**Visions of the Past:**

**Five decades of Labour Manifesto Pledges on Education.**

**Part 1. The 1970s: Mostly In Power.**

**Length:** 5,500 words

**Summary:** the Labour Party was in power for 11 of the 15 years between 1964 and 1979. In Labour Party terms this qualifies as ‘the long term’. This allowed it to to enact a lot of its general election manifesto pledges, particularly to the education system where its major reforms ended up taking the form of larger-scale, longer-term projects. This blog post picks up the story with an overview of landmark events from before 1970. After this point, it looks in more detail at each manifesto’s education pledges through to 1979.

What is it we want really?

 For what end and how?

If it is something feasible, obtainable,

 Let us dream it now,

And pray for a possible land

 Not of sleep-wakers, not of angry puppets,

But where both heart and brain can understand

 The movements of our fellows;

Where life is a choice of instruments and none

 Is debarred his natural music.

Louis MacNiece, from pt. XXIV, *Autumn Journal* (1938).

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4. **Before 1970.**

Louis MacNiece’s words struck me as being a suitable epigraph for this piece, because it is informed by an egalitarian spirit, the same kind of spirit that informed a lot of Labour’s educational thinking and reforms that were set in train in the 60s.

When it came to the education of school-age children, the central educational idea that came out of Harold Wilson’s Labour governments from 1964 onwards was that of Comprehensive Schools. Much of the groundwork for this had been done in the preceding years at local level. Journalist Peter Wilby sums this up when he argues that “the pressure for comprehensives came from ordinary parents who wanted opportunities for their children that were unavailable in secondary moderns, including the O level exams that promised access to white collar jobs" (see Note 1 below).

A key figure in drawing all this together at party and ministerial level was Tony Crosland, who was in the forefront of arguing in favour of Comprehensives and who started the ball rolling in government

The story of what led to the comprehensive system is rich and detailed, but sadly outside the scope of this blog. However, it's important to note that the Labour Government's actions set the seal on a movement against selection and the 11-plus that had been growing in various quarters for some years prior. The following passage from Susan Crosland's 1982 biography of her husband gives a flavour of how a national ‘comprehensivisation’ programme eventually came into effect. She outlines her husband's approach upon taking over as Education Secretary in 1965:

*The three problems he saw as most pressing were: secondary school reorganisation, teachers supply, and, after the Robbins Report, higher education. A decision on the first problem had been taken by the Labour Government: not to legislate. This was partly because the Government had such a small majority, partly because of a general feeling that most local authorities would reorganise if asked and given the chance to do so. Michael Stewart* [previous Education Sec] *had a circular in draft [...] Tony took the draft out, polished it, and began negotiations with the multitude of local-authority, teacher and other pressure groups that surround education.*

*At a later date he contemplated legislation on comprehensives, especially when so many local authorities went Conservative. But in January 1965 he wasn’t sorry that Cabinet had already decided not to legislate: it was fundamental to his view of democracy that reform would stick better if it could be achieved voluntarily.*

The 'circular' referred to above- Circular 10/65- was the note from the Department for Education and Science duly circulated to all local education authorities, requesting that they submit plans to the Department on how to reorganise their secondary education provision along comprehensive lines.

Crosland’s move set the agenda for years, making it difficult for opposition parties to fully oppose it. Margaret Thatcher, Conservative Education Secretary from '70 to '74 “could not stem the move” as Susan Crosland puts it.

Another move made by Wilson's government was to advance plans to phase in an increase to the school leaving age to 16. This was not actually achieved until 1973- under the Conservatives in fact- given that the increase was partly dependent on having money to adequately resource this enhanced provision.

Wilson's government did, however, break genuinely new ground in the field of Higher Education, best symbolised by the creation of the Open University. Michael Young and then Minister of State for Education Jennie Lee are credited with much of the early work on this, and they had Harold Wilson’s full backing. Assessments of Wilson- his career, his record, even his character- vary to this day, but the OU is commonly seen as among his greatest achievements, some would say the greatest. As early 1976, during James Callaghan’s first conference speech as PM where he paid tribute to his predecessor, he cited the OU as Wilson's greatest achievement.

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It’s a mark of these ideas’ significance that they gained such traction, so much so that four years of Tory government (1970-74) couldn’t truly reverse them or hold them back, despite the opposition on ideological grounds by some in that government. Some wanted to disband the OU, but the Conservative Education Secretary in Edward Heath's government, Margaret Thatcher was broadly supportive of the OU. As for schools, despite Thatcher cancelling Circular 10/65, plans to go comprehensive were too advanced in too many LEAs to make a full-scale reversal of Labour's policy a practical move.

**2. The 1970 Labour manifesto.**

Fast forward to 1970. The timeline below gives a flavour of some of the events leading up to that year's general election. Labour’s manifesto was entitled “**Now Britain's Strong- Let's Make It Great To Live In”.** This still being Harold Wilson's party, the embers still glowed of the “white heat” of the “scientific revolution” that he famously spoke of in 1963. And so among the opening declarations we find this hymn to technology and the future:

*We believe that Britain's potential for improvement is enormous. Science, technology and the general growth of knowledge present great opportunities for social and economic advance. With foresight, intelligence and effort - with planning - we can harness the new technologies and the powerful economic forces of our time to human ends.*

There’s a similar sense of ongoing purpose and ambition when it came to the core **manifesto pledges,** which were categorised into 'Eight Main Tasks'. Task 4 was **"Education and Social Equality”.** Oneducationthe overall sense is of wanting to carry on with the projects in hand, while indicating how they will develop further. The manifesto is a comparatively wordy document, so here is my summary of what it proposed:

**Comprehensive Schools:** The first pledge was to continue the system of 'Comprehensive reorganisation' (up to that point, 129 of 163 English and Welsh LEAs had agreed plans to reorganise their schools along Comprehensive lines). The manifesto pledged legislation "to require the minority of Tory education authorities who have so far resisted change to abandon eleven plus selection in England and Wales." There were similar plans for Scotland.

**Resources for schools:** Pointing to its record on building and renovating schools (13 projects completed per week in the last five years under Labour, compared to less than nine per week in the last five years of Tory rule) the general pledge was to keep this up, with the focus on primaries and nursery schools. (It's interesting to note those numbers of new buildings built under both Labour and the Tories in those days. In current times the newer schools have been 'Free Schools' but notably many of these have popped up in pre-existing buildings never intended for education, such as old office blocks).

**Staffing**: A pledge to reduce the size of classes in all schools to 30.

**Accountability** (I've used our contemporary term here- it's not in the original manifesto): "We shall introduce for England and Wales a new Education Bill to replace the 1944 and subsequent Acts. One of our aims will be to bring parents and teachers into a closer partnership in the running of our schools."

**General pledges:** Raise the school leaving age to 16 in 1972, once sufficient capacity and resources had built up.

**Lifelong learning:** (again, to use a contemporary term): Conduct a review to lay plans for further expansion of HE. We also find this phrase in this manifesto, which could come have been written in 2021:

*The capacity of people to learn and their desire to learn continues at all ages. It is, therefore, essential that provisions should be made for people, for adults of all ages, to re-enter the education system*

It was written in the context of discussing the Open University, but it also reflects the increasing sense that education was also a means of training- or re-training- for employment. The relationship of education to skills for employment would become an increasing theme for Labour as the 70s wore on.

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In the event, however, Wilson's Labour lost this election. As Pelling and Reid point out, the 1970 election was rather too close to call in the run up to polling day, and Labour felt it had a chance of winning. Its eventual defeat is often put down to its rather rocky economic record, especially after 1967, and the rather more effective election campaign run by Heath’s Tories.

Some landmark social legislation was passed during Labour’s tenure between 64 and 70, and its education policies fit into this progressive social programme. The sense of continuity that came from being in power from '64 until '70 seems to have allowed a reasonably clear purpose and vision for education to emerge. The OU is still going strong, and the Comprehensive School concept has been tinkered with but endures to this day. Arguably, our current thinking around diversity and inclusion are directly related to those core concepts of fairness and equality that took shape during the fifties and sixties.

In retrospect Labour were perhaps fortunate that the Heath government’s response to its school and HE reforms was evidently not strong enough, in practical or policy terms, to halt or undo much of what Wilson's government had started.

Despite his 1970 defeat, Wilson had enough ‘credit in the bank’ with the Party, and so Labour’s leadership and front bench survived. This in turn led to a certain amount of continuity in personnel and policy terms. The experience shared among Labour's ranks meant that the Party was able to capitalise on the unexpected events of 1974. Coming back to power relatively quickly after 1970’s setback thus enabled Labour to pick up its policy agenda where it left off, and also to avoid that otherwise most quintessential of Labour experiences: a prolonged spell in the doldrums of opposition.

**3. The 1974 manifestos: February and October.**

By early 1974, an election was called in the face of another Miners' Strike. With polling day set for **February the 28th,** Edward Heath asked the country "Who Governs Britain?”. "Not you," the country duly replied.

After a short period trying to put together a coalition with Jeremy Thorpe’s Liberals, Heath had to admit defeat. Wilson’s Labour were back in power.

The short-notice nature of the February ’74 election shows in the comparative crispness of the Labour manifesto. **Its title was "Let's Work Together- Labour's Way Out Of The Crisis".**  Pelling and Reid describe Labour’s manifesto as a "far more left wing programme than previously in its history."This was an election fought against a backdrop of national and international unrest and uncertainty, and the manifesto is dominated by references to the fundamentals of life, like energy supply and the prices of goods. It’s unsurprising, therefore, that the plans for education aren't as detailed as in the 1970 edition, and neither are they placed as high in the list of priorities.

Education is eventually mentioned some way into the manifesto text, grouped together with other public services, and under the umbrella heading of plans for 'Social Progress'. The manifesto passage is short so here I quote it in full:

***Expand the EDUCATION SERVICE by the introduction of a national scheme of Nursery Schools, including day care facilities, and by a big expansion of educational facilities for 16-18 year olds, by finally ending the 11+ and by providing additional resources for children in special need of help. We shall speed the development of a universal system of fully comprehensive secondary schools. All forms of tax-relief and charitable status for public schools will be withdrawn.***

Note here the emerging prioritisation of ‘children in special need of help’, or what we’d now term Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. The expansion of facilities for 16-18 year olds would see sixth form colleges and FE get a boost that would last some decades. Comprehensivisation would continue apace, the verb "speed" signalling the introduction of legislation to compel LEAs who were holding out to submit their plans for ending selection and reorganising secondary education.

The final sentence above is notable for the fact that Labour was now in 1974 explicitly grappling with how to tackle the issue of independent schools and their finances. This did mark a departure from the tone and content of the 1970 manifesto and perhaps reflects the move leftwards identified by Pelling and Reid. However, the gulf between the rhetoric of a manifesto, and the reality of actually hitting independent schools in the wallet, would become apparent between 1974 and 1979.

(Incidentally, note how that phrase “Education Service” makes a bow in this manifesto, a somewhat isolated use of a phrase that in some ways prefigures the 'National Education Service' concept of the Corbyn-era manifestos of 2017 and 2019.)

Wilson's first 1974 administration was a minority government, and so **Labour returned to the polls in October 1974** seeking a clear majority. The autumn manifesto has a different tone (**title: “Britain Will Win with Labour”**), and the document was more forward-looking compared to the 'crisis management' feel of the February manifesto. There is much talk of 'unity' and the importance of the 'social contract', a phrase which occurs numerous times throughout the text. In large part this reflected a desire to place the relationship between government and the unions onto a more stable footing, although the broader resonance and relevance of the phrase to society- denoting the relationship between citizens and the state- still applied.

We see this reflected in the core pledges on education. As before these appear some way into the manifesto, after it has dealt with the still-pressing issues of industrial relations, prices, energy and so on. The key section is short, so once again I quote it in full:

***We have already asked local authorities to submit plans for comprehensive education by the end of the year, increased provision for nursery education and raised students' grants by 25%. The Labour Government realises the problems of many of our teachers and an independent inquiry has been set up into their pay. We have made an additional £1.8 million available to supplement teachers' pay in difficult areas and increased the school building programme we inherited. We have provided funds for new classes for adults who cannot read.***

***As in all our plans, economic restraints are bound to influence timing. But the next Labour Government will:***

* ***End the 11 plus and other forms of selection for secondary education.***
* ***Continue to give priority to nursery school and day care provision, full-time and part-time.***
* ***Stop the present system of Direct Grant Schools and withdraw tax relief and charitable status from Public Schools, as a first step towards our long-term aim of phasing out fee paying in schools.***
* ***Continue to move towards a fairer system of student grants.***
* ***Provide increased opportunities for further education and training, including compulsory paid day release, especially for young people who leave school early.***
* ***Legislate for an annual review and an annual report to Parliament on youth services.***

Note here the nod to ‘economic restraints’ influencing the timing of plans and a cautious hedging of bets. Doubtless Labour had the precarious state of the nation’s finances in mind, but may also have been thinking of the budget cuts of 1967-8 which served to delay that increase in the school leaving age to 16.

Wilson won only a small parliamentary majority of three seats, but a win is a win for any party, and always especially welcome for Labour. Crucially, the victory enabled the party to pick up the same educational course largely where it left off. There’s no doubt that this was a big help to a party that had set in train some big projects, like comprehensive education and expanding HE (and by implication augmenting FE and tertiary provision). As we have seen, as Tory Education Secretary between 1970 and 1974 Margaret Thatcher had suspended the comprehensivisation programme, but in practice there was too much momentum behind it. By a combination of electoral good fortune and electoral manoeuvring, Labour had put itself in a position to try and finish the job. However, as we now know, it was not entirely successful in every local education authority and school in the country.

A couple of examples illustrate the difficulties the Labour government faced. The first was the ‘Tameside Case’ from Greater Manchester, where the local authority (when under Labour control) had submitted plans to central government to introduce comprehensive schools. However, when in early 1976 the council came under Tory control, it promptly announced that it would reintroduce academic election and the 11 plus. Cue a large headache for education secretary Fred Mulley, and legal action between government and council. In late 1976 the government passed an Education Act to try to compel councils to submit plans to go comprehensive, but as the continued existence of selection in some areas of the country demonstrates, the results were mixed.

Another unintended result of this 1976 Education Act came when Labour stopped the Direct Grant system for grammar schools. When faced with the ultimatum of either abandoning academic selection once and for all and coming under LEA control, or going it alone as independent schools, the majority of those direct grant grammar schools chose independence. Rather than marking a "first step towards our long-term aim of phasing out fee paying in schools.

moving closer to ending academic selection and undermining the case for fee paying schools" this piece of legislation actually swelled the ranks of independent fee paying schools at a stroke.

As for the issue of stripping fee-paying schools of their charitable status, this soon ran into a quagmire of legal detail, and was not resolved during the course of the Parliament. Green and Kyanston go into useful detail about these issues in their book *Engines of Privilege* (see bibliography).

Three more key Labour themes are in this 1974 manifesto: the first is a pledge to increase staffing and resources, backed also by a necessary spending pledge. The second comes in the final bullet point on youth services. This way of thinking across education and other services for young people would of course take broader and deeper forms in the years to come. The third is the ongoing commitment to adult education generally and to teaching basic skills to adults.

During his time in office, PM James Callaghan did try to take Labour policy in a new direction by means of his ‘Great Debate’ about education. But despite much fanfare, the results largely came to nothing.

**4. The 1979 Manifesto**

This was entitled **"The Labour Way is the Better Way".** When it came to education, there was precious little new thinking. The momentum generated briefly by ‘The Great Debate’ had largely been lost. The section on education is pretty brief, and so is quoted here in full:

***Education***

***The Labour Party believes in equality of opportunity. Universal comprehensive education, which is central to our policy, must be completed in the 1980s. Already class sizes are the lowest ever recorded. The ratio of pupils to teachers is now only 23.6 in primary schools and 16.9 in secondary schools [sic]. Labour will continue to give high priority to reducing class sizes further.***

***Independent schools still represent a major obstacle to equality of opportunity. Labour's aim is to end, as soon as possible, fee-paying in such schools, while safeguarding schools for the handicapped. Labour will end as soon as possible the remaining public subsidies and public support to independent schools.***

***The Under-fives: Under this Labour Government, the proportion of 3- and 4-year-olds in nursery classes and schools has doubled. Local authorities will be encouraged to do much more. Our aim is to provide nursery education for 90 per cent of our 4-year-olds and half of our 3-year-olds by the early 1980s.***

***The Needs of Youth: We will provide a universal scheme of education and training for all 16-19 year olds, if necessary backed by statute. We will remove the financial barriers which prevent many young people from low income families from continuing their education after 16.***

***We will reintroduce legislation for income-related mandatory awards to all 16-18 year olds on all full-time courses.***

***Further and Higher Education: Further education places have increased by 25,000 under Labour. Labour will substantially increase the opportunities for people from working-class backgrounds -particularly adults - to enter further and higher education. We want to see more workers given time off work for study. To this end, the places at the Open University have increased from 42,000 in 1974 to 80,000 in 1978. We propose to extend the present mandatory grant system. Labour supported the adult literacy scheme, and will ensure its continuation.***

The core post-1964 themes are replayed here once again: a commitment to the Comprehensive programme and the threat of more legislation to compel intransigent LEAs to comply; increased focus on what we now call SEND (albeit couched above in the less sympathetic language of the 70s); expanding post-16 education, FE, and HE; and a general commitment to increasing resources.

A charitable assessment of these pledges would note a commitment to those central long-term ambitions of equality of opportunity, extending opportunity, increasing resources, and generally tackling real-life priorities. We also get another set of pledges on fee-paying schools. In tone it is also similar to the 1974 manifesto, the language striking a determined note.

Being less charitable, it must be said that by 1979 there were neither any substantially new ideas, nor a sense of building further on established gains. If anything, this reads like an attempt to tie up loose ends. Despite the overall success of the comprehensive project, Labour still hadn’t ensured a full roll-out nationally, the 1976 legislation not having fully addressed the issue. Another loose end was fee-paying schools. They had been in the crosshairs in 74. Here they were again in '79. No one doubts that- in legal and legislative terms- settling the fee-paying schools question has been (and indeed continues to be) a very thorny question indeed. But Labour had done itself no favours. In practical and legislative terms the results were muddled (again, see Green and Kyanston). They hadn’t really resolved anything, and it is clear that some pretty determined and skilfully drafted legislation would have been needed to succeed in these areas where previous attempts had failed.

Would Labour have finally seen these projects through in the 80's had it won? Would it have been able to renew and refresh its vision for education more generally? We will never know of course, although the party could have had the chance. Had James Callaghan called an election in late 1978, many feel he may well have won.

There is evidence that, in broad terms, the chance to reinvigorate Labour education policy in the late 70s was lost. Callaghan's "Great Debate” had signposted future directions and generated some ideas and movement, but it hadn’t led to another Education Act as planned. By late 1977, Callaghan's government was in full-on survival mode, and it was felt that there would not be enough time in the Parliamentary time to get education legislation through. Besides, the Cabinet was split over what any new education legislation might look like, and this reflected a more general split in the party as a whole. This would break out into an all-out Labour ‘civil war’ after the 1979 election and into the early eighties. But back in the context of the 1979 manifesto it explains why it mainly repeats old familiar themes: In other words, sticking to what they knew was the surest way of getting agreement.

The need for any party in power to do its best to unite around fresh ideas is underscored if we compare Labour’s 1979 manifesto pledges with what the Tory manifesto had to say in the same election campaign. Buried some way into the text, the heading is “Standards in Education”. It essentially riffs on the usual Conservative themes of a decline in standards and a general educational ‘dumbing down’:

*The Labour Party is still obsessed with the structure of the schools system, paying too little regard to the quality of education. As a result we have a system which in the view of many of our parents and teachers all too often fails - at a cost of over £8 billion a year - even to provide pupils with the means of communication and understanding. We must restore to every child, regardless of background, the chance to progress as far as his or her abilities allow.*

*We will halt the Labour government's policies which have led to the destruction of good schools; keep those of proven worth; and repeal those sections of the 1976 Education Act which compel local authorities to reorganise along comprehensive lines and restrict their freedom to take up places at independent schools.*

*We shall promote higher standards of achievement in basic skills. The Government's Assessment of Performance Unit will set national standards in reading, writing and arithmetic, monitored by tests worked out with teachers and others and applied locally by education authorities. The Inspectorate will be strengthened. In teacher training there must be more emphasis on practical skills and on maintaining discipline.*

It’s unsubtle stuff alright, and all part of the narrative in that election of Britain being in crisis from top to to bottom. But in its resemblance to Conservative rhetoric on education even to this day, it shows how far you can go by triggering and exploiting parental fears, and pushing the same buttons about standards, basic skills, and discipline. This kinds of Tory rhetoric wasn’t really new in an intellectual or political sense- and a lot of it was downright reactionary- but it was forceful and promised change.

The moment that best symbolised a change in the political weather was of course the Conservative election victory that year. A sign of things to come for Labour was Education Secretary Shirley Williams losing her seat in the election. And by 1981 she would not even be in the Labour Party.

Of course, an election is not won or lost on education pledges alone. But Labour’s thinking on education perhaps mirrored the wider sense that this was a government that had been buffeted by events and that had grown tired at the helm. Having largely made the educational weather for the past decade and a half, and having set the course for deep and lasting educational changes, there were now clouds on the horizon.

And so Labour entered the choppy waters of opposition, with internal divisions and dissent within the wider Party further rocking the boat. How it fared in the wake of Thatcher and until 1992 is the subject of the next post in this series.

Notes:

1. Peter Wilby, “Public Schools and the public”, New Statesman, 19th March, 2021.

**5. Context: A timeline of selected political events including milestones in education**

| **Year**  | **Significant political events** | **Significant education legislation and other milestones.**  | **Secretary of State for Education (L=Labour / C= Conservative)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1964 | General Election, October- Labour majority. | Announcement of plans to raise the school leaving age to 16, starting in the academic year 70-71. Number of students in HE and FE (approx) 118,000 [based on 1962/3 nos.) | Michael Stewart (L) |
| 1965 |  | Comprehensive Schools: Govt. asks all local authorities to submit plans to reorganise education along comprehensive lines and to end the 11-plus.  | Antony Crosland (L) [to 1967]. |
| 1966 | General Election, March- increased Labour majority. |  |  |
| 1967 | Pound devalued (Nov.) James Callaghan becomes Home Sec, swapping jobs with Roy Jenkins who becomes Chancellor.  | Partly due to general budget cuts, final delivery of school leaving age plans (as above) deferred from 1971 to 1972.Free milk for secondary school pupils stopped.  | Patrick Gordon-Walker (L) |
| 1968 | March: Jenkins's first budget. He describes his policy as "a stiff budget, followed by two years of hard slog".  |  | Edward Short (L) [to 1970] |
| 1969 |  | The Open University starts in earnest, upon receipt of its Royal Charter.  |  |
| 1970 | General Election, June- Conservative majority. | Number of students in HE and FE: 235,000. Thatcher's first major decision is to cancel Circular 10/65, the Labour invitation to LA's submit comprehensivisation plans. However, with many plans already made and still being submitted, the Heath govt. could not resist. % of pupils in England and Wales attending Comps goes for 32 to 62% during Thatcher’s tenure.  | Margaret Thatcher (C) [to 1974].  |
| 1971 | Heath government u-turn on nationalisation, paving way for rescue of Rolls-Royce and upper Clyde shipyards.  | 'Mrs Thatcher the Milk Snatcher' public controversy, in light of her plan abolish free school milk for pupils 7-11.  |  |
| 1972 | Miners' strike. Power rationing follows. Direct Rule imposed on Northern Ireland. Freeze on wages and prices. Inflation soars. Yom Kippur War in Middle East:  | DfE accepts that that within ten years it should provide nursery education for 90% of 4 year olds and 50% of 3 year olds.  |  |
| 1973 | UK joins EEC (Jan 1st) Yom Kippur War in Middle East (October). Oil prices quadruple between October 73 and Jan 74. Energy Crisis: Heath order a three-day working week, starting week of Dec 31st.  | School leaving age officially becomes 16.  |  |
| 1974 | Miners strike again. General election, February- Heath fails to create a Con-Lib coalition. Labour forms minority Govt. General Election, October- increased Labour majority. IRA mainland bombing campaign escalates (e.g. Birmingham Pub bombings, Nov).  | Comprehensivisation plans reactivated by Govt. Circular 4/74.  | Reg Prentice (L) |
| 1975 | Thatcher becomes Conservative leader (Feb). Referendum endorses UK membership of EEC (June).  |  | Fred Mulley (L) |
| 1976 | Harold Wilson resigns (March). Callaghan becomes Labour leader and PM (April). UK asks IMF for loan of $3.9 billion (Sept.) | Direct Grant system phased out for Grammar Schools. (119 of 170 DG Grammars opt for independence rather than coming under LEA control.) 1976 Education Act requires remaining LEAs to submit comprehensivisation proposals. James Callaghan delivers speech at Ruskin College, Oxford (Oct.) sparking "Great Debate" about nature and purpose of education.  | Shirley Williams (L) [to 1979].  |
| 1977 | Roy Jenkins becomes President of EEC. Parliamentary 'Lib-Lab pact' agreed (March).  |  |  |
| 1978 | Lib-Lab pact ends (May). 'The Winter of Discontent' begins.  |  |  |
| 1979 | Devolution referendums in Scotland (fails to reach required majority) and Wales (rejected) [March]. Callaghan Govt. loses vote of confidence. Calls GE. General Election, May- Conservative majority. Thatcher elected first woman PM.  | No. of students in HE and FE: 307,000 | Mark Carlisle (C) |

**6. Sources:**

**Online**:

An archive of Labour Party general election manifestos, from 1900 to 2001, can be found online at www.labour-party.org.uk. (n.b. this site is not affiliated to the Labour Party.)

Tory manifestos past can be found at [www.conservativemanifesto.com](http://www.conservativemanifesto.com).

Education in England: http://www.educationengland.org.uk is also a rich online resource.

**Books**:

David Cannadine, *Margaret Thatcher: A Life and Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017)

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Shirley Williams, *Climbing the Bookshelves* (London: Virago, 2009).

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