

## œ Epilogue œ

### The Committee to Make the Students Learn

*John Wade\**

There was a committee in '63 to make the students learn,  
For right attitudes, skills and knowledge, to make the students  
yearn.

The committee sat and sat and sat  
Till old Bill Foster died, and Mary Finch went crazy  
And Martin Feathers tried, to find the terms of reference, while  
paper multiplied

Then young replacement Janet Fast, on the internet she found  
The lost report of '53, had covered similar ground  
Elated, she circulated this historic gem  
Of wisdom about learning, the creme de la creme,  
Alas, her colleagues had no ears for this babble from the past  
So Janet retired to Woodstock, and smoked a lot of grass.

Meanwhile, near common room or coffee urn, the committee  
to make the students learn,

Met less frequently,  
And so beset by anomie, the committee known as MSL,  
Slowly went to hell.

Old grumbling Pete threatened thumbscrew, nails and whip,  
Another wanted mentors fastened at the hip,  
Another wanted daily tests to make them learn the rules,  
And exclusion from the classroom, show them they are fools  
Crush them with the bell curve, then lift them up with praise,  
Analyse their learning styles, until their eyes do glaze.  
Open book, closed book, clear performance goals,

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Lecture, buzz groups, clinic,  
Redefine the roles, of teacher and of learner  
Shut those laptops down  
But no-one was listening, for in data they had drowned.

But never fear, there is a rumour going 'round,  
That a super group of learning gurus has recently been found  
And they know the answers for which we all do yearn,  
And are setting up a committee to help the students learn.  
But I walk past the gravestones of those who sat before  
Whose names I can't remember, whose words are gone for sure  
The committee to make the students learn, forgot a preliminary task,  
How to make the *teachers* learn, is a question I now ask.

So having asked that question,  
You know what happened next,  
I now chair another group, which is equally perplexed  
And we explore for footprints from the distant past  
On how to make the teachers learn, and make that learning last.  
And now that I am weary, with one foot in the grave  
I realise that all my work, the planet will not save  
And though there is no new thing underneath the sun  
The learning of the old things has only just begun.