Review Essay

The Educationist as Administrator

Noeline Alcorn, *To the fullest extent of his powers: C.E. Beeby's life in education*, Wellington (N.Z.), Victoria University Press, 1999.

We live in an age which distrusts the very idea of education systems being placed in the hands of persons steeped in the literature and practice of educational enterprise. This is an apostasy of recent origin. As late as 20 years ago, officials in charge of significant national systems of education, illustrious school principals, and classroom practitioners, were expected in the more liberal societies of the world, to show how their policies and practice measured up in terms of innovation and result to challenges such as those identified in the writings of John Dewey. In his 1929 Gifford Lecture, for example, Dewey had argued that when mankind invents arts 'and by their means turns the powers of nature to account; man constructs a fortress out of the very conditions and forces which threaten him. He builds shelters, weaves garments, makes flame his friend instead of his enemy, and grows into the complicated arts of associated living. This is the method of changing the world through experience.'[1] The commonly-claimed task of progressive schooling between 1900 and 1960 was stipulated to be one of providing the kind of teaching and learning that would enable people to cope intelligently and in a humanly satisfying way with the changing world as Dewey depicted it to be. There was an underlying optimism, reflecting perhaps the redemptionist element to be found in the character of many educational practitioners, that despite the obstacles of war and mixed economic fortune, such a mission could be accomplished. Thus is was that it was no coincidence that the educational developments which caused the greatest excitement during those years were those that were predicated upon a fundamental belief shared by administrators, teachers, and holders of progressive opinion, that teaching and learning as a deliberately conducted human activity could contribute significantly to the growth of intelligent local, national, and international communities; communities whose level of intellectual and emotional excellence was exemplified in the way that they welcomed technological change as an opportunity for adding to the quality of human life experienced by each and every individual at each and every age.

It is precisely this faith in the quality of open classroom learning as being at once the heritage and the harbinger of the adult problem-solving society which values highly the processes of lateral and creative thinking and a willingness to experiment, which has collapsed so dramatically in recent years. One significant marker of this change is the qualities that are sought in educational leaders. Apart from technocratic specialists where the emphasis is placed upon expertise rather than upon shared communication, educational administrators throughout the world tend nowadays to be appointed primarily on the basis of their experience and expertise in handling and directing significant public resources in systemic ways to the end that measurable school learning results (outputs) will satisfy the 'stakeholders' in education systems—i.e. governments, parents, employers and (sometimes) students. The prime motivation placed upon teachers to achieve good results is a mixture of competition (whose class can achieve the best outputs?) and fear (jobs are risked if results are poor). Whatever the mix however, the one abiding and necessary requirement is common and detailed prescriptions of learning outcomes (curricula and syllabus prescriptions) which provide for fair rules of contest. In such a contest, the open classroom and autonomous teaching and learning has no essential place because schooling becomes driven by detailed a priori centralised prescriptions which are designed to purchase desired 'outputs'. It is these which constitute the criterion of success or failure while, as far as the administrator is concerned, the teaching/learning process is contingent to this criterion and therefore is in essence non-problematic. Thus it is indeed true that as systems replace the teaching/learning process as the focal point of attention it is assumed that there is no need for an educational administrator to be well-versed in literature and practice. What progressive educational thinkers claimed teaching to be—i.e. an art based upon science—has been reduced to the act of conforming to external rules. The term 'teaching' is still used but critics claim that its status as an activity has been severely reduced; much in the way that art is debased when consumers are invited to paint pictures by numbers.

The progressivist emphasis upon enquiry classroom learning conducted within a framework of broad curriculum goals is in fact potentially threatening to an administrator who is required to produce 'outputs' in a world characterised in the words of Roger Kerr, Executive Director of the New Zealand Business Roundtable, as being one of globalisation, the privatisation of public services, the waning of democratic politics in the face of corporately-captured and driven technological imperatives, and the enshrinement of consumer freedom and choice via the operation of commercial market models.[2] Thus is entered the paradox to end all paradoxes. In the name of the sovereignty of the freedom of the individual

consumer, today's educational administrator is encouraged to eschew the sovereignty of discrete educative classroom experience developing in its own way and its own pace in time and replace it with a standardised menu of centrally-prescribed learning schedules minutely framed in terms of specified outputs; outputs which, if they are attained, are presented as the evidence of successful administration. It is a process which reduces the teacher to the status of a technician who transmits 'knowledge' to a passive clientele; a process which in Deweyan terms can be guaranteed to have a profoundly conservative, unthinking and inert result from the 'schooled' population. This is the paradox.

Yet all is not as black as this portrayal might suggest. Despite clear universal trends by officialdom in the last decade to reduce teacher preparation and education to that of a mastery of technical procedures; a process which seems to be almost inversely proportional to an accompanying trend of inflating professional credentials, teachers as individuals, and through their professional associations, continue to contest administrative policies which threaten to deskill and denigrate their status and collegiality as professionals. Among consumers also there remains the belief that the educational process should, even if it does not always do so, provide something more for individuals and groups than indoctrination, mantra verbiage, and the ticking off in uniform fashion of utilitarian objectives imposed by those who have captured the 'output' methodology. As early as 1868, that brilliant English humanist educationist, T. H. Huxley, had got to the heart of the matter when he noted,

> The politicians tell us, 'you must educate the masses because they are going to be our masters'. The clergy join in the cry for education for they affirm that people are drifting away from the church and chapel into broadest infidelity. The manufacturers and capitalists swell the chorus lustily. They declare that ignorance makes bad workmen; that England will soon be unable to turn out cotton goods or steam engines cheaper than other people and then Ichabod! Ichabod! the glory will be departed from us. And few voices are lifted up in favour of the doctrine that the masses should be educated because they are men and women with unlimited capacity of being, doing, suffering, and that it is as true now, as it ever was, that people perish for lack of knowledge.[3]

It is his optimism about what education, conceived of as a human right, can do to enhance the lives of all individuals, that marks Huxley out from so many of his contemporary educationsts and also presents his argument as a critical alternative to so many of the utilitarian prescriptions which pervade educational policy and practice in our own time.

This kind of optimism by governments, officials, and populations at large, was especially evident in the years which followed the second world war. As countries whose economies had been shattered by war began to

rebuild and as former colonial territories became independent nation states, increasing hopes were invested in international organisations like UNESCO as instruments whereby the best resourced nations could assist those with little in order to translate the goal of universal education into a reality. Even today, we are periodically reminded of the moral imperative which is placed on those who have, to give to those who have had little in terms of formal schooling opportunities. In August 1999, for example, two young teenage boys from the African state of Guinea stowed away in the undercarriage of a plane travelling to Brussels. Found to be dead on arrival, a note accompanying the bodies read in part,

> Excellencies, gentle-men members and responsible citizens of Europe, if you see that we have sacrificed ourselves and lost our lives, it is because we suffer too much in Africa from an absence of schooling. Without schooling we are nothing.[4]

Unrealistic expectations of what education can achieve for individuals have unfortunately often accompanied high hopes of immediate gain in societies which until recently have had a paucity of schooling resources available to their people. And even in resource wealthy societies it is doubtful if administrators of public schooling are ever likely to be freed from the tasks of having to balance competing and conflicting expectations among different interest groups in accord with the available resources and the political realities of the day; to sell particular developmental policies to the government so that these become owned as government policies; and to reframe (with considerable diplomacy) school reform aspirations held by politicians so that worthwhile educational progress has some likelihood of occurring. None of the above can be accomplished by applying systemic rules. Each requires the educational administrator to move beyond rules and to risk making judgements which are based on his or her own conception of what is educationally worthwhile.

Clearly, we now live in a time which favours the security of rules over the risks involved in innovation and review and a time which does not therefore necessarily place a premium upon the imaginative educational insights of the administrator. By way of contrast however, the great advantage of Dr Noeline Alcorn's recently published biography of C. E. Beeby,[5] New Zealand's greatest educational administrator, is that it demonstrates in a compelling way that Beeby was an outstanding administrator precisely because he was a particularly fine educationist who was a master of the literature in his field; a literature to which he contributed by way of research and reflection throughout all of his very long adult life. The converse is also true. Beeby was an excellent and stimulating educationist because his extensive experience as an administrator encouraged him to keep his

attention attuned to the activity of teaching and learning; the process which lies at the heart of all educational endeavour. As Alcorn presents them, Beeby's life and his achievements can be likened to a morality play from which we can learn much if we will.

Born in Leeds in 1902, Clarence Beeby emigrated with his family to Christchurch, New Zealand, at the age of four. Although the family came from working class origins, his father's skilled occupation as a pharmacist meant that the young Beeby's environment was one which was economically secure as well as being one which was attuned to the doctrine of 'getting on' in a new land of opportunity. From his mother especially, Beeby learned from the age of five that the purpose of school learning was to compete with his peers for the prize of being first; something that he was very good at doing and fortunately something also which his quick mind enjoyed as he mastered the bookish studies which dominated the curriculum of the New Zealand public primary schools of the day. With growing scholastic success, Beeby attended the prestigious state secondary school, Christchurch Boys High School, for four years before enrolling at the University College Canterbury where he eventually graduated M.A. (Hons) and was awarded a junior staff teaching position in philosophy.

Yet even at the height of his early scholastic success, Beeby, by his own account[6] had in fact begun to realise that 'free' education was selective. Many of his friends and acquaintances with whom he had competed did not come from families who had either the resources or the desire to keep their children in the school system beyond the age required by law. Instead, they were put to work with the object of supplementing family incomes. Just as importantly, Beeby's experience at Christchurch Boys High School taught him very clearly that schooling which was socially and economically exclusive, frequently fell into the trap of providing for that reason models of behaviour which emphasised conservative 'in-house' rules rather than exciting innovative teaching and learning in the classrooms. Reflecting many years later, he noted very precisely how the several 'free' secondary schools in the Christchurch of his schooldays reinforced, in their enrolment policies, the class structure of a supposedly egalitarian colonial city. Beeby recalled,

> In the selection of its entrants, Christchurch West District High School was in a peculiar position. The students of the Tech (i.e. Technical High School) came mostly from working class families with the exception of some girls taking commercial or homecraft courses. But there were a good number of children from professional or business families who went to West because they could not get into the secondary schools on academic attainments or through the old-pupil network. A few of them were admitted to one of the traditional schools when they had proved themselves by passing the Matric.[7]

The detail herein points us to the startling realisation that what Beeby reports was the working knowledge of the school-sophisticated families of Christchurch; a knowledge which had little to do with egalitarian rhetoric and a knowledge which probably had little relevance to the 50 per cent of the Christchurch school population who never attended secondary school at all! Nor was Beeby alone in sensing that schooling that was restricted in focus to the social and vocational sorting of individuals was likely to produce poor teaching and learning. The point was becoming a matter of universal comment. In 1921, for example, when Beeby was in his second year of University study, a young primary school teacher in China, Mao Zedong, claimed that because the parents and students in his country were interested only in obtaining diplomas, what resulted was mechanical, uniform teaching and management methods which had the effect of 'binding and fettering the students' intelligence'.[8]

In her biography, Alcorn makes it clear that a critical point in Beeby's development as an educationist occurred when he came under the influence of the charismatic Professor of Education at the University of Canterbury, James Shelley.[9] An early member of the New Education Fellowship, Shelley, who had been appointed to his Chair from England in 1920, soon proved himself to be an inspiring advocate of such desiderata as child-centred education based upon a scientific knowledge of child development, lifelong education as the driving force of community renewal and development, professional development of teachers as artists who based their practice on a science, and schooling viewed as an instrument which could assist individuals to adapt intelligently to a changing world. Beeby took to all of these things with the energy of a disciple but in the first instance his major interest was attracted by the new technology and science of psychological testing. After gaining a Ph.D. in psychology from Manchester University and receiving considerable supervision from Charles Spearman, the then guru of mental measurement in the United Kingdom, Beeby returned to a permanent teaching position at the University College Canterbury.

Beeby now took charge of the University's psychological research laboratories and with Shelley and others began to build up a repertoire of testing programs designed to enhance individual vocational guidance and employment selection as well as to determine individual suitability for entrance to school course specialisms. Like many of his colleagues engaged in similar work elsewhere in the world, Beeby entertained the hope that through this work a just society governed by the principles of social science would come into being. But is was a hope, it has to be said, that rested uneasily with his own experience of coming to learn that a supposedly egalitarian system of schooling was in fact a process of exclusion as much as it was an instrument of enhancement. Cremin[10] demonstrated how the

progressivist movement in education worldwide at this time comprised an uneasy alliance between romantics and the tough-minded men and women who marched under the banner of the science of mental testing. And like many progressivists, Beeby had a foot in both camps. In fact, it was the problem of how to provide ethically and practically for the process of educational selection in a society permeated with a democratic ethic that continued to absorb much of his attention when, as a young man, he won appointment as the foundation Director of the New Zealand Institute of Educational Research (NZCER) which, aided by grants from the Carnegie Foundation, was established in Wellington in 1934.

In the whirlwind of research publication which occurred over the next four years, the NZCER demonstrated that education policy could be informed by good research instead of relying upon ideological ad hocery and/or the conservatism of existing practice. The energy of the young Director was a matter of frequent comment and it was brilliantly exemplified when he organised with government support the world NEF Conference in New Zealand in 1937. From his growing network of international contacts, as well as the working relationships which he formed with innovative school practitioners throughout the country, Beeby strengthened his commitment during these years to the concept of a broad curriculum being delivered to all children as of right by enlightened, responsible, and professionally–trained teachers who would be progressively freed from the procrustean hold of detailed syllabus prescriptions laid down by centralised authority, in order to develop educational programs best suited to the circumstances of their classrooms.

Teachers and schools, Beeby and others came to argue, should be properly judged in terms of the quality of teaching and learning which actually took place in the classrooms. The trouble was however, that the criterion of quality was too often taken to be the percentage of passes each school and class gained in national examinations; results which could be, and often were, achieved by drilling and slavish adherence to prescription schedules. Nor did Beeby think that this happened purely through national crankiness. As he saw it, the public's commitment to the school examination as a vocational and social selection device was a product of the country's post-settlement egalitarian ethos. In 1937, he noted, 'New Zealand's special dilemma arises not because her children are more acquisitive than average, but because she has gone further than most countries in the direction of genuine democracy'.[11] Thus when Beeby was appointed Assistant Director of Education in 1938 and Director in 1940, he knew that he would not only have to be a leader who inspired educational practitioners but also one who could persuade politicians to

support changes in policy which often seemed to challenge conservative expectations in the electorate at large.[12]

Beeby's ascent to the highest administrative office at the age of 36 allowed him to bring a young man's energy to what was by any reckoning, an awesome task. He was greatly assisted by working as an official for a reforming government which had a commitment to educational development unparalleled in New Zealand's settlement history before of since. In the shape of Peter Fraser, first as Minister of Education and later as Prime Minister, Beeby had a political master who was not only an educational idealist but also an experienced and brilliant tactician who was thoroughly used to grasping the politics of educational issues from the point of view of both professional practitioners and the public.[13] Beeby took up his office in the darkest days of the second world war; a mixed blessing in terms of the need to make do with limited resources and shortages which continued to challenge administrators during the immediate post-way decade. Yet Beeby himself always said that war, terrible as it was, aided the educational reformer as people sought to invest their hopes in the future generation in order to balance out the miseries, crises and disasters of the present. It was also a fact that a centralised economy placed on a war footing was not disadvantageous to an architect of public education reform.

All of these opportunities could have come to naught however in hands that were less skilful than Beeby's. Limited as his resources were, he set out to turn the Department of Education into a driving force for educational innovation and change. Outstanding appointments such as those of Philip Smithells and Gordon Tovey[14] in the fields of Physical Education and Art respectively, signalled that the bookish school curriculum was further to be broken down. But most importantly it was the teachers themselves who were invited to work with the Department in developing curricula and it was through his dialogue with such teachers that Beeby sharpened up the shape of proposals for reform which were acceptable to politicians. Perhaps more than he was sometimes prepared to admit, Beeby's reforms enhanced trends which were already evident in official policies before his time. But his style was uniquely his own as indeed was his faith in the ability of teachers to make excellent professional use of the greater freedom from external constraint granted to them by the reform process. Perhaps Beeby's finest achievement during this period was the way he steered through reforms in post-primary schools via the Thomas Report of 1943 whereby a selective secondary school structure of the kind which Beeby described of his own schooldays in Christchurch, was changed so that schools were required via a core curriculum to provide workable programs for the total age group. Through this work, Beeby set the pattern of secondary schooling in New Zealand which lasted for the next 50 years.

None of this was without personal cost to the young Director who set himself up quite deliberately as the mover and shaker of events. Teachers who wished to retain the security of being told what to do, ambitious parents who lamented the absence of the competitive daily schoolroom testing to which they had been used, and politicians who sniffed electoral anxiety on the wind, united in condemning the introduction of what they called 'Beebyism' into New Zealand's schools. The reform process in the primary school sector proceeded steadily despite the critical rhetoric but the rhetoric rose to a crescendo with the publication of Thomas' proposed reforms of the secondary schools; reforms which seemed at first glance to throw into doubt opportunities for powerful and/or ambitious families to use the public schools for their children to 'get on'. Because he knew these kinds of families so well, being of course one of their number himself, Beeby was able with some adroitness to demonstrate to many critics that their opportunities were not being curtailed by the reform process. But this did not save him from being viciously attacked in a pamphlet widely circulated by Professor Anderson[15] of the University of Auckland and by many academics in general who claimed that Beeby was both anti-intellectual in his outlook and 'soft' on schooling standards. This was perhaps the unkindest cut of all. The record shows that Beeby did more to promote the development of New Zealand's universities than any of his predecessors in office. It is also the case that throughout his life Beeby paid what some might now argue to have been, an unnecessary deference to those who lived in ivory towers.

By the time his long tenure of office as Director of Education came to an end with his retirement in 1960, Beeby had learned through these and other like experiences to become a consummate tough-minded politician and one who would go to almost any lengths to protect what he regarded as being worthwhile in the educational process. Alcorn notes perceptively that he, as an official of the Crown, was wary of becoming involved in public disputes when such involvement could be avoided although he was frequently called upon to act as a mediator between disputing parties; a task at which he was singularly adept. Much of the personal abuse which came his way however, he simply had to endure in silence. Occasionally the price came higher still. He was forced, for example, to cancel the appointment of the outstanding educationist, W. J. Scott, to a departmental position after Scott made some undoubtedly honest criticisms in public concerning the quality of entrants to the teaching profession; criticisms which Beeby judged could encourage opponents of educational change to attack the government as well as the schools. Scott and Beeby had been long-time friends but friendship had no purchase against the danger, as Beeby saw it, of placing the education reform process in jeopardy. Some of Beeby's most fervent supporters like

Philip Smithells were dismayed at the turn of events above and several others of like kind. But their protests fell on deaf ears. Beeby was prepared to pay the price of isolation that came with the politics of administrative leadership despite the personal cost to himself. Alcorn reports the account of an applicant who arrived at the Director's office for an interview confessing openly that she was awed 'to be entering the lion's den'. 'Not much fun being the lion,' came the swift reply from the little man behind the desk.[16] Challenging and exciting though they were, it is clear from the evidence that Alcorn has amassed, that the politics involved in directing New Zealand's education system in Beeby's day were often far from 'fun'.

Wisdom in these circumstances was hard won, yet it was Beeby's wisdom gained through his administrative experience in promoting educational reform, along with his boundless energy, that propelled him forward on to the wider international stage of education and national development in the post-war world. After being intimately involved in the euphoria of establishing the United Nations Organisation in 1945, New Zealand's Prime Minister, Peter Fraser, became uneasy about stories he had heard concerning the poor state of schooling in several of New Zealand's trusteeship territories in the Pacific; in particular Western Samoa. Anxious to protect his country's standing, he despatched the Director of Education on a fact-finding tour and required him to report back directly to the government. Beeby's report impressed more than a little and it soon became apparent that his skills in channelling the energies of bureaucrats and politicians so that they were focused in a worthwhile way on the practicalities of providing more and improved schooling opportunities for peoples, especially those in developing countries, were desperately needed in newly-created international organisations such as UNESCO. In 1948, at the request of the Director-General of UNESCO Sir Julian Huxley (the grandson of T. H. Huxley), Beeby was seconded to serve for 18 months as Assistant Director-General of UNESCO in Paris. Thereafter his international commitments grew almost exponentially and continued long after his retirement as Director of Education in New Zealand in 1960 and his appointment as New Zealand Ambassador to France 1960-63. In addition to his many consultancies, Beeby also held in his later life Professorships of Education at the University of London and the University of Harvard.

Beeby's survey of the state of schooling in Western Samoa also however marked a major development in his own educational thinking. For the first time he confronted directly the challenge of designing strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning in classrooms where the physical resources were mediocre at best and the teachers themselves were poorly trained and educated for the tasks expected of them. As Beeby was also to find over and over again in similar situations in the years ahead, these

circumstances were made worse by totally unrealistic expectations, often packaged in a cargo-cult mentality, that schools and teachers no matter how inadequate they were could somehow make poor countries rich in a short space of time. Specialist economic planners and consultants were often less than helpful as well. They tended to avoid the issue of quality learning by assuming that if schools were built in appropriate places and staffed with teachers, educational development would necessarily follow. Beeby would have none of this but he soon realised that if the only teachers available lacked the resources to be 'self-starters' it was useless to leave them to work out good programs for themselves. Instead, they needed direction and guidance via detailed syllabuses and carefully written and graded text-books which would be the means by which bureaucrats advanced development and change. The teachers would know what to do because it was written down in the syllabus or in 'the book'.

Beeby's immediate logical problem however was that this was exactly the administrative strategy which he had spent years as Director in New Zealand demolishing by placing more responsibility for curriculum planning, teaching, and assessment in the hands of classroom practitioners. How was he therefore to resolve what on the face of it appeared to be an absolute contradiction in administrative strategy? Beeby's answer which was most notably formulated in his best known book, *The Quality of Education in Developing Countries 1966.*[17] reached back to his days as a student when he believed that educational theory should in the end be based upon universal truths about individuals and social organisations. In brief, he argued that all education systems *had* to develop through three major stages; each stage being predicated upon the level of schooling which the teachers themselves had attained. He posited that the most primitive stage (called 'The Dame School') was one of noise, confusion, and going nowhere because the teacher, apart from being some kind of a minder, lacked any knowledge to change anything. Once a system of authoritative intervention organised from afar was instituted however, progress could be made. The teacher could be told step by step what to do and be held accountable for his/her task achievements. Classes would be inspected to test how far the pupils had progressed and this would guarantee necessary if minimal educational achievement. This stage, which Beeby labelled 'Formalism', was where he judged that most education in developing countries was likely to be, thus requiring the educational administrator to initiate strong and tightly-prescribed interventionist policies.

Central to Beeby's thesis however is his further assumption that 'systems' grow beyond this stage to what he calls the stage of 'meaning' when the teachers can be recruited from a 'schooled' population and therefore no longer need the props associated with interventionist external

control. Instead, they can be encouraged, as a matter of deliberate administrative policy, to develop their own programs within a framework of broad objectives and to take responsibility for their own policies of selection and assessment within the life of the schools. The greatest advantage of Beeby's argument was that it enabled him to explain why an educational administrator had to adopt diametrically opposed policies depending upon the circumstances with which she/he was faced. The concept of developmental stages, which probably owed much to Beeby's early training as a psychologist, also, whatever its validity, provided some assurance to bureaucrats and politicians that today's strategies could lead to tomorrow's improvement. Above all, the way in which Beeby's stages theory retained the quality of the teacher as being the alpha and omega of the educational process was totally consistent with a credo to which he held throughout his working life.

In his later years, Beeby retained a lively and stimulating interest in new educational ideas and technical innovation. His major interest lay in current problems and issues and he was frequently on call as a stimulating and provocative speaker—especially to the young. The temptation to look back was there, but characteristically Beeby was the sort of person who used retrospection in order to sharpen his focus on a present educational dilemma. This was how he kept himself mentally young even while his phenomenal energy began to wane. He also had the gift of laughing at himself and the rare but necessary sense of humility required of great teachers and, dare it be said, administrators. Alcorn records that Beeby's last major public address was given at the University of Canterbury in December 1987.[18] His topic was 'Educational Research and the Making of Policy' and Alcorn applauds the lecture's well-crafted argument and its fine presentation to an appreciative audience. Beeby himself wasn't quite so sure. On 22 January 1988 he wrote to this reviewer,

> I was grateful for your generous reference to my lecture in Christchurch. I wasn't very happy with it myself and suspect the applause had in it a touch of Dr Johnson's dog standing on its hind legs; the wonder, for both dog and lecturing octogenarian, is not that they do it well but that they do it at all. But I was genuinely pleased by your suggestion that I set myself more difficult objectives as the years pass; that's as I would have it, and, if its true, I hope it continues to the end.[19]

Were he alive today, it is clear from his life history that Beeby would have welcomed the new technology available to modern teachers and been stimulated by the sharper expectations of teachers and the educational process which prevail in contemporary society. On one vital matter however, we can be confident that he would have profoundly and aggressively disagreed. Administrative theory which treats the teacher as something

between a hired hack and cartwheeling clown who is to be kept in control by external testing would have earned his intense disgust and contempt. Not only would he have known that the countries where such testing regimes have been introduced are doomed to relearn the mistakes of their past but he also would have held that such policies are reactionary in terms of progressive theory such as his own. He would also have known that policies such as universal testing will work against demands for innovation and lateral thinking in teachers' educational practice. Testing programs produced in a competitive ethos inevitably result in teachers sticking to the tried, the safe and the obvious because the results (or outcomes) are deemed to be what counts. Thus Beeby would not have been surprised that Dr Aitken of New Zealand's Education Review Office reported in 1999 that New Zealand schools lacked innovation even as she called for more national tests[20] but he would have endorsed the comment of Richard Epstein, a right wing American educational commentator, who has recently cautioned against national school testing as a form of quality control, recalling that his own schooldays were ones in which the class worked at a very high level 'but come May 10 or so, we closed our books and took out Regents' examination material, and all of a sudden we were refining skills for a standardised test to see that we scored in the high 90s. But we paid a steep educational price for this burst of public achievement'.[21]

It was his commitment to the boundless possibilities inherent in the educational process and his faith that sufficient numbers of teachers and the public shared his vision that marked Beeby out as an educational administrator as opposed to being merely an efficient bureaucrat. As has been seen, for Beeby, like one of his mentors John Dewey, travelling was fulfilment; not the point of arrival. The excitement of research and the developing of novelty into worthwhile ends was the spirit which he relished in himself and encouraged in others; a spirit nicely captured in the lines of Samuel Taylor Coleridge when he wrote,

> We were the first that ever burst
> Into that silent sea.

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NOTES

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