

NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART



A CASE HISTORY OF
EDUCATION UNDER
NEO-COLONIALISM

PADDY GILLAN

15p

NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART

a case history of education under neo-colonialism

Paddy Gillan

To Cathal Goulding, house-painter, who spoke at a student seminar in November 1970; trusting that he and his fellow tradesmen will find it of value to apprentices.

Contents	Page
INFORMATION	1
BACKGROUND	1
ATTEMPTED RATIONALISATION	5
HISTORY 1967-1971	7
IRISH EDUCATION AND THE PERSON	18
BEYOND HISTORY	21

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This pamphlet is, primarily, the result of a seminar - "ART and SOCIETY" - which was held in the National College of Art in November, 1970.

The theoretical guidance of speakers at the seminar - in particular, Jack Dowling, Lelia Doolan, Seamus O Tuathail and Eoghan Harris - helped enormously in my attempt to analyse the NCA situation.

For advice and help in writing this pamphlet, I am indebted to Nell McCafferty, Anne Harris and John Armstrong.

I am grateful to Frank Flannery, Paul Tansey, Paul McGill (all of USI) for valuable facilities which were readily made available. I am especially grateful to Mr. Patrick McEntee for his close and conscientious scrutiny of the script.

For contributing her time, generosity and special knowledge I am indebted to Dympna Mullan.

For typing this pamphlet, I am grateful to Deirdre Dowling, Margaret Whelan, Mary Lynch, Mrs. Murphy (Trinity SRC), Mary Mannion and Deirdre Keane.

The help and encouragement of my parents, the MacConnville and Hackett families, Bill Whelan, Grainne Dowling, Charlie Cullen, Paul Funge, Alice Hanratty, Anne Ryder, Gene Lambert, Mary Powers, Billy Keane, Fergal Costello, Joe Comerford, Oliver Donohoe, Eamon O Muiri and the members of the NCA Student Union made my task in writing this pamphlet an easy one.

I apologise to Constance Harris and to Peigi Whelan for the interference caused by the preparation of this pamphlet with their activities as children.

Finally, a word of thanks to the National College of Art. Without it, this pamphlet would not have been necessary; my hope is that it can help to bring about an improvement in the condition of the College.

Paddy Gillan,
Dublin,
May, 1971.

INFORMATION

The National College of Art (NCA) is situated between Dail Eireann and the National Library in what were once the stables of Leinster House, Kildare Street, Dublin.

The College is directly controlled by the Department of Education, which appoints the Director and staff. Thirty-four teachers are employed part-time, while six of them are civil servants. Trade Union membership is forbidden to all teachers.

The College comprises three main schools - of Design, Painting and Sculpture. There also exists a two-year Foundation course and a one-year Principles of Teaching course.

One hundred and twenty students attend these schools or courses. About one-third of these are from the provinces, while the remainder are from Dublin. No State grants are available to NCA students; seven students hold state scholarships, (four worth £170 per annum, and three worth £150 per annum).

£60,000 is the estimated NCA expenditure approved each year by Dail Eireann; £40,000 of this is actually spent. This is because a number of full-time and part-time teaching posts have remained unfilled for many years. Also, other anomalies exist - a surplus of £1,250 exists from the NCA scholarship fund for 1970/71. Government expenditure on the College is almost entirely devoted to staff salaries and wages.

There are eighteen class-rooms in the College, many of which are closed more often than they are open. Necessary equipment is scarce. Rules and regulations governing the use of such equipment as exists result in it lying idle more often than it is in use. Maintenance of the College is in the hands of the Board of Works. The building is patrolled each night by a military platoon; the attitudes to academic discipline reflect this.

BACKGROUND

"The National College of Art is the principal institution of the system of Art Education in Ireland as administered by the Department of Education, and provides for the study of the Fine Arts and the Decorative Arts and Crafts, and for the training of Art teachers for schools of Art, Technical Schools, Secondary schools and Primary Schools. The object of the College is to promote and facilitate the advancement of Art in Ireland, to enhance the value of industry through the alliance of artistic design with practical skill, and to maintain the highest standards of artistic achievement in national culture".

N.C.A. Clar (Syllabus)
last published 1968.

A "little academy of school for drawing and painting" was founded by the Dublin Society in 1746 and acquired premises in Leinster House in 1815.

In the course of its history, the school was controlled by the Board of Trade, the Department of Science and Art and the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland. In 1877, the school was made a special Metropolitan School of Art. In 1924, under the provisions of the Ministers and Secretaries Act, control of the school was vested in the Department of Education (Technical Instruction Branch). In 1936, the school became known as the National College of Art (Colaiste Naisiunta Ealaíona na hÉireann).

From 1746 to 1924, the school was a colonialist institution. The work conducted in the school was a mixture of Graeco-Roman and English art - decorative traditions. This was actualised in the form of individual art-objects - drawings, paintings, sculptures - and multiple craft objects which were for private consumption. The actualisation took place in a British colony, the people of which were politically, economically, culturally and educationally oppressed. The staff and students of the school were, essentially, privileged and their function was to serve the cultural needs of the beneficiaries of colonialism in Ireland - the British, Anglo-Irish and upper-middle class sections of the community. As it served an elite minority, the school was neither a proper cultural or educational establishment, because proper culture and education must serve and relate to the whole of a community; furthermore, it was almost totally isolated from the community. Elitism and isolation continue to affect the National College of Art.

Little change occurred after direct control of the school was assumed by the Department of Education in 1924. While the Department continued to apply, with minor alterations, a British system of education to Independent Ireland, it completely ignored art and visual education. Neither art or visual education were economically productive and the visual arts did not figure prominently in the so-called Gaelic cultural revival. The visual arts had never played any part in the life of the Irish community under British colonialism. Instead, they had been the preserve of a small minority of the community. In Independent Ireland, this situation remained essentially the same. The only difference was in the composition of the minority - as the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy declined in number and in power, an emerging native Irish 'Ascendancy' took its place. The school now became a neo-colonial institution; the concept of Irish independence was reflected only "its being officially re-named Colaiste Naisiunta Ealaíona na hÉireann (National College of Art) in 1936. The Irish Free State Department of Education, apart from painting the pillar-box green, actively neglected the College. Neglect is demonstrated by the history of a report, commissioned by the Department concerning the Metropolitan School which was submitted to the then Minister in 1927. This report, the work of a three-man French delegation, recommended: "This school should be re-organised in a most thorough way." The report urged, "as a measure of prime necessity" the replacement of Mr. George Atkinson, Headmaster, and three other members of the staff, among them Mr. Sean Keating. None of the report's recommendations were implemented. Mr. Atkinson became NCA Director. Mr. Keating remained on the staff until the early 1960's and became NCA Professor of Painting. (This report was the first of many to be commissioned and then ignored by the Department of Education). Effective control of the College was allowed fall into the hands of any interested party. For the most of the period 1943-1969, effective control of the College was in the hands of a group of members of the Royal Hibernian Academy (R.H.A.)

The RHA was incorporated by Charter in 1823 and is modelled on the Royal Academy, London (founded 1768). Academies of Art first appeared in the 15th. century and were based on the "humanism" of the Renaissance. One of the immediate results of the Academic approach was a division between artists and the community. The Academic movement spread and became so powerful that it almost completely controlled the content, direction and development of the visual arts; it also monopolised the distribution of individual art-objects. The London Royal Academy acquired its own gallery and school and became the most powerful and influential visual-arts body in the British Empire. The Royal Hibernian Academy, in 1843 was without premises of its own to house a school or gallery adequate for its needs.

Strong RHA connections with the College had existed for much of its history. Many RHA-members had been employed on the staff of both the Metropolitan School and the College. RHA exhibitions were frequently held in the College gallery. Mr. George Atkinson at the time of his death was NCA Director and RHA Secretary. It was, however, during the period 1943-1969 that RHA-NCA connections became strongest.

In 1943 Mr. Michael de Burca was appointed to the position of Director of the National College of Art. He had graduated from the College in 1940 and had been employed as an Art Inspector by the Department of Education. The position of de Burca as Director was initially insecure as a result of staff resentment at his appointment. This resentment appears to have begun to disappear as R.H.A. influence in the College grew. R.H.A. members gained key positions on the staff; de Burca became R.H.A. secretary; Keating, Mac Gonigal (both later to become R.H.A. Presidents) and John F. Kelly, became Professors of Painting. Mac Gonigal became Assistant-Director of the College. Other R.H.A. members to be appointed to the permanent staff were Carey Clarke and Fergus O Ryan; James Nolan and Tom Ryan were appointed to the part-time staff. Ironically, in 1945, when R.H.A. control of the College began, the power and influence of its model, The Royal Academy, began to decline.

The Department of Education was content to allow the R.H.A. group assume effective control of the College, because:-

- (1) it attached no importance to visual or art education, as neither was economically viable/productive,
- (2) consequently, it was not prepared to serve the N.C.A. with the funds necessary for proper development.

The R.H.A. group did not develop a proper educational system in the College.

It was served by:-

- (1) The use of the College for its annual exhibition
and
- (2) Permanent and part-time appointments to the N.C.A. staff.

The main result of Departmental neglect and effective R.H.A. group control was that there was no proper education available in the College. The R.H.A. group insisted on a "discipline" add values which did not relate to a 20th. century Irish community. They pursued Graeco-Roman-Renaissance academicism and, as a concession to the location and official title of the College, a pseudo Gaelic visual tradition (instead of an authentic Irish one).

"The syllabus, based largely on that formulated by Zuccari, was a soul-destroying affair. All students were put through the same dreary routine.. The pencil was their only tool. They would begin by copying from line-engravings, of say, ears, eyes, and noses taken from the paintings of approved masters, such as, Raphael and Poussin. After these had been mastered, they would progress to executing limbs before going on to draw from plaster casts. Some such dismal article as a plaster ball or bunch of grapes would initiate them into the properties of light and shade. Next followed the copying of casts from the antique. Finally, the students would be allowed enter the academy's sanctuary: the life class. Here the model would be nobly posed by one of the visiting professors. The whole of this wearisome routine would be backed up by lectures on anatomy and perspective. This programme was to remain the cornerstone of the teaching of painting and sculpture until well into the 1950's" Sjoerd Hannema "Fads, fakes, and fantasies, the crisis in the art schools and the crisis in art:-"

(A similar programme remained in operation in the N.C.A. until the beginning of 1969 when it was finally rejected by the students.)

The N.C.A. time-table was rigidly structured so that students had little time to think for themselves. Students were allowed in the building only during official class hours. They were deprived of information necessary to their education through the absence of a library. Those students who survived the boredom, mental-fatigue and repressive conditions of the five-year course were awarded diplomas in either painting, sculpture or design - diplomas which are generally unrecognised. Other students left in disgust.

Students who questioned anything were suppressed by threats of, or actual expulsion. Students totally dependent on N.C.A. scholarship income (£3 weekly in the early sixties, currently £5 weekly - for students from outside Dublin) endured physical hardship. The idea that "Art" was for those who could afford - to either practice or possess - it was promoted by prominent members of the staff. "Design" in N.C.A. terms meant commercial art. Art and design were debased and made meaningless within the College by its effective controllers; proper education or culture existed, if at all, by accident.

The power of the R.H.A. group in the College has declined. The group itself has grown smaller. Since active student agitation in 1969, MacGonigle (RHA President), Tom Ryan, and de Burca (RHA Secretary) have resigned their positions in the College. The RHA "Art" philosophy is no longer acceptable to most NCA students. Because of student objection to the disruption it caused, the RHA annual exhibition has not been held in the College since 1968.

The remainder of the RHA group will have no further need of the College once the proposed new RHA gallery and school have been built. Thanks to Mr. Matt Gallagher, well-known property-developer, the 18th. century RHA, is to be given a new lease of life. This life has, however, been artificially maintained at the expense of the educational and personal development of NCA students for the past twenty-five years. But formal control of the NCA is vested in the Department of Education. NCA students are primarily, immediate victims of the active and cynical neglect of its duties to the College by the Department. Ultimately, NCA students are victims of the neo-colonialist capitalist system as administered by the Irish Government.

ATTEMPTED RATIONALISATION

Throughout its history, many reports, concerned, fully or in part, with the College, have been made. Such reports continue to be made. The ones dealt with here are, perhaps, the most important. They have all been issued within the past ten years. The first of these was issued in 1961. This was the report, 'Design in Ireland' (also known as the Scandanavian Report), which was commissioned by Coras Trachtala and which stated:-

".....it is our opinion that the NCA as presently constituted cannot be the starting point for the education of people in the different crafts or indeed for the education of painters, sculptors or designers".

The constitution of the NCA remains unaltered. Referring to the College, the Commission on Higher Education (11, Vol. 1.) stated:-

"The administrative patterns of the Civil Service are not, it seems to us, suited to an institution of Higher Education. The academic work of the College is conducted by its professors and other teachers but its general administration is under the control of a government department. In such an arrangement, there is a duality of responsibility, and a clear locus of authority cannot be discerned; as a consequence, the academic development of the College cannot proceed in the normal way".

A "clear locus of authority" remains to be discerned; "the academic development of the College" has yet to proceed normally.

The Report of the Council of Design, commissioned by the Department of Education and issued in 1965, stated:-

"The premises at Kildare Street, Dublin are totally inadequate for a National College of Art".

The premises remain unchanged. This report also stated:-

"The circumstances of the National College of Art make it difficult to assess satisfactorily the calibre and potential of the students...."

The circumstances of the NCA remain unaltered.

In 1968, two Art Inspectors of the Department of Education compiled a report on the College. This report was highly critical of the College and was quietly suppressed within the Department. The two Art Inspectors were refused admission to the College for some time after the report was issued.

In 1969, a report made by a member of the second NCA advisory Council was presented to Padraig Faulkner, Minister for Education. This report was also highly critical of the College and it, too, was quietly suppressed.

The Scandanavian Report and the Report of the Council of Design were both commissioned for the same reason:- to improve the standard of Irish industrial design. In evaluating Ireland's prospects of entry to the European Economic Community, it was found that the standard of Irish design, in general, and Irish industrial design, in particular, was very much below the "European" standard. Coras Trachtala was entrusted with the task of initiating improvements of Irish design standards so that Irish products could compete on equal terms with European products in the common, free-for-all, Market. Coras Trachtala succeeded in establishing Kilkenny Design Workshops which is "devoted to the improvement of industrial design in Ireland". Coras Trachtala was less successful in its efforts to rationalise the NCA by making it economically viable, through re-orientating the College towards industrial design. The Scandanavian Report, which it had commissioned was never acted on. The onus to act lay with the Department of Education which refused to do so. The Department was reluctant to spend the money necessary to rationalise the College on Coras Trachtala's terms, as it was not convinced of the need for, or economic benefits of, industrial design education on the scale envisaged. The RHA group in the College was also strong enough to preserve itself in spite of the implicit criticisms of its performance in the College contained in both the Scandanavian and Council of Design reports.

The Art Inspectors report of 1968 was not, apparently, officially commissioned - least of all by the Department of Education which found it embarrassing. Similarly, the reluctantly-commissioned Advisory Council Report of 1969 was embarrassing to the Department and to almost the entire staff of the College. Both these reports were fundamentally art-educationalist, compiled mainly by art-educationalists. While the criticisms of the College, contained in the Advisory Council Report were accurate, its compilers self-consciously concentrated on art-education and ignored the political, economic and social realities of the NCA situation.

"The crux of the matter is that the College of Art is not economically productive in the way that a school of engineering or college of technology can be. Neither is the College a vote-catching issue".

Terry Kelleher, "Hibernia", Oct.9th
1970

All of the reports concerning the College could not avoid strong criticism of the system of education in operation. However, the recommendations contained in the different reports will be of little value in formulating

a meaningful art/design education policy for the Irish community. The recommendations of both the Scandanavian and Council of Design reports relate to conditions which exist in developed capitalist countries and not in Ireland. The art-educationalists omitted to take into consideration the fact that Ireland currently exists as an underdeveloped country and the recommendations of their reports reflect this omission.

The reports effected no change in the College. Neither technocratic or art-educationalist policies were implemented. The Department of Education bureaucrats and the RHA academic mandarins remained in control of the College; the students remained educationally deprived.

HISTORY : 1967 - 1971

Until the 1967/68 academic year, the National College of Art Students Representative Council (SRC) appears to have concentrated purely on social affairs. Apart from meeting at social functions, NCA students were effectively disunited and disorganised within the College. NCA timetables and misbegotten traditions ensured that students of the different schools knew little of and cared less for each other's problems. Student general meetings were rarely held; when they were, it was to discuss the Annual Art Ball. Cynicism, apathy and docility were effected amongst students by the condition of the NCA; while these qualities prevailed among students, conditions in NCA got steadily worse.

The NCA SRC for 1967/68, however, set in motion a series of events which have radically altered the students of, and the situation within the College.

1967

The NCA SRC initiated an investigation into the problems of the College. As a result of this investigation, a twenty-page report was completed.

April 30th, 1968.

NCA student delegation met Brian Lenihan, then Minister for Education. The students pointed out, among other things, that the NCA was the only

Institute of higher education under the direct control of the Civil Service. Lenihan promised immediate action; he promised a new building within five years and an independent governing body with student representation within one month. Lenihan also made arrangements to meet the students within three weeks.

August, 1968

After months the students succeeded in meeting Lenihan. He apologised for not having fulfilled his previous promises and made a new promise to build a new college in three years; he stated that there would be a governing body before Christmas 1968. Lenihan introduced Mr. Sean O'Connor, Assistant Secretary to the Department of Education, who was appointed to investigate the situation in the College and make recommendations before Christmas 1968.

November, 1968.

O'Connor began his investigation and met students and staff collectively and individually; he spent approximately two mornings each week in the College until Christmas.

December 1968

O'Connor withdrew the promise of an independent governing body and proposed instead an advisory council with no executive powers to advise the Director, de Burca, on the general direction of the College, with particular reference to (1) entrance standards and (2) the restructuring of courses. The Council was to be composed of two Government appointees, three staff members, three students, O'Connor and the Director. The proposal was accepted by the students with grave reservations.

In 1968, the Art Inspectors of the Department of Education made a report on conditions and standards in the College which was quietly suppressed.

In 1968, also, the Royal Hibernian Academy Exhibition was held in the College for the last time. No student-organised Art Ball has been held since 1968.

January, 1969.

After three meetings of the Council, it became clear that it was not competent to deal with the restructuring of courses and the reform of teaching methods. Council members stated they were neither willing or able to discuss these matters.

A petition, signed by all students of 2nd Year, Preliminary School, resulted in Mr. Tom Ryan ARHA being removed from his teaching post with that class.

February 13th, 1969.

Mr. Maurice McGonigal, Assistant Director, NCA, Professor, School of Painting, President RHA, Honorary Royal Academician and Royal Scottish Academy, announced he had resigned from his positions in the College in protest "against a steady turnover to student power". Students saw this as a political move to divert attention from the real problems of the College; if it was, the move failed. De Burca was forced to reluctantly accept the resignation.

February, 17th 1969

The Advisory Council met a general assembly of students; its members adopted the student's proposal that an executive educational committee, composed of art educationalists, be established, instead of the existing advisory council, to restructure the courses and review teaching methods and staff qualifications. The Advisory Council had effectively disbanded itself.

February, 19th 1969

O'Connor met the SRC and told them that Lenihan felt he had "done enough" in establishing the Council; he rejected the recommendation of the very council which he had established. A general meeting of students unanimously decided to boycott official classes and commence a work-in on the following day until Lenihan re-considered his views.

February 20th, 1969

Over 90% of the NCA Students boycotted classes and, instead worked in the College Gallery.

February, 21st 1969

As the work-in continued a number of students were asked by the Director and two Department officials to sign a form promising to resume normal classes on the following Monday. The students refused. A Government Information Bureau Statement, issued on behalf of Lenihan that night, stated that the College was closed indefinitely (The College was to remain closed for five weeks).

February, 24th 1969

NCA students accepted the offer of working facilities made by Trinity College Art Society.

February, 25th 1969

Lenihan felt forced to leave a Meeting at Trinity College through a toilet window after repeatedly refusing to state why he had closed the NCA.

March 1969

A series of meetings between NCA students and senior Dept. of Education officials was held. Lenihan was present at two of these Meetings. The students demand for an executive educational committee was refused. Finally, the students accepted a proposal for a second Interim Advisory Council, which was to make recommendations to the Minister with a view to improving Conditions in the College. This Council consisted of the Director (as chairman) two students, two teachers, a Department of Education Art Inspector and six others closely connected with Art Education and design fields. Lenihan promised that NCA students would be consulted at all stages of the drafting of a Bill to establish an independent governing body; he also promised to sign a list of twenty promises he had made to students during the negotiations.

April, 15th 1969

The College re-opened. Notices in the College announced that two permanent staff appointments had been made. This was the first of Lenihan's twenty promises to be broken.

April, 22nd 1969

A general meeting of students decided, in view of Lenihan's failure to either sign or keep the promises he had made, to occupy a wing of the College. The NCA SRC had been dissolved a few days previously; it was hoped that this would lead to more active participation in NCA affairs by the students as a whole.

The Advisory Council appointed a subcommittee to make a report on the College. The Council however experienced a number of internal problems. The two NCA teacher members adopted a defensive attitude at meetings; the Rev. Professor Cyril Barrett, S.J. Warwick University, at one stage threatened to resign. After one of the student members resigned for health reasons, the students expressed no interest in selecting a replacement; they had little hope that the Council could effect the necessary changes in the College.

May 28th 1969

A number of antique plaster casts were destroyed in the College.

May, 29th 1969

A student meeting decided to end the occupation because of the destruction of the casts.

June 1969

Assessments of work (instead of examinations) were held; a group of students travelled to London to study conditions in Art Colleges there.

June, 28th 1969

The College was closed to students for the summer.

In July, Padraig Faulkner, the new Minister for Education, stated in the Dail that the NCA would reopen at the end of September.

In July, also, the report of the Advisory Council Sub-Committee was presented to Faulkner. The report stated:- "It is generally felt at the moment that the college is dangerously out of control". The report strongly advised the "dissolution of the College as it stands and that work be got underway for the setting up of a new Art Establishment and re-staffing". The report also advised that all posts should, even if only technically be dissolved within the College; it contained sweeping criticisms of the schools in the College. After presenting the report, "implicitly highly critical of the staff" to the Department, its three authors were asked to discuss it with the teachers; two of them refused - Mr. Dermot Larkin and Professor Christopher Ryan

"We were very unpopular people with the staff, but I think the whole of the Advisory Council, with the exception of the staff-members on it, were in sympathy with us" - Mr. Larkin

Irish Times,
October 16th 1969

In August, 1969, a month after presenting the report to Faulkener three members of the Council resigned in protest against his failure to act upon it. The three were - Professor Ryan, Mr. Larkin and Professor Geoffrey Hewitt, then Principal of the Cork School of Art.

"I was not prepared to be associated with a council which was acting as stop-gap for the Ministers failure to solve the problems of Irish Art Education".

Professor Ryan,
Irish Times
October 16th 1969

August 1969

A total of sixteen students, who had been active in agitation within the College were informed that they had either "failed" outright in their yearly assessment of work or were advised not to return to College

November, 3rd 1969

The College re-opened, five weeks later than usual, for the new academic year.

On November 14th, 1969, a notice signed by Mr. de Burca, Director NCA, stated that ten final year students would be enabled to spend three months studying at Loughborough College of Art and Design, England. All expenses were to be paid for by the Department of Education. In March, 1970, another official notice withdrew this offer to students; instead a number of final-year students would receive, on application £100 each.

In August 1970, a number of former (1969/70) final-year students made written applications to the Dept. of Education for £100 each. In January, 1971, these former students were informed at the Department's offices that their applications had been "mislaid".

The majority of NCA teachers were enabled to spend, on average, a fortnight at Loughborough (all expenses paid for by the Dept. of Education) during the 1969/70 academic year.

November-December 1969.

A student-organised petition resulted in one student being awarded his diploma and in another being allowed to complete his studies in the College.

January, 1970

The teaching-staff refused to meet the student body to discuss the problems of the College.

February, 1970.

A demand for materials required by students and supported by students and some teachers was sent to the Department of Education. This demand was never acknowledged.

April, 1970.

A symposium on art education organised by students, was held in the College, in spite of de Burca's efforts to stop it. Four teachers of the staff of forty attended the symposium.

In April 1970 an exhibition of work by students of the College was held in the Project Arts Centre, Dublin. The exhibition's opening was not attended by the Director, the Professor of Sculpture or the majority of the staff, although they had all been invited.

The exhibition, reviewed on professional standards, was well received.

May 5th, 1970

A general meeting of students passed the following resolutions:-

(1) That an association of members of the National College of Art be formed, comprising all students and staff, to control the NCA.

(2) That the association control the appointment and decide the terms of reference of a college director.

(3) That the three-school diploma system be abandoned and that all students be allowed to share in all facilities and take a common diploma majoring in the subject of their choice.

Twenty-five students occupied the College in support of these resolutions.

May 6th, 1970

A notice reading:- "College of Art for students and teachers, not for Civil Servants" was displayed outside the College. The staff refused to enter the building; College diplomas were distributed to them and others assembled outside the building. A meeting of approximately sixty students endorsed the occupation.

In the evening, a force of thirty gardai was sent to the College to remove the students. The students left the building and were told the College was closed indefinitely.

May 7th, 1970

A meeting of staff and Department of Education officials devoted itself to deciding which students should be expelled. Thirty students were considered for expulsion at one stage; a subsequent meeting decided that nine students should be "suspended".

May 18th, 1970.

It had been announced previously that the College was to re-open on this date. When students attempted to enter, the doors were locked. A porter read out a list of the names of nine students who were refused entry. The Gardai were called and the doors were opened. The majority of NCA students refused to enter. The nine students later received letters informing them that they were suspended from the College pending their appearance before a Board of Enquiry which the Minister for Education had set up to 'investigate

recent events' in the College.

May 20th, 1970.

"Speaking at Question Time in the Dail yesterday, the Minister for Education, Mr. Faulkner, estimated that £500 worth of damage had been done to the College premises during the recent occupation, and that materials and equipment worth £700 had disappeared". - Irish Times.

Faulkner's estimate of £500 worth of damage was a wild exaggeration; no equipment had been stolen by students. The Board of Enquiry was convened in the College. Students were denied legal representation when they individually appeared before the Board. One of the Board's members was a barrister, Mr. Kiernan; the other members were Mr. de Burca, Director; Mr. Donal Murphy, Professor, School of Sculpture, NCA; Mr. M. O'Flanagan, Chief Inspector, Department of Education, and a Miss Lynch of the Department of Education.

May 22nd., 1970.

A meeting of over 80% of NCA students unanimously adopted the proposals for an Association, comprising students and staff, to control the College; the meeting also called for an immediate end of government control of the NCA. A delegation comprising six of the suspended students and one other, was elected to meet Faulkner and put the proposals of the meeting to him.

May 25th., 1970

The student delegation and officers of the Union of Students in Ireland, (USI), who had arranged the meeting, met Faulkner and officials of his Department. Faulkner stated he didn't feel the delegation was representative of the majority of NCA students (who had elected it); he further stated that nobody was going to walk over his back. Faulkner rejected all the students' proposals.

May 29th, 1970.

Faulkner informed the President of USI that he felt he had enough evidence to expel the nine suspended students. As a 'gesture of goodwill', however, the students were re-instated - 'without prejudice to any legal action'. After their re-instatement, the majority of NCA students resumed attendance.

Freedom of speech, community involvement, debate and a resulting broadly based policy on art education are what we want - not imposed, undemocratic Governing Bodies, unjustified expulsions or threats of expulsions, narrow courses, hostile staff/student relations and shrieks of 'Communist plots' whenever people open their mouths.

- Extract from letter, signed by a group of NCA students which was published in National newspapers, June, 1970.

June, 9th, 1970.

Mr. de Burca, Director NCA sent a letter, in which five teachers were named, to Mr. Cuddihy, Department of Education. In the letter, de Burca stated that one of the teachers has a 'propensity for starting student trouble'. Another teacher was stated to be 'apparently without any staff loyalty'; the staff loyalty of another was stated to be 'rather dubious'. (The names of all five teachers had been in May, published as signatories to a letter published in 'The Irish Press', disassociating themselves from the move to expel students.)

Later in June, the letters of re-appointment of staff arrived at the

College. Two of the teachers named in de Burca's letter and one other did not receive notice of re-appointment at this stage. A number of students asked de Burca why the three teachers has not received letters of re-appointment; de Burca said it was 'a clerical error'. The students made it clear that this answer was unsatisfactory. The three teachers finally received their letters of re-appointment.

June 26th, 1970.

The College was closed to students for the summer.

August, 1970.

Students received the results of their yearly assessments of work. Of the nine students suspended in May, three (two of whom did not submit work for assessment) were informed that had 'failed'; another was informed that his assessment had been incomplete.

A number of students who had been involved in agitation were 'failed' and 'advised' to pursue other careers.

Re-assessment for these students was not allowed.

September 28th, 1970.

The College re-opened for the 1970/71 academic year. A student-produced fourteen-page Prospectus was circulated in the NCA. Partly satirical, it was however accurate in describing conditions in the NCA.

A new College registrar had been appointed to replace Miss Evelyn McCarthy. The new registrar, Mr. George Somerville, was formerly attached to the Reformatories Division, Department of Education.

October, 16th, 1970

Gardaí entered the College, on the invitation of the registrar, to remove an unregistered student. This student had been suspended in May while in his final year. After his reinstatement, he refused to have his work assessed in protest against the conditions of assessment. Some of his work was, however, assessed and passed by one of the two external assessors. Nevertheless, the student was officially failed. The Gardaí left viewed by a meeting of students while the registrar attempted to explain their presence.

This meeting later issued a statement expressing its lack of confidence in the competence of the Department of Education to restructure art education in Ireland.

The student whom the Gardaí had been called in to remove was later awarded a Painting Diploma after a nominal assessment.

November 3rd., 1970

Mr. Micheal de Burca resigned as Director of the NCA and was appointed Senior Art Inspector, (a position which was apparently created on that day).

November 11th, 1970.

At a staff meeting, Mr. Sean O'Connor announced that Miss Lucy Charles, Professor of Design, had been appointed Acting-Director; she was to retain the Professorship of Design. Students immediately circulated a petition demanding the resignation of Miss Charles. They objected to the fact that neither the staff or students were consulted, that the post was not advertised and the terms of reference, necessary qualifications and powers of a director were not made known to students; the students also felt that the appointment was made purely to retain the status quo, while the Department continued its policy of procrastination on the immediate

and long-term future of the College.

November 11th, 1970.

Over sixty NCA students visited the Department of Education's offices at Marlborough Street to express their dissatisfaction with the Director's appointment.

The students then engaged in securing adequate student representation at the Industrial Design Education Seminar (held in Killarney from 26th to 28th November). One of the stated objectives of this seminar, jointly sponsored by the Department of Education and Coras Trachtala was 'to lay down guidelines for the future of design education in Ireland'. The organisers of the seminar were skilled technocrats. The students felt that the seminar was primarily intended to serve the interests of Irish capitalist industry rather than education; they felt however that they should personally present their case at the seminar. Finally, the students succeeded in securing the attendance of four of their number whose expenses were paid by C.T.T. and the Department of Education.

November 19th - 21st, 1970.

A student organised seminar, on the theme 'Art and Society' was held in the College. The Department of Education, through the registrar, informed the students that 'no politicians, photographers or journalists' could attend the Seminar. The speakers at the three-day seminar included artists, designers, philosophers, the editor of 'The United Irishman', and Cathal Goulding, described to the registrar as 'a creative activist'.

"The students of the College of Art are young and enthusiastic. Their three-day teach-in has perhaps given many of them the first glimmerings of a world to which they (and our society) have turned a blind eye - not a sheer, fully fashioned, fully finished world, not a world in which every idea is hatched out with the exquisite finitude of an egg, but a world which is not finished, which is constantly to be re-made - a world in which it takes the breaking of eggs to make an omelette - or, perhaps, - a revolution?"

- Lella Doolan, Irish Press, November 25th, 1970.

November 26th-28th, 1970.

The organisers of the Killarney Seminar selected the attendance (or participation to be euphemistic) which cost each person £25. The attendance included capitalist industrialists, bureaucrats, technocrats, engineers, architects, art-educationalists, designers, art-teachers and art students. Seven NCA staff-members, selected by Acting Director Lucy Charles attended the seminar at no cost to themselves.

One of the official speakers asked:- "Can they (students) be taught to relate their skills to those of marketing, financial production and other specialists? Can they believe that meeting the hard, objective criteria of the market-place can sometimes be more important than satisfying their own.....taste?"

Another official speaker stated that "Design is part of the profit-making process"; Mr. Mallinson, Managing-Director, Navan Carpets,

described himself as 'one who spends my life using designers'. On Saturday, November 28th, the seminar was addressed by Mr. Sean Mac Gearailt, Secretary of the Department of Education, who gave an attempted explanation for the continued failure to reform the National College of Art, which satisfied few of those present. MacGearailt (who spoke instead of Faulkner), said that one thing has been definitely decided - the new autonomous college was to be known as the National College of Art and Design. MacGearailt refused to answer questions on the immediate problems of the College; instead he made a plea for 'no recriminations'. Two of the official student delegates and twenty others (who had travelled from Dublin to hear MacGearailt speak) walked out of the seminar in protest at MacGearailt's failure to be specific on the problems that affected them. The students felt that the seminar had been an expensive and elaborate waste of time. It had been so highly organised that free or meaningful discussion could not have taken place. The resolutions adopted were intended to serve Irish capitalist industry rather than Irish education, (which was only mentioned as a concession to idealism). However, due to official and unofficial student participation, neither the images of Coras Trachtala or the Department of Education were enhanced. The Department officials were presented with the truth about their neglect of the College; the students confirmed for Coras Trachtala that, as the technocrats themselves had said, education was not their business.

December 1970.

NCA students took part in anti-internment protest and produced hundreds of anti-internment posters.

January 4th, 1971.

Daily one-hour pickets supported by NCA staff and students commenced outside the Department's offices at Marlborough Street. The pickets were in protest at the Department's continued failure to act constructively on the problems of the College.

February 1971.

A survey of NCA students' living conditions was made. It showed that one-third of all NCA students were in financial need while at least five students were living in squalor or on charity. A student delegation seeking the establishment of a NCA Grants Scheme was told by Department of Education officials that needy students should seek bank-loans.

March, 1971.

Several requests were made by students to Acting-Director Lucy Charles that the unused office of former Director de Burca should house a library. These requests were refused. The students then appropriated the office as well as two other unused rooms; they assumed control of the three rooms. As a result, library facilities were available in the College for the first time in its history.

March 25th, 1971.

A female model received notice of dismissal from the Department. Eighty-nine students and five teachers stated in a petition that they had always found her satisfactory as a model. Students felt that the dismissal was a case of victimisation.

March 29th, 1971.

Acting-Director Lucy Charles resumed her duties in the College after a fortnight-long absence. Mr. Michael O'Neill, (Accounts Branch, Department of Education) assumed duty as NCA 'Administrator' - a position previously unknown in the College. Students resented the fact that the appointment had been unannounced and O'Neill's duties unexplained to them.

April 2nd., 1971.

Twenty-one NCA students remained in the building after it had been officially closed for the Easter holidays at 9.00.p.m. In a statement, the students said: "The following are the immediate reasons for the occupation of the College building. (1). Interference in academic matters by the registrar and a recently appointed 'administrator'. (2). Stated implications that certain staff members, felt by the NCA authorities to be over-sympathetic to students, will not be re-appointed next year. (3) The arbitrary dismissal of Miss Jany Jermyn as a model in the College. (4) The refusal of the Department of Education to allow a student-organised seminar on Art/Design education in the College during Easter Week. (5) The refusal of the Department to honour its obligations to a student of the College who obtained a diploma in 1970. All students awarded a diploma in 1970 were offered an award of £100. One such student has been denied this award. Mr. Michael O'Neill, the recently appointed NCA administrator, has accepted responsibility for this action. (6) The neglect by staff-members - who continue to be paid - of their duties.

The statement said that these incidents were caused by the Department's control of the College and that the College was deteriorating into 'an educational slum'. The statement demanded an education which would serve not only the personal needs of the students but also those of the whole Irish community. It also demanded the resignation of the Acting-Director, Lucy Charles and her replacement by a democratically elected staff/student Directorate.

At 10.30 that night, a force of about forty gardai arrived at the College and carried the students, one by one, out of the building.

IRISH EDUCATION AND THE PERSON

The National College of Art may appear to be a unique and oppressive educational institution. It is not so much unique, however, as a clear reflection of education under neo-colonialism.

"The young person in school is monstrously confronted by the BARBARIAN in unforgettable form. The latter possesses almost limitless power. Equipped with pedagogical skills and many years of experience, he trains the pupil to become a prototype of himself. The pupil learns everything required for getting on the world - the very same things that are necessary to getting ahead in school; deceit, pretending to have knowledge one does not have, the ability to get even without being punished for it, speedy acquisition of clichés, flattery, subservience, a readiness to betray one's fellows to the higher-ups...."

Bertolt Brecht

Until the time the person as a child enters an educational institution, learning has been part of his natural experience of life. He has learnt simple skills - walking, talking - through practice, in his own time and in his own way. Within the formal educational system, all that is quickly changed. The child is confronted with subjects which are presented as separate entities - separate from each other and from his normal activities as a child. He is set examinations in these subjects - examinations which are standardised and have little to do with his creative, imaginative, practical or critical abilities. The child is graded and his educational future partly decided for him by the results of these examinations; such results also condition the child to accept false judgements on his potential. Attendance at school becomes the child's job; he sees formal education as something to endure.

At the second level of formal education, the child has to deal with an increased number of subjects; most of his time is spent dealing with them. His time at school is governed by timetables; his time outside school is partly governed by home-work. The standardised curriculum does not cater for his personal needs, wants, abilities or circumstances. Instead, it caters for the 'average child'. At the second level, the importance of examination success is greatly emphasised. The child is intensively and relentlessly prepared for success in such examinations as the Intermediate, Group or Leaving Certificate examinations; he is constantly told of the necessity of maximum examination success. The examination is, it is implied, the key to future 'success, happiness and wealth'; it assumes a dominant and harmful place in the child's educational life. 'Effort, tension, persuasion and occasional violence' are part of the preparation for examination success. The pressure increases immediately prior to examination time. The examinations themselves are essentially competitive procedures; through them, the young person competes with his fellow-students for scholastic 'success' and for the right to continue within the formal educational system. In theory, the Free Post-Primary Education scheme guarantees the right to a full second-level education to all Irish young people. In practice, however, the educational system remains discriminatory and undemocratic. The lower the social scale he belongs to, the less freedom of choice the young person has in choosing to attend either vocation, secondary or boarding school. How many young people from Irish slums attend Irish boarding schools? How many young people from wealthy backgrounds attend Irish industrial schools or reformatories? The Free Post-Primary Education scheme has changed neither the competitive or discriminatory aspects of Irish education; at most, it has made a bad education available to more people. It is a bad education because it is fragmented into isolated subjects, examination success is

relentlessly emphasised, and competition and discrimination are important aspects of it. Instead of fostering the development of the young person, the system fosters harmful strains and tensions and 'success' on its terms is gained at the expense of personal uniqueness. The effect on the young person is dehumanising.

However, the dehumanising effect of the system on the young person is counteracted, to some extent at least, during the time spent at primary and secondary schools. This is because, during this time, the young person in all probability lives at home and is, therefore, part of some real community. It may be a rural, urban, working-class or middle-class community, but within it, the young person can function to some degree as a human being.

The third-level university/college-student, however, is effectively cut off from any real community while the system of education becomes even more dehumanising than at primary/secondary level. The person becomes almost totally involved with (1) his course of study, and (2) the university/college 'community'.

(1) The person beginning third-level education is forced to select one course of study which he is expected to follow for the duration of his university/college attendance. His class-background will, to a great extent, determine the course he will choose. (People from lower income groups have to choose short courses regardless of their abilities or preferences). The chosen course of study exists in isolation to the other courses followed in the same institution. The content and aims of the course he chooses have already been decided for the person. The entire course and its structure have been planned for him as an 'average student', and the time within which he is expected to successfully complete the course has also been planned for him.

The main implication of the person's university/college attendance is that he must successfully complete the course he chooses to follow. Failure to obtain either a diploma, degree or certificate is seen as a disastrous waste of time, money and energy. The person is under pressure to pass all examinations set for him - whether he is supported by his parents, by a grant or scholarship or whether he is self-supporting. (Pressure on the self-supporting student is perhaps greatest. His life often involves living in cold, damp rooms, undernourishment, constant borrowing from fellow-students, the absence of any social life - all because his income is too often inadequate. Many such students see successful completion of their courses, within the shortest space of time possible as a necessary first step towards permanent escape from the misery of such an existence).

Because of the pressure to successfully complete his course, the person feels compelled to follow the rules of academic life as laid down for him. He accepts discrimination and competition. He accepts the isolation of 'his' course within the university/college and from social, political and economic realities. He accepts that instead of being creative, imaginative or critical, he must be passive, docile and subservient. He accepts also that his chances of ultimate 'success' will be partly determined by the law of supply and demand, by which Irish universities/colleges serve the neo-colonialist capitalist economy. The person, in fact, must voluntarily

9 770791 822112

suppress the greater part of his humanity if he is to succeed in the educational rat-race. He must suppress his idealism, his personal wants and needs and ignore his potential as a human being. He must allow himself be subjected to unnecessary stresses and strains caused by examination pressures. He must allow himself be moulded into a 'useful and contributory member of society', or, in other words, a sound, stable, viable economic unit. His academic activities do not allow the person function as a human being.

(2). Whether he lives away from or at home, the circumstances of being a third-level student make the person part of the university/college 'community of scholars'. This 'community' exists within the institution in canteens, community rooms etc.; formal student politics and social, cultural and recreational activities take place within it.

The 'community', however, is controlled by the university/college authorities. Service and recreational facilities are available to students at the discretion of the authorities. The activities of social, cultural and recreational societies/clubs in universities/colleges must be approved of by the authorities; if not, the societies/clubs are denied facilities and financial assistance. Activities conducted within and sponsored by university/college controlled societies/clubs serve to contain students rather than contribute to their personal development.

Student Representative Councils, (SRC's) exist in most Irish universities/colleges. These councils are financially supported by the institutions and their structure and objectives comply with the requirements of the university/college authorities. SRC's have no power other than to make requests and offer suggestions. SRC political activity reflects Irish parliamentary political activity. SRC's are elected each year by a constantly declining percentage of the electorate. They meet regularly, pass resolutions and make recommendations which serve no purpose other than to create an illusion of effective student participation in university/college control. Just as Dail Eireann is becoming increasingly irrelevant to the lives of Irish people, so too are SRC's to the lives of Irish third-level students.

Because it is essentially controlled by it, formal student political activity serves the interests of neo-colonialist capitalism. It serves the personal interests of a small number of student politicians; it frustrates and disillusions those genuinely interested in real political activity.

The university/college community is artificial primarily because the people who form the majority within the community - students - have no effective power. The community exists only on a part-time basis - it begins to disintegrate prior to examination time and ceases to exist altogether during holiday times. Its values, too, are artificial to its membership, and reflect the common denominator of neo-colonialist values. These values are alien to Irish students and to real Irish communities. Life in the artificial university/college community does not help the person's development as a human being; it helps him come to terms with and accept the conditions of life in a neo-colonialist capitalist society. His academic activities and experience of the artificial university/college community dehumanise and alienate the person.

The true nature of education under neo-colonialism can be more clearly seen in the National College of Art than in other institutions. This is due to its size, to the fact that a system of education has been seen not to operate there and also to the fact that the College is under the direct control of the government. Consequently, NCA students have one advantage over the students in other Irish universities/colleges.

"If It has not done what It should for Its students, the NCA, presumably, has, at least, taught them how to battle through and surmount Indifference and Ineptitude, so that they are at least trained for the struggle".

- Irish Times, Nov. 10th, 1970

BEYOND HISTORY

THE NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND THE 'FREE' STATE

The National College of Art has always been in a state of crisis; recent events have merely highlighted this fact.

Initially based on misconceived academies of 'Art', the College as a colonial institution never contributed to the educational or cultural wealth of the Irish people; instead, it served those who educationally, culturally, socially, economically and politically suppressed the Irish people. When Ireland achieved partial independence, the College, reflecting Ireland, became a neo-colonial institution, serving the Anglo-Irish and native Irish elite. Partially independent Ireland served a colonialist economy within an Irish community and explained this away through an artificial Gaelic romanticism; the tensions produced by this situation affected all Irish institutions of which the College was one. Just as effective control of Ireland was allowed into the hands of political mandarins, effective control of the College fell into the hands of academic mandarins.

Ireland is politically, economically, culturally and educationally underdeveloped because its government serves the interests of neo-colonialist capitalism rather than the interests of the Irish people. The National College of Art is educationally underdeveloped because it is controlled by the Irish government. The history of both Ireland and the College, together with the fact that they have both been neglected by their formal controllers, ensured that the College and Ireland could never have been in anything other than a state of crisis. As has happened in the College, recent events in Ireland have merely highlighted the crisis which has always existed.

Just as the crisis in the College has not been caused by student 'hooliganism', the crisis in Ireland has not been caused by the 'hooliganism' of the people in the north of Ireland. The crisis in Ireland is caused by neo-colonialist capitalism; it is political, social, cultural, economic and educational. It manifests itself through the continued high rate of emigration - approximately one million people have already left independent Ireland to seek a living elsewhere, approximately twelve thousand people continue to leave each year, - through the high rate of unemployment, through the decline of rural Ireland - the small farmer, rural communities and the Gaeltachtaí are threatened with extinction, -

and through the indecent housing, educational and health facilities many people in urban and rural Ireland experience. The crisis in Ireland manifests itself through the almost total replacement of Irish culture by the lowest common denominator of international consumer society culture. It manifests itself through the fact that formal political activity is conducted, on the whole, by mediocre self-styled 'public representatives', who act, on bureaucratic/technocratic advice, in the interests of neo-colonialist capitalism. The crisis in Ireland results in, among other things, frustration, cynicism, apathy and disillusionment among people which leads to labour unrest, alcoholism and mental illness. The people of Ireland continue to be - as they were under British colonialism - oppressed; they are now oppressed by neo-colonialist capitalism. This oppression is effected by foreign and native capitalists and a government which acts as an agency of neo-colonialist capitalism. Educational oppression is effected, primarily, by the government which controls the Irish educational system.

The educational system administered by the Irish government, in the interests of neo-colonialist capitalism, is essentially the same system as was administered in Ireland by British colonialism. The main function of the British educational system in Ireland was the production of skills to run the colonialist economy. This entailed instilling docility and subservience in, and keeping the majority of people ignorant; a minority was kept slightly less ignorant so that it could serve in the colonialist administrative structure. The present Irish educational system has changed little in this respect. Since the establishment of the Irish Free State, minor alterations have been made to the system, (an emasculated Irish language/tradition was first introduced to the system to facilitate the idealism which existed in Ireland in the aftermath of the War of Independence. As this idealism was gradually replaced with pseudo-pragmatism, the Irish language/tradition was cynically neglected and is now in danger of extinction). The functions of the Irish educational system have been slightly altered. Its functions now are to serve a neo-colonialist economy and to serve the needs of the capitalist ruling class (- a small minority of the Irish people.) Consequently, the function of a proper educational system - to serve the needs of the whole community through fostering the development of each human being's full potential - is totally ignored.

Until 1969, courses in the College were narrow and restricted. Students were effectively isolated from one another and from the Irish community. Their lives in the College were governed by authoritarian rules and regulations. Aspiring working-class students were discouraged from attendance. The values promoted by the NCA academic mandarins were a bastardised mixture of Hellenic, colonialist ascendancy and pseudo-Gaelic values. The College existed as a culturally and educationally non-productive institution. The NCA 'community' existed nomadically in a number of public-houses and coffee-shops, and formally appeared at the annual Art Ball (at which academic mandarins and oppressed students democratically ate, drank, danced and made merry with each other).

CHANGE AND REACTION

By 1969, it was patently obvious that the Irish educational system, as administered in the College, although forced by its own reports and commissions to admit the existence of serious inadequacies, was so much out of control that it would never correct itself. The academic mandarins rejected any change as it would have resulted in an immediate loss of employment, power and prestige. The government refused to implement change as, to have done so, would have publicly exposed its past neglect of the

College. Furthermore, the government had not devised a way through which an art college could become economically productive.

In 1969, active student agitation in the College began. Since then, the power and prestige of the academic mandarins has decreased; it is now almost non-existent. Students have won the right of assessments of work rather than yearly examinations. They have organised lectures, a series of film-shows, a symposium on art-education and a three-day seminar in the College. NCA students have established the Gallery as a free work area and have appropriated unused rooms for use. One of these rooms now houses the foundations of a library. Student agitation has prevented victimisation of students and staff when it has been attempted. Students are in the position to set and follow their own courses. While the problems of the College remain unresolved, the students have, however, made many worthwhile gains in the course of the agitation which still continues.

The government will seek to rationalise - on economic terms - the system in the College, without altering it. Expediency will decide when the 'autonomous' National College of Art and Design, (NCAD) will be established. Formal control of the NCAD will be vested in an 'independent' governing body (which will include a suitably moderate and docile student) selected by the government. Increased government investment will be required to establish and run the NCAD; increased government investment will mean increased effective government control. Effective government control will be exercised by a Coras Trachtals-based technocracy. This technocracy will demand that the NCAD be an economically viable/productive centre. Consequently, the primary function of the College will be to provide highly-skilled, specialist industrial designers to serve foreign and native Irish capitalist industry. Another function will be to produce trained workers for the capitalist advertising industry. The function of the NCAD 'Fine Arts' section will be to produce 'artists' to decorate (with suitably well-executed, anonymous, inoffensive, internationalised, two and three-dimensional 'works of art') the prestige headquarters and office-blocks of the foreign and native capitalist industrialists and financial speculators. The NCAS-produced 'artist' will also produce unique, individual 'art-objects' for private consumption by members of the capitalist minority in their luxury homes.

Just as the attempt, by the Irish government, to obtain EEC membership is not a genuine attempt to solve the real problems of an underdeveloped country, neither is the attempt to establish a capitalist industrial design-orientated NCAD a genuine attempt to solve the real problems of an underdeveloped educational institute. Both attempts are related, not just in their timing, but in that they are both being made to solve neo-colonialist administration problems. Just as the government, intent on binding Ireland to the Western European capitalist bloc, is embarrassed by recent events in Ireland, so too, the government's Department of Education, intent on establishing an economically viable/productive Art College, is embarrassed by recent events in the College. In both the case of Ireland and the College, the source of the problems - neo-colonialist - is ignored by the government and its department. Both the government and the department are ultimately servants of neo-colonialist capitalism, in the interests of which the EEC and the NCAD 'solutions' are proffered.

The EEC 'solutions' will benefit the foreign and native Irish capitalist minority; the majority of Irish people will continue to experience the conditions of an underdeveloped country. The NCAD 'solution' will benefit the same minority; students will continue to be dehumanised and improperly educated by the system, while the Irish community will remain deprived of an educationally and culturally productive College. The EEC and NCAD 'solutions', will, if implemented, mean that oppression will be more subtly effected.

BEYOND HISTORY

The problems of Ireland and of the National College of Art are irrevocably bound together.

In the case of the College, the neo-colonialist system of education, administered for forty-eight years (1921-1969), is now in the final stages of collapse. The contradictions of the system itself and the consistent attacks which students have made on it have contributed to this. This is as it should be; too many people (students) have been harmed by it for too long. It exists now only in the interests of government/bureaucratic expediency, which demands its preservation until the NCAD 'solution' can be safely implemented. These interests are clearly opposed to the interests of students. The efforts of the students will have been in vain if the collapse of the present system is immediately followed by the implementation of one equally bad. This must not be allowed to happen.

The immediate objective of the students must be to finally destroy the present system. Following that, every effort must be made to prevent the establishment of a technocratically-controlled industrial design college. Students must campaign for the establishment of a democratically controlled art/design college, which will be truly 'national' in that it will contribute to the cultural and educational wealth of the whole Irish community.

Such a campaign is a logical continuation of the one conducted up to now in the College. It must, of necessity - if it is to be successful - be conducted in an awareness of the political, social and economic realities of Ireland today. It must identify with other campaigns directed against the oppressive conditions of neo-colonialist capitalism. It must identify in particular with the campaign against Irish membership of the Common Market (which will open Ireland to exploitation by American-dominated, international capitalism); the NCAD 'solution' is a small but integral part of the EEC 'solution'.

The NCA student campaign must ultimately identify with the campaign to establish an Irish Republic in which the rights of all human beings to proper housing, health and educational facilities, dignified labour and freedom of speech can be freely exercised. It is only in such a Republic that a proper art/design college can make the maximum contribution to its students and to the Irish community. To help in the creation of that Republic is a task worthy of any artist.

END.

Title: National College of Art: A Case History of Education under Neo-Colonialism

Organisation: National College of Art Students Union

Author: Paddy Gillan

Date: 1971

Downloaded from the Irish Left Archive.

Visit www.leftarchive.ie

The Irish Left Archive is provided as a non-commercial historical resource, open to all, and has reproduced this document as an accessible digital reference. Copyright remains with its original authors. If used on other sites, we would appreciate a link back and reference to the Irish Left Archive, in addition to the original creators. For re-publication, commercial, or other uses, please contact the original owners. If documents provided to the Irish Left Archive have been created for or added to other online archives, please inform us so sources can be credited.