

## ***'Learning ... to live with each other' – education & international development'***

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Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for your invitation. I am delighted to be here, and to give this lecture in memory of a man who contributed so much to our public life.

Hugh Gaitskell taught working miners in his very first job at the Department of Adult Education, right here in the University of Nottingham. 'It was my experiences there, especially in the coalfields', he later wrote, 'which were to turn me ... towards active politics.'

I can still remember the night in January 1963 that Hugh Gaitskell died. I had just turned nine years of age and I saw the grief that his passing caused my mother, and my father who had worked closely with him. There was a terrible sense of loss. But he bequeathed us a legacy, not least his passionate belief in the link between education, politics and the building of a better world.

Little did I know that evening that one day I would represent part of the constituency – south Leeds – that he served with such distinction in Parliament and which proudly possesses a primary school that bears his name. A fitting and lasting testament to his belief in the importance of education in preparing the next generation for the opportunities and responsibilities that they will take on.

He knew that education matters. Why? Because at its best, it has the power to inspire people to make a difference – whether in their communities, in public service or in politics.

This evening I'd like to talk about two aspects of the relationship between education and politics.

First, the power of education not just as a fundamental human right, but also as something that lifts people out of poverty, and helps them to better themselves – a vision that must be at the heart of fighting poverty, injustice and inequality across the world. As Amartya Sen has said: "If you want to change the world, build a school".

But I also want to talk about education's power to bridge divides – to bring us together – in understanding the complex, confusing and uncertain world in which we now live. Education that is not just about learning, but also about learning to live with each other.

Education is not a privilege. It is a right, and it should be available to everyone. It is a precondition if countries are to achieve the level of economic growth needed to

tackle poverty. It helps improve health, nutrition and child mortality. It enables people to transform their own lives and the society in which they live.

But today, tomorrow, and next week, over 110 million children around the world will not go to school. 90 million of these children live in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, and - of those - some 60% are girls.

This is a terrible waste of human potential. Research on girls' education shows that women with just the most basic of primary education are more likely to have smaller and healthier families, to work their way out of poverty, and to send their own children to school. No wonder, then, that the World Bank argues that girls' education is the most valuable investment in development a country can make.

And we are making progress in giving more children the chance to benefit from an education. 20 years ago, 8 out of 10 children worldwide went to primary school. Today, it is 9 out of 10.

Our target, though, is for every single child in the world to have the opportunity of a primary education – within ten years. This is not just a UK but a UN target: one of the eight Millennium Development Goals for 2015 that 189 countries signed up to in the year 2000.

We are also committed to giving both boys and girls equal access to primary and secondary schooling by 2005, and to all levels of education by 2015.

But although we are making progress, we still have a long way to go. As Gordon Brown said recently, on current rates of progress it will take us more than a century to meet many of the Millennium Development Goals. We cannot wait another 100 or 150 years to see them realised. We have to act – and now.

To make progress on education, there are many things we need to do. One challenge is the lack of infrastructure and equipment – and, increasingly, teachers. In South Africa, for instance, it's estimated that 100,000 teachers will die of AIDS-related illnesses by the end of the decade. In Malawi, each year, more teachers are dying of AIDS than can be trained. Across Africa, the spectre of HIV and AIDS affects children both at home and at school, often forcing them to drop out of class to care for sick parents, or - when they lose their parents - to stop going to school altogether.

Another problem is that when children do enter primary school, they often fail to complete it, and the education they receive is of poor quality. School facilities are often inadequate. And even where there are teachers, they may - especially in rural areas - have nowhere for themselves and their families to live. And, most fundamentally, governments may simply lack the resources they need to get their children into school. This is a double tragedy when we know that in Uganda, for

example, children who have been to secondary school are four times less likely to become HIV positive.

Changing all of these things is only going to happen if it is driven by the political will of developing country governments themselves.

Take one example, and a little-known one: Yemen. A mountainous country of 19 million people, it's among the poorest in the world, with one of the worst imbalances between the numbers of boys and of girls in school. 80% of women in Yemen cannot read or write. The overall enrolment rate is still only 64%, and for girls it's 55% - and less than 30% in rural areas. Even with the current rate of growth, the high birth rate will still leave nearly 4 million primary age children without a school place in 2020.

The Yemeni Government has made universal primary education - for all its children, both boys and girls - one of the four pillars of its strategy to lift the country out of poverty. That is one of the reasons why it was selected to be part of the global 'Education for All' Fast Track Initiative, a programme to make faster progress on an international commitment first made at a UN conference in 1990.

Alongside the Dutch government and the World Bank, DFID has contributed to a \$115 million programme to help the government implement its plan to get girls into school. And - in view of the present 50% drop-out within the first 6 years of schooling - to keep them there.

The programme is increasing the number of girls' schools, providing facilities (not least toilets) to make existing schools more "girl-friendly", and increasing the number of female teachers in rural areas. It's also providing teaching to adults - as literate parents are far more likely to send their daughters to school.

This is just one example of how DFID works on education around the world - and there are plenty of others. Since 1997, with a rising aid budget, the UK has invested over £700 million in basic education in developing countries. That money has helped to provide books and equipment, build new schools, pay teacher's salaries and provide them with training. This investment is set to increase to £1 billion for the period 2004-2008.

And it's working.

The Kenyan government, for instance, has introduced free primary education, which has brought 1.2 million new children into school. This was partly made possible by a DFID grant of an extra £10 million in 2003.

In Bangladesh, one in three girls and one in four boys didn't go to school in 1990. By 2000, this had been reduced to one in ten for both boys and girls. DFID is

contributing £100 million to a national primary education programme, aimed at improving the quality of education for over 17 million children.

In India, primary school enrolment has increased to over 90%. 25 million children between the ages of 6 and 14 may still not receive any education, but that's down from 39 million just 5 years ago.

Even Ethiopia, which has the lowest enrolment rates in sub-Saharan Africa, has seen them double over 10 years to 65%.

These are some of the encouraging statistics. But the reality of progress is best seen on a human scale. In the way, for instance, that development funds can contribute to schools being able to provide hot lunches in Madhya Pradesh in central India. That's one more reason for poor parents - often unable to prepare an evening meal - to ensure that their children are in school. Or the fact that in the same region we have been able to fund bicycles to allow girls to get to secondary school every day.

Gareth Thomas, my deputy minister, was in India recently, visiting a school that DFID has in part funded through a local NGO called the Salaam Balaak Trust. He tells me that by the word 'school', they mean a disused shack by the shunting yards of a Delhi railway line, nestling under a large tree, with one volunteer teacher and 30 street-children sitting cross-legged on a red carpet. The children were so engrossed in their work that they barely looked up to acknowledge the entourage of ministers and suited civil servants. As well as the teachers, there are teenage volunteers - children who were themselves rescued from their own desperate lives and brought to the school, and who now scour the shacks alongside the trackside, in order to find other children who would never otherwise receive any education, and bring them to the school.

The other memory is mine. It's of a school in Dhaka in Bangladesh for children who have to work. It operates on three shifts a day, so that the pupils who work in the mills, in domestic service or in their parents' shops can get an education. The class was full, and I asked the head teacher: "What are your attendance rates like?". She paused, and then replied: "About 98%".

And I stood there and realised that these rates were better than in any of the secondary schools in my, and Hugh Gaitskell's old, constituency. That school in one inner city area had got something that another inner city area several thousand miles away would love to have.

Here was education, transforming lives as it should. And here were children - and their families - who, despite having done a full day's work, understood the precious value of what that school had to offer them and their future. Not just a desk, a textbook, a classroom, and a teacher, but a window on the world as well.

And it is to that window - what it reveals to us, what we can see through it, its ability to change the way we make sense of the world and our place within it - that I now want to turn. The world we see before us today, and the role that education has to play in helping us to change it as we learn to live with one another.

How aware are our children of the world in which they are growing up? How aware do they want to be? What sort of world do they want to create as they grow older? And what about the rest of us?

DFID's research on this reveals that 70% of people in the UK say that they are 'concerned' about world poverty, but only 5-10% are actively so, to the extent that they would volunteer, or donate, or invest ethically, or buy fair trade products. I passionately believe that we must do better to inform people about, and involve them in, the world in which they live.

One way we're doing this, of which we're particularly proud, is *'The Rough Guide to a better world'*. This is the advert - two million free copies are now available at all good Post Offices throughout the UK. It's a Guide which brings to life the challenges the world faces, and gives practical advice about solving them.

The other way is through discovery and reporting – the mirror that we hold up to ourselves. If by any chance you doubt its potential to make a difference, then just reflect on our own history. On the part that reporting by the great social reformers played in our own development. The people who in the 19th century got on their horses - and on the trains - and who travelled the length and breadth of the land to tell society about the conditions in which so many people lived. People who helped to change the face of Britain.

From William Cobbett with the *'Political Register'* and *'Rural Rides'*; to the novels of Charles Dickens; to, Robert Tressell's *'The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropist'* - a book that exemplifies the power of words and images to inspire people to act. This was great social reform born of great reporting.

And I think that we are now witnessing exactly the same process happening on a global scale, in which telling the stories of humankind has the same potential to help us – together – to change the face of the world. It's one of the reasons why this thing we call international development has moved from the margins of politics two generation ago to the place it occupies today – right at the heart of the big political debates of our age.

We share this small and fragile planet with a growing number of our fellow human beings. We are more interdependent than we have ever been in human history. We understand better now how events in one country increasingly affect those of us who live in another country.

The city I have the privilege to represent - Leeds - is an international city. It is home to 42,000 people who were born outside the British Isles and who came there to make their lives.

Some from choice. Some because they had to flee their homes and travel half-way around the world to find a place of safety. Some to study, as I learned the very first time I attended a United Nations UNESCO meeting in Paris. I sat down – a new minister – behind the sign that said ‘Royaume Uni’. Next to me was ‘Rwanda’. And the delegate got up, stuck out his hand, and said: “Hallo, I studied law at the University of Leeds with Jack Straw”. It is a small world. A small world becoming a global world.

A world whose borders are permeable to all sorts of flows. Trade. People. Capital. Investment. Pollutants. Electronic data. Conflict. Television pictures. Ideas. All flows helping to create a world with no islands left: a world in which our carbon dioxide emissions here in the UK directly affect small Pacific island states on the other side of the world; and where “failed states” in Africa can destabilise entire regions by spreading conflict and generating large flows of refugees – some of whom I see every time I hold constituency surgeries in Leeds.

We have learnt that conflict kills development as well as killing people. It’s one reason why in southern Sudan – the scene of Africa’s longest running civil war – 98% of children do not finish primary school.

So the economy and society have become globalised. Never before, after all, have people been so mobile.

We talk of globalisation – which is after all simply the result of a human-made process that has been going on for thousands of years, but which has picked up pace and intensity in the last century in a way that our forebears could scarcely have imagined.

It brings benefits. It also creates fears. Uncertainty. There is the tale – apocryphal perhaps – of the banner seen on the demonstration. It read ‘Worldwide movement against globalisation’. Confused perhaps, but I do think that one of the things that our political system is having to grapple with is the sense of uncertainty that some people feel about the future. If you look back at the newsreels of the post-War period and the 1950s and 1960s, there was a tangible sense of optimism that the future would be better. I think now we are not so sure. Why? Because of climate change. AIDS. Terrorism.

And because the globalisation of society and economy has brought threats as well as opportunities, there are two other things that will have to be globalised as well.

One is global governance. Now more than ever, we need the instruments of global governance we have created since the end of World War 2. A growing number of global treaties, on everything from the environment to corruption, and from arms control to international trade. The European Union, which has proved so effective as a means of preventing war in Europe.

And the United Nations, of course, now entering its third generation of life. Founded on a Charter that lays down clear principles of human solidarity and protection that we would all subscribe to, but an organisation that has found it difficult to apply those principles to those who need their protection most of all. Like in Liberia, Iraq, Sudan, Afghanistan - or the DRC, where an estimated 3 million people have lost their lives in the last decade in what has been described as Africa's 'hidden First World War'.

And that leads me to the second thing we must globalise, as well as to the role of education. Global governance alone is not enough. We also need global citizens.

Citizenship is usually something we understand to refer just to nations. And in the strict legal sense, that's true. But any teacher knows that there's also a broader, and deeper, kind of citizenship: the kind that has to do with our responsibilities to one other, and the sense that our individual rights are also balanced with a duty towards society as a whole – our collective responsibility. In a globalised world, that balance of rights and responsibilities has to go beyond our own communities and our own countries, and reach out to the rest of the world, as it reaches out to us.

This is where education matters. Part of what global citizenship is about is giving people the understanding that they need to live – and act – in an interdependent world.

Let's be clear: this is no easy task. Why? Because there is a tension that has to be managed: a tension between unity and diversity.

In one sense, citizenship – at the global level as much as any other – is all about respecting diversity and difference. Here in the UK, for instance, the last 20 or 30 years has seen a significant change in the culture of respect for, and understanding of, diversity. Its results have been seen far beyond the school gates. Twenty years ago, racism in football was deeply ingrained. Now - mercifully - it isn't. And where it does rear its ugly head – as we saw recently in Madrid and Blackburn – it is scorned for being the abomination that it is. That's progress towards a more mature sort of citizenship – and it's thanks to education.

And we need education to fulfil this role in the global context as well. Too many people who are simply uninformed have come to equate Osama bin Laden with Islam – as if the warped ideology of Al Qaeda represents the timeless values of one of the world's great religions. We need education to teach people that Islam has long stood for the precise opposite - for values of tolerance, progress and learning -

exactly as it did in that extraordinary moment of cultural flowering in European history in early 15<sup>th</sup> century Spain, when the Moors ruled Andalucia, and when Muslims, Jews and Christians coexisted peacefully.

But diversity on its own is not the whole story. Citizenship is also about those values that are truly universal, and should apply the world over. Take Afghanistan, for instance. The Taliban slammed that window on the world shut for half the next generation - Afghanistan's girls - by making it illegal for them to go to school. In so doing, they denied those children the very essence of their humanity – the chance to learn to live with the rest of us.

And then there were those who said that democracy was only a western idea, and that it could not work in Afghanistan. Afghanistan's elections were a tremendous success. People queued to vote. They showed that the desire of people both for accountable government - and for the chance to participate in deciding who governs - are values to which the whole world aspires.

But perhaps the most difficult of all the questions raised by the arrival of our interdependent world is the need to decide *which* values are universal, and which issues by contrast are questions of diversity and difference.

National sovereignty is no longer the absolute that once it was. This is most obviously the case where the international community now has the responsibility to a state's citizens to intervene militarily in cases of genocide or mass slaughter. I see this as akin to the shift in values here in the UK on domestic violence: once we saw this as a private matter for the family concerned, but now we see this as *everyone's* concern. Seeing what is happening isn't enough. We need to act, too. One lesson we need to acknowledge is that there is a difference between awareness, and understanding, and action.

But there are grey areas, where reaching consensus is more difficult. All of us can think of one particular country that has refused to sign up to international action on addressing climate change. No one can force it to sign up to Kyoto. Yet its decision to stay out affects *all* of us. Is this a case of diversity, or is it everyone's concern?

Governments will continue to debate issues like this between themselves. But for lasting consensus, we need more than just the world's governments involved in this debate – we also need its *citizens*. And it is the role of education to help create global citizens who can make sense of the world they will inherit; who learn, over time, to understand and respect each other; and who will uphold universal human rights.

This work – the challenge of creating a generation of global citizens – is one of the most important tasks education has ever been asked to undertake. We have the chance to create a global society of rich diversity and difference, but united by

shared values and purpose. But we also have to recognise that with interdependence comes greatly increased risks, from climate change, to HIV, to conflict and to ideologies of hate.

Two possible futures: one a vicious circle, the other a virtuous one. And the difference between the two is very simple. It's that difference between a world of ignorance, and a world of learning.

Hugh Gaitskell understood that difference. The world needs to understand it too, and then to act on it.

Thank you.