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TEACHING AND LEARNING AT YEAR 12 Differences in teachers' conceptions of history Kate Patrick Please do not quote without permission

The main focus of my research is the effect of the teacher on what students learn. I am looking here at the teacher's contribution to shaping the content of the student's learning - what the student learns, rather than how, or whether, she or he learns. In particular, I am interested in what notion of history, as a study, teachers express, how it frames their teaching in the classroom, and how far it is communicated to their students.

My starting point for this discussion is the idea that the teacher is not a glass window through which a particular syllabus casts light on a group of students. In recent years there has been a good deal of work on the conceptions of the everyday world which children bring to the classroom - people talk about "children's science" (see White, 1988, for a review of the literature). I want to argue that teachers also bring conceptions to the classroom, and that these conceptions cannot necessarily be inferred from the curriculum they are teaching. Teachers have ideas about what they are trying to teach, what they want their students to learn, and how they expect them to learn it. Their ideas are not unique, they have a history in place and time, just as the syllabus does, but it can't be assumed that they are identical with the syllabus.

Probably at the moment, when Year 12 studies are being consciously reshaped, it is more obvious that the insights embodied in the current curriculum connect with a particular way of interpreting the teaching of history (cf for instance Lonsdale, 1989). Like other history studies conceived in the seventies, say for example the English Schools Council History 13-16 course with which its development was linked, the present Year 12 Australian History course is unified by a set of underlying concepts which are used as reference points

by
the examiners. These concepts are evidence, empathy, historical
imagination,
values, time, change, causation, and motivation. These concepts are very
like
the outcomes of study nominated by the Schools Council in the History 13-16
course, and a similar justification seems to underlie their centrality in
the
course: if students don't understand these ideas, then they don't have a
firm
grasp on the idea of history and how it is studied. The examiners describe
them as basic to the discipline, that is, they are ideas which are seen as
essential to the development of historical understanding. In the VCE
course,
as in History 13-16, these underlying concepts can be studied in relation
to a
number of possible topics; there is no common course content. Schools elect
to
study three of a possible fifteen core topics. When the examiners devise
exam
questions, they say, they are trying to see how well students understand
some
or all of these concepts in relation to the specific content area covered
by
the question.

This way of defining course objectives suggests that teachers may be
expected
to structure their teaching around students' acquisition of these basic
concepts, as is explicitly the case for the History 13-16 Project. This is
not, however, the approach of the teachers I've interviewed. One said,
"The
Chief Examiner says that concepts are the coathangers and the content is
just
the clothes you hang on them - she says we all teach too much content.
I've
had a number of arguments with her about that over the years. The concepts
need to emerge from the content, the students need to know something before
they can get anywhere." Another commented that in recent years "there has
been
a great emphasis on skills and content has tended to drop out, I feel
content
is extremely important and skills only make sense in the context of
content".
A third told his class,

'I agree with the chief examiner that we teachers are always trying to get
too
much information into the course - but she's never taught it... You can't
put

together three pages of detailed argument for a point of view if you don't have the content - you need a data base - now to get that up and useful by the end of the year, you'll need a few fundamental pieces of information, and you'll be focussing in on the basic concepts.' (School 3, 26 March 1990)

Each of these teachers emphasises the content of the course, rather than the underlying "historical" concepts. In itself, this suggests that these teachers dispute the rationale of the present course. How do they, then, represent the content of the course, and what kind of image of history do they offer their students? What is history about, and how do you do it? I don't want here to fall into the trap of comparing the teachers' ideas on points which I take to be characteristic of the study of history. Rather I want to start by examining what they talk about themselves: what they focus on and the context in which they consider it. In doing this I am using the phenomenographic approach of Ference Marton to analyse their conceptions (see eg Marton, 1985, and Marton and Neuman, in press). I have also found it very useful to listen carefully to the images and metaphors they use, as a way of representing the structure they give the subject. I draw particularly on the work of Lakoff and Johnson (see Lakoff, 1987, Lakoff and Johnson, 1980); there are also a number of researchers, inspired by people like Donald Schön, who have been focussing on teacher images (see eg Theory into Practice, Spring 1990, a special issue on Metaphors, especially Munby and Russell, 1990).

My main sources of information are interviews with teachers, and prolonged observation of their classes. Last year I interviewed fourteen Year 12 Australian History teachers. This year I am observing classes taught by four of them, and it is the conceptions of these four teachers I shall be discussing today. I have observed twenty or so of each teacher's Year 12 Australian History classes, including at least one sequence of classes on a particular topic. All four are mixed-sex Government high schools drawing on largely

middle-class catchment areas..

I want now to focus on a set of four transcripts; there's an extract from one lesson taught by each of the four teachers I've been observing.

There are two things I want to do with these transcripts. First, I want to connect the teacher's focus in the lesson to the dominant metaphor they used when they talked to me about teaching Australian History, and the kind of work they particularly encourage students to do. Secondly, I want to draw attention to those points students raise which the teacher does not pursue, as an indication of what lies outside the field of discourse, which the teacher has defined.*

The teacher at School 1, whom I shall call Ms Farmer, emphasises getting students to "see", by trying to visualise what things looked like in the past, being on the lookout for traces of the past, collecting visual material, and explaining changes in appearance. The part of the course she least likes is the land legislation in the Settlers and Squatters topic, which she describes as "dry" - she would leave it out if she could - and she generally avoids political issues, which she feels her students find it hard to understand. Her metaphors for her teaching are mainly visual: she "exposes" them to a lot of primary sources, tries to "get them to see how to use their information", arrive at "a viewpoint of their own"; "students find it difficult to see what's important". She models the way to take notes or construct essays by using the board - the answer to students' difficulties in seeing is to show them. These images suggest a conception of students learning by perceiving, and what they learn is an understanding of what is visible and immediate.

In this particular extract Ms Farmer uses a map of early Melbourne to introduce students to some observations about the siting and planning of the city. She sketches pictures of everyday life, drawn from the reminiscences of early settlers - Batman's vegetable garden, the horses dashing through washing hung

across the street, the boats sailing up a flooded Flinders Lane. At the same time, she points out the geographical constraints on settlers, like the swampy land south of the Yarra, the fresh water above Dight's Falls, the relationship between Melbourne and the docks, the patterns of settlement and subdivision on the ridges and gullies. Her emphasis on the River Yarra is important in the context of later lessons, when she continually emphasises the significance of Melbourne's role as a port serving a hinterland.

Two points are raised by students which are excluded from the discussion. The first is Steve's comment that "there was a carpenter in the city", which Ms Farmer sets aside, though earlier in the same lesson she points out that there was a carriage builder's yard in Bourke Street, and towards the end of this extract she draws attention to the houses - at this point in the lesson she is asking for "the overall pattern you can see". The second excluded point is Anna's comment that "the river was called the Yarra Yarra". In another lesson Anna again expresses interest in how places acquired their names - who named them, how were the names chosen, what were their referents; this time Ms Farmer responds, in that she identifies some of the people after whom suburbs had been named, but the significance of names and changes in them is not pursued.* The meanings she is looking for relate to the functions of the settlement and the rationale and impact on daily life of its physical structure. Her emphasis is on what can be physically apprehended.

Ms Kollontai, at School 2, sees the study of history as demanding active thought. She says,

'I want them to learn to have confidence in their ability to think about things for themselves, so I want to make history seem accessible - not as a great big body of knowledge to be acquired, but interesting, exciting, offering lots to think about, to do with people and what life's all about. I want them to be

able to think, assess, and weigh up.'

Ms Kollontai can see the possibility that her students will think of history as an oppressive, inert mass of material on which they can have no effect; she wants them to see in it exciting ideas and experiences which they will be able to take hold of and think about. This is a process which she sees as involving positive effort on their part - not passively seeing, but actively picking out the main points which are being made from a mass of detail. Her aim is for students to build up a broad-brush picture which they can recall at the end of the year, and which will form a frame into which more detailed information can fit. When she first started teaching she was more insistent on "getting the facts into them", but she now feels this is not in fact how students learn. She speaks positively about the World Wars topic, because "they can't just learn the information, they have to do something with it, because they have to keep on comparing one War with the other". She talks about "doing something" with information, connecting it - she advises them as they begin their reading on a topic to "start by getting the broad picture". These images suggest that her central concern is getting her students to handle information, and her task as the teacher is not so much to show it to them as to see that they get hold of it. This involves both connecting what they learn with what they already know, and seeing the point of it in the context of a general problem. In class she talks about her own explorations in search of the Mahogany Ship down near Warrnambool, her visit to Anzac Cove and the First World War graves in France, her experiences growing up in a respectable working-class home with a copper and an ice-chest out the back - she opens up the connections between her own experience and what is being studied, and calls on students to do the same.

The process of getting students to relate new information to what they already know is visible in the transcript. The study of industrial conditions in late

nineteenth century Victoria is approached through a discussion of workers' rights and what guarantees them. You will see that I have taken a fairly long passage - it seems to me to constitute a single episode, moving from a focus on present conditions of employment to a parallel, and connected, focus on the past. It begins with a series of questions from Ms Kollontai about modern conditions of employment, and outwork, piecework and sweating are all defined in a modern context - "sweating is still a modern term, all these are". The discovery that one student's mother does outwork making curtains at home is used as a way in to discussing who characteristically does outwork and why. The next move in the discussion is a critical one - why, asks Ms Kollontai, would employers today choose to employ outworkers? The answer builds on the previous discussion about unions and legal rights. Outworkers can be exploited because they are powerless; factory workers have unions and legal rights, but outworkers don't. The next question is why women would choose to do outwork - Ms Kollontai suggests it is now important to migrant women, but was that true in the nineteenth century?. Here Ms Kollontai is asking her students to move back and forth, to use their understanding of the present to assess their developing picture of the past. Throughout the discussion are these links between what students already know, or might have heard of, and the new information they are being given.

Most of the student contributions to this class are responses to direct questions from Ms Kollontai. Even where they don't express precisely the point she is after, she habitually accepts them - she echoes them and incorporates them into the discussion. There is also a brief discussion in which one student clarifies the difference between piecework and outwork. Three responses are not accepted. One is definitional: the question as to whether builders are paid by piecework. The other two raise points which are outside the frame of the discussion.

The first of these occurs at the beginning of the excerpt. Ms Kollontai asks how she is protected from an arbitrary wage cut. She has actually just suggested the answer she wants, and I think this is significant - she does not assume that her students will have picked it up, that they will have seen

what

she has shown them. Initially they don't, and she tries again. One student

says, You've got a union - this is true, and Ms Kollontai accepts the point; it

is not quite what she is after, but it is within the scope of the discussion.

The next student says, You've got a skill. This answer is not accepted.

Ms

Kollontai says, "Something about my working conditions". She has in mind the

prescribed mechanism by which her salary is determined, not her individual characteristics. The other unsuccessful response, which she ignores, is the

suggestion that women undertake outwork because "they're desperate for money".

Here the suggestion that "they have to stay home with the kids" is accepted.

At stake in both instances is the kind of explanation Ms Kollontai is looking

for. The answers she accepts refer to the situation of the worker. The frame

of reference is collective experience - this is how the course description is

structured. The categories of the syllabus shape the limits of the discussion.

Historians and textbooks characterise the past; the problem for students is getting hold of the structure of what they say, and making sense of it.

Mr West, the teacher at School 3, also talks about the relations of the parts

and the whole. He believes students need to be familiar with the details before they can form a picture of the whole, and he does not use class discussions to monitor the development of their understanding. He says,

"Until

they have a data base to use as evidence they're not operating historically,

and it takes them an awful long time to get that data base". They need to become familiar with handling data - he talks about "picking it up",

"gathering

it", "juggling it", "tossing it round". So students spend most of their class

time working individually on assignments, finding the answers to questions he's

set. He says,

"The kind of question doesn't vary much throughout the year, I would ask them

say How Australians saw themselves in 1914, What were Australia's relations with the Empire, which are harder questions to answer than Give three

reasons

why men volunteered in World War I, which they might find set out in the textbook, or Compare and contrast the lives of women in World War I and World War II."

These questions go for the underlying meaning of the texts, rather than the overt points they make. By the end of the year, Mr West expects his students to "see the structure in written things", and to "see the whole thing as a span". Ultimately, he says, "I also want them to take away an understanding of the century in which they live".

The lesson from which the excerpt comes is fairly early in the class's study of the twenties. Throughout these introductory lessons Mr West has been arguing that seeing the twenties as "The Jazz Age" is a very partial account, and he has been pointing to tensions between different groups and interests in society. In this excerpt he models the approach he describes, playing with the detail, drawing inferences from it, and fitting it into a structure. He says of this kind of lesson,

"Every now and again [I] turn it back on them so that they don't go away thinking it's all been received wisdom, so that they do have to juggle it, some things are contradictory, some things are inadequate."

The springboard for the discussion has been a recap of the objectives of the newly-formed RSL (the RSSAILA), which Mr West has used as a lead-in to introduce a set of documents. The first one was a document produced by the RSSAILA; the class is now looking at an excerpt from a speech by Billy Hughes, then the National Prime Minister of Australia, to a national conference of the National Party. Mr West reads it aloud, and comments and questions as he goes. Students have the text in front of them.

In considering this text Mr West focuses initially on the message which Hughes is delivering to his audience. It is important to him who Hughes was, who his audience was, and what he might be trying to achieve in this speech. He constantly asks students to interpret what Hughes is saying. Some of

these

questions involve straight explication of difficult language ("what were belligerent nations?", "what's Sinn Feinism?"), but more often he is asking "What's he got in mind?", "What does he mean by Bolsheviks?". He says, "You've got to read between the lines", and asks:

"What does he mean by Bolsheviks? What could he mean in an Australian context?

It's not a hard question. Bolsheviks - don't be dense - a word beginning with

U." (2.24, 2.25)

"Extremism - it could be a word for the Catholic church, which opposed conscription later in the war via Archbishop Mannix. He's not likely to say,

we don't want these Catholics getting power, but he could mean that." (2.24)

A little later he says,

"Sinn Feinists were Irish extremists, who wanted to take Ireland out of the war. Like extremists, it meant Catholics, these are code words." (2.30, 2.31)

He contrasts the groups who would endorse Hughes' values - the Nationals, the

RSL - with the groups which he reads Hughes as rejecting - Catholics, trade

unionists. It is notable that he focuses on Hughes' intentions and how he develops his argument. Here, as in other lessons, he is drawing his students'

attention to evidence of an individual's particular experience, and how it can

be interpreted to carry a wider meaning. This particular document is proffered

as evidence in the context of division and conflict of values in post-war Australia, the theme he has been pursuing over several lessons.

In this lesson students give a few tentative answers to Mr West's questions.

Two are rejected, both in answer to the question, "What do you think he means

that we must be partners of the great British Empire?" The response, "Immigration", is consistent with discussion in a previous lesson about Britain

as the main source from which migrants were wanted, but it is not the answer he

is looking for here. The second answer, "Cricket", is specifically in response

to the question "What else do we do with Britain?", which was perhaps rather carelessly framed. Mr West later indicates that he was thinking of the trade connection between Australia and Britain in the 1920s, whereas the student has come up with a perception of the kind of contact between Australia and Britain in the present. In this discussion, differences between past and present are acknowledged (see 2.1), but they are set aside; what students know about the present is not used as a reference point. Nevertheless, historical investigation is presented as a practice in which Mr West hopes his students will eventually undertake.

In Ms Parbo's class, at School 4, students participate from the start. She says, "I get them to try and look at things from other points of view, not just the traditional one". She argues that the writing of history is framed by the writer's point of view - she says the class looks at

"historical bias, what's behind it and why we do it, what we get out of it - so that kids can see that history's not an absolute, it's something that people can have different opinions about, that each one of us is subjective, there's no such thing as objective history."

The dominant metaphor in her teaching is point of view - the effect of your standpoint on your perspective. This notion of different perspectives is applied to historians writing about the past, to the groups whose history is being studied, and to the students themselves. She gets the class to discuss the point of view of historians such as Blainey and Rowley. She says,

"the textbook they've got to read for the first topic is Blainey. and you know, it's enough to make your hair stand on end, because he was such a guru of Aboriginal history in the 70s, and yet his book is absolutely littered with the most atrocious racist type of comments, "While the Aborigines are sharpening their spears, our rockets are going to the moon" and - I was sort of being very open about it, and the kids were saying, This is our textbook, it must be

right, who's she going off at, eh? They found it very hard in the beginning to accept me, and one of the guys said, Well I'm not writing anything down, this is all theory, not fact - when we were looking at how the Aborigines might have migrated to Australia, and we talked about the whole implications of this, if they were immigrants at all, and if so how it can be used by governments to deny land rights, and all this stuff, and he said, I'm not writing this down, it's all theory. You can't prove it. (laughs)

So they got very frustrated and angry in the beginning because it challenged this whole idea of things are right and wrong, black and white."

Other exercises she gives the class include writing a song to the tune of Waltzing Matilda, expressing the view of Aborigines which might be held by a white selector, describing the different ways the blacks and whites would perceive a sequence of situations in the Women of the Sun video, and analysing the power relationships implicit in photographs. She says:

"They've got to be able to explain that it's very important for us to be able to record that white and black together business, it's very important for us to be able to show our power over them, for example in a number of the pictures where there are whites actually in the pictures the whites are standing on steps and things above and the Aborigines are down positioned lower than them"

Ms Parbo not only wants her students to recognise that other points of view are possible, she wants them to re-evaluate their own point of view and make moral judgements of their own.

"I'd like them to come out being non-racist, non-sexist, tolerant in their outlooks, aware of another way of life other than their own, perhaps thinking a little bit differently about their material needs, I suppose I'd like them to come out of it feeling that this country's big enough for quite a few of us, not just for some of us... By now, for example, there are about three or four

people in the Year 12 class who at the beginning of the year were convinced that Aborigines were an inferior species, that they had a lot to learn from the rather materialist advances of the white culture, and I think that of these four people, at least three of them are much more sympathetic to the Aboriginal cause, and much more questioning of their own materialism."

Ms Parbo feels her students are likely to identify with the Europeans' point of view - she wants them to be able to see things more from the Aborigines' perspective.

At School 4 the document being used is a brief passage from a letter of complaint from a young officer with the First Fleet to Sir Joseph Banks. It describes the officer's early impressions of the Aborigines. The excerpt I quote starts at the beginning of the class discussion of this document, which they had not seen before, and takes the discussion almost to its end (there are a few concluding remarks about the Europeans' disappointment at the fertility of the land, which I have omitted). Ms Parbo uses the officer's comments to focus on the different perspectives of Aborigines and Europeans, and the judgements they made of each other in consequence. She pushes students to consider the European perspective - why the Europeans were "cheesed off" by Aborigines, what exactly they didn't like about them, and why they might think the Aborigines were treacherous. She links this with an anecdote about her own experience, so that it is tied in with how people experience difference today. In passing, she also draws attention to the Aborigines' perspective on the situation. Ms Parbo's frame of reference in this discussion is the conflict between Aborigines and Europeans, which is seen as arising from a lack of understanding for each other's point of view. The text is used as a spring-board for characterising and criticising the European perspective on Aborigines. The anonymous officer is used as an example of European attitudes and lack of understanding. Ms Parbo picks up the general sense of his opinions rather than the weight he gives to any particular point, and she moves the discussion through to a moral appraisal of these opinions. This is a very different use of a text from a meticulous reading between the lines.

There are two contributions to the discussion which Ms Parbo excludes or

rejects. Mary wants to qualify the conclusion which is being drawn, and says, "they eat fish - so did the white people" . This objection is passed over. The second contribution comes from Tama, a Maori student, who has been particularly involved in the discussion. When he initially reflects on the Europeans' perspective, his conclusion is taken up. Later in the lesson he is still pondering the point:

"It's strange, it's very rude to say, Ugh yuk, but at the same time I can't stomach lambs fry, and I've got an uncle, when he eats a fish he eats the eyes and the brains, everything." (1.29)

Tama is offering the idea that the Europeans' revulsion at the Aborigines' food might have been involuntary. Ms Parbo's question, however, was whether it was moral for the Europeans to reject the Aborigines on the basis of their diet.

"Does that make him less of a human being?" (1.30)

Her conclusion is that

"the Aborigines ate different things, and that made them weird to the Europeans." (1.32)

Ms Parbo's lessons frequently work towards a moral point of this kind.*
While

she tries to get the class to characterise the Europeans' perspective, she wants them to reject it. She has a position she would like them to adopt. This is consistent with her presentation of history as a conflict between interpretations: she is happy to argue for her own view and against others.

She frequently challenges her students to come out with a contrary view, but it is always clear what her view is.

I conclude that these four teachers construct the study of history differently and locate their students differently in relation to it. Ms Farmer's image of

"seeing" the evidence defines a largely material field of study, from which disputes over meaning, or power, are generally excluded. She focuses on observable details, particularly everyday life, within a context of geographical constraints. Pictures and buildings, which are visible traces of the past, are important in her teaching as part of this process of visualisation. She communicates a sense that the substance of history is not

essentially problematical, except where too few data are available for inspection. To make sense of what you see, however, implies registering pattern and meaning - "the overall pattern you can see" - and Ms Farmer works towards enabling her students to see as she does. By contrast, Ms Kollontai works to establish an argumentative structure. She sets up active comparisons, between one time and another, between one group and another; she expects her students to read structures in the present and in the past against each other, and to see them as illuminating each other, through both continuities and differences. Neither of them suggests that students act like historians, nor do they generally offer critiques of historians. They treat historical texts as more or less transparent windows on to the period they are studying. They focus on the subject matter of historical texts - the conclusions and evidence deployed by the historian - rather than on on the historian's perspective or how s/he constructs the narrative.

Mr West and Ms Parbo both introduce their students to the idea that historians interpret the traces of the past. Mr West models for his class the process of doing this, siting the document he is explicating both in its specific time and place, and also as evidence supporting a broad interpretation of the period. The study of history he presents to his students relates to the apprehension of the past, and he only passingly connects it with the present. By contrast, Ms Parbo, like Ms Kollontai, is oriented to the present ideas of her students. She doesn't see history as a self-contained study, but as an expression of the historian's point of view, values and preferences. Historians therefore are not especially privileged, and she authorises her students to dispute with them. For Ms Parbo, the terrain of history is continually fought over and reinterpreted, and she offers her students one interpretation among others, which she challenges them to reject.

It is my argument that the differences between these teachers are more than procedural. They are teaching their classes different things about what constitutes the study of history. The question with which I leave you is

whether this is likely to make a difference in what their students notice when they read history.

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Transcript extracts

The School 1 class is being introduced to the study of Marvellous Melbourne.

They are discussing a set of documents, and are just looking at a map of early

Melbourne when the extract starts. 4.1 T Anything that catches your eye?

4.2 Steve There was a river running down Elizabeth Street. 4.3 T Very good - yes,

Elizabeth Street was really a gully with a stream running down the middle, they

had severe problems with drainage for a long time, it got flooded quite frequently, and there were sewerage problems when it flooded - they used to put

up walking paths and planks. 4.4 What else do you notice?

4.5 Steve There was a carpenter in the city 4.6 T I meant in the overall pattern you can see...

4.7 S Batman's Hill 4.8 T Yes - race meetings used to be held around Batman's Hill,

as I told you he had his house there, with a vegetable garden in the front where they grew vegetables to eat. 4.9 Anna The river was called the

Yarra Yarra

4.10 T Yes, we've dropped a Yarra - what else do you notice? 4.11

Steve It was segmented (Map shows the road grid with no houses marked) 4.12 T

What do you mean? 4.13 Steve It's drawn out in big squares 4.14 T

Yes, the Melbourne streets were laid out very early, before many houses were built on them. It was planned quite well initially. The very early documents describe streets - roads winding around, rather than remove a tree stump you would have to deviate around them, as you drove along the road when you met a tree stump the road would swerve around it. There are some great descriptions of carriages with a horse that had bolted, in the narrow streets like Flinders Lane people would drape their washing out from side to side of the street, and the horses would go charging through all this washing. 4.15 There are also some great descriptions of Melbourne in floodtime - Flinders Lane one year was flooded so badly you could sail a boat up it. 4.16 What do you notice about the shape of the Yarra - how is it different now? 4.17 S It's all boarded up - bluestone edges 4.18 T Right, it's contained, it flows in a channel - at that time it flowed where it wanted to. 4.19 Steve What did they do about Elizabeth Street? Did they just build over it? 4.20 T They put drains in - it took them a long time though. If you look at the prices of land around Elizabeth Street you can see it really affected the property values, the prices there are much lower.

4.21 Looking at the map, where would you say was the most important part of the settlement? 4.22 S From Flinders Street up to Collins. 4.23

T Right, in a square (she names streets, I didn't catch them) 4.24 Why was that? 4.25

S Because of the market? 4.26 T What market - the Queen Vic market? (S No - Market Street)

Yes, surprisingly enough, there was a market in Market Street. But why else?

4.27 Steve To be near the river. 4.28 T Yes, the town was focused on Elizabeth Street through to King Street, nice and close to the river - remember everything had to be brought in from overseas. 4.29 S Why didn't they settle

further up the river? 4.30 T There was a waterfall further
upstream - that did
them a good turn actually, why was that? 4.31 S Fresh water 4.32
T Yes, it was
fresh, not salt or brackish. 4.33 Steve Why didn't they settle on
the other side
of the river at all? 4.34 T It was swampy - in the area where
the Arts Centre
is. 4.35 Also there was the cost of a bridge. 4.36

Now look at the keys - there
were things like storage houses, government buildings, printing houses, and
houses - notice the houses - there are hardly any houses in Melbourne
today,
only a few apartments at the top of buildings.

(School 1, 2 May 1990)

School 2 students are getting into their second topic, Working class life
1860-
1910; they are talking about working conditions in this period. The
teacher
has prepared some notes which she is introducing. 3.1 T How can the
boss reduce
wages in a period of unemployment? 3.2 S He can just say, I can't
afford it.
3.3 T What if you don't want to take a pay cut? 3.4 S He
can fire you.
3.5 T Compare it with Collingwood Football Club - in this
situation the employer
has control - if you don't want to take the pay cut, the employer can sack
you
- there's an absence of government regulations. Could that happen to me?
3.6 S No 3.7 T Why not? 3.8 S You've got a union.
3.9 T That's one thing. What else?
3.10 S You've got a skill - they couldn't just employ anyone else.
3.11 T There's
something else about my working conditions that makes it very difficult.
3.12 S You've got a contract? 3.13 T Yeah, you're
thinking on the right lines -
it's the equivalent of a wages tribunal. 3.14 S Like the ACTU 3.15
T That's not
the right group, but you're on the right lines - my salary is fixed, it's
scribed in legislation that didn't exist at this time. Anyone know when
the
basic wage was introduced? No? Just before 1910 - in 1908 or something
like
that. 3.16 You should include an example, you need a bit of
evidence to back up
what you say - a plasterer's wage fell from 10/- a week to 7/- or 8/-
between

1890 and 1894. 3.17 Strikes - shearers', miners' - the unions were defeated in all the strikes, there was increasing emphasis on the unions, but they were defeated in all their strikes, they start to think about what they were doing -

the Labor Party also emerges at this time. 3.18 (Reads notes) 3.19 What's the point of this? 3.20 To show you the fluctuations in one side of working conditions - also to emphasise the point that workers had to struggle for wages and shorter hours. 3.21 First we'll look at the conditions people work under, then the role of unions in relation to hours, wages and conditions. What do we look at? 3.22 Factories - when do factories become a part of the scene in Melbourne? that pearl of wisdom you learnt yesterday? 3.23 S The seventies. 3.24 T Yeah - first in Melbourne and then elsewhere. 3.25 (Summarises headings of study) 3.26 You need to know what a few words mean, which I've got listed here. First of all, piecework. I'm not paid on piecework, fortunately. Is anyone paid on piecework now? 3.27 S Builders? 3.28 T (doesn't catch it) Women? 3.29 S Builders? 3.30 S No, they're paid by the hour. 3.31 T They can be paid by the job, say they tender to put up a building, under a contract, but that's different. 3.32 S Seamstresses. 3.33 T Seamstresses. People making trousers. 3.34 Ss Pickers. - Shearers. 3.35 T You're paid for the number you make. 3.36 Outwork - you do work at home for the factory - so basically you go home and you work. 3.37 S That's just like piecework. 3.38 T Except piecework refers to how you're paid, and not where you work. 3.39 S So outwork would be paid by the hour. 3.40 T Not necessarily - you could be doing outwork and piecework. 3.41 S So you could do piecework in a factory. 3.42 T (assents) 3.43 Sweating - do we have outwork now? 3.44 S Yes 3.45 T Who does it 3.46 S My mother makes curtains at home. 3.47 S Women. 3.48 T Yes, women - there was a lot of fuss last year about women who sew trousers at home, and bring them back to the factory or have to hand them over to someone on behalf of the factory or a sub-

contractor

- from what you know, would they be paid well? 3.49 Ss No 3.50 T
Well - I'll

phrase that question - now, we're talking about now, what would be the advantage of outwork to the employer? 3.51 S They're not covered by the union.

3.52 T What difference does that make? 3.53 S They can rip them off. 3.54 T They can rip them off good and proper. It's especially important for migrant women.

Do you think that's why they did outwork in those days as well? 3.55 T
Why do

women do outwork? 3.56 S They're desperate for money 3.57 S
They can stay home and

look after the kids. 3.58 T They can stay home and look after the kids. They're

a vulnerable group of people - yes. 3.59 Sweating. It's still a current term,

all these are. 3.60 Unionists tend to equate sweating with outwork, but it's

not the same, it's plausible that you could have an outwork situation with a

reasonable amount of money, but sweating implies low pay for long hours with no

protection whatever. 3.61 No protection - if you injure yourself in outwork

situation, what is it? 3.62 S Your responsibility. 3.63 T
If you injure yourself

say doing curtains at a factory, what then? 3.64 S You get workers comp.

3.65 T Workers comp. Did workers' comp exist in the nineteenth century?

3.66 S No. 3.67 T No, not at all. 3.68 If you lost an arm working in a factory,

what happened then? 3.69 S You didn't have an arm. 3.70 T
You didn't have an arm

- it was your bad luck - if you had a good employer he might give you a bit of

compensation perhaps. These people have no bargaining power, they have to accept the work because they need it - sweating is still used today, the

main group who are exploited by sweating are migrants. (School 2, 1 June 1990)

Students at School 3 spend a large proportion of class time working individually on assignments set by the teacher, but their weekly double period

usually includes a whole-class presentation or discussion, led by the teacher.

In this class the teacher has been asking them about the foundation of the

RSL

and the problems of returned soldiers. He goes on to consider with them a set of documents, the first of which is an extract from an RSSAILA leaflet. At the

point when the extract starts, he is reading the second document. 2.1 T

Hughes

to the National Federation (that's the National Party). (reads) (Need for Australia to remain in Empire) Interesting - you can say Populate or Perish,

Unlimited horizons, but unless we have an imperial link to Britain, Hughes argues, we will fall. "The extreme outpost of the white race" - would Hawke

say this? There have been changes over seventy years. (reads: "banner of superb audacity") What does that mean? 2.2 (Silence) 2.3 T

Any ideas? 2.4 He's

saying that as a race, as a group, white Australians are superbly audacious in

taking the country and making something out of it in only a little over a hundred years. 2.5 (reads: must be "fools or traitors") 2.6

You can ask

yourselves, Who are these people. 2.7 (Reads: " belligerent nations") 2.8 What

were belligerent nations? (No answer) The nations that went to war.

2.9 (reads: Free white Australia because of the British Empire. Anyone against

the Empire an enemy of ours, must be in Empire - proud to be in Empire.)

2.10 What do you think he means that we must be partners of the great British

Empire? 2.11 S Immigration. 2.12 T What else do we do with Britain? 2.13 S Cricket

2.14 T What else? 2.15 S Trade 2.16 T

Trade, right, yeah, not even begin to think of

trade with Asia, US, Africa - Empire, particularly Britain. 2.17

(reads: "no

man flout the law", no Bolshevik extremism, no Sinn Feinism, no rich opposing

the poor) 2.18 He's singling out groups - do you think he's on the side of the

RSL? or against? Where does the RSL stand in the last 4-5 lines? 2.19

S Same

sort of thing - they were against the Bolsheviks. 2.20 T So they're on the same

side - he doesn't see them as a problem, they're not an enemy - they want special treatment, he's happy with that, because of what they've done. But they're all opposed to Bolshevism - why that word? What's he got in mind.

Year 11 history - Miranda? 2.21 Miranda Can't remember - Communism?

2.22 T The

Bolsheviks were the major party in pre-revolutionary Russia, they took power in

1917 and took Russia out of the war. People like Hughes distrusted the Bolsheviks, they killed the King and Queen of Russia, killed the people he stood for. Were there Bolsheviks in Australia? 2.23 S Yeah. 2.24

T What does he mean by Bolsheviks? What could he mean in an Australian context? It's not a

hard question. He's not referring to the Catholic Church? or is it? Extremism - it could be a word for the Catholic Church, which opposed conscription later in the war via Archbishop Mannix. He's not likely to say,

we don't want these Catholics getting power, but he could mean that.

2.25 Bolsheviks - don't be dense - a word beginning with U.

2.26 S Unionism.

2.27 T He has lately been kicked out of the Union movement - he was a Labor Prime

Minister - he was a unionist, and the leader of a union - after conscription he

didn't want a bar of that, he was taken up by the Nationals as their leader.

Now he's saying he doesn't want extremists turning away from our destiny.

2.28 What's Sinn Feinism? 2.29 (Silence) 2.30

You should have - you should have

read about the 1916 uprising by now - Sinn Feinists were Irish extremists, who

wanted to take Ireland out of the war. 2.31 Like extremists, it meant

Catholics, these are code words. 2.32 The Nationalists were

Protestants, they

were hearing what they wanted to hear, what they expected their leader to say.

2.33 So how united was Australia at the end of the war? There were divisions.

Obviously religious divisions - they cropped up at the end of the war - what

else? 2.34 S Soldiers. 2.35 T They were a special group - with very conservative

values - which fitted in nicely with the Nationals, given that theme of Soldier

Settlement. Fits in with the Nationals and the Country Party. Keep those documents as an indication of the evidence for that sort of division at that

time. (School 3, 23 May 1990)

Students at School 4 had spent first term studying Aboriginal society before

the European settlement of Australia. In this lesson they were going through a

set of documents from the early years of the Port Jackson settlement, as part

of their second unit, European/Aboriginal relations to 1900. Most lessons at School 1 involve discussion, either based on work the students have done or documents presented to them in the lesson. In this particular lesson the documents were a class set which were circulated to students, but which they did not actually keep.

1.1 T Brendan, tell me what this writer thought of the Aborigines.

1.2 Brendan They were annoying - they went round naked, they only ate fish and roots.

1.3 T Why was he cheesed off because they only ate fish and roots?

1.4 Ss Not healthy - they didn't like it.

1.5 T Why didn't they like it, because it was different?

1.6 Tama It's like the French eating snails, we say, Ugh, yuk, what a turn-off.

1.7 Mary They ate fish - so did the white people.

1.8 T So what people eat can put you off - it can be a turn-off, as Tama says.

1.9 Brendan They lived in rocks, trees, huts; they didn't want to make friends; they wandered round and killed marines, and they attacked unknown whites.

1.10 T So what sort of things didn't he like?

1.11 S They were primitive and poor.

1.12 S And treacherous.

1.13 T Why?

1.14 S Because of the way they get back.

1.15 S You can't trust them.

1.16 Mary One minute they're your friend.

1.17 T Why did they think that?

1.18 S They couldn't communicate.

1.19 T They couldn't speak the language, they were some sort of primitive, poor pathetic things - they eat rubbish, you can't trust them, they turn on you for no reason. What else, Brendan, anything else?

1.20 Mary They killed settlers.

1.21 T Right, that's what's treacherous, he doesn't understand why they're just killing people working on the land - why would they do that?

1.22 S It's their land?

1.23 T Yes - perhaps even their sacred sites. They're unacquainted. - Tama obviously hasn't tried snails - they're delicious with garlic butter.

1.24 Tama There's no meat on it.

1.25 T Not much.

1.26 Tama You can't say anything really until you've tested it. When I was younger I used to go with my Maori relatives and get sea-snails.

1.27 T You remember that girlfriend I told you I went to New York with, you remember we couldn't get on, well one of the main reasons was she thought it was very funny I liked sour cucumbers, she went on and on about it,

it was a bit pathetic really, every time she saw a shop with gherkins in the window she'd say, There's some sour cucumbers, you'd really like those, and laugh, and there are a lot of shops in New York with sour cucumbers in the window - what we see here is a similar prejudice to today, someone eating something they don't like, and we think they're weird - but if you're not familiar with it, you're the one who's ignorant, not them. 1.28

So think about these criticisms - are they valid? 1.29 Tama It's strange, it's very rude to say, Ugh yuk, but at the same time I can't stomach lambs fry, and I've got an uncle, when he eats a fish he eats the eyes and the brains, everything. 1.30 T Does that make him less of a human being? 1.31 Tama No 1.32 T But the Aborigines ate different things, and that made them weird to the Europeans. (School 4, 23 May 1990)

* This is not necessarily a point which is wholly excluded from the flow of the discussion, but the substance of students' comments which the teacher does not pursue. In looking at a draft of this paper, Ms Kollontai said that in her classes there would be some confident students whose points she could directly reject, but with others she would always pick up their comments in some manner, to encourage them to participate. * It is interesting that in setting up her students' research projects for their option, Ms Farmer asks them to nominate an hypothesis, but not a problem to which the hypothesis might relate. * In an earlier class, discussing the differences between aboriginal religion and the variety of religious beliefs in Western society, she asked, "Is it better to have no choice, or a smorgasbord?" and Tama objected, "Why does it matter if it's better?" (School 1, 28 March 1990)