

Roger Kerr: The man, the message, the strategy. What impact on teachers and education in New Zealand?

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ABSTRACT

In 1986, Roger Kerr was appointed Executive Director of the New Zealand Business Roundtable and set about transforming a somewhat moribund organisation into the aggressive agency for reform that it is today. Since then, Kerr, as a neo-liberal, has sought 'market' reforms in many areas of New Zealand economic and social life. However, he appears to have singled out education for particular attention. To this end, he has written a number of papers and commissioned several reports from overseas experts in an effort to implement wide-ranging changes to the New Zealand education system. For many educators, Kerr's focus on the education system (and teachers in particular) has become little more than a vendetta which threatens their personal and professional well-being. Many teachers are baffled by the intensity of his attacks. Some of the questions raised in consequence of this vendetta are "Why are teachers being made scapegoats in the arena of neo-liberal reforms to education?", and "How successful might Roger Kerr be in his goal to radically change the delivery of education in New Zealand?" While it may not be possible to answer the last question, I will attempt to demonstrate how Roger Kerr, as a dynamic and single-minded ideologue, has successfully garnered the energies and ideas of neo-liberal writers and activists in New Zealand and elsewhere, to the extent that this collective influence has considerably shaped the debate about education in New Zealand. In so doing, I will profile Roger Kerr, set his ideas and the NZBR in context, then analyse the ways in which his personal style and dedication to neoliberal ideology have combined to promulgate his ideas about education reform to a degree which may impact on education in New Zealand for years to come.

Personal History

Who is Roger Kerr? According to his curriculum vitae, Kerr is a high-flier, a well-educated New Zealander who has made it in the field of education, diplomacy, and the neo-liberal business world. At the age of forty-seven, he has a Masters of Arts degree in French (his thesis was on the literary theories of socialist Jean Paul Sartre), and a Bachelor of Commerce and Administration in Economics from Victoria University. He was born in Nelson, into a farming family. According to older brother Alan Kerr his parents; " ... were rather simple farming folk and we didn't mix in intellectual circles at all." Nevertheless, his mother was "big on education", and somewhat contradictory to her son's statement, had earned a Masters of Arts Degree in History. Kerr attended a state high school - Waimea College - and was particularly influenced by a teacher who believed in academic excellence.

Kerr went on to top the School Certificate results in New Zealand in 1960, was dux in sixth form, was good at sports and music, "did a superb bachelor's degree", and won first class honours for his MA. He was known to have an awesome ability to swot. His curriculum vitae states that he has had only four jobs - two of which are held concurrently. For nine years, Kerr, partly on the basis of his knowledge of French (one of his BA majors was French, the others were Mathematics and English), held the position of First Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Brussels. He resigned from this job to join Treasury, and by the time he had left Treasury to undertake the position of Executive Director of the New Zealand Roundtable (NZBR), held the position of Assistant Secretary. In 1987, he was appointed Director of Electricorp, a position he still holds in addition to the Executive Directorship of the NZBR. All in all, an illustrious (and conservative) career- perhaps not surprising for one who possesses both an "incredible cheerfulness" and "manic work habits".

Roger Kerr and the NZBR in Context

Roger Kerr's interest in neo-liberalism and his machinations on behalf of the NZBR did not occur in a vacuum, and need some explanation in terms of the economic and political context in which they occurred. Since the 1930s and certainly before the advent of neo-liberalism, the New Zealand state was run along Keynesian lines. However, after the oil shocks in 1973 the New Zealand economy began to decline, and the resulting economic and political uncertainty created a mood for economic reform. During the debt-ridden and unsuccessful years in which Sir Robert Muldoon (National's Prime Minister from 1975-1984) tried to pull the country out of impending recession with a number of capital-intensive "Think Big" projects, dissatisfaction grew to the extent that a mood of liberal individualism was flourishing in opposition to Muldoon's authoritarian and interventionist (Keynesian) style. A 'more market' mentality took hold in the realm of business, with the finance sector spearheading the change and calling for deregulation. Behind the scenes, a group of Economists who had studied and worked overseas in places such as the World Bank, and who had brought neo-Australian 'free market' ideas (individual demand, the marketplace, equilibrium and private property) back to New Zealand, gained control of Treasury and the Reserve Bank. Kerr was a member of this group. By 1984, the economic situation was such that:

During the week of the election New Zealand suffered a foreign exchange crisis, and in an atmosphere of uncertainty and panic finance minister Roger Douglas and his advisers at the Treasury and Reserve Bank seized control of policy. By the beginning of 1985, the government had abolished exchange controls, scrapped financial deregulation, floated the New Zealand dollar, and instituted a high-interest-rate monetary policy. A veritable coup had occurred.

Jesson (1992) has no doubt that a core of right-wing officials and businessmen and officials was responsible for the coup. Since at this time Roger Kerr was employed as Assistant Secretary at Treasury, he is implicated as being one of the prime movers and shakers in Labour's sudden conversion to neo-liberal ideas. But Kerr's mission did not stop with the adoption of neo-liberal fiscal policies by the newly elected Labour Party. In 1986, he joined the NZBR, a move which (according to some) was intended to ensure that New Right/neoliberal ideologues extended their power base throughout the public and private sectors in New Zealand.

Reforming the NZBR

As stated above, there was never any doubt of Kerr's neo-liberal business orientation, even before he joined the NZBR as Executive Director. To specify, Kerr was not only a Treasury Economist, he was also an architect of Rogernomics, and thus is partly responsible for bringing monetarist reforms to New Zealand. As the new Executive Director of the NZBR, Kerr soon brought his zeal for monetarist reform to bear on the organisation's operations. The NZBR's membership was promptly expanded from twenty to thirty-five (now fifty-two), and the organisation was also transformed from being a low-key lobby group to a "strident organisation" whose new members formed " ... a cabal of hard-

line right-wingers ... ". Suddenly, there was a political agenda. Commissioned reports (of which the Sexton Report is one) appeared and conferences were held, for as Jesson states, " ... the battle for political power is a battle for public opinion ... ". There seems little doubt that Kerr's intellect, drive and singlemindedness which had made him "One of the best and toughest-minded thinkers in Treasury" were instrumental in reformulating the agenda of the NZBR to more hard-line concerns, particularly in light of the fact (according to Sir Robert Muldoon) Kerr was "the most extreme of his [treasury] group on economic views".

Kerr the Tactician: His Writing Style

Since joining the NZBR full time in 1986, Kerr has written two papers on education. These are entitled "Joining the Unreal World: Education Politics in New Zealand" (1991) and "Education Today" (1992). But in 1990, he also wrote a paper on "The New Zealand Business Roundtable: Roles and Goals", which states that the business community has a pivotal role to play in all aspects of public life. In addition, he was instrumental in setting up the Education Forum in March 1992. This is a group of right-wing teachers and principals whose role as Forum members is to promulgate neo-liberal ideas about education, as well as to castigate 'old'-style methods of teaching and teachers. While this group seem to act as the NZBR's propaganda arm on education, the Forum's relationship with the NZBR in terms of funding is unclear. Nevertheless, the relationship seems close (if not symbiotic), and the Education Forum's documents are remarkably similar to Roger Kerr's papers on education. However, for the purposes of this paper (and since Roger Kerr does not claim authorship of these documents) an analysis of his writing style will be made solely on those papers bearing his name.

In writing about education, Roger Kerr states that his interest in reform is not personal, but stems from NZBR concerns about public sector efficiency, or in his own words - "getting value for money" since education "takes such a large chunk of government spending". There is also the belief that the education system should guarantee the skills needed for a competitive market, whether local or international. This last factor makes education a particular priority for the NZBR. However, for Kerr the priority translates into a focus on teacher performance rather than other, perhaps more controversial aspects of education reform. Indeed, an anti-teacher focus is so much a feature of his writing that this concern appears little more than a vendetta against the teaching profession itself. His papers "Joining the Unreal World: Education Politics in New Zealand", and "Education Today" are identical in this respect. They begin with a critique of 'liberal' pedagogy, stating a case-for increased teacher accountability and performance (ie: the education system should be forced to operate in terms of private sector efficiency), then launch into a condemnation of the teaching profession's ability to avoid accountability and 'to feather its own nest'. One example (of many) is -

What other industry offers its employees a unified national salary structure, pay rates based on service and qualifications, national bargaining, more leave than most professionals, self-regulated working hours, protection from dismissal and national deployment schemes?

Kerr intersperses his polemic with numerous quotes from academics and others (deemed experts) engaged in promoting neo-liberal educational reforms. These are often more forceful or colourful than Kerr's own words, and serve to amplify his anti-teacher rhetoric. The above quote from Kerr is thus well served by the following from former principal, Claudia Wysocki

Education is a highly protected profession and one which does not take kindly to change and the suggestion of public accountability. The PPTA is strongly outspoken whenever its members' job security appears to be under threat. Strikes by teachers have never been about the quality of education. Rather they have been about job security and conditions of employment.

and further, from the National Business Review -

Teacher union leaders are still able to posture as educationalists as they fight to preserve incompetent members' jobs and inflated privileges.

When inserting such quotes, Kerr sometimes goes to some pains to distance himself from the person making the quote, or their stated position. In so doing, he can be seen to be the more reasonable party in the debate. For example, in "Joining the Unreal World", after quoting an anonymous individual (referred to as 'a former teacher') who maintains that the PPTA is " ... one of the most dangerous unions in the country, and is the implacable enemy of excellence in education..." , Kerr follows up with -

This may be an overstatement; we enjoy some valuable associations with PPTA representatives and one of them has been invited to the next meeting of the Education Forum.

But this tactic serves other purposes. In this instance, it enables Kerr to demonstrate that the PPTA is not a cohesive group, just as the quote allows him to reintroduce a critique of teachers and teacher unions. Further, he is able to exploit his 'reasonable' stance by following up with another more 'extreme' quote which serves the purpose of contradicting him on this point. Thus, by quoting the National Business Review (in this instance) as saying that the government should devise a strategy

... to expose teacher unions and many principals as the real enemy in achieving value for money in education.

Kerr undermines his own apparent neutrality, at the same time as he reinforces the idea of teachers/teacher unions being the enemy which must be routed. Overall, this technique has a similar effect to hard-sell advertising in which constant repetition is employed as a means of convincing consumers to buy a particular product they otherwise might not have purchased.

Another tactic Kerr employs is to single out various New Zealand academics who disagree with his ideas, accusing them of left-wing paranoia (Joce Jesson, Hugh Lauder) or intellectual out datedness (Professor Snook), often quoting them in such a way as to invite ridicule. While this is obvious back-biting, the effect overall is to add to the picture of teachers being - not only lazy, self-serving, union-dominated, even dishonest individuals whose activities exclude the well-being of the children they teach, but also as being the puppets of dangerous, left-wing intellectuals. This might indicate that Kerr is an advocate of Public Choice Theory, a central tenet of which is that everyone (teachers included) is motivated by self interest. Jonathan Boston (1990) states that any suggestion that individuals are " ... significantly concerned with societal well-being or the common good, or that they and their advisers are guided by fundamental ethical precepts, is generally dismissed". There seems no other theoretical explanation for Kerr's concerted attacks - and it is impossible to comment on his personal agenda since he eschews the possibility of subjectivity informing his 'objective' ideas. However, his sustained criticism does appear to contradict one aspect of Public Choice Theory which recommends incentives (rewards) for individuals to keep them on-target with company/agency goals, although in reply to this, Kerr might state that the pay differentials guaranteed under the package of reforms proposed by the NZBR should be incentive enough for 'motivated' teachers who are presumably employed in the 'better' schools.

If a feature of Kerr's writing is to quote, wherever possible, the words of academics, experts or others who have written or spoken in a way that can be construed to be in favour of neoliberal reforms in education, then this technique has led to results other than those already discussed. For instance, Kerr's apparent need to provide legitimation for his ideas, or to prove that famous writers and thinkers everywhere would agree with his politics has led him to quote some unlikely people, one of whom is Karl Marx. But this tendency to overquote has also led him to overstate his case. In Kerr's paper "Education Today", for instance, - Marx is quoted as saying that he is opposed to the idea of an elementary education run by the state. What Kerr omits to say here is that Marx's antagonism towards state education is based on his belief that the state is 'the managing committee of the bourgeoisie'. In so saying, Marx believed that state-run education facilitated the interests of capitalists - presumably the very capitalists who are currently underwriting the neo-liberal reforms in education. Thus, Kerr uses a quote misleadingly in order to underscore his argument, and to add insult to injury, (by way of another quote) blithely insinuates that if Marx were alive today he would probably join the Business Roundtable.

However, Kerr is not beyond contradicting himself. On page nine of "Education Today", he derides Professor Snook for saying that he is "... drawn to the Marxist notion that the ruling ideas of every age are the ideas of its ruling classes". This is precisely Marx's point about the problems endemic in a state-run education, which would promulgate the concerns (ideas) of the bourgeoisie. Kerr's reply to Professor Snook to the effect that ideas rule the world, demonstrates that he fails to understand his own rhetoric. Ideas such as those underpinning neo-liberal reforms in education are generated by powerful groups within society. There is little doubt that in terms of beliefs and actions of the present New Zealand government, the ideas of the business world hold sway. Thus, ideas do not have equal weight, as Kerr implies. Perhaps, after all, the question "Whose ideas rule the world?", as answered by Professor Snook, should thus not be so readily dismissed by Kerr as being irrelevant and out of date.

Perhaps an unintended outcome of Kerr's strategy to include a multitude of quotes, is that his work is disjointed, with apparently little attention paid to the structure of his writing, or to maintaining the logic of his argument. This affects the coherence of his work. In one telling example from his paper "Joining the Unreal World: Education Politics in New Zealand", Kerr quotes NZEI general secretary Ros Noonan as saying -

... all of the high-powered government advisers spend three months of every year working face to face with the public in a shop, or cleaning, or looking after the young or the old.

There is no explanation as to the context of the quote, or to why Kerr considers it relevant to the education debate, until it becomes clear from Kerr's reply that he has used the quote, once again, simply to lampoon the ideas of teachers or teacher unions. He says -

I struggled to think where I had heard of that vision before. It dawned on me a few days later, reading of the death of Chairman Mao's widow: China's 1960 Cultural Revolution is alive and well in New Zealand. The world outside seems to think the 'use by' date for such ideas has expired.

But again, another purpose is served here. Reference is made in Kerr's reply (as it is on several occasions) to the threat of communism - a hoary old chestnut indeed. Thus, it can only be assumed that this (also outdated?) scare mongering is a tactical ploy - one, I suggest, which diverts attention from the real issues at stake. These are issues which Kerr affords little real attention, so bent is he engaged in point scoring. The overall effect is to minimise the reader's understanding of the reforms, much less their effects, and to maximise the impression that teachers themselves are truculent and self-serving ideologues, bent on obscuring the education debate in New Zealand. In this way, Kerr deflects criticism away from himself and the ideas he promotes. Unfortunately, his style also serves to polarise the participants in the debate, in a way that must exacerbate, if not determine, the new polemics of education in the 1990s.

A Case Study of Kerr's Tactics: The Voucher System

As part of the pro-choice plan, Kerr is an advocate of the voucher system which he suggests would give all New Zealand parents a cash payment to help send their children to one of the 'better' schools. The assumption behind this plan is that the better schools are private schools, for which fees must be paid. Kerr says little about how a voucher system would work in New Zealand. Instead, he draws on the experiences of a group of parents in Milwaukee, USA, who fought for and won the scheme against opposition from the education establishment. In particular, he quotes one Polly Williams, a black democrat who spearheaded the plan. About the voucher system and Polly Williams, Kerr has this to say -

What particularly seems to infuriate defenders of the One-Best-System approach to education is that many of the challenges to it around the world are coming from the political left. One of the most prominent figures in American education today is Polly Williams, a former aide to Jesse Jackson and a democrat representative for Wisconsin. Williams herself is no stranger to poverty. She came from a poor black family in Mississippi and was at one stage a welfare beneficiary. Yet

on the question of choice and competition in education Williams had to fight a monumental battle against educationalists, teacher unions and her own party to gain acceptance for a limited voucher programme to enable children from low income families to attend private schools.

Without describing the nature of the battle, or the basis on which it was fought, Kerr not only manages (again) to snipe at the education establishment, but also suggests that the voucher system is a system based on equity, and one which primarily benefits the poor. If Kerr's ideas, as stated, is that all New Zealand parents be given a voucher for their children's education, then this argument cannot hold. For wealthy parents, who may already have children in private schools, the benefit derived from an education voucher would serve as a convenient 'top-up' to their already substantial income. For poorer parents, however, the amount designated by the voucher might not be enough to make up a possible shortfall between it and the fees of a private school. Further, it is doubtful whether poorer parents could foot other expenses at private schools, such as those incurred in the course of field trips, sports/music/drama interests, science equipment etc., given that these are often reduced or absorbed within the budgets of the 'poorer' schools. In all, there are a host of other problems associated with the voucher system, in addition to the question of open access to private schools.

Polly Williams' advocacy of the voucher system as a means by which poor families gain access to the benefits of a private school education bears further examination if its relevance to New Zealand is to be understood. Roger Kerr gives no clue as to the basis for Polly's battle with the education establishment in Milwaukee. Instead, he quotes Polly Williams' opinions at length. These include the following -

Choice empowers parents. It allows them to choose the best schools for their children. It doesn't say, as the educrats do, that poor people are too dumb (they use the word uniformed) to make choices. Poor people are the same as rich people. And poor people make decisions all the time. They decide where they are going to live, what grocery store to buy from where to shop for clothes - they decide everything, but all of a sudden, the educrats claim that they don't have enough sense to make a decision about the education of their children.

This quote is effective because of its emotional content. However, it says very little - which may be the reason for its inclusion in Kerr's paper. Thus, but not allowing Polly Williams to state the reasons for her pro-choice battle, Kerr sidesteps the necessity for outlining the education context which, in this case, proved the catalyst for establishing the pro-choice movement in Milwaukee. Instead, he celebrates the outcomes of the pro-choice win, which he says were increased waiting lists at private schools, more motivated and happier students, as well as children working to capacity.

In contrast to this celebratory tone, Snook (1987) also writes about the voucher system in the USA and adds a cautionary note. In his paper entitled "The Voucher System: an alternative method of financing education", he comes to the conclusion that "The concept of a voucher system is confused. There are many different voucher systems and their nature, purpose and effects are varied". Further, he says that "Despite massive financial inducements, all [USA] districts, even very poor ones (with the exception of Alum Rock) rejected a voucher system. Massive publicity campaigns failed everywhere to convince a majority that a voucher system would be in the interest of their children. And if this were not enough, Snook maintains that "If we can trust the Alum Rock research, some parents were 'freely' choosing programmes which were seriously detrimental to the education of their children". So much for the benefits of pro-choice?

About her pro-choice stance, several articles written by or about Polly Williams are more enlightening. Polly outlines the history of schooling for blacks in Milwaukee, including in one ("Inner City Kids: Why Choice Is Their Only Hope") two maps which illustrate the bus routes taken by black children to their education destination. For one school alone, there are approximately fifty routes. Why? This extensive 'busing', explains Polly, is the result of a now-defunct policy for black/white integration by which black children must be integrated into white schools. For the most part, this means that black children are obliged to attend schools far away from home. Polly decries this

system, saying that "Poor black people [have] become the trophies of white social engineers". To remedy this, she says "We want our kids educated in our own communities". Thus, the parental choice, in this instance, is ... for black children to be able to attend the school next door. Here, Polly clearly emulates the type of schooling readily available in New Zealand. How ironic, therefore, that in recommending a neo-liberal pro-choice education paradigm for New Zealand, Roger Kerr is advocating a move to a system which Polly Williams abhors - one in which large numbers of children may be 'bused' or driven daily to the school of their parents' choice. The benefits of integration would not be realised in the New Zealand paradigm, however. More likely, a polarisation would occur instead - between rich and poor, and between different ethnic and religious groups. This does not augur well for notions of egalitarianism that so far have underscored educational policy in New Zealand.

Polly Williams' pro-choice stance is not solely based on concerns over the busing of black students. On her agenda is an attack of the public schooling system in Milwaukee which has a ninety percent failure rate, by which is meant that ninety percent of students who leave school cannot read. This astronomical rate is hardly comparable to New Zealand's ninety-nine percent literacy rate in what arguably has been " ... one of the best systems in the world". Thus, Roger Kerr's promotion of a voucher system as a means of ensuring a better education for children must be questioned on the grounds of its relevance to the New Zealand context. More seriously, a question needs to be asked concerning the way he writes about the voucher system, in particular, the way he employs the rhetoric of others such as Polly Williams (and neglects those such as Ivan Snook) to provide legitimacy for ideas that are ill-explained, and which are framed in such a way to lead the reader to believe that the quote included not only supports but is appropriate to the argument. Does Roger Kerr really - intend to mislead his audience in this way? Or is it a case of Kerr employing a strategy he believes is most persuasive to his cause? If so, then this ploy undermines the quality of his writing.

The result, reader cynicism, might be avoided if only the ideas he advocated were more fully and honestly stated.

The Implications of Kerr's Critique of Teachers and the Education System

While the NZBR 'schools' agenda is presumably aimed at producing a more competitive education market which (in business terms) should guarantee a more skilled workforce, · Kerr's anti-teacher rhetoric seems to highlight another objective - that of undercutting the teaching profession itself. But to what purpose? If Kerr's aim (as expressed on behalf of the NZBR) is to produce more committed teachers in order to optimise student performance (does this necessarily equate?), then this surely would entail longer training, increased pay and conditions, etc. in order to attract the more highly-skilled and committed personnel. That this is apparently not the case has been demonstrated by -

- a. legislation introduced in 1991 (and endorsed by the NZBR) which allows schools' boards of trustees to employ unqualified teachers,
- b. NZBR recommendations (in specific cases) for the time period for teacher training to be reduced,
- c. Kerr, as representative of the NZBR, clearly stating that teachers' pay and conditions should be cut except, perhaps, for higher-level employees,
- d. Kerr stating that the teachers' pro-active union should be replaced by a reactive professional organisation such as the New Zealand Medical Association which demands, by way of a charter, a degree of accountability from personnel.

Taken together, these recommendations/changes indicate a desire to undercut the privileges reaped by so-called 'fat cats' of the teaching profession, much in the same way as the National Government sought (and succeeded) in undercutting the power of labour unions by introducing

the Employment Contracts Act in 1991. The reforms, then, are to be introduced into the education system as a means of ensuring a degree of intra- and inter-school competition which would make teachers accountable and students productive. This point appears to underscore the argument put forward by Kerr in both his papers on education, as evidenced by a comment such as "We may well wonder why Japan is outstripping the world in educational achievement and technology" - a comment which is juxtaposed by another in - which Kerr makes the point that, in comparing New Zealand to Japan, New Zealand business leaders are now examining " ... why we have performed so poorly as a country for so long".

Japan's economic paradigm, then, should be imposed for the good of New Zealand education. The fact that the majority of teachers in New Zealand reject this paradigm is irrelevant - they are motivated by self-interest, says Kerr. However, Kerr's advocacy of the notion of 'choice' (parental choice in deciding the school/type of education for their child), as a seductive alternative to the present, more standardised educational forms, appears to mask an unpalatable ideology. The attempt to undercut the collaborative strength of the teaching profession in New Zealand by replacing it with a non-collaborative, individualised and fragmented 'parental-choice' paradigm is suggestive of a cynical defusing of people-power for the purpose of instituting a raft of reforms (educational and other) which will cut the cost (quality) of education and, in the long term, negatively impact on the lifestyle of New Zealanders. Thus, Roger Kerr in the name of choice, seeks to undermine the strength of the teachers' unions, simply because collective strength represents power to resist reforms. It is doubtful, as Kerr must be aware, that this power could be transferred to parents under the pro-choice plan, because parents (as representative of society at large) are an atomised, - diverse group, with little reason to act collectively. In any case, even if parents were uniformly opposed to the educational reforms currently in train, many are confused by changes they believe they are powerless to prevent. As it is, the concept of pro-choice being an empowering strategy for parents is inherently flawed. Firstly, a degree of consensus has always been available in the existing education system; and secondly, access to 'better' schools may be foreclosed for a variety of reasons, not the least being geographical or academic (private schools may accept only the most 'able' children). Pro-choice, then, seems little more than a public relations exercise intended to obscure the nexus of power as it shifts from teacher unions (according to Roger Kerr's perceptions) to the agents of change, while upholding 'the public' as being the real beneficiaries of neo-liberal reforms. How ironic that Roger Kerr, in rebuking anti-reformists who refer to the public as being 'uninformed', should, in fact, neglect to inform the public as to the true nature of these reforms, whose beneficiaries will be mainly the wealthy - ie: wealthy (private) schools, entrepreneurs and families who already comprise New Zealand's elite.

The above is evidence to suggest that Roger Kerr is a true strategies in the Bob Jessop 'strategy theory' tradition. If the state (as represented by the New Zealand government) is, in Jessop's terms a forum through which " ... differential opportunities [are offered] to different political forces to realise their interests in pursuing specific strategies", then Kerr assumes this differential exists and has maximised his opportunities. As Executive Director of the NZBR, he has rare access to resources of time, money, and power in order to pursue his ideological aims. This bounty is unavailable for most other politically-oriented individuals - or organisations in New Zealand. Kerr promote the concerns of the NZBR through the media, public forums, commissioned reports, and (presumably) by personal influence. How successful is he? In terms of viewing the state as a 'strategic terrain' which can be influenced using a Poulantzian 'privileged strategy' then the answer must be "very" - if only (in an arena of competing interests), Kerr has proved himself to be the master's voice.

This voice makes no bones about the fact that we should work harder and longer for less, produce more and more often, and generally step up the pace of working life. In his own words, to this end, "Education is crucial to the country's wellbeing" Kerr suggests that the pay-off is an improved standard of living, which would be produced by the 'trickle down' effect. This notion is puzzling. Since the educational reforms he suggests would presumably enhance the learning possibilities of some students in some ('better', ie.: better able to capture resources?) schools at the

cost of others (Maori, women, the poor?), the gap between the haves and have-nots must surely increase. Notions of egalitarianism on which the New Zealand education system has been based (if not realised) would disappear. It is difficult not to interpret this scenario as one in which 'the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.'. In terms of the NZBR, this sounds suspiciously like the self-interest of which teachers are accused by Kerr. Could it be said, then, that by sleight of hand Kerr has neatly circumvented criticism of his own monetarist (elitist) goals, by making teachers, as obstructors of neo-liberal progress, villains of the piece instead?

Conclusion

On the basis of Kerr's strategy as evidenced in his papers, it is difficult not to assume that his role in the education debate is to act as devil's advocate. Anthony Hubbard from the 'Listener' might agree in light of his statement that " ... Round table reports and speeches are lethal objects, aimed with care at politicians and power brokers of every sort". Kerr's education message, then, is a loaded one. While neglecting to detail NZBR plans for the education system, he concentrates instead on 'for and against' rhetoric regarding teachers and the education establishment. Educators themselves (apart from the NZBR inspired Education Forum) are not consulted about reform. Rather, they are denigrated, even ridiculed, in a manner which seems to give lie to Kerr's occasional statement to the effect that " ... teachers matter a great deal to education". Thus, Kerr's agenda is to wage a war of attrition against the existing education establishment, and to create - in the minds of New Zealanders everywhere - negative images of educators together with positive images of the business-oriented reforms currently in progress. It is a battle that Kerr expects to win, if only on the basis of past successes since "Life has been a blur of trophies, and now he holds one of the biggest prizes of all: he's helping to run the show". But if, for Kerr, education is all about dollars and cents, ie: raising economic performance ('the competitive edge') by increasing credentialism (education 'outcomes'), and by reducing the cost of the education budget; and if he is persuasive in his argument that teachers are obstructing progress and are thus sabotaging the economic future of young New Zealanders, then Apple (1992) sounds this note of warning

" ...the political right in the United States has been very successful in mobilising support against the education system and its employees, often exporting the crisis in the economy into the schools. thus, one of its major achievements has been to shift the blame for unemployment and underemployment, for the loss of economic competitiveness, and for the supposed breakdown of "traditional" values and standards in the family, education, and paid and unpaid workplaces from the economic, cultural, and social policies and effects of the dominant groups to the school and other public agencies. "Public" now is the center of all evil; "private" is the center of all that is good".

This is the scenario similarly being enacted in New Zealand. Ideologues such as Roger Kerr have made it a strategic battle. But there is little doubt that in the battle of strategies between the NZBR's Roger Kerr and the beleaguered teacher unions who are resisting change, Kerr has might on his side. Thus, the 'competitive edge' may in this instance prove to be Kerr's superior access to the media, money, resources, and (of course) to the New Zealand Government's ear. It seems ironic that the main purpose of Kerr's reforming zeal is to change the world-class education system that New Zealand is already reputed to have.

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