funds available and it was left to independent bodies, such as philanthropic trusts to do this. And it was to one of these that I now moved.

Chapter 4

The purpose of getting power is to be able to give it away

Radicalising trust

In 2003 I left the Scottish Government to become chief executive of the Carnegie UK Trust. An independent philanthropic foundation, it was one of twenty established by the Scots American rags-to-riches billionaire Andrew Carnegie. I had mixed feelings about working for an organisation set up by the wealthy, not least capitalist barons who like Andrew Carnegie had not flinched from using ruthless approaches to strike breaking. But the foundations' world was fascinating. It had money and could do things and almost everyone, from government, to the business sector, to civil society loved them. I have written about this for the European Foundations Centre. *'Somehow the Fords, the Gateses, the Van Leers, and the Carnegie foundations of this world are trusted. We are seen, if not as neutral, then certainly as a safe pair of hands. So we must be getting something right'*. I was especially attracted to the fact that Andrew Carnegie had an epiphany and literarily given almost all of his wealth away (being seen as utterly bonkers by his peers) and, by his most famous dictum that *"to die rich is to die disgraced"*.

In many ways Andrew Carnegie had been a benevolent employer, building homes, swimming pools and libraries for his steelworkers in Pittsburgh. He was passionate about education for the masses, his greatest bequest being to build several thousand free public libraries. As a child I had spent many happy hours with my mother in a Carnegie library. More recently I had been

hugely impressed by the work of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, set up as part of his attempts to stop the Great War, and after 1989 being an influential think tank and advocate for democracy in Russia, the Middle East and China. Carnegie had even offered to buy the Philippines after the Spanish American War, so that the Filipinos could have their independence from the US. In reaction to his Wee Free extreme Protestant mother, he had become an agnostic. There is an apocryphal story that when asked, because of his lack of belief, why he had funded the restoration of organs in British churches and cathedrals, he answered that it was to drown out the cant of the sermon. He was also a powerful supporter of phonetic spelling reform in the English language, leading in America, for example, to 'thru' rather than 'through'.

The Carnegie UK Trust had made an influential mark upon the post-war development of adult education, youth work and social welfare in Britain. It had helped shape the social work profession through its *Committee of Inquiry into the Employment and Training of Social Workers*, chaired by Ellen Younghusband. Younghusband later went on to chair the Gulbenkian Foundation's first working party on community work and social change. One of Carnegie's trustees, Lady Abermarle, had chaired an equally influential government committee to review the work of the youth service in England and Wales. The Trust had provided grants to rural and urban communities for decades and also been a significant funder of the Workers' Educational Association, Toynbee Hall, Newbattle Abbey, College Harlech and Carnegie College in Leeds. Perhaps its most politically radical grant was to the Army Bureau of Current Affairs (ABCA). This supported adult education with the troops during and immediately after the Second World War, together with the publication of pamphlets to be used in discussion groups on why we were fighting the war and what life afterwards might be like. This included such

themes as *The Soviet Angle* and *Democracy East and West*. Some social historians believe that the ABCA had a significant influence over many troops voting for the post-war Labour government. Indeed, Churchill raised some concern, eloquently saying “*such discussion (will) only provide opportunities for the professional grouser and agitator with a glib tongue*”.

Not long after I became CEO, I was on a BBC radio programme with the environmental campaigner George Mombiot. He had argued strongly that philanthropy was not the way to address issues of environmental concern such as climate change, but rather that governments should be doing this. I could not disagree with him. Mombiot was an excellent journalist and writer, but I argued that in addition to governmental and inter-governmental action, we needed to use every agency we could to change people’s hearts and minds and behaviour. This included the role that foundations could play in funding research and direct action by civil society, working through trades unions, voluntary organisations, the churches and non-governmental organisations, and with business to promote corporate social and environmental responsibility. Many foundations set up by wealthy philanthropists, whose wealth had come from business, in Carnegie’s case - steel production, had been and could be progressive and they had reputational capital, that could open doors.

Carnegie’s reputation was huge, the most iconic name in Scottish and international philanthropy for nearly a century. But most of the Trust’s endowed assets were long spent (on building libraries) and its grants-giving programme had paled into insignificance compared with the new player on the block, the Lottery. It had also become a ‘small c’ conservative, risk averse foundation, but it was up for change, and its chair, William Thomson, the great grandson of Andrew Carnegie, wanted me to modernise it. I advised trustees that we would be more

influential if we became more strategic in our focus, rather than scatter-gunning small grants. I had long admired the progressive and highly respected Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) in England. Scotland needed a radical Scottish-based foundation, an independent think tank with muddy feet '*speaking truth to power*' that would fund action research and commissions of inquiry, lifting stones in areas that perhaps the state was neglecting and the establishment didn't want lifting. And, with a more targeted programme supporting progressive practice across the British Isles and internationally.

To take this forward, I brought in over a dozen new research and development staff and four programme directors, plus contracted consultants. We opened a second office in London and built a new eco HQ in Scotland. We changed the Trust's Royal Charter to enable us to engage in international partnerships, both within the EU, but also to enable us to develop joint work with some of the other Carnegie foundations overseas, which had never been done before. This had been a huge lost opportunity. Carnegie UK was one of the very few British foundations with sister organisations in other parts of the world. By changing the Charter, this allowed Carnegie UK, for the first time since it was established in 1913, to develop programmes with an international and not just a British Isles profile and impact. My challenge was to lift the sites of the trustees to appreciate the added influence collaborative British, European and international working could bring. There were Carnegie operations in the US, Europe, Asia and Africa and I wanted to be able to build links with them. Indeed I held discussions with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, to open a shared office in Brussels. The trustees would not go that far, but they were very supportive of my strategy to forge closer links with the other Carnegie foundations and with other foundations across the EU.

Within eighteen months, the Trust was fundamentally

reshaped. We established two commissions of inquiry. The first was to examine the future for sustainable rural community development. The second, to examine the roles that civil society could play in preparing for possible future scenarios such as climate change. We ran an extensive programme on youth empowerment, leading to the creation of a national centre supporting young people's participation in decision-making, together with work supporting education for democracy in schools and a joint EU programme on this theme. Each of these programmes continued my long-held passion for helping to prepare and empower disadvantaged communities and young people to have a voice and to be more resilient in times of great change. And finally, we established a smaller, though I hoped, equally influential, programme to promote and enhance the effectiveness of progressive social change philanthropy.

Land ownership

Ever since I had fought in a rural constituency in the 1983 general election, I had been interested in rural issues and especially in land ownership. I knew the history of the Clearances and the land theft, not only in Scotland but across Britain, with the Enclosures and the earlier carve up of the country among the crown, the robber barons and the church. This covered both urban and rural land, including, for example, the huge landholdings held by the Duke of Westminster, in London. Wat Tyler, not John of Gaunt, was my hero. Kevin Cahill's magnificent book *Who Owns Britain?* at last was beginning to expose this, and the ways in which such entrenched interests had obfuscated the true nature of this inequity, and that it still existed. The BBC made a programme fronted by Dan and Peter Snow which used much of his research and which we used too. Cahill was a fascinating character. He had been to Sandhurst and served as an officer

in Northern Ireland. His was not the background of the radical socialist. But of interest to me was his investigative research in Britain, which exposed the continuing scale of inequitable land ownership and that it still remained in the hands of those earlier power elites who had in effect carved up the country. He later wrote a major study on land ownership across the world and deserves a Nobel Prize for this important work.

Narrow land ownership was denying opportunities for people to enter the land use economy, constraining local social and economic development and distorting the ability to build affordable housing, by rationing land for building and thus putting land prices up. Ironically the town and country planning laws were being complicit in this rationing of land, with the introduction of the 'green belt' to stop ribbon development and urban expansion. These planning restrictions were well intentioned, but there was no doubt that there were strong vested interests wanting to ensure that land for house building was put at a high price. This, in turn, was continuing the exodus of young people from rural communities, as they could neither get jobs, nor afford to live there, with the downhill spiral of the decline of rural villages and towns, and of rural areas becoming places where only the better off could afford to live and to have second homes. It was possible to build affordable housing and thereby create a publicly led green construction programme that would help lift the rural economy, as Keynesian policies had done after the Second World War. But this would require a government committed to deflating land values as well as to pump priming the construction sector. It was not the house that was the inflationary cost, but the land, and of course it was the landowners who gained most out of this greed. The government needed to tax wealthy landowners, through high inheritance tax and to change the planning laws, in such a way as to be able to compulsorily purchase land at agricultural value, in order to release

more land and thus deflate land prices. This in turn would see a revitalisation of rural communities, as evidenced in areas of community land ownership, such as the highlands and islands of Scotland.

We also needed a radical rethink around sustainable food production, the impact farming was having on climate change and the protection of biodiversity and wildlife. The Labour government did take on the issue of access and in Scotland, community land ownership. I had some involvement in this when working for the Scottish government. Labour also created more National Parks. And there were other reforms in play, within the EU, around ending the huge financial subsidies land owners and farmers received; a policy change the *Carnegie Commission on Sustainable Rural Community Development* endorsed. But the Labour government would not take on the large land owning interests over inequitable land ownership. I could never understand why. Labour was never going to get the votes of the large landowners and numerically they were a tiny part of the electorate. So the inequitable pattern of centuries remained and remain. And land prices for development remain high. I recall talking with Tim Smit, founder of the Eden Project, at the time, about whether the Prince of Wales or Lord Falmouth, who owned large parts of Cornwall, had gifted land to the Eden Project. The answer was no. The land owning aristocracy was, as I had already seen, far less likely to be philanthropic with its own wealth.

The members of the Carnegie Commission were a pretty broad church, indeed I had brought them together in the hope that we might be able to create a progressive consensus around the sustainable development of rural communities. Members included Jonathan Porritt, Chris Haskins, Labour peer and adviser to Blair on rural issues, Gary Craig, president of IACD and Sir Ken Gill, former president of the National Union of Farmers. Here, perhaps was its weakness. It was too broad and

Finding our voice

I was unable to secure agreement to take on the issue of inequitable land ownership, which in my assessment was at the heart of what was causing so many problems across the world. Pushed hard by Porritt and Kate Braithwaite, the programme's director, we did, however, manage to raise the public debate and profile around what sustainable rural development might mean for local communities and how it could be realised. We contracted research into future scenarios for rural economies, the environment and social development and co-sponsored a conference with the OECD that involved rural policy-makers and advisers from 25 countries.

We published a series of reports on rural issues, including a *Charter for Rural Communities*, that led to an editorial in the *Guardian* newspaper, which concluded that it '*should be required reading and debate material for central and local authorities, opposition parties, funding agencies, landowners, planners, social workers and grassroots activists*'. We supported community land trusts and the community buy-outs in the Scottish Highlands and Islands, and funded over fifty rural community development action research projects, and the networking of rural community development practitioners internationally, partnering with the International Association for Community Development. My hope was that the Carnegie Commission might lift the lid on where power lies in rural communities and what was blocking sustainable rural development, and we did a little, although I would have liked us to have been much more radical.

Preparing the troops

The Carnegie and Rowntree trusts had jointly established a Commission in the late 1970s, on the future of voluntary organisations, chaired by Lord Wolfenden. He had been chair of the Carnegie UK Trust, but is best known for having chaired the government's *Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution* (better known as the Wolfenden report). This had an enormous influence upon the liberal social reforms in Britain in the 1960s, including ending the laws prohibiting sodomy. *The Commission on the Future of Voluntary Organisations* had been equally probing. One generation on, I was keen to get the Trust to examine the role that civil society was now playing and what issues and challenges it should be preparing for over the coming years. This time, however, I wanted us to look at wider civil society, and not just the voluntary sector, in other words also trades unions and faith-based organisations and those other parts of society that are neither governmental nor private sector.

I had recommended somewhat of an establishment figure to chair Carnegie's Rural Commission – David Steel, the former leader of the Liberal Democrats. This time I wanted to get the Trust to jump a generation and appoint someone who was beginning to make a name as a radical policy thinker. With the support of Millie Banerjee, the new chair of the Trust, and endorsement by the trustees, we appointed Geoff Mulgan, the former head of Tony Blair's No 10 Policy Unit and the PM's Strategy Unit. In the 1980s Mulgan had worked as a van driver for the socialist comedians Red Wedge. He was now an influential writer on social and political issues in the *Guardian*, *New Statesman* and *Marxism Today*, a former director of the left leaning think tank, Demos and now the director of the Young Foundation, set up in memory of Michael Young, the social entrepreneur.

We launched the *Carnegie Commission on the Future of Civil Society*

at the Civicus international civil society conference in Glasgow in 2006, which we co-sponsored. Mulgan was keen to think out of the box and to challenge civil society to come up to the mark in terms of having a stronger role to play in Britain and internationally. The Commission examined the democratising of the media and media ownership, participative democracy, social justice, climate change and the civil economy. Again we published a wide range of publications and positioned Carnegie with a new range of progressive non-governmental organisations, with the TUC and faith-based groups working at local, national and international levels. The programme director, Lenka Setkova, had previously worked with the Soros Foundation in central Europe, had a strong internationalist approach and was especially keen to link up with foundations working in this area in Europe and the US, including the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. The Commission finished its work in 2010, with Martyn Evans, Carnegie's new CEO, taking forward its work around the critical role that the mass media plays, for good and ill.

A debate among progressive foundations at this time was about how influential the right wing foundations had been in funding the neo con agenda and the lobbying and media industry in Britain, which in turn had greatly influenced the Conservative governments in the UK in the 1980s and 1990s. Progressive foundations, in the sense of more liberal leaning, are wealthier globally than conservative ones – maybe there are more guilt-ridden than Machiavellian capitalists – but they scatter gun their influence through funding reactive Elastoplast programmes picking up the damage of human and natural disasters. The conservative foundations, on the other hand, fund TV and radio stations and Congressional lobbyists, not to say political parties. As a result, the ideas of the right run around the globe before the left has even tied up its bootlaces. I had long been of the view that we needed to use some of the methods

of the right. Slow, grassroots, bottom-up development work was vital, but other global drivers would never really allow the poor to become empowered unless we started getting much more savvy politically.

In 2004 a number of CEOs of progressive British foundations met with our counterparts from progressive US foundations to discuss such issues and to consider how we might become more effective. We were snowed in at a residential centre in upper New York State. I told colleagues how Andrew Carnegie had purchased newspapers in Britain to advocate for the abolition of the monarchy and to support other liberal causes. Progressive foundations in America were funders of public service broadcasting there, although its reach was minimal; thankfully, in Britain we had retained state funded public service broadcasting with the BBC, something we needed to be vigilantly protecting. In the US, right wing philanthropists, foundations and pressure groups had an almost total stranglehold over local commercial TV and radio stations, and they funded national and international media such as Fox TV, which was distorting democracy in the US. This was a deeply worrying trend that we saw coming across the Atlantic and wanted to try collaboratively to prevent.

The British foundation participants formed a collaborative on our return, to seek to work together more closely in order to be more effective in supporting a progressive agenda around social and environmental justice. I chaired the first meeting of what we called the Woburn Place Collaborative and organised its first residential meeting in Britain at which we discussed climate change. I also led on creating a partnership between Carnegie, the British and Scottish governments and the Economic and Social Research Council, to establish the first university-based research centres in Britain on philanthropy and charitable giving, based at CASS Business School in London. Our objective was to target philanthropic funding more effectively for progressive

Finding our voice

social change. This work was led by one of my staff, Diana Leat, who wrote an excellent book on progressive social change philanthropy and was also a visiting lecturer at CASS.

We worked closely as part of a collaborative of progressive trusts, led by the Scarman Trust, to establish the *Independent Commission on Unclaimed Assets*, with Sir Ronald Cohen as chair. It was set up to consider how unclaimed assets (an estimated £500m sitting untouched for 15 years in dormant bank and building society accounts) could be best used to benefit society. Gordon Brown, as Chancellor, indicated strong interest in the big idea coming out of the Commission, to create an independent Social Investment Bank, using the capital from these accounts to support social enterprises in disadvantaged communities. This led directly to the Labour government passing the Dormant Bank and Building Society Accounts Act, under which money in these accounts could be distributed for the benefit of the community. When Labour lost the general election in 2010, there was apprehension that the idea would be lost. However the coalition government picked it up and this eventually led to the Big Society Capital bank, which lends money to social enterprises.

The right to a voice

The other major area we worked on was the empowerment of young people and their participation in decision-making. My predecessor, as head of the Trust, had a background in youth work, as director of the YMCA. He had started a programme called the *Carnegie Young People's Initiative* (CYPI). I had become aware of CYPI then when I was running SCEC, as they came to us for advice, in light of our work creating the Scottish Youth Parliament and local youth councils. The CYPI programme director left just as I started at Carnegie, enabling me to bring

in two dynamic young directors, Robert Bell and Raji Hunjan. Robert led on youth participation policy and practice and Raji on democracy in schools. Robert had worked within government on youth participation policy and Raji had been responsible for the education for democracy programme at the Hansard Society.

In 1989 the Convention on the Rights of the Child had been adopted by UN General Assembly. What it omitted was the right to participate in the decisions affecting their lives. The Labour government's 2004 Children Act introduced the post of Children's Commissioner, which we had strongly advocated for. The Commissioner had the duty to promote awareness of the views and interests of all children and young people in England, in particular those whose voices were least likely to be heard. Similar Commissioners were established across the new devolved administrations. We funded communities of practice around youth participation and around promoting democracy in schools, among youth workers and teachers across Britain and, collaboratively with other foundations and with the European Commission, across the EU. One of our main legacies was to convene and lead a consortium of agencies to create Participation Works, a £4m on-line resource and information centre for young people and for people working to support youth empowerment. Again we published a wide range of reports and participation toolkits.

In the autumn of 2013, I attended a Carnegie UK sponsored event in Edinburgh, which launched the Global Citizenship Commission to update the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Gordon Brown, had been appointed by the UN Secretary General to chair it. He and Malala Yousafzai, the young Pakistani teenager shot for campaigning for the right for girls to attend school, spoke powerfully about the right to education and to equality. Malala represented the passion of

Finding our voice

young people to participate in learning and, through that, in building democracy and social justice in communities where this is denied. She was inspiring.

Name-dropping

It was while CEO of Carnegie that I met Bill Clinton. I was attending the Global Philanthropy Forum in Washington, representing Carnegie. I had already been involved with the Forum when organising an international philanthropy symposium in Edinburgh in 2005 as part of the Carnegie Medals for Philanthropy ceremony. The Carnegie Medal is seen as the Nobel in the philanthropy world and I had invited Jane Wales, president of the Global Philanthropy Forum, to present one of the medals. At the symposium the film director Richard Curtis, one of the leading media lights behind the *Making Poverty History* campaign was a speaker, as was Mary Robinson the former Irish president and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. It was not long after Blair had hosted the Gleneagles G8 Summit, so there was still quite a spotlight on Scotland. It was the largest gathering of philanthropists and foundations Scotland had ever seen.

At the Washington event there were a number of philanthropic celebrities. Ted Turner made a speech about abolishing nuclear weapons. Next to me around our table was former Genesis musician Peter Gabriel, whose WITNESS foundation was doing some tremendous work using new media to promote human rights. When Clinton arrived, it was clear that he was among friends. The Global Philanthropy Forum was on the liberal wing of the philanthropy world and Jane was a Democrat. Clinton gave a speech, which at first seemed lumbering and he looked tired, but once he got into his stride the magic and charisma came back. I was introduced to him and he embraced

me warmly – I think he assumed I was one of the Carnegie family!

Sean Connery contacted me in 2007. We were organising a festival to mark the anniversary of the building of the first Carnegie library. BBC Radio Presenter Jim Naughtie and a roll call of authors attended. I had written to Connery on the off chance that he might join us as he had just brought out a book on Scotland. Connery was a strong Scottish Nationalist and advocate of independence, (notwithstanding that he lives as a tax exile in the Caribbean). Not expecting a reply, when my PA Lucy said he was on the phone, I was unsure whether I was being spoofed. He was friendly and apologetic that he could not join us. As a proud Scot, Connery regarded Andrew Carnegie highly. I was clearly a little star-struck, as I seem to recall that my only interjection in a ten-minute call was to inquire what the weather was like in the Ba ha ha ha mas.

I don't know why I feel at times tongue-tied with celebrities. I'm good handling the British royals, of which there are dozens. I've spoken with the Queen about sheep, with Prince Philip about his negative views of government funding of youth work, Prince Charles on empowering young people and Princess Anne on Andrew Carnegie. And, on all occasions I had, I think, managed not to sound unctuous or to bow. But with entertainment celebrities, I become a gibbering idiot. I met Bruce Springsteen once. I love his music and had been especially moved by his singing with Pete Seeger of Woody Guthrie's *This Land is Your Land* at the Obama inauguration. I was so in awe that all I could manage to get out was '*your music is quite good*'. There is an urgent need here for some social science research to help us understand why we behave in this way and how to overcome it!

When I ran Carnegie, we got much more involved in climate change issues. Jonathon Porritt perhaps more than anyone really brought home to me, the urgency of the situation. I had been

Finding our voice

aware of global warming and the possibility that this would lead to extreme weather changes since reading *Only One Earth* in the early 1970s, but my career had been more as a social than as an environmental activist and I had not appreciated just how serious things had become. Al Gore's excellent film *The Inconvenient Truth*, which we gave to all trustees, and the UN Bali conference in 2007, had underlined to me the necessity for social activists, concerned with poverty and inequality, to understand why climate change was potentially catastrophic for the most vulnerable people in the global south. And, why social activists needed to join forces with environmental activists, concerned as the latter were with pollution, the felling of rain forests, the poisoning of the oceans and the loss of biodiversity. Both were dealing with the results of an economics that valued profit before people and planet. Yet social and environmental activists tended to work in different silos. So we enhanced the work of both of the Carnegie Commissions to examine the implications of climate change. I joined a Europe-wide foundations' group collaborating to fund social and environmental programmes associated with mitigating climate change and helping communities to plan for this, chairing a European foundations' gathering on this theme in Istanbul in 2008.

A very personal engagement with the climate

In 2002 we had a disaster with our house, a Victorian manse in Perthshire, overlooking Loch Leven. It was hit by a hurricane. The house was exposed on a hillside and had its double gable-ended roof ripped off. No-one was in, thank god. The Forth Road Bridge was closed and I drove avoiding upturned and overturning articulated lorries on the motorway to get home. The wind was terrifying, the rain torrential and would stay so for about a month. It was impossible to keep tarpaulins on the house

and one by one the corniced Victorian ceilings of our three storey home began to sag, crack and then fall under the weight of the water. The only part of the house which remained undamaged was a beautiful Russian banya, which I had helped my dear friend Norman to build in the back stone shed just after we had moved in. So at least Natasha and I could hit each other with birch twigs! But financially and emotionally it was a disaster.

We lived in or near the village of Kinnesswood in the parish of Portmoak for about ten years. It was a pretty village overlooking the loch, in the shadow of the Lomond Hills. It was the place where the vellum was made upon which is written the Treaty of Arbroath, part of the iconography of Scottish independence. The manse was originally home to one of the breakaway ministers of the Church of Scotland. As an addicted community activist, I had not long moved to the area before I had become involved in the community council. Community activism is, I fear an addiction. Our neighbours were a retired couple, Conrad and the honourable Anne Garnett. She was the daughter of one of the White Mischief aristocrats who had lived in Kenya before the War and had been brought up there. They had lived most of their lives in Africa and were now retired. Conrad was ever active and it was he who encouraged me to join the community council as he was standing down at 80!

Portmoak parish covered the eastern shores of Loch Leven, with Kinross on the west. It was a pretty area about thirty miles north of Edinburgh. But while we had magnificent views of the loch and the castle, in which Mary Queen of Scots had been imprisoned, we could not walk to or around the loch, which was still privately owned by a local aristocrat. A local bit of community action which I became actively involved with, and which left a small legacy for future generations, was in creating access paths in our parish, the most important being the Michael Bruce Trail, the Loch Leven Trail and an off-road path connecting the two

main villages in the parish. Among my neighbours and friends were Dave Morris, Director of the Ramblers in Scotland, and Louise Batchelor, BBC Scotland's environmental correspondent, who unsurprisingly were highly supportive. Dave was one of Scotland's most formidable campaigners and the access legislation which was passed in 2003 owed much to his hard work. Holly was close friends with his daughter Esme, who tragically died of cancer in 2013. Esme was a hugely inspirational fighter for children's cancer charities in her teens.

The zenith of my political career was being chair of Portmoak Community Council. My priorities were to create a safe path running about half a mile behind the road hedge line between the villages of Kinnesswood and Scotlandwell and to open up access to the lochside. I worked hard to raise the money, but we needed to do a huge amount of convincing to secure the agreement of the landowners. We had great fun one night when we ran a *Planning for Real* exercise, to identify where the new paths would go in the parish. We invited all the landowners and other interests in the village to a meeting in the village hall. We organised it with café-style tables, each holding half a dozen, rather than in a confrontational row of chairs with me and a local authority official at the front. We knew that most, if not all, of the landowners hated the access legislation going through Parliament. At the meeting one farmer said it was communism. If only it had been! Anyway, we invited each table to draw on the maps where they thought the paths should go. The end result was broad agreement on a network linking up with a round-the-loch path.

Michael Bruce's birthplace cottage museum backed onto our house. Bruce was a contemporary of Burns but died at the age of 21. His most famous poem was *Ode to the Cuckoo*. He wrote beautiful verses about the area and the loch and I secured funds to have single verses engraved on plaques placed along the trail,

which we named after him. It was opened by George Reid, the Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament. George was also the vice chair of Carnegie's civil society commission. Before first entering Westminster and then the Scottish Parliament, he had worked for the Red Cross in Geneva. He had a wonderful speaking voice and knew Michael Bruce's poetry well.

Comin thro' the rye

Louise Batchelor and her husband Dave, a BBC Scotland radio producer, were the leading lights in organising the annual Burns supper in our village. Dave was quite an authority on Robbie Burns and produced a wonderful series on Radio Scotland of performances of Burns' work, spoken by some of Scotland's best-loved actors. My aunt Monica, who died in 2014, had a letter from Burns, dated 1789, seeking money from her great-great-grandfather. *'Sir, A Poet and beggar are, in many points of view, alike, that one might take them for the same individual character under different designations, were it not that though, with a trifling poetic licensed, most poets may be styled beggars, yet the converse of the proposition does not hold, that every beggar is a poet. In one particular however, they remarkably agree: if you help either the one or the other to a mug of ale, or the picking of a bone, they will willingly repay you with a song. This occurs to me at present, as I have just despatched a well lined rib of John Kirkpatrick's Highlander; a bargain for which I am indebted to you, in the style of our ballad printers, 'Five Excellent new songs'. The enclosed is nearly my newest song, and one that has cost me some pains, though that is but an equivocal mark of its excellence. Two or three other, which I have by me, shall do themselves the honour to wait after your leisure; petitioners for admittance into favour, must not harass the condescension of their benefactor. You see, Sir, what it is to patronise a poet. 'Tis like being a magistrate in a petty borough; you do them the favour to preside in their council for one year and your name bears the prefatory stigma of Bailie for life'.*

The Portmoak Burns supper was quite the event and tickets sold like wildfire. Burns was also a hero in Russia as one of the foremost poets of the people, and on hearing that my daughter Holly could speak Russian, Dave invited her, aged six, to read the poem '*Comin thro' the rye!*' in Russian. She did to huge applause. This was among the first of Holly's many public performances as a child. She was Aladdin in the school pantomime one year and wore the clothes for days afterwards. Holly was always singing and dancing, and Natasha played the piano beautifully. She encouraged Holly to do ballet, but was highly critical of the Scottish dance teachers. Nothing could compare with Russian ballet. Holly's primary school in the village was good and she had many friends, her closest, Eilidh, just pipping Holly to the post in running races on the sports days. Natasha, who was a qualified teacher, became involved in running the after school club. Natasha was very kind to my mother who for the last three years of her life suffered serious dementia.

My mother had worked at a girls' private school until she was nearly sixty-five. Every year she would take a group of girls down to the RSC at Stratford upon Avon for a week of emersion in Shakespeare, which she adored. She was an avid reader and in later years enjoyed huge historical blockbusters bought by my oldest nephew Andrew. Mum had needed to be active. She had loved gardening and walking with dad in the Yorkshire Dales. My parents were also involved in voluntary work, belonging to the League of Hospital Friends and on the committee of a housing association and they were often out picking elderberries and other fruits to make home-made wine.

My father had returned reluctantly to work for Lloyds Bank after the War. He had been offered some financial post advising a South American government, but decided against it. After he retired, he was employed part-time to sort out the whereabouts of the money the corrupt architect John Poulson had silted

away overseas. It was Poulson who had bribed Labour and Conservative local politicians during the period of urban regeneration in the 1960s, and his arrest had also led to the fall from office of Reginald Maudling, Heath's Home Secretary. As I have said, my father was broadly conservative, but he was scrupulously honest, detested corruption and was generally appalled with Margaret Thatcher's politics. He remained actively involved in the Royal Auxiliary Air Force after the War and for twenty-one years ran the 609 Squadron Association. He died in 1993, aged nearly 89. Mum died at 90 in 2004. Vascular dementia, which my mother had, was a cruel disease. I remember taking her for a meal when she was in her mid-eighties and she started crying and telling me there was something wrong with her head and her memory. She moved up to Scotland to live in a nursing home next to our village, just before she turned 87 and at least Holly was able to see her and sing to her and I visited nearly every day. We cuddled and she laughed and sang, but it was awful seeing someone becoming so dependant. Her few words were 'help me'.

Colorado or Devon?

In 2008 I left Carnegie. I was offered the job of CEO of the Global Greengrants Fund based in Boulder, Colorado. It was a wonderful opportunity. GGF was an inspiring foundation, funding citizen action programmes across the world from Greenland to China. Its aim was to support local community leaders outside the US and Europe, in fighting social and environmental injustice. Through activist-led grant making, GGF provided seed funding for grass roots action on the front lines of social change. I already knew its CEO, Chet Tchozewski, whom I had met through Stephen Pittam, from Rowntree, and I had invited to speak at the 2005 Carnegie Philanthropy Symposium. I went over to Boulder, met all the staff and looked at houses and

Finding our voice

schools. The job entailed much travel, visiting projects across the world. As Obama had just won the Presidential election, the US was clearly going to be a much more interesting place to live and work.

I had however become increasingly unhappy with my marriage. We differed too much on ways in which to bring up Holly and the catastrophe with our house had compounded the stress at home. Holly and I both wanted to move away, but moving to America, where we had no relatives or friends, was too big a jump. So I informed GGF that I would not after all take the job. In hindsight I was over cautious and I am sure Holly would have loved it, but over a weekend of hesitating and talking with Holly, she dealt the final blow. She had just watched the horror film *The Shining* with her cousin and did not want to go to live near the Rockies. In fact the film was shot almost entirely in Hertfordshire. I let GGF down by not taking up the post, and for months after I felt we should have taken the plunge. Holly was 13 when she and I instead went to live in Devon. I had been invited for interview for the post of CEO of Voluntary Service Overseas, but was unsuccessful, so I returned, after 25 years, to the world of academia, becoming director of Schumacher College. It was still a major move for us both. But Devon was a glorious county, and I knew that the coastal path and Dartmoor were places I'd want to be near. The beautiful Dartington estate, where the college was located, was close to both and we loved the place.

Small is beautiful, well come on, not that small!

We visited a number of schools in the area just before we moved down and finally plumped for the local comprehensive. However when Holly started the new term, the school had forgotten she was coming. She hated it. The school had 2,000 pupils and, while in many ways good educationally, typified a scale of comprehensive education which I had long been critical of. Holly refused to go back, so we hastily searched for another school and both agreed to try the local South Devon Rudolph Steiner School. It was small-scale, had a strong commitment to environmental and social education and just felt right for her. As a single parent, and with Holly having been through a difficult time, the school provided stability.

Schumacher College was one of several organisations in Britain inspired by EF Schumacher, whose book, *Small is Beautiful*, I had read as a student in the early 1970s. Others include Practical Action, the New Economics Foundation, the Soil Association, the Centre for Alternative Technology and the Schumacher Society. The college was a residential centre running postgraduate and short course programmes on community, social, economic, farming, land reform, ecology and environmental themes, with a strong community learning ethos. With several hundred activists, scientists, lawyers, corporate social and environmental responsibility staff from the business sector and community education and development workers attending in any one year, from across the world, it was an immensely rich learning environment, as well as a peaceful place for recharging the batteries. And after 35 years work, I felt I had some ideas and experiences to share.

One of its longstanding staff members was Satish Kumar. Satish was also the editor of *Resurgence* magazine, which he had taken on from EF Schumacher, and which I had read periodically

since the 1970s. I blotted my credibility somewhat when asked by the staff team when I first met them, which living scientist I admired? Richard Dawkins I replied. Dawkins had just bettered Satish in a recent TV interview for the programme *The Enemies of Reason*. I came to like and respect Satish. He was very much the 'spiritual' leader of the college and had had a fascinating life. A former Jain priest, he had been a peace and environment activist since the 1960s. As a young man he had campaigned for land reform in India and was a Gandhian. He was also an adroit fundraiser and had many wealthy admirers, including Prince Charles. I went to a fundraising event with him in London attended by a number of rich clients of a private bank. He gave a colourful presentation about how awful capitalism was and after the talk was surrounded by supplicants.

When I joined Schumacher, Satish was in his mid-70s, but still gave talks and ran short courses and was an invited speaker at events around the world. I worked most closely with him on organising a festival to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the birth of the Nobel Prize winning writer, poet and all-round polymath Rabindranath Tagore. Largely forgotten now in Britain, Tagore was very influential in the early years of the twentieth century. He was a mentor of Gandhi and of Leonard Elmhirst, the co-founder of Dartington. In 1921, Tagore and Elmhirst, who was an agricultural economist, had set up the Institute for Rural Reconstruction called Shriniketan, in India. With his marriage to Dorothy Payne Whitney, a member of the hugely wealthy American Whitney family, Elmhirst had brought many of these ideas to the Dartington Hall estate, which they had purchased after the Great War.

Schumacher College had been set up very much in this spirit with considerable financial support from the Dartington Hall Trust. While it was primarily a post graduate level adult education college, aimed at leadership education, it had the feel

of a retreat about it. Its focus was upon transformative learning, where the learning was intended to profoundly change people. It had quite a formulaic approach to the design of many of its courses, born of years of experience. This included rituals such as a one minute silence before each lecture, community or staff meeting. There was high quality academic input, but also much time for group work, study in its glorious library and quiet reflection inside and outdoors, with walks on Dartmoor and down to the coast a standard part of every course. Much of the day was designed around food – the growing, preparation, serving and eating of. A central part of being a student at the college was to engage in all of this, irrespective of whether the course was around economics, earth jurisprudence, ecology or political science. All, students, teachers, staff and volunteers got stuck in. This approach was very much led by Julia Ponsonby, a staff member and the author of the wonderful vegetarian cookbook *Gaia's Kitchen*.

The college had a small in-house faculty of academics and over fifty world-class visiting teachers from around the globe. These included the hugely inspiring environmentalist and scientist James Lovelock, who was still teaching there when I arrived, well into his nineties, Mark Tully, the BBC's former correspondent in India, Claire Short, Labour's former Secretary of State for International Development, the Marxist Susan George, political scientist, activist and fierce critic of the IMF and World Bank neo con policies towards international development, Tony Juniper, the former director of Friends of the Earth, and Andrew Simms, the director of the Climate Change Programme at the New Economics Foundation.

When I arrived in 2008, the Trust had just decided to close the Dartington College of Arts campus, which, as with Schumacher College, was located on the Trust's estate. It had been agreed to merge the College of Arts with University College Falmouth and

Finding our voice

to relocate it to Cornwall in 2010. Established in 1961, its alumni had included the artists Gilbert and George and the guitarist John Renbourn. While others associated with the Arts College had included Benjamin Britten and Peter Piers. This decision had clearly been hugely controversial and generated extensive local protest. All the local road signs for Dartington had the word 'art' painted out. For the local Totnes economy, it meant the loss of several hundred students. For the Trust, it left a hole where there once was a heart. And many saw it as the death of an experiment in radical arts education after nearly fifty years at Dartington.

The pending closure had a palpably depressing effect upon the whole place, including among the staff at Schumacher College. There was a feeling that something important was being lost in Dartington's long and impressive history of investing in experimental education, following as it did the earlier demise of the progressive Dartington School. I realised immediately that I had landed in a hornets' nest. The closure of the Arts College presented both opportunity and challenge for Schumacher College. The opportunity, in the eyes of the Trust and its CEO, was to fill that hole and the lost student energy, by relocating Schumacher College to part of the Arts College campus, thus giving Schumacher the space to grow and a more visible profile. To them it seemed to make sense. The challenge was that the staff, students and alumni and notable philanthropic funders at Schumacher College did not want to move, and that a purpose built Arts College, with dance studios and theatres, was not appropriate for a college that specialised in small group work, unless radically redesigned.

This blessed plot

The existing Schumacher College site worked well and was clearly much beloved. But Schumacher's small campus was also run down and required refurbishment and my plans for growing the number of courses I wanted to see the college running required more space. My intuitive judgment, however, was that the move to the Arts College site would not be good for Schumacher and I said so. But I could not fully appreciate the dilemma facing the Trust, stuck as it was with an empty and very tired looking 1960s college campus, at the heart of the estate almost adjacent to the glorious medieval Dartington Great Hall. My position was that if we had to move, it needed to be to somewhere better than the existing site. We undertook extensive financial modelling and ran design workshops, over half a year, with 'green' architects, to explore the viability of transforming the look, feel and energy efficiency of the Arts College buildings. I knew from my time at Carnegie, where we had built a new eco HQ, that this would not be cheap. And we looked very seriously into the option of moving Schumacher College off the estate, entering into negotiations with another Trust. All proved too expensive. It was a taxing period for all concerned and I had to expend an enormous amount of time and energy trying to find a solution that would be in the best interest of the Trust and for the college. Wisdom eventually prevailed and the move did not take place, enabling us to secure funds to refurbish and expand at the existing location, most of which was completed by the time I retired. But it had distracted me from why I had been attracted to go to Schumacher in the first place – to expand its radical education and practical action programmes.

A few months after I had arrived I organised a two-day residential 'think tank' for staff, some students and invited visiting teachers to look at the future for the college. There was a feeling

Finding our voice

by many attending that while Schumacher College was enormously respected and indeed loved by students and teachers, its main weakness was that it was less strong on applied courses. Tony Juniper and Andrew Simms felt that some of its courses had become too esoteric. It was also not viewed as a place where social and environmental activists would necessarily go to enhance practical skills training. This chimed with my observations. It was impressive at changing people's hearts and minds, but much less strong at running applied courses that would also provide change skills. I was certainly not against the college running retreat-type short courses and of generally being a place for the re-energising of people – this was vitally important for activists, as I knew and felt personally. My career had been about helping people to be active change-makers and to be able to do that job well, and I felt that there was a need to expand the practical side of its programmes. I made this my priority.

In search of warmth

Along with the job came a house. Deer Park Cottage is located on a wooded hill on the Dartington Hall estate. It looks a bit like a Swiss ski chalet but lacks the heating – it was freezing. It was built in the 1960s for Michael Young, later Lord Young of Dartington. There is a tale that he had lost his virginity on the hill and wanted to build a hideaway house there. Young helped write the Labour Party's 1945 manifesto while at Dartington and went on to found the Institute for Community Studies, the University of the Third Age and the Consumers Association. He was the person who thought up the idea of the Open University, which Jenny Lee and Harold Wilson made into a reality. Young was one of Britain's greatest social entrepreneurs and I often lay in the bath there hoping for inspiration. I got little, but I did get a bit warmer.

In my time as the college director we expanded its campus facilities, creating several new classrooms and teaching areas. We introduced more practical certificates and post graduate degrees and extended access for lower-income students, through cheaper and more flexible courses, open learning and international outreach. One degree I am especially proud we launched was a Masters in New Economics, designed to influence a new generation of economists and potential business leaders in contemporary thinking around sustainable economic, environmental and community development. We brought together an impressive teaching team of in-house staff and visiting teachers from the New Economics Foundation, Plymouth University Business School and the Transition Towns movement. This caught the attention of the new Secretary of State for Climate Change, who together with some civil servants spent an afternoon with our course team. We were informed that this was because he was keen to be briefed on ideas to influence George Osborne, the new Chancellor, and that it was rumoured that David Cameron, the Prime Minister, admired EF Schumacher. Sadly the Secretary of State was the Liberal Democrat, Chris Huhne, who not long afterwards had to resign from the Cabinet and was imprisoned because he had asked his wife to take the rap for a speeding offence. Anyway, neither Osborne nor Cameron got the message and the Conservative/Liberal government stuck to the conventional (GDP as opposed to sustainable) growth orthodoxies.

When I became director of Schumacher College, I joined the Green New Deal Group, a coalition led by Forum for the Future and the New Economics Foundation, and added the college's name to its campaign to try to influence the political parties in the lead up to the 2010 General Election. I worked closely with three government ministries to prepare a joint report on the role of civil society in raising awareness of the issue of climate change among the general public. We co-organised an event

Finding our voice

on this theme with Saltsburg Global Seminars (whose conference centre was the Von Trapp family home used in the film *The Sound of Music*). Together with NEF, we published a book on sustainable growth economics and we organised three well-attended sessions at the civil society parallel event at the United Nation's Climate Change summit in Copenhagen. There we worked closely with Transition Towns, a young and inspiring international community action movement, with its hub based in Totnes and with which Carnegie UK had also worked. TT under its inspiring co-founder, Rob Hopkins, was promoting practical ways in which local communities could take action around climate change and become more resilient in dealing with its impact. Rob and others from TT became regular speakers on college courses. They were practical activists, yet also highly reflective practitioners. I warmed to them immediately.

Transition Towns was one of the most inspiring non-governmental community education and development movements I had come across. I was very keen for the college to be working more closely with them and a number of college staff did so. Their aim was to raise awareness of the need for more sustainable living within and by local communities and to help them to become more resilient in dealing with climate change. Communities, both rural and urban, were encouraged to reduce energy use, and reliance upon fossil fuels and to, for example, increase local organic food production. Rob, who had been an FE teacher in permaculture, had initially been working on this in Ireland, but the movement really took off when he moved to Totnes and worked with Naresh Giangrande and Ben Brangwyn to create the transition towns network in 2006. This was when I had first come across them, through the work of the Carnegie rural community development programme.

Their approach to community education and development was effective because in some sense of its simplicity. They

had developed a formulaic community leadership training programme, together with highly accessible guidebooks on what to do. Their aim was for towns to create community-visioned, designed and implemented action plans, supported by local councils and other agencies, which would mobilise and support residents to get involved in very practical local initiatives. Through an excellent website and their published handbooks, plus a highly effective training programme, which they offered to other communities, the approach started to spread virally. By 2008 around forty communities across Britain had become transition towns. By 2014, it is estimated that over a thousand communities across the world had adopted the transition approach.

As well as working with Transition Towns, I was very keen that we develop closer links with other agencies in the south west. This region contained some of the most progressive educational agencies and organisations working on climate change in Britain and I felt that we should be collaborating more closely together, as with cuts in funding for education, we could find ourselves in competition. Professor Jonathan Gosling at Exeter University had been developing a One Planet MBA with WWF to drive sustainable development in the business world, and David Wheeler, the newly appointed Professor and Pro Vice Chancellor at the University of Plymouth, had an impressive career in sustainable development and had advised such organisations as Greenpeace, Oxfam and the World Bank. Over dinner one night in Exeter, we formed a forum to share ideas and to explore opportunities for joint course development.

Plymouth University, with which the college already had a formal link, as the validating body for the college's sole degree, was open to designing new programmes with us. Both Plymouth and Exeter University Business Schools were keen to develop Masters degrees in this area and I wanted to partner with them on this, offering residential modules to be run at Schumacher.

The Eden Project was not far away, as was the Met Office Hadley Centre, one of the world's leading climate change research centres. The Soil Association and the Schumacher Institute, both EF Schumacher initiatives, were in Bristol. In north Devon, Bicton FE college was developing a centre of excellence for sustainable farming and renewable energy. And just over the county boundary, in Cornwall, Duchy FE college had opened a Rural Business School and was also keen to collaborate on designing and delivering a joint programme on sustainable horticulture. To date, Schumacher College had delivered short courses and one post graduate degree. All had been at a high academic level and all had cost a lot of money to attend. By working with the FE colleges, we could not only offer much cheaper programmes, but also more practical ones, as an addition to our higher level programmes.

Sadly within six months of my arrival, Brian Goodwin, one of our most esteemed teachers died. Just before, Brian had come to a party I'd organised for the staff team in my garden at Deer Park cottage. It was a glorious day and we sat eating strawberries and Devon cream, talking about my family connections with Lancelot Hogben, whom Brian both knew of and had admired. Brian's sudden death hit the college community hard. Together with Stephan Harding, he had established the college's only postgraduate programme - an internationally respected Holistic Science Masters degree. Brian's was a hard act to follow. I was however able to secure funds to bring new staff into the college, two of whom, Julie Richardson and Jon Rae, really shifted the chemistry within my management team. There were no social scientists on the faculty when I arrived, which somewhat undermined the holistic nature of some of the courses that were run. Julie had worked with Porritt's Forum for the Future and with the Cabinet Office and Jon with the UN in the Middle East. Both had more degrees than a thermometer, but were also

highly practical and shared my view that we needed to deliver more applied courses.

I was able to bring several new staff into the team, with expertise in sustainable economics, eco-villages, chaos theory, health, sustainable food production and green building. My intention was to triple the size of the student numbers by 2013. We set up planning groups with different partners to design new post graduate courses in New Economics, Radical Education, Rural Community Development, Ecodesign and Sustainable Food Production as well as FE level programmes in sustainable horticulture. Some at the college saw me as being anti-academic and that my impatience in scaling up would damage the Small is Beautiful ethos of the place. The new courses were certainly much more applied and practical, but they were equally challenging academically and had inspiring teachers.

Clearly the carbon footprint of international air travel was becoming increasingly hard to defend, as well as the financial costs for students from the global south. And to cap it all the new British government drastically reduced the number of visas for non EU students able to come to the college. So if activists and development workers could not come to us, we had to look at creative ways of going to them; a longstanding principle of community learning. I was especially keen that we extend our reach by way of open learning and through partnerships with potential 'sister' international colleges overseas, with whom we might run joint programmes. The college had an extensive library of films taken of visiting speakers, which we could make available in an open access way and through our partners as part of an open online programme. We secured funds from the Christensen Fund to pilot a certificate programme for social and environmental activists working in Kyrgyzstan, in central Asia. This enabled them to remain within their country, while the tutors and training materials would be made available via skype and

Finding our voice

on our website, and we employed two very able open learning experts to join the college staff team. Two Kyrgyz students who had already graduated from one of our Masters programmes supported the participants on the ground.

I had long been impressed by the work of the Barefoot College in India, set up by the inspirational Bunker Roy, who with his wife, Aruna, had been long time social activists, educators and organisers of the poor. I invited Bunker and Aruna over to speak to students and Bunker became a member of my international board. I also held discussions with similar institutional partners in China and South Africa, and we had early discussions with activists in Brazil, keen to establish a college there. We envisaged a network of progressive centres training social and environmental activists, able to support urban and rural communities to become more resilient and committed to sustainable community development. One such group we made contact with was the Rural Community Development Programme in China.

Another look at the land

Cahill's research had confirmed what international development workers had known for years, that lack of access to land was one of the major sources of inequity and poverty around the world. In 2010, I had an opportunity finally to examine the issue of land ownership and land use in a very practical local way by being invited to chair the Land Use Review for the Dartington Hall Trust's farm and estate. The Trust, which owned the college buildings, also had 1,200 acres of farmland and woodland and for fifty years, under Leonard Elmhirst's leadership, had been at the cutting edge of agricultural research and education in Britain. By the early 1980s, however, the trustees seemed to have lost interest in the farm, other than in wanting it to look manicured. It had been rented out and just as the movement for sustainable

farming was taking off, the farmer had decided it would become non-organic. Schumacher College was surrounded by the farm, indeed the farm buildings were adjacent to the college. But there had been almost no dialogue between the college and the farm in terms of using the land for education and research.

Sir John Beddington, the British government's Chief Scientific Officer had just produced a hugely challenging report, calling for a more sustainable approach to food and farming. With the world's population heading towards nine or ten billion by the middle of the century, and increasing levels of hunger, yet set against a background of growing evidence that industrial, monoculture agriculture and the over use of chemicals was degrading the land and damaging biodiversity, there was serious concern that our whole approach to farming and food production was not going to deliver. Add to this the growing cost of energy and fertilisers and the negative impact of climate change and unpredictable weather patterns, plus growing campaigns around cruelty to livestock, due to intensive industrial farming methods and around GM crops, and it was clear we needed an urgent rethink.

I was concerned that in undertaking the review, we engaged the wider community and invited evidence from, and went to visit, innovative experts in other parts of the country. With Transition Towns we ran community consultation events and we worked on identifying a number of places to visit and on collecting primary and secondary research on what could be done on the land. We were assisted by around twenty postgraduate students from the Duchy Rural Business School, who undertook 'futures' modelling for us on the financial viability of the estate. All were experienced farmers or land managers from Britain and overseas. One expert we invited to give evidence was Peter Harper, Director of Innovation at the Centre for Alternative Technology in Wales. Peter had just co-authored an excellent

publication called *Zero Carbon Britain*, and made a powerful presentation on the need for, and how we could achieve, zero carbon farming. Peter subsequently worked closely with us on designing a new Masters degree in sustainable food production.

Next to Schumacher College was the Agro forestry Research Trust set up by Martin Crawford, who often taught our students. Agro forestry used the interactive benefits from combining trees and shrubs with crops, and an organic, permaculture approach to create more diverse, productive, healthy, and sustainable land-use systems. And yet Martin's cutting edge work was not being more widely adopted across the estate. I became convinced that it should be. I also met with Colin Tudge, one of Britain's leading sustainable farming campaigners, and was interested in Colin's idea of establishing a college of enlightened agriculture. Elmhirst's original vision was that the estate, including the farm, should support new thinking, education, research and rural enterprise. So why not re-establish this vision and transform Dartington's farm into a British exemplar for sustainable farming and food production, conservation and the protection of bio-diversity? This thinking greatly influenced the report I wrote and which was presented to trustees on the future for the farm and estate and which they accepted in 2011.

It had crossed my mind that we at Schumacher College might take on the farm, but the finances were not there at the time and I needed to focus my attention on securing funds to renovate the college buildings and to fund new courses, now that we had decided not to move. We did, however, take on some additional land for our sustainable food production courses. My involvement in the land use review had, I hoped, positioned the college to play a much more active role in relation to the future of the farm and estate, post 2014, as a centre for post graduate studies and vocational training around sustainable farming and food production. This would complement Schumacher College's

other postgraduate degrees and short courses, and become an important part of our wider range of programmes supporting social and environmental activists and change-makers.

I also chaired a group working on a joint publication, with the National Trust and others on Land Partnerships. At Schumacher, we ran a small outreach community learning and enterprise programme called Landscape, supporting social entrepreneurs to set up new land use businesses, ranging from a small horticultural farm, to the building of the largest straw bale barn in Devon as part of a timber enterprise. These would also provide practical placements for students. The publication was aimed at landowners and social entrepreneurs, encouraging them to work together, and for landowners to parcel out land for new, independent, land based businesses. It was not the radical land reform I had long believed in, but it was intended as a signal to policy-makers, landowners and those concerned with rural community economic regeneration, from a group of land owning charitable trusts who were making their land available.

In February 2011 I took my daughter Holly to Morocco. We had a wonderful time in Marrakesh and went walking in the Atlas Mountains. Across North Africa the Arab Spring was just beginning – in Tunisia, then Egypt and Libya. The local TV stations and the BBC World TV in our hotel were full of the news. We spoke with staff and people in the hotel bar and you could feel their genuine happiness and hope. There was a minor demonstration in Marrakesh the day we arrived, and some months later a café in the main square at which we had eaten was bombed. It is still too early to see the eventual outcome of this socially networked, but also spontaneous eruption of people power and whether democracy might just have the chance to take root after years of dictatorships. With what has subsequently happened in Egypt and Syria, the challenges will be enormous.

2011 was the centenary of Schumacher's birth and I was

Finding our voice

invited to speak at the Hay Literary Festival with Caroline Lucas MP, the leader of the Green Party, and Andrew Simms from the New Economics Foundation. Schumacher had been a Marxist as a younger man and like Hobsbawm and Popper had to get out of Germany when the Nazis came to power. For many years he had worked as a chief economist with the National Coal Board and was opposed to nuclear energy. Earlier in his career he had worked for the British government in Burma, to assist with its transfer to independence. There he became influenced by Buddhist thinking and began to question the Western capitalist economic development model. He had written of the importance of learning by doing. This approach had been hugely influential in my own field of community education and development work. He was one of the early writers on sustainable community development and a strong proponent of energy efficiency and renewables. He had eleven children, so clearly did not support population control. Not long after the Hay event, I had an operation. I had been feeling unwell for some time and was later referred to a consultant at University College London and signed off work, before retiring in 2012.

Finding myself looking back

There has been a cultural revolution since the 1960s, pioneered by radical educationalists, which challenged the more formal teaching approaches of the past, with ones that encouraged more experiential learning, discussion and questioning. The extent of this change was brought home to me recently when working with some Chinese students, used to what they called the Confucius approach, where they listened, with little questioning, to the 'authoritative' words of me, the teacher. Paulo Freire called this didactic approach the 'banking' model of education, depositing knowledge to be regurgitated at exam

time. This more deferential culture has been changed, hopefully irreversibly, in Britain. Once you open Pandora's Box of freedom and questioning, it is difficult to close it again. Encouraging questioning students brings its challenges too of course. A key skill of the educator is to help the student to learn to listen to the views of others in the group. This is hard work, but worth it as the students become more confident, far better at problem solving and of 'thinking out of the box', in order to find personal and co-operative solutions to challenges in their lives.

I still keep my hand in as a visiting teacher and examiner at Edinburgh University, supporting international students on an Education and Development postgraduate Masters degree. The number of young people now going on to college or university has grown enormously over the past forty years in Britain, providing opportunities that few from working class and indeed most middle class families had in the past. Further education colleges and libraries, (where they have not been closed by public expenditure cuts), have largely dissolved the walls between what they do and their adjacent communities, becoming more accessible learning centres and also committed to outreach. Britain's Open University and Open College have, over this period, encouraged adults back into learning in large numbers, breaking down barriers for so many who had earlier been failed by the formal schooling system. This is a great achievement. We are all now much more educated and thus, hopefully, more informed, discerning, less deferential, enterprising and empowered. This can only be good for the ways in which we run our society and economy, for knowing how to care for the environment and for each other and for deepening our democracy.

The outcomes of the expansion in support for disadvantaged communities in the noughties in Britain were enormous. Communities up and down the country became better organised, and better able to raise funds and other resources to realise their

Finding our voice

projects. More people engaged in lifelong learning programmes from disadvantaged communities than ever. More schools became community schools, encouraging young people to get involved in community work. More colleges became community colleges, with outreach programmes. More social and community owned enterprises were set up. More people became engaged in designing the regeneration of their neighbourhoods. More community festivals, leisure and arts programmes took place. More young people engaged in community service here and overseas and participated in decisions that affected their lives. More people volunteered or engaged in fundraising events that supported projects to tackle poverty, assist the disabled, the elderly and to protect the environment and wildlife. More communities became engaged in preparing for climate change and in sustainable development. We became a more active, compassionate and informed society. Community education and development workers played a hugely significant role in facilitating all of this people power. For all their faults, and there were many, the 1997-2010 Labour governments and the devolved jurisdictions, unlocked resources that transformed the lives of millions.

Don't agonise, organise

But then came the crash in finance capitalism in 2008 and, from 2010, the austerity measures (not for the rich). This has meant huge cuts in the welfare state and many of the public services set up to tackle disadvantage. In the past three years the professional community education and development workforce in Britain has been halved, perhaps more, as we do not have complete figures affecting staff cuts within non-governmental organisations. Some local authorities, predominantly Conservative ones, have abolished their provision completely. In Devon, where I now live, there is virtually no local authority community education service.

Other local authorities, predominantly Labour ones, have transferred their work in this area to quasi autonomous trusts to try to protect funding. This has been the case in Dundee.

The lack of legislation requiring local authorities to provide community education and development support to local communities or to fund non-governmental organisations to do this has, predictably, made these services highly vulnerable to cuts. Not that legislation would necessarily have protected these services, but it would have at least been a hurdle requiring legislative change. Public expenditure for overseas development work has managed to maintain some sort of line, but even here the criteria for funding changed. The civil society capacity building fund run by the Department for International Affairs, for example, was abolished by the new government. Overseas development workers have, however, had to deal with the aftermath of an increasing number of man-made environmental disasters and the tragedies of civil war, as in Syria and South Sudan.

Has this led to the death of the community education and development profession? And has the notion of the emergence of an 'empowering professional', which I wrote about in the 1990s, become an ephemera? The answer is perhaps both yes and no. For a number of reasons covered in this book, the four decades during which we tried to create a new discrete profession did create some roots. But I am convinced that visibility, or rather the lack of it, has been a problem. The general public knows what a teacher does. School teacher, says what it does on the tin. For those people doing community education and development work, however, there has never been a single job title. It remains a highly dispersed profession with a diverse range of employers, especially in the non governmental sector, and each organisation has tended to invent its own job titles. It was this weak public identity that we tried to address by setting up PAULO, coming up with a name that described what all these occupations had

Finding our voice

in common - supporting community learning and development. We always recognised the need for specialist staff – for working with young people, in adult literacy, on environmental or health issues or as community artists, in the same way that there are different subject teachers in schools.

But what they all had in common was a combination of knowledge, skills and values that made them different from social workers and school teachers. PAULO, and the Sector Skills Council, came closest to publicly profiling the sense of a single professional identity. This enabled it to have greater punch collectively for over a decade, reflected not only in additional public investment, but also across many areas of public policy. In 2011 the new government abolished the Sector Skills Council.

A tale of optimism, juggling and military strategy

To do community education and development work requires never ending optimism. As a personality type I have always erred on the side of optimism. It was for this reason, that I felt so passionately that those who do this work needed to organise themselves. In part this was a sort of craft guild mentality. I wanted those doing it to demonstrate high practice and ethical standards, so that we in turn would give of our best to the communities we were serving. This is why I spent years supporting organisations like the Association of Community Workers, the Community and Youth Workers Union, the Standing Conference for Community Development, PAULO and the International Association for Community Development. And, why I wanted to build national and regional development centres to support these practitioners, in what is a hard and challenging job. It is also why I believed, ironically perhaps, that qualifications count. I say ironically, as I was of a generation that refused to go to either of my degree ceremonies, disdaining academia and denying

my parents the pride of attending. And yet, through my own community education and development practice, at both grass-roots and senior management levels, I came to see how much people working for disadvantaged communities, in particular people from these communities, wanted to be good at doing the job and valued their qualifications. I witnessed this so many times, in Scotland, in South Africa and other parts of the world.

It was often asserted when we were setting up PAULO that we were herding cats, implying a fruitless task. There have been many times when I have been involved in trying to organise community education and development workers that I felt they were probably right. Any group of people owing many of their radical practice ideas to the 1960s was always going to have an anarchic gene. And then I went to see a circus in Moscow where cats were indeed herded. The coalition of informal education and community development occupations that we successfully brought together in the 1990s to create PAULO and then the Sector Skills Council, demonstrated that it was possible. And it will be huge a setback should they now fragment. Unity is always strength. And my advice now to those who believe in the importance of community education and development is to re-group and to rebuild.

I try hard to dismiss conspiracy theories that suggest that Conservative governments had always been wary of community education and development, as this was not the case. In the 1980s and 1990s Conservative governments funded the establishment of both the Community Development Foundation and the Scottish Community Education Council and the funding of other national development agencies. It was a Labour/Liberal government that had abolished SCEC. And, there were many local Labour politicians who hated community education and development workers stirring communities up. The current Conservative/Liberal government wants to see local

communities having more of a say in neighbourhood planning, through its 'localism' policies and the Liberals have a noble tradition of support for community activism. But the government has overseen the largest cuts in community education and development support for local communities in decades. Perhaps this was a cock up, where a new administration of young, inexperienced politicians, caught up with the hubris of power, did not have the maturity to think through the consequences of its actions. Yet Michael Gove, the ideologically tribal Conservative education minister has said clearly that he wants to abolish citizenship education in schools. Paulo Freire presciently wrote that conservative governments prefer a culture of silence.

In 2010, the Community Development Foundation lost its quango status and core funding from government, and now exists as a much smaller social enterprise seeking contracts to survive. Other national development organisations, such as the National Youth Agency and the Federation of Community Development Learning, have also had significant cuts in funding. The Community Development Exchange, the former Standing Conference for Community Development, had to close due to the loss of government grant support in 2013. The infrastructure that we had put in place over the previous forty years to support professional development in Britain was being dismantled.

In the autumn of 2013, I was involved in organising two sixtieth anniversary receptions for the International Association for Community Development, to celebrate its work. We held these events at the beautiful new centres of the Carnegie UK Trust and the Gulbenkian Foundation. It was good to see old colleagues, but it felt like a wake. There was, however, one young Somalian student who spoke with passion about the work going on in London to support Somalian asylum seekers and, of the importance of development work in his own country. He reminded me of why I got involved in this work in the first place.

In the summer of 2014, IACD together with the Scottish Standards Council for Community Learning and Development and other Scottish partners, is holding an international conference in Glasgow, on the theme of our Common Wealth. As part of the conference, the expected several hundred participants will visit community education and development projects across the region. Glasgow has changed tremendously since I worked there, but there still exists high and growing levels of poverty and disadvantage. Support for community education and development practice and for policy in Scotland is still better supported than in other parts of Britain, and there is legislation currently going through the Scottish parliament to strengthen the empowerment of local communities. So, while these are harder times for practitioners, there are some green shoots of optimism.

My grandfather, Charles Edward McConnell, who as a young soldier had fought at the Relief of Ladysmith in South Africa and was an officer in the Great War, was also a champion all-round sportsman. Where he excelled was in juggling Indian clubs. These are bowling-pin shaped and made of wood, and used in carefully choreographed routines. They became popular during the health craze of the late Victorian era, and appeared as a gymnastic event in the 1904 Olympics. He became the world champion, but for some reason Great Britain did not send a team to take part in the Olympics and all three medals were won by the Americans. Despite this, his prowess was widely covered in the British press. I have an album full of Victorian and Edwardian newspaper cuttings and posters advertising his performances in front of such luminaries as Lord Roberts of Kandahar, the Commander in Chief of the British army. Granddad performed the length and breadth of Britain, accompanied on the pianoforte by my grandmother. My father was put on the stage and became the junior Indian club world champion aged eight and exercised in our garden well into his eighties.

Juggling is a truly wondrous thing to behold. It is a skill and an art form of great beauty. To do it well requires years of practice. Juggling, like spinning plates, the daily routine of community education and development workers, is about keeping several objects in the air, hopefully without any coming crashing down, until you, the juggler, decide you want to retrieve them. Most jobs are like this, certainly where you are working with so many players, often with competing calls upon your time. And where the work you are doing to support disadvantaged people is being countered by others, who want your clubs to fall.

And it is here that military strategy comes to in to play. Clausewitz's most famous aphorism is that "*War is the continuation of politics by other means*". Clausewitz, like Marx, was a student of the concept of dialectical change, where there is an inter-relationship between what each side is doing. For Marx it was between the capitalists and the workers, where the former would do all they could to weaken to latter, and vice versa. Life is rarely quite the zero sum game of the battlefield, but it is all too often about human power dynamics, where the powerful will try to retain their power and where the weak need to combine if they are to have any chance of making some gains, hopefully for the better. For successful community education and development work, you need to be able to see the wood for the trees, and, at the same time, see the detail. You need to do careful research, to show flexibility and initiative, but always mapping out a clear plan of action of what it is that the group you are working with wants to achieve.

In the late 1990s, while I was CEO of the Scottish Community Education Council, we engaged in an initiative with the British armed forces. We secured the secondment of a young officer from the army, together with the endorsement of the Secretary of State and the senior commanding officers across the three services, the Army, RAF and Royal Navy, to run staff development

programmes for new officer level entrants in community engagement. The British armed forces have long been required to take on wider roles than simply defending the country and invading others. They are a key part of our development engagement in different parts of the world and of managing conflict resolution and peace building. At that time Yugoslavia was falling into civil war and the Prime Minister was seeking ways of securing a peace agreement in Northern Ireland.

I was quite attracted to this project, in part, because of my family's connections with the military. During the carnage of the Great War, my grandfather was in charge of the operations, organization, administration and discipline of his regiment. It has been said that the adjutant controls the battle while the CO commands it. He had served as the adjutant of the 82nd Heavy Artillery Group fighting the Turks at Gallipoli, was part of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force under General Allenby and among the first to enter Jerusalem in 1916 after it had been captured from the Turks. My other grandfather, George Sayer Hogben, who we called Poppy, had been a regimental bandmaster and seen action in the Somme, where he lost cousins and where two of my grandmother Nan's brothers were killed. My mother, who was born in 1914, felt that Poppy was a stranger when he returned in 1918. And my father had served as an RAF officer in the Second World War and was stationed with the West Riding 609 Squadron, which had seen action in the Battle of Britain. Dad flew a few times, but on a steep dive burst his eardrums, so was placed in charge of processing foreign pilots from occupied Europe into the squadron, chiefly Poles, Belgians, and others from the Commonwealth. So, perhaps there was something in me that appreciated the idea of military organising.

We delivered professional development for them on community education and development approaches. This programme continued into the early years of the Labour government after

Finding our voice

1997, and Britain's more pro-active engagement in Bosnia and then Sierra Leone. I presented some of the sessions and it was fascinating how similar in many ways the role of the community education and development practitioner was with theirs. It has been said that people doing professional community education and development work are the modern day secular clergymen and women supporting the people of their parish. There is some truth in this. But, as the son and grandson of military officers, I also appreciated how close our role was with that of the military, seeking to build peace and reconstruction in war-torn countries.

From Olympian heights

I have always liked Nye Bevan's quote: "*The purpose of getting power is to be able to give it away*". But to do this, requires people with commitment and skills also working within central and local government, in business, the military, the media as well as civil society, who really do believe in building more participative and socially just democracies. This also means public servants who know how to work in more empowering ways. There are now more people with a career background in community education and community development working as policy advisers within central government, for ministries for communities (variously named) across Britain. But they are a small band of heroic public servants and there still remains too much conservatism within the public sector, which prevents more open, empowering styles of government.

There are many reasons for this, from jobsworth attitudes, to a belief that is against changing the power dynamics, precisely because it will mean more open democracies and empowered citizens and communities that will want a voice, and will challenge. Here is another difference between a progressive's approach and a conservative's one. Both claim that they want to

see an enabling and empowering state. For the former, we want a pro-active state, a state where its public servants are trained and skilled at working together with citizens, to plan and deliver good quality public services and stronger, more equitable communities. The conservatives want to take the state 'off your back', with less regulation and planning. This includes the employment of far less public servants and less well-trained staff and where public services are delivered, if they are delivered at all, by charities or by way of self-help.

During the New Labour years it became less of an issue as to who delivered public services, the public, private or non-governmental sector, so long as they were efficiently, equitably and qualitatively delivered. The 2012 Olympics and Para-Olympics underlined the strengths of this more plural, mixed economy approach. There was sustained public investment by the state and the lottery and a partnership played by the public services - the police, the armed services, sports and leisure services - together with an important contribution made by volunteers, charitable trusts and corporate sponsorship. Danny Boyle's opening event gave deserved praise to the legacy of the post-war public services in Britain's social history, but you felt that he was documenting something that was fast disappearing.

Whether protecting the environment, the health and safety of employees, providing social care, lifelong learning opportunities, or free museums, we had public services of which we should have been proud. One of these was the state's investment in community education and development, here and overseas. Like the right to vote, we took these for granted and failed to realise how important it was to protect these social democratic advances. The current government has successfully portrayed this investment in public services as the cause of the current recession, whereas the primary cause lay with failures and greed in private finance capitalism. Those involved in public education,

in public service broadcasting, the progressive media and in the leadership of the Labour party, have not effectively countered this misrepresentation. It is now time to do so.

In the 1970s, there was a belief that the community education and development worker should do him or herself out of a job, as though 'empowerment' was a commodity to be transferred and once done so, a community would be more educated, able and resilient to deal with similar situations in the future. But members of a community change, people come and go, grow older, move away. Is there however such a thing as a community memory, a culture of learning, of the capacity to organise to influence change, passed on from generation to generation? Folklorists like Ewan MacColl and record labels like Topic, in the 1950s and 60s in Britain, collected working class memories and songs, just when many of these communities were being torn down. Community educators, especially those who are also community artists and musicians, have done much over the past forty years, to record and to pass on people's experiences about coming together, about the power and fun of social action and the hard times of struggle. There has, however, been a loss of many of the institutions that traditionally forged these community identities - the trades unions, the co-op movement, working men's clubs, faith organisations - all are much weaker now than they were in the 1960s. And, while four decades of community education and development work has done much to rebuild community networks and social capital, it has done so against other, stronger forces that have promoted individualism and, in the immortal words of Michael Caine, the self-preservation society and Margaret Thatcher's, *'there is no such thing as society'*.

Rediscovering community is more than just about a feeling of 'place' and kinship, although roots and family are important and powerful. Community is also more than the common interest of a group of people who come together to fight against some

injustice. Community is a very human need. We are a social species: we need others to care for and to care for us, neighbours who look out for each other, the honest shopkeeper, the good work mate, decent boss, caring partner, lover, parent, friend. We all need and, I believe, are searching for a sense of community, of kindness and fairness. No-one in their right mind wants a social and economic system that exploits, divides and alienates people and despoils the planet. And yet that is just what is happening and we need to change it, and fast. It does not need to be this way. Social and environmental activists, green, social democratic reformers, responsible companies have shown that their is another way.

Communities, especially poor communities, in both the developed and developing worlds, will always need people with technical skills to help them, and that support is getting more difficult to access than it was before. Most of the community education and development professional workforce is now employed by non-governmental organisations in Britain. Perhaps this is a good thing – it was never that easy being a local government employee assisting a community to be critical of the council. Indeed, it has to be said, too many avoided that. When I first got involved in this work it was the heyday of social democracy, when the state spent money on community education and development and where local authorities employed such workers by the thousands. This is no longer the case.

Community education and development work has strengthened and deepened democracy, and with this, the ability of citizens to challenge those with power in a more informed and effective way. We had high hopes in community education and development work, but the realities of a more equitable redistribution of power over the past four decades have been modest. Indeed the rich have got richer in every part of the world. And, as Edward Snowden's disclosures have highlighted, democratic

checks and balances over the power of governments have been seriously undermined in recent years. As educationalists and organisers, we have been able to do little to change the maldistribution of wealth or the emergence of the surveillance apparatus of the state. As community educationalists we can simply keep raising the issues and as community organisers, keep assisting those who are being exploited, to work together.

It has been estimated by Oxfam that the wealth of the 85 richest people is equal to half the population of the world. This is grotesque, as perhaps a billion people go to sleep hungry every night. It is these inequalities that are the main causes of global poverty and the related deprivations that are associated with that - high child mortality, ill health, poor housing and poor education. Poverty is primarily caused because a few have a huge and grossly inequitable cut of the world's wealth and resources and exploit a large pool of cheap labour to produce and retain that wealth. Huge inequalities are quite simply bad for any society and community, because they give too much power to a small minority of individuals and deny opportunities for the many. Huge wealth corrupts the soul (however one wants to define this). It breeds greed and indifference and while some wealthy people have followed Andrew Carnegie's example and given money away through philanthropy, the majority have not. But we must never give up hope that things cannot change. Inter-governmental bodies like the UN and EU, social democratic governments, local authorities, progressive civil society organisations and socially and environmentally responsible companies and organised communities, demonstrate that there are different ways of running things. But little progressive social change has been achieved without education and organisation and often struggle. Sadly the human condition demonstrates that we can be easily corrupted by power, but much more deeply hurt by the lack of it.

We can be heroes

I live in Dartmoor National Park. My local Community Forum recently fought and won a campaign to stop a toxic waste dump being located next to our small rural town, Buckfastleigh. I have been a foot soldier in this campaign, which is the most sophisticated community action I have seen for years. It has been led by two incredibly able and committed local residents, Neil Smith, a disillusioned former financial adviser in the City of London, and Julia Wilton, a law graduate and nursery teacher at the Rudolf Steiner school. Buckfastleigh is a former woollen mill community, the last in Devon, with its final mill closing in 2013. It is a town with high indicators of deprivation. It had its political radicalism in the past, as a town with a strong Chartist and Co-operative tradition, not at all unlike the former mining and textile towns of West Fife in Scotland and Calderdale in West Yorkshire, I know well. It also has what they call the blow-ins, incomers, some on low incomes, others like me, middle class professionals, who have decided to live here because it is a pretty, friendly, peaceful place and because it is in the National Park.

Both the long-standing residents and the blow-ins joined together to fight for the community. Our Community Forum mobilised large numbers of residents over three years, through hugely effective public education, good research and creative organising. Its approach has been community education and development at its best, and yet we did not have a professional community education and development worker supporting us. We did however require considerable technical support. Some existed pro bono, within the community, but much had to be brought in from outside, with technical experts paid for as the result of hard fundraising. And we needed to raise a lot. The Transition Towns movement, which demonstrates some of the best community education and development work I have seen

recently, probably has few professionally trained community education and development workers, but does use many of the participatory techniques developed by the profession.

Is self-help, the muscular idea of the nineteenth century, once again the way of the future? The current British government's idea of the Big Society indicates that it is. There is nothing wrong with self-help - co-ops, trades unions and most other civil society organisations started in this way. But, will a more progressive government once again have the vision also to provide free community technical assistance, education and development support to assist those that are less well resourced, whose voice is rarely heard? I hope so. In February 2014, Ed Milliband, leader of the British Labour party, gave a speech calling for a new type of public services, with people power and the voice of the users of public services and of local communities becoming a central feature of Labour's whole approach to government. This, as with calls for the Big Society, is vacuous unless resourced by way of free community education, organisation and development support, both domestically and overseas.

As this book has, I hope, demonstrated there is a wealth of experience and expertise across the professional community education and development sector that should be harnessed, built upon and improved. Whether employed by democratically elected local authorities or through grants to non-governmental organisations, and especially directly by local communities, staff with community education and development skills will have a significant multiplier effect in getting more people engaged. Community workers will support community integration, anti-racism, conflict resolution and peace building. Youth workers working with school teachers on practical citizenship education programmes will support young people to become more actively involved and concerned about social and environmental issues. Community technical aid provided by the likes of lawyers,

planners and architects will make a huge difference in assisting people to shape their neighbourhoods for the better, creating safer, vibrant and more beautiful places to live. International development workers will assist millions of people in poorer countries to build better, more resilient lives. Community based adult educators will increase adult literacy levels and engage more people back into learning. Support for the community arts will bring the opportunity for us to find our creative side through music making, arts classes, drama groups and multi-cultural festivals, enriching us all.

Public servants trained in community engagement and with attitudes that once again are about providing public service, will transform the ways in which government, at all levels, develops sustainable policies and delivers sustainable programmes. Businesses that are socially and environmentally responsible, with decently paid staff proud to provide products and services that are safe and healthy, will succeed, as the British workers' co-operative, John Lewis Partnership demonstrates. Farmers, who produce food sustainably, will provide healthier food, care for animal welfare, biodiversity and conservation and look after our land for all of us and for future generations. The rich who give wealth away as progressive philanthropists and the landed wealthy who transfer land to community land trusts for low cost housing and community supported agricultural projects, will be doing the right thing. We should all once again feel a responsibility to pay progressive taxes at a level that will provide quality public services that benefit the whole of society, from environmental protection to care for the elderly. But from the hard knocks of experience, all of this means the transfer of power, legislation, regulation and investment and the election of progressive governments, at European, national and local levels.

Western liberal democracy has achieved much. But liberal democracy is not enough. We need now to move towards a more

social and greener democracy, where rights are balanced by far greater social and environmental responsibilities by individuals, companies and governments. In this book, I have often used the terms democratic socialism and social democracy interchangeably. There are some political scientists who would argue that they are different. In practice, certainly in the West, this is not generally the case and I am someone who feels comfortable seeing these as part of the same progressive tradition. For me socialism and democracy must be two sides of the same coin. Socialism, without the checks and balances of democratic oversight - including secret ballots, an investigative press, independent public service broadcasting, an independent judiciary and public education that encourages education for democracy - has been enormously damaging. Similarly democracy, without a high degree of equality of opportunity, economic justice and social responsibility, is shallow and far easier to manipulate by those with power and wealth.

My democratic socialism/social democracy has its big 'P' political heroes, role models and leaders. These include Nye Bevan, Barbara Castle, Willy Brandt, Jacques Delors, Mary Robinson, Aung San Suu Kyi, Nelson Mandela, to name but a few. I have also admired some socialists, such as Michael Gorbachev in the USSR, who though not democrats in my sense, were pretty benevolent. Likewise democrats, or rather Democrats, in the US sense, who because of the Cold War, have never been able to include the prefix 'social', but who clearly are, such as Bill Clinton. But little progressive change has been achieved solely by inspiring leaders. It has required the day to day efforts of the millions of ordinary men and women, young and old, and of local community leaders, who over the centuries have organised, campaigned, suffered and often succeeded in building a fairer, more just world. And it is these people, these communities we must support. They are the real heroes.

That world has largely been seen as the human world however. Early socialists, such as the Levellers, were concerned about land issues and the co-operative movement was born out of anger about the cost and the adulteration of food. In the nineteenth century, social reformers became increasingly concerned about the pollution in the cities, the smog and the dying rivers, and of the impact upon people's health, my great granddad's early death through tuberculosis being just one example. Some socialists, such as William Morris, also began to see the importance of protecting the natural environment for its sake, as well as ours. And in the early twentieth century we saw campaigns by workers for access to the countryside, then the post-war Labour government creating National Parks and later legislation protecting endangered species and biodiversity. But we have not done enough to recognise the rights of the millions of other species and flora with which we share this lonely planet. And, it is the only planet we have. A paradise we, as a species and with a human designed economic system, seemed doomed to destroy.

The science of ecology has allowed us to see much deeper into nature's complexity and to understand our inter-dependence with it. Climate change scientists have proved that industrial pollution is changing the earth's climate patterns. The dire warnings of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, have highlighted how much we have lost and what serious damage we are doing by putting profit before planet. In March 2014, the IPCC concluded that the planet's climate was already tipping, with the melting of sea ice and the thawing of the permafrost in the Arctic. Climate change is already reducing global food production, creating killer heat waves in Europe, wildfires in Australia and leading to deadly flooding in Bangladesh and Pakistan and other coastal areas. And these extreme weather events are hitting the most vulnerable communities worst. All governments, including those on the social democratic left, have

failed to take the regulatory actions necessary to prevent this.

It is for this reason that running through my democratic socialism there has always been a strong green river. And it is why I want to see a green Labour party, as well as a strong Green party in local, British and European politics and in other parts of the world. My passion about this all started through my parents' love of the Dales, during my school days cycling to and climbing every pike in the Lake District, through my long distance walking and, why I now live next to Dartmoor. And why I hate litter so much, and always take a bag with me on my walks to pick it up! It was because of my love of wildlife and of trees and flowers as a child. And of why, as a little boy, I thumped a friend for trampling down some daffodils. I suspect it is because we all know, intuitively, how much we are a part of nature, but have been brainwashed to thinking we are above it and can exploit it with abandon.

A younger generation is reminding us of these deep truths. My daughter Holly is an animal rights campaigner, concerned about the appallingly cruel behaviour of the industrial farming sector, much of which I too had become silent about. She challenges me hard and I have huge respect for her. I am sure she will do great things. As with my generation back in 1968, young people today are concerned and want a voice. They are organising through demonstrations like the anti-capitalist Occupy movement and, increasingly virtually, through influential on-line communities like 38 degrees and Avaaz. Holly is far more informed and communications savvy than I was at her age. This gives me hope.

In 2008 I attended an event in Cork to celebrate the life of a colleague, Ray Murphy, who had worked for the Atlantic Philanthropies Irish-American foundation and died in his late fifties of cancer the year before – a year in which I lost four of my friends. The others were Gordon Hinchcliffe, the American with whom I had been at secondary modern school and stolen

from antique shops. I had not seen Gordon for forty years, but we kept in touch and had planned to meet again just before he died; Olivia Brown, who owned Powt Howe, the house in the Lake District where Natasha and I were married. Olivia was a remarkable person. At the age of 23 she had established the first children's museum in Glasgow in the mid 1970s, with signs saying 'please touch'. She was an accomplished musician and, with her husband Chris, passionate about the countryside; and John Hubley, with whom I had worked in Strathclyde and who had introduced me to Gandhian approaches to community development. John had become a world expert on public health, but he fell ill while abroad and when he returned to Britain was not treated in an NHS hospital, but in a private clinic contracted by the NHS to carry out routine, low-risk procedures. During keyhole surgery a major vein was ruptured. It turned out that the clinic lacked some of the basic equipment to help stem the bleeding. The coroner pronounced negligence. A BBC Panorama television programme was made about John's tragic and needless death.

The President of Ireland, Mary McAleese, spoke at Ray's memorial. She said that *'we are the first generation that has at last pulled Ireland out of poverty'*. Within six months Ireland's economy went into freefall, catching pneumonia as the US and then the UK caught flu as a result of the financial crisis. Ireland had significant infrastructural investment and economic development during the Celtic Tiger years, but also corruption and greed. I am optimistic that Ireland, as part of the EU, will pull through. Ireland has changed profoundly, to become a much more open, secular, inclusive and multi-cultural country, able to confront its past history. Ireland is the only country in Europe with a population smaller than it was in the 1840s. The famine then was largely caused because of the inaction and political dogma of what today we would call an ideologue neo con government, of

laissez faire conservatives and liberals, who refused to intervene to save people's lives. This was the height of Victorian hypocrisy. Throughout the famine there were British government guarded foodstores, which they refused to open. Indeed perhaps the only people who come out of that tragic period in Ireland's history with some social morality were the Quakers who ran the soup kitchens. These were the development aid activists of their day.

Similarly in Scotland, where I lived for most of my career, and which, in 2014, may decide upon a future independent from the rest of Britain. If I was still living there I would be minded to vote for independence, just to spite the establishment. Smaller countries can work well and have huge influence, as the Scandinavians demonstrate. But an independent Scotland would still be a country with great inequalities and have to operate within a world of global financial capitalism and greedy elites who care little for national boundaries. While it certainly makes much sense to have more power transferred from Westminster, Scotland will still need to pool many areas of sovereignty with other parts of the British Isles and the wider EU. I am not a nationalist, and frankly the more sovereignty we share the better, over a wide range of policy issues, as well as at the same time decentralising power to a smaller scale where appropriate.

Living now in the south west of England, I can see how much that region loses out by not having more powers transferred from London. I have long felt that the Germans have got a better federal system, with their provincial landers. The abolition of the Regional Development Agencies by the British government in 2010 was a mistake, and my preference would have been to have made them into directly elected regional assemblies, with far greater powers to shape the political, social, economic and cultural development of the English regions. The establishment of a devolved parliament in Scotland brought a confidence, which the English regions lack. Glasgow, a European City of Culture,

is a dynamic place, despite the current recession. Edinburgh is a European capital of great beauty. Aberdeen and Dundee have been transformed and are both modern entrepreneurial and cultural centres. And at least now some of the rural highlands and islands are community owned, including the part of the country where my Scottish grandmother Winnie's family, the MacAulays, hail from.

The decentralisation of more political power to the regions and nations of the British Isles, and within them to the cities, counties, towns and local communities, will not by itself redistribute economic power. Capitalism is international, with British head-quartered multi nationals operating globally and others, with their HQ in Beijing, New Delhi, Berlin or New York operating in Britain. Experience has taught us that such companies and the even more fluid financial capitalism, will only be socially and environmentally responsible if regulated, and it is only supra national political bodies, such as the EU, that get close to calling them to account, both within Europe, but also with respect to their behaviour in the developing world.

Like it or not, we are in a period of global history where the nation state is being replaced by supra national quasi continental blocks. The EU has over 400 million citizens, yet barely five per cent of the world's population. Of all of the supra-national groupings, it spends, however, half of the world's expenditure on social welfare and development, has taken some of the strongest measures to deal with climate change and has among its members the most advanced social democracies in the world. I have many criticisms of the EU, especially of the Common Agricultural Policy, which has encouraged monoculture, wastage of food and environmental damage. But I still believe that the EU can be a power for good in the world, with its nations, regions and local communities each playing their important part in that. The crisis in finance capitalism hit southern Europe hard, but

Finding our voice

although too little and late, the richer north, is supporting them. However across the EU, it is the political and nationalist right that is gaining power, and those of us on the social democratic left have failed to challenge them effectively and failed to educate the public about the importance of voting at the European parliamentary elections and of voting in a spirit of community rather than reactionary xenophobia.

I now have a wonderful new partner, Iris. Actually she is an old friend, as we first met more than twenty years ago while both working at the Community Development Foundation. She works for the national agency responsible for ensuring excellence in the social care field, and has reminded me of the importance of empowerment work with older people, now that I am heading that way! Iris was born in County Monaghan, Ireland, the county my family came from. We go back often to Ireland to see her family and perhaps to discover mine. Iris is critical of my attempts to claim Irish ancestry and when I slip into an Irish lilt. This, she says with rolling eyes, sounds more like a mix of a leprechaun and Ian Paisley. But at least with no stammer. A few years ago I saw Cathal McConnell, one of Ireland's greatest folk flautists, playing in Edinburgh. We spoke after the gig over a pint and he told me that his great grandfather had rejoiced under the name 'Stuttering Micky' and was a great singer. So there's hope for me yet.

Finding our voice