

Fabian Tract No. 106.

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# THE EDUCATION MUDDLE AND THE WAY OUT.

A Constructive Criticism of English Educational  
Machinery.

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THE EDUCATION MODEL

AND THE WAY OUT

A Commentary on the Education of English Speaking Peoples  
in the Tropics

THE LARABIAN SOCIETY

PRICE ONE PENNY

# THE EDUCATION MUDDLE AND THE WAY OUT.

OUR educational machinery in England has got into a notable mess. Some places have two or three public authorities spending rates and taxes on different sorts of schools, whilst others have none at all. In one town the clever boy or girl finds in the infant school the lowest rung of an unbroken ladder to the university; whilst in the very next county there is no rescue for talented poverty from the shop or plough. Some school districts are too small to maintain a decent primary school; others are large enough to run a university. The central organization is as chaotic as the local. The various educational institutions in the United Kingdom—taking only those supported out of the rates and taxes—are officially under the charge of no fewer than ten separate Cabinet Ministers; and their several departments usually scorn to consult together.

The result is that, although we spend on education in the United Kingdom every year nearly twenty million pounds of public money of one sort or another, from rates, taxes or public endowments, we get a very inadequate return for it. In English education to-day, waste and want go hand in hand.\*

## I.—THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES.

### The Present Muddle.

There are, in England to-day, two distinct sets of local educational authorities, acting in the same areas, and sharing the provision of schools between them. These are (i) the School Boards, (ii) the County, Borough and Urban District Councils.

The School Boards, of which there are now 2,527, have unlimited powers of rating, but are, in other respects, narrowly restricted in their scope. They can maintain only "elementary" schools, as defined by the Acts and by the Day and Evening "Codes" annually issued by the Education Department. But they do not maintain or control even all the elementary schools. More than half the children in elementary day schools, and more than one-third of the young people in evening continuation schools, are in the so-called "voluntary" or denominational schools. Where a School Board exists, it is responsible for enforcing attendance at school upon all the children of the district, whether they go

\* The proposals of this Tract relate exclusively to England. Scotland and Ireland have entirely distinct educational machinery, widely differing from that of England, but in an equal muddle. Wales, including for this purpose Monmouthshire, is included with England for elementary education, but has a system of its own for secondary schools and universities, and must be separately reorganized.



to Board or voluntary schools. But in more than one-third or England (measured by population) no School Board exists. Over this large area, the children must attend denominational schools, and these are under no local public control. In these parishes the duty of enforcing school attendance is entrusted to the local sanitary authority—that is, in rural parts, the persons who are the Guardians of the Poor. Even in the two-thirds of England in which School Boards exist, they are not allowed to have schools of their own if there is already a sufficient supply of places in “voluntary” schools, however unsuitable such schools may be for the special educational needs or religious opinions of the locality. The effect of this is that in over 10,000 parishes there is none but a denominational school. These “voluntary schools” (though four-fifths of their cost is provided from taxes) are nominally governed by “boards of managers,” who are practically self-elected; whilst the real work of administration is usually performed by the minister of religion (Anglican or Roman Catholic) to whom the school “belongs.” The Government puts the School Boards, the public educational authorities within their respective districts, exactly on the same footing as these little nominal committees of managers. Moreover, by a piece of official pedantry, every alteration in the Code intended to improve a village school under this irresponsible private management, is made to apply equally and identically to the largest and most efficient borough School Board. The School Boards were, in fact, established by Mr. Forster in 1870 merely to “fill up the gaps” in the then existing system of “voluntary” schools, and they have been treated as stop-gaps ever since. They are closely scrutinized by jealous eyes in order to prevent them from providing “secondary” or “technical” education, however much their constituents may need or desire this. Nevertheless, so numerous are the children of school age that the English School Boards in 1899-1900 spent about £9,500,000, an amount which had increased in each of the two preceding years by about 4 per cent. The English voluntary schools in the same year spent about £5,300,000, which had increased in each of the two preceding years by about 10 per cent. Of the totals the Government found about £3,600,000 and £4,150,000.

The County, Borough and Urban District Councils, on the other hand, whilst narrowly limited in the amount they can spend on education, enjoy a large freedom as to its kind or scope. The Technical Instruction Acts, 1889 and 1891, prohibit their teaching any child who is in the standards of an elementary school, but impose no upward limit of any kind. Hence the London County Council, like the Town Councils of Manchester, Nottingham, Bristol, Newcastle, etc., can help to maintain a university. The instruction must be confined to “technical education,” but this has been so defined as legally to include every subject of study except “theology, Greek and Shakespeare.”\* The result is that Town and County

\* Even these subjects may legally be taught in Town or County Council schools, if a proportional part of the expense is covered, as it always may be, by sources of income (such as fees or endowments) other than the Town or County Council grant.

Councils now maintain and aid hundreds of schools (above the elementary standards) of every kind—grammar schools, science and art schools, commercial schools, cookery schools, trade schools, and what not. In most towns, the Town and County Councils do not, in fact, confine themselves to anything that can properly be described as technical education. They have, without express statutory warrant, assumed the position of secondary education, and even university authorities; and in this they have been encouraged by the Education Department. But though they have thus stretched their powers, and enlarged their responsibilities, their funds are strictly limited.

The County Councils (51 in England) and County Boroughs (62) can spend on "technical education" what is known as the "whiskey money" (the additional duties on beer and spirits imposed by the Local Taxation Act, 1890), and in 1899-1900 they did so spend £804,000 out of £867,000. They can spend also up to a penny in the pound from the County or County Borough rates. In 1899-1900, twenty-two County Boroughs added in this way £44,960 to their whiskey money expenditure. No County Council has yet levied a rate on the whole county for education, but in a few cases the Council levies a rate on a part of the county at the request and for the benefit of the rural districts concerned. The Non-County Boroughs and Urban District Councils can, in addition, levy a penny rate of their own for technical education, and 262 of them now do so, to the extent of £36,894 a year.\*

The total expenditure on education by these municipal bodies now amounts to about a million sterling, and it is increasing at the rate of about 5 per cent. a year. In addition, they exercise, by their inspection and grants, more or less control over about a million sterling a year of educational endowments devoted to secondary and higher education.

### Conflict and Overlapping.

These two distinct sets of local authorities come everywhere into more or less acute rivalry and conflict. The School Boards were the earlier in the field, and they have frequently provided "higher grade schools" and evening continuation schools of high type, scarcely to be distinguished from those started by the Town and County Councils. But this occasional overlapping is not, of itself, a serious evil, and, moreover, it is one which mutual consultation and consideration might easily set right. Nor is the waste of public money owing to this overlapping at all large in amount. What is serious is the educational chaos caused by the arbitrary separation of one part of education from another; the total absence of any

\* There may also be expended under the Public Libraries Acts, 1892 and 1895, a penny rate (in Manchester and 21 other towns, enlarged by local Act to 2d., and in four towns unlimited) on "public libraries, public museums, schools for science, art galleries and schools for art." In addition, the Museums and Gymnasiums Act, 1891, enables any Town or Urban District Councils to spend up to a halfpenny rate on museums, and another halfpenny rate on gymnasiums.



considered scheme for fulfilling the whole educational needs of any one district ; the lack of any coherent system for the promotion of scholars from school to school ; the stupendous inequality between one district and another ; and the deadening effect upon the primary schools of their confinement within rigid limits, and the exclusion of their teachers from the opportunity of being transferred to other branches of education. What is wanted, in the interests alike of the public, the children and the teachers, is

### Administrative Unity.

There ought to be, in each district of convenient size, one public educational authority, and one only ; responsible for providing and controlling all the education maintained in the district out of public funds, whether it be literary, scientific, commercial, artistic or technological in type—whether it be, for any of these types, primary, secondary or university in grade.

### The Policy of Drift.

But there is, as yet, apparently not much chance of our getting this administrative unity. Having “drifted” into the present muddle, the only easy course is to go on drifting ; and this is what nearly everybody, statesman and schoolmaster alike, is vigorously doing. The last Liberal Government did nothing but “drift,” so far as education was concerned, the short time it was in power ; and Mr. Acland, unable to gain the ear of the Cabinet for so dull a subject, was reduced to making untiring administrative attempts to patch up a crazy structure.

In 1896 the Conservative Government half-heartedly attempted to unify local educational administration by forming “education authorities” from the Councils of Counties and County Boroughs. They did not believe it possible to abolish the School Boards, and preferred, on the line of least resistance, to subordinate them to the new authorities. The Bill passed its second reading by an immense majority, but was lost owing to the revolt of the smaller or non-county boroughs, who objected to the surrender of their independence, and joined the opponents of the clauses intended to strengthen denominational education. Since then the chiefs of the Department have announced their intention of securing the objects of the defeated Bill, by a combination of administrative action and small Bills. This means that they have given up any serious attempt to think out the problem as a whole, and that the policy of least resistance has slipped back into a policy of drift. The School Boards are weak ; therefore bit by bit their power is being taken from them—but they are still retained in existence. The County Councils are strong ; therefore bit by bit their powers are being increased, but there is no suggestion that they should receive that unrestricted rating power and that control of all educational grades which alone would make them efficient educational authorities. The Church is powerful and the Church schools are in want of money. Therefore a new source of confusion is introduced by the creation of “associations of voluntary

schools," which secure the control of an important section of education to the official hierarchy of the various denominations.

Year after year we are promised a Secondary Education Bill, and it is safe to assume that it too will follow the line of least resistance and least thought. The School Boards may unfortunately still further be restricted both in their day and in their evening schools, and the Councils may be given increased power, but will still be subject to a narrow rating limitation, and still confined to special educational grades. But just as easy writing makes bad reading, so easy legislation makes bad administration. The School Boards and the denominational school managers would still be in charge of the education of nearly three million children, and an expenditure of over twelve millions sterling annually, whilst every year the educational results of that expenditure would be endangered or even gravely impaired. Already it is difficult to create public interest in School Board elections. Already it is common to find only one-fifth of the electorate taking the trouble to vote, and as the School Boards are elbowed out by their stronger municipal rivals, this decay of public interest must increase. A body elected on a small poll is always in peril. The Board schools have bitter enemies. In all sections of the community there are to be found many who think that to provide anything beyond the "Three R's" for the manual laborers is illegitimate and absurd, whilst they dismiss with contempt the claim of elementary teachers to be or to become an educated class. As long as the County and Town Councils are kept without responsibility for or knowledge of the primary schools, they will tend to believe that the only real education is to be found in the technical schools which they maintain, or in endowed secondary schools which they inspect and aid, and which are open to all who can afford to pay the fees, and to a selected few of those who cannot. Their natural partizanship for their own schools inevitably tends (even if unconsciously) to reinforce that powerful social prejudice which resists any development of "primary" education beyond the preparation for a life of hewing wood and drawing water. It has been suggested that this might be prevented by giving the School Boards the statutory rights to a few representatives on the education committees of the Councils. But such representatives would be in a permanent and helpless minority, and their presence would do little except increase friction; while the division of the responsibility of the Councils might tend to produce that decreased interest which is the result of indirect election.

One method, however, of connecting the Councils with primary education is so perfectly consistent with the policy of drift that it has been already foreshadowed, and may be adopted at any moment. The Councils, while still separated from the Board schools, may be empowered or required to assist efficient "voluntary," that is denominational, schools in their district. This would make the position of the Board schools absolutely impossible. The Councils would tend to become partizans not only of the social interests of the technical and secondary schools, but also of the religious interests of



the denominational schools, and religious tolerance for teachers would, like the teaching of French or algebra to children without fee or scholarship, seem to be one of the "fads" of an unreasonable and discredited faction.

Thus, whilst reform is difficult, delay is dangerous. The "policy of drift" will not save the School Boards, and will probably destroy all chance of an enlightened development of elementary education for the mass of the people.\* Every year the Town and County Councils become stronger and more grasping; every year the importunities of the Anglicans and the Roman Catholics for increased grants of public money for their denominational schools become more pressing; every year the muddle increases.

### The Claim of the School Boards to be the Sole Educational Authorities.

If the "policy of drift" is thus so dangerous to elementary education, and if everything points to unification as the remedy, why should we not adopt the Liberal and Nonconformist cry of "School Boards everywhere and for everything?" This proposal—to place the whole of public education in each district under the control of the body already elected by the citizens to manage the greater part of it—seems at first sight irresistible. Closer consideration proves, however, that it is impracticable as a solution of the present difficulties, and that even if it were possible, it would not be desirable. We simply *cannot* make the School Board the universal authority for secondary and technical education, because:—

(1) In one-third of England School Boards do not exist. It was exactly for this reason that the School Board was ignored in the Technical Instruction Act of 1889, and the new powers were given to the County, Borough and Urban District Councils, which together cover all England.

(2) School Boards are so fiercely hated by large sections of the people, so little desired by the ordinary man, and so energetically opposed by positive majorities of the local electors, that their compulsory establishment in places where they are not petitioned for, and where they are not absolutely required to provide new schools, is politically impossible—even if it could be defended on principles of Democracy and Local Self Government.

(3) Even where School Boards exist, their districts are, in the vast majority of cases, absolutely unsuitable for anything beyond elementary education. Out of 2,527 existing School Boards, 2,085 govern populations of less than 5,000. It will certainly be

\* In December, 1900, this peril was made both imminent and apparent. The Court of Queen's Bench decided (in *R. v. Cockerton*) that the London School Board could not, out of the School Board rate, conduct classes for the examinations and grants of the old Science and Art Department, or go beyond the Code of the Education Department, or give instruction of any kind to adults, whether in day or evening schools. This decision may perhaps be appealed against, but it will certainly be accepted by the Government as definitely limiting the powers of the School Boards.



impossible for many years to come in England to maintain even one good secondary school for boys and girls in a population as small as 20,000. Only about 300 out of the 2,527 existing School Boards deal with such a population. Higher education, and more specialized education would, of course, be outside the possibilities of many even of these larger Boards. To make the School Board the sole authority for all education within its district would necessarily involve abolishing nine-tenths of the existing School Boards, and creating new bodies for much larger districts than single parishes, or even than small boroughs. There would still remain the difficulty of providing for the purely rural areas divorced from their urban centres. But even if it were possible to adopt the existing School Boards as the authorities for secondary and technical education, it would not be desirable, because School Boards have inevitably become the scene of religious quarrels, and experience shows that their election is almost always made the occasion for a struggle between religious denominations. No one would wish to infect secondary and technical education—hitherto mainly free from sectarian squabbles—with this deplorable strife.

### The Case for a New Educational Authority.

Many defenders of School Boards now admit with regret that it is politically and geographically impossible to make the existing School Boards the sole educational authorities for their respective districts. They urge that the best way to secure administrative unity in education is to create a brand-new body; to divest the County, Borough and Urban District Councils of all their present educational powers; to abolish all School Boards; to divide England up afresh into suitable districts; and to make each district elect an Education Council, to which should be entrusted all the education within its area. But this too, on examination, is found to be both impracticable and undesirable, because,

1. It would involve the maximum of disturbance of local property, finances and vested interests, and would combine in one irresistible opposition (i) the 2,527 School Boards and the 1,200 County, Borough and Urban District Councils, all objecting to have their freehold schools taken away from them, (ii) all their officials whose salaries would be disturbed and their very places jeopardized, (iii) all the members of Parliament, not understanding what it was about, but desperately wirepulled by the aforesaid local bodies and their officials, and (iv) all the rate-payers who would expect their rates to be raised by the change. No House of Commons would look twice at such a Bill; and no Cabinet would propose it.

2. It would almost certainly transfer to the elections of the new bodies, and so enlarge and perpetuate, the religious animosities and sectarian strife that now dominate School Board elections and obstruct educational progress. All experience

indicates that, at any rate in the England of this generation, public bodies directly elected to manage schools will be elected largely on theological grounds. The proposed new Educational Councils, though elected for wider educational functions, and often for larger areas, would tend to be merely the existing School Boards under a new name.

We come thus into direct conflict with those who, so far as matters educational are concerned, still cherish a belief in the necessity of an *ad hoc* body. This demands separate consideration.

### The Story of the "Ad Hoc" Body.

It is now often urged, in support of the School Boards, or of the proposal to create elected Educational Councils, that the business of providing and managing schools is of so special a nature that it is best entrusted to a separate public body elected *ad hoc* (that is to say, for this special business only). This is not the reason why School Boards were invented. Whatever good arguments there may be for an *ad hoc* body for school management, the School Board, as we know it, is merely one of the few survivors of what was once a large class. A hundred years ago most of the local government of the English towns was carried on by *ad hoc* bodies, chosen in all sorts of ways, for all sorts of different functions. During the eighteenth century, as the urban population increased, it became absolutely necessary to provide for more local government. No statesman thought out any general system. What happened was that one bit after another was stuck upon the structure of the old township government—in one place a special board of commissioners was appointed to drain the marshes; in another a separate body of governors and directors of the poor was elected to provide a workhouse; elsewhere a board of trustees was set to keep a road in repair; or a special "lamp board" would be constituted to pave and light the streets. It was the age of *ad hoc* bodies, elected, co-opted, appointed or constituted in every conceivable way, and literally thousands of them came into existence. In 1834, when the Poor Law was reformed, there was no public body either in the rural districts, or in the unorganized urban districts, to which the new work could possibly have been given. A new *ad hoc* body had therefore to be created. The result of this historical accident is that there are people to-day who have come honestly to believe that the management of a workhouse and the administration of relief is a matter of so special a nature that it must be entrusted to an *ad hoc* body. When, in 1870, Mr. Forster carried the Education Act, efficient town councils existed in the boroughs, and it was at first proposed that the School Board should be nominated by these Town Councils, of which they would virtually have been statutory committees, with independent powers. But in the rural districts no responsible local authority could be found, and the great population of London was in the hands of the Vestries. Indirect election was objected to by the Radicals, and the various de-



nominal bodies insisted on "a representation of all parties and all religions." So Mr. Forster gave way, and directly elected School Boards were created. Now many people have come to feel that there is something inherently reasonable and natural in having a separate elected body to look after schools. This is not the opinion of Germany or Austria, France or Switzerland, where they know something about education. In all these countries the public body that manages other local affairs also manages the schools. The hesitation to carry the *ad hoc* theory to its logical conclusion shows an inherent doubt in its validity. Mr. Chaplin's proposal to create a special authority for defective poor law children met with universal condemnation, and during the debates on the London Government Bill, 1899, the suggestion that Boards of Guardians should be abolished and their duties handed over to municipal authorities, met with general acceptance, especially from experts like Canon Barnett. We have, in fact, ceased to believe in the need for *ad hoc* authorities. During the last sixty years they have been as far as possible absorbed and abolished.\*

The success of Town and County Councils, with their varied functions, is evidence that separate bodies for separate services are superfluous. There is at least as much difference between main drains and lunatic asylums, between street sweeping and technical education, between prevention of infectious disease and providing music in the parks as there is between "purely municipal," poor law, and educational functions—problems no less difficult, duties no less important, are involved in the actual work of a modern municipality as in any of the three separate services.

### The Way Out.

If, then, it is impracticable and undesirable, either to make the School Boards the sole educational authorities, or to supersede them and all other existing educational bodies by brand-new Educational Councils, how are we to get administrative unity? What we have to work towards is the concentration in a single elected body for each locality of all the public business entrusted to that locality. Leaving Poor Law aside, as outside the purpose of the present Tract, let us consider how, on this principle, we can get out of the Education muddle.

First, as to the unit of area. It is at once clear that the large towns must be kept as distinct educational units. Birmingham and Manchester, Liverpool and Leeds, can neither be broken up nor merged. Outside the large towns, seeing that we want unity of all grades of education, the unit of area must, it is clear, be much larger than the parish; and as a large part of the educational machinery is already organized by the County, it does not seem either practicable or desirable to adopt any other area.

Leaving out of account for a moment London and the County Boroughs, we propose that, in the 50 Administrative Counties

\* The one case in which such authorities have been approved and multiplied—that of Port and Harbor Trusts—is not really an exception.

which make up the rest of England, the County Council should be made responsible for the provision and maintenance of every kind and grade of education within its area. All School Boards existing within the County should be abolished, and their schools transferred to the County Council. The annual cost of maintaining these and other public schools should become an equal charge throughout the County, levied in the ordinary County rate. The first duty of the County Council should be to prepare and submit to the Board of Education for criticism (but not for control) a complete survey of the existing educational provision for the whole County, from the elementary school to the university, coupled with a plan for its completion and improvement. The Council should have full and free powers to experiment in schools and subjects, and of initiation in new forms of instruction, subject only to the consent of the Board of Education. Finally, it should control any public educational endowments belonging to the locality, administer the "whiskey money," and have unlimited powers to levy rates for the aiding and supplying of every description of education within its district.\*

We have here the basis of a complete and systematic organization of education (outside London and the 62 County Boroughs), based on the principle of administrative unity. But there are difficulties in the way, and objections to be overcome, with which we must deal one by one.

#### (a) THE NON-COUNTY BOROUGH.

The first difficulty that confronts us is the claim of the Non-County Borough and the large Urban District to escape from the County, and to be made, like the County Borough, a completely independent educational unit. On the one hand it is undesirable even to appear to limit the activity of an energetic and growing town. On the other, we have the practical impossibility of disturbing the "whiskey money" distribution, which now goes to the Counties and County Boroughs; and cutting off from the Counties nearly all their schools and institutes, which have naturally been placed in the urban centres. The solution must be found in a proper organization of functions and powers. The educational system of the County must be organized as a whole, the little market towns taking in it their proper place as educational centres for the adjacent districts. But, in this system, the local administration, including the whole management of the institutions in the towns, should be delegated by the County Council to a responsible local committee for each Non-County Borough or Urban District. This local committee might consist, in the main, of persons nomin-

\* The six English Universities would remain, as at present, independent of the local authorities, except in so far as these might aid them by grants, in which event conditions would naturally be mutually agreed. But the universities, no less than other educational bodies, should be subject to inspection, criticism and public report by the Board of Education itself. Such endowed, "non-local" schools as Eton and Harrow, and the various unattached colleges and specialized educational institutions, would occupy a similar position.



ated by the Borough or Urban District Council, together with the County Councillors for the district, at least two women, and possibly other persons interested in education. These committees could be allowed, subject to the ultimate control of the County Council, to spend a definite sum annually allotted to them by the Council, plus any special rate in their own area that the Borough or Urban District Council could be induced to levy.

(b) THE ABSENCE OF WOMEN, AND OFTEN OF PERSONS WITH EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE, FROM COUNTY AND BOROUGH COUNCILS.

It is said that County and Borough Councils, though they usually contain some experienced administrators, are unfit to manage schools, because (i) they often include no men of educational experience or interested in the subject, and (ii) women are not eligible to sit upon them.\* To get over this real difficulty, and also to facilitate efficient administration, the County and Borough Councils should be required by statute to appoint special educational committees. Under the Technical Instruction Acts the Town and County Councils have spontaneously developed this organization for educational purposes, entrusting the execution of their powers to committees on which are co-opted persons whose presence and advice may be, for one reason or another, desired. This system has worked so well that it ought to be continued. The local authorities for education would then be the Town and County Councils acting each through a statutory committee consisting of a majority of councillors and of certain co-opted individuals. In order to preserve unity of control, no other authority or body of persons should have a statutory claim to representation thereon; but, if only (pending an alteration of the law) to ensure the presence of women, the Town or County Council should be required to submit for the approval of the Board of Education the proposed composition of its committees. These committees, like other committees, should not have the power to levy a rate, otherwise all the simplification of finance would be lost. At the beginning of the financial year the committee would present its budget, and after getting it passed would administer the allotted funds without further interference by the Council.

(c) THE NEED FOR LOCAL SUPERVISION.

But the County is a large area, and it is rightly urged that no County Council can properly undertake the actual management of the schools in all its parishes. It is not suggested that it should do so. The work of the Education Committee of the County Council would be to frame a scheme for providing and maintaining such schools, of such grades and types, and in such localities as the circumstances of the County require. It should provide both the capital cost and the annual maintenance of these schools; frame regulations for their government; inspect them by its officials; and

\* The law should, of course, be changed, so as to make women eligible for election to both Town and County Councils. See Fabian Tract, No. 93.

appoint all the head-masters. But the detailed administration of the several institutions, the selection of assistant-masters, and as much else as possible should be delegated to a local committee, appointed by the County Council for each parish or for each institution. For this local committee, two alternatives present themselves. Either the County Council might be required to appoint the local Parish Council, or the County Council might be left to appoint whom it chose among the local residents, with the addition of two or more members nominated by the Parish Council.

(d) HOW TO DEAL WITH THE VOLUNTARY SCHOOLS.

Every County Council would find the greater part of the elementary education in its district in the hands of voluntary schools, owning no allegiance to it or to any other local authority; but often starving for lack of funds, and grossly below any reasonable standard of educational efficiency. It is politically impossible to abolish these voluntary schools; and whatever we may think of the theological reasons for their establishment, their separate and practically individual management does incidentally afford what ought to be, in any public system of education, most jealously safeguarded, namely, variety, and the opportunity of experiment. What we have to do with the voluntary schools is to put them under the control of the local educational authority; to improve and strengthen their committees of management; to raise their efficiency; and especially to provide better salaries for their teachers; to make impossible the tyrannical vagaries of foolish clergymen in the village schools; and to bring these into co-ordination with the rest of the educational system.

We propose that the County Council should be allowed to offer a grant in aid up to, say, five or even ten shillings per head per annum to all the voluntary schools in the County, to be spent in increasing the salaries of the teaching staff, or otherwise raising the efficiency of the schools; and in all cases subject to the following conditions, viz. :—

(a) The County Council to be allowed to inspect the schools, frame regulations for their administration, and audit their accounts.

(b) All future appointments and dismissals of teachers to be subject to its confirmation.

(c) The appointment, subject to its approval, of a committee of managers, which should invariably include two members to be annually nominated by the Parish (or Urban District or Borough) Council; meet at least once in every term, appoint its own chairman and clerk, and have brought before it all school business (including the appointment, suspension, or dismissal of teachers, the school log, and the school accounts); be responsible for the whole management of the school; and transmit copies of its minutes annually to the County Council.



The Education Committee of the County Council should be empowered to provide additional school places when in its opinion the existing denominational school accommodation, though sufficient, was unsuitable to the demands of the district. In this way the Church schools would remain strong where the Church was strong, but a sufficient remedy would be provided for substantial Nonconformist grievances. A right of appeal to the Board of Education should also be reserved to the managers of any "voluntary" school in any case of complaint against the local authority. With this freer system of grants the "special aid grant" should be merged in the other Government grants in aid and the voluntary associations for its administration should be abolished as unnecessary and inconsistent with County districts.

### London and the County Boroughs.

We have reserved the case of London and the 62 County Boroughs, where the need for educational improvement is less crying than in the rural districts, and the problem of unification more difficult. The administrative unity of all grades of education is, however, no less desirable in London and the large towns than in the country, and the malign influence of sectarian quarrels at School Board elections is apt to be even more severely felt. On the other hand the School Boards in these large towns are usually at least as efficient as the municipal authorities; the work to be done is large—in London colossal; and there would be some danger that unification would lead not, as in the Counties, to an increased expenditure on education, but to some slackening in the present rate of increase, if not to a positive limit. The School Boards in London and the County Boroughs should therefore for the most part be left untouched. The County Council in London and the Town Councils in the County Boroughs would become the authorities for all education outside the powers of the School Boards, with spending powers in this department of their work as unlimited as in drainage or water supply. They should, of course, retain all their existing powers, and they should, moreover, have the same enlarged powers of providing new schools as are given to the rural County Councils.

These considerations do not apply to such County Boroughs as Bury, Chester, Lincoln, Preston, St. Helens and Stockport, which have no School Board. Nor need they apply to County Boroughs like Wigan, where the School Board has no school; or like Blackburn, Oxford or Worcester, where only five to ten per cent. of the children are in Board Schools; or like Bath or Exeter, where the Board Schools contain fewer than 2,000 children. In all these cases the School Board should be abolished, and the Town Council at once made responsible for all grades of education. This would leave about 47 County Boroughs in which, as in London, the School Board system may be deemed to have so firmly established itself, as to be entitled to be untouched. But even in these cases it should be open to the School Board, if it should come to think it desirable,

to terminate its own existence, and transfer its schools and powers to the municipality.\* Meanwhile the School Board should be strongly represented on the education committee of the municipal body; and the management of the proposed grant in aid of voluntary schools should be dealt with by a statutory sub-committee, of which the School Board members should form one half.

## II.—THE CENTRAL AUTHORITY.

### The Present Drift.

The Board of Education Act of 1899 has substituted the Board of Education for the Education Department, the Department of Science and Art, the Charity Commissioners and the Board of Agriculture, but no provision has so far been made for the rearrangement of their overlapping powers or for the internal organization of the new Department. The powers of the Treasury over university colleges, of the Local Government Board over poor law schools, of the Home Office over industrial schools and reformatories, and through the Prisons Commissioners, over prison schools, of the India Office over the Engineering College at Cooper's Hill, of the Board of Agriculture over the agricultural colleges, and of the War Office and Admiralty over their own primary schools in garrison towns, and over military and naval schools, are still continued to these departments. A consultative committee has been created, but without specific powers beyond the framing of a register of teachers. So far as can be seen, the present intention is to organize the Board of Education solely into primary and secondary divisions, the latter being illogically sub-divided into "technical education" and "secondary schools." Such a plan may easily reduce the whole "reform" to a merely mechanical concentration of existing departments under a single roof. This is of no use if no real unity and no organic relation between the various kinds and grades of education is created. Failure to secure this would be particularly bad for elementary education, which it is the fashion to regard as mechanical and suitable for assignment to lower-grade minds. The education of the great mass of the people must not be isolated from the general intellectual movement either locally or at the centre.

### Our Plan.

The Board of Education should have, subject to the authority of Parliament, powers of inspection, criticism, and audit of all education of every kind and grade, which is maintained or aided out of monies provided by Parliament, or from endowments or trust funds derived from persons deceased; and the Board should therefore take cognizance, not only of such primary and secondary education as it con-

\* In 1900-1 the Nottingham Town Council put a clause in a bill which it was promoting, for the complete merging of the School Board in the Town Council. The School Board passed a resolution (January 1901) that the Bill was "premature," and desired its withdrawal "for the present." But the Board is understood to be not unfavorable to the principle.



trols, but also of universities and university colleges, non-local schools, and other endowed educational institutions, army and navy schools, training colleges, poor law schools, and industrial and reformatory schools and school-ships.

The official staff should be unified and divided primarily into departments on a geographical basis, so that the section of the office dealing with each area should take within its purview all the grades of education, whether elementary, secondary or university, and all subjects of study, whether literary, scientific, technological or commercial, carried on, in the day or in the evening, under public authorities or bodies of managers or trustees. Only in this way can we ensure a complete view of all the needs of the district, the organic unity of education within that district, and a differentiation of the requirements of different districts. This fundamental organization of the central department should be into ten or twelve "provinces," each including all public education within a well-defined geographical area, such as London, Lancashire and Cheshire, Devon and Cornwall, the South-Eastern Counties and so on.

Each of these ten or twelve geographical sections should be under an official of high standing and varied experience, who might be called Provincial Superintendent. Through his hands should pass all the reports and other papers relating to any part of the education of his district, which should have its own staff of inspectors for different kinds of schools and different subjects of study. Each province would have its own special needs, and special difficulties, which should be treated without any striving after rigid uniformity.

But in order to secure the highest specialist efficiency, no less than national unity, all important proposals should pass from the heads of the geographical departments to one of three or four staff officers, of the rank of Assistant Under-Secretary of State, who should devote themselves each to one kind of education, and should deal with that kind of education all over the country. From him the papers would go, through the permanent Under Secretary of State to the Board, that is the Minister for Education, for final decision.

The Board of Education should require (*a*) the provision of at least a prescribed minimum supply of all grades of education by each local authority separately or in conjunction with other local authorities; and (*b*) the provision of an adequate educational and administrative staff.

The Board of Education should make the following grants:— (*a*) a fixed grant based upon a calculation of two-thirds of the necessary minimum expenditure on each grade; and (*b*) a variable grant based upon one-half of the additional expenditure on any grade up to a fixed maximum. In this way efficiency and enterprise would be promoted, and at the same time extravagance checked. If any educational authority expended less than the minimum in order to save the rates, that is, raised by rate less than one-third of the minimum expenditure, the Board should have power, in the first

instance, to fine the locality by reducing or withholding all or part of its grant, *and of supplying the deficiency thus caused by ordering a special local rate to be levied.* If this failed to ensure the provision of the "National Minimum" of education in the particular locality, the Board should have power, in the last resort, to remove the defaulting local authority from office, and appoint, for a short term of years, Government Commissioners in its stead, with power to rate. But such a drastic course would never be necessary. Meanwhile the Board's inspector should have the right to attend at all full meetings of the authority.

### Conclusion.

The democratic ideal in education is not merely that a ladder should be provided, whereby a few students may climb unimpeded from the elementary school to the university; though even this ideal has little chance of realization so long as some rungs of the ladder are under no one's care, and competing guardians squabble for the right to look after others. What the national well-being demands, and what we must insist upon, is that every child, dull or clever, rich or poor, should receive all the education requisite for the full development of its faculties. For every child, in every part of the country, at least a "national minimum" of education must be compulsorily provided. Above and beyond that minimum we must see that ample provision is made for varying faculties and divergent tastes. Our plan is to extend popular control and popular assistance to every branch of education; to combine all the scattered and overlapping authorities; and to link together the municipal life of our local authorities with the intellectual life of the schools by the concentration of all local services under one local body. This plan, it is true, requires the surrender of some cherished illusions, and involves some delicate adjustments to suit transitory forms of organization, but if these difficulties are faced and met on the lines sketched out in this Tract, we shall bring the schools into intimate connection with the everyday life of the country and secure so far as official machinery is concerned a sound and efficient educational system.

The still more important and more difficult problems of what to teach and how to educate, remain for separate consideration.



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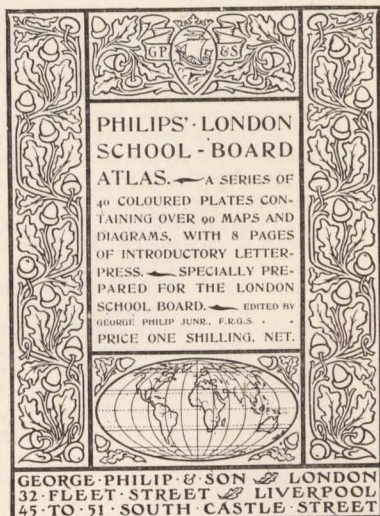
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