THE EDUCATIONAL POLICIES OF
THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY, 1918–1944

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Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
This thesis sets out to examine the role played by the Conservative Party in the evolution of the state education system between 1918 and 1944. The early chapters provide a chronological account of ministerial policy and party attitudes towards secondary and elementary education between the wars. This is followed by assessments of the party's approach to the dual system of council and church schools, and to the problems of 'education for employment'. The manner in which Conservative education policy operated locally is then examined with particular reference to the area of London; and the arguments put forward are brought together finally by an analysis of the party's responsibility for, and reaction to, the 1944 Education Act.

The two main themes of the thesis are the working of the modern Conservative Party and the history of education as a political issue, which has arguably been over-simplified in existing accounts. It is demonstrated here that Conservative ministerial policy contributed more to the development of state schools than has been realised, especially in the case of Lord Eustace Percy; and that party opinion - though traditionally hostile or indifferent to education - became more receptive to the need for reform during the 1930s. In this light, it appears that ministers such as Percy saw education as a means of transforming the Conservative approach to social reform, and that the politics of education were characterised by continuity and growing party agreement. These forces came together most conspicuously in the Second World War. R.A. Butler's reform of 1944 looked forward to a more positive party role in social policy, but was based on ideas popularised between the wars; it was accepted by Labour as the realisation of minimum demands made over the past twenty years, and by Conservatives as the logical extension of policies they had recently endorsed.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I

This thesis sets out to examine the role played by the Conservative Party in the evolution of the modern education system, which underwent an important transformation in the first half of the twentieth century. Before the First World War, the two main types of school provided by the state - secondary and elementary - were largely separate and distinct. It was only after the passage of the 1902 Education Act that a small number of children had for the first time attended state-aided secondary schools. The Act offered the old independent foundation schools the option of receiving financial aid from the Exchequer, and also empowered the newly created local education authorities to set up additional municipal schools. As a result a fee-paying minority, usually entering from private preparatory schools, were offered the benefits of an academic curriculum in preparation for higher, university education or for a career in the professions. In the meantime, the great majority of the nation's children remained in the public elementary schools, which operated under an inferior code of administrative regulations at the discretion of either local authorities or voluntary, church, organisations. The elementary school pupil received only basic instruction and left to seek employment at the age of twelve or thirteen, rather than proceeding to any form of further education. The Edwardian period witnessed the first, tentative attempts to relate two forms of schooling hitherto divided rigidly along lines of social class. The free place regulations of 1907 reflected the contemporary concern to create an educational 'ladder', available to all to climb
irrespective of background: thereafter at least a quarter of all secondary school places were to be provided free of charge to elementary pupils. In addition, some local authorities sought to improve facilities for the older and more able children attending the elementary schools, either by introducing 'senior classes' within the all-age school or by setting up separate institutions, pioneered in London and Manchester under the name of central schools. The growth of this 'advanced elementary instruction' was handicapped, however, both by regulation and tradition; and at the outbreak of war in 1914 the horizontal stratification of the education system had been neither eroded nor seriously challenged.

In the period between 1918 and 1944, which was bounded by two major educational reforms, the notion of separate and parallel types of state school was gradually blurred and ultimately broken down. Fisher's Education Act of 1918 pointed the way by encouraging the expansion of both secondary and advanced or post-elementary education. As concern about 'the education of the adolescent' came to dominate debate, increasing criticism was directed at the absence of an intrinsic connection between the secondary and elementary schools. In particular, the term 'secondary education for all' was used to embody the demand that every child should receive a connected course of training. All children, it was suggested, should receive elementary, or primary, education to the age of eleven, followed by four or five years of secondary instruction in one of several types of school - one of which would be the traditional secondary school - conducted under a single code of statutory regulations. The concept of two successive stages of a unified educational process was not, however, adopted as national policy between the wars. Under the impact of a series of economic recessions, the need to control educational expenditure became a major
priority for inter-war governments and ruled out the possibility of significant advances. As far as the adolescent was concerned, successive administrations concentrated on modest improvements within the existing framework. The policy of elementary 'reorganisation', for example, improved standards for the older children by dividing schools into junior and senior departments, but this process - though well advanced by 1939 - still took place within the context of the inferior regulations governing elementary education. The idea of abolishing the regulations which underpinned the existing system was in fact only taken up during the Second World War, which provided a fresh impetus to reform proposals. Amongst its many provisions, the 1944 Education Act laid down that in future all children would attend first primary and then secondary schools, thereby marking official acceptance of the view that the two stages of education were not separate entities but sequential phases of the same process.

The following account is concerned with the contribution which the Conservative Party made to the development of the state system between 1918 and 1944. The early chapters provide a chronological account of ministerial policy and party attitudes towards secondary and elementary education between the wars. The issue known to contemporaries as the education of the adolescent provides the main connecting theme for these chapters, which concentrate on two questions in particular - the extent of access to the traditional secondary school, and the form and scope of post-elementary education provided for the remainder of adolescents. The issue of education for the adolescent was itself intimately linked with two further problems examined in the following chapters: the difficulties posed by the 'dual system' of church and council elementary schools, and the ill-defined question of relating education to employment, which
involves consideration of other types of provision such as technical education and 'continuation' schooling. The manner in which Conservatives locally tackled the various issues affecting those between the ages of five and eighteen is then raised, with particular reference to the area of London. Finally, the main arguments put forward are brought together by an analysis of the party's responsibility for, and reaction to, the 1944 Act. The evolution of the modern education system was of course the product of a wide range of factors, and the approach adopted here does not allow full treatment to be given to the complex administrative, professional and popular pressures which helped to shape the school structure after the First World War. These forces are dealt with primarily where they impinge upon the main concerns of this study, which are twofold. The first is to examine the history of education as a political issue, with particular emphasis on the role which Conservatives played in the development of the state education system; and the second is to contribute to an understanding of the ideas and practice of the Conservative Party, or Unionist Party as it was known until 1924. Before explaining how these concerns can be linked and pursued, it is necessary to review the treatment of educational and political issues provided by historians in existing accounts.

II

The labour movement has dominated writings on the history of education as a political issue in the early twentieth century. Labour's contribution to the creation of a national network of primary and secondary schools has been widely discussed, and the work of Rodney Barker and Brian Simon in particular has established the Labour Party as the main political force behind educational reform during the
period. In recent years attempts have also been made to trace the influence of particular groups within the labour movement - the parliamentary Labour Party, the Fabian Society, local Labour Party organisations, and the Trades Union Congress. The emphasis on Labour policies has provided a useful framework for understanding education as a political issue, but the preoccupation with a single body of opinion - especially in the period between the wars when Labour was only briefly in office - provides an incomplete picture of the evolution of the school system. A fuller appreciation of this development has been made possible by recent studies of individual legislative reforms, notably the Acts of 1918 and 1944, and by more detailed analysis of those civil servants at the Board of Education closely involved in the formulation of national policy. There remains a need, however, for systematic study of the Liberal and Conservative administrations which dominated British politics before the Second World War. The neglect of Conservative policies, upon which this work focuses, has occurred despite not only the party's electoral dominance, but also the role of the Conservatives in carrying the 1944 Act.


4. An exception to the neglect of Liberal policies, which also examines the influence of Board of Education officials, is G.E. Sherington, English education, social change and war, 1911-20 (Manchester, 1981).
Any basis for the judgement of Conservative education policy after 1918 must first take into account some of the controversies which have arisen over the ideas of Labour. In the first major study of Labour education policy, Rodney Barker has indicated that it is not enough to simply identify the party as the chief agent of reform. He goes beyond this to examine the differences between the various sections of Labour opinion, and identifies the tension between the egalitarian aims of certain groups and individuals and the meritocratic tradition of social engineering which underpinned party policy in office. This tension is used to provide a framework for understanding many of Labour's post-war policies: the cautious response given to the Education Act in 1918; the envious acceptance of the selective and academic tradition of the secondary schools, while seeking to make them more accessible to working-class children; the absence of any commitment to abolish private education or alter the curriculum of the state schools; the endorsement given to elementary reorganisation, despite this falling short of the demand for a restructured system of regulations; and the acceptance of the 'tripartite' structure of grammar, technical and modern schools implicit in the 1944 Act, rather than the more radical common or multilateral secondary school. These policies are used to illustrate a wider conclusion about Labour: the party derived its ambitions not from socialist principles but from practical experience and 'labourist' views. The Labour Party sought fairness within the existing system, not wholesale reconstruction.5

Rodney Barker's persuasive case for interpreting Labour policy has subsequently been disputed, in particular by Brian Simon, who emphasises the idea that the party offered a consistent and radical

alternative in the inter-war period. The short-lived Labour governments, he claims, made significant headway in the face of considerable opposition, and the party's desire to abolish the distinction between parallel systems of secondary and elementary education above all marked Labour off from its political rivals. The development of this argument, however, suffers from an inability to clarify the precise meaning of Labour attitudes, especially on the issue of 'secondary education for all'. Professor Simon ignores the evidence which suggests that for most party members, this catch-phrase meant expanding the existing secondary schools for academically minded children, while providing new and broadly equivalent facilities in central and technical schools for children hitherto restricted to the all-age elementary school. Instead he stresses the importance of those sections of party opinion which, especially during the 1930s, pressed for the introduction of multilateral schools. Again this ignores the reasons for thinking that although the idea of multilateralism attracted some support before the passage of the 1944 Act, this was primarily in the context of an addition - not an alternative - to the varied structure of secondary education which Labour sought to create.\(^6\) Brian Simon's work is of course concerned with the wider development of official education policy between the wars, but in so far as he concentrates on Labour policy, there is little sense of the need to qualify the party's desire for reform.

The arguments of both Rodney Barker and Brian Simon have themselves become the subject of recent criticism, notably in a review of educational

development during the 1920s by Nigel Haslewood. This maintains that Labour's achievements in the period have been underestimated, and that previous accounts have directed unfair criticism at the party's leading educational publicist, R.H. Tawney. It can be argued, however, that Nigel Haslewood's critique itself fails to distinguish clearly between the two different historical approaches under review. The claim that Brian Simon 'appears to accept' the existence of major differences between the parties over education, for example, seriously distorts the latter's case. In this instance, Tawney is portrayed as a leading exponent of reform, and criticised only on the single issue of adhering to a varied system of secondary schools, rather than to the multilateral idea - a further indication of Simon's concern with the origins of what later became the comprehensive school.

By contrast, Rodney Barker has sought to place the thinking of R.H. Tawney firmly in the context of the period. Tawney, he shows, both invoked the theoretical ideals of equality and social justice, and at the same time took many of his actual proposals from the existing educational world. Nigel Haslewood's point about sharp differences between the parties has more substance in the case of Dr Barker, who provides only incidental references to Liberal and Conservative policy. Haslewood's own reappraisal of Labour achievements in the 1920s, however, ironically falls back on familiar claims about the party's distinctiveness, thus bringing the argument full circle. Labour's interest in educational reform has been established beyond doubt, but the available evidence also indicates the importance of

bringing out the complexity and ambiguity of party policy. The extent to which this is necessary will depend in part upon judgements of a crucially related, but hitherto neglected, area of study - the corresponding policies pursued by the Conservative Party.

In contrast to the labour movement, only a limited range of the Conservative Party's activities after the First World War have attracted attention among historians. The main focus has been on the leading political issues which faced successive Conservative administrations, and on the development of party organisation nationally and locally, with little emphasis being placed on domestic policies. One result of this has been to enhance the assumption that, compared to Labour's association with educational reform, Conservative policy between the wars was dominated by two simple themes - reducing spending whenever possible, and resisting improvements to the state schools. The sterile nature of the party's policy has been stressed particularly in relation to finance, with the claim that Conservative education ministers were agents of the Treasury, responsible for carrying out the demands for reduced spending which continually restricted progress. Conservative governments have also been accused of seeking to maintain a nineteenth century conception of the education service, as reflected in opposition to the idea of abolishing the statutory division between secondary and elementary education. For Brian Simon in particular, the inte-

war years provided a clear-cut case of Labour demands to introduce 'secondary education for all' being frustrated by the hostility of Conservatives.\(^\text{12}\)

III

This thesis does not attempt to reverse the well-established outline of the contribution to educational reform made by the political parties. In the most general of terms, the interest of Labour members in the national education system was not shared by Conservatives, many of whom had not attended state schools.\(^\text{13}\) In the same way as it is necessary to clarify the Labour Party's concern with reform, however, so it is possible to challenge existing assumptions about Conservative policy as being over-simplified. The aims of the following account are therefore to modify existing accounts of Conservative policy and opinion towards state education in the period between 1918 and 1944, and in turn to shed new light on the working of the Conservative Party and the nature of education as a political issue. The main arguments presented here can in fact be developed in four general directions: by examining the detail of Conservative ministerial policy after the First World War, especially towards secondary and elementary education; by bringing out the complexity of party opinion - nationally and locally - towards a wide range of policy issues; by using the example of education to highlight the changing nature of Conservatism between the wars; and by establishing a framework for

\(^{12}\) Simon, op.cit., p.10ff.

\(^{13}\) J. Stevenson, British society, 1914–45 (Harmondsworth, 1984), p.350, notes that 58 per cent of Conservative M.P.s during the period between 1920 and 1940 were educated at public schools, over a quarter of them at Eton.
understanding education as a political issue which goes beyond the idea of radical demands being cynically and systematically distorted.

The first point which will be emphasised here is that Conservative education ministers after the war did not simply endorse the Treasury desire for economy. Although there were differences between individuals as to their intentions and active involvement in policy-making, Conservative ministers as a whole sought to resist Treasury demands in order to promote the education of the adolescent. Edward Wood, for example, the first Unionist minister to serve at the Board of Education after 1918, was broadly concerned to increase the number of secondary school places and to provide post-elementary instruction for at least some children. This approach was considerably extended after 1924 by Lord Eustace Percy, who not only endorsed the policy of elementary reorganisation, but also urged as a logical consequence the abolition of the existing statutory regulations and the creation of a single code governing 'higher' education. In the 1930s, by contrast, Conservative ministers continued the process of dividing the elementary schools but retreated from the idea of amending the law to unify post-primary education. The desirability of creating a single system of primary and secondary schools was taken up again during the Second World War, initially by Herwald Ramsbotham and later by R.A. Butler, who was of course to take the credit for implementing reform in 1944. Similar distinctions also emerge on the issue of religious education, where Eustace Percy's desire to restructure the dual system foreshadowed the new settlement achieved by Butler during the war; and on the problem of education for employment, towards which

14. See Appendix I, 'Ministers and leading officials at the Board of Education, 1918-1944'.
Percy presented several distinctive ideas never fully followed through, even by the 1944 Act. The general assumptions about Conservative ministerial policy therefore require modification: there were, it will be argued here, a wide variety of individual approaches towards policy for the adolescent, but the ideas of Eustace Percy in particular stand out as central to an understanding of the reforms later carried by Butler.

The second area in which this study seeks to modify existing accounts concerns the attitude of the Conservative Party as a whole towards state education, which has been depicted as one of uniform hostility. In the first place, it is possible to indicate the complexity of party views by identifying several groupings or shades of opinion, often distinct in outlook though never mutually exclusive. At one extreme, for example, a small number of Conservative M.P.s, usually led by Lady Astor, were constantly critical at the lack of educational change between the wars. These social reformers were counterbalanced, however, by a minority of 'die-hards' who consistently opposed any reform. Between these two extremes, several other groups could be identified: ministers and party officials, who were primarily concerned about the electoral implications of policy; those professionally involved in the educational world as teachers, academics or local authority representatives; and the broad mass of Conservative supporters, who showed little interest in education and veered from hostility to indifference according to circumstances. Despite this variety of viewpoints, certain ideas could be regarded as characteristic.

15. For further information about Lady Astor and other Conservatives mentioned hereafter, see Appendix II, 'Conservative education policy: biographical details of ministers, M.P.s and party supporters'.
of party opinion overall, but the significance of these common assumptions has also been missed by existing accounts. In brief, Conservatives were preoccupied after 1918 with preserving the position of the traditional secondary school; as a result of this obsession, reforms of the elementary system - for example reorganisation or the raising of the compulsory leaving age - were considered to be unnecessary. This general position began to change, however, gradually and partially during the 1930s. Conservatives now began to accept, some more enthusiastically than others, that all children should benefit from post-primary education and that some at least should remain at school until the age of fifteen, thus paving the way for the party's acceptance of reform in 1944. The similar movement of opinion on the dual system and education for employment, and in the policy of local party members in London, reinforces the conclusion about Conservative attitudes which can be drawn from the following account. The party as a whole was opposed to educational reform between the wars, but there were individual exceptions from an early stage, and the imperceptible shift which took place in attitudes towards the adolescent once more points to the importance of pre-war events in understanding the 1944 Act.

The educational policies and opinions of Conservatives can be used thirdly to illustrate certain points about the working of the party after the First World War. At first sight, the case of education appears to indicate that policy decisions within the party rested almost exclusively with ministers and leading party officials. Eustace Percy, for example, was able to publicise his scheme of 'higher education for all' as official Conservative policy in the 1920s, despite the objections of leading party supporters. Percy's inability to implement his scheme, however, though due to a variety of circumstances,
indicated the manner in which successful ministerial initiatives were always dependent upon party endorsement. This was illustrated by the raising of the school-leaving age in 1936, when Conservative ministers deliberately included a generous system of exemptions in deference to the party's industrial and agricultural supporters; and by the 1944 Act itself, which Butler consciously shaped in order to secure the acquiescence of the Conservative parliamentary party, the largest force in the wartime coalition. A wide range of pressures - administrative and professional, local and national, as well as party political - ultimately contributed to the form of policy undertaken by Conservative ministers towards the adolescent.

The example of education can also be used to shed light on the relationship between Conservative thinking and practice. The views of party members on education have been regarded - at least for the period of the Second World War - as the product of certain ideological positions, stemming from either paternalistic 'Tory' or 'Neo-Liberal' ideas. This line of argument is disputed here both on the grounds that Conservative opinion was divided into complex, overlapping groupings, and in view of the importance of social background and practical experience in shaping particular attitudes. For example, many of the values which Conservatives wished to uphold in the state schools - such as hierarchy and excellence, the training of character and the place of religious education - were, it will be argued, a reflection of their own public school training. Education did, however, highlight certain political ideas, especially in relation to the role

of the state. The party's preoccupation with the secondary schools, for example, could be seen in a wider context as a means of defending the existing social and political order. Conservatives believed that the most gifted children should be able to climb the educational ladder, but as the remainder were to have a fixed role in society, there was no point in the state actively intervening to improve the elementary system. This inflexible approach was of course held by Conservatives to varying degrees, and as the responsibilities of the state were gradually extended, so individuals began to encourage a more active role for the state. As far as education ministers were concerned, Eustace Percy clearly led the way in this respect, attempting in the 1920s - though with very little support from his party - to use education as a means of altering the social structure in order to achieve parity between all professions and occupations. The only other Conservative to emulate this approach was R.A. Butler, who believed that the abolition of the old division between secondary and elementary education was crucial in eradicating the inherited idea of 'two nations'. The 1944 Act owed much to the minister's perception of party needs: he hoped that reform in education would help the Conservatives in adapting to wartime circumstances by competing on new terms with Labour. At the same time, Butler's reform foreshadowed the style of policy which the Conservative Party was to adopt after 1945, accepting a more active role for the state in domestic policy and encouraging the creation of a more flexible, meritocratic social order.

By bringing together the themes which characterised the Conservative Party, and adding what is known about Labour's approach to education,

it becomes possible to comment finally on the operation of education as a political issue. In any comparison of overall party attitudes to education, there were of course significant differences between the parties. The Liberals placed much hope in the continuation school, and the Labour aims of extending free access to secondary education, raising the school-leaving age and abolishing the existing statutory regulations were opposed by most Conservatives between the wars. This does not go far, however, in explaining the actual course of events, and it does not follow that the politics of education consisted purely of concerted hostility to radical demands. In the first place, the ambiguities of Labour policy in office and the aims of Conservative ministers such as Eustace Percy point to an element of continuity between successive administrations. This was particularly evident in the concern to improve secondary and post-elementary instruction, in the desire for a compromise solution to the dual system, and in the inability to tackle the problems of education for employment. When set against the constraints which faced all governments, notably the low priority of education, the Treasury's insistence on economy and administrative inertia, a somewhat different conclusion emerges: that the choice of policy towards the adolescent was effectively narrowed, and contained within limits well recognised by front-bench ministers. In addition, although Labour opinion clearly provided the main political pressure for reform, the subtle changes in Conservative attitudes during the 1930s implied a slow convergence of party views on certain demands concerning the adolescent. These two characteristic features of education as a political issue - the similarities between successive ministerial policies and the increased overlap in party views - were in fact central to the creation of the modern education system, and came together most conspicuously during
the Second World War. The 1944 Act was consciously based on ideas
popularised in the inter-war period; it was accepted by Conservatives
as the logical extension of policies they had latterly endorsed,
and by Labour as the realisation of the minimum demands made for the
past twenty years.
The pattern of development within the state school system at the end of the First World War was largely dictated by the 1918 Education Act. This measure left untouched many of the features familiar during the Edwardian period and enshrined in Balfour's legislation of 1902, notably the administrative structure of local education authorities, the conditions governing financial aid to voluntary schools, and the rigid statutory division between secondary and elementary education. The Act did, however, propose various improvements in the education provided for adolescents. In the area of higher education, the limit on the rate which could be levied locally for the purpose of higher instruction was removed, and in response to greatly increased public demand local authorities were charged with providing secondary education for those children capable of benefiting but debarred by inability to meet the cost. The public elementary schools were also to be improved through the introduction of a standardised, percentage grant from the Exchequer on all approved expenditure, which was now to include the raising of the compulsory school-leaving age to fourteen, the abolition of the notorious 'half-time' system of child employment, and the systematic provision of advanced elementary education. Finally, local authorities were to be responsible for planning and implementing a network of day continuation schools - an extension of the existing education system which required all adolescents who had left school
at fourteen to attend on a part-time basis until the age of sixteen.\(^1\)

The movement for educational reform culminating in the passage of the government's legislation has traditionally been identified with the individual influence of the Liberal minister, H.A.L. Fisher.\(^2\) The recent findings of Geoffrey Sherington, however, indicate that Fisher - who served as President of the Board of Education between 1916 and 1922 - can no longer be regarded as the main architect of the 1918 Act. Fisher was essentially an upper-middle class intellectual who had little desire for radical reform: he favoured cautious change which would extend opportunities for the great majority who attended elementary schools without challenging the selective and academic tradition of the secondary schools. The minister personally argued in favour of continuation schools, although these had been recommended by a departmental committee on education and employment in 1917, and overall his influence on the content of the Act was limited by a dependence on the well-defined views of senior civil servants at the Board of Education. The Board's pre-war plans to extend educational facilities had been carefully guided by the Permanent Secretary, Sir Lewis Amherst Selby-Bigge, whose influence was equally apparent in the legislation finally adopted by parliament. The First World War thus produced no fundamental alteration in the direction of education policy: the introduction of a measure largely worked out by Board

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1. A general account of the background, terms and importance of the 1918 Act is provided by L. Andrews, *The Education Act, 1918*.
officials and advocated by the Liberal government before 1914 reinforced earlier trends and ensured a high degree of continuity in the education system.³

This line of argument clearly sheds important light on the origins of the 1918 Act, although it arguably understates the political contribution made by the minister. Fisher brought little new thinking to the Board of Education and his contribution to the content of the government's legislation was minimal, but he was one of few education ministers with a genuine interest in the work of the department, and without his determination to exploit the movement for wartime reconstruction there was no guarantee that reform of any sort would have reached the statute book. The relative influence of civil servants and politicians at the Board of Education provides, however, only an incidental theme to the main concern of this chapter - the educational ideas and opinions of the Unionist Party. By examining the involvement in, and response of, the party to the 1918 Education Act, this account seeks to provide a basis for understanding Conservative education policy between the wars. In particular, it aims to illustrate the manner in which the party formulated education policy and the assumptions which underpinned the Unionist approach to the secondary and elementary schools at the end of the First World War. The wider object of highlighting the operation of education as a party political issue at national level can also be served by an analysis of the Act in two main contexts: in the first place looking at the role and influence of Unionist Party leaders, who occupied prominent positions in the

³. G.E. Sherington, 'The 1918 Education Act: origins, aims and development', British Journal of Educational Studies, XXIV, 1 (1976), pp.66-83; and English education, social change and war, esp. chs. II-V.
second coalition government of December 1916; and secondly concentrating on the reception given to the education bill by party members in parliament.

II

The origins of the 1918 Education Act cannot be located simply in the thinking of ministers and civil servants at the Board of Education. The measure must also be regarded as the product of the circumstances of wartime politics, in particular as one outcome of the coalition which the Unionist Party formed with Lloyd George and his Liberal supporters in order to facilitate a more effective prosecution of the war. In this context, the Act was to some extent a product of the movement for 'reconstruction' commonly identified with the Liberal wing of the coalition. During 1916 the Asquith government had already undertaken cabinet investigations into possible areas of social reform, and after taking over as Prime Minister Lloyd George furthered this process by establishing a Ministry of Reconstruction under Christopher Addison. The actual details of Fisher's legislation remained the departmental concern of the Board of Education and owed little to the government's reconstruction machinery, but the bill was nevertheless associated with a reforming Liberal minister and presented as a contribution to the reconstruction ideal of creating greater social justice. In the context of wartime politics, however, the education bill was at the same time an agreed measure between Liberals

4. On reconstruction as a whole, see P.B. Johnson, Land fit for heroes (London and Chicago, 1968). The bill was described as 'part of a comprehensive scheme of Reconstruction' by the Reconstruction Committee in its 'Memorandum on the education bill 1917', June 1917, Public Record Office, Cabinet papers (P.R.O. CAB) 24/19.
and Unionists, for whom the whole issue of education had been politically divisive before 1914. This makes it important to examine in the first place the reasons behind the support given to Fisher by Unionist Party leaders, especially Andrew Bonar Law, who after December 1916 became Chancellor of the Exchequer, leader of the House of Commons and de facto deputy Prime Minister.\(^5\)

As leader of the Unionist Party since 1911 Law had displayed an open toughness in his relations with the Liberal government, especially on the issues of Ulster and tariff reform. The outbreak of war, however, required greater flexibility of approach, and in order to enhance Unionist involvement in the running of the war effort Law negotiated agreements first with Asquith and then with Lloyd George.\(^6\) His acceptance of Fisher's education bill stemmed to a considerable extent from the manner in which the second coalition had been formed. During the period of political uncertainty in early December 1916, Law decided against the possibility of attempting to form a government himself and opted instead to work with Lloyd George as an alternative Liberal leader. After this decision had been taken, Law would have placed himself in an impossible position by opposing the new Prime Minister: Lloyd George's support for the idea of educational reform thus made it virtually certain that the Unionist leader would follow suit, especially as Fisher made known his willingness to avoid controversial areas of policy. This reaction was itself only one example of Law's desire to tie Unionist fortunes to Lloyd George.

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George, a strategy more fully formulated after the passage of the education bill when Law decided to preserve the coalition as a means of retaining a share of political power, countering the threat of labour, and ensuring that 'the reforms which undoubtedly will be necessary should be made in a way which was as little revolutionary as possible'. 7 In the short-term, Law had more to lose than to gain by opposing educational reform, and having little personal interest in the problems of state schooling, he adopted an attitude of firm but detached backing for Fisher. In his capacity as Chancellor of the Exchequer, Law gave assurances that the Treasury would provide funds for implementing Fisher's proposals soon after taking up office. He pledged to concerned M.P.s that the education bill would receive priority in the following session when the measure ran into early difficulties at the end of 1917; and he later urged the Prime Minister to keep Fisher at the Board of Education until the bill became law in the face of calls for cabinet changes. 8

Law's attitude to the education bill was shared by other prominent Unionist leaders. Fisher later noted the practical help provided by A.J. Balfour, who suggested ways of guiding the bill through the intricacies of the committee stage in the House of Commons; and in early 1917 Milner provided the important service of circumventing Unionist attempts to raise controversial questions about religious

7. The President's desire to avoid controversy is noted in his 'Memorandum on the education bill 1917', 16 May 1917, P.R.O. CAB 24/13. For the later Unionist strategy, see A. Bonar Law to A.J. Balfour, 5 Oct. 1918, Balfour papers, British Library, Add. Mss. 49693, fos.276-9.
8. 'Report of a deputation of M.P.s to the Prime Minister', 26 Nov. 1917, Lloyd George papers, House of Lords Record Office (H.L.R.O), F/225/3; Law to Lloyd George, 2 Mar. 1918, Lloyd George papers, F/30/2/29. See also Law to F.E. Smith, 1 Apr. 1918, Bonar Law papers, H.L.R.O., 78/3/13, for Law's role in the legislation 'now considered necessary'.
instruction which the education minister sought to avoid. The leading Unionist peer in the cabinet, Lord Curzon, was less enthusiastic in his acquiescence, having earlier declined the offer of membership of a government reviewing committee for education, but like other ministers he raised no major objections when the war cabinet gave Fisher permission to proceed with the drafting of a bill in May 1917. This decision to go ahead with legislation diverted attention away from ministers at the centre to the likely reaction amongst the press, educationists and the political parties generally. As far as the Unionists were concerned, large sections of the party shared the leaderships' lack of interest in the details of educational reform: this applied both to the important central bodies such as the National Union and to local constituency associations, which were preoccupied with the war, although such indifference did not always characterise local education authorities under Unionist control. The main focus of attention therefore centred on the party in parliament, which had effectively been brought over onto the government side by Law's alliance with Lloyd George, leaving opposition in the Commons primarily to the Liberal followers of Asquith. The Unionists were unlikely to jeopardise the war effort by now defeating government proposals in parliament, but the party nevertheless occupied a crucial position in the formulation of wartime policies. The existence of a hard core of Coalition Liberals prepared to support Lloyd George's leadership, even when traditional Liberal sentiments appeared threatened, meant

10. Minutes of the War Cabinet, 30 May 1917, P.R.O. CAB 23/2.
11. For the example of the Unionist controlled London County Council, see below, pp. 233-4.
that the major danger to the cohesion of the coalition inside parliament after December 1916 came from dissident elements on the Unionist back-benches. As a result the need to maintain acceptable levels of party support was always a crucial consideration for government ministers: the education bill had been shaped by a variety of forces and was presented as a Liberal initiative, but it could not have proceeded as an agreed measure in parliament without the endorsement of Unionist M.P.s.

III

The government's education bill was first introduced into the House of Commons in August 1917. Although the bill was generally well received among politicians and educationists, it was unable to make any significant progress in parliament before the end of the session. This was partly due to the pressures of parliamentary business and partly the result of opposition to two key sections of the measure: the local education authorities objected to the framing of the administrative clauses, and representatives of industry were opposed to the idea of releasing their young employees during working hours in order to attend continuation classes. As a result the bill was withdrawn and ultimately modified in both respects by the President. The wording of the administrative clauses was toned down, although Fisher retained the principle of a closer working relationship between the Board and local authorities; and after the reintroduction of the bill in March 1918, the original plan for continuation schools was

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altered by reducing the minimum number of teaching hours every year and by making compulsion apply for the first seven years of operation only to those between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, rather than up to eighteen. After these important modifications, the government's education proposals passed rapidly through the committee stage in the Commons and reached the statute book during the summer.\textsuperscript{13}

The response of the Unionist Party to Fisher's bill was of course partly conditioned by the circumstances of wartime coalition. The continuance of the second coalition, and with it the prosecution of the war effort, would have been endangered by any displays of outright opposition in the Commons, and to an extent the reaction of individual Unionists was dictated by the pressures of party management and the desire not to jeopardise the government's position. At the same time certain wartime legislation after 1916 did result in dissent from the official policy adopted by party leaders, and isolated acts of defiance were clearly possible in the case of relatively uncontroversial measures such as the education bill, when there appeared to be no imminent danger to the coalition's large majority.\textsuperscript{14} The bulk of the amendments put forward in parliament to modify Fisher's proposals were in fact made by Unionist M.P.s, an indication that the response of back-benchers was not pre-empted simply by the need to keep Lloyd George in office. In the event only a small number of party members took any active part in the debates on the bill, a reflection of both the low political priority accorded to education and the general

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[13.] Andrews, op.cit., chs. 2 and 3.
\item[14.] The opposition of Unionists to the Representation of the People Act, for example, is recorded in D.H. Close, 'The collapse of resistance to democracy: Conservatives, adult suffrage, and second chamber reform, 1911-1928', The Historical Journal, 20, 4 (1977), pp.893-918.
\end{itemize}
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preoccupation with the war. Many members were either absent on military service or else, in the words of one observer, 'too busy in the smoking rooms and on the terrace airing their opinions of the Allied strategy to pay attention to the proceedings within the House'. Amongst those Unionists who did remain in the House, however, the education bill was acceptable both as part of the strategy for maintaining co-operation with the Liberals and as a measure in its own right, although this collective acceptance was itself set within a framework of widely varying individual attitudes.

At one extreme a small minority of Unionists were resolutely hostile to education in general and Fisher's ideas in particular. This body of opinion was most strongly articulated by Sir Frederick Banbury, a stockbroker representing the City of London, who had acquired a reputation for his unbending opposition to increased social provision and public expenditure. Banbury's technique was simply to adopt and magnify every objection raised to the bill: educational reform was unrelated to the central task of winning the war and was inadmissible pending fresh parliamentary elections; the introduction of continuation schools would cause serious damage to industry; and the increased power likely to be vested in the Board of Education even posed the danger of 'going back to the days of Charles I and Cromwell'.

Banbury was thus an arch exponent of die-hard Conservatism, obstructing the government's bill wherever possible and rejecting outright the principle of improving state education.

15. Punch, 5 June 1918. Ramsden, op.cit., p.112, notes that at least one hundred Unionist M.P.s were on active service throughout the war.
His objections overlapped with a separate but related form of Unionist opposition which viewed the bill entirely in terms of its likely effect on employers and industry. Basil Peto, for example, a backbencher with mining and construction interests, complained that the elementary schools could not be linked with industrial needs if continuation classes imposed a 'Rhondda ration of education' on every child.\(^\text{17}\) He was joined by other members who formally conveyed the reservations of the Federation of British Industries, and who threw their weight behind the movement to postpone or modify the continuation scheme in an attempt to preserve child labour.\(^\text{18}\)

The intransigence of men such as Banbury and Peto certainly provided a persistent and recognisable element within Conservative educational opinion during the First World War, distinguished from the other parties above all by the denial of the need to advance the cause of education. This form of blatant hostility, however, was neither the only Unionist response to Fisher's bill nor - as much of the existing literature implies - the most representative reaction. The attacks of the die-hard wing of the party on the government had been muted after the formation of the second coalition in December 1916, which removed the main anxiety of ineffectiveness in prosecuting the war. Banbury consequently stood alone in his unrepentant opposition, 'so much a Die-Hard', in the words of one colleague, 'that he was almost a caricature'.\(^\text{19}\) Similarly only two members with industrial

\(^{17}\) Ibid., c.353.
\(^{18}\) For a fuller account of Unionists representing the F.B.I., and the distinction between these and other sections of party opinion, see below, pp. 192-5.
\(^{19}\) 'The House of Commons and the party system', draft of unpublished autobiography, n.d., Lady Astor papers, Reading University Library, 1416/1/6/88.
constituencies were prepared to echo Peto's threat to defy the government whip in the event of a division on the second reading. As a result the outright opponents of the education bill were left to propose a series of ineffectual amendments at the committee stage which attracted little support even within Unionist ranks. Peto's efforts to incorporate military drill in continuation schools and practical teaching in rural schools, for example, were backed for the most part only by M.P.s with military and agricultural connections - an indication of the strength of the forces which combined to ensure overall party endorsement of the minister's proposals. As one parliamentary commentator noted, the case for the education bill was such that it was never seriously challenged by 'Mr. Peto's objection that certain plays by Shakespeare and Sir James Barrie could not be produced if child labour were prohibited; or by the frank obscurantism of Sir Frederick Banbury, who declared that higher education was a positive hindrance to a business man'.

The most characteristic response of those Unionists who spoke in the parliamentary debates was one of overall sympathy. This was not solely or even primarily due to the educational enthusiasm of back-benchers: in addition to the hidden influence of party management, the prospect of serious Unionist opposition had been largely removed by Fisher's conscious effort to avoid legislation that was likely to revive party political controversy. In particular, he was aware that the price to be paid for obtaining an agreed measure with the Unionists was to leave untouched the basic foundations of Balfour's 1902 Act - the selective system of secondary schools, the administrative

20. 105 H.C. Deb., 5s., cc.2223-6 and 2265-8, 8 May 1918.
structure of local authorities, and the religious settlement which earlier Liberal governments had sought to amend. In 1917 the minister went as far as addressing a meeting of the National Union of the Conservative and Unionist Associations to reassure them of his desire to avoid sensitive areas of policy\textsuperscript{22} - an indication of the important sense in which Unionists accepted the government's bill because it did not offend their traditional values and assumptions. On the other hand, several spokesmen were more positive in supporting Fisher's ideas, especially those local authority representatives, educationists, teachers and academics whose professional interest led them to take an active role in clarifying party attitudes. To these men proposals such as a compulsory school-leaving age of fourteen, improved access to secondary schools and the introduction of continuation classes had long been acceptable and necessary. They were, in the words of the back-bench academic J.A.R. Marriott, 'the commonplace of educational reformers'.\textsuperscript{23} Thus although Fisher's bill was strongly based on pre-war Liberal thinking, a combination of negative and positive factors made its central provisions acceptable to both the major parties.

The general support provided by Unionists for the education bill itself took on a variety of forms. Some M.P.s were largely uncritical and simply provided practical assistance wherever possible: this applied particularly to men such as Sir George Reid in the Commons, whose help was later contrasted favourably by Fisher with the attitude of many Labour members; and to the Earl of Lytton in the Lords, who

\textsuperscript{22} The Times Educational Supplement, 4 Jan. 1917.
assumed responsibility for guiding the bill through its later stages. 

A more typical reaction, however, was for Unionist members to welcome the underlying principles of Fisher's scheme while not hesitating to criticise individual aspects or clauses. This applied even to those closely associated with education, highlighting the complexity of Unionist responses and the difficulties of defining clear-cut sections of party opinion. Marriott, for example, having pledged his support for the bill on the second reading, proceeded to vote against the government on several amendments during the committee stage, especially those concerned with maintaining parental responsibility, enhancing voluntary effort and preserving individual liberty through diversity in educational institutions. The support of Unionists was therefore tempered on occasions by a suspicion of individual clauses which fell outside their own educational experience. Marriott was a good example of this experience as a product of Repton and Oxford, having little personal contact with state schools as a university lecturer, and proposing amendments in parliament that clearly reflected the values of independent or public school education.

The determination of back-benchers to defend deeply held beliefs resulted in occasional acts of defiance which threatened party political controversy. This was most apparent in the case of two amendments: in the first place an attempt by Marriott to cancel out

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25. e.g. 106 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.923, 29 May 1918.
26. In his own education he mixed with the 'sons of squires, parsons, soldiers, lawyers and other professional men... mostly from good homes'. J.A.R. Marriott, Memories of four score years (London and Glasgow, 1946), p.21.
the clause abolishing all fees in elementary schools; and secondly in an amendment by the Scottish educationist Sir Henry Craik, moving that local authorities should not be charged with providing advanced elementary instruction where adequate local provision already existed. Both these amendments were couched in terms of preserving diversity and choice, although the main underlying motive was a concern to maintain the importance of religious instruction by strengthening the position of the voluntary schools within the state system. Many Unionists regarded the abolition of fees as the removal of a bulwark against the introduction of secular education, and Craik's ultimate intention was that new higher elementary schools should not overshadow the existing equivalent provided by the Church of England and the Roman Catholics. The voting pattern on Craik's amendment in particular illustrated the existence of an undercurrent of party hostility despite the coalition: Unionist critics and supporters of Fisher alike joined together to defy the party whip in order to defend religious education, but were narrowly defeated by a majority which embraced both government and opposition Liberals. As one supporter of Asquith noted, he had not intended to oppose the amendment until seeing 'the cloven hoof behind it' - an indication of the survival of Nonconformist grievances within the divided Liberal ranks. This pattern of voting, however, was never repeated and rarely threatened during the course of the debates on the education bill. The fact that Craik's amendment provided the only example of more Unionists opposing the government than supporting it indicated not only the party's attachment to

27. 107 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.1590, 2 July 1918; 105 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.2044, 7 May 1918.
28. 105 H.C. Deb., 5s., cc.2051-2, 7 May 1918.
29. Ibid., c.2049.
voluntary schools, but also the widespread backing which the government could command.

A more direct challenge to the education bill was evident on those issues which transcended party lines, notably the reservations of local authorities and the opposition to continuation classes. Unionist members were involved in both these movements, although often as supporters of Fisher who challenged these particular clauses as representatives of their constituency or interest group. Henry Hibbert, for example, Unionist M.P. for the Chorley division of Lancashire, played a leading role in the discussions to amend the administrative sections of the bill as a member of the County Councils Association, and he was also prominent in the movement to modify Fisher's scheme of continuation schools. In alliance with Labour back-benchers from Lancashire representing the cotton and textile industries, Hibbert and his associates were responsible for forcing the minister to make important concessions in the scale of the continuation school experiment.\(^{30}\)

There was nevertheless a clear distinction between Hibbert and the official spokesmen for industrial bodies such as the Federation of British Industries. Whereas the latter consistently opposed all aspects of educational reform, Hibbert had spoken out during the war on the need for improved education. He denied any suggestion that Lancashire members were seeking to wreck the education bill, and himself put forward an alternative plan for continuation schools in an attempt to satisfy both educationists and industrialists.\(^{31}\) In his capacity as chairman of the Education Committee on the Lancashire

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31. For further details of Hibbert's views and the alternative scheme of continuation which he presented, see below, pp.194-5.
County Council, Hibbert was also interested in introducing free secondary education throughout the administrative county, an idea which proved far too advanced for the Board of Education. The curtailment of Fisher's initial plan therefore reflected the power of vested interests in determining policy, with part of the opposition to continuation being channelled through the Unionist Party; for men such as Banbury and Peto the result was a cause for celebration, but for Hibbert it was more a case of reconciling individual preferences with the wishes of constituents. Like his Labour Party counterparts who opposed the continuation schools, Hibbert was guilty of political opportunism rather than reactionary opinions.

A final distinctive reaction among those Unionists who sympathised with Fisher's legislation was to provide active support while claiming that the bill could have gone further in improving educational facilities. This small body of opinion was spearheaded by Lord Henry Cavendish-Bentinck, who took the lead in backing up improving amendments put forward by either opposition Liberals or the Labour Party. He was the only Unionist to vote against the government on an amendment designed to introduce a school-leaving age of sixteen and comprehensive maintenance allowances for continuation schools, and himself put forward a proposal to restrict the hours of child labour for those attending continuation classes. In the latter case Bentinck was supported by other Unionists such as J.W. Hills, who spoke of the absurdity

32. H. Hibbert to Fisher, 9 Sep. 1918, P.R.O. ED 24/1640; N.D. Bosworth-Smith to Hibbert, 12 Sep. 1918, ibid.
34. 106 H.C. Deb., 5s., cc.868-76, 29 May 1918. Bentinck was described by Fisher as a 'Tory idealist of rare purity and elevation of character' - Fisher, op.cit., p.110.
of 'bringing a boy who is overtired from his work to his school'.

Both Bentinck and Hills had previously been members of the Unionist Social Reform Committee, a back-bench pressure group established before the war with the aim of modernising the Unionists' policy machinery. The Committee had made little impact on the pre-war party leadership, although at the end of the war a smaller group of ex-members still met regularly with the intention of 'acting together' in parliament. This group contained in men such as Charles Bathurst, Mark Sykes and Edward Wood some of the strongest advocates of the government's bill. Bathurst, for example, was amongst those who urged the reintroduction of the bill after it was held up in 1917 and later welcomed the measure on behalf of agricultural interests; and Edward Wood - in what Fisher described as the best speech on the second reading - linked the bill to wider concerns about post-war reconstruction by speaking of the need to 'repair and recreate the waste of war by such things as health, housing and... education'.

The enthusiasm of former Unionist Social Reform Committee members provided an obvious contrast to the hostility of Banbury and Peto, and illustrated the diverse range of attitudes embraced in Unionist circles. Wood, who was later to succeed Fisher as President of the Board of Education, in fact made a deliberate point of stating that

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35. 106 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.2002, 10 June 1918.
the hostile critics within the party would have little success in seeking to reject the education bill outright. This commitment did not, however, imply the existence of a closely knit and influential social reforming group in Unionist ranks. Edward Wood's warm reception for the bill on the second reading did not prevent him putting the voluntary schools before advanced elementary instruction by voting with Craik's amendment; and by comparison with the modifications put forward by M.P.s such as Marriott, a single amendment relating to child labour was not much to show for a body of progressive social thinking. In effect the active Unionist supporters of Fisher's bill were an unofficial ginger group, motivated by a combination of personal, theoretical, electoral and political considerations, and much more concerned with other aspects of social policy at the end of the war. Henry Bentinck had long stood out as a maverick in his party, and his imitation of Liberal back-benchers in seeking to go beyond the Board of Education's intentions made him just as exceptional in Unionist terms as Banbury at the other extreme. The social reformers, like the die-hard element within the party, occupied only a marginal position in shaping the most widely held Unionist attitudes towards the state education system.

IV

An examination of the parliamentary debates which preceded the passage of the 1918 Education Act demonstrates that at the end of the First World War there was no easily identifiable Unionist education

38. The main concern was with the creation of a government ministry to tackle issues of health, as was indicated in the Sanders diary, 20 Jan. 1918.
policy. The main reasons for this were the absence of any direct ministerial lead from members of the coalition, which was compounded by the fact that no Unionist minister had served at the Board of Education since 1905; and the general lack of interest in education throughout the party as a whole. The Unionists had paid little attention to social issues during the Edwardian period, and after 1914 there were few signs of any wholesale change in policies and priorities: individual members on occasion played an active part in the movement for social reconstruction, but the party overall was preoccupied with winning the war and many supported the education bill primarily as a means of maintaining co-operation with the Lloyd George Liberals.

The Unionist response to the bill, however, cannot be seen entirely in terms of a tactical manoeuvre arising out of the political circumstances of 1917. The parliamentary party was unlikely to reject a measure agreed by Bonar Law and the party leadership, but it was able to express genuinely held views on issues raised by Fisher and the Board. These views varied from hostility to warm endorsement and indicated many overlapping approaches to educational problems, although this does not imply that Unionist opinion amounted to nothing more than a disjointed collection of individual views. Despite the existence of complex and competing individual attitudes, there remained considerable areas of agreement among Unionist M.P.s about the basic structure and purposes of state education.

The concern which most clearly united all shades of Unionist opinion was the determination to preserve the selective and academic nature of the existing secondary schools. Although the public demand for this form of education had risen dramatically in the past few years, Unionists remained convinced that in order to maintain educational standards it must remain a minority provision. Philip
Magnus, for example, the former Director of the City and Guilds' London Institute, was a prominent Unionist supporter of Fisher, but he still warned against the tendency to provide secondary education for increasing numbers of working-class children. The retention of fee-paying was also regarded as an important means of maintaining the traditional functions of the secondary school, a view expressed at one point by Banbury's profession of horror at the idea of secondary education being 'given free to people who cannot afford to pay for it'. These beliefs were not always held in such strident fashion, and many back-benchers accepted both that the overall number of secondary places should be increased in line with public demand and that the provision of scholarships and free places would increase correspondingly. The Unionist Party as a whole, however, was agreed that secondary education was essentially a training for advanced study at university or for a professional career, and must accordingly remain available only to limited numbers of gifted children. For the remainder of children in the elementary schools, Unionists had given lukewarm approval to the principal lines of improvement suggested by the 1918 Act. The need to improve the upper stages of the elementary course through the introduction of advanced instruction had attracted little support, and was clearly given a lower priority than the strengthening of religious education within the elementary system. Similarly the day continuation schools had been accepted by the party as a whole, but received no enthusiastic endorsement.

40. 105 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.2010, 7 May 1918.
41. See especially the comments of Marriott, Bathurst and Wood on the second reading debate.
The assumptions shared by party members pointed to some of the wider political concerns of Unionists at the end of the war. Many back-benchers, for example, expressed their anxiety that in education, as in other areas, the power of the state was steadily superseding voluntary initiative. One M.P. unsuccessfully moved an amendment aimed at making attendance at continuation schools optional, and another complained that with young people now catered for to the age of eighteen, 'the state will soon be doing something or other for them in the interval between that age and the receipt of an old age pension'. These complaints were not of course made exclusively by Unionists, but the force with which they were expressed indicated some of the party's particular concerns. In the first place, the commitment to the educational 'ladder' - enabling clever children to reach secondary education irrespective of social background - was such that any reform of the elementary system was considered unnecessary. As the debates on Fisher's legislation indicated, the main interest for Unionists in the elementary sphere was to uphold voluntary initiative. The continuation schools had been given lukewarm approval, but only as a means towards the pragmatic end of fitting young people for their working lives. These views, when taken together, imply a wider point: that in spite of the wartime concern about social reconstruction, the Unionist Party still embraced a limited view of the state's responsibility in promoting reform. In the case of education, many of the party's attitudes had been developed and formulated long before 1914. Indeed prominent figures such as Marriott, Craik and Magnus all had public careers behind them stretching back to the Victorian period. The Unionist response to the 1918 Act was thus underpinned

42. J.D. Rees - 104 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.744, 18 Mar. 1918.
by a desire to preserve pre-war values. The advances proposed by Fisher had been accepted, but it was still expected that policy would continue along well-established lines, and that the power of the state would not be used to produce any fundamental change in the structure of the education system.

Education had not, however, become any more divisive between the political parties than it had been before the war. Behind the facade of coalition government, Unionists and Liberals were obviously entrenched in their views of the dual system - a point reinforced in 1918 when the National Liberal Federation committed itself to public control of all maintained schools. On purely educational issues there was much greater scope for agreement. The Unionist desire to extend but preserve the exclusive nature of secondary education was shared by Fisher, and it was also agreed that continuation schools should be established and that some children at least might benefit from advanced elementary instruction. In the meantime, the Labour Party's reaction as the third force in parliament had been characterised overall by 'cautious support' for the education bill. The most obvious divisions over education were therefore not along straight party lines. Instead there were distinctions between the minority of Unionists who believed that education, in the words of Frederick Banbury, 'is so much thrown away'; the broad body of Unionist, Liberal and Labour members who sympathised with the education bill, despite reservations on particular points; and the small body of Liberal and Labour back-benchers who regarded the 1918 Act as inadequate, especially in not challenging the horizontal division between secondary and

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43. Sherington, English education, social change and war, pp.117-8.
44. R.S. Barker, Education and politics, p.32.
elementary education. In the early post-war years, however, these shadings of political opinion were to shift considerably, as attention in the educational world moved on to the practical difficulties of implementing the new legislation.

45. Banbury, 104 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.435, 13 Mar. 1918. The extent of the general consensus of opinion was indicated by the parliamentary commentator of Punch, 13 Mar. 1918, who observed that the debate on the education bill 'was one long eulogy, in various keys, of its author'. Amendments sponsored by the Liberals Joseph King and J.H. Whitehouse aimed at raising the school-leaving age to sixteen and increasing the provision of free places in secondary schools were supported by Labour members. See Barker, op.cit., p.31.
The enthusiasm which accompanied the passage of the 1918 Education Act was overshadowed in the immediate post-war years by a concern to reduce expenditure on the social services. In the face of a worsening economic recession, many of Fisher's projected reforms were never translated into reality, and discussions about the nature of educational reform were constantly underpinned by financial difficulties. This failure to fully implement the 1918 reforms itself facilitated a greater emphasis in the educational world on the problems facing children between the ages of eleven and sixteen. The greatly increased demand for secondary education far exceeded the number of places available, which actually fell as a result of economic difficulties after 1919, with the result that thousands of children were confined to the various types of advanced courses being evolved in the elementary schools. The provision of advanced elementary instruction, which had been incorporated in Fisher's Act, was also regarded as important because many of the older children were already considered to be 'marking time' under the elementary curriculum - a problem exacerbated by the failure of the continuation schools.\textsuperscript{1} By 1924 the issue of 'the education of the adolescent' thus came to occupy a central place on the educational agenda: the selective secondary schools could not offer places to all those qualified to attend, and the efforts of

\textsuperscript{1} G.E. Sherington, English education, social change and war, pp.155-71.
local authorities to improve their facilities for the older and more capable elementary pupils were handicapped by regulation and tradition. In these circumstances, party policy-making increasingly revolved around the nature and extent of post-elementary instruction and its relationship with secondary education; and the aim of this chapter is to examine the ways in which the Unionist Party responded to this problem in its early stages. This requires examining in turn the policies of successive post-war governments: the Lloyd George coalition of Liberals and Unionists, which remained in power for four years after the 'coupon election'; the Unionist administrations of 1922 to 1924; and the short-lived Labour government of 1924, which marked the eclipse of the Liberals as the second major party in the state.

II

For eighteen months after the end of the war, H.A.L. Fisher as President of the Board of Education built steadily on the foundations laid by the legislation he had recently guided through parliament. The early establishment of continuation schools was encouraged in several areas, and the new percentage grant from the government provided an incentive to local authorities to expand their education service. During the winter of 1920, however, the social policies of the Lloyd George coalition first slowed down and then went into reverse. In December 1920 the cabinet suddenly announced that any schemes involving increased public spending were to be suspended. In education this decision was followed by the publication of Circular 1190, asserting that for the time being the Board of Education would consider only urgent local schemes.\(^2\) The drive for economy continued

throughout 1921 in the wake of a worsening economic recession. The Prime Minister attempted to tackle this situation by appointing a special committee under Sir Eric Geddes to recommend further reductions over the whole range of government services; and when this committee reported in February 1922, it suggested drastic economies in the education estimates amounting to eighteen million pounds. These proposals aroused widespread opposition and enabled Fisher to soften the effect of reductions. When he left office in October 1922 many of the hopes of 1918 nevertheless remained unfulfilled: the idea of a national network of continuation schools was abandoned, and there were large reductions in teachers' salaries and special services for disabled children. In view of the prominent role which the Unionist Party played in the coalition with the Lloyd George Liberals, the reversal of educational policy in the immediate post-war years raises important questions about the Unionist approach to education, firstly in relation to those party members serving in prominent government positions.

The campaign to reduce educational spending was undoubtedly led from within the cabinet by Unionist ministers. In particular Austen Chamberlain, Chancellor of the Exchequer until replacing Law as party leader in March 1921, used his position as chairman of the cabinet's finance committee to press for large reductions in expenditure. Chamberlain was, in the words of one colleague, 'not the man for new finance', and as early as January 1920 he was complaining to the cabinet about 'the immense growth of expenditure in education since'

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the Act of 1918, and the huge liabilities in prospect. At the end of the year Chamberlain made strenuous efforts to prevent the opening of the small number of continuation schools for which plans had already been accepted; and when Fisher's opposition forced him to concede for the time being, he made it clear that in return the Treasury expected the education department to make corresponding economies elsewhere. After the publication of the Geddes Report, it was Chamberlain - now the Lord Privy Seal - who once more led the assault on Fisher's plan for cuts of three million pounds as wholly inadequate. He wanted to implement the full Geddes proposals if possible, arguing that there was no other way of balancing the budget, reducing taxation and stimulating trade. A similar line was taken by Chamberlain's successor at the Treasury, Sir Robert Horne, who voiced the claims of the business community in stating that the recommendations of the Geddes Report were themselves too modest. After further cabinet consultations which revealed the difficulties of abandoning the percentage grant or breaching the legally binding Burnham agreement on teachers' salaries, Horne was left to announce somewhat reluctantly in March 1922 that a total reduction of just under seven million pounds was being made in education spending.

4. Sir C. Petrie, The life and letters of the Right Hon. Sir Austen Chamberlain (London, 1940), p.134, notes that Chamberlain was reluctant to take on the position of Chancellor because of the difficulty of curbing national expenditure. The quote by Waldorf Astor about Chamberlain is cited in Morgan, op.cit., p.82, who also notes (p.97) that the premature retirement of Law tipped the balance decisively against the social reformers in the cabinet.

5. 'Expenditure on education', memorandum by the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the finance committee, 21 Dec. 1920, P.R.O. CAB 27/71; A. Chamberlain to Fisher, 30 Dec. 1920, P.R.O. ED 24/1258.

6. Minutes of the cabinet committee on parts II and III of the interim report of the committee on national expenditure, 10 Jan. 1922, P.R.O. CAB 27/165.

7. 'Education estimates', memorandum by the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, n.d., P.R.O. ED 24/1310; Cabinet minutes, 15 Feb. 1922, P.R.O. CAB 23/29; 151 H.C. Deb., 5s., cc.431-3, 1 Mar. 1922.
These reductions were generally accepted by the Unionist Party as a whole. In January 1922 Lloyd George was warned by Fisher's deputy at the Board of Education that to implement the Geddes Report in full would lead to considerable opposition in parliament from Labour members, both wings of the Liberal Party, and 'a by no means negligible proportion of Conservatives - those especially who are interested in social reform, and also those associated in the work of local government'. This forecast was borne out by the complaints of Henry Bentinck and Major Ernest Gray, a former President of the National Union of Teachers, who argued that 'the axe is altogether far too clumsy a weapon with which to attack a delicate organisation like the education of the children of this country'. The Unionist opponents of drastic cuts contributed to the political atmosphere which resulted in only the partial implementation of the Geddes Report; but their influence was more than offset by those sections of party opinion which threw their weight behind the most far-reaching reductions possible. As far back as 1920 a small group of Unionist die-hards in the Commons had begun attacking Fisher as an extravagant minister, and the force of this view was strengthened as the economic situation deteriorated at the end of the year. A specially formed 'Unionist Restriction Committee' called for the immediate suspension of the

9. Bentinck argued that if the Government stopped wasting money in Ireland and elsewhere there would be plenty for education - 139 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.2224, 21 Mar. 1921. For the views of Gray, see 152 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.498, 1 Mar. 1922, and 'Education and economy', The Nineteenth Century, 91 (1922), pp.945-51. See also Walter Elliot, 'The return to party politics', The Nineteenth Century, 90 (1921), p.197: 'an aggressive, orchidaceous, high Nationalist, high Protectionist, damnigger Toryism, hacking down education and research to feed the guns, would meet no more devoted opponents than the Conservative members Mr. Hills and Mr. Ormsby-Gore'.

Education Act, and a parliamentary committee chaired by one of the leading Unionist die-hards, Colonel John Gretton, attacked the percentage grant for creating a 'vicious circle of divided financial responsibility'.

The die-hards provided support during 1921 for Lord Rothermere's Anti-Waste League, which alarmed the government with a series of by-election victories; and they subsequently greeted the findings of Geddes with calls for the implementation of 'the Report, the whole Report, and nothing but the Report'. By this stage, however, the influence of the die-hard voice was receding, partly because the cry for economy had come to be accepted by nearly all sections of Unionist opinion.

The most characteristic party response after 1920 was simply to regard economies in education, as in all fields of public spending, as inevitable once economic recession had set in. This view was held most strongly by the industrialists and businessmen who arrived in the Commons in such large numbers after the 1918 election, but it applied equally to many of those who had earlier supported Fisher. J.A.R. Marriott, for example, now warned against the financial implications of the Education Act: he believed that Austen Chamberlain was not sufficiently alive to the need for retrenchment, and he later defended the reductions which followed the Geddes Report as 'inevitable and necessary'.

10. e.g. Sir Henry Page-Croft, founder of the right-wing National Party - 131 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.2591, 15 July 1920; The Daily Telegraph, 10 Nov. 1920; Seventh report of the select committee on national expenditure, Cmd. 248 (1920).


The Unionist Party thus played a central role in the events which overtook the education system in the post-war years. In order to preserve the position of the coalition, Lloyd George had little alternative other than to concur with the demands of his leading cabinet colleagues once the severity of the economic situation became clear. The Unionist Party in parliament, which far outnumbered the Liberal supporters of the coalition, quickly became impatient with the government's inability to face up to the new circumstances. At the beginning of 1921, the government only narrowly avoided defeat on a set of departmental estimates at the hands of Unionist dissidents; and the insistence of the Treasury under Chamberlain about stopping the continuation schools was underpinned by the belief that without such a step, the cabinet would be unable to 'show their Unionist supporters any saving on educational expenditure'.

In the final analysis, however, Unionists were the loudest but not the only advocates of economy. The belief that reduced public spending was essential in order to lower taxation, free money for the expansion of trade and in turn alleviate unemployment, embraced all sections of political opinion in the early 1920s. Within the government, Liberal ministers such as Fisher questioned only the scale, not the necessity for, economies; and in parliament, the demands for reductions became so widespread that one commentator referred to the Commons as a 'House of Economists'.

The economy measures which overshadowed the final years of the Lloyd George coalition resulted in an absence of discussion about the general principles of educational reform. In 1920 for example, the important

report of a departmental committee under Hilton Young into scholarships and free places at secondary schools went largely unnoticed by the political parties. The repercussions of economy did, however, facilitate one move which highlighted the problems of education for the adolescent in 1922. In the aftermath of the failure of continuation schools, the Labour publicist R.H. Tawney provided a radical new assessment of the necessary direction of reform in his seminal work, _Secondary education for all_. Tawney expressed the belief of the Labour Party's education advisory committee that in place of the present divided system all children should receive primary education to the age of eleven, followed by a course of secondary education, equal in quality and prestige to that already in existence and conducted under regulations for 'higher', rather than 'elementary' schools. Hence by 1922 Labour appeared to offer a clear alternative to the two major parties: Fisher and the Liberals now stood alone in their commitment to the discredited continuation schools, while the Unionist Party fell back upon an extension of the 'ladder' as the primary object of education policy.

15. Report of the departmental committee on scholarships, free places and maintenance allowances, Cmd.968 (1920). This suggested that three quarters of the child population were capable of benefiting from secondary education, although the medium term target it proposed was twenty secondary school places per thousand of the population. It also advocated an increase in the minimum number of free places in grant-aided secondary schools from 25% to 40%. See G. Sutherland, _Ability, merit and measurement: mental testing and English education 1880-1940_ (forthcoming).

16. R.H. Tawney (ed.), _Secondary education for all_ (London, 1922). Tawney did not mean education for all in the existing secondary schools, rather a distinct course or phase of secondary education after the age of eleven, conducted in a variety of types of school. The term 'secondary' was thus coming to have two uses in the 1920s, and as the idea of a secondary stage of education developed, so existing secondary schools were increasingly called grammar schools. Hereafter 'secondary' refers to the grammar schools unless otherwise stated. The terms 'advanced elementary instruction', 'post-elementary' and 'post-primary' all refer to children aged over eleven in schools governed by the regulations for elementary education.
III

The collapse of the Lloyd George coalition brought the Unionist Party to power in its own right for the first time since 1905. The new government was to remain in office for little more than a year before being defeated in a further election called on the tariff issue, although during this period responsibility for education policy now rested with a Unionist minister, Edward Wood. The administration of Bonar Law and his successor in May 1923, Stanley Baldwin, provides the first opportunity to examine the educational policies pursued by Unionists at ministerial level between the wars; as distinct from the attitudes and opinions expressed by different sections of the party. The worst features of Unionist involvement in educational affairs have certainly been detected in Edward Wood's term as President of the Board of Education. The official biographer of Wood, later the first earl of Halifax, has noted that he was preoccupied with hunting on the family estates in Yorkshire, and that civil servants were largely responsible for the conduct of policy. Wood himself had 'little, if any, interest in educational problems, past or present'.

This assessment has been used as part of a wider attack on the Unionist approach to state education, particularly in relation to expenditure. The uninspired administration of Law and Baldwin, it has been claimed, did nothing to reverse the policy of strict economy in public spending pursued by the coalition, and it required the advent of a Labour government in 1924 to relieve economy and point the way to future educational developments.

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personal and political arguments has tended towards the conclusion that Edward Wood was one of the least successful occupants of the Board of Education. The object of this section is to modify such claims by placing Wood's term of office within the context of the existing economic and political conditions, and by tracing the response of Unionists to the new concern with the education of the adolescent.

The idea of Wood’s indifference to education has been, if not exaggerated, then at least mis-stated. The Halifax family had always possessed a strong whig and liberal tradition, and after entering parliament as the Conservative member for Ripon in 1910, Wood had become associated with the younger, progressive wing of the party. Before the First World War he was a member of the Unionist Social Reform Committee, and he remained loyal to the traditions of this group by standing out in 1918 as one of the staunchest Unionist supporters of Fisher’s Education Act. Wood welcomed the Act as a measure of social reconstruction, and he particularly favoured the provisions designed to improve elementary education: the abolition of the half-time system of child labour, the raising of the school-leaving age to fourteen, and the establishment of part-time continuation schools. A few months later Wood published a short work entitled The great opportunity, which confirmed his awareness of the problems facing the education system. In this he argued that the educational ladder, which allowed children from the elementary schools to advance to the grant-aided secondary schools, needed to be broadened for the

benefit of children from deprived backgrounds.\(^{21}\) An assessment of Wood's early career does not imply that he had any great interest in education. The concern with foreign affairs which dominated his later career had already become a major political interest, reinforced by a short spell at the Colonial Office in 1921. In essence Wood was typical of the gentleman amateur in politics, preferring his estates to the duties of public office. This did not mean, however, that he would prove an unsuccessful minister, or that he could not be identified with a particular section of Unionist opinion. Bonar Law's choice of ministers was of course partly restricted in November 1922 by the refusal of the Conservative coalitionists to take office after the Carlton Club meeting, but in view of his party's lack of interest in education, Edward Wood went to the Board of Education with a better claim than most Unionists and with a past record of supporting modest reform.

When Wood arrived at the Board, the prospects for any major reforms in education were not encouraging. This was partly due to the low political priority of education, especially under a Unionist government. The President himself had to wait several months before he was allowed the assistance of a junior minister. 'On the advice of the Treasury', the Prime Minister informed him, 'I have hitherto gone on the supposition that it would not be necessary to fill the post of Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education. My idea has been that this is one of the posts in regard to which we might economise'.\(^{22}\) The advice of the Treasury was of course the most powerful restraint on educational

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expenditure, and this points to the economic context in which Wood's policy must be considered. After the Geddes 'axe' had fallen on education earlier in the year, many of the problems facing the coalition had been passed on, and the change of government did not affect the seriousness of the economic position. The Unionists in fact inherited a prospective budget deficit of sixty five million pounds in 1922, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer made it clear that further reductions in the spending of all departments were necessary simply to avoid increased taxation. In these circumstances Wood could do little more than imitate his predecessor Fisher, who since early 1921 had been reduced to the role of resisting Treasury demands for further spending cuts. In the face of such clearly defined financial constraints, Wood's work as an education minister must be judged firstly by his inclination and ability to stand up against the Treasury.

The concern with economy which overshadowed Wood's term at the Board of Education brought the minister into conflict with Treasury officials on several occasions. The most prominent of these, in terms of its possible implications for educational finance, concerned the moves to introduce parliamentary legislation in 1923. The coalition government had earlier sponsored an economy bill which contained clauses designed to give legislative effect to the educational proposals of the Geddes committee. The main recommendation was for a reduction of parliamentary grant, in effect overriding the obligation of the Exchequer to pay a percentage of all approved local authority spending. The introduction of a separate education measure to pursue this idea was considered when the Unionists came to office, but Wood took a firm stand against any form of legislative reduction. He was influenced

at this stage by the views of the Municipal Reform (Conservative) majority on the London County Council, who had long campaigned for the introduction of the percentage grant; and he informed the cabinet that local authorities were already subject to restrictions on their spending and would resent a violation of the 1918 Act which placed greater authority in central government. The President's argument eventually secured the withdrawal of the offending clause, despite protests from the Treasury that the prospect of tighter control over educational expenditure was being abandoned.

The pattern of this incident was repeated later in 1923, when Baldwin's decision to call for a general election was preceded by an investigation into the possible ways of adjusting the educational system to counter the effects of juvenile unemployment. Wood responded by calling in the first place for a small advance in secondary education. In particular the President sought to make up the recent reduction in secondary admissions by amending the Board's policy on free places, which remained fixed at a minimum of twenty five per cent in every grant-aided school, despite the advice of the Hilton Young Committee. In practice the decline in total admissions was automatically resulting in fewer free places, and in July 1922 the cabinet had declared that the existing proportion of these places in each individual school should not be increased. Wood sought to improve this situation by requesting a more flexible attitude from the Treasury, but at first he received only an unpublicised assurance that free places could be increased in areas of particular economic hardship. In the

24. 'Economy (miscellaneous provisions) bill', memorandum by the President of the Board of Education, 25 Jan. 1923, P.R.O. CAB 27/211.
discussions on juvenile unemployment, the President repeated his suggestion as part of a scheme 'to give rather more freedom in the working of well-established educational principles which we have been constrained to check under the stress of economy'. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Neville Chamberlain, subsequently agreed that an extra five thousand free places could be created in order to prevent many able children from becoming competitors in the labour market.

In the context of juvenile unemployment, Wood also concentrated on the issue of maintenance allowances for children receiving advanced instruction in the elementary schools. The acute shortage of places in the existing secondary schools had intensified the efforts of local authorities to provide advanced courses, but the reliance of many families on the industrial earnings of their children often resulted in failure to attend senior classes or central schools. The 1918 Act had made only limited provision for the payment of allowances to maintain children for longer periods at school, and in the aftermath of the Geddes axe the Treasury had further insisted that spending on this service should remain static for at least three years. Wood argued against this decision in cabinet discussions at the end of 1923. He claimed that the case for maintenance allowances and remission of secondary school fees was far stronger in the existing climate of unemployment, and he referred to the number of children debarred by poverty from attending courses of advanced instruction.

27. Report of the cabinet juvenile unemployment committee (chairman, the Chancellor of the Exchequer), Jan. 1924, P.R.O. CAB 27/228. For a fuller discussion of the government's approach to juvenile unemployment, see below, pp.203-4.
28. This decision was publicised by Board of Education, Circular 1265, 6 June 1922.
The Chancellor was persuaded by Wood that it was necessary to remove restrictions on the provision of maintenance allowances in order to avoid a hostile reaction among local authorities. This further success for the President was once more secured in the face of protests from Treasury officials, in this instance over the cost of an extensive system of state grants and allowances.30

In the event the President's ideas for an increase in free places and maintenance allowances were not implemented by the Unionist government. Instead the cabinet decided to reserve judgement on this and other aspects of policy, as the election defeat of December 1923 made the government's survival improbable. This failure to carry out the proposals does not, however, detract from their importance in highlighting the distinction between the determination of the Treasury to reduce spending and the willingness of Wood to defend his departmental interests. In the circumstances of continuing financial restrictions, the President's concern to defend at least the framework of the 1918 Act meant that his whole term of office was overshadowed by the struggle to wring small concessions from the Treasury. Even Wood's political opponents noticed that he introduced the reduction in the education estimates for 1923 with mixed feelings; and shortly before leaving the Board, he increased the figure prepared by civil servants for the following estimates on the grounds that further reductions would be unacceptable to local authorities.31 This limited and defensive

31. See the speeches of Morgan Jones (Labour) and Fisher (Liberal) in 164 H.C. Deb., 5s., cc.1523-35, 31 May 1923. Wood's suggested increase in the estimates was recalled later in 'Board of Education estimates 1925-1926', memorandum by H.W. Orange, 6 Dec. 1924, P.R.O. ED 24/1290.
role in resisting Treasury encroachments itself reflected the assumption that deflationary measures offered the only remedy for dealing with industrial and economic recession. Wood himself believed that it was not possible to think of spending unlimited sums of public money when the nation was bankrupt. He told one party colleague that 'it is difficult, if not impossible, to set a term to the educational expansion that is theoretically possible and even desirable. Any educational administrator, therefore, who seeks to pursue counsels of moderation will inevitably, wherever he draws the line, be the target of attack'. The tone of Edward Wood's approach to educational finance was thus set by a combination of economic orthodoxy and commitment to moderate reform: his declared aim was to apply limited funds to the best advantage by steering a middle course between those enthusiasts who called for unlimited spending, and those reactionaries who argued that money was being wasted on state education.33

During Wood's term of office the Unionist Party in parliament inclined towards the latter rather than the former view. There were individual back-benchers who complained about the likely effects of further reductions in spending, such as Oliver Stanley, one of a small group of younger Unionist M.P.s calling for a more positive approach to social policy overall.34 These complaints, however, were isolated and echoed only by those traditionally identified with the education issue: in particular Henry Bentinck and Nancy Astor, who was shouted down at the party's annual conference in 1922 for suggesting that unless educational facilities were improved, thousands of children

32. Wood to E. Cadogan, 13 Dec. 1923, P.R.O. ED 24/1757.
33. 162 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.804, 29 Mar. 1923.
turned out of school at fourteen would become 'red-hot Socialists'.

The short shrift given to Astor's views pointed to the pressure which Wood came under from the opposite extreme of party opinion - those who advocated further cuts in expenditure to meet the national emergency. These attacks occurred both in parliament and behind the scenes, notably when a deputation of Unionist back-benchers visited the Prime Minister in July 1923 to air their grievances. The deputation included many of the die-hards who had called for the full implementation of the Geddes Report, and the general tone was set by John Gretton, who spoke of the 'wild plan of expenditure which had been launched by Mr. Fisher's Act'. The remedies favoured by members of the deputation were voiced by its leader, Francis Harrison, an expert in currency affairs who argued that the overriding importance of reducing taxation necessitated changes in all aspects of the minister's policy. He was particularly outspoken on elementary education, where he called for a raising of the school entry age to six and the reduction of grants to special schools, on the grounds that 'mentally deficient children would probably be better killed'. Harrison further claimed that he could have mustered at least two hundred Unionist M.P.s to support his deputation, although it was unlikely that such a number shared his extreme views. The extent to which the die-hards felt compelled to press their case suggests that unlike the period associated with the Geddes axe, when the cry for economy had been taken up by

all sections of the party, there was no longer a widespread commitment to extreme reductions. With Edward Wood carefully holding the line between the two extremes, there was little reason for the broad body of Unionist opinion to complain. As one newspaper noted, for the majority of party members, the 'safe middle way is so broad and obvious'.

The concern with economy dominated Wood's term at the Board, but it did not entirely preclude discussion of the underlying trend and assumptions of education policy. In particular, the need to improve education for the adolescent was becoming an increasing focus of attention. The secondary schools were unable to accommodate many of those qualified to attend, and the elementary schools were continually handicapped in providing advanced instruction; and the inadequacy of adolescent education which this situation produced had of course been the theme of Tawney's recent initiative on behalf of the Labour party. Edward Wood, although he did not address the question of the relationship between the two separately administered forms of state schooling, was conscious of the new problems facing the adolescent. The great opportunity had already indicated his desire to make secondary education more accessible, and in office Wood's declared aims were to reverse the decline in secondary admissions while ensuring that no child of adequate intellectual merit was debarred by poverty from attaining the best education the state could provide. When asked whether he intended to provide universal secondary education at no cost or to allow free secondary schooling only to brilliant working-class children, the President replied that these two alternatives were not exhaustive and that he was not prepared to embrace either.

37. The Daily Telegraph, 2 June 1923.
The proposal to increase the number of free places at the end of 1923 was a direct reflection of Wood's view of secondary education: through such means he hoped to make the selective tradition of secondary schooling compatible with a broader base for the educational ladder. By the time he left office, Wood had taken a small step in this direction by securing in the face of Treasury opposition a slight increase in the number of secondary school places.\(^39\)

The President's policy towards the secondary schools, which reflected the traditional Unionist adherence to the idea of the ladder, was accompanied by a recognition of the need to improve post-elementary instruction as an essential part of policy towards the adolescent. The continuation schools established under the 1918 Act had already been effectively abandoned before Wood arrived in office, and financial circumstances made it equally unlikely that school life would be extended by an increase in the compulsory leaving age. Wood himself warned against the expense of such a measure, which he knew was unacceptable to both Board officials and Unionist opinion,\(^40\) although he remained flexible when this issue was raised at local level. Several requests to raise the school-leaving age locally under the terms of the 1918 Act had been rejected during Fisher's last year at the Board, and Wood's desire to reverse this trend by allowing one local proposal to go ahead in 1923 was in fact prevented only by the intransigence of the Chancellor.\(^41\) In the meantime, the President preferred advanced instruction as the best means of improving the upper stages of the

\(^38\) 159 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.1221, 4 Dec. 1922.  
\(^40\) Report of the Chancellor's juvenile unemployment committee, Jan. 1924, P.R.O. CAB 27/228.  
\(^41\) Chamberlain to Wood, 26 Sep. 1923, P.R.O. ED 24/1537.
elementary system. His advocacy of increased maintenance allowances reflected a belief that the central schools in London offered a suitable means of providing children with something better than ordinary elementary education. In this context Wood also referred to the need to face up to the problems of the 'dual system': the existence of church schools alongside local authority provision was likely to obstruct the spread of advanced instruction as the voluntary bodies lacked the financial resources to make improvements - an important recognition by a high church Anglican in view of the party's attitude in 1918. A final indication of Wood's interest in post-elementary reform was provided by the approval he gave for an investigation into adolescent education, other than in the secondary schools, by the Board of Education's Consultative Committee in December 1923. This incident highlighted the limitations and significance of Wood's approach: he characteristically played no part in originating the idea of a national investigation into post-elementary reform, the development of which in 1923 was negligible; but a new concern for reform was being taken on board by the Unionist Party for the first time, and Wood was to refer to the importance of the Committee's investigation long before its findings were published in 1926.

Edward Wood's term at the Board of Education appeared to many in the educational world as an extension of the period of restrictions associated with the Geddes axe. Circular 1190 was not withdrawn, and many of the provisions of the 1918 Act remained inoperative.

42. 164 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.1510, 31 May 1923.
43. Ibid., c.1507. See below, pp. 154-6, for an account of Wood's policy towards the church schools.
44. Wood's reference to the investigation in 1924 was made during the estimates debate - 176 H.C. Deb., 5s., cc.1182-3, 22 July 1924.
In addition, the minister personally had displayed little genuine interest in educational problems. He did refer in vague terms to the need for an educated democracy, and he clearly attached considerable value to religious instruction as the basis of any schooling; but for the most part Wood had been content to echo the views and policies of leading officials at the Board. These limitations must, however, be set against the political and economic constraints of the period, especially the power of the Treasury in restricting the spending of all departments. By putting forward departmental views in defiance of the Treasury, Wood was responsible for a slight shift in official Unionist policy towards the adolescent. The privileged position of the secondary school was still to be defended, but for the first time a Unionist minister promoted the idea that this was not incompatible with the development of advanced elementary instruction. This shift went unnoticed by many Unionists, who played little part in the formation of policy and were more concerned that Wood complied with the government's cautious image; it nevertheless provided the basis for a Unionist policy towards the adolescent to rival the aspirations of the Labour Party, which now took charge of the nation's educational affairs for the first time.

IV

The formation of the first Labour government early in 1924 coincided with a significant improvement in the financial conditions affecting the education service, owing to both a fall in school numbers and the termination of the government's obligation to assist ex-service

45. J.A. Ramsden, The age of Balfour and Baldwin, p.177.
students. As a result Wood's successor at the Board of Education, Charles Trevelyan, immediately secured the withdrawal of Circular 1190 and set about 'reversing the engines' after three years of extreme stringency. The Labour government's policy towards the adolescent represented something of a compromise between two views held within party ranks: the egalitarianism of Tawney and Labour's education advisory committee, which now sought to go beyond Fisher's Act, and the more meritocratic tradition which had defended the framework of the Act and still regarded the improvement of access to the superior standard of the secondary school as a primary object of policy. Trevelyan, who had affinities with the progressives Liberals prominent in their criticism of the 1918 Act, began by planning to increase the number of secondary school places, doubling the target of attainment to twenty places per thousand of the population. He did not adopt Hilton Young's suggestion of providing forty per cent of places free of charge, but he did introduce a special grant for any free places awarded in excess of the present minimum, and also made known his willingness to consider plans from authorities who wanted to abolish fees altogether. In the sphere of elementary education, Trevelyan was less successful in encouraging local schemes to raise the school-leaving age to fifteen, and he concentrated instead on providing administrative backing for advanced elementary instruction. Tawney and his associates had originally condemned the development of senior classes and central schools as 'reformism', as they were invariably conducted by law under the inferior elementary regulations. The popularity of such development in the educational world, however, led the advisory committee to drop their objections; and during the year many local authorities began submitting schemes of development which included provision for advanced instruction.

46. Simon, op.cit., pp.78-84.
Unlike many of his colleagues, Trevelyan was considered to be a success when the short-lived Labour administration came to an end in November 1924.47

The Unionist response to Labour policy in 1924 was to produce a more detailed statement of aims and priorities than in any previous party pronouncement. The recommendations put forward in the Unionist election manifesto at the end of the year themselves represented a rare example of different sections of the party working together in order to formulate policy. This process was itself part of the wider stimulus to policy-making and organisation provided by the shock of electoral defeat in 1923: as one newspaper declared in March 1924, more thinking about the nature of Unionism had taken place since Labour came to power than in the entire previous decade.48 The party leadership now established a 'shadow cabinet', with former ministers and leading members presiding over a system of parliamentary committees which sought to devise more coherent policies for a whole range of issues.49

In the case of education, Edward Wood played an important advisory role, although he was now giving greater attention to the problems of agriculture; and this absence of a strong lead from national leaders allowed a greater influence than hitherto for back-benchers, organised for the first time in the 'Unionist Education Committee'. In addition to this group, ideas also filtered upwards from a body of teachers sympathetic to the Unionist cause who, after being called together at the party's Central Office early in 1924, decided to form the 'Conservative Teachers' Advisory Committee'. Under the leadership

47. R.S. Barker, Education and politics, pp.40-55.
48. The Times, 14 Mar. 1924.
of C.W. Crook, a prominent member of the National Union of Teachers as well as a Unionist M.P., this committee ensured that the party's manifesto in 1924 contained a commitment to obligatory salary scales for teachers.\(^50\) It also provided backing for the policy now espoused towards the adolescent: an increase in the number of secondary school places, with a corresponding increase of scholarships and free places, and the development of central schools and other forms of advanced elementary instruction.\(^51\)

The Unionist manifesto indicated a general willingness to accept the main lines of Labour education policy. From the opposition benches, Edward Wood agreed with Trevelyan's emphasis on the need for continuous national advance, and added that 'there is really no big ground of controversy on the educational field at the present moment by which we are divided'. On behalf of his party, Wood accepted the need for an expansion of secondary places, which Trevelyan had adapted from the findings of the Hilton Young Committee; and he referred to the central schools as the best means of remedying the inadequate provision made for the majority who attended elementary schools. It was in this context that Wood noted the importance of the investigation currently being undertaken by the Consultative Committee.\(^52\) These views were echoed by other Unionist spokesmen such as Annesley Somerville, an ex-master at Eton and a figure who was to remain

\(^{50}\) On the Unionist education committee, see the later comment of R.P. Hudson to Nancy Astor, 1 Dec. 1926, Astor papers, 1416/1/1/198. For the C.T.A.C., see C.W. Crook to Cap. H. Jessel, 17 Nov. 1923, P.R.O. ED 24/1757; The Teacher's World, 12 Nov. 1924; and The Times Educational Supplement, 9 Jan. 1926, which recounts the origins of the group and claims that it was influential behind the scenes in the drafting of the 1924 manifesto.

\(^{51}\) National Unionist Association, Tracts and leaflets, no.2443, Baldwin's election address (London, 1924).

\(^{52}\) 776 H.C. Deb., 58., cc.1174-82, 22 July 1924.
influential in the parliamentary education group throughout the inter-war period. Somerville illustrated the close connection which had arisen between front- and back-bench opinion in opposition by emphasising the urgency of both more secondary schools and an extension of the London central schools in order to tackle the problems of education and unemployment for those between eleven and fifteen. This response was characteristic of the absence of parliamentary criticism which persisted throughout the short period of Trevelyan's tenure of the Board of Education. The extent to which party priorities overlapped in 1924 was recognised by the Labour minister himself, who observed that the Unionists had objected very little to the spirit of his administration.

The six years after the end of the First World War had produced minor changes in Unionist Party policy and attitudes towards education. At ministerial level, Edward Wood had provided a lead by encouraging the development of advanced elementary instruction, thus widening the party's previously exclusive concern with the traditional secondary school. This initiative had not been received enthusiastically by Unionists as a whole, but this did not mean that the party's approach consisted of uniform hostility. The configuration of party views remained in fact highly complex. At one extreme, a minority of die-hards continued to oppose reform in an uncompromising fashion. Trevelyan's estimates in 1924 were interrupted by one M.P. who, on

53. Ibid., cc.1218-20. Somerville's position as the acknowledged leader of the education group in the Commons was later noted in Education, 8 Jan. 1926.
behalf of industrial interests, condemned the high level of education spending 'root and branch'.\(^{55}\) Conversely, a small number of back-benchers were critical of successive governments for not pursuing a sufficiently active policy. Bentinck and Astor stood out in this context, emphasising their distinctiveness in 1924 by proposing private members' bills aimed at raising the school-leaving age to sixteen.\(^ {56}\) A greater sympathy for the minister was shown by a further identifiable group: those involved in education as local authority representatives or teachers, now organised along more formal lines both inside and outside parliament. For many Unionists, however, the key concern in education since the war had been to hold down expenditure in difficult financial circumstances. The majority of party members were in fact either indifferent to educational issues or - by virtue of their background and experience of private education - incapable of addressing the problems of the state system. This was illustrated most conspicuously by Sir Martin Conway, M.P. for Cambridge University, who in the course of a rambling speech in 1924 concentrated primarily on his recollection of 'the days of his youth, when ambitious boys ran away to sea'.\(^ {57}\) Unionist opinion in the early 1920s showed few signs of encouraging a more active role by the state in promoting educational reform.

The post-war years had important implications finally for education as a political issue. The emergence of education for the adolescent as a key issue had in particular helped to clarify party policies. In comparison to the debates on the 1918 Act, when cross-party agreement had been frequent, the experience of sustained economy hardened divisions

\(^{55}\) Harry Becker - 176 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.1215, 22 July 1924.
\(^{56}\) The Times Educational Supplement, 1 Mar. 1924; The Times, 11 Aug. 1924.
\(^{57}\) Punch, 30 July 1924.
made it possible to identify specific party approaches to the adolescent. The Liberal Party alone continued to place faith in the continuation school: Fisher maintained that with parents still dependent on the industrial earnings of their children, it was necessary to combine full-time training for limited numbers in secondary schools with part-time training for the majority at continuation classes.\footnote{58}

The Liberals, however, had been displaced in 1924 by the Labour Party, which sought the extension of free secondary education and the reorganisation of the elementary system, ultimately to a point where all adolescent education would be of equal standard.\footnote{59} The Unionists, by contrast, had accepted the need to provide more places in the secondary schools, but were still unclear as to how far and in what ways the benefits of post-elementary instruction should be extended.\footnote{60}

Despite these obvious differences, the actual course of events in the immediate post-war years was dictated by a variety of political and economic factors, in particular the financial downturn which took place after 1919. The practical constraints of government in fact produced a degree of continuity in the policies of successive administrations, with ministers from each of the three main parties espousing the development of secondary and post-elementary education in the face of persistent economic difficulties. In 1924 Lord Eustace Percy, who served as Parliamentary Secretary at the Board of Education under Edward Wood, was able to claim that the need for continuous

\footnote{58. See Fisher's comments during the estimates debate, as well as his article, 'Lines of educational advance', \textit{Contemporary Review}, 124 (1923), pp.443-4.}
\footnote{59. Barker, \textit{op.cit.}, p.55.}
\footnote{60. The emphasis in party literature was still focused on the secondary school, e.g. National Unionist Association, \textit{Looking ahead} (London, 1924), p.12. The party's concern with this was reflected in the fact that the only mild criticism of Trevelyan in 1924 concerned the possible dilution of grammar school standards through the hasty extension of scholarship places - see Sir Charles Yate, 175 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.573, 26 June 1924.}
advance proclaimed by Trevelyan had already been recognised by the previous Unionist administration. Percy was soon to have the opportunity of demonstrating his commitment to a policy of continuity, for he was to succeed Trevelyan as President of the Board after the subsequent defeat of the Labour government.

61. 176 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.1255, 22 July 1924.
CHAPTER 4


I

The problems of how best to educate children in their adolescence, which had come to occupy a prominent position in educational debate after the First World War, continued to provide a focus of attention during the second half of the 1920s. With the failure of the continuation schools and the persistent scarcity of secondary school places, particular interest centred on possible ways of improving the education of older children in the public elementary schools - the subject of a thorough investigation by the Board of Education's Consultative Committee. The findings of this investigation, which were eventually published in the influential 'Hadow Report' of 1926, did much to popularise the idea that elementary and secondary education should be regarded not as distinct types of schooling, but as successive stages of the same process. This new and more widespread interest in the relationship between two forms of education hitherto divided along lines of social class produced no radical departures in policy; and the responsibility for this has been primarily attributed to the Conservative government elected in 1924 and in power until May 1929. This government, it has been claimed, not only set its face against the main findings of the Hadow Report, but also launched a fresh offensive against educational expenditure in an attempt to control public spending, thereby demonstrating the party's contempt for state schooling.¹

¹ B. Simon, The politics of educational reform, pp.84-141; N. Middleton and S. Weitzman, A place for everyone, pp.152-5.
The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate that the existing accounts of Baldwin's second government, more so than any other period between the wars, provide an over-simplified account of education as a party political issue. The argument pursued here does not seek to overturn completely the well-established outline of the interest in educational reform shown by the political parties. Many members of the Conservative Party, which dropped the name Unionist in 1924, continued to display little interest in social issues: this applied both at the leadership level - in the cabinet and at Central Office - and throughout the lower ranks of the party nationally and locally. An attitude of indifference reflected in part the low political priority accorded to education, which was not considered to be a vote-winner in the same way as other aspects of social reform in the period such as housing or unemployment benefit.\(^2\) This low political priority provides the basic context in which Conservative education policy must be considered; and to it should be added the perennial difficulties posed by the power of the Treasury and the well-established views of leading civil servants at the Board of Education. When these constraints are taken into account, it becomes possible to establish an alternative framework for analysing education and politics, in which some at least of the existing assumptions about Conservative policy in the 1920s must be modified. This framework can be established by concentrating in the following account on the policies of the Conservative minister who served continuously at the Board of Education after 1924, Lord Eustace Percy. His term of office fell into three broad phases: the first year after the electoral victory of 1924; the period of late 1925 and 1926, which was overshadowed by the

threat of major reductions in spending; and the two years following
the publication of the Hadow Report. One general issue united and
underpinned each of these three stages - the issue known to
contemporaries by the general term 'the education of the adolescent'.

II

The immediate post-war years had witnessed two party initiatives
to tackle the problems of education for the adolescent. The Liberal
Party under H.A.L. Fisher had promoted the idea of compulsory
continuation schools, although the attempt to introduce part-time
instruction for all children leaving the elementary schools at fourteen
on a national scale had proved unsuccessful. In the aftermath of
this failure, the Labour Party now offered a more direct challenge
to the horizontal division between secondary and elementary education
in the form of Tawney's Secondary education for all. The Conservative
Party, by contrast, embraced neither of these policies, although Edward
Wood's term of office had indicated a slight post-war shift in party
opinion - still defending the privileged position of the secondary
school while recognising the need to provide advanced elementary
instruction. The idea of two successive stages of a single process,
linking primary and secondary education, bore little relation to the
educational realities of the early 1920s, though it is against such
a standard that Conservative policy during the period has usually
been condemned. The election of Baldwin's Conservative government
in October 1924, for example, is said to have marked the return to
a long-term strategy of containment after the advances planned by
the previous Labour administration. Lord Eustace Percy, depicted
as an undistinguished education minister whose aristocratic background
made him incapable of understanding the needs of the state schools, reinforced this strategy from the outset by dismissing a Labour Party motion in parliament calling for some form of secondary education for all children up to the age of sixteen. The idea of a negative strategy of containment towards the adolescent, in both the existing secondary schools and the advanced stage of elementary education, is central to criticisms of Conservative policy between the wars. It provides the main connecting theme of this chapter, and requires examination firstly with reference to Eustace Percy's early months at the Board of Education.

After a distinguished academic record at Oxford and an early career in the diplomatic service, Lord Eustace Percy - the youngest son of the seventh duke of Northumberland - had entered politics as a Municipal Reform member of the London County Council. In 1921 he was elected to parliament as Conservative member for Hastings, and quickly received promotion to junior ministerial positions at the Ministry of Health and the Board of Education. Percy soon became identified with a sharp intellect and a vigorous, sometimes abrasive, manner in political debate: Trevelyan was later to refer to his 'well developed facility for disintegrating political co-operation'. His rapid rise to the cabinet as President of the Board of Education in 1924 - becoming the youngest member of Baldwin's team of ministers - was partly due to the lack of interest shown by Conservatives in

education, and the absence of suitable alternatives after Edward Wood had opted for the more congenial post of Minister of Agriculture. At the same time, Percy also had the personal backing of the Prime Minister, which itself derived in part from an identification with the more progressive elements of the Conservative Party. Like many young party members who had experienced the war, Percy believed that Conservatism needed to be redefined if it was to survive, becoming more flexible in economic and social policy in particular. His attitude towards education was underpinned by the belief - which like much else he shared with his Liberal predecessor Fisher - that the creation of an educated democracy was essential to the stability of an advanced industrial nation. These views brought Percy particularly close to the Prime Minister, in outlook if not in temperament; and he brought to office Baldwin's preference for national priorities over class prejudices. This approach was necessary in education, Percy later recorded, as the elementary schools in the 1920s were 'as much "finishing" schools for manual workers as Miss Pinkerton's academy was a finishing school for young ladies; and a "class" education of this kind was coming to be increasingly suspected and resented'. In Eustace Percy, the Board of Education had acquired a Conservative minister with an unusual degree of interest in social reform; an advocate of Baldwin's 'New Conservatism'.

5. K. Middlemas (ed.), Thomas Jones: Whitehall Diary (London, 1969), p.301, records that Baldwin asked whether there was anybody in the party sufficiently interested to take up the post.


7. Percy, op.cit., p.95; Ramsden, op.cit., chs. 9 and 12 - for an analysis of the meaning and impact of 'New Conservatism'.
The new President's main concern in his early months at the Board was to pursue the idea of continuous advance in national policy towards the adolescent, as expounded in 1924 by Trevelyan. Shortly after coming to office Percy informed the Permanent Secretary, Selby-Bigge, that he wanted to avoid any breach of continuity with his predecessor's policy while holding down expenditure for some time, pending the reintroduction of the idea contained in the 1918 Act that local authorities should submit planned schemes of educational development for their areas.\(^8\) One of the President's first actions was to cancel, primarily on administrative grounds, the special grant introduced by Trevelyan to encourage free places in addition to the minimum required in state-aided secondary schools.\(^9\) This, however, marked the only real departure from Labour's policy. Thereafter Percy both extended traditional secondary education by creating eight thousand new school places within a year, and consolidated the regulations which encouraged the reorganisation of elementary schools into junior and senior departments with a break at the age of eleven.\(^10\) This policy led the Board of Education to sanction a larger amount of capital expenditure than in any year since the war, and reflected the small adjustment which had taken place in Conservative thinking towards the adolescent. For the time being the new minister could claim simultaneously that selection would remain, despite the increased number of grammar school places, and that the most pressing need of

8. Percy memorandum to the Secretary, 15 Nov. 1924, P.R.O. ED 24/1290. See also The Times, 29 Nov. 1924, for Percy's public emphasis on the need for continuity.


10. Percy to T. Jones, 19 Jan. 1926, Duchess of Atholl papers, Blair Castle, Scotland, file 3, where the minister reviews his early months at the Board. See also Board of Education, Circular 1350, 28 Jan. 1925; and Circular 1358, Programmes of educational development, 31 Mar. 1925.
the education system was to improve the upper stages of the unreconstructed elementary schools.\footnote{11} There were signs that in the latter context Percy would go beyond his initial preoccupation with selective central schools as the best means of improving elementary instruction. In April 1925, when the House of Commons discussed the Labour motion in favour of a secondary course for all children over the age of eleven, the President referred to the relevance of his administrative regulations and added that his aim was to provide advanced instruction for all children where possible. Far from dismissing the Labour motion, Eustace Percy took the responsibility for ensuring that Conservative back-benchers withdrew their own more limited amendment, thereby enabling the motion to be carried with the blessing of both major parties.\footnote{12}

The motion sponsored by Conservative M.P.s in April 1925 provided a clear indication of the extent to which party opinion lagged behind official policy. In pursuing the idea of continuity, Percy had attracted a measure of support from Conservatives in parliament, especially those most actively involved in the educational world and those who had stood out against the drastic economies of the Geddes period.\footnote{13} For the most part, however, the trend of the minister's policy was greeted with scepticism and sometimes alarm. Lord Hugh Cecil in particular, an important figure in the party, made a savage

\footnotesize{\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{11} The Times, 7 Feb. 1925; 186 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.2454, 23 July 1925.
\item \footnote{12} 182 H.C.Deb., 5s., cc.2381-2, 8 Apr. 1925. Brian Simon (op.cit., p.117), says that Percy dismissed the Labour resolution as being merely 'pious', although what he said was that both Labour and Conservative resolutions were pious, 'not in the sense of being hypocritical but in the sense of being very far-sighted and looking very far ahead'.
\item \footnote{13} See, for example, the support given by Annesley Somerville, a prominent member of the education group in the Commons - 186 H.C.Deb., 5s., c.2553, 23 July 1925.
\end{itemize}}
attack on what he perceived as the 'doctrine of educational
equalitarianism', arguing that to provide 'equality of opportunity
for unequal persons is like providing equal buttonholes for unequal
buttons'. Cecil's concern with maintaining privilege and hierarchy
was equally evident in the debate of April 1925, when Conservative
members concentrated on the need to widen access to the grammar school
rather than improving standards for the majority. This reflected
the continuing strength of the pre-war idea that the extension of
the educational ladder alone provided an adequate policy. The Morning
Post, perhaps the most strident of the party's supporters among the
national newspapers, encapsulated this view when it claimed, 'an
educational ladder that the talents shall be free to climb is one
thing; but a system which is based on the assumption that schooling
for all can profitably be extended beyond a very elementary level
is both wasteful and futile'. In denying this proposition, Eustace
Percy was pursuing his policy towards the adolescent in spite of,
rather than because of, the views of his party colleagues.

The President's personal contribution must of course be set
against other factors which dictated the nature of the government's
policy during Percy's first year at the Board of Education. In this
context, the relaxation of extreme financial restrictions during 1924
had been crucial in allowing cautious progress. The carefully
articulated views of leading officials at the Board, notably the

15. The Conservative amendment called for 'the provision of sufficient
secondary schools with an adequate number of free places, the
 provision of central schools to accommodate all those primary
school pupils... who are not accommodated... and facilities for
transfer' - 182 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.2365, 8 Apr. 1925.
long-serving Permanent Secretary, were also vital to the shaping of policy, especially in view of Percy's inexperience. Nevertheless, the manner in which the minister had taken up and extended Edward Wood's approach had important implications for the politics of education. In party terms, there remained obvious differences between the intentions of Secondary education for all and the policy of the Board, and still more Conservative Party opinion as a whole. The Labour Party wanted to improve access to the existing secondary schools by abolishing fees wherever possible, and in the long-term hoped to create a new and equitable school system for all children over eleven. By contrast, Percy had been reluctant to encourage a rapid increase of free places in the grammar schools, and in so far as he advocated advanced instruction for all adolescents in 1925, he was against the introduction of one 'dead high school level'. These distinctions must, however, be considered alongside the similarities which existed in practice between the Conservative minister and his Labour predecessor. The policy of both administrations was shaped by a complex combination of political, economic and administrative pressures. In broad terms, both were concerned to meet the increased public demand for secondary education by working towards the standard of twenty places per thousand of the population, as set by the Hilton Young Committee; while at the same time tackling the inadequate provision for the remainder of adolescents by encouraging all forms of post-elementary instruction. This element of continuity was reflected in a deliberate absence of parliamentary criticism by the Labour opposition in 1925; an education official who visited Labour's annual conference was even informed by prominent party members of their private belief that the

17. 182 H.C. Deb., 5a., c.2380, 8 Apr. 1925.
18. Percy to W. Churchill, 1 Dec. 1924, P.R.O. ED 24/1389, outlines these broad similarities as part of the process of continuity.
Conservatives at last supported educational reform. With Eustace Percy in office, the differences between the parties operated within a framework which accepted the importance of opening up secondary education and improving the general standard of elementary instruction.

III

The settled nature of educational politics was interrupted in November 1925 by a sudden campaign for economy, signalled by the publication of a notorious Board of Education circular to local authorities. This document, Circular 1371, proposed an immediate reduction in spending and the replacement of the existing method of financing the education service; and has been depicted as a return to the philistine policy of retrenchment associated with the Geddes axe of the early 1920s. The withdrawal of the circular some months later was the result of sustained public protests and is said to have owed little to the President of the Board of Education, whose continued attempts to introduce a restrictive block grant system marked one of several identical efforts between the wars to gain full control of educational finance in the interests of economy. The second year of the Baldwin government, and in particular the episode of Circular 1371, therefore raises the question of whether Eustace Percy complies with the model of Conservative ministers as agents of the Treasury intent on restricting expenditure; and how far the events of the period altered the government's policy towards the adolescent.

A reversion to the restrictions associated with the Geddes Committee was clearly threatened when the economy took a new downturn during 1925, and the Treasury announced a large prospective budget deficit.\textsuperscript{21} The Treasury's obsession with a balanced budget had of course acted as the most powerful restraint on government spending since the end of the war, and the education department in particular was unlikely to receive encouragement from the new Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Winston Churchill's feelings about education reminded Eustace Percy of 'Porson's famous comment on Gibbon's attitude to Christianity; he seemed to "hate it so cordially that he might seem to revenge some personal injury"'. Percy added that this contempt was partly the result of a lack of interest in local, as opposed to national, affairs: 'whether it were the extension of the great Manchester College of Technology or the improvement of what he once described to me, in one of his baroque moments, as "village schools with a few half-naked children rolling in the dust". Churchill's country owes much to his baroque moods, but it is unfortunately not a style of architecture that suits educational building'.\textsuperscript{22} The insurance scheme which Churchill supported in 1925 could itself only go ahead if other spending departments were restricted for at least two years; and in addition to this, the Chancellor himself chaired a cabinet committee after July 1925 which was set up to remedy the budget deficit by securing economies in all departments.\textsuperscript{23} The Board of Education's approach to educational finance during this period must be considered within a twin context: the low political priority which education traditionally

\textsuperscript{22} Percy, op.cit., pp.96-7.
received was now to be set alongside renewed pressure in Whitehall for economy.

The Board's circular was the direct result of the cabinet committee's request for a large reduction in the 1926 education estimates. The President reacted initially by outlining three possible methods of making large savings, each of which was open to serious political objection. He added that the committee's demand would involve a period of restriction at odds with the party's election manifesto, and urged the government to face up to the fact that increased spending on higher education, in which he included senior elementary as well as secondary schools, was inevitable. Churchill remarked in turn that the President's proposals should be adopted if it was intended to create the maximum amount of political discontent. This set the tone for a long series of heated debates in the cabinet committee. Percy continued to claim that educational expenditure could not be stabilised at its present figure, and at one point the Secretary of State for India, F.E. Smith, accused the education minister of favouring increased taxation as an alternative to economy. One government member noted the 'F.E. atmosphere' in the cabinet, which was likely to work against the Board of Education in discussions on economy. Treasury officials insisted upon a large, immediate reduction in spending; and in order to provide notice of this intention to local

24. 'A general memorandum on alternative methods of reducing educational expenditure', memorandum by the President of the Board of Education, 2 Nov. 1925, P.R.O. ED 24/1198.
25. Cabinet standing committee on expenditure, 5th meeting, 10 Nov. 1925, P.R.O. CAB 27/303.
26. Cabinet standing committee on expenditure, 6th meeting, 12 Nov. 1925, ibid.
authorities about to submit three year programmes of development, it was agreed to issue a circular.28

The two main proposals of Circular 1371 provided an important insight into Eustace Percy's overall strategy for education. The demand for immediate reductions of at least two million pounds threatened severe disruption to the elementary schools, although at the same time this did not imply an abandonment of the Board's policy of post-elementary reform. Percy made it clear in the cabinet discussions that he wanted any review of local authority spending to be based on the three year programmes due to commence in April 1927 - this procedure had been deliberately revived in order to allow continuous educational development and prevent periodic economy campaigns.29 The Treasury's insistence upon immediate reductions overruled the President's wish, but the published circular nevertheless made a point of stressing that there would be no return to the indiscriminate economies associated with the Geddes era. It argued instead that a review of existing services was now essential, 'if the Nation is to be able to finance new projects designed to provide additional facilities for Higher Education and to improve the instruction of the older children in Elementary Schools'.30 Hence the original proposals presented by Percy and rejected out of hand by Churchill, the complex series of draft documents to the cabinet and even the final version of Circular 1371 were all based on the same assumption: that any short term restrictions on the education service would not entail the abandonment of the policy embodied in the administrative regulations of 1925.

29. Cabinet standing committee on expenditure, 6th meeting, 12 Nov. 1925, P.R.O. CAB 27/303.
The second objective of the circular was to introduce a block grant in place of the existing obligation of the Exchequer to pay a percentage of all approved expenditure of local authorities. As far back as 1923, when serving as a junior minister at the Board, Percy had argued against the retention of the percentage grant. He believed that 'no system could possibly be devised outside "Alice in Wonderland" which could so certainly ensure the promotion of expenditure without the promotion of educational improvement'.\(^31\)

As President he only agreed to issue a circular on the condition that it would be the first step towards replacing the percentage grant: the aim was to introduce a block grant based on the legitimate expectations of local authority spending on the adolescent.\(^32\) This plan was arbitrarily proposed without consulting those who would have to administer the system locally, but was nevertheless at variance with the Treasury's advocacy of a grant independent of possible expenditure and explicitly designed to encourage local authorities in making economies.\(^33\) These differences resulted in further disputes within the government, with Percy arguing for the introduction of his version of the block grant to coincide with the commencement of the local authority programmes. It was eventually decided in 1927, however, that education grants would continue on a percentage basis and would not be incorporated in the Minister of Health's forthcoming reform of local government.\(^34\)

\(^{31}\) 'Possibilities of financial decontrol', memorandum by Percy, 9 May 1923, P.R.O. ED 24/1326; 189 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.1716, 17 Dec. 1925.

\(^{32}\) See Percy's attitude in the cabinet committee and his later comments in, for example, his correspondence with Churchill, 12 Apr. 1926, P.R.O. ED 24/1198.

\(^{33}\) 'Board of Education estimates', note by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 26 Oct. 1925, P.R.O. CAB 27/305.

\(^{34}\) For the role of the Parliamentary Secretary in this episode, see Duchess of Atholl to Baldwin, 19 Jan. 1927, Baldwin papers, vol.4, f.15; and the Duchess of Atholl, Working partnership (London, 1958), p.158.
In the meantime, the publication of Circular 1371 caused a storm of protest among educationists and in the labour movement. This criticism was even given voice by Conservative back-benchers in parliament, where several members - including those identified with the progressive ginger group known as the Y.M.C.A. - abstained from voting on a Labour motion attacking the circular. The sustained level of protest, and subsequent discussions with local authority representatives, soon convinced Eustace Percy that it was not possible to hold down the 1926 estimates at the level provisionally set by the cabinet committee. At this point he urged the Prime Minister to recognise the need to launch an education programme involving 'substantial extra expenditure'. Baldwin, however, was still being pressed to make reductions by Treasury officials, and sought a compromise by the appointment of a special committee under Lord Colwyn, who had arbitrated in an earlier dispute over departmental estimates. When this committee recommended large scale economies throughout the education service, the President dismissed the idea of indiscriminate cuts as 'a waste of time', and threatened to resign if any such proposals were introduced. This threat carried Percy's approach in cabinet to its logical conclusion, and was enough to secure the support of the Prime Minister, who was unwilling to lose one of his closest supporters. The infamous circular was then withdrawn in March

35. The Conservative protests in the Commons were led as usual by Nancy Astor, who laid all the blame for reactionary measures on Churchill; she was shouted down when claiming that most of her colleagues realised that the circular was a 'crashing blunder' - 189 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.1771, 17 Dec. 1925. Astor abstained from voting on the Labour motion along with younger members such as Duff Cooper, although the only Conservative back-bencher to vote against the government was C.W. Crook, Secretary of the Conservative Teachers' Advisory Committee.


1926, after causing considerable alarm but little practical damage to the schools. The estimates were set by the Board of Education at the same figure as in the previous year, and the Treasury was left to design alternative methods of holding down expenditure.  

The events surrounding Circular 1371 highlighted the political and economic constraints within which education policy had to be framed in the mid-1920s. The main thrust for economy in Whitehall had been made by the Treasury, and the tension which this produced with the Board operated throughout the entire period of Baldwin's administration. Winston Churchill had first complained that the education department was resisting economies in December 1924, and after the experience of the circular, he expressed his private concern that 'they are determined - as Percy has repeatedly avowed - to commit us to very much larger expenditure and to a new extensive programme before this Parliament is over'. Treasury officials were equally concerned about the financial implications of education policy in general since the end of the war; and towards the end of the government's term of office the Chancellor was still attacking 'Lord Useless Percy', as he called him, for outlining the largest projected increase among

38. Cabinet standing committee on expenditure, 16th meeting, 26 Feb. 1926, P.R.O. CAB 27/303; Board of Education, Memorandum on the estimates, 1927 Cmd.2885 (London, 1927). Brian Simon claims that the government's economy bill of 1926 represented a further devious attempt to enforce economy and supersede the percentage grant, but that after the withdrawal of the circular, its provisions lapsed. In fact the economy bill, which was not as far-reaching as its predecessor of 1922, came into force and was used to clarify certain duties of local authorities by disallowing expenditure such as duplicate aid to secondary schools and maintenance allowances beyond the statutory limit. See Economy (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1926, 16 & 17 Geo.5.

the spending departments. The publication of the circular had certainly demonstrated the President's inexperience and arbitrary political style, especially on the block grant issue, which was still being reviewed by an official committee under Lord Meston. Churchill mentioned his suspicion of an attempt to emulate the practice of Lord Haldane, who had once discredited the advocates of army retrenchment by staging a ceremony at which the King bade farewell to a disbanded battalion of Scots Guards. Percy later admitted, however, that the hasty publication of his circular was more influenced by a saying of Theodore Roosevelt, that all unpleasant political fences should be taken at a gallop. The frustration of Treasury aims in 1926 was not entirely fortuitous, although this impression was no doubt fostered by the consequences of Eustace Percy's impetuosity, which were to damage his own political reputation, to obscure his concern for improving the education of the adolescent, and to undermine the support of the labour movement for his policies.

IV

The remainder of Eustace Percy's term at the Board of Education was dominated by the Hadow Report. The Board's Consultative Committee under the chairmanship of Sir Henry Hadow, Vice-Chancellor of Sheffield University, had been conducting a long investigation into education for children over eleven in the public elementary schools; and its

influential report published in December 1926, The education of the adolescent, recommended that many of the developments now taking place locally should become national practice. The compulsory school-leaving age should be raised to fifteen within six years; a stage of primary education to the age of eleven should be followed by a distinct course of post-primary instruction for all children, either in grammar schools, central schools (to be renamed modern schools), or the senior departments of existing elementary schools; and ultimately all adolescent education should be governed by similar statutory regulations. The government's response to this comprehensive report has been harshly criticised. The Labour Party's enthusiasm for a document which echoed much of its own policy has been contrasted with Percy's dismissal of the need to raise the school-leaving age and his alleged mis-definition of the concept of post-primary reform. By simply dividing the elementary schools into junior and senior departments, the President was said to be constructing a new post-primary system still based on the inferior regulations for elementary education, and so perpetuated in a more subtle and mischievous fashion the distinctiveness of elite secondary schools. These claims must be considered firstly in connection with the Board of Education's immediate reaction to the Hadow Report, which under Percy indicated an intimate connection between extending school life and reforming the post-primary system.

In December 1926 the education minister informed Sir Henry Hadow that he was unable to give a firm date for raising the school-leaving age.

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age. He argued that his whole policy towards the adolescent had started from the recognised assumption that many children were already 'marking time' in the upper stages of all-age elementary schools; to extend compulsory attendance before the general standard of eleven plus education had been improved would simply compound the problem.\textsuperscript{44}

This attitude lay behind Percy's criticisms of both the Labour Party, for becoming obsessed with the 'red herring' of the school-leaving age after 1926; and his own Conservative colleagues, for proposing at the annual conference in 1927 to dissociate the party from any desire to extend the school course. Percy's proposed amendment to the conference resolution asserted that the government should continue to prepare for the next advance in compulsory attendance by improving and extending the post-primary curriculum. The chairman of the conference noted that the delegates - anxious to support the government following the General Strike - were prepared to vote for the minister's amendment despite being very unsympathetic.\textsuperscript{45} Hence there was an important distinction between the attitude of the party, aware of the electoral unpopularity of raising the age, and the policy of the minister, conscious of the practical difficulties inherent in a proposal he did not regard as the major priority. Percy's real error in the short-term was once more that of political judgement, saying the wrong thing at the wrong time. He later recorded that his refusal to set a firm date had been unnecessary, when the school age issue 'could have been allowed to remain, what it had long been in the teaching profession,

\textsuperscript{44} Percy to Sir Henry Hadow, 16 Dec. 1926, reprinted in The Times Educational Supplement, 8 Jan. 1927.
\textsuperscript{45} National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations (N.U.C.U.A.), Annual Conference, minutes, 1927, pp.43-4; Sanders diary, 10 Nov. 1927 - J.A. Ramsden (ed.), Real old Tory politics, p.234.
a cherished aspiration the attainment of which must be postponed for severely practical reasons'.  

In the meantime the President gave a much warmer reception to the ideas for post-primary reform embodied in the Hadow Report, pointing out that the division of elementary schools into junior and senior departments was already taking place under his earlier administrative regulations.  

In 1928 the Board went one stage further by issuing a pamphlet entitled *The new prospect in education*, which formally committed the government to a wholesale policy of 'Hadow reorganisation' — the division of all public elementary schools into junior and senior departments with a break at the age of eleven. Local authorities were urged to introduce four year courses of senior education for all children within five years, when further consideration could be given to the necessity of raising the compulsory leaving age.  

The adoption of Hadow reorganisation marked the most important shift in Conservative policy towards the adolescent during the 1920s. Instead of pressing for advanced elementary instruction for limited numbers in central schools, the government now officially advocated a distinct course of education for all children over eleven, although important sections of party opinion were still unconvinced of the merits of this reform.  

The unrecognised novelty of Eustace Percy's strategy after 1927 lay in his realisation that the administrative logic of Hadow reorganisation would ultimately prove insufficient, especially

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46. Percy, op.cit., p.100.  
49. This applied both at national and local level. See below, pp. 250-1, for the example of the Conservative controlled London County Council.
as it left untouched the thorny problem of the relative status and functions of the various post-primary schools. In this context the Labour Party had recently reversed its attitude towards central schools, which generated much more intense feelings of injustice than the senior departments. As long as the central schools remained inferior in staffing, equipment and accommodation under the elementary regulations, it was difficult to justify the claim of The new prospect that these schools did not simply provide a cheap substitute for real secondary education. Percy sensed that this situation could only be remedied by abolishing higher and elementary education as separate statutory categories, so bringing the regulations into line with developments in post-primary education since the war. In May 1927 he suggested to his civil servants the need for legislation in the present parliament defining elementary education as ending at the age of eleven: this would not resolve the exact status of the modern schools proposed by Hadow, but it would help to remove the stigma of social inferiority attached to the central schools. By the time of the 1929 general election, the President had refined his ideas on reshaping the law into a policy which was to be presented to the electorate as 'higher education for all'.

Throughout 1928 Percy investigated ways of amending the law, as he told one cabinet colleague, in the direction of getting rid of the statutory distinction between Elementary and Higher Education and substituting for it a distinction between Primary Education up

51. Percy to A.V. Symonds, 6 May 1927, P.R.O. ED 24/1264: this the President described as 'one of my provocative minutes'.
to 11 and various forms of Secondary Education after that age'.

As the election came closer, the Parliamentary Secretary at the Board of Education, the Duchess of Atholl, urged the minister to proceed cautiously. The Duchess had for the most part given Percy quiet and unobtrusive support for his policies, with the exception of the block grant issue; but at this stage she sided with cautious officials and pointed to the serious obstacles - administrative, religious, financial and political - which stood in the way of a move towards 'higher education for all'. The restructuring of the administrative system of local education authorities, for example, was certain to provoke strong resistance from those non-county boroughs with powers over elementary education only. With his plans at such an early stage, Percy was able to do little more than encourage the trend whereby the so-called 'Part III Authorities' transferred their powers to the county councils, thereby hoping that they would not prove intractable when legislation was brought forward. The church schools posed an even more fundamental problem, for experience had shown that any attempt to alter the balance of the religious settlement enshrined in the 1902 Act raised the possibility of reviving denominational bitterness. Percy nevertheless faced this issue, and during 1928 began devising ways of reaching a new agreement on the religious issue as an essential part of an amendment of the law.

54. The President was aware of this problem from an early stage. See, for example, Percy to Worthington-Evans, 28 Jan. 1928, P.R.O. ED 24/1408.
55. For a fuller discussion of Percy's approach to the voluntary schools, see below, pp. 160-72.
The major problem which the President faced in a political context was the obvious lack of sympathy for his ideas within his own party.

In the cabinet the main opposition came from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who warned of the ultimate cost of a measure which would stimulate demands for the abolition of fees in higher education and the assimilation of teachers' salaries. The Minister of Health, Neville Chamberlain, was also a fierce critic, and made powerful claims on any available funds for his department in the belief that Conservative opinion favoured more spending on housing and health but economies in education.56 This judgement certainly applied to the parliamentary party, which as a whole remained indifferent to educational issues: in 1928 the estimates debate was interrupted by a Labour M.P. who questioned whether it was in order to continue when - with the exception of Percy and Atholl on the front-bench - there were no Conservative members in the chamber.57 The President could command some backing from those party members closely identified with education. The loosely organised education group in the Commons, for example, the successor of the Unionist Education Committee, supported Percy's attitude towards the Hadow Report by calling on the Board to take 'all practicable steps to develop a system of post-primary education for children over 11'.58 This group, however, formed only a small section of the large body of M.P.s which swelled the government's majority; and in

56. Cabinet minutes, 12 Mar. 1929, P.R.O. CAB 23/78; Percy, op.cit., p.95.
57. 217 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.1124, 16 May 1928.
58. The motion was introduced by three members of the group: Somerville, Edward Cadogan and Robert Hudson - 202 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.1036, 16 Feb. 1927. Lady Astor was the only Conservative to vote with the opposition on the Hadow Report, and her complaints so exasperated Percy that he called her 'very ignorant about the facts of education' - Percy to Nancy Astor, 22 Feb. 1927, Astor papers, 1416/1/1/201.
so far as education was ever considered by this majority, there still remained a distinction between the value of extending the ladder to the grammar school and the futility of education for all beyond a minimum standard. One anonymous pamphlet, in a direct reference to the alarming implications of Eustace Percy's policy, defended the need for elite training on the grounds that 'there is a good deal of difference between equal opportunity for all and equal opportunity for all of equal capacity'.

'Higher education for all' was nevertheless made the cornerstone of the government's education programme for the 1929 election. The official statement of Conservative policy claimed that the Board of Education had been working towards legislation 'which there has not been time in the life of this parliament to carry through - the placing of every child over 11 under Higher Education regulations - a measure which would end by law, as it is now being ended in fact, the outworn "elementary" system'. A similar commitment was made to immediate measures enabling denominational schools to receive further financial aid; and to a permanent settlement of the religious issue designed to allow the church schools to participate fully in the new post-primary structure. Percy had also taken steps towards ensuring the implementation of this electoral rhetoric in the event of his party returning to power. He had set 1931 as a target date for carrying

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59. 'Raising the school-leaving age. Attitude of the Conservative party', n.d., Salisbury papers, W 139/1. Much of the party's interest in education, especially after the General Strike, amounted to little more than anti-socialism. Regional teachers' circles, for example, were set up to counter alleged communist infiltration in the teaching profession; and were tacitly supported by the party chairman J.C.C. Davidson - The Times, 26 Feb. 1927.


an amendment of the law through parliament, as this coincided with the reassessment of teachers' salaries which would take place under the Burnham agreements; he had undertaken a careful series of negotiations with Anglican, Roman Catholic and Nonconformist representatives in order to prepare the ground for a religious settlement; and he had even secured Treasury approval for assisting the voluntary bodies with the repair or replacement of their existing schools over a five year period.  

The electoral programme of 1929 marked the most crucial aspect of Eustace Percy's policy towards the adolescent, although its significance was to be largely obscured by Labour's success and the return of Trevelyan to the Board. The idea of 'higher education for all' indicated a willingness to go beyond Hadow reorganisation, and a recognition that a system of post-primary schools for all children could only be effectively developed by abolishing the statutory distinction between secondary and elementary education. Percy's own conception of the status and functions of the new post-primary schools certainly differed in several respects from the assumptions underlying R.H. Tawney's plan for a closely linked, two-stage educational process. The traditional value attached by the Conservative Party to religious instruction, for example, was reflected in the minister's belief that a redefinition of education over the age of eleven would remove many of the financial disabilities of the church schools.  

The most fundamental point of difference was highlighted by Percy's desire to keep certain schools under separate regulations within the amended

63. 'Church schools', memorandum by Percy, 26 Sep. 1928, P.R.O. CAB 24/197.
higher education category. This pointed to the crucial aim for Percy of eradicating the anti-vocational element in English education: his concern was not for parity between all post-primary schools, but for the creation of parity between two educational ladders, one leading from the secondary school to the university and the other from the senior and technical schools to the college of technology. These differences, however, must be set against the basic acceptance of the need to overhaul the regulations which underpinned an education system divided horizontally along lines of social class. When asked shortly before the election whether he meant the same things by the terms secondary and higher education for all, the President replied that 'all senior or modern schools should fall into the same statutory category as the existing secondary schools', and added that 'I hope all senior schools will play the secondary schools at football and beat them'.

V

A close examination of the government's policy in the 1920s points in the first place to the need for a revision of existing judgements about Lord Eustace Percy as President of the Board of Education. Percy, who has been regarded as a remote and undistinguished minister, was acknowledged even by his political opponents as one of few

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64. Percy, op.cit., p.101. For an account of Percy's policy towards technical education, and its relationship with the post-primary system, see below, pp. 209-11.

65. The Teachers' World, 10 Apr. 1929. The aim of the Conservative government, Percy had earlier said, 'is to provide for all children a course of education of a secondary character as part of their ordinary school life' - N.U.C.U.A., What the Conservative government has done for education, 1925-28 (1928), p.6.
ministers with a genuine interest in the work of the department. 66 He certainly brought a distinctive style to office and was more willing to act independently of official advice than many ministers. The policy of 'higher education for all' in particular was devised in the face of Board reluctance by Percy, who became known in the department as 'the only Minister who is his own Permanent Secretary'. 67 Within his own party he was considered to be a progressive, although this often entailed criticism from traditional supporters of Conservatism: The Daily Mail, for example, conducted a long campaign against Percy as a 'squandermaniac', attacking him as a 'socialist' or 'pink' member of the cabinet. 68 Percy’s energetic approach to social reform resulted in part from a personal belief in the need for a more coherent party strategy, suited to modern social and industrial conditions; he later referred to the feeling 'that inclines me to side with my father rather than with Beatrice Webb, though in terms of national policies I might agree more often with her than with him'. 69 At the same time, he was also motivated by the desire to appeal to the electorate, and on the eve of the 1929 election he justified his education policy to the cabinet on the grounds that if the Conservatives did not act now, others would take credit for

66. The Labour M.P. and N.U.T. official Leah Manning, for example, recalled that Percy was 'dedicated to the position', adding that Fisher was the only other pre-1945 minister of whom this could be said. See A life for education (London, 1970), p.235.
67. G.A.N. Lowndes, The silent social revolution, 3rd edn., (London, 1969), p.324. This outcome may have resulted from the fact that Symonds, who became Permanent Secretary in 1925, came from outside the department and so lacked the long experience of Selby-Bigge. This point was made by Dr. Gillian Sutherland, whom I would like to thank for commenting on drafts of this and the previous chapter.
68. The Daily Mail, 30 Jan. 1925, had said that Percy was a 'public danger' in calling for increased spending on education. See also the paper's comments on 23 June 1927.
the inevitable expansion of educational facilities in the next decade.  
Hence both personal and political motives combined to lead Eustace
Percy towards a cautious programme of expansion in the 1920s.

The most important obstacle to such a programme had been provided
by the power of the Treasury. On the issue of educational finance
in general, Percy had continuously resisted Treasury demands for
reduced spending, and in such a way as to indicate more than routine
defence of departmental commitments. In spite of this, he never
succeeded in countering the impression that Conservative governments
traditionally restricted funds for education. This was due not only
to the President's clumsy handling of Circular 1371, but also to
the rigid policy of 'limiting standards' imposed on local authorities
after 1927. When taken together, in the context of the limited amount
the government was prepared to spend, these policies ensured that
educational expenditure increased only modestly over the period of
the Baldwin administration.  
Percy later observed that to carry
conviction, an education policy 'had to be administered with generosity,
and it was, no doubt, just that impression of generosity that I failed
to convey'.  
In effect the President's options for expanding the
education service were narrowed by a network of economic and political
constraints, and by the widely held assumption that public spending
had to be reduced at times of economic depression pending a trade
revival. For Eustace Percy, this assumption was tempered by a desire
to improve the standard of education provided for the adolescent.

71. On 'limiting standards', see Board of Education, Circular 1388,
14 Feb. 1927. The Board's net expenditure rose from £39,148,064
in 1925 to £40,299,899 in 1929 - Board of Education, Memorandum
When he came to office in 1924, the President's first concern for the adolescent had been to build slowly on the framework provided by the 1918 Education Act. The Hadow Report, however, acted as a watershed which convinced him that an effective course of education for all children over the age of eleven required a fundamental adjustment of the existing regulations. This recognition, when seen in conjunction with the accompanying aim of a shift in emphasis from academic to technical training, gave the government a distinctive policy at the end of the 1920s. Percy's interest in a universal, differentiated system of higher education was unprecedented among Conservative education ministers, and marked him out as predecessor of R.A. Butler, whose legislation in 1944 eventually introduced a national system of primary and secondary schools. Eustace Percy shared, if not the same political flexibility as Butler, then at least an awareness of the possible party advantage to be gained from a forward education policy, as well as an adherence to a one-nation, Baldwinite brand of Conservatism. The practical impact of Percy's approach on conditions for the adolescent nevertheless revealed the limitations of 'New Conservatism' in the 1920s. The value attached by Conservatives to diversity, religious instruction and technical training had been safeguarded, and the party's electoral defeat meant that 'higher education for all' remained only a statement of future intentions. In the meantime competition for scarce places in the grammar schools continued to be fierce, and by the time Percy left office only twelve per cent of children over the age of eleven had been placed in central or senior schools under the scheme of Hadow reorganisation.73 As one newspaper editorial remarked of the

73. Memorandum by the Duchess of Atholl, n.d. (1929), Atholl papers, file 41.
government's electoral programme, 'it was one thing to adopt a policy and another to carry it out'. The obvious discrepancy between the rhetoric and the reality of the government's policy reflected not only the seriousness of the obstacles preventing reform, but also the inability of the education minister to carry his case convincingly to either the electorate as a whole or even to Conservative opinion.

There was little contemporary evidence which supported Eustace Percy's later contention that during the 1920s Conservative opinion was first awakened to the importance of education. His policy of 'higher education for all' was officially put forward as the party's programme, although this indicated the power of ministers to formulate policy, rather than the preference of Conservative supporters. In so far as party members had paid attention to educational issues, they were not sympathetic to the prospect of altering the relationship between secondary and elementary education. The traditional commitment to an elite secondary training for the able minority remained strong, and to this section of opinion it was futile to improve the elementary system beyond increased opportunities for climbing the ladder. There was now a second body of opinion, dominated by the education group in parliament, which agreed with the need to develop post-primary instruction; but the adherents of this view were both small in number and - unlike Percy - openly prepared to defend the

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74. The Times, 9 May 1929: 'What the present administration has done', to continue Percy's football analogy, 'has been to set the ball rolling, or rather to kick it towards the goal'.
75. This was partly due to Percy's style: many of his ideas were difficult to understand and poorly communicated, and one of his cabinet colleagues concluded that he was 'hopelessly academic'. Neville Chamberlain diary, 8 Dec. 1929, Chamberlain papers, Birmingham University Library, NC2/22.
76. Percy, op.cit., p.96.
position of the grammar school within any developing post-primary system. The period of the Baldwin government thus brings together many of the main ideas about the Conservative Party implied by this study. The ministerial policy of the party has been particularly misunderstood by existing accounts in the case of Percy. His concept of higher education for all foreshadowed the later success of R.A. Butler, and in a wider context he embraced a unique conception of the state's responsibilities which included the use of education to promote parity between all forms of employment. Conservative opinion as a whole, however, though divided along more complex lines than realised, still baulked at the prospect of a more active role for the state; and defended the existing education system as a means of preserving the established social order. The interaction between ministerial policy and party opinion was particularly instructive in this instance. Conservatives had accepted the President's highly individual proposals as a basis for fighting the 1929 election: whether they would have sanctioned reform along such lines in the event of electoral victory was much more doubtful.

Eustace Percy's record indicates finally the need to modify the established framework for assessing education as a political issue. The Labour Party in opposition clearly continued to advocate the most far-reaching reforms. In 1929 Labour campaigned on a platform of raising the school-leaving age and rapidly opening up free access to the grammar schools - both of which were anathema to mainstream Conservative opinion. If Percy's policy is used as a yardstick, 77

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77. e.g. Edward Cadogan, a supporter of Percy who attacked 'the fallacious notion that the endless multiplication of places in secondary schools... was the panacea of all evils' - 202 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.1045, 16 Feb. 1927.
however, a much more ambiguous conclusion emerges. He was responsible for committing the Conservatives to a reform which came close in outline to what many Labour supporters understood by the term 'secondary education for all' - an expansion of secondary education for the academically minded and the development of central and technical schools for those hitherto restricted to the all-age elementary school.78 There were of course outstanding differences even on this basis, notably over the status and functions of post-primary education, but Percy's approach nevertheless reinforces the conclusion that an element of continuity existed in the policy of successive administrations. This was indicated most clearly after Trevelyan returned to the Board of Education in 1929, when Percy began to argue that Labour's overriding commitment to raise the school-leaving age within two years was hindering the cause of post-primary reform. The new government, he claimed, was ignoring the move towards a comprehensive revision of the present law in favour of an undifferentiated elementary system governed by the old regulations.79 Trevelyan sidestepped this criticism by proceeding with Hadow reorganisation, and was soon to reflect that preparations for extending compulsory attendance had caused such concern at the Treasury that no further funds were available for the second major aim of improving access to the grammar schools.80 This interchange pointed to the basic characteristics of education as a political issue in the 1920s:

78. Barker, op.cit., chs. III and IV, establishes that equality of opportunity was widely interpreted to mean universal and free access to different types of school, conducted under similar statutory regulations; and that it was not until the 1930s that small sections of Labour opinion began to advocate a single form of secondary education for all in multilateral schools.
80. C.P. Trevelyan to P. Snowden, 29 Oct. 1929, P.R.O. ED 24/1393.
against a background of shifting economic, political and administrative constraints, the choice of policy towards the adolescent was narrowed and contained within limits well recognised by ministers at the Board.
CHAPTER 5

THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY AND
EDUCATIONAL REFORM, 1929–1939

I

The decade following Eustace Percy's departure from the Board of Education produced few new developments in education for the adolescent. The tone for much of this period was set by the second Labour administration, which shifted attention away from the idea of restructuring the regulations governing adolescent education and concentrated instead on attempting to improve the elementary system by raising the compulsory school-leaving age to fifteen. Labour's efforts were eventually overtaken by the severe economic crisis of the early 1930s, but in 1936 the reconstituted National government returned to the same theme. The school-leaving age was raised with exemptions for 'beneficial employment', and the voluntary schools were provided with building grants to enable them to participate in the new reforms. The 1936 Act, however, never came fully into operation and was eventually suspended on the outbreak of the Second World War. The problems of secondary education in the meantime - with the important exception of the replacement of free places in 1932 - remained largely in the background. The grammar schools were the subject of a further long investigation by the Board's Consultative Committee, and the question of the relationship between secondary and elementary schooling only returned to the agenda with the publication in 1938 of the Spens Report, upon which no action was taken before the war. The object of this chapter is to examine the development of Conservative ministerial policy and party opinion
towards the major issues which arose during the years after 1929. This requires looking in particular at the policy pursued by Trevelyan in his second spell at the Board; the economy measures which overshadowed the period of the first National government; the introduction and reception of the 1936 Act; and the pre-war developments which culminated in the Spens Report. From an analysis of these developments, a subtle shift in Conservative policy emerges: although successive ministers were inclined or forced to proceed cautiously in improving conditions for the adolescent, party opinion as a whole slowly came to embrace reforms which had been resolutely resisted when first discussed in the 1920s.

II

After returning to the Board of Education in 1929, C.P. Trevelyan spent some time in attempting to extend further free secondary education, but he found his energies increasingly absorbed by a single issue - that of raising the school-leaving age. The Labour Party's commitment to this reform had deepened since the publication of the Hadow Report, and the new initiatives introduced by Trevelyan for the elementary schools - notably a special increase in local authority grants - were usually linked with the government's proposed legislation. After six months in office Trevelyan introduced a short bill into parliament, designed to raise the compulsory leaving age to fifteen by April 1931 and to provide maintenance allowances to certain children during their extra year of school attendance. The bill never proceeded, however, largely because of cabinet hesitation and widespread opposition to the omission of any reference to the position of the voluntary schools. In May 1930 the bill was withdrawn and immediately replaced by a second measure which provided both for the raising of the school
age and for the provision of special grants to the church schools. The government, with the support of the Liberal Party, made some progress with this second bill in parliament, but in the absence of complete agreement among the denominations, Trevelyan decided to withdraw the measure and revert instead to his original proposal. In early 1931 the President's third school attendance bill suffered defeats in both the Commons and the House of Lords, and shortly afterwards Trevelyan resigned from office, protesting against the government's failure to introduce meaningful social reform. It is first necessary to examine the role played by the Conservative Party in the defeat of Labour's legislation, and in the process to establish the extent to which Conservative opinion altered on the wider questions concerning adolescent education.

The response of the Conservative opposition in the early stages was led by Eustace Percy, who after serving at the Board for five years was the party's natural spokesman in parliament. Before the introduction of Trevelyan's first bill in December 1929, Percy's attitude - as has already been shown - was to caution against the abandonment of his own line of policy. The opposition, he claimed, should 'offer the Government whole-hearted support in carrying through a comprehensive revision of the Education Act in which the question of the proper length of school life shall occupy its proper place as an important consideration but as subordinate to the supreme question of providing a good education'.

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open minded attitude was reflected in the unopposed passage which
the Conservatives gave to a Liberal motion in favour of the early
introduction of legislation. After Christmas, however, when it
became clear that the government intended to concentrate on the single
issue of the leaving age, Percy's attitude hardened perceptibly.
This was partly due to the alarm shown by many of his party colleagues.
Percy himself echoed some of these concerns, notably the absence
of any reference to the church schools and the hostility to maintenance
allowances as a costly and illogical expedient. Conservative policy,
he said, was to provide suitable teaching and accommodation for children
up to the age of fifteen, but 'to compel, or to bribe, parents to
accept that offer must tend to social injustice and administrative
chaos'. Percy's real anxiety, though, stemmed from his overall
definition of the needs of the adolescent. Initially this focused
on the rejection of his electoral proposals: for Percy, reorganisation
into senior schools governed by higher education regulations was
essential if an increased school life was to benefit the majority;
Trevelyan believed conversely that the raising of the school age
was crucial if reorganisation was to have any value. During 1930
Percy's dissatisfaction increasingly shifted with circumstances to
focus on the school-leaving age as one method of tackling juvenile
unemployment and linking up educational with industrial needs.

3. 231 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.2054, 13 Nov. 1929.
4. The Times Educational Supplement, 8 Mar. 1930. Percy wrote to
one party supporter: 'It is a curious fact that the Socialists
never seem able to distinguish between the statement that all
children ought to be offered a good education up to the age of
fifteen, and the statement that all children should be compelled
to stay at school up to the age of fifteen' - Percy to E.M.H.
Galbraith, 11 Mar. 1930, Conservative Research Department papers,
Bodleian Library, Oxford, Education: folder 1G.
Indeed by the time of the second reading of Labour's bill in May, Percy was concentrating exclusively on Trevelyan's failure to meet the central need of adolescence - a smooth passage between school and work. 5

The former minister's arguments found some sympathy with other Conservatives during the second reading. This applied particularly to Percy's adherents in the education group, such as William Ormsby-Gore, who attacked the government for crowding children into the elementary schools to 'mark time' as part of a 'thoroughly unscientific unemployment relief process'. 6 Many other back-benchers, however, found less sophisticated reasons for objecting to the bill. Michael Beaumont, for example, a well-known advocate of retrenchment, objected purely on the grounds of cost - thus indicating the continued existence of the view earlier championed by Banbury, which regarded public expenditure on education as intrinsically wasteful. 7 Beaumont was joined in his hostile attitude by representatives from the Lancashire constituencies, who complained that a higher school-leaving age would adversely affect the supply of juvenile labour in the textile industries. This body of opinion was led by Vernon Davies, who backed up his argument with the claim that the raising of the school age was 'definitely contrary to the Hadow Report'. 8 In contrast to this intransigence, some back-benchers stood out in support of Trevelyan's bill. Nancy Astor, the most persistent advocate of reform, was now

5. R.S. Barker, Education and politics, p.62, notes the distinction between Percy's belief that a bad education was worse than no education, and Trevelyan's that any education was better than none.
6. 239 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.1618, 29 May 1930.
7. 239 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.1653, 30 May 1929.
8. 239 H.C. Deb., 5s., cc.1600-5, 29 May 1930. The links between Davies and the Federation of British Industries are noted below, p. 216.
joined in particular by John Buchan, representing the Scottish Universities. Buchan agreed with the Labour claim that on educational grounds the passage of the bill was urgent, and he subsequently acted in defiance of the party whip by abstaining from the vote on the second reading. The opposition were defeated in this vote, but their hope that reform would not go ahead was soon realised. Some Labour M.P.s complained about the inadequacy of the proposed system of maintenance allowances, and the growing dissatisfaction with the clauses affecting church schools was being channelled through both the Labour and Liberal parties. In these circumstances, the President withdrew his school attendance bill, but repeated his pledge to carry legislation by the end of the year.

By the time Trevelyan introduced his third bill in November 1930, the range of opinion on the Conservative benches had narrowed, and the party had become united in its determination to resist reform. This hardening of attitudes resulted partly from the absence of any reference to the church schools, but was primarily due to the deterioration of the national economy in the second half of the year. The downturn in the economy enabled Conservatives to place much greater emphasis on the prohibitive cost of providing extra school accommodation and teachers. Michael Beaumont, in repeating his earlier objections, was no longer alone amongst his colleagues, and on the second reading he was joined by two of the party's leading spokesmen on finance,

9. Ibid., cc.1574-5; J.A. Smith, John Buchan (London, 1965), p.315. Punch, 4 June 1930, observed that 'there seemed to be no great enthusiasm for the Bill among the Government's supporters.. but after Mr. John Buchan had blessed it from the Conservative back-benches, they cheered up'.
Robert Horne and Edward Hilton Young.\textsuperscript{11} The new circumstances also influenced those who had earlier supported Trevelyan. John Buchan agreed that the bill should not go ahead in such grave conditions, and Nancy Astor - who had always expressed reservations about the inclusion of maintenance allowances in order to 'placate hon. Members from the Clyde' - declared that she could now vote against the measure with a clear conscience.\textsuperscript{12} Eustace Percy's criticisms had also become more forceful, although characteristically for reasons different to those of his colleagues. Percy had recently become involved in a controversy with the Rothermere press, and this led him to proclaim more insistently his preference for 'liberty' over 'compulsion'. Moreover, the economic situation heightened Percy's opposition to the Labour bill, not because of the likely cost, but owing to the continued failure to ensure that children went up 'a steady incline... into life instead of having to change... gears violently from school to factory'. This explains why at the committee stage Percy objected so strongly to the decision to delay the operation of the bill for eighteen months, which he claimed removed any pretence of acting urgently to assist the young unemployed.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{11} 244 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.1139 and 93, 6 Nov. 1930: Hilton Young commented that the country might recover from industrial depression and perhaps even from the misfortune of the present government, but was unlikely to emerge unscathed from 'that co-incidence of calamities, the two at once'.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., cc.1129-30; 244 H.C. Deb., 5s., cc.1578-9, 11 Nov. 1930; 'Education (school attendance) bill', n.d., Lady Astor papers, 1416/1/1/210.

\textsuperscript{13} On the press controversy, with Percy being accused of making political capital from a measure he earlier supported, see the Daily Mail, 3 Nov. 1930. For Percy's objections to the third bill, see 244 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.1105, 6 Nov. 1930, and The Times Educational Supplement, 6 Dec. 1930. Punch, 4 June 1930, had already noted that 'the additional burden on the taxpayers did not seem to worry him'.

The Conservative opposition once more had cause for optimism as the committee stage of the bill dragged on. Labour members were still resentful of the possibility of a means test to determine eligibility for maintenance allowances, and Liberal support for the government was being undermined by the economic situation. Moreover, proceedings in the Commons had to be delayed until the new year in the hope of pacifying Roman Catholic M.P.s, who were threatening to vote against the government unless some provision was made for financial assistance to the voluntary bodies. With the failure of negotiations to produce a workable compromise on the religious issue, the way was open for Conservatives to press home their opposition. In January 1931 the party voted with the Labour dissidents to ensure the passage of the so-called 'Scurr amendment', which rendered the bill inoperative pending a concrete agreement enabling church schools to participate in the raising of the school age. Trevelyan intended to push ahead despite this setback, although it was now widely rumoured that the Conservatives would use their majority in the House of Lords to further block reform. The passage of the Scurr amendment did, in fact, have the ironic effect of causing some uncertainty among Conservative leaders as to the best method of proceeding. The opposition peers had recently become intent on defeating the government in order to force a general election, but a protracted debate now ensued between those who stuck to the tactical importance of embarrassing the Labour administration and those who felt that the opportunity to assist the church schools should not be thrown away. With the support of Percy and the front-bench peers, party political considerations ultimately prevailed, and the Conservative leader in the upper

14. See below, p.177.
chamber, Lord Hailsham, successfully moved the rejection of the bill on the grounds of financial extravagance. This effectively marked the final defeat of Labour's efforts to raise the leaving age: although the government threatened to proceed under the parliament act, no further action was taken before the government was replaced in the autumn of 1931 by a coalition of Conservative, Liberal and National Labour supporters.

Trevelyan's efforts to raise the school-leaving age were of course unsuccessful for a variety of reasons. He had been given only lukewarm support by members of the cabinet, in particular the Prime Minister and Philip Snowden, the Chancellor, who was rumoured in 1931 to have ordered the bill 'to die... as being one more superfluous mouth to feed'. The President himself must also bear some responsibility, both for underestimating the government's reliance on Liberal support and for acting prematurely on the religious issue in the absence of full agreement. The Conservative Party had nevertheless played a crucial role in thwarting the minister's ambitions for reform. This hostility to raising the leaving age was itself the product of several interrelated factors, some of which revolved around political rather than educational considerations. In this context, the tactical consideration of undermining a minority administration was evident from the outset, when Trevelyan called for early action on the grounds that the 'Tories see good business' in cabinet hesitation. An equally important consideration of this

16. Lord Hailsham to Salisbury, 4 Feb. 1931, Salisbury papers, 4M 139/75; 79 H.L. Deb., 5s., cc.1104-64, 18 Feb. 1931.
18. Trevelyan to J.R. MacDonald, 11 July 1929, Ramsay MacDonald papers, Public Record Office, P.R.O. 30/69/251.
sort was the belief that raising the leaving age was an unpopular measure with the electorate: the desire to win votes on the issue was particularly evident in the condemnation of maintenance allowances as a 'bribe' to parents. Beyond these common factors, a whole range of objections were put forward by Conservatives, reflecting a variety of experiences and expectations. Reservations had been made on financial, industrial and even agricultural grounds, in addition to the educational case against the bill made by Percy and his supporters. When combined, these considerations and attitudes indicated that Conservative policy on this issue remained unbending: the raising of the school-leaving age in 1930 would, in the words of one leading Conservative, have split the party down the middle.

On the remaining aspects of Labour policy for the adolescent - the increase of free places in the grammar schools and the encouragement of elementary reorganisation - Conservative opinion had similarly shown few signs of shifting. For many party members the extension of secondary education for selected children continued to be the primary object of policy. The education group in parliament were more flexible in their attitude to post-primary reform, but themselves remained one step behind the thinking of Eustace Percy, who alone amongst Conservatives in the early 1930s continued to call for far-reaching reforms in the education of the adolescent.

19. Eustace Percy, Some memories, p.100: 'To be suspected of a desire to keep children longer at school was a black mark against parliamentary candidates in the constituencies in 1929 and later; and... none were more eager to foment such suspicions than Labour canvassers'. Even a supporter of reform such as John Buchan claimed that allowances had 'the ugly look of being a bribe to parents' - 239 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.1577, 29 May 1930.

20. The Times Educational Supplement, 22 Nov. 1930, for Conservative amendments designed to secure exemptions from attending school for those working in agriculture; Salisbury to Baldwin, 10 May 1930, Baldwin papers, vol.10, f.385.

The educational policy of the first National government was overshadowed by the theme of economy. The debates about reform, including those concerning the school-leaving age, were subordinated until at least 1934 by the seriousness of the economic recession. The tone for much of the period was set by the Committee established in 1931 under Sir George May, which recommended widespread economies of some twelve million pounds in educational spending. The May Report suggested wholesale economies throughout the education service - the abandonment of Fisher's percentage grant to local authorities, the reduction of teachers' salaries, and the replacement of free places in the secondary schools with means tested 'special places'. The assumptions upon which the May Report were based justify the claim that its philosophy was the most regressive of the inter-war years, although it does not follow that the renewed economies of the 1930s represented the 'traditional Conservative panacea'.

Conservatives were of course enthusiastic advocates of retrenchment, but the assumption that deflationary measures alone could remedy industrial stagnation was still widely shared by all sections of political opinion. The majority of the May Report had already been accepted by Trevelyan's successor, H.B. Lees-Smith, before the fall of the Labour government; and the introduction of the Board's restrictive circular, number 1431, was carried out by the Liberal minister, Sir Donald Maclean, who echoed the idea that sacrifices were now inevitable. In practice, then, successive governments

23. 'Cabinet committee on the Report of the committee on national expenditure', memorandum by the President of the Board of Education, Aug. 1931, P.R.O. CAB 24/223; 'Interview between the President and representatives of local education authorities on 4th September 1931', Sir Donald Maclean papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford, c.468, fos.147-56.
were again hamstrung by economic orthodoxy and the Treasury's insistence on maximum reductions in spending; shortly before his unexpected death in June 1932, Maclean was warned by the Treasury that further sweeping reductions in spending were necessary. It was in these familiar circumstances that Edward Wood, now Lord Irwin, was appointed for a second term as President of the Board.

In 1932 Irwin was clearly reluctant to resume cabinet responsibilities after his spell as Viceroy of India. He noted in private that 'little as one wants to do it, it would not be right to refuse to take a hand if they think one can help'. This reluctance was not wholly the product of a lack of interest in education. Irwin was extremely reluctant to abandon the renewed enjoyment of his family estates in Yorkshire, and had turned down the position of Foreign Secretary on such grounds in 1931; he later recorded that he would much prefer the position of master of the local fox-hunt to that of Prime Minister. Despite this reticence, Irwin was carefully chosen in the summer of 1932. Ramsay MacDonald was anxious that Maclean's death should not lead to an alteration in the balance of the coalition, but found that no Liberals of cabinet rank were available for promotion. He believed that the present agitation about cuts in education would be exacerbated by the appointment of a minister closely identified with the Conservative position - ruling Eustace Percy out on such grounds - and after consulting Baldwin and Chamberlain, settled on Irwin as a minister capable of 'effecting

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24. Chamberlain to Maclean, 1 June 1932, P.R.O. ED 24/1260.
accommodation and compromise'. With Irwin now in the House of Lords, the brunt of this burden was borne by the Parliamentary Secretary, Herwald Ramsbotham, who had been appointed in November 1931. Ramsbotham, a former merchant banker, had only entered parliament in 1929 as Conservative M.P. for Lancaster, and owed his rapid promotion to a non-partisan style of politics which appealed to Baldwin as party leader. The task facing the new ministers for the foreseeable future was both limited and predictable: as long as the financial situation showed no signs of improving, the Board had to impose restrictions without completely alienating political and educational opinion.

The constraints imposed upon Irwin and Ramsbotham were illustrated firstly by the introduction of 'special places' in September 1932. Treasury officials had long complained that the entry of pupils free of charge to secondary schools was wasteful of public funds, and the May Report endorsed this view by suggesting that free places be made conditional upon a means test. Under Treasury instructions, the Board had been working on ways of implementing this recommendation while Maclean was in office. Irwin was thus left to publicise an unpopular policy which he inherited, although with the backing of the Parliamentary Secretary he did override the wish of Board officials.

27. MacDonald to Baldwin, 21 June 1932, MacDonald papers, P.R.O. 30/69/678 (Pt.1), f.180.
28. N. Middleton and S. Weitzman, A place for everyone, p.230; MacDonald to Baldwin, 21 June 1932, MacDonald papers, fos.180-1, where Baldwin is reported as saying that Ramsbotham's claim to office would have been difficult to ignore had not other political considerations been involved.
29. 'Secondary schools', memorandum by H.B. Wallis, Apr. 1931, P.R.O. ED 24/1207; Report of the committee on national expenditure (May Report), Cmd.3920 (1931), which also implicitly criticised the Conservative Party for increased spending on higher education since 1927.
to throw open competition for places to schools outside the public
system. \(^{30}\) The President met the storm of criticism which followed
the publication of Circular 1421 with the claim that the Board intended
to fill places 'by open competition, the parents of successful
candidates being hereafter asked to make such contribution to the
cost as it may be in their power to afford'. \(^{31}\) In practice, however,
the new policy did not produce the savings of £400,000 estimated
by the Treasury, which was similarly frustrated in its efforts to
impose further drastic reductions on local expenditure. The Committee
set up for this purpose under Sir William Ray, Conservative M.P.
for Richmond, called for further savings of over three million
pounds by measures such as the closure of small schools, an additional
reduction in teachers' salaries and the introduction of fees in certain
central schools. \(^{32}\) Acting on the advice of the Permanent Secretary,
E.H. Pelham, the President protested against the probable intensifi-
cation of public disquiet by the implementation of the 'controversial'
Ray Report. The reintroduction of fees in any elementary school,
he noted in particular, would reverse a well-established principle
and would prove 'acutely contentious'. \(^{33}\) In this way the most extreme
demands of the Treasury were fended off: savings were made from the
closure of small schools with the agreement of the voluntary bodies,
but the majority of the recommendations made by the Ray Report were

\(^{30}\) MacDonald to E.G. Herwill, 1 Jan. 1933, Astor papers, 1416/1/1/994; 
Ramsbotham to Irwin, (?) Sep. 1932, P.R.O. ED 12/353; Board of 

\(^{31}\) Irwin, 'Secondary education. Thirty years' development', The 

\(^{32}\) Report of the committee on local expenditure in England and Wales 
(Ray Report), Cmd.4200 (1932).

\(^{33}\) 'Further economies in education', note by E.H. Pelham, 22 Nov.
1932, P.R.O. ED 24/1261; Irwin to Chamberlain, 6 Dec. 1932, ibid.
ignored and Irwin promised only to consider giving effect to some of the minor proposals.\textsuperscript{34}

Restrictions in spending nevertheless overshadowed the policy of the first National government. The Conservative ministers at the Board, while objecting to wholesale economies, were prepared to sanction a significant change in the free place system which they regarded as politically defensible, despite its unpopularity in the educational world. The main thrust for economy within the government had predictably come from the Treasury, but in this instance an extra ingredient was provided by the calculated hostility of the Chancellor. In the 1920s, Neville Chamberlain had made no secret of his dislike for the projected expansion of education envisaged by Eustace Percy, and this attitude clearly persisted when he became the 'executive arm' of the coalition government after 1931. In February 1933 the Chancellor personally endorsed a claim by the Minister of Health, Hilton Young, that new projects involving capital expenditure would not be automatically ruled out, even though the Ministry was operating under the same restrictions applied to the Board of Education. This resulted in local authority complaints that the Board was being unduly restrictive, but Irwin's requests for a more flexible approach were initially rebuffed by Chamberlain's insistence on avoiding new commitments wherever possible. The Chancellor gave way only after being convinced that intransigence now would lead to much larger demands on capital expenditure at a later date, though he continued to maintain that substantial cuts in education spending

\textsuperscript{34}. Memorandum by E.J.S., n.d., ibid.
were still required. Chamberlain thus had well-defined priorities in social policy: 'in many parts of the country', he told the President, there was 'a clear demand that other services, such as housing and slum clearance, should have preference over education if substantial new expenditure were to be incurred on the social services'.  

Education, which had traditionally been accorded a low political priority, therefore suffered in the 1930s from the additional constraints imposed by a hostile Chancellor, who was to remain a powerful force in the government throughout the decade.

The economies introduced in the early 1930s were overwhelmingly endorsed by the Conservative Party. There were isolated individuals who stood out against this trend, notably Eustace Percy, who took no part in the debates on economy measures. In addition, those professionally involved in the educational world once more complained that reductions were too severe. R.H. Morgan, for example, a former headmaster and representative of the National Union of Teachers, was the only Conservative M.P. to vote against the government's introduction of 'special places'. The party as a whole, however, was adamant that reductions in spending were necessary. Chamberlain

35. J.A. Ramsden, The age of Balfour and Baldwin, p.331, notes Chamberlain's powerful position in the government and cites his diary comment that 'it amuses me to find a new policy for each of my colleagues in turn'. On the controversy over capital expenditure, see 'Notes on Board's policy as regards sanctioning fresh capital expenditure', E.H. Pelham, 25 Apr. 1933, P.R.O. ED 24/1261; Irwin to Chamberlain, 6 Nov. and 5 Dec. 1933, and Chamberlain to Irwin, 21 Nov. and 20 Dec. 1933, ibid.  
36. Chamberlain to Halifax, 6 Feb. 1934, P.R.O. ED 24/1550. In 1934 the Chancellor in fact attempted to launch a new housing programme, and in the following year was able to secure the appointment of one of his close adherents, Kingsley Wood, to the Ministry of Health, with instructions to carry out such a scheme - J.A. Ramsden, The making of Conservative Party policy, p.71.  
37. 270 H.C. Deb., 5s., cc.1211-4, 16 Nov. 1931.
was able to appeal to the belief of many that education, like all
other services, must suffer at a time of national crisis, although
the mixed reception given to the hard line report of a private members' economy committee indicated the limits to which Conservatives generally wished to go. For some party members, the education service was an obvious area to be singled out for harsh treatment. This applied to the Conservative Research Department, which had close working links with the Chancellor; and to individual back-benchers such as Michael Beaumont, who urged the reintroduction of fees in elementary schools, castigated the Hadow Report, and declared a willingness to 'accept the name of reactionary if that is the tone of my policy'.

Despite his eccentricity, Beaumont indicated the mood amongst Conservatives, who had to be satisfied as the largest body of government supporters. In 1933 several speakers noted during the estimates debate that Ramsbotham's main concern was to defend himself against those who criticised the high levels of expenditure on education, a mentality reflected in the loud cheering which accompanied any reference to the economies carried out.

38. The economy committee had been set up at the Chancellor's request to outline possible areas of further economy, but many back-benchers eventually dissociated themselves from the drastic remedies proposed. See J.A. Ramsden, The age of Balfour and Baldwin, pp.337-8.
40. e.g. Ernest Evans, 290 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.241, 30 May 1934. The Labour spokesman W.G. Cove asked: 'Is the truth that while Mr. Ramsbotham asservates and reasservates his love of education... that this love is not shared by the Government he so faithfully serves?' - ibid., c.204.
The preoccupation with economy measures did not completely eclipse discussion of educational issues. In secondary education, the Board's policy was of course dominated by the need to defend the introduction of special places. For Ramsbotham in particular, this move was logical in the sense that completely free secondary education had never been proposed by any government. Apart from this, little change was envisaged in the short-term, and the Board was content to wait upon the findings of the Consultative Committee, which began an investigation into secondary education in 1933. As far as the elementary system was concerned, the Board gave continued encouragement to the process of Hadow reorganisation. Irwin argued that funds should be concentrated on this reform when they became available, and in 1934 Ramsbotham was able to claim that despite economies, over fifty per cent of all children now attended senior departments, and that further proposals in this direction would be sympathetically considered.

The Parliamentary Secretary was in fact the only Conservative minister apart from Percy to consider long-term reforms which would transcend the existing division between secondary and elementary education. He was reported as claiming in one important speech, that

'some day or other, when we had improved the technique of our senior schools, particularly on the practical side, and when financial conditions permitted, the compulsory school-leaving age might be raised and we should have post-primary education for all. There was no reason to suppose that the post-primary education then given in the senior schools would be in any way less desirable or inferior to the post-primary education now given between 11 and 16 years of age in the secondary schools. The establishment of our senior schools was probably the greatest educational reform of the twentieth century. Experience had shown that in many cases reorganisation could

41. 270 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.1174, 16 Nov. 1932.
42. Irwin to MacDonald, 30 Aug. 1933, MacDonald papers, P.R.O. 30/69/6 (Pt.1), f.6; 290 H.C. Deb., 5s., cc.189-90, 30 May 1934.
43. The Times Educational Supplement, 21 Oct. 1933.
be achieved without any appreciable net increase to public expenditure, and local authorities would resemble foolish virgins if they should be found with no oil in their lamps when the Treasury announced that it was prepared to supply the matches'.

For the time being, however, the Board concentrated on much less sweeping reforms for the adolescent. As economic circumstances slowly improved, Irwin sensed that political and educational opinion favoured a more positive approach, preferably picking up where Trevelyan had left off. By early 1934, the President was therefore considering ways of tackling the linked problems of the school-leaving age and grants to the church schools.

Party political opinion, in the meantime, had altered very little on questions concerning the education of the adolescent. Labour thinking at this time was, in the words of Rodney Barker, characterised by 'greater violence of language on the one hand, and more vigorous insistence on traditional demands on the other'. Hence the party denounced Circular 1421 as 'class persecution' and a threat to working-class access to the grammar schools, but in 1934 was still calling for a common code of post-primary regulations and the raising of the leaving age to ensure equality between all schools.  

In the Conservative Party, the obsession with economy meant that the concerns of the adolescent received even less attention than usual. The exception to this was once more Eustace Percy, who in the course of giving evidence to the Spens Committee departed from his earlier ideas by suggesting the abolition of the grammar school in its existing form. Percy argued that because the competitive examination at the age of eleven was 'educationally deleterious and politically

44. Barker, op.cit., pp.69-70, who also notes the new, but as yet limited, interest in the multilateral or common secondary school.
unfair', it would be preferable for all children to go to 'intermediate schools' for four years. These would have a variety of biases, but should be equal in status, generally free of charge and all conducted under the regulations for higher education. At fifteen pupils could then go on either to higher secondary schools as a preparation for university training, or to senior technical schools preparing for industry or higher technological studies.  

Percy's concern with two educational ladders was of course in direct contrast to the attitude of most Conservative Party supporters. The Education Committee in parliament had given some backing to the former minister, but was unlikely to share his attitude towards grammar school selection. For the majority of Conservatives, moreover, the maintenance of secondary education as an elite training remained the primary concern. In response to enquiries in 1933, the party's Central Office gave the reply that it would be a mistake to subject all children over the age of eleven to secondary education, though it should be made progressively more available to children of parents unable to afford fees. This indicated the extent to which Conservative opinion remained dominated by the traditional ladder concept and the need to preserve fee-paying, elite secondary training. By contrast, the elementary system held little interest: the party had been openly hostile to the raising of the compulsory leaving age, and showed no enthusiasm for post-primary reorganisation. These attitudes were only to show the first, tentative signs of alteration in the second half of the 1930s.

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46. W.C. Cleary to P. Cohen, 24 Nov. 1933, P.R.O. ED 24/1395.
In October 1935 the National government was re-elected for a second term as a coalition between Conservatives, MacDonald's Labour supporters and Liberal Nationals. One of the first measures which the new administration carried through parliament was the 1936 Education Act, which introduced certain building grants for voluntary schools and raised the school-leaving age to fifteen with exemptions for 'beneficial employment', applicable to those in their final year of school attendance. The origins of this reform clearly went back to the period of the first coalition: as the economic situation slowly improved, so public agitation for a more advanced education policy revived, and concentrated in particular on the improvement of the elementary system favoured by Trevelyan. The Board of Education, for a variety of reasons, chose to ignore the popular opinion in favour of the universal extension of the leaving age and opted instead for a generous system of exemptions. When the Board's plans were presented to parliament early in 1936, there was widespread agreement about the need to assist the voluntary schools in preparing for a higher leaving age and furthering reorganisation, but considerable controversy over the scope and definition of 'beneficial employment'. It is therefore necessary to trace the origins of the 1936 Act and to focus on two questions in particular - the motives which led Conservative ministers at the Board to contemplate reform of the leaving age, and the response of Conservatives generally to the Act and the implications which this had for the party's attitude towards the adolescent.

The renewed demands for an extension of the elementary school course after 1933 were led by educationists and Labour Party spokesmen. The Conservative Party's minor role in this public agitation, however, has gone unnoticed, and operated on two levels. In the first place, Conservative controlled local authorities were amongst those who were now considering the raising of the leaving age under the bye-law procedure of the 1921 Act. The majority of those areas who had already adopted this course were in fact dominated by Conservatives, and the movement for reform along these lines was much strengthened in 1933 by the commitment of the Lancashire County Council to a graduated scheme for extending school life.\footnote{Notes on the operation of the bye-laws in the existing fifteen bye-law areas', D. Du B. Davidson, 16 Dec. 1935, P.R.O. ED 136/64: nine were Conservative controlled, and only two Labour. On the situation in Lancashire, see The Times Educational Supplement, 9 Dec. 1933.}

The second element of Conservative involvement was provided by a private members' bill introduced into the Commons in December 1933, which was designed to raise the school age to fifteen by 1937 while allowing exemptions for those obtaining 'suitable employment'. This measure was put forward in the name of the Liberal spokesman Percy Harris, but he acknowledged that the real author was Eustace Percy, who immodestly suggested that his own earlier draft bill had been superior by containing the proviso that all exempted children should attend continuation classes until the age of sixteen.\footnote{283 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.1229, 1 Dec. 1933. For further details of the Harris bill, and its relationship to the problems of education for employment, see below, p. 217.} The Harris bill, which was only narrowly defeated in a thin House, reflected above all Eustace Percy's new found concern with industrial 'planning', and for this reason his main support amongst Conservatives came from those who were similarly interested in controlling the flow of...
juvenile labour from the schools into industry. He was nevertheless backed up by party educationists also, notably Edward Cadogan, R.H. Morgan and Annesley Somerville, who agreed that it was necessary to look at the problem of the school-leaving age from a new perspective. This sympathy for reform which would involve a higher leaving age was of course offset by the continued hostility of many back-benchers. Herbert Williams denounced the idea as another 'madcap scheme that would increase public expenditure', although the Board of Education's rejection of the Harris bill was ultimately based on administrative and educational objections.

Within two months of the debates on the Harris bill, the President - who became Viscount Halifax after the death of his father in January 1934 - was ironically urging his cabinet colleagues to contemplate a similar sort of measure. His reasons for doing so were twofold. In educational terms, he noted that there was a strong case for returning to the issues which had preoccupied Trevelyan. The process of reorganisation, to which the Board was committed, could not proceed much further without raising the question of how the voluntary bodies were to find the funds necessary to reorganise their schools, and whether the full benefits of senior education were to be realised by a four year course. The second, and more pressing concern for Halifax, was the political danger of 'attempting

50. Labour supported the bill 'as a necessary step in the right direction': W.G. Cove - 283 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.1233, 1 Dec. 1933. For Somerville - ibid., c.1243. The bill was defeated by ten votes. It was opposed by 68 government supporters (65 Conservative, 3 National Liberal), and attracted support from 34 opposition members (17 Labour, 16 Liberal, 1 Independent) as well as 24 M.P.s on the government side (20 Conservative, 1 National Liberal, 2 National Labour, 1 Independent National) - ibid., cc.1275-8.

51. Williams - ibid., c.1209; Ramsbotham - ibid., cc.1265-72.
to continue a process of severe and mechanical restriction in the educational field'. He argued that large savings had already been made, and that the Board's record was likely to be criticised as unduly restrictive as the economy improved, especially when compared with measures now being sanctioned by other departments. In this context Halifax referred both to the disquiet shown by the 'responsible' authority in Lancashire, and to the recent interest in the school-leaving age as a method of tackling juvenile unemployment - a clear reference to the Harris bill. The remedy suggested by the President, tentatively at this stage, was to introduce legislation in the present parliament which would raise the leaving age with generous exemptions, whilst also providing building grants for the voluntary schools. By linking the two issues it was hoped that Nonconformists, teachers and local authorities would accept building grants in return for raising the leaving age; while for Conservatives it was hoped that 'the presence of one would blunt the edge of unpopularity of the other', and the cost would be much reduced by excluding maintenance allowances. This new initiative at the beginning of 1934 provided a good indication of Halifax's style as President: he was sensitive to the electoral implications of public disquiet with the government's policy, and now favoured a measure of reform which would be both politically acceptable and financially practicable.

The President's hopes for early action were frustrated throughout 1934 by the reticence of his cabinet colleagues. The cabinet

52. Irwin to Chamberlain, 12 Jan. 1934, P.R.O. ED 24/1395; 'Future educational policy', memorandum by the President of the Board of Education, 8 Feb. 1934, P.R.O. CAB 24/247.
53. Cabinet educational policy committee, first meeting, 1 Mar. 1934, P.R.O. CAB 27/574.
committee set up to review education policy highlighted the constraints within which the minister operated, for he found no allies in seeking to tackle the question of the school-leaving age. This was partly due to the low priority of education. Chamberlain in particular repeated the argument that 'the man in the street' already considered education spending to be too high, and he secured acceptance of the view that at best the Board should only devise a policy to present at the next election. Halifax also suffered at this stage from departmental rivalry and the priority attached to other government reforms. The Ministry of Labour feared that any reference to raising the school-leaving age might hamper the work of the recently revived Junior Instruction Centres; and with the Chancellor's backing, it was agreed that the government had done enough for the time being by the introduction of its Unemployment bill. Instead of pushing ahead with reform proposals, the President was therefore restricted by cabinet opposition to informal discussions with other government departments. When the government's attitude towards the school age was brought up in the House of Lords in July 1934, he was even instructed to modify his speech in order to emphasise the importance of the instruction centres. Under mounting public pressure, however - especially from the School Age Council led by John Buchan - Halifax finally managed to extract a promise of future action from his unsympathetic colleagues. In February 1935 the Prime Minister received a powerful deputation from the School Age Council, and the cabinet committee conceded that a declaration of policy would be required.

54. Ibid.
55. Cabinet educational policy committee, second meeting, 27 June 1934, P.R.O. CAB 27/574.
for the forthcoming election. Their recommendation, subsequently endorsed by the full cabinet, was that the President should form a departmental policy before consulting outside bodies, giving special consideration to the issue of finance and to the interests of industry and agriculture.57

These considerations were to remain uppermost as the Board set about devising the actual detail of its reform proposals. An office committee under the Deputy Secretary, Maurice Holmes, had in fact already been considering the question of education after the age of fourteen, and argued that in order to minimise dislocation to industry, the school age should be raised with exemptions for 'beneficial employment'. These were to be worked out by local authorities under the bye-law procedure of the 1921 Act, using much tighter safeguards than those suggested by the Harris bill; authorities were also to be given permissive powers to compel attendance of exempted children at continuation schools until the age of sixteen.58 Halifax had certain reservations about the report of the Holmes committee, notably over the absence of even a limited scheme of maintenance allowances and the preference for permissive rather than compulsory attendance at day classes. These objections were overruled, however, on the grounds of cost, and the Board of Education thereafter entered into a series of informal negotiations

57. On the School Age Council, see Simon, op.cit., pp.200-1. See also Cabinet educational policy committee, First Report, 1 Feb. 1935, P.R.O. CAB 24/253; and Cabinet minutes, 6 Feb. 1935, P.R.O. CAB 23/81. This result owed much to pressure by Halifax for an overall scheme of educational advance including several items - such as an increased grant for elementary reorganisation - which were carried out after he left office - Halifax minute to Pelham, n.d. (Dec. 1934), P.R.O. ED 24/1395.
having already determined the likely shape of legislation. The various deputations visiting the Board were questioned about whether they favoured the raising of the leaving age for all children, the development of continuation schools or 'the middle course advocated by Lord Eustace Percy and others' — the raising of the leaving age with exemptions and subject to attendance at further part-time classes. The great majority sought the extension of school life for all children with maintenance allowances attached, but this did not prevent the Board from giving a sympathetic hearing to the representatives of agriculture and industry. The National Farmers Union was one of only two delegations openly to state a preference for exemptions, and the President informed them that he was fully aware of the difficulties of the agricultural interest — an assurance repeated in even stronger terms to employers' representatives.

In June 1935 MacDonald was replaced as Prime Minister by Stanley Baldwin, who moved Halifax to the more senior post of Secretary of State for War and installed at the Board of Education another young minister identified with the intellectual left of his party, Oliver Stanley. Within weeks of assuming office, Stanley presented to the reconstituted cabinet committee the legislative proposal already worked out by the Board, whilst adding that if finance had not been

59. 'Rough notes by the President on the Holmes Report', 25 Feb. 1935, ibid. See also the notes by G.G. Williams, 6 and 26 Feb. 1935, P.R.O. ED 24/1550, which claim that in the forthcoming consultations, the Board would 'test the soundness of their own proposals'.

so crucial, he would have advocated the flat raising of the leaving age to fifteen. Stanley's forceful presentation of his case helped to secure a more sympathetic attitude to educational reform. The new President could now rely on support from both Halifax and Eustace Percy, who returned to ministerial office after Baldwin became Prime Minister; and in the absence of Neville Chamberlain, the committee agreed that the Board's scheme could be included as part of the government's electoral programme. After the return of the National government, however, the final meetings of the cabinet committee highlighted continuing disagreement over the proposed scheme of exemptions. The Board had now retreated from the idea of requiring exempted children to attend further instruction, on the grounds that neither local authorities nor employers were enthusiastic. Halifax and Percy both protested against this decision, but the legislation introduced into parliament early in 1936 referred only vaguely to the need for local authorities to consider 'the opportunities to be afforded... for further education' when granting employment certificates. This final whittling down of the scope of reform underlined the limitations of the government's ambitions. The 1936 Act did not represent, as it has been called, the return of the discredited practice of half-time or the implementation of Halifax's 'own, Conservative, idea' of exemptions. In educational terms,

61. 'Compulsory education beyond 14', memorandum by the President of the Board of Education, 27 June 1935, P.R.O. CAB 27/574.
62. Cabinet educational policy committee, fifth meeting, 4 July 1935, ibid.
63. 'Compulsory education beyond 14+. Requirements as to further education for exempted pupils', minute by M.G. Holmes, 30 Oct. 1935, P.R.O. ED 24/1549; Cabinet educational policy committee, seventh meeting, 5 Dec. 1935, P.R.O. CAB 27/574; Education Act, 1936. 26 Geo.5&1 Edw.8. Cl.41, Sec.2(4). For Percy's equivocal attitude towards the 1936 Act, see below, p.222.
it marked the national adoption by the Board of the local procedure
enshrined in the 1921 Act, and owed more to Eustace Percy's desire
to link education and industry than to the thinking of Halifax.
Politically, the measure went as far as Conservative ministers were
able to go in the circumstances. Halifax and Stanley, while realising
the need to act, were determined that the considerations of finance,
agriculture and industry would remain paramount - in short, they
had to ensure that reform was acceptable to Conservative supporters. 65

In parliament the school-leaving age remained, as it had been
since Trevelyan's second term at the Board, a major source of division
between the parties. The Labour Party was still firmly committed
to the raising of the age for all children, and after the introduction
of the government's bill poured scorn on the idea of 'beneficial
employment' as unjust and unworkable. 66 The attitude of Conservatives
had of course been the complete reverse: as recently as 1934
Ramsbotham had argued against tackling the problem, on the grounds
that 'no Unionist member is, so far as I am aware, pledged to raising
the school-leaving age'. 67 The idea of exemptions did in fact receive
criticism from what the press termed the 'Left Wing of the government's
supporters' in 1936. Nancy Astor claimed that this provision ruined
a good bill, and Harold Macmillan played a prominent role in a
series of public protests organised by educational bodies. More
surprisingly, these critics were given strong backing by members

65. Stanley was particularly conscious of appealing to the 'electorally
important sections of the community - parents and employers' -
memorandum by the President, 27 June 1935, P.R.O. CAB 27/574.
66. e.g. H.B. Lees-Smith - 308 H.C. Deb., 5s., cc.1186-8, 13 Feb. 1936.
67. Ramsbotham to Pelham, 14 Jan. 1934, P.R.O. ED 24/1550: 'though
socially and educationally there are very strong reasons for
raising it, I am rather doubtful as to its value as a political
asset'.

of the party's education committee. Annesley Somerville, for example, criticised the procedure of exemptions as cumbersome; and a stinging attack on this part of the bill was made by William Duckworth, who voiced the reservations of the Association of Education Committees. In spite of these criticisms about not going far enough, most Conservatives remained reluctant to endorse any reform which raised the compulsory leaving age. This reticence had now been overcome, however, both by the simultaneous assistance given to the voluntary schools and by the generous system of exemptions provided in deference to the wishes of parents, agriculture and industry. Hence there was never any threat to the government's large majority: Macmillan was the only Conservative back-bencher to enter the opposition lobby on the second reading, and at the committee stage the education group contented itself with amendments aimed at improving the exemption procedure. Although the parliamentary party accepted the education bill without enthusiasm, the passage of the 1936 Act nevertheless marked an underlying change in Conservative thinking towards the adolescent. The party had now acquiesced in a reform which went some of the way towards the measure resisted firmly when attempted by Trevelyan. Those closely involved in the educational world had moved to the opinion that a flat raising of the leaving age would be most beneficial; and amongst the majority for whom exemptions were vital in securing support, the assumption that only children

68. The Times Educational Supplement, 15 Feb. and 7 Mar. 1936; Astor - 308 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.1271, 13 Feb. 1936; Somerville - ibid., c.1231; Duckworth - ibid., c.1193.
69. e.g. the introduction of a clause ensuring that employment certificates could only be granted at the end of a school term - 'Notes on amendments. Committee - Commons', n.d., P.R.O. ED 136/51. These amendments had often been worked out in agreement with the President. See the minute by Pelham, 21 Feb. 1936, P.R.O. ED 136/47, recording the visit of a deputation from the Conservative education committee.
selected by academic ability should remain at school after fourteen had been seriously undermined. This small but perceptible shift was soon to be mirrored in other aspects of policy for the adolescent.

V

The raising of the compulsory leaving age was due to come into operation three years after the passage of the 1936 Act, but was suspended with the outbreak of the Second World War. In the meantime, Board policy for the adolescent continued along well-established lines. Steady progress was made under the terms of Circular 1444, which removed restrictions on the upper limit of special places in secondary schools and reintroduced a higher level of grant to encourage elementary reorganisation. The long-awaited report of the Consultative Committee on secondary education, which was finally published in December 1938, had the effect of raising officially the whole issue of relating secondary and elementary education for the first time since Percy left office. The Spens Report argued that a school-leaving age of sixteen was ultimately desirable; that all children should attend schools conducted under the secondary code of regulations; and that notwithstanding experiments in multilateral schooling, the main aim was for 'parity of esteem' between the various types of secondary school. This restatement of the neglected intentions of Hadow was coolly received by senior Board officials, however, both on financial and administrative grounds. In early 1939 it was

announced in parliament that there would be no attempt in the foreseeable future either to introduce experimental multilateral schools or to subject all post-primary education to one set of regulations. This attitude reflected not only the continuing reluctance of ministers and officials at the Board to contemplate major reform, but also the renewed threat of economy, which increased as spending on rearmament was stepped up.\textsuperscript{72}

In the Conservative Party, interest in education for the adolescent remained at a low level during the period of the second National government. This was partly due to the absence of any direct ministerial lead after Baldwin retired and was replaced by Neville Chamberlain in May 1937. In contrast to the sort of appointments made by Baldwin, the new Prime Minister ensured that the Board of Education was entrusted to peers, first Earl Stanhope and later Earl de la Warr, a National Labour supporter. Chamberlain's own associates were given priority in domestic affairs, notably in launching a new housing programme; and in 1938 the government was criticised for making the Board the 'Cinderalla of the Cabinet', used as a convenient staging post in any government reshuffle.\textsuperscript{73} The lack of interest on the front-bench was compounded by the decision of Eustace Percy to follow the example of Baldwin in retiring from political life, having spent two fruitless years as Minister without


\textsuperscript{73} J.A. Ramsden, The age of Balfour and Baldwin, pp.362-3: there was no mention of education when Chamberlain recalled that he entered politics to improve conditions for 'the people' through better wages, housing, health and leisure. For the comments of Percy Harris, see 337 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.765, 20 June 1938.
The combination of these circumstances meant that for the first time since the Lloyd George coalition, Conservative education policy was shaped primarily by a random collection of parliamentary views. This naturally allowed greater prominence for widely divergent and eccentric expressions of individual opinion. At one extreme Herbert Williams continued to attack any measure which involved increased spending on education; while Nancy Astor - the most unrelenting Conservative reformer between the wars - was now arguing the case for a 'Ten Year Plan' to recondition school buildings and develop nursery education, claiming amongst other things that doctors knew very little about health. Despite the continued indifference of most party members to educational issues, however, there were signs that underlying changes were slowly taking place in Conservative attitudes towards reorganisation in particular as a crucial part of the elementary system.

The shift in Conservative attitudes was once more most pronounced in the Education Committee, which since Eustace Percy's term of office had expressed sympathy for post-primary reform without clarifying the ultimate status of senior education. In the second half of the 1930s, members of this group began to advocate more openly changes in the law which would unify and remodel adolescent education. Edward Cobb, for example, who had earlier presided over the Education Committee of the London County Council, was now calling for a tripartite structure with all children attending senior, secondary or technical schools; and Annesley Somerville went one better by

echoing Labour calls for experiments in multilateral schooling, aimed at emulating the French example by combining classical, modern and technical sides in a single building. Moreover, party opinion as a whole was beginning to move towards the position taken up by the education group after reorganisation had been initiated. At the 1935 general election Central Office supported the concept of post-primary education for all children, although this was not regarded as inconsistent with the defence of the grammar school within an extended senior system. The practical successes of senior classes and central schools reinforced the new acceptance amongst Conservatives that it was necessary to provide something better than old style elementary education for the majority. The debates on the Spens Report also indicated a more flexible attitude towards reform, with Kenneth Pickthorn - by no means the most progressive member of the education group - concluding that 'on the whole it is probably a good report'. The second National government therefore produced few developments in policy and no wider interest in education among Conservatives than before. It did however, mark the point when Conservative opinion came to accept certain reforms for the adolescent as inevitable or necessary. The party's defence of grammar school standards remained a primary but not exclusive concern, and could be considered as compatible with two widely canvassed changes in the elementary schools - the raising of the leaving age for unspecified numbers, and the provision of senior education for all.

76. Cobb - 325 H.C. Deb., 5s., cc.103-4, 14 June 1937; Somerville - ibid., c.126.
77. Cabinet emergency business committee, 7 Nov. 1935, P.R.O. CAB 27/590.
78. 343 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.1787, 15 Feb. 1939.
In comparison with the ambitious plans outlined by Eustace Percy when in office, Conservative ministers at the Board of Education in the 1930s had produced few innovations in policy for the adolescent. The process of dividing the elementary schools into junior and senior departments had been continued, but there were no indications that Percy's desire to end the separate statutory categories of secondary and elementary education would be followed as a logical progression. Both Halifax and Oliver Stanley chose instead to follow official advice in concentrating on the related problems of grants to voluntary schools and raising the compulsory leaving age - issues which had been given urgency by public and educational concern. Although Halifax in particular had defended his department against the most excessive demands of the Treasury, the difficulties for education ministers in the 1930s were compounded by the attitude of powerful government figures such as Neville Chamberlain. In his capacity as first Chancellor and later Prime Minister, Chamberlain was able to ensure that educational reform was constantly accorded a low political priority. At the 1935 election, for example, he compiled in order of importance a list of proposals for inclusion in the government's manifesto; the Board's plans for education were placed at the bottom of the list. Against this background, ministerial policy in the decade after 1929 was able to produce only limited and familiar improvements for the adolescent. The number of grammar school places increased slowly, and elementary reorganisation made some impact in church as well as council schools. The existing administrative regulations emphasised the inferior status of the new senior schools,

however, and the only attempted departure in policy - the raising of the school-leaving age - was to be restricted to unspecified numbers of children and never of course came into operation.  

The 1930s were more important for alterations in overall party attitudes to education than for Conservative ministerial initiatives. The actual configuration of party views remained as complex as at any time since the First World War. The hostility of certain die-hards, though abetted at the highest level by Chamberlain, was still counter-balanced in the party as a whole by reformers such as Nancy Astor and Education Committee members in parliament. In addition, many party members still found it difficult to focus on the problems of state schooling, which fell so far outside their own experience. The views of Michael Beaumont, said one of his colleagues, belonged 'to the days of Lady Clara Vere de Vere, who thought that education began and finished by teaching the orphan boy to read, or teaching the orphan girl to sew, and then pray Heaven for a humble heart'. This should not obscure, however, a small shift in opinion concerning the adolescent. Conservatives had traditionally focused so exclusively on secondary education that reforms of the elementary system had been considered unnecessary. After 1935 the first signs of a modified approach began to appear. When put forward by Conservative ministers, party members accepted that some children at least should remain at school until fifteen. At the same time, the proven success of experiments in senior elementary education had the effect of removing

81. R.A. Spencer, Conservative M.P. for St. Helens - 280 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.1152, 12 July 1933.
suspicions about a universal, differentiated system of education for all children over eleven. To an extent this shift represented a move from hostility to indifference; an acquiescence in reforms now considered to be inevitable. The first, tentative indications were nevertheless given in the late 1930s that Conservatives would accept a remodelled system of education for the adolescent.

The movement of Conservative opinion points finally to a significant underlying change in the nature of education as a political issue. With the further division of Liberal forces under successive coalition governments, the Labour Party continued to press for the most fundamental changes in the education system. In the short-term, Labour wanted to abolish grammar school fees and extend the elementary course to fifteen for all children. The ultimate aim was for every child to attend different, but broadly equal, secondary schools under a unified code of regulations. These policies had remained constant for the past decade, however, and the Conservative Party was slowly coming to accept at least the minimum demands of Labour. In fact as party attitudes began to converge in certain respects, so new lines of demarcation were emerging. By 1939 Labour had become publicly identified with the idea of multilateralism, primarily as an addition to a varied secondary structure, whereas Conservatives had made known their reservations about possible reforms thrown up by the Spens Report. Kenneth Pickthorn, for example, defended the direct-grant grammar school as 'almost the most glorious thing in the whole history of our education'; and Annesley Somerville - in his capacity as President of the Independent Schools Association - argued that the public schools must at all costs remain free of state control. 82

82. 343 H.C. Deb., 5s., cc.1783-4, 15 Feb. 1939; ibid., c.1757.
The implications of these shifts in party opinion were only to emerge fully during the Second World War, when Conservatives accepted the provision of secondary education for all children up to fifteen, but stood out against reform of the direct-grant or public schools. Hence in the 1920s the policy of Eustace Percy had foreshadowed the later role of R.A. Butler; in the 1930s it was an imperceptible shift in party attitudes which paved the way for acceptance of the 1944 Act. This central theme - the importance of Conservative policy and opinion between the wars in understanding the 1944 Act - can be reinforced by turning to an issue intimately linked with the education of the adolescent: the problem of religious education.
CHAPTER 6

THE 'DUAL SYSTEM' OF CHURCH AND COUNCIL SCHOOLS:
CONSERVATISM AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION BETWEEN THE WARS

I

The politics of education before the First World War had been dominated by controversy over the 'dual system'. After the Education Act of 1870, the educational provision previously made by the voluntary bodies - mainly the Church of England and the Roman Catholic church - had been supplemented for the first time by elementary education in the newly established Board schools. In political terms, the establishment of this dual system of elementary education represented a compromise between the Conservative supporters of religious instruction and the Liberal champions of state-provided education. The Conservative Party's close allegiance to the Anglican church manifested itself in attempts to preserve and strengthen the position of the voluntary schools; whilst the Liberals took up the complaints of their Nonconformist supporters, notably about state funds being used to bolster voluntary bodies who continued to manage and staff their schools free from any public control. In the years after 1870, the financial dimension of the religious issue had become increasingly complex and contentious. The Board schools developed gradually with support from both the Exchequer and local rates, but the church schools received only modest grants from central government and had to rely heavily on contributions from their congregations. The growing desire of the voluntary bodies to provide their schools with local financial aid on a permanent basis was taken up by the Conservatives and reflected
in the 1902 Education Act, which both replaced the School Boards with local education authorities and introduced rate aid for the voluntary bodies without imposing new conditions for the appointment of teachers or control of denominational teaching. This legislation was resisted fiercely by the Liberal opposition, and was followed by the refusal of Nonconformists in certain areas to pay rates for what they regarded as the subsidising of sectarian religious instruction. The efforts of later Liberal governments to bring all elementary schools under public control, while allowing 'contracting out' facilities for the denominations, were resisted in turn by the Unionists; with this failure to dismantle Balfour's Act, the settlement of 1902 remained intact as the basis of the dual system at the outbreak of war.  

This chapter is concerned to examine the changing nature and importance of the religious issue in English education between the wars. The problems of a dual system of church and council schools were central to any reform of elementary education, and were raised in particular by the new development of post-primary instruction during the period. The following account concentrates on the attempts made after 1918 to reach a new agreement among the main interest groups - the voluntary bodies, political parties, local authorities and teachers' representatives. Within this overall context, attention focuses on the extent to which religious education remained a source of divisiveness between and within political parties. The decline of the Liberal Party after the war necessitates some consideration

1. For a comprehensive study of the dual system after 1870, see M.A. Cruickshank, Church and state in English education, 1870 to the present day (London, 1963). See also J. Murphy, Church, state and schools in Britain, 1800-1970 (London, 1971).
of the Labour Party's approach to the voluntary schools; and points
to the question of how far denominational differences remained
intimately linked with social and political divisions, as they had
been before 1914. The Conservative Party's attitude towards religious
instruction, which provides the main connecting theme of the chapter,
itself raises several issues. The relationship between Conservative
policy in office and party opinion as a whole, for example - which
has been traced in preceding chapters for secondary and elementary
education generally - was complicated in this instance by the party's
close involvement with the bodies officially representing the church
schools, the Anglican National Society and the Catholic Education
Council. This account will therefore seek to assess the manner in
which the various shades of denominational opinion were channelled
into both Conservative ministerial policy and wider party attitudes.

By looking finally at the value which party members placed on religious
instruction as part of the school curriculum, it becomes possible
to link two important problems: the changing nature of the dual system
as a policy issue in the inter-war period, and the motives and
assumptions which underpinned the close association between Conservatism
and religious education.

II

At the end of the First World War, the financial position of
the voluntary schools caused considerable concern among the church
bodies. Although the voluntary, or non-provided, schools still formed
half of the elementary system, the growth of population in recent
years faced the churches with demands for new schools which were
difficult to meet. In addition, the rise in building costs since
the turn of the century was exacerbated by the effects of the war, which left a legacy of many defective school buildings; and under the terms of the 1918 Education Act, the denominations were further required to consider the extra accommodation necessary for advanced elementary instruction. In these circumstances, the financial terms agreed in 1902 were no longer considered to be adequate. The voluntary bodies had difficulty simply in repairing their old school buildings, many of which were built before 1875, and would be unable to participate in reform of the elementary system without a further measure of financial aid from the state. This, of course, required a new national agreement. The existing terms laid down that local authorities could only levy rates for the internal repair of church schools, not for the actual structure of the school buildings. At the same time, they were unable to compel voluntary school managers to spend money on their buildings, and had little effective control over the appointment of teachers. From the viewpoint of the local authorities, who required control over the management of buildings and teachers in order to stimulate advanced elementary education, the continuance of the dual system in its existing form was thus becoming identified at the end of the war as an obstacle to general progress.\(^2\) The debates on the dual system in the years immediately after the war were in fact to show that although some of the intensity of previous controversy had died down, there was still not sufficient agreement to allow a major restructuring of the 1902 settlement.

The 1918 Education Act left the position and rights of the voluntary schools unaltered. The Liberal minister Fisher was aware that any direct reference to the dual system could revive sectarian

\(^2\) Cruickshank, op.cit., p.114.
bitterness and so jeopardise his plans for improving the council elementary schools, especially in the circumstances of wartime coalition. At one point the President reassured Unionists in public that he did not intend to tackle the religious issue - a recognition of the necessary price to be paid for an agreed party measure.\(^3\)

The parliamentary debates on the bill provided some justification for Fisher's reticence, as Unionist back-benchers made their views clear whenever the position of the church schools was indirectly affected. In particular, an amendment moved by Sir Henry Craik to modify the clause relating to advanced elementary instruction attracted support from both the critics and friends of Fisher's bill. The Craik amendment was backed most forcefully by Sir Clement Anderson Montague-Barlow, an Anglican who had earlier defended the 1902 settlement and who was now acting as an official spokesman for the National Society. Barlow put the case that 'when a statutory obligation is laid on a local authority to provide central schools, it shall not be exclusive of the provision of adequate central schools by the Church or Roman Catholic bodies'.\(^4\) For the only time during the committee stage of the bill, more Unionists voted against than with the government, and it required an alliance of Unionists loyal to the coalition with supporters of both Asquith and Lloyd George to ensure the defeat of the amendment. Even then, the matter was not allowed to rest, and the National Society pursued its case in the House of Lords, where the government eventually conceded a technical point to the church position.\(^5\) Fisher also gave way on certain

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4. See above, pp. 35-6. For Barlow's point, see 105 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.2046, 7 May 1918.
smaller issues which indirectly affected the voluntary bodies. The Unionist M.P. Mark Sykes, for example, on behalf of the Catholic Education Council, was able to insert a conscience clause to the effect that no young person should be required to attend instruction 'contrary or offensive to his religious belief' in the new continuation schools, whether established solely by local authorities or partly with voluntary assistance.6

The passage of the 1918 Act indicated that although some of the previous animosity had been removed from debates about the dual system as a result of the war, the religious issue continued for the most part to be discussed in pre-1914 terms. Beneath the surface of agreement created by the conditions of coalition, the dual system persisted as a divisive issue on which the various interest groups held firm to their entrenched positions. The Liberal minister had been prepared not to jeopardise the continuance of the coalition by avoiding the problem in the short-term, but this did not mean that party members had modified their views on the need for public control. Hence the National Liberal Federation, in welcoming Fisher's Act, also called for an end to the 'grievances' of 1902 and for all publicly maintained schools to be controlled and managed by public bodies. The Unionist Party, despite its overall support for the education bill, was equally prepared to employ the rhetoric of past debates. Unionist back-benchers had acted as the official representatives of both the major denominations, and the Craik amendment had shown widespread sympathy for the assumption that the place of religious education within an extended elementary system must be protected.

Within the context of general support, however, there did exist

conflicting views among party members over the future direction of the dual system: these differences were to emerge more clearly in the years after 1918.

Although H.A.L. Fisher made no attempt to raise the religious issue in 1918, he was aware that the implementation of his Act would inevitably revive concern about the dual system. During the early part of the post-war coalition with the Unionists, the Liberal minister sanctioned a series of conferences between Anglican and Free Church representatives, aimed at finding sufficient agreement to allow legislation. The conferences concentrated on pre-war Liberal ideas, whereby all non-provided schools were to be controlled by the local authorities, who in return would be obliged to provide 'facilities' for denominational instruction in all their schools at the request of parents. The amount of common ground amongst the representatives indicated the softening of views in the previous decade, but Fisher discovered to his cost that the publication of his ideas in March 1920 was still premature. Although the National Society of the Anglican Church gave restrained approval, the other major interested parties were far more critical. Militant Nonconformists reacted with hostility, especially to the possible surrender of the 'Cowper-Temple' clause, which since 1870 had ensured that undenominational teaching only could be given in state-maintained elementary schools. The Roman Catholic community, having played no part in the negotiations, was equally emphatic in rejecting Fisher's scheme. The Catholics were primarily concerned with maintaining the distinctive religious atmosphere of their own schools: they had no interest in transferring children to council schools, and even regarded the concession of 'contracting out' in certain cases as inadequate to compensate for the loss of the terms secured in 1902. In addition, any slim prospect
of progress in 1920 ran up against the implacable opposition of teachers’ unions, who objected both to the prospect of religious tests for teachers and to the possibility of 'right of entry' - bringing in clerics or laymen from outside to give denominational instruction in the local authority schools. The reaction to Fisher's ideas, and the economic recession which followed, together ensured that no further action was taken by the Lloyd George coalition; Fisher was left to reflect that unity of educational administration was not worth the price of another period of violent religious controversy.7

The Unionist response to the government's tentative proposals was primarily to defend the case of denominational religious teaching. Some back-benchers reflected the fears of their Roman Catholic constituents, although the main reaction of party members was closely linked with a division of opinion amongst Anglicans as to the necessary direction of future policy. With many Church of England schools closing each year owing to financial difficulties, the National Society had become receptive to the strategy of seeking a compromise while the Church still retained a strong bargaining position. Indeed the Society, with the support of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Randall Davidson, had both originated the post-war conferences with the Free Churches and drafted the ideas put forward on an impartial basis by the education minister.8 The Fisher proposals were subsequently supported by a small body of Unionist opinion which believed that it was necessary to sacrifice the dual system for the benefits of variety under unified local authority control. The most prominent advocate of this view was Sir Thomas Davies, the Unionist member

7. Fisher to C. Addison, 31 Mar. 1922, P.R.O. ED 24/1498.
for Cirencester and Tewkesbury and a former chairman of the education committee for Gloucestershire. Davies frequently referred in the Commons to the difficulties, under the existing religious settlement, of promoting advanced elementary education in rural areas where the majority of schools were non-provided; and he claimed that any national agreement should 'abolish the dual system and have one national service right throughout'. In November 1921 Davies introduced a private members' bill into the House which followed closely the lines of Fisher's plan. The bill, which went no further than a first reading, was independent of government influence: it was effectively the work of the National Society, which was keen to revive discussion and subsequently published a statement of policy incorporating the ideas put forward by Davies. Many Unionists, however, remained unconvinced of the merits of transferring church schools to local authority control. This scepticism was championed by high church Tories such as the fourth Marquis of Salisbury and his brothers Robert and Hugh Cecil - all veterans of the pre-war struggle to prevent the Liberals from imposing public control. As the Archbishop of Canterbury noted, the possibility of progress along the lines of the Davies bill was remote in 1922 not only because of the response of other interested parties, but also in view of the damaging division likely to result in the Church itself by the opposition of Parmoor, the Cecil family, Sir William Worsley, and such like.

The period of the Lloyd George coalition thus highlighted the difficulties of bringing about any change in the dual system of elementary education. Fisher, like many of his officials at the Board of Education, was less concerned with Nonconformist grievances than with the administrative obstacles which dual control presented to the improvement of the elementary system under the 1918 Act. However, even his pragmatic approach, which recognised as a starting point the need to satisfy the Church of England as the owner of the majority of voluntary schools, made no headway in the face of the conflicting demands made by the various interest groups. Despite the general movement of opinion encouraged by the war, the religious issue still held its place as the primary educational divide between the major political parties, who continued to employ the rhetoric of pre-1914 debates. In the Unionist Party, the course of action suggested by the Davies bill attracted little support, especially at a time of rigid economy when the demands made on the voluntary bodies for new building were relaxed. The Cecil interest remained strong within the party, and found its cause assisted in the short-term by the existence of coalition. In February 1922 the party leader, Austen Chamberlain, made it clear to a gathering of prominent Unionists that the religious problem would not be reopened. The denominational question, he said, 'is settled', and the major issue in education was now to decide how far 'you can make economies in a service which has become excessively costly'. In the aftermath of the war, the Unionist leadership appeared to come down strongly on the side of that body of party opinion which opposed any major revision of the 1902 settlement.

At first sight, this impression was confirmed by the collapse of the coalition and the return of a Unionist government under Bonar Law in October 1922. The Prime Minister's choice of a minister to preside over the dual system was Edward Wood, the son of the Earl of Halifax, who had been strongly influenced by his strict Anglo-Catholic upbringing. Wood had already indicated that he shared the general Unionist conviction that religious instruction must provide the foundation of any education. He had consistently defied the government whips to support National Society amendments to the 1918 Act, in spite of his sympathy for Fisher's reforms; and his work *The great opportunity* argued that children should not be prevented from receiving teaching in the faith professed by their parents.

Indeed, Wood later admitted that during his early career he regarded religious education as worthwhile only if it reflected 'the full doctrine of the Church' - an attack on 'the learning about Joseph and his coat' which Unionists suspected took place in council schools, and an implicit rejection of the need for church schools to come under local authority control. In these circumstances, Wood's appointment to the Board of Education was warmly welcomed by those who regarded the Davies bill as a betrayal of the Church. One correspondent exhorted the new President, now that Lloyd George and Fisher were out of the way and a 'Cabinet of Churchmen' once more in office, to take more dramatic steps in defending Church of England

15. 105 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.2052, 7 May 1918; Sir George Lloyd and Edward Wood, *The great opportunity*, p.98.
16. This was noted by R.A. Butler in a diary entry for 9 Sept. 1943 - Butler papers, Trinity College, Cambridge, G15, f.89. It was also observed at the Board during the Second World War that Wood, although devoutly religious, was not above 'pulling a fast one for the good of the cause'. See Chuter Ede diary, 1 May 1942, British Museum, Add. Mss. 59694, p.13.
schools and colleges. Wood certainly arrived in office with a willingness, if not to take extreme measures, then at least to defend the status quo. As he informed the Archbishop of York, Cosmo Gordon Lang, there was unlikely to be pressure from the government for an alteration in the dual system: the pressure of economy in the next few years would probably prevent both central and local government from pressing for the expansion of education, which would itself relieve the Church from the need for immediate action.

During his short spell at the Board, however, Edward Wood gradually became more aware of the intricacies of the religious issue. The President's officials made him conscious of the administrative obstacles which the dual system posed to educational progress; and the need to reconcile conflicting viewpoints led to the recognition that any policy towards the dual system had to be framed within well-defined limits. Hence the President refused a request that he associate himself with a petition in favour of denominational teaching in state-aided schools, claiming that the minister should not be identified with such a contentious issue. In particular, Wood became increasingly aware of the division of opinion among Anglicans, and Lang was struck by his developing consciousness of the view held by the National Society. This emerged most clearly during the estimates debate in 1923, when the President claimed that owing to the good sense of managers, teachers and local authorities, the dual system no longer aroused fierce controversy, and that certain considerations of 'finance and organisation' would soon have to be taken into account. He added,

17. Rev. P.D. Eyre to Wood, 9 Nov. 1922, P.R.O. ED 24/1506.
before being interrupted by the Speaker for hinting at legislation outside the scope of the debate, that all those who supported religious education as an integral part of the state system should strive to reach an agreement. In accordance with this declaration, the Board gave its tacit approval to the renewal of talks between Anglican and Free Church representatives, in an attempt to revive the spirit of the 1919 conferences. These moves hardly amounted to a major step forward in government policy, although they marked the first recognition by a Unionist minister in the post-war period that an amendment of the 1902 settlement might ultimately prove necessary. In view of his background and temperamental desire not to diminish the role of religious teaching, Wood's assumption that the Church may have to make some concessions to public control represented a novel departure in Unionist policy, and was greeted with dismay by those party members who had most vigorously welcomed his appointment.

This section of opinion was given further cause for concern by the formation of the first Labour government in 1924 and the arrival at the Board of Education of Charles Trevelyan — a former Liberal junior minister at the Board during the height of the pre-war religious controversies. The fears of the denominationalists, however, proved to be largely unfounded. Although the early Labour Party had consistently favoured the exclusion of religious education from schools receiving public funds, the dual system had not been raised at the party conference since before the war. Labour's inability to produce a clear strategy for the church schools stemmed primarily from a division

20. 164 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.1507, 31 May 1923.
21. See the correspondence with Wood in P.R.O. ED 24/1506.
22. Murphy, op.cit., p.100.
of loyalty in party ranks. The Labour ranks did contain an influential Nonconformist element, giving the appearance of being a natural successor to the Liberal Party in seeking unity of control, but this influence was offset by a heavy reliance on Roman Catholic members and voters, especially in the industrial north-west. In addition, Trevelyan was both unfamiliar with new developments and constrained from immediate action - like his predecessors - by the fear of sparking off another period of intense controversy. Hence in March 1924 the new minister informed the Archbishop of Canterbury that Labour had no intention of disturbing the 1902 settlement: his own personal preference was for purely secular education, but attempts to create a single system under public control would be a serious mistake. In so far as the Labour government of 1924 pursued a policy for the voluntary schools, it was simply to imitate previous administrations in expressing approval of the growing agreement among all interested parties.

The Unionist Party, by contrast, was less ambiguous in its approach to the dual system. After the election defeat at the end of 1923, the party set about producing new policies for a wide range of issues, including education. The committee set up for this purpose took particular care in working out its ideas on religious education: in March 1924 one of its leading members, William Bridgeman, approached the Archbishop of Canterbury for his advice on the policy which

23. He expressed this fear most clearly after leaving office, saying that 'of course we are not in love with the dual system with its educational disadvantages, but at present we are a good deal more afraid of the vast misfortune of another period of religious animosity..' - 186 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.2465, 16 July 1925.
24. 'Interview at Lambeth on March 24th 1924 with Mr. Trevelyan, Minister of Education', memorandum by Archbishop Davidson, Davidson papers, Special Subject Education, Box 18.
25. Ibid.
Edward Wood and others were formulating, 'as we should not like to make any proposals which the Church might feel strongly against'. The Archbishop suggested that contact should be made with the National Society in order to devise an acceptable policy, and as a result of subsequent discussions, a reference to religious education was agreed as part of the Conservative educational programme for the ensuing general election. The statement limited itself to the pledge that a future Conservative government would maintain the right of parents to have their children educated in the religion to which they were attached. This brief declaration was of course designed to appeal to all sections of denominational support, although it demonstrated that behind the scenes the close link between the party and the Anglican church continued and had a direct bearing on the formation of policy.

The first Labour government marked an important turning point in the history of the dual system. In the immediate aftermath of the First World War, there had been many signs that sectarian controversy could still be easily aroused and that religious education remained politically divisive. With the emergence of the Labour Party and the decline of Liberal fortunes in the early 1920s, however, subtle changes began to occur in the terms of debate. The Labour government, unlike previous Liberal administrations, made no attempt to move towards the abolition of the dual system, despite the existence of an undercurrent of hostility towards religious teaching. This failure to act indicated that the issue of the dual system was now becoming less of a dividing line between successive governments, and

27. National Unionist Association, Baldwin's election address, Tracts and leaflets, no. 2443, 1924.
was coming to be seen by Unionist and Labour education ministers as an administrative obstacle to elementary reform in general. The policies of both Edward Wood and C.P. Trevelyan had aimed not at furthering their own conflicting preferences, but at achieving a workable compromise on the complex financial problems created by dual control. In August 1924 the Archbishop of Canterbury thanked Trevelyan for his recent encouraging words about the prospect of eventual agreement; and having earlier spoken to Wood on the same issue, he added that it was pleasant 'to think of you and him working in harmony to the right end'.

The most fundamental differences on the religious issue were now unlikely to be taken up at ministerial level, although such differences continued to be reflected in party political opinion. The claims of militant Nonconformity still found favour with Liberal and, to a lesser extent, Labour politicians; whereas large sections of Unionist opinion persistently refused to countenance ideas of creating a unified elementary system under local authority control. As in the case of education for the adolescent, Unionist Party attitudes towards religious education after the war remained unchanged in the face of modest advances in ministerial policy.

III

The financial difficulties of the voluntary bodies were exacerbated during the second half of the 1920s. In the first place, the Board of Education publicised a 'Blacklist' of schools urgently requiring repair, the majority of which were church properties. Moreover, the

28. Davidson to Trevelyan, 5 Aug. 1924, Davidson papers, Special Subject Education, Box 18.
Board committed itself to a policy of reorganising all elementary schools into junior and senior departments - an idea popularised by the Hadow Report of 1926. The Hadow recommendations were the latest and most serious blow to the financial settlement reached in 1902. The denominations could now either sit tight and refuse to participate in the new programme of elementary reform, or else seek additional aid for the purpose of converting their schools into separate buildings - a course of action likely to involve increased public control as the price of an agreement with Nonconformists, teachers and local authorities. The problems of the dual system were therefore becoming inextricably linked with the question of post-primary reform, and the issues arising from this dominated Lord Eustace Percy's term as education minister in Baldwin's government of 1924 to 1929.

Percy's own religious convictions were somewhat eccentric: in his Oxford days he admitted to being much influenced by the school of Christian socialism, and it was once said that the Northumberland family worshipped at the 'church of the Unknown God'. Nevertheless, like Edward Wood before him, Percy was broadly recognised as an Anglo-Catholic; an instinctive supporter of religious education who would have preferred to leave the dual system untouched. Percy soon recognised, however - again like his predecessor - that a more positive approach was required. He was to work towards a new settlement firstly by concentrating on the Anglican schools, and then by evolving a scheme as part of the wider proposal of 'higher education for all' after 1927.

29. This comment was made by Chuter Ede, in his diary for 28 Sep. 1943 - Add. Mss. 59697, p.16. On the evangelic tradition of the Northumberland family, see Eustace Percy, Some memories, esp. p.123, where Percy refers to his 'somewhat supersectarian' view of the religious issue.

Eustace Percy's policy towards the dual system was conditioned initially by the continuing differences between the various interest groups. This ruled out the possibility of a publicly declared plan, which had not been seen since Fisher's abortive attempt of 1920, and focused attention instead on improvements taking place at local level. In areas such as Cambridgeshire, local authorities had already taken the initiative by seeking their own agreements with the managers of church schools. In most of the local 'concordats' agreed in the 1920s, the education authority gained control of the management and organisation of all elementary schools in their area; in return provision was made for 'agreed syllabus' teaching in all council schools - regarded as sufficient by many diocesan bodies - and for denominational instruction where requested by parents. With little prospect of a national agreement, the Permanent Secretary at the Board informed Percy soon after his arrival that the only practical policy in the short-term was to encourage local concordats by removing restrictions on the transfer of Anglican schools under the 1918 Act. The new minister took up this approach vigorously, spurred into early action by a request from the County Councils Association that measures be taken to improve voluntary school buildings, and fearing that a controversial discussion could revive wider religious animosity. Hence in March 1925 Percy took his first initiative: he urged that the government should immediately announce its support for local agreements, and should aim to introduce an enabling bill within a

32. 'Dual system - proposals for a settlement', minute by Selby-Bigge, 5 Mar. 1925, P.R.O. ED 24/1510.
year giving local authorities wider discretionary powers in making agreements with church school managers.33

The cabinet's rejection of Percy's idea indicated the continuing disagreement over the future position of the Anglican schools. Criticism of the President was led by Lord Salisbury, now Lord Privy Seal and leader of the Conservative Party in the House of Lords. Salisbury wrote complaining that the government's 'friends in the country' would be alarmed by any move which could be interpreted - especially by areas such as the West Riding which were hostile to 'definite' religious teaching - as meaning that parliament would entice hard pressed church schools to surrender.34 Percy replied that the real danger in places like the West Riding was no longer overt hostility, but the possibility that through lack of funds managers would be forced to transfer their properties to the local authorities with no guarantees in return - this had persuaded him to give the experiment of local settlements a full trial.35 This exchange highlighted the difference between the minister's contact with administrative realities, and Salisbury's persistence in thinking in pre-war terms. At this stage, the cabinet was still prepared to support the approach of Lord Salisbury. In April 1925 it was decided that the government would not commit itself to any course of action, and the President was left to inform the County Councils that an enabling bill would only be considered after receiving definite views on the subject from authorities involved in transfer schemes.36

33. See 'Position of church schools', memoranda by the President of the Board of Education, 19 Mar. and 1 Apr. 1925, P.R.O. CAB 24/172.
34. Salisbury to Percy, 27 Mar. 1925, P.R.O. ED 24/1516.
36. Cabinet minutes, 1 Apr. 1925, P.R.O. CAB 23/49; The Times, 22 Apr. 1925.
The immediate problems of the Anglican schools were, however, the subject of a wider discussion by a cabinet committee established shortly afterwards. Percy put forward the case that dual control presented serious difficulties for the progress of elementary education. The existing system, he argued, was 'administratively and financially intolerable', and made impossible the fulfilment of the party's electoral pledges about improving Blacklist schools and developing advanced elementary instruction. He repeated the idea that the majority of Anglicans, as well as local authorities and moderate Nonconformist opinion, would be most interested in providing more flexible arrangements for the local transfer of schools. Percy believed that this plan had advantages over Fisher's proposed settlement: any change in the dual system would be minimal and optional, and local authorities would have responsibility for negotiating terms suitable and acceptable to local opinion. 37 The opposition to the President was again taken up by Salisbury, who claimed that the Church would only contemplate surrendering its schools if a definite 'religious gain' could be achieved. 38 This argument was backed up by the Home Secretary, William Joynson-Hicks, who added that any move towards the abolition of the dual system would alienate 'masses of Government supporters'. 39

By contrast, Percy found support from Edward Wood, now Baron Irwin,

37. The terms which Percy envisaged for the transfer of church schools to local authorities included the provision of agreed syllabus teaching in all schools, as well as denominational instruction on certain days for senior children where requested, either in the school concerned or elsewhere - the latter implied an extension of the so-called Anson bye-law. Report of the Cabinet church schools committee, 26 Oct. 1925, P.R.O. CAB 27/283.

38. By this Salisbury meant the sort of scheme earlier outlined by the Bishop of Manchester, which aimed to safeguard religious teaching by establishing central and local religious committees and by including references to the religious competence of teachers. See Cabinet church schools committee, 1st conclusions, 18 June 1925, P.R.O. CAB 27/283.

39. Ibid.
and Lord Birkenhead, who noted that the government was only intending
to provide legislative guarantees where local agreements had been
worked out. The recommendations of the committee ultimately
represented a compromise between the two points of view. On the
one hand, there would be no attempt at a comprehensive national
settlement and - as a concession to Salisbury - encouragement should
be given to securing 'adequate' religious teaching in all schools.
On the other hand, local initiatives were not to be discouraged, and
the government would be prepared to introduce enabling legislation
for such purposes if demanded. The President finally made this
decision public in June 1926.

Percy's public statement did not speed up the pace of local
negotiations as he intended. During the summer of 1926 proposals
for transferring schools were rejected or coolly received by several
Anglican diocesan bodies, and in October the President was concerned
that legislation was unlikely when only one authority was ready to
act. Any slim prospect of progress was dealt a severe and unexpected
blow by the annual Church Assembly of the following month. In the
absence of Archbishop Davidson, the Assembly destroyed the impression
that the Church would accept an enabling bill, and endorsed instead
a strongly denominational alternative policy. Although the Archbishop
quickly reaffirmed the commitment of many Anglicans to legislation,
Percy realised that the damage already done left the government no

40. Cabinet church schools committee, 2nd conclusions, 20 Oct. 1925,
ibid.
41. Cabinet minutes, 11 Nov. 1925, P.R.O. CAB 23/51; The Times,
25 June 1926.
42. Percy to A. Rowland Clegg, 12 Oct. 1926, P.R.O. ED 24/1518.
nearer to acting than it had been previously. The President now envisaged that the only course was to gradually rebuild trust between local authorities and voluntary school managers, particularly through the recently established Archbishops' Commission on Religious Education. 'If the Church Assembly does not commit another faux pas in the interval', he noted early in 1927, 'it is possible that the Commission may succeed in putting forward proposals which would meet with general goodwill, but, in the meantime, we should certainly let the whole matter rest where it is'.

The failure to introduce an enabling bill marked the end of the first phase of Eustace Percy's approach to the dual system. His first two years at the Board had been dominated by the attempt to produce an adjustment designed to benefit the Anglican schools alone. As he told one party colleague, any fundamental changes in the 1902 settlement still appeared out of the question. If attention centred on existing schools and undenominational teaching in council schools, 'we may be able to get somewhere, but if we stray outside these limits we shall merely revive old controversies'. Percy's cautious approach had itself aroused opposition from within the Church, however, which in turn found political expression in the Conservative Party. Although the proposals for an enabling bill were never sufficiently advanced to be discussed by parliament, there were signs that Conservative supporters shared some of the reservations of Lord Salisbury. In 1926 one local party, for example, attacked the threatened 'closure'.

43. Cruickshank, op.cit., pp.126-7; Percy to Davidson, 7 Dec. 1926, P.R.O. ED 24/1518.
44. 'Proposals for an enabling bill to deal with church schools', memorandum by Percy, 9 Feb. 1927, P.R.O. CAB 24/184.
45. Percy to W. Smithers, 7 Dec. 1926, P.R.O. ED 24/1518.
of church schools, adding that the present administration should be more vigorously defending religious education. This did not mean that all Conservatives were opposed to local concordats, but it did highlight the difficulties of achieving even moderate reform. Percy had clearly hoped that by dealing with the Anglican schools the problem of the Roman Catholics, which had been ignored in discussions on enabling legislation, could then be faced separately. After the decision of the Church Assembly had jeopardised this two-stage approach, the President began to contemplate for the first time the necessity of a wider settlement. This shift in the second half of Percy's term at the Board was primarily due to one major development - the effect on educational and religious opinion of the 1926 Hadow Report.

The Board's first reaction to the Report was to reject the idea of raising the school-leaving age within six years, a proposal which would have placed considerable extra burden on the voluntary bodies. The President did, however, welcome new developments in post-primary instruction, and he declared that voluntary as well as local authorities must face up to the need for 'Hadow reorganisation'. This commitment to reform of the elementary system raised in more acute form the financial shortcomings of the church schools. The problems for Percy were accentuated at this stage by the attitude of the Roman Catholics, who had played little part in post-war discussions on the dual system. The Catholic community was determined to defend the religious atmosphere of their schools, and the immediate reaction of Catholic spokesmen to the Hadow Report was to oppose any measures likely to result in

46. H. Blain to Percy, 5 July 1926, ibid., refers to the complaints of the Burnley Conservative and Unionist Association, which had been passed on to the party's Central Office.
47. The Times Educational Supplement, 8 Jan. 1927.
the loss of senior pupils - an attitude which in areas such as London helped to underpin the initial scepticism about reorganisation.\(^4^8\)

In July 1928 a deputation led by the Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Bourne, complained that the Hadow Report was unsympathetic to the voluntary schools. Percy hoped initially that soothing assurances would be enough to calm Catholic fears: he replied that children would not be forced into council schools at the age of eleven, and he expected only experiments in reorganisation from the denominations.\(^4^9\) The President's kind words proved only temporarily effective, however, and in the face of continuing Catholic agitation, he began to revise his strategy for the dual system.

The President's new approach derived in the first place from his commitment to elementary reorganisation, which pointed ultimately to the need for a revision of the 1902 settlement. If, however - as Percy hoped - the denominations were to be able to maintain their position within the elementary system, it was no longer possible to concentrate only on the Anglican schools. The persistence of Catholic agitation, he realised, also raised an important tactical consideration: the need to secure Catholic support in the face of efforts to use the election as a lever for improving the position of church schools. Percy's response was to suggest a twin policy for the dual system. The idea of enabling legislation was to be retained, though now confined to the repair of schools on the Board's Blacklist. More important, the religious problem was to be a central feature of the minister's

\(^{48}\) For the role played by John Gilbert, chairman of the Catholic Education Council, in the response of the London County Council, see below, p.253.

\(^{49}\) Deputation from the Joint Committee of the Hierarchy and the Catholic Education Council, 13 July 1928, P.R.O. ED 24/1521.
wider policy of 'higher education for all'. The idea of creating a unified administrative code for all children over eleven was of course to be presented primarily in terms of its educational advantages, but for Percy it possessed additional merit. The statutory restrictions in force on both religious teaching and grants of public money to the voluntary bodies applied only to elementary, and not to higher, education. The abolition of the existing elementary category would therefore remove many of the disabilities of church schools and enable effective assistance to be given for reorganisation into senior schools. The President's new approach remained at the centre of his policy for the dual system throughout his final months at the Board, and raised difficulties with both the major denominations.

In November 1928 Percy made his new policy known for the first time to a deputation of Roman Catholics. He was aware that this private declaration alone would not be enough to satisfy the deputation: many Catholics were still demanding the introduction of the 'Scottish solution' - the transfer of schools to local authority control with absolute guarantees that denominational instruction would be given by specially appointed teachers. As a result, the President made strenuous efforts to pacify Catholic opinion, establishing for example closer links with the chairman of the Catholic Education Council, F.N. Blundell, a Conservative back-bencher. He also introduced some important concessions in policy, notably by modifying the shape

50. 'Church schools', memorandum by Percy, 26 Sep. 1928, P.R.O. CAB 24/197; Percy to Churchill, 1 Oct. 1928, P.R.O. ED 24/1389.
51. 'Memorandum of interview with the Catholic Education Council and the Hierarchy', 22 Nov. 1928, P.R.O. ED 24/1521.
52. e.g. The Universe, 15 Oct. 1928.
53. Percy to F.N. Blundell, 23 Oct. 1928, P.R.O. ED 24/1521: he confessed to being 'quite at seas' as to what the Catholic community as a whole wanted, since individuals freely expressed their opinions.
of the proposed enabling legislation into such a form as to make it acceptable as an interim measure of relief pending a general settlement. In March 1929 he secured approval from the Treasury to spend one million pounds over a five year period in special grants, designed to assist Catholic schools on the Blacklist in making essential repairs. Percy subsequently had reason to believe that he had secured his objectives. The Catholic Hierarchy reversed its hostile attitude towards the government, with Cardinal Bourne refusing to commit himself to any controversial proposals and claiming on the eve of the election that one party at least had accepted Catholic demands.

The President's main fears in the latter context were, if anything, caused by the Church of England. In the immediate aftermath of the Hadow Report, Percy believed that as far as enabling legislation to assist the Anglicans was concerned, 'we have missed the bus'. With the decision to formulate a new policy, however, he became more anxious about the proceedings of the Archbishops' Commission on Religious Education, a further body chaired by Sir Henry Hadow. Percy feared that any report from the commission before the election might identify the Church with a definite form of settlement and so 'draw the fire' of the other interested bodies. In addition, some of the commission's likely recommendations were a cause for

54. See the anonymous note of discussion with the President on 7 May 1929, P.R.O. ED 24/1518, and Percy to Gilbert, 7 May 1929, P.R.O. ED 24/1523.
55. 'Note of interview with Treasury officials', 23 Mar. 1929, P.R.O. ED 24/1523. Cardinal Bourne said that by comparison with the Conservatives, the other parties were 'shy and reticent' - The Times Educational Supplement, 1 June 1929.
56. Percy to Sir Henry Hadow, 13 Apr. 1927, P.R.O. ED 24/1519.
concern. Above all, the abolition of the elementary education category for the specific purpose of aiding the church schools would, in Percy's words, 'blow the gaff', and prevent the government bringing forward the measure purely on its educational merits. He noted that concern not to prejudice future progress had led the Catholics to confine themselves to an 'extraordinarily good' statement of general principles, rather than becoming identified with one form of settlement. By using his influence behind the scenes, the President was able to persuade Sir Henry Hadow to follow this example. The commission produced no statements before the election and, equally important, left open the negotiating position of the Anglican church.

The prospects for the inclusion of Percy's ideas in the Conservative election programme in 1929 did not at first sight appear encouraging. The Duchess of Atholl had already expressed her fear that Nonconformists would object strongly to the abolition of the Cowper-Temple clause and to the possibility of denominational teaching in council schools. Some of the Parliamentary Secretary's reservations were echoed in the cabinet by Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State for Air. The objections of Lord Salisbury, however, were now less strident than in earlier years. In private, Salisbury was now admitting that the education question had altered considerably in the last few years, and he was even moving towards the opinion that the dual system in its present form could not be sustained. With only a minimum of

59. Percy to W. Buchanan-Riddell, 3 May 1929, ibid.
60. Memorandum by the Duchess of Atholl, 18 Mar. 1929, Atholl papers, file 41.
discussion, the President was able to secure permission to proceed with the drafting of his proposals. The party's official statement of policy subsequently contained the claim that 'the Government feel confident that the time is ripe for a permanent settlement by agreement based on a common recognition of the vital importance of religious instruction in accordance with the wishes of the parents'. A commitment was also made to an immediate measure enabling Blacklisted schools to be brought up to date, along the lines of the legislation contemplated in 1926.62

The Labour Party's success at the general election prevented Eustace Percy's ideas from proceeding further. The period of Baldwin's second government had nevertheless confirmed many of the underlying changes taking place since the early 1920s. By the time Percy left office, the dual system was the source of much less party political controversy than previously. The President believed that throughout his term at the Board, the Liberal Party machine in the constituencies was more alive to the value of old war-cries than Labour, though the importance of this had in fact been reduced by the electoral decline of the Liberals and the softening of moderate Nonconformist opinion.63 Moreover, Labour as the major party of opposition since 1924 had given few signs of seeking to emulate the Liberals by pursuing an actively secular policy. Trevelyan had stressed his desire not to revive old disputes, and at the 1929 election some Labour members

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63. 'Church schools', memorandum by Percy, 26 Sep. 1928, P.R.O. CAB 24/197; Percy to J. Scott Lidget, 10 Apr. 1929, P.R.O. ED 24/1523.
even competed with the Conservatives by pledging help for the Catholic schools. Within the Conservative Party, the attitude of Lord Salisbury indicated a new willingness to contemplate at least a modification of the dual system. These party views highlighted the underlying change in the religious issue: since the war the problem for successive governments had become one of reconciling denominational differences in order to facilitate the overall progress of elementary education. Eustace Percy had of course sought to maintain the position of religious instruction, introducing various administrative measures and regarding the likely benefits to the voluntary bodies as an essential aspect of 'higher education for all'. Before the war, however, the ideas advocated by Percy would have been inconceivable coming from a Conservative minister. The plan put forward in 1929 marked a novel attempt to shift the problems of dual control away from the elementary system into the higher education sector, where local authorities were free to make their own arrangements. Moreover, Percy had followed the example of Fisher in aiming at a comprehensive national agreement which would, in his own words, 'turn the flank' of 1902. In religious education, as in policy towards the adolescent as a whole, the focus of attention was to shift and become narrower in the decade after Percy left the Board of Education.

64. Every Labour candidate at the election was informed by party headquarters that they should avoid pledges of financial support, although this did not prevent many Catholic Labour candidates from giving sympathetic assurances - D.W. Dean, 'The difficulties of a Labour educational policy: the failure of the Trevelyan bill, 1929-31', British Journal of Educational Studies (1969), p.293.

65. The administrative measures taken by Percy included the removal of obstacles to the recognition of voluntary training colleges and the sanctioning of an increased building programme for elementary church schools. 'Notes on the church school problem', the Duchess of Atholl, 30 Apr. 1929, P.R.O. ED 24/1523.
The determination of the Labour minister C.P. Trevelyan to raise the school-leaving age to fifteen after 1929 had two important effects on the issue of religious education. In the first place, attention turned away from the possibility of a comprehensive revision of the 1902 terms and centred instead on the problem of how the voluntary bodies were to participate in Labour's projected reform. The second, and directly related effect, was to highlight the need for immediate agreement: unless the church schools were to be excluded from the twin reforms of reorganisation and raising the leaving age, it was necessary to secure a short-term compromise between the voluntary bodies on the one hand and the Nonconformists, teachers and local authorities on the other. When he first returned to the Board, Trevelyan in fact contemplated the bypassing of this issue. In December 1929 he introduced a short bill designed to raise the school age by April 1931, making no reference to children educated in the non-provided elementary schools. As a result of this omission, agitation for increased financial assistance was renewed by both the Roman Catholics and Anglicans, and was taken up in the political arena by the Conservative opposition. Conservative back-benchers still remained divided over long-term policy for the dual system, as was shown by the recommendations of the Anglican Archbishops' Commission, finally published in October 1929. The majority report of the Commission had backed the conciliatory approach of the National Society, and

66. Trevelyan had decided soon after coming to office that a one-clause bill should be sufficient to raise the school age within two years - Trevelyan to J.R. MacDonald, 31 July 1929, Ramsay MacDonald papers, P.R.O. 30/69/251.
was supported by M.P.s such as Sir John Birchall, a Church Estates commissioner; but demands for a firmer attitude by the Church had also resulted in the production of a minority report, which was signed by Harold Macmillan and Cyril Cobb as the only back-benchers serving on the Commission. Despite these differences, however, the exclusion of church schools from Trevelyan's bill provided a natural rallying point for the party. Eustace Percy devised the wording of the argument, widely used by Conservatives in the constituencies, that the government was acting unreasonably in offering local authorities special grants for raising the school age which were not available to church bodies.

This sense of indignation was expressed at all levels. A former cabinet colleague of Percy's passed on the complaints of local churchmen, adding that Percy too had no doubt been 'inundated with these and others like them from all quarters'. In the face of this and other forms of widespread protest, Trevelyan's school attendance bill was withdrawn early in 1930.

Behind the scenes the Labour minister now initiated a series of negotiations aimed at incorporating the voluntary bodies in plans for raising the leaving age. The results of these negotiations were reflected in a second education bill introduced in May 1930, under which local authorities would be able to contribute to voluntary school costs in return for greater control over the appointment of teachers. Trevelyan's proposals were based primarily on the wishes

67. The Times Educational Supplement, 2 Nov. 1929.
68. 'Answer drawn up by Lord Eustace Percy', Feb. 1930, P.R.O. ED 24/1523.
69. A. Steel-Maitland to Percy, 8 Jan. 1930, Conservative Research Department papers, Education; folder 1G.
70. Board of Education, Proposals for enabling local education authorities to enter into agreements with the managers of non-provided schools for purposes of reorganisation, Cmd.3551 (1930).
of the National Society and the Anglican episcopate, and for this reason found favour with Eustace Percy. Under his guidance, the parliamentary party as a whole was now more willing to accept increased public control. Annesley Somerville, for example, claimed that the difficulties facing the church schools following the Hadow Report of 1926 were widely recognised, and that the moves initiated by Percy and continued by Trevelyan deserved full support. In spite of the reservations of Lord Salisbury, the Conservative opposition in parliament distinguished clearly between opposition to a higher school-leaving age and support for additional aid to the voluntary bodies. The real problems for Trevelyan at this stage were created in other quarters. The Catholics complained bitterly that permanent concessions were being demanded in return for short-term financial assistance. The operation of the party whip meant that this hostility was not reflected on the Conservative side in May 1930; and Trevelyan was embarrassed to find instead that Catholic members of his own party - led by John Scurr - were threatening to vote against the government unless amendments were made. The public campaign undertaken by the Catholics produced a corresponding reaction among Nonconformists, whose complaints were taken up by Liberals: one M.P. asserted that such a measure could be expected from the Conservatives but was inexplicable from a Labour minister with a Nonconformist background. The government's dependence on Liberal support naturally

71. The Times, 2 May 1930; Archbishop Lang to Salisbury, 24 May 1930, Salisbury papers, 4M 135/54; Percy - 239 H.C. Deb., 5s., cc.1530-1, 29 May 1930.
72. Ibid., c.1546.
73. Rev. R.M. Kedward - 239 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.1660, 30 May 1930.
enhanced the significance of this attitude, which persisted throughout the committee stage in parliament. Trevelyan's attempt to combine two measures into one ultimately strengthened the opposition to both, and in the summer of 1930 the education bill was once more withdrawn.

In October the President made a third attempt to raise the school age by reverting to the original idea of omitting reference to the religious issue. The Conservative Party in turn simply went back to its position of a year ago. At the committee stage Hermann Ramsbotham, a new member representing Lancaster, tabled an amendment suggesting that the school-leaving age should not be raised until local authorities were able to contribute to the costs of voluntary schools. The amendment had complete backing from all sections of the party, and although not called, it foreshadowed a similar amendment being threatened by Roman Catholic Labour members. Faced with this ultimatum, Trevelyan held a series of conferences aimed at narrowing denominational differences. These produced some new ideas which the government published as a White Paper, but in the absence of complete agreement the President was unable to give Scurr and his followers a definite assurance that a religious settlement would follow the passage of his bill. Hence in January 1931 the notorious 'Scurr amendment' was carried by an alliance of Labour dissidents and the Conservative

74. Percy to Steel-Maitland, 14 Jan. 1930, Conservative Research Department papers, Education: folder 1G, had already observed that Trevelyan was 'frightened to death of the Free Churches'. Nonconformists (and Catholics) in fact tabled nearly all the proposed amendments at the committee stage; the Conservatives concentrated solely on the school-leaving age aspects of the bill.

75. N.U.C.U.A., Fighting points for Conservatives (London, 1931), pp.88-9. Freed from the need to back the party line of supporting the scheme of May 1930, Roman Catholic Conservative M.P.s now denounced the bill as an 'outrageous act of injustice': e.g. Colonel Reynolds - 244 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.1149, 6 Nov. 1930.
opposition, making the bill inoperative pending agreement on the religious issue.\textsuperscript{76} This defeat made any further progress unlikely, although the defeat of the bill in the House of Lords was not now inevitable. The majority of Conservative peers wanted to reject the government's bill on the grounds of extravagance, but others felt that in view of the paramount importance of assisting the church schools, the measure should be carried after the safeguard of the Scurr amendment. The outcome was a compromise which reflected the party's approach throughout the period of opposition. Trevelyan's bill was voted down in February 1931 on the grounds of cost, but Conservative spokesmen pledged their support for any future measure which might ease the position of the voluntary schools.\textsuperscript{77}

The prolonged financial crisis of the early 1930s brought further temporary relief to the voluntary schools. After Trevelyan's resignation and the fall of the Labour government, the pressure of economy was such that the National government gave little attention to the problems of the dual system for some three years. During this period the Liberal minister at the Board of Education, Sir Donald Maclean - whose appointment had caused some disquiet among Anglicans\textsuperscript{78} - died unexpectedly, and was replaced by Irwin, who returned for his second spell at the Board. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Cosmo Gordon Lang, had taken the unusual step of privately urging the Prime Minister

\textsuperscript{76} Scurr was dubbed by one of his colleagues the 'Scurrge of God', but for the idea of the amendment as a 'Tory intrigue', see below, pp. 254-5.

\textsuperscript{77} The Times Educational Supplement, 31 Jan. 1931; Lord Hailsham to Salisbury, 4 Feb. 1931, Salisbury papers, 4M 139/75; 79 H.L. Deb., 5s., cc.1071-2, 18 Feb. 1931.

\textsuperscript{78} Holland to Lord Grey, 22 June 1932, Archbishop Lang papers, Lambeth Palace Library, vol.31, f.194.
to appoint a Churchman in succession to Maclean, and Irwin's arrival certainly altered the tone of the government's approach in the short-term. As the economic situation improved in 1934, the President also began to revive the question of the dual system. His main concern was to pick up precisely where Trevelyan had left off: Irwin, now Lord Halifax, argued that for educational and political reasons the government's policy must return to the questions of raising the school-leaving age and providing capital grants for the church schools.

This line of reasoning initially made little headway among Halifax's cabinet colleagues. The traditional suspicions of the Treasury were voiced by the Chancellor, Neville Chamberlain, who persuaded the cabinet that nothing more than the formulation of a general policy was required before the next election. In addition, the composition of the government provided obstacles to the Board's case. Nonconformist members of the cabinet such as Kingsley Wood and Walter Runciman warned of the possible revival of sectarian controversy, and it was generally agreed that although a Conservative administration might have acted to assist the voluntary bodies, the introduction of such grants at the present moment would alienate the Liberal supporters of the National government. As a result Halifax was forced to go slow throughout

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80. 'Future educational policy', memorandum by Halifax, 8 Feb. 1934, P.R.O. CAB 24/247: educationally, Halifax argued that Hadow reorganisation could not be completed without enabling the church senior schools to be brought up to standard; politically, Nonconformists, teachers and local authorities would be hostile to the separation of the school age and building grant issues.
1934, and could secure permission only to continue 'exploring the state of opinion in the country'.

The state of opinion in the country had in fact altered considerably since the disputes over Trevelyan's legislation. Within months of the Scurr amendment, the Catholic Hierarchy had for the first time declared a willingness to contemplate small changes in the dual system; and there were several signs of a change of heart among Nonconformists about the White Paper proposals of 1931. These changes were reflected in negotiations with the government after Halifax had finally secured permission in 1935 to devise a policy for the forthcoming general election. The movement in denominational views was sufficient to allow the President to decide quickly on a scheme of grants for the voluntary schools, based primarily on the ideas of the 1931 conferences. Local authorities were to be empowered to provide grants covering between fifty and seventy five per cent of the cost of repairing denominational schools for the purposes of elementary reorganisation or raising the leaving age. In return the teachers employed in such schools were to be employed by the local authority, with a certain number 'reserved' for the approval of voluntary managers, and agreed syllabus instruction was to be available in all so-called single-school areas. These ideas were retained as the basis for future action after Halifax had been replaced by Oliver Stanley in the cabinet

82. Cabinet educational policy committee, third meeting, 6 Nov. 1934, P.R.O. CAB 27/574.
84. 'Educational policy of the government', notes by Archbishop Lang, 4 June 1935, Lang papers, vol.32, f.124.
reshuffle of June 1935. The new cabinet committee established to advise on education was much more sympathetic to action on the religious issue than its predecessor. Stanley could now rely on the support not only of Halifax, but also of Eustace Percy as Minister without Portfolio; and even Kingsley Wood, impressed by the willingness of the Free Churches to accept building grants in return for a time limit of three years, was prepared to drop his main objections. The Board's proposals were subsequently printed as official government policy for the election of October 1935, and after the return of the National government, Stanley included building grants as part of the education bill which he quickly presented to parliament.

In party terms, the debates which preceded the passage of the 1936 Education Act witnessed something of a reversal from those accompanying Trevelyan's abortive school age bills. The Labour Party now declared itself opposed to the proposed raising of the leaving age, owing to the provision for 'beneficial exemptions', but made clear its support for a religious agreement which built upon Trevelyan's initiative. Conservative back-benchers, in the meantime, reaffirmed the position spelt out during the period of the Labour government. In many areas Roman Catholics agitated against the bill in early 1936, in some cases misunderstanding its terms, but in parliament Conservative spokesmen remained loyal to the government and expressed the more

85. Cabinet educational policy committee, fifth meeting, 4 July 1935, P.R.O. CAB 27/574. Stanley did introduce two modifications: in order to satisfy Nonconformists, the grants were limited to a fixed period of three years, thereby highlighting their emergency nature; and the Catholic reluctance to relinquish control over appointment of teachers was overcome by extending the grants to cover new senior schools.
86. H.B. Lees-Smith - 312 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.2029, 27 May 1936.
moderate case of the Hierarchy. Sir John Shute, in particular, the
member for Liverpool Exchange, welcomed the measure as a step in the
right direction, while making it clear that a final settlement was
still required. At the committee stage the Catholic attitude was
equally moderate: Shute and his associates made clear Catholic fears,
such as the need for a right of appeal in cases where local authorities
refused to give grants, but then refrained from pressing their
amendments to a division. 87 Conservative members were also prominent
in conveying the views of the National Society, which had originated
many of the ideas contained in the bill. The lead in this context
was taken by Sir John Birchall, who supported two contentious amendments
which the government felt unable to accept. The first was designed
to extend financial aid to junior as well as senior schools in cases
where expenditure was necessitated by reorganisation; and the second
aimed at allowing the right of entry in certain council senior schools.
The latter was sponsored personally by Archbishop Lang in the House
of Lords, and raised such disquiet among teachers and Nonconformists
that the President felt compelled to personally intervene and delete
the clause when the bill returned to the Commons. 88

Under the terms of the 1936 Act, some five hundred proposals
for improved or new senior accommodation were submitted by the voluntary
bodies in the period before the outbreak of war. The postponement
of these schemes in 1939 meant that the voluntary schools still contained

87. 'Discussion with Roman Catholic representatives on January 9th
1936', note by G.G. Williams, 10 Jan. 1936, P.R.O. ED 136/44;
'Education bill. The denominational issue', memo by D. Du B.
Davidson, 12 June 1936, P.R.O. ED 136/59.
88. Birchall - 308 H.C. Deb., 5s., cc.1209-10, 13 Feb. 1936; Cruickshank,
op.cit., p.133.
far fewer pupils in reorganised departments than the council schools, and still faced the problem of how to find a permanent and enduring place in the national system. The need for a wider settlement was reiterated by the publication of the Spens Report, which if officially endorsed, would have required the voluntary bodies to build a large amount of superior secondary accommodation or else confine themselves to the elementary system. Throughout the decade after 1929, however, government policy had concentrated not on the need for a long-term settlement but on the immediate issue of enabling church schools to participate in elementary reorganisation and the raising of the leaving age. On this twin issue, the views of the political parties had steadily converged. Although some Liberals remained committed to old Nonconformist slogans, the Labour Party had accepted that it was not possible to exclude church schools from new developments, and the Conservative Party threw its weight unanimously behind a limited amendment of the dual system. By the time of the 1936 Act, the parties diverged only to the extent that individuals identified themselves with particular denominational reservations. The real obstacle to further reform of the dual system was now the difficulty of finding a basis for agreement among Anglicans, Catholics and Nonconformists, all of whom had only reluctantly accepted the 1936 terms. As one observer said of this first encroachment into the 1902 settlement, 'here is a bill which nobody likes, but which nobody is anxious to take the responsibility of wrecking, with the result that by threatening withdrawal if any amendments are carried against

89. Birchall noted that at the committee stage many of the Church members were prepared to vote with the government rather than the National Society. See R. Holland to Lang, 25 Mar. 1936, Lang papers, vol.32, f.302.
them, the Government have succeeded in getting it through committee practically unchanged'.

V

Religious instruction, more so than any other issue concerning the state schools, held a special place in the Conservative Party's approach to education between the wars. It was widely agreed, in the words of Lord Salisbury, that education 'must have a Christian foundation. Religion must be taught in all schools - many of us would say, religion as far as possible in the form prescribed by the wishes of the parents'. The desire to make religious, preferably denominational, teaching the basis of every school curriculum was such that interest was aroused well beyond the narrow parliamentary group usually associated with educational affairs. Many Conservatives expressed their concern as active members of particular denominations, especially the Anglican church, or even as managers of individual voluntary schools. The traditional desire to defend religious education thus remained fundamental for Conservatives, but this should not obscure the important changes which took place in policy and attitudes towards the dual system after the First World War. Edward Wood had led the way by recognising that some form of modification

90. R. Martin to Lang, 8 May 1936, Lang papers, vol.32, f.312. Oliver Stanley concluded that 'the fires are damped down, but they are still there' - 312 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.2088, 27 May 1936.
92. e.g. Sir George Courthorpe, M.P. for Rye, who complained about the effects of Hadow reorganisation on the church schools in his area of Sussex, many of which had been built by his family - Courthorpe to Percy, 6 Dec. 1929, Conservative Research Department papers, Education: folder 1G.
of the 1902 settlement would ultimately be necessary. The moves made by Eustace Percy towards a comprehensive revision of the 1902 terms had attracted little support from the party as a whole, but one of the chief obstacles to reform - the hostility of high church Conservatives - had gradually diminished in importance. Salisbury came to believe that the dual system 'is clearly doomed sooner or later - probably sooner', and the party readily endorsed the limited encroachment into the terms of dual control made by the 1936 Act.

Two concurrent changes therefore took place in the Conservative approach to the dual system, both of which were vital in explaining the settlement ultimately achieved during the Second World War.

Conservative ministers had come to recognise the need for a change in the system so fervently defended during the Edwardian period; and party opinion as a whole - mirroring the shift in attitude towards the adolescent during the 1930s - increasingly accepted such reform as inevitable.

These changes reflected the manner in which the religious issue altered during the inter-war years. By 1939 the dual system was much less intimately linked with social and political divisions than it had been before or immediately after the First World War. This did not mean that denominational differences had disappeared or that such differences no longer found expression in the political arena. As late as 1930 a Liberal back-bencher could be found claiming that Nonconformists would resist change to the last, and that one of his Conservative opponents represented 'the very arrogant side of the Anglican Church, erecting its mitred front in Court and Parliament'.

93. Salisbury to Earl Grey, 1 Sep. 1930, Salisbury papers, 4M 137/1-4.
94. Isaac Foot - 239 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.1660, 30 May 1930.
This use of pre-war rhetoric, however, only served to blur the manner in which religion had declined as the source and generator of political opinion. With the decline of the Liberal Party in the early 1920s, religious education had become much less politically contentious. Thereafter, two major characteristics had stood out. At ministerial level, successive administrations worked within well-defined limits, aiming at finding a workable compromise between the desire of Anglicans and Roman Catholics for maximum grants, of Nonconformists for public control, and of teachers and local authorities for efficiency and freedom from religious tests. In the meantime, party opinion towards the dual system showed an increasing willingness to accept a compromise solution. The Labour Party, despite an undercurrent of hostility to religious teaching, had adopted a cautious approach to the question of dual control, and even took some of the credit for the modest advance secured in 1936. Conservatives also became increasingly conscious of the need to incorporate the church schools more fully into the national education system. Religious education therefore highlighted two of the central features of education as a political issue between the wars - the similarities in the ministerial policies of successive administrations, and the growing area of agreement between the political parties. These features were also evident in the case of a further prominent question after 1918: the wide-ranging issue of 'education for employment'.
CHAPTER 7

THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY AND THE PROBLEMS OF EDUCATION FOR EMPLOYMENT, 1918-1939

I

Educational debate between the wars was mainly concerned with the full-time system of schooling. The politics of educational reform revolved around the twin themes of grammar school education and elementary reorganisation; other widely discussed issues - the dual system in particular - were intimately bound up with the central problem of educating children during their period of compulsory school attendance. The education of the adolescent overlapped with, and at several points touched directly upon, the question of the relationship between education and the nation's industrial performance, or between schooling and employment. This broad issue, which embraced part-time as well as full-time education, acted as a persistent undercurrent in debates during the inter-war period, but has received little systematic attention from historians.¹ The neglect of this important area of educational history stems in part from the difficulty of identifying a single, recognisable problem of relating school and work. In an attempt to tackle the 'boy labour problem', as it was known to many contemporaries, politicians and educationists promoted a whole range of policies, some of which were directed to specific ends and not

¹ This neglect is pointed out by H. Silver, Education as history: interpreting nineteenth- and twentieth-century education (London, 1963), pp.151-59. The only attempt at a broad treatment is made by G.A.N. Lowndes, The silent social revolution, pp.146-68.
conceived as part of a larger whole. In the Edwardian period the emphasis had been on technical education, a composite term which covered both full-time instruction for adolescents in a small number of junior technical schools, and voluntary, part-time education up to the age of twenty-one in technical colleges and agricultural institutes. After the First World War, however, new methods of preparing children for their working lives came to be canvassed. The idea of making further part-time education compulsory was for the first time embodied in legislation with the passing of the 1918 Act, which introduced day continuation schools on a national basis. In addition, full-time schooling increasingly entered into the debate. The desirability of a curriculum with a practical bias in the new senior elementary schools was frequently discussed following the Hadow Report, and the effects on the labour market of raising the compulsory school-leaving age increasingly occupied attention. The problem was thus many-sided and difficult to define, affecting a wide range of age groups and touching several areas of policy, often separately administered by the Board of Education. The underlying questions nevertheless persisted: the content of the school curriculum as a preparation for employment; the nature of the transition period between school and work and the need for further part-time education; and the extent of the formal relationship between educationists and industrialists in defining their respective needs. These questions were regarded by contemporaries as the central concerns of the issue of 'education and industry', or of 'education for employment'.

This chapter sets out to examine the manner in which the political parties, and in particular the Conservative Party, approached the problems of education for employment between the wars. This framework
does not allow room for detailed study of many important questions, such as the function of particular institutions within their localities or the role played by semi-official committees, industrial leaders and professional interest groups. The following account concentrates instead on the way in which politicians perceived the problems of education for employment as they affected those in the fourteen to eighteen age group. Within this context, three individual problems require special consideration: the day continuation schools; juvenile unemployment, which became a matter of public policy for the first time in the 1920s; and technical education, which for a variety of reasons was regarded as a traditionally weak area of the education system. From an analysis of these and related questions concerning full-time education for adolescents, two main conclusions emerge. The first is that government policy produced only modest improvements: although individual ministers presented bold strategies for education and industry, their hopes were largely frustrated and Board policy in the 1930s especially resorted to a series of narrowly conceived, short-term expedients. The second is that party political opinion provided little concerted pressure for any major changes in policy, with the Conservative Party in particular paying only intermittent attention to the ill-defined problems of education for employment.

II

In the immediate aftermath of the First World War, the problems of education for employment were dominated by the day continuation school. There was to be some discussion in the post-war period about the need to improve technical education as a whole, but attention focused nationally on the continuation school as a novel method of meeting the educational needs of the juvenile worker. During the Edwardian period, the Board of Education had gradually become more receptive to the idea of compulsory attendance at continuation classes, and the war ultimately provided the circumstances necessary for the introduction of a national scheme. The education bill introduced by Fisher in 1917 adapted pre-war Liberal ideas and imposed upon local authorities the duty of establishing continuation schools in their areas. These were to provide part-time education of a general nature for all adolescents between the ages of fourteen and eighteen no longer in full-time attendance at school. Fisher's experiment was soon to be curtailed and then abandoned altogether. The prospect of elementary school leavers continuing their education after entering employment was opposed by various industrial interests, and when this opposition was taken up in parliament, the education minister was forced to make important modifications to his original scheme.

The necessary hours of attendance were reduced from 320 to 280 each year; compulsory attendance was only to apply up to the age of sixteen in the first instance; and extension of the scheme to cover all those

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up to eighteen was only to occur after a period of seven years. Several local authorities proceeded to open new continuation schools following the passage of the 1918 Act, but the possibility of a national network was undermined by the post-war economic recession. The new schools were quickly closed down, and after Fisher's departure from the Board in 1922 the reintroduction of continuation classes was never seriously considered. The failure of Fisher's efforts resulted from several interrelated factors - local and national, as well as economic and political. The aim of the following account is not to reconsider each of these factors: it is rather to examine the role of the political parties, particularly the Unionist Party, in attempting to meet the problems of education for employment during the period of the Lloyd George coalition.

Fisher's education bill was of course an agreed measure between the Liberal and Unionist wings of the wartime coalition. The scheme of continuation schools which it promoted, however, had already attracted support from politicians for a wide variety of reasons. Fisher himself tended to combine both educational and industrial considerations. His desire to improve opportunities for the elementary school pupil was reflected in the claim that the new schools aimed at being 'half educational, half social'; but at the same time his awareness of industrial needs was illustrated by the declaration that continuation was essential if young workers were to be adequately supervised and so 'more disciplined and reasonably tempered'.

The assumptions of the other political parties were more clearly stated. The Labour movement had on the whole followed the Liberal lead in advocating part-time instruction before the war, although some wanted it to be provided on the most comprehensive basis possible. The Workers' Educational Association, for example, called for twenty hours of part-time education each week up to the age of eighteen, fearing that working-class children would otherwise be confined to vocational training aimed at increasing economic efficiency. This fear was based less on the policy of the Board of Education, which favoured a liberal curriculum, than on the suspected intentions of the Unionist Party's attitude. Continuation schools - like nearly all aspects of education apart from the religious issue - had received little attention from the party as a whole before the war, but those Unionists who did press for reform in this direction tended to emphasise the possible industrial, rather than educational, benefits. Unionists believed that only the most gifted children should be encouraged to continue with their schooling beyond the elementary stage: for the remainder it was a matter of common sense that the curriculum be linked up with their future working lives. This view was embraced nationally by the Unionist Social Reform Committee and locally by the Municipal Reform Party in London; in a more extreme form it justified the need for continuation schools on the grounds of improving 'national efficiency' and emulating the German example. In these circumstances, it appeared that considerable scope existed for party differences over the precise form of further part-time instruction, if not its general necessity. This was to be confirmed by the debates which preceded the passage of the 1918 Act.

6. Sherington, op.cit., p.64.
The complex response of Unionists to Fisher's education bill was reflected above all in the discussion of clause ten - the proposed introduction of continuation schools. The hostility of industrialists to reductions in their child labour force was certainly echoed on the Unionist back-benches, but an exclusive concern with this section of opinion ignores in the first place the capacity of party members to voice independent views.\textsuperscript{8} For many Unionists, their response to clause ten was conditioned primarily by their overall attitude to educational reform. Those back-benchers who gave general support to Fisher's bill were frequently found defending the need for continuation classes. This applied to those professionally associated with the educational world, such as J.A.R. Marriott; and to the younger members identified with social reform, notably Edward Wood, who argued that the value of further training was now widely recognised.\textsuperscript{9} By contrast, the small minority of Unionists hostile to the education bill directed part of their criticism towards clause ten. Basil Peto, for example, complained that the threatened reduction in child labour would dislocate post-war trade, and Frederick Banbury expressed his anxiety that young agricultural labourers 'who are most useful in getting in the hay harvest... will be stopped work two hours before they ought to stop work because they have to go to school'.\textsuperscript{10} Peto and Banbury were not, however, acting as formal representatives of industry in putting forward these arguments. Their opposition to continuation schools was rather one aspect of their die-hard resistance to

\textsuperscript{8} For an example of the emphasis on the industrialist response, see L. Andrews, \textit{The Education Act, 1918}, p.52ff.
\textsuperscript{9} Marriott - 104 H.C. Deb., 5s., cc.678-9, 18 Mar. 1918; Wood - ibid., c.714.
\textsuperscript{10} Peto - 104 H.C. Deb., 5s., cc.344 and 348, 13 Mar. 1918; Banbury - ibid., c.433.
educational reform in general; and it was offset by the attitude of members such as Marriott and Wood, who conversely supported clause ten as part of their sympathy for the bill as a whole.

The opposition of industry was of course channelled through the Unionist Party in parliament, although again the nature of this opposition has been over-simplified in existing accounts. Hostility to the continuation schools had been spearheaded at an early stage by the Federation of British Industries, which operated mainly through its own internal committee system. In early 1918 the Federation suggested that, as an alternative to continuation classes, full-time education should be extended for selected children. This idea was referred to during the second reading of the bill by General T.E. Hickman, the Unionist M.P. for Wolverhampton South, who officially voiced the Federation's concern that trade would be disrupted by a full system of continuation schools. At the committee stage, Hickman also sponsored amendments designed to limit the scope of clause ten, notably by proposing that attendance should be made voluntary. The arguments put forward on behalf of the Federation attracted considerable publicity in the educational press, but in practice had little impact on the shape of the bill. Hickman made no attempt to press the Federation's alternative scheme at the committee stage, and he was joined by only one other back-bencher - J.S. Harmood-Banner, representing the Everton constituency - in officially presenting the

12. 104 H.C. Deb., 5s., cc.778-9, 18 Mar. 1918; 106 H.C. Deb., 5s., cc.1115-6, 30 May 1918.
industrialist case. The latter's grasp of the issues involved was so unsure that he was interrupted at one point by Hickman for inadvertently giving the impression that the Federation position was not representative of employers as a whole.\footnote{The Times Educational Supplement, 28 Feb. 1918; 104 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.777, 18 Mar. 1918.}

The reservations of the Federation were echoed most loudly by employers in Lancashire, who had a long tradition of using juvenile labour in the cotton and textile trades. The fear of a reduction in child earning capacity also concerned the textile unions, with the result that Unionist and Labour back-benchers representing Lancashire seats joined forces to put the case of their constituents against the proposed continuation schools. The opposition of the 'Lancashire group', however, was tempered by a sympathy for educational reform which Hickman had not displayed. The Unionist leader of the group, Henry Hibbert, was a well-known advocate of reform as chairman of the Education Committee on the Lancashire County Council, and he openly declared his support for the main principles of the bill during the second reading.\footnote{104 H.C. Deb., 5s., cc.370-5, 13 Mar. 1918. For Hibbert's wider views on educational reform, see above, pp. 36-7.} Hibbert stressed that the Lancashire members were primarily concerned about the particular form of Fisher's scheme. In the spring of 1918 his own suggestion - for fifteen hours in school every week between the ages of fourteen and sixteen - was widely discussed as a possible alternative. As one newspaper observed, the compulsory principle was now accepted by all but the 'reactionaries' - a direct reference to the Federation of British Industries - but opinion was still divided as to whether a two or four year course would prove most beneficial. On this question, the W.E.A. amongst others sided

14. 104 H.C. Deb., 5s., cc.370-5, 13 Mar. 1918. For Hibbert's wider views on educational reform, see above, pp. 36-7.
with Hibbert's plan as a means of causing less interference with industry, providing it could be enforced up to the age of eighteen.\textsuperscript{15} Fisher, however, felt unable to accept the alternative plan. After realising that the opposition of Lancashire members threatened a parliamentary defeat for the education bill, the President modified his scheme to make it acceptable without a division. This outcome led to complaints that Lancashire had once more acted as the 'Ulster of Education', although in fact Hibbert shared neither the hostility of Banbury to educational reform nor the distrust of Hickman for all forms of continuation. The real problem for Lancashire members was, as one Unionist noted, that 'their constituencies are stronger than their principles'.\textsuperscript{16}

The continuation school debates in some ways cut across the main party divisions seen during the passage of the 1918 Act. Clause ten, like all other sections of the Act, had received formal endorsement from members of all parties; but there had nevertheless emerged significant underlying differences about the purpose and future shape of continuation schools. The only enthusiastic support for clause ten had been provided by the coalition Liberals, who praised the minister's attempt to fuse the 'technical' and the 'cultural' aims of education.\textsuperscript{17} By contrast, the small Labour group in parliament had emphasised the potential importance of continuation in improving

\textsuperscript{15} The Times Educational Supplement, 7 Mar. 1918; The Journal of Education, Apr. 1918.

\textsuperscript{16} Memorandum of interview with Lancashire M.P.s', 30 May 1918, P.R.O. ED 24/670; Fisher diary, 31 May 1918, Fisher papers, unclassified series; The Westminster Gazette, 6 June 1918; C.W. Crook - The Times Educational Supplement, 13 June 1918.

\textsuperscript{17} e.g. E. Parrott - 104 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.749, 18 Mar. 1918.
educational opportunities for working-class children. Labour spokesmen attacked the assumptions of the Unionist die-hards rather than those of Hibbert's alternative plan, and their anxiety about premature specialisation for industrial purposes was reflected particularly in the insistence that 'works schools' should not be recognised as places of continuation schooling under the Act. The real potential of the schools for the Labour Party lay in the possibility that when fully developed, they would provide the great majority of children with a substitute for secondary education, which would remain a minority provision. Unionists, in the meantime, tended to regard the schools in far more functional terms. Banbury's view that book-learning was a waste of time for labourers and mechanics indicated that on this - as on other issues - a small minority stood apart in denying the value of any further education for most children. Moreover, those Unionists who did support the bill stressed neither the need for an alternative form of secondary training nor the importance of fusing 'technical' with 'cultural' traditions. For most party members, the aim was rather to improve economic efficiency by ensuring that the demands of industry for a better equipped workforce were met. Hence at the end of the war, Liberals alone placed great hope in the continuation school as a comprehensive method of tackling the problems of education and employment. Both the Labour and Unionist parties had given cautious backing to clause ten, and now waited to see how the new schools would develop.


19. Hibbert was something of an exception here, arguing that 'if you place fetters round industry you must... so synchronise education with commerce that you may develop the former without handicapping the latter' - 106 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.1629, 5 June 1918.
In the event the continuation schools did not outlast the period of the post-war coalition. Following the passage of the 1918 Act, local authorities began devising their own plans and new schools were soon opened in several areas, including London and Birmingham. When the economic situation deteriorated, however, these authorities quickly reversed their policies in an effort to save money, and by 1921 the government had effectively abandoned its attempt to introduce a national system of compulsory continuation. In political terms, the arguments previously used in favour of continuation classes were rapidly overtaken by events. This applied particularly within the Unionist Party, where at cabinet level the party leader and Chancellor of the Exchequer, Austen Chamberlain, played the leading role in forcing the abandonment of Fisher's experiment. Chamberlain had no concern for continuation as part of an educational or industrial strategy; he was simply alarmed that the new schools posed the threat of an increased burden on the Treasury at a time of recession. In 1920 he therefore took steps to ensure that no further 'appointed days' would be granted to local authorities for the opening of new continuation classes, and he even pressed Fisher to close down those schools already in operation.\(^{20}\) The education minister fought off this last demand in the short-term, but his rearguard action was ultimately unsuccessful in the face of a worsening economic situation. The Board of Education, like other departments, placed severe restrictions on expenditure, and in 1921 many local authorities began to avail themselves of the option - insisted upon by Chamberlain - of being able to avoid their

\(^{20}\) 'The growth of expenditure on education', memorandum by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 21 Dec. 1920, P.R.O. CAB 24/97; Cabinet finance committee, 'Expenditure on education', memorandum by Chamberlain, 21 Dec. 1920, P.R.O. CAB 24/117.
responsibilities under clause ten. Thereafter the Chancellor became more confident of holding down fresh expenditure under the 1918 Act, for political opinion was increasingly swinging behind the orthodox Treasury view of strict deflation as the necessary remedy pending the revival of international trade.\(^\text{21}\)

At the party political level, many Liberals maintained their commitment to continuation in the new circumstances after 1919, but the earlier reservations of both Labour and Unionist opinion now rapidly intensified. This partly reflected a general hardening of attitudes in the face of growing industrial and social unrest.\(^\text{22}\) As the parties lined up behind their respective electoral supporters, so the nature of the continuation school curriculum became a focus of debate. Hence in London for example, Unionists took up the complaints of local businessmen by stressing the need for a vocational rather than general curriculum. Labour spokesmen in turn used the attitude of hostile employers as a pretext for demanding more radical change in education.\(^\text{23}\) For the most part, however, Unionists objected to the new schools simply on the grounds of cost. Some party members, such as Cyril Cobb, chairman of the Education Committee on the London County Council, had acted to ensure the introduction of continuation classes in their areas, and continued to give them support. This encouragement was quickly undermined in 1921 by the criticisms first of die-hard and 'anti-waste' sympathisers and then of wide sections of Unionist opinion. The most persistent critics of continuation in parliament all held seats in the London area, and so consciously

\(^{21}\) Chamberlain to Fisher, 30 Dec. 1920, P.R.O. ED 24/1258.  
^{22}\) K.O. Morgan, Consensus and disunity, pp.287-301.  
^{23}\) Sir Reginald Blair - 174 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.935, 11 July 1921; Will Thorne - 152 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.1325, 29 Mar. 1922.
directed their attacks on the schools in the capital.\textsuperscript{24} The eventual closure of the London schools in 1922 highlighted the party's new found concern with economy at all costs. The desire of a minority of local Unionists to continue with the new schools was overcome by the determination of the majority - prompted behind the scenes by national party figures - to make savings wherever possible.\textsuperscript{25} The continuation schools were thus abandoned by Unionists as a convenient scapegoat in a time of recession, rather than because of any consideration of their intrinsic value. As one back-bencher remarked in 1922, in the present conditions it was far better to have the nation 'half educated and solvent, than to have it well educated and bankrupt'.\textsuperscript{26}

The immediate post-war years ultimately resulted in only partial success for efforts to improve education for employment. In the area of technical education, the war had underlined the need for technical and scientific training, and resulted in a personal request from the Prime Minister that further action be taken in this direction. Fisher responded by proposing the establishment of special committees to assess the needs of individual industries, but this initiative had not been taken up. In the meantime the President ignored pressure to amend the regulations for junior technical schools, which still prepared their pupils for specific trades, in order to allow them

\textsuperscript{24} e.g. Colonel John Newman - 138 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.597, 21 Feb. 1921; Sir John Hopkins - 139 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.666, 10 Mar. 1921.
\textsuperscript{25} For further details of the London example, see below, pp.238-42. In Birmingham, the new schools were opened in January 1921, but closed three weeks later after the City Council called upon the Education Committee to discontinue the scheme. For the pressure exerted by Chamberlain in this instance, see P.R.O. ED 24/1443.
\textsuperscript{26} Sir Gerald Hurst - 152 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.1179, 28 Mar. 1922. The Permanent Secretary to the Treasury is reported to have said early on that unless the continuation schools were stopped, the government would be unable to show any real savings to its Unionist supporters. See Selby-Bigge to Fisher, 11 Dec. 1920, P.R.O. ED 24/1258.
to prepare students for higher technical and university training. As a result the slow development of voluntary, part-time courses in the technical colleges remained the main hope for progress, and the prospects for technical instruction were left uncertain with Fisher's departure from the Board. As one official report observed, 'technical education represents a debatable country with limits not very clearly defined lying upon the borders of Secondary and University education'.

The reasons behind this lack of progress had been many and varied. Amongst those most directly concerned, employers had given little backing to the continuation schools, and industrialists as a whole had been slow in outlining their demands of technical training. The Board of Education, for its part, had viewed continuation and technical education as separately administered policy issues, rather than as twin aspects of the same problem. The Permanent Secretary, Selby-Bigge, had seen no need for a direct national lead in introducing continuation classes, and he envisaged only a modest expansion of junior technical schools. The central element of Board policy, he believed, must be to develop the academic training given in the secondary schools, which alone were to remain the route to higher education.

In the political arena attention had centred almost exclusively on the continuation schools: here Fisher's experiment had suffered from the additional pressures of economic recession and political indifference, the latter of which had wider implications for party attitudes towards education for employment.

27. 'Junior technical schools', memorandum by Selby-Bigge, Jan. 1918, P.R.O. ED 24/1849, which notes that 61 such schools were now in existence; Sherington, op.cit., pp.142-5.
28. 'Memorandum on the facilities open to scholars in public elementary schools for a continuance of their full-time education beyond age of 14', 29 Nov. 1918, P.R.O. ED 24/1411.
The failure of the continuation schools was vital in determining the shape of party education policies for much of the inter-war period. This applied particularly to the general approach necessary for adolescents. The Liberals under Fisher continued to believe that without continuation classes, the majority of adolescents would escape all educational influence after fourteen. For Fisher, the necessary direction of policy was to widen but preserve the minority training given in secondary schools, improve the upper standards of the elementary school, and cater for juvenile workers in continuation classes.²⁹ The scenario of compulsory part-time and permissive full-time higher education, however, was no longer favoured either by local authorities or by the other political parties. The Labour Party had come to regard the continuation schools as only a temporary expedient, and in fact the failure of Fisher's efforts paved the way for the alternative policy drawn up by Tawney in 1922 - a wholesale reorganisation aimed at developing advanced elementary instruction up to the standard of existing secondary schools.³⁰ For some Unionists, in the meantime, the idea of continuation education remained attractive in the absence of a national scheme, but the party now concentrated primarily on the same issues as Labour - those affecting the full-time system of education for adolescents. With the decline of the Liberal Party in the early 1920s, this was to have the long-term effect of transferring party controversy away from issues of education for employment and towards the full-time secondary and post-primary schools. Technical education, which after the failure of the continuation schools stood

³⁰ E.A. Waterfall, The day continuation school in England (London, 1923); R.S. Barker, Education and politics, p.43.
alone as a method for tackling education for employment, had always been accorded a low priority in educational and political debate. Hence after 1922 the parties were left only with the legacy of early post-war controversies, and instead of presenting broad strategies, they fell back upon earlier prejudices. Labour spokesmen attacked any ideas of a vocational bias in the curriculum, while in the Unionist Party - where educational opinion was still largely made on the back-benches - there was still a strong feeling that vocational training 'is better done by the factory'. These prejudices were to hinder fresh attempts later in the 1920s to produce a comprehensive policy for the problems of education and industry.

III

After the fall of the Lloyd George coalition, debates about the relationship between education and the nation's industrial performance centred on two main issues. The first of these, juvenile unemployment, highlighted the extent to which the optimism of Fisher's continuation experiment had been overtaken. At the height of the post-war economic recession nearly 150,000 young people between fourteen and eighteen were out of work, and for several years education ministers were forced to concentrate on the problems caused by the dislocation of industry and decline in apprenticeship. After 1926, however, the Board of

31. This comment was made by Francis Harrison, who added that expenditure on evening institutes was 'a gross waste of public money'. See 'Deputation of Conservative M.P.s to the Prime Minister', 11 July 1923, P.R.O. ED 24/1259.
Education gave much greater prominence to a second issue - that of technical education. Despite the pressure of foreign competition, this area of policy had received little public attention in the post-war years, and it was only after the publication of the Hadow Report that technical training ceased to be overshadowed by continuation and juvenile unemployment. The two central problems of the 1920s both raised questions which directly concerned full-time schooling for adolescents. The seriousness of juvenile unemployment heightened controversy about the need to raise the compulsory school-leaving age to fifteen; and the role of technical education was increasingly discussed in terms of its relationship with the new forms of post-primary instruction. The object of this section is to trace the various problems of education for employment which faced central government in the 1920s, and to indicate that this period saw the only attempt by a Conservative minister between the wars to emulate the aim of Fisher - to present a broad policy for those between fourteen and eighteen which would meet both educational and industrial needs.

There were few signs of a positive approach by the Board of Education in the early 1920s. Edward Wood's term as President was dominated by the need for financial stringency, which allowed little discussion either of technical education or of the desirability of reintroducing continuation schools. The Unionist government was faced instead with an alarming increase in the level of juvenile unemployment, and this prompted the Prime Minister to establish a cabinet committee in order to suggest possible remedies. The report of this committee concentrated on three measures which were to be frequently considered by successive governments. In accordance with the thinking of Board

officials, the idea of raising the school-leaving age to tackle the problems of the young unemployed was rejected as a 'striking reversal' of declared policy. The Ministry of Labour, however, ensured a more sympathetic attitude to two further proposals - the lowering of the minimum age of unemployment insurance from sixteen to fourteen; and the extension of Juvenile Unemployment Centres, which had been set up as an emergency measure in 1919 to provide training for unemployed juveniles. In order to consider these ideas further, a second committee was set up late in 1923 under the Chancellor, Neville Chamberlain, but the influence of the Treasury ensured a retreat in policy. The reduction in the age of unemployment insurance was ruled out, and the Unemployment Centres - although recognised as the 'most hopeful and economic solution of the problem' - were only to receive full Exchequer support in exceptional cases. The fall of the government shortly afterwards prevented the necessity for any further action, but the underlying assumptions of the government's policy had already emerged. Juvenile unemployment was regarded as a temporary problem which required a temporary solution: under pressure from the Treasury, the government sought to tackle the effects rather than the causes of the problem through the cheap expedient of Unemployment Centres, guided as much by electoral as by educational or industrial considerations.

34. Report of the Cabinet juvenile unemployment committee, 15 Dec. 1923, P.R.O. CAB 27/228. For the views of the Minister of Labour, see Montague-Barlow to Chamberlain, (?) Dec. 1923, P.R.O. T 161/518 s.22666/1.

35. Report of the Cabinet juvenile unemployment committee, Jan. 1924, P.R.O. CAB 27/228. The Unemployment Centres clearly attracted little support from the Treasury, where one leading official complained that they should not receive support because 'both education and the relief of distress are local responsibilities and not primarily the responsibility of the Government' - 'Juvenile unemployment', minute by A.W. Hurst, 31 Dec. 1923, P.R.O. T 161/518 s.22666/1.
The Labour government of 1924 similarly concentrated on short-term responses to the immediate problem. In March a cabinet committee established by C. P. Trevelyan advocated a more flexible attitude on each of the three proposals considered by its Unionist predecessor. The committee recommended that plans by individual local authorities to raise the leaving age under existing bye-laws should be sympathetically considered; that the age of entry into unemployment insurance be lowered to coincide with that of entry into employment; and that the Exchequer grant to the Unemployment Centres be raised for as long as the problem remained acute. Trevelyan was soon made aware of the limitations of this approach. Few authorities were prepared to raise the leaving age for all children when unemployment affected only limited numbers in their areas; and the proposal to extend unemployment cover to all juveniles in insured trades met with such opposition from all quarters in the Commons that it was eventually abandoned. As a result the minister was left to fall back on the advice of his officials that Unemployment Centres constituted the best solution. The Labour administration thus brought a more energetic approach to office, but was unable to produce any fundamental shift in policy. Trevelyan's main interests lay elsewhere, in the grammar schools and the upper stages of the elementary system; and like his predecessor, he did not see the need for a broad strategy specifically addressed to the issues of education for employment.

37. Barker, op. cit., p. 51. In encouraging individual local authorities to raise the leaving age, the cabinet committee endorsed special arrangements for considering exemptions 'on such grounds as beneficial employment' - Report of juvenile unemployment sub-committee, 3 Mar. 1924, P.R.O. CAB 27/202. This marks the first appearance in official thinking of the concept which was later to be embodied in the 1936 Act.
He made no attempt to revive the continuation schools, and when pressed by back-benchers from all parties to initiate the first major enquiry into technical education since the 1880s, Trevelyan replied that no demand for such an enquiry existed at present and that he preferred smaller studies into individual aspects of the problem.\(^{38}\)

The first eighteen months of Eustace Percy's term at the Board also saw few new departures in official thinking on juvenile unemployment. The new Conservative government was soon faced with the problem of putting something in the place of the abortive measures of 1924. The idea of reintroducing continuation schools was rejected as both financially prohibitive and unrelated to the immediate issue, as the unemployed could only attend for certain hours in the week.\(^{39}\) In 1925 a newly formed cabinet committee therefore returned to the three well-established lines of policy. The raising of the leaving age purely for the purposes of easing pressure on the juvenile labour market was ruled out, and the committee were also reluctant to continue encouraging individual authorities in this direction, on the grounds that the high levels of exemption involved turned the schools into 'waiting rooms' until work was found.\(^{40}\) The lowering of the insurance age had already been ruled out for the time being by its reception in the Commons, and the further possibility of making attendance at Unemployment Centres rank as contribution to the insurance fund was considered likely to leave the government open to the charge of putting

\(^{38}\) 175 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.572, 26 June 1924.
\(^{39}\) 'Juvenile unemployment', Joint memorandum by the President of the Board of Education and the Minister of Labour, 20 Jan. 1925, P.R.O. CAB 24/173.
\(^{40}\) Cabinet juvenile unemployment committee, 1st Conclusions, 5 Feb. 1925, P.R.O. CAB 27/265.
children on the dole. Eustace Percy, like his predecessors, was therefore left to make do with the existing Unemployment Centres, and for some time he canvassed the idea of giving local authorities the power to compel juveniles to attend the Centres while out of work. At the same time, the government established a further committee under the chairmanship of the industrialist Dougal Malcolm, charged initially with reviewing the whole problem of juvenile unemployment. In 1926 the Malcolm committee recommended that the main responsibility for the problem should be assumed by the Ministry of Labour rather than the Board of Education. Hence the Board's direct interest in juvenile unemployment disappeared suddenly: the difficulties faced by successive education ministers were largely removed by the simple expedient of relinquishing responsibility.

The problem of juvenile unemployment was not a major policy issue in the post-war period as it affected only limited numbers of adolescents. The persistence and difficulty of the problem, however, was such that it shed light on the wider assumptions of the political parties in approaching those in the fourteen to eighteen age group. In practice successive governments concentrated on seeking to ameliorate the worst effects of unemployment through the specially established Centres. In private, the leading party spokesmen regarded the Centres as useful in the short-term, but inadequate as a permanent contribution to the needs of the juvenile worker. When questioned about the government's policy in 1925, Fisher still maintained that the real remedy lay in the reintroduction of continuation schools. For the Labour Party,

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41. Cabinet juvenile unemployment committee, interim Report, 6 Feb. 1925, P.R.O. CAB 27/265.
Trevelyan claimed that the Unemployment Centres should be continued as palliatives, but that the only long-term solution was to 'keep children in school' until the age of fifteen. Eustace Percy had also recognised the limitations of the Centres. In personally initiating the appointment of the Malcolm Committee, the President was adamant that juvenile unemployment should be regarded as only one aspect of a much wider problem. He argued that any enquiry must 'get out of the old rut' of discussing the school-leaving age and the age of entry into insurance, and address instead the more fundamental question of 'what kind of education industry wants and what kind of recognition it is prepared to give to good education'. These front-bench strategies had not been the source of controversy amongst the parties as a whole before 1926. The Unemployment Centres were generally acceptable to political opinion, and in the absence of a nationally declared policy such as Fisher's continuation schools, there was little place for discussion of wider issues. The ideas of Trevelyan and Percy nevertheless foreshadowed the emergence of the major dividing line between the parties in the second half of the 1920s: Labour became committed to raising the compulsory leaving age, partly as a means of tackling juvenile unemployment, but this reform was resolutely opposed by Conservatives. For Eustace Percy, the school age was only one small aspect of the problem of adjusting educational and industrial needs - a problem which dominated the second half of his term at the Board.

43. 'H. of C.', notes by the Duchess of Atholl, 26 Feb. 1925, P.R.O. ED 24/1352, which reveals the close interest of the Duchess in this issue.
44. 'Draft memorandum for consideration by representatives of employers' and workers' organisations in regard to juvenile unemployment', Eustace Percy, Apr. 1925, ibid.; Percy to P. Cunliffe-Lister, 18 May 1925, P.R.O. ED 24/1354.
During his early months in office, Percy had shown few signs of working towards a comprehensive policy for the whole issue of education for employment. He made only vague references to the need for improved technical training, commenting for example on the value of amending the secondary school curriculum to industrial needs in certain areas - a reflection of the long-standing Board belief that effective technical education could only be based upon a sound grammar school system.\footnote{The Times, 15 Dec. 1924: the secondary school 'should furnish the salt of the workshop as much as that of the business or profession'.}

The government's concern with juvenile unemployment, although preoccupying the President in 1925, did make him aware for the first time of the importance of widening consideration of the issues involved. Hence he not only prompted the appointment of the Malcolm committee as a means of reviewing education in relation to the requirements of trade and industry, but also introduced administrative measures such as the revision of the regulations for junior technical schools, which had developed only slowly since the end of the war.\footnote{The Times Educational Supplement, 3 July 1926.}

The transfer of the Board's responsibility for juvenile unemployment in 1926 left Percy free to develop his ideas. In November he reviewed the Board's future financial commitments and consciously adopted a broad approach to the question of education for employment. The main lines of reform, Percy argued, should be to expand the part-time evening classes grouped under the name technical education; to encourage continuation schools, at least on a voluntary basis; and to develop new post-primary schools of 'more practical character'.\footnote{"Memorandum on educational policy", Eustace Percy, 23 Nov. 1926, P.R.O. CAB 24/182.} By the end of 1926, the President had therefore recognised the need for a broad strategy which concerned...
both part- and full-time education for adolescents. This strategy was to be further developed following the publication of the Hadow Report.

After 1927 Percy's policy was based on two new assumptions. The first was that industrial circumstances had altered so rapidly that the anti-vocational bias in the education system had to be overturned: the ultimate aim must be to improve the social status of the worker in order to match that of the liberal professions. The second, and closely related belief, was that technical training must be built upon the foundations of a sound elementary, or post-primary, structure. In contrast to his earlier speeches, he now warned against the danger of the 'grammar school tradition becoming rather a fetish'. These convictions underpinned Percy's twin approach to the issue of education for employment. In order to stimulate part-time training for the fourteen to eighteen age group, he widened the training courses for technical education teachers; established inquiries into particular branches of industry, notably the Clerk committee on engineering and the Goodenough committee on salesmanship; and he initiated a move towards regional councils to oversee policy in technical instruction by setting up a major inquiry in the West Midlands. At the same time, Percy stressed that an important aspect of reorganisation in the full-time system was to ensure that the proposed modern schools

48. See, for example, his speech at the Regent Street Polytechnic, recorded in The Times Educational Supplement, 9 Apr. 1927.
49. Ibid., 4 June 1927.
50. 'Note of discussion between the President, Sir Aubrey Symonds, Sir Edward Crowe and Mr Goodenough with regard to the proposed inquiry into salesmanship', G.A.N. Lowndes, 21 June 1928, P.R.O. ED 24/1882; Percy to Sir Dugald Clerk, 25 June 1928, P.R.O. ED 24/1878; J. Graves, Policy and progress in secondary education, 1902–1942 (London, 1943), pp.140-1.
worked out a practical curriculum, leading to higher courses in the technical and commercial colleges. These two themes were now inextricably interwoven in the President's thinking. 'The development of education in our technical institutes and colleges in co-operation with industry', he argued in 1928, 'offers tremendous opportunities for further education, and those are the opportunities at which our new system of senior and secondary schools must largely aim at introducing their scholars'.\footnote{The concept of 'higher education for all' which Percy presented to the electorate in the following year was intended to further this approach. The ultimate aim, he later recorded, was to establish parity between two educational ladders: one leading from the secondary school to university and the other through the senior and technical schools to the college of technology.}

The complexities of the minister's policy went largely unnoticed by Conservative Party opinion as a whole. In the early 1920s, the party had been reluctant to sanction any new initiatives designed to reduce juvenile unemployment. Lady Astor had been shouted down by the annual conference for urging the need to raise the compulsory leaving age, and in 1925 members of the cabinet had baulked at the proposal for an Unemployment Centres bill, noting the cool response of employers.\footnote{This concern not to tread on the toes of the party's}

\begin{footnotes}
51. 217 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.1104, 16 May 1928. See also Board of Education, Pamphlet No.60, The new prospect in education (1928).
53. National Unionist Association, Annual Conference, minutes, 1922; the anxiety of the Minister of Health and the President of the Board of Trade is recorded in P.R.O. ED 24/1352 and 1354. See also Colonel J. Lithgow to Duchess of Atholl, 5 May 1925, British Employers' Confederation (B.E.C.) archive, Warwick University, MSS.200/B/3/2/C.660 pt.1, which indicates that leading employers were likely to oppose the bill. Percy dropped the idea of the bill, which he said had received 'rather faint praise' – 25 May 1925, P.R.O. ED 24/1352.
\end{footnotes}
industrial supporters was later repeated when the Board of Trade rejected Percy's suggestion for joint action in encouraging particular industries to set up reviewing machinery. The President justified such action on the grounds that there existed a 'considerable feeling' amongst Conservatives in favour of linking up education with industry. This claim, however, clearly overstated the extent to which party members sympathised with, or even comprehended, the subtleties of the minister's policy. Members of the education group in the Commons once more fell in line slowly behind the President, but other sections of Conservative opinion were much less enthusiastic. The largest back-bench groupings representing industrial interests took no part in discussions about education for employment, and many M.P.s reiterated the prejudices earlier shown in the continuation school debates. The arguments frequently emphasised by members representing constituencies in the industrial north-west - and echoed at every level of the party - were that juveniles should enter industry at the earliest possible moment, and that public money should not be wasted on an 'M.A. education' when the real need was for directly vocational training.\(^5^4\)

The last three years of Baldwin's second administration had witnessed a novel attempt by a Conservative education minister to tackle education for employment as an identifiable policy issue. Percy's approach was distinctive in several respects. He often cited the need to follow

\(^{54}\) Percy to Cunliffe-Lister, 5 Oct. 1927, P.R.O. ED 24/1875. Cunliffe-Lister's reply, 21 Nov. 1927, asserted that in the present circumstances 'harassed manufacturers' were unlikely to pay attention to proposals involving 'a good deal of work and trouble'. On the attitude of back-benchers, compare, for example, Somerville - 217 H.C. Deb., 5s., cc.1114-6, 16 May 1928, with Edmund Radford, M.P. for Salford - 182 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.2369, 8 Apr. 1925.
the example of the United States — where he had spent much of his earlier career — in eradicating the anti-vocational bias peculiar to English education. He also advanced his reforms, in striking contrast to mainstream Conservative opinion, within a context of industrial co-operation. According to Percy, peace in industry would be secured not by ingenuous attempts to tidy up industrial relations — a direct reference to the Trade Disputes Act which followed the General Strike — but by 'the "spiritual architecture" of which Milton spoke, and the stones of that spiritual architecture must... be sought in the quarry of technical education'. 55 By the time he left office, however, Percy's vision of equal social and academic prestige between secondary and senior schools, between universities and technical colleges, had come nowhere near realisation. This was of course due to a whole range of circumstances: the reluctance of the cabinet to impose additional demands upon industry; the power of the Treasury in holding down expenditure; and the continued suspicions of industrial and commercial leaders. 56 Percy himself also bore some of the responsibility: for example, the criticism that he tended to wait on events was later conceded by Board officials, particularly in not using the second

55. The need to emulate the Federal Board for Vocational Education in the U.S.A. was a particular theme of Percy's preface to Board of Education, Pamphlet No. 64, Education for industry and commerce (1928), the most comprehensive summary of his views on the whole issue. His concern with industrial co-operation is recorded in the Daily Express, 9 Apr. 1929.

56. The National Confederation of Employers' Organisations believed that the fundamental problem was that of allowing 'the breath of industry inside the doors of the Board of Education' — J.B. Forbes-Watson to J. Richmond, 3 Jan. 1928, B.E.C. archive, MSS.200/B/3/2/c.660 pt.9. A further reason why industry proved reluctant to act was of course that in the 1920s demands for trained personnel were fully met by existing provision. See S.F. Cotgrove, Technical education and social change (London, 1958), p.81; and T. Cook, 'The Great Debate continues..', History of Education Society Bulletin, 23 (1979), pp.52-3.
report of the Malcolm committee to establish permanent national contact with employers and trade unions. Finally, educational opinion as a whole still maintained that the problems of the fourteen to eighteen age group could be settled by much less complicated methods. In contrast to the strident demands of Conservatives for more vocational training in the schools, many Liberals still favoured the revival of continuation schools, while the Labour Party had become more firmly committed to the raising of the school-leaving age as the necessary policy. Thus if Eustace Percy was, in the words of G.A.N. Lowndes, the first President of the Board to fully realise the importance of technical education, then by going against the main lines of thinking in the 1920s, he also had - to employ an earlier judgement on Lord Haldane's attitude towards education and industry - 'too heroic an idea of what was necessary'.

IV

The decade after 1929 witnessed a retreat from Percy's attempt to present a broad strategy for the problems of education for employment. The pattern for much of the period was set by the Labour administration of 1929 to 1931, which introduced three separate bills aimed at raising the compulsory school-leaving age to fifteen. This reform was pursued primarily in terms of the educational advantages to be gained, but the renewed increase in juvenile unemployment after

57. M. Holmes to Sir Horace Wilson, 15 Aug. 1941, P.R.O. ED 136/269: Holmes nevertheless recalls that Percy made much more vigorous attempts to stimulate action than many other ministers.
58. Lowndes, op.cit., p.151; The Times, 18 July 1916, for the comments of Henry Bentinck on Haldane.
1930 added an extra dimension to the debate. For many Labour members, a higher leaving age was now a viable method of reducing competition from juvenile workers for scarce jobs.\textsuperscript{59} Until at least 1936, when the National government finally carried an Education Act which raised the leaving age to fifteen with exemptions for 'beneficial employment', educational policy and discussion concerning the fourteen to eighteen age group was inextricably bound up with the problems of full-time schooling for the adolescent. This process not only transferred controversy once more away from education for employment as an identifiable issue, but also overshadowed the specific difficulties of technical education, which became a matter of concern for the Board in the years preceding the outbreak of war. The final section of this chapter sets out to examine the lack of progress made by successive governments in the 1930s, and indicates that despite the efforts of Eustace Percy to build upon his approach in office, Conservative ministers and politicians as a whole produced few new remedies for the disparate problems of education for employment.

C.P. Trevelyan's second spell as President of the Board after 1929 was dominated by his concern to raise the leaving age in accordance with the recommendation of the Hadow Report. As a result of the minister's preoccupation with this single issue, other areas of policy were accorded only a low priority. In technical education, for example, the government was content to wait upon the publication of the various reports initiated by the previous administration. It was also decided that the inclusion of junior technical schools within the new post-primary system, which would require reducing the age of entry from

\textsuperscript{59} Barker, op.cit., pp.58-61; Garside, op.cit., on the fluctuating levels of juvenile unemployment.
thirteen to eleven, was unnecessary in the interests of both technical training and elementary reorganisation. The unsuccessful school attendance bills which Trevelyan sponsored were of course blocked by the Conservative opposition for a variety of reasons. In so far as the Board's legislation was intended to remedy juvenile unemployment, however, Conservative back-benchers found a particular cause for concern. Vernon Davies, the M.P. for Royston, officially voiced the objections of the National Confederation of Employers' Organisations in stressing that a higher school-leaving age would have adverse effects on the supply of juvenile labour in the Lancashire textile industries. The support given to Davies by other Lancashire members representing industrial constituencies illustrated the continued concern of Conservatives to meet demands for cheap juvenile labour. This attitude was the main cause of the party controversy which arose from the juvenile unemployment aspects of the leaving age debates: the demands of a small but influential body of back-benchers for more vocational training led to complaints from Labour that premature specialisation for industrial purposes was being openly encouraged.

In opposition, as in government, Eustace Percy's thinking was clearly distinguishable from that of his party colleagues. His initial concern was with the school-leaving age as an aspect of post-primary reorganisation, but with the sudden increase in the level of unemployment, he soon returned to the wider ramifications of education

60. E.H. Pelham minute to Trevelyan, 15 Nov. 1930, P.R.O. ED 24/1849; Board of Education, Pamphlet No.83, Memorandum on the place of the junior technical school in the educational system (1930), p.30.
63. e.g. 239 H.C. Deb., 5s., cc.1595-8, 29 May 1930.
for employment. Percy's criticism of Trevelyan's second bill in May 1930 concentrated wholly on the link between juvenile unemployment and the transition between schooling and work. By taking the short cut of compelling all children to remain in school, he argued, the Labour government had not offered the 'faintest tinge of that industrial statesmanship which is our only hope'.

As the economic situation deteriorated further, Percy's argument underwent two important changes. The first of these was to turn on its head the idea that raising the school age alone would solve juvenile unemployment: the only long-term solution, which would also ease the transition between school and work, was to rationalise the demand of industry for juvenile labour. This could be achieved on the one hand by employers and workers outlining their needs through industrial associations; and on the other by educationists devising a leaving certificate for senior schools and encouraging exemptions from a higher leaving age in particular areas, both in order to satisfy industrial needs. The second change was to reintroduce the argument in favour of continuation schools.

Despite having promoted Hadow reorganisation, Percy increasingly came to believe that it was only possible to meet educational and industrial needs if the Hadow scheme of full-time courses was expanded into the wider ideal of full-time education up to fourteen, followed by a further two years either full- or part-time according to pupils' requirements.

At this stage the former minister's complex strategy was echoed by some of his close adherents, such as Annesley Somerville, but most

64. 'The school-leaving age', Empire Review, 50, 345 (1929), pp. 266-9; 239 H.C. Deb., 5s., cc.1541-2, 29 May 1930.
65. Percy to E.M.H. Galbraith, 12 Feb. 1930, Conservative Research Department papers, Education: folder 1G.
66. The Times Educational Supplement, 13 Sept. 1930, recording his speech to the British Association for the Advancement of Science.
members of the parliamentary party were content simply with Percy's opposition to Labour's legislation. This in fact hardened when the proposed date for raising the school age was put back by eighteen months: this made the bill 'ten times worse' to Percy by removing any pretence of acting swiftly for those out of work. Thereafter he threw his weight behind the party manoeuvres which helped to ensure the final abandonment of Trevelyan's proposals early in 1931.\textsuperscript{67}

The ideas of Eustace Percy, which derived from his visit to the United States and Canada in 1930, were to have an important indirect effect on the subsequent policy of the National government. This was not apparent until at least 1934, however, for Percy was excluded from office and Board policy was overshadowed by the need for stringent economies. As President of the Board after 1932, Irwin, later Lord Halifax, presented no new remedies for the problems of education for employment, although he did take some interest in the continuation school as a method of easing the transition between school and work.\textsuperscript{68}

In Herwald Ramsbotham, the Parliamentary Secretary during this period, the government did possess the only Conservative minister apart from Percy to advocate sweeping changes in policy. Ramsbotham, who had spent much of his earlier career in merchant banking, recognised that the major problem for most school-leavers was the 'plunge into employment'. In order to remedy this, he called for a wide variety of reforms: the development of junior technical schools, which now

\footnotesize{
67. Ibid., 6 Dec. 1930; Lord Hailsham to Salisbury, 4 Feb.1931, Salisbury paper: 4M 139/75. See also the presidential address delivered by Percy at the annual conference of the Association for Education in Industry and Commerce, An educational policy for an industrial nation (1931), pp.6-13.

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numbered nearly two hundred; the adaptation of the grammar school curriculum; the expansion of voluntary continuation schools; the pursuit of regional industrial policies; and the encouragement of technical colleges as a viable alternative to the universities. The economic circumstances of the early 1930s, however, rendered these proposals less likely to succeed than the earlier reforms upon which they were based. The Treasury's control over expenditure ruled out the provision of much-needed funds for technical education, and the Board took little action to implement the final reports of the committees on Salesmanship and Engineering. The predominant concern of the government in this period, in fact, was once more the high levels of juvenile unemployment.

The National government's initial response was to return to the pragmatic and palliative measures favoured by the Board in the 1920s. The Unemployment Act of 1934 finally implemented two of the proposals widely discussed previously: the reduction of the minimum age of entry into unemployment insurance to fourteen and the enforcement of attendance at Unemployment Centres - now renamed Junior Instruction Centres - which were to receive full Exchequer support. Halifax, while taking a close personal interest in the fluctuating levels of juvenile unemployment, did not dissent from the widely held view that the government's measures - introduced by the Ministry of Labour - would be sufficient to tackle the problem in distressed areas. When the high levels of unemployment were presented as a justification

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70. Holmes to Wilson, 15 Aug. 1941, P.R.O. ED 136/269, recalls that despite the moderate tone of these reports, the N.C.E.O. did not even commend them to their constituent members.
for the additional measure of raising the school-leaving age, the Board remained sceptical of its likely effects in reducing the numbers out of work. Juvenile unemployment thus occupied only a minor role in the government's move towards legislation to raise the compulsory leaving age. This move did involve some consideration of the wider problems of the fourteen to eighteen age group. Halifax argued that 'on broad grounds of social policy' he favoured the revival of the Fisher scheme to ease the transition into industry; and for a time the Board seriously contemplated making attendance at continuation classes compulsory until sixteen for all those exempted from remaining at school. This course of action was ruled out, however, on the grounds of cost and owing to the desire not to jeopardise the electoral and financial backing of industrialists by imposing new duties upon them. Halifax's successor as President, Oliver Stanley, informed a deputation from the National Confederation of Employers' Organisations - which complained about a shortage of juvenile labour if the school age were raised - that the government bore the possibility of increased industrial costs 'very fully in mind and might be trusted to be alive to its reactions'. The Act carried by the re-elected National government in 1936, which raised the leaving age but provided exemptions for those able to find 'beneficial employment', therefore indicated the obvious limitations of Conservative policy. Far from applying

any comprehensive remedies to the problems of education for employment, ministers at the Board were primarily concerned to yield to the immediate wishes of the party's industrial supporters.

The 1936 Act was accepted, though without any great enthusiasm, by the Conservative Party as a whole. This included Eustace Percy, who was eventually reappointed to the government as Minister without Portfolio in June 1935. On the back-benches in the early 1930s, Percy had become closely identified with a small group of Conservative M.P.s who called for a national policy of industrial reorganisation, and his views on education rapidly became linked with his belief in industrial unification or 'planning'. In 1933 Percy, with the support of back-benchers such as Harold Macmillan, Hugh Molson and Noel Lindsay, introduced a private members' bill designed to 'regulate the entry of young persons into employment on leaving school and to provide for their further education'. The bill was not given a second reading, but it did form the basis for a similar measure introduced by the Liberal M.P. Percy Harris. This laid down that the leaving age should be raised by 1937, with exemptions for 'suitable employment'; although unlike Percy's bill, on which it was consciously based, there was no provision for further part-time instruction up to sixteen for all exempted children. The Harris bill, which was only narrowly defeated in the Commons, thus reflected Percy's belief that by controlling the flow of juvenile labour it would be possible to emulate the American example of a joint employment policy with industry. The Board opposed

76. The Times Educational Supplement, 18 Nov. 1933; 283 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.1229, 1 Dec. 1933.
the bill on the grounds that juvenile unemployment was best tackled by the government's own unemployment bill. When it later came to formulate plans for educational reform, however, it found that the only suitable alternative to universally raising the leaving age or introducing continuation schools was to fall back on a modified version of Percy's scheme; this volte face could be justified by including more adequate safeguards about the granting of employment certificates to exempted children.\textsuperscript{77} Percy had little option but to support the Board's reform once he had returned to the front-bench, although he did fight in cabinet to retain the proviso that exempted children should attend further instruction. In parliament Percy now dropped his rhetoric about 'planning', and on the same day as the second reading he took the unprecedented step of informing the British Association of Commercial and Industrial Education that his own desire to combine a higher leaving with age with part-time instruction was not likely to be achieved by the present bill.\textsuperscript{78} In this sense Eustace Percy was the reluctant architect of the 1936 Act, which turned out to be a pale reflection of his own elaborate remedies for education and industry.

The actual date for raising the school-leaving age was set for 1939, and with a gradual improvement in the rate of juvenile employment, the Board's attention in the years preceding the outbreak of war turned

\textsuperscript{77} 'Raising of school age. Some points for discussion', E.H. Pelham, 6 Mar. 1935, P.R.O. ED 24/1557.

to technical education. In 1935 Board inspectors had carried out a thorough survey of the existing provision for technical instruction, and found that many areas either needed new facilities or were handicapped by unsuitable buildings. The government's election manifesto in 1935 subsequently contained a pledge to put technical education 'on a thoroughly sound and up-to-date basis', and in the following year Oliver Stanley announced that a seven year programme of improvement was to be undertaken at a maximum cost of twelve million pounds.\(^7\text{9}\)

This initiative, the first since Percy left office, did not bring any major development in technical training. The possibility of a higher rate of government grant to speed up the building programme was blocked by the cabinet, and less than one hundred projects were sanctioned under the scheme before the war intervened.\(^8\text{0}\)

Despite the calls of Stanley and his National Labour successors to rival Britain's industrial competitors - a theme given added urgency by the approach of war - any improvement of technical training continued to run up against a network of obstacles. In addition to the lack of enthusiasm from employers, the government itself was unable to take a positive approach. In the spring of 1939 the Treasury reiterated its opposition to any increased spending on technical education, which it made clear would have to be balanced by economies elsewhere. The persistence of departmental rivalry was illustrated by the Ministry of Labour's refusal to reopen the idea of permanent national contact between educationists and industrialists, and the Board of Education itself remained unsure of the precise status of technical education.

\(^7\text{9}\). Board of Education, Circular 1444, Administrative programme of educational development, Jan. 1936.

\(^8\text{0}\). Notes by H.B. Wallis, 73 Aug. 1941, P.R.O. ED 136/269.
Following the publication of the Spens Report, Board officials prevaricated over the proposal that junior technical schools should be made an integral part of the secondary system, and finally recommended that they should continue to be administered separately - a reflection on the inability of technical instruction to command either priority or attention in the 1930s.  

V

Conservative ministers between the wars were largely unsuccessful in their attempts to tackle the problems of education for employment. Edward Wood had initially been preoccupied with alleviating the distress caused by juvenile unemployment, and when he returned to the Board in the 1930s he initiated the moves towards a generous system of exemptions to accompany the raising of the school-leaving age. The most ambitious approach to the whole question of relating educational and industrial needs had been provided by Eustace Percy in the 1920s. His aim was to eradicate the inherent distrust of vocational training and bring about 'a profound change in the whole structure and conception of our national system'. This change, which Percy increasingly linked with the need for industrial 'planning', indicated a novel attempt to use education as a means of altering the social structure. Percy was to find, however - like Fisher before him with the continuation schools - that serious difficulties attended his plans.

for reform. Some of these obstacles, such as the reluctance of industrial leaders to become actively involved, fell outside the control of government; but in the political arena also problems arose, especially from the common assumption of ministers and Board officials that specific issues always required self-contained responses. As a result, the inter-war years produced no significant move, in either legislative or administrative terms, towards a school system more closely related to industrial needs. In the area of part-time education, the small number of remaining continuation schools operated on a voluntary basis, and the numbers attending technical colleges and agricultural institutes rose only slowly. For those in full-time schooling, the raising of the leaving age as a remedy for juvenile unemployment was prevented by the outbreak of war, and the only institutions catering directly for vocational needs - the junior technical schools - continued to suffer in competition with the prestigious grammar schools.

One of the obstacles preventing successful ministerial initiatives for much of the inter-war period had been the attitude of the Conservative party as a whole. Unionists had given lukewarm approval to Fisher's continuation school experiment, but this commitment was soon reversed in the face of economic recession. For many party members - especially those professionally involved in industry or commerce - the introduction of directly vocational teaching in the elementary schools remained the primary objective. Eustace Percy's elaborate programme fell on largely deaf ears, and the desire to maintain existing forms of juvenile labour was illustrated as late as 1936 by pressure

for exemptions to an extended school course. There were, however, some indications that by the end of the 1930s Conservative opinion was becoming aware of the case for more fundamental reform. Percy's concern with planning had already been echoed by back-bench advocates of industrial reorganisation and members of the education group; and Conservatives later pressed for a debate on the Spens Report in terms of 'the growing severity of international competition in trade and the consequent need to attract into the service of commerce and industry a sufficient supply of persons of well trained character and brains'. 84 Shortly before the outbreak of war, the Conservative Research Department confirmed the growing desire among party members for a new programme to improve technical education, though uncertainty remained as to how it might be paid for. 85 As in the case of education for the adolescent and religious instruction, the second half of the 1930s therefore witnessed a subtle shift in Conservative Party opinion - in this instance recognising for the first time the necessity for a comprehensive approach to the question of education for employment.

The problems of relating educational and industrial needs highlighted finally the working of education as a political issue between the wars. The inability to promote reform successfully was not exclusive to Conservative ministers. Fisher's plans for continuation schools had not been realised, and Trevelyan never gave the issue of education for employment the same priority as reform of the secondary and elementary schools. In practice, lack of progress resulted not only from the absence of any effective ministerial lead, but also from the perennial problems which faced all governments - the constant

84. 343 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.1757, 15 Feb. 1939.  
intransigence of the Treasury in this case being matched by departmental rivalry between the Board and the Ministry of Labour. Furthermore, political opinion remained uncertain as to the necessary direction of policy. Party controversy had been most acute immediately after the war, though by the 1930s a slow convergence of views was taking place. The remaining Liberals, on the evidence of the Harris bill, were now unable to produce their own initiatives; and Labour continued to focus on the twin themes of raising the leaving age and resisting premature vocational training. Here again were two of the central features of education as a political issue: ministerial policy, despite the efforts of Percy in particular, was uniform in its lack of success; and party views, while agreeing that something should be done, provided no concerted pressure for action. It was not surprising that in the case of the ill-defined problems of education for employment, 'the baby' - as Eustace Percy put it - 'was passed on to Butler'.

86. Percy, op.cit., p.100, referring in particular to the school-leaving age.
CHAPTER 8

EDUCATION AND LOCAL CONSERVATISM BETWEEN THE WARS:

THE MUNICIPAL REFORM PARTY AND THE EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

OF THE LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL.

The local history of English education in the first half of the twentieth century has traditionally been written in terms of institutions and individuals, and little attention has been paid to the complex variety of political, administrative, social and economic forces which combined to shape the system of schools in particular districts or regions.\(^1\) The neglect of the contribution to education made by political initiatives reflects in part the uneven development of local politics during the period: in certain rural areas, for example, the influence of administrators and educationists was clearly paramount in the absence of strong party affiliations.\(^2\) An understanding of Conservative Party education policy between the wars nevertheless requires some consideration of education as a local political issue, and the object of this chapter is to analyse the policies and opinions of Conservatives in the administrative area of the London County Council,

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2. e.g. B. Simon (ed.), Education in Leicestershire, 1540-1940 (Leicester, 1968). The local government situation was further complicated in the inter-war period by the numerous Conservative-Liberal pacts established in, for example, Sheffield and Bristol, to resist the Labour Party - J.A. Ramsden, The age of Balfour and Baldwin, p.258.
the largest local education authority in the country. This examination is intended to provide both a contribution to the history of education in London and a basis for approaching outstanding questions about Conservative policy, such as the motives and assumptions which underpinned the policies pursued by local party members and the nature of the relationship between local and national Conservatism.

The London County Council (L.C.C.) formed the top tier of local government in the capital between the wars: it covered an area of over one hundred square miles and contained some four million inhabitants. The Council's long established tradition of administering municipal services from County Hall along party political lines allows a closer study of local Conservative attitudes than is often possible elsewhere, and also provides - owing to the electoral changes which took place at successive triennial elections - an important opportunity to examine the educational policies of the three major parties at local level. At the end of the First World War the main opposition to the dominant Municipal Reform (Conservative) Party still came from the Progressives (Liberal), but during the 1920s the Progressives were eclipsed throughout the capital by the emergence of the London Labour Party, whose support increased steadily until it was able to claim a majority on the Council for the first time in 1934. In addition, the example of the L.C.C. illustrates the wide variety of local groupings able to influence the direction of education policy. The twenty nine metropolitan boroughs within the administrative county were invested with no executive powers over education, and for the most part policy decisions remained under the control of the Council's

3. See Appendix 1, 'The administrative county of London between the wars'.
4. See Appendix 2, 'L.C.C. election results, 1913-1946'.
Education Committee, whose leading members were carefully chosen by the majority party. The experience of the inter-war years indicates, however, not only significant differences between L.C.C. representatives, but also the influence on education policy at particular moments made by the other bodies which constituted London Conservatism: the local constituency associations, the group of London M.P.s, and the powerful London Municipal Society.

The difficulties of attempting to assess Conservative Party policy locally from a single case-study are certainly compounded by the unique nature of the L.C.C. The scope of educational provision and the clearly defined system of party politics in particular highlight the caution necessary in treating London as an indicator of trends elsewhere. To this general reservation must be added the limitations of the following account, which concentrates on the development of policy towards secondary and elementary schools rather than on the complete range of the Council's educational activities. Within this framework the role of Conservative members and supporters provides the main focus: this in turn does not allow full weight to be given to the overlapping network of individuals and ideas that helped to shape the school system between the wars. The administrative guidance of the Chief Education Officer and his staff, for example, and the crucial role of social and economic factors such as demographic change in determining educational provision, are both considered primarily

5. See Appendix 3, 'Chairmen and vice-chairmen of the L.C.C. Education Committee, 1918-1944'.
in terms of how they impinged on the politics of London education. At the same time these limitations do not detract from the value of concentrating on Municipal Reform policy towards secondary and elementary schools. Municipal Reformers dominated London politics for much of the inter-war period and occupied a central position in educational policy-making; and the problem of the nature and extent of provision to be made for adolescents in secondary and elementary schools formed the major theme of educational debate in the capital.

Before the First World War the pattern of London education had become firmly established, partly under the direction of Municipal Reformers in power continuously at County Hall after 1907. Under the terms of the 1902 Education Act the Council had established a number of municipal secondary schools. These were primarily fee-paying, although in accordance with government regulations a proportion of places were provided free of charge to pupils from the public elementary schools. The majority of children, however, were educated between the ages of five and thirteen in the voluntary or the council provided elementary schools, which were characterised in London by their exceptional numbers and by the generous treatment accorded to the denominational managers of the non-provided schools. The features which most distinguished the L.C.C. from other education authorities before the war were the provision of advanced instruction for the

older and more capable elementary pupils, notably in the central schools first established in 1910; and the extent of the provision made for technical and vocational education, primarily in part-time evening institutes but also in a small number of pioneering, full-time junior technical schools. These schools focused increasing attention on the problem of education for the adolescent, an issue which forms the main connecting theme for the three chronological periods into which education in London between the wars divides: the immediate post-war years, the period of Municipal Reform domination between 1922 and 1934, and the years of Labour Party control before the outbreak of the Second World War.

II

In 1915 the Progressive opposition in London had agreed to co-operate with the ruling Municipal Reform Party in the transaction of council business, with the result that an informal L.C.C. coalition emerged to mirror the agreement between the Liberal government and the Unionist Party nationally during the war. At the first post-war election of March 1919, the two major parties combined to concentrate their rhetoric on the 'pacifist' and 'extremist' London Labour Party, and an element of co-operation between Municipal Reformers and Progressives remained through to the triennial election of 1922. The numerical strength of Municipal Reform members nevertheless allowed the party to exercise ultimate control over council policy. This was reflected in the party's monopolisation of leading appointments

9. Ibid., pp.400-4.
on the Education Committee, a body of fifty members traditionally dominated - according to the Chief Education Officer - by about twelve prominent individuals.\(^\text{11}\) As a result effective control of education policy in London in the immediate post-war years rested with a small number of Municipal Reform representatives, the most prominent of whom was Cyril Cobb, chairman of the Education Committee until 1921 and a leading figure in the London Unionist movement.\(^\text{12}\) The two main issues which concerned Cobb and his associates during these years both stemmed from the passage of the government's Education Act in 1918 - the so-called London scheme of 1920 resulted from the requirement that local authorities submit programmes of educational development for their areas; and the introduction of day continuation schools in the capital reflected an attempt to act upon a crucial section of the government's legislation.

In early 1917 the L.C.C. Education Committee had outlined various reforms in education which anticipated the government's proposals for post-war reconstruction, and in October Cyril Cobb wrote to the President of the Board of Education, H.A.L. Fisher, expressing his committee's strong approval of the educational sections of the new legislation.\(^\text{13}\) The government's main proposals - to remove the limit on the rate which local authorities could levy for higher education, to raise the school-leaving age to fourteen, provide for advanced elementary instruction and to introduce continuation schools - had become widely acceptable before the war. The Committee did, however,

\(^\text{11}\) Thoms, op.cit., p.6.
\(^\text{12}\) See Appendix 5, 'Biographical details of Municipal Reformers'.
have reservations about other aspects of the education bill, notably
the possible extension of central government power to the detriment
of local authorities and the proposed formula for financing elementary
education. The proportion of educational expenditure met from the
rates was traditionally far higher in London than elsewhere in the
country, but after prolonged discussions with Council representatives
during the war this grievance was removed when Fisher eventually
agreed to provide a minimum Exchequer grant of fifty per cent on
all approved spending. After achieving this concession, which proved
the most important financial provision made by the 1918 Act and which
was to have a significant effect on the proportion of rates levied
in London, it was not surprising that Municipal Reformers praised
Fisher's work as a reform of 'great magnitude', recommending that
London M.P.s provide every possible assistance in guiding the measure
through parliament.¹⁴

The warm reception accorded to the 1918 Act indicated that at
the end of the First World War education was not a politically divisive
issue in London. John Scott Lidget, the leader of the Progressive
Party and a long-standing member of the Education Committee, later
recalled that one of the benefits of the informal coalition on the
L.C.C. was to secure 'practically unanimous agreement, for the time
being, with Mr. Fisher's education policy'.¹⁵ This bipartisan approach
was broken down, however, as the Council set about implementing the
new legislation in the following years. The first stage in the erosion
of cross-party agreement resulted from the plan for educational development
within the administrative county, drawn up by the Education Committee

¹⁴ L.C.C., Education Committee, Minutes, 23 Jan. 1918, p.5.
under the terms of the Act and published in July 1920 as the 'London Scheme'. This lengthy document was largely drafted by the Education Officer, Sir Robert Blair, and reflected many of his concerns; although it required political endorsement for effectiveness and represented an important statement of Municipal Reform policy. For the statutory category of higher education, the main suggestions of the London Scheme were to proceed cautiously with an expansion of secondary school places; to extend the Council's system of scholarships and free places, bringing it in line with the Board of Education's policy that no young person be debarred from the education of which they were 'capable of profiting' through inability to pay fees; and to remedy the shortages in technical education caused by the war. In the area of elementary education, it was proposed to revive the pre-war policy of reducing the maximum size of classes, known as the '40/48' scheme; to improve the teaching and curriculum of the upper standards of elementary schools; and to double the existing provision of fifty central schools. The issue of continuation schools had already been the subject of a separate report. 16

The London Scheme was soon to be suspended temporarily in the face of economic recession, but it did illustrate many of the assumptions which underpinned Municipal Reform policy at the beginning of the 1920s. In essence the plan sought to maintain, on a more generous level, the basic features of London's pre-war education structure. The secondary schools were defended as selective institutions preparing for higher education and professional training, with fee-paying remaining prominent despite the proposed extension of scholarships;

and in elementary education a clear distinction was made between the need to develop central schools, which were conceived as a preparation for commercial or industrial employment, and the problem of improving general standards for 'the great mass of children 11+ to 14 and over, who are not considered suitable for transfer to secondary and central schools'. The fundamental belief which linked these twin concerns was an adherence to the educational 'ladder' - the idea that the necessary and desirable direction of reform was to extend the opportunities for clever children to receive the highest forms of education, irrespective of background. Hence the L.C.C.'s scholarships were tenable at either secondary or central schools, and Municipal Reformers often referred to the existence of a 'complete educational ladder for those who are in a position to avail themselves of it'. Although the priorities of Municipal Reformers were still shared by many other education authorities, it was not the case - as some Education Committee members claimed - that the London Scheme had no 'party significance'. Scott Lidget for the Progressives said the proposals for the adolescent would be outdated within a decade; and more significantly, Labour Party spokesmen criticised both the nature and extent of the scholarships provided, and the failure to provide a distinctive course of education for all children over eleven. These new party divisions were to be hardened and

19. e.g. Cyril Jackson in The Times, 1 July 1920.
20. Scott Lidget's comments were also made in The Times. L. Haden Guest (ed.), The new education (London, 1920) provides criticism of the Scheme by Labour members of the Education Committee mainly on the grounds of its lack of generosity, especially in improving access to the secondary schools for working-class children (p.55). One essay did go further in calling for a universal system of secondary education, but significantly envisaged that for some pupils such provision would be made in continuation schools (pp.114-5).
clarified in the following two years, as attention turned to the Council's attempt to introduce continuation schools throughout London.

The idea of compulsory part-time education for school leavers who had entered employment was supported in principle by Municipal Reformers before 1914. This support was maintained during the war years as the government moved towards advocacy of a universal system of continuation schools, and the L.C.C. was amongst the first education authorities to act upon the section of the 1918 Act which required attendance for a limited period from all those between the ages of fourteen and sixteen no longer in full-time schooling. On the whole, Municipal Reformers regarded continuation schools as the best method of easing the transition from school to work and tackling the thorny problem of the relationship between education and industry, although behind this agreement individual motives varied considerably. Some Unionists emphasised the importance of vocational training and wanted to emulate the example of continental systems by introducing schools which would contribute to 'national efficiency'; others such as Major Ernest Gray, a teachers' representative who frequently criticised party policy, stressed the virtues of a liberal curriculum and the value of providing some form of contact with the educational system for the majority of children who left the elementary schools at fourteen.\textsuperscript{21} Gray's concern pointed to one of the fundamental reasons behind the support of Municipal Reformers for the educational ladder: in the immediate post-war years the party was as yet unconvinced of the value of a distinct course of full-time schooling for all children.

\textsuperscript{21} Thoms, \textit{op.cit.}, p.43; Ernest Gray, 'Education and economy', \textit{The Nineteenth Century}, 91 (1922), p.946.
after the age of eleven - the needs of both education and industry would be best served by providing full-time higher instruction for the select few in secondary or central schools and part-time higher education for the majority in continuation schools.

The enthusiasm of Education Committee members was ironically being undermined even before the first set of twenty continuation schools were opened in January 1921. The severe downturn in the economy during the previous year had produced renewed calls for economies in public expenditure both nationally and locally, and in London attention quickly turned to the probable cost of establishing new schools. Within Unionist Party circles, there were criticisms from both M.P.s with London constituencies, who called for the abandonment of the whole scheme as part of a suspension of the 1918 Act; and from the officers of the London Municipal Society, whose complaints about incurring fresh expenditure in the prevailing circumstances received a sympathetic hearing from the Chancellor of the Exchequer in November 1920. An equally ominous note was struck in the following month by Cyril Cobb, who informed the Board of Education that the Municipal Reform majority on the L.C.C. was likely to defeat his desire to proceed with the new schools. Although there would be considerable controversy, Cobb predicted that 'the reactionaries would win and the majority of the Council would be glad to take the opportunity of dropping the schools altogether'. In the short-term the education minister was able to secure reluctant cabinet approval for submitted plans such as

22. e.g. Sir William Davison (M.P. Kensington South) - 136 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.1732, 23 Dec. 1920; The Daily Telegraph, 10 Nov. 1920.
those of London to go ahead, but the opening of the continuation schools further polarised opinion in the capital and set the scene for controversy between influential sections of Unionist support on the one hand, and an alliance of the opposition parties with certain Municipal Reform members of the Education Committee on the other.

During the spring of 1921 the pressure on the Education Committee to take some form of action mounted, especially as the inability of adjacent authorities in Greater London to produce similar continuation schemes led to complaints from parents and employers that children in the L.C.C. area were being unfairly treated. The Committee reacted by producing a report in May which suggested that the London scheme might be modified, and the necessary savings made, by reducing the length of compulsory attendance from two years to one for the present. This suggestion caused sufficient disquiet amongst members such as Ernest Gray, however, that the chairman of the Committee, now H.C. Gooch, agreed that the alternative of saving money by amending the curriculum to include domestic economy and manual training should first be examined, thereby allowing the retention of the full two year course. When the findings of the Education Officer ruled out this option, the Committee returned to its original proposal, but suffered an unprecedented defeat by the margin of one vote owing to the combination of Progressive and Labour forces, the absence of Gooch from the crucial meeting, and the equivocal attitude of the majority party. At this stage the weight of Unionist opinion in London was brought fully to bear on the Education Committee.

25. L.C.C., Education Committee, Minutes, 1 June 1921, pp.373-4.
A week later the executive committee of the London Municipal Society, meeting in private with leaders of the L.C.C., decided that the extension of the continuation schools beyond the age of fifteen should not be allowed until national finances improved; and it was urged that members of the cabinet be approached with a view to securing the necessary government action. In the event such action was not required: the Education Committee responded to this new pressure by pushing through its original resolution, and the curtailment of the continuation scheme was subsequently adopted as official policy after a stormy four hour debate in the full Council.

The divisions within the London Unionist movement over the continuation schools hardened in the following year. The Geddes axe encouraged many M.P.s to call openly for complete suspension, and the leaders of the London Municipal Society succeeded in securing a manifesto commitment at the election of March 1922 to release the capital from its obligation to provide continuation schools until financial stability had returned. When the Municipal Reform Party increased its majority at County Hall, Gooch's successor as chairman of the Education Committee, Cyril Jackson, realised that it would be 'useless for me to propose any form of continuance'. His warning was borne out in May 1922 when the Committee carried a recommendation to close the London schools until the 1918 Act had been more fully applied elsewhere, despite the abstention of prominent Municipal...

27. The Times Educational Supplement, 25 June 1921.
29. C. Jackson to H.A.L. Fisher, 1 May 1922, P.R.O. ED 24/1447.
Reformers such as Gray, Cobb and F.R. Anderton, leader of the Council. An observer at the meeting said 'it was obvious that the resolution was due to party pressure', noting the example of a new member of the Committee who had been impressed by visiting one of the schools but who felt bound by his earlier electoral pledge. A deputation from the Education Committee subsequently visited the Board of Education to inform the minister of the Council's decision, with the result that in the summer of 1922 the majority of London's continuation schools were closed, leaving only a small number of schools run at a minimal cost in co-operation with individual employers.

The episode of the day continuation schools brought out clearly the manner in which education policy locally had to be framed with reference to competing political and economic pressures. The Education Committee, with the full administrative backing of Blair and his officers, had devised and implemented a scheme of continuation, only to find its policy overturned by the power of the party machinery in London. There was of course no simple, clear-cut division in Unionist opinion, and certain members of the Education Committee, for example, made no secret of their dislike for the schools; but there was nevertheless a general distinction between those who administered the education service and considered the interests of the schools first and foremost, and those who were primarily guided by alternative influences. The latter was not confined only to those

31. An important illustration was Mrs. J. Wilton Phipps, who became chairman of the Education Committee in 1923. See the untitled notes on the Committee meeting of May 1921 in G.L.R.O., EO/HFE/1/109.
who put the rates before education, such as the L.C.C.'s finance committee, which was said to exercise 'a control not untinged with Treasury tradition in the thrifty stewardship of public funds'.

It also included those who were conscious of wider considerations: the London Municipal Society in particular, as the co-ordinating body of London Unionism, was concerned both by the stiffening of party opinion nationally and by the growing unpopularity of continuation schools with voters locally. At the Education Committee meeting of May 1922, the main complaints about the schools concerned the absence of a directly vocational curriculum and the inconvenience caused to London parents and employers; only one new member of the Committee based opposition on financial considerations, and the savings actually made from the abandonment of the scheme turned out to be insignificant. The fate of London's continuation schools was thus determined by financial, political and electoral rather than educational considerations.

The closure of the continuation schools set the seal on the period between 1918 and 1922 as one of frustrated hopes for London's education service. The two major planks of the Education Committee's policy - the London Scheme and the continuation schools - had been rendered inoperative, and the need for economy in all areas quickly took precedence. After the initial increase in expenditure generated

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32. The Times Educational Supplement, 6 Jan. 1921.
33. Holmes minute to Davies, 4 May 1922, P.R.O. ED 24/1447; L.C.C., Education Committee, Minutes, 12 July 1922, p.407. The importance of political expediency was indicated, perhaps inadvertently, in an early study of the continuation schools which pointed out that London was still making provision for the 14-18 age group in Unemployment Centres. See L. Brooks, 'The London compulsory day continuation schools', unpublished University of London M.A. thesis, 1923, p.151.
by wartime inflation and Fisher's legislation, there was a large reduction in the education estimates aimed at bringing down the county rate levied for educational purposes. As a result the basic configuration of the L.C.C.'s pre-war structure remained intact in the new circumstances of the 1920s. At the top the authority continued to provide secondary education only for an able minority: despite the dramatically increased demand for secondary schooling during and after the war, the London Scheme was reticent about aiming at the Board of Education's suggested provision of ten places per thousand of the population; and as supply far outstripped demand, London's amended scholarship scheme was no longer able to stand out as one of the most generous in the country. By 1921 Board officials were referring to 'the paucity of Secondary provision' in the capital, and attributing the blame partly on a reluctance to develop or convert the central schools into higher institutions. The central schools, which had themselves been pioneered before 1914 with the object of providing a practically-biased curriculum, were clearly regarded as a vital part of the elementary system after the war; but with the advent of economic recession, the planned extension of the central schools was shelved and the majority of schoolchildren remained where they had been before the war - in the council's all-age elementary schools.

34. See Appendix 6, 'Total expenditure of the L.C.C. on higher and elementary education, 1917-1937', which highlights the reduction in spending after 1921.
35. See Appendix 4, which indicates the fall in the total number of secondary school places between 1921 and 1924.
36. See the deliberations of Board officers at the Assistant Secretaries' committee, 10 Mar. 1921, P.R.O. ED 120/64.
The school structure of the post-war period clearly reflected the priorities of the Municipal Reform Party, which was generally agreed about the necessary direction and intentions of education policy. Apart from the continuation school debates, actual defiance of the party whip by Education Committee members was rare; few were inclined to follow the example of the young Lord Eustace Percy, who on one occasion voted with the opposition parties in an attempt to prevent children from being able to work before school hours.  

The mainspring of the Committee's approach had been to cautiously expand facilities as finances permitted, seeking in particular to implement the 1918 Act as a continuation and development of London's existing system. This legislation had facilitated a dual approach to the problems of the adolescent: to the traditional ladder provided by the secondary and central schools was now to be added the innovation of part-time day continuation for the majority. The continuation school in fact lay at the heart of the whole Municipal Reform strategy for the adolescent, as it highlighted the fundamental underlying concern about the need to link up the hitherto separate worlds of school and work. The Education Committee had thus sought to increase the vocational content of the continuation school curriculum, and the London Municipal Society even inserted a suggestion in the 1922 manifesto calling for the appointment of a Royal Commission to investigate whether the present schools prepared children adequately for their working lives.  

37. L.C.C., Education Committee, Minutes, 10 Dec. 1919, p.904. Percy was a Municipal Reform representative for Holborn for a short period before entering parliament in 1921.  
38. L.M.S., Manifesto of the Municipal Reform Party, Jan. 1922. See also, in addition to the complaints of London M.P.s, constituency views such as L.C.C. Election 1919, Address to the electors (n.d.), St. George's Conservative Association, Westminster City Archives, Ms.1267/7/5. Some Unionist supporters were much more blatant than the Education Committee in pressing for training to be given to 'the children of the industrial and commercial classes in the last two years of their school life' - L.M.S., The Ratepayer (July 1921), p.47.
however, brought out clearly the party differences which had developed by 1922. The Progressives alone remained committed to a full scheme of continuation classes as the first essential of reform, whereas the emerging Labour group had become only lukewarm in support, arguing that the schools should be closed unless a system of maintenance grants was devised for children in attendance. Some Municipal Reformers remained in the meantime fond of the idea of continuation, although in practice the party had abandoned a major plank of its policy and was left to fall back upon advocacy of the educational ladder alone as the best method of securing progress - the adequacy of this policy was to dominate party debates on education in London throughout the following decade, as attention turned increasingly to the nature and extent of post-elementary instruction to be provided for the adolescent.

III

The Municipal Reform Party remained as the dominant force on the London County Council for twelve years after the municipal election of March 1922. During this period the Progressives were rapidly eclipsed as the main opposition at County Hall by the London Labour Party, whose support increased steadily under the leadership of Herbert Morrison until Labour was able to claim a majority of seats in 1934 - thus bringing to an end nearly thirty years of consecutive Conservative rule in the capital. The leading role in determining important statements of Municipal Reform education policy between 1922 and 1934 was once again taken by key individuals on the Education Committee,

notably successive chairmen Harold Webbe, Sir John Gilbert and Captain Edward Cobb. After the experience of the immediate post-war years, these men were careful not to antagonise party feeling and Conservative opinion in London. As a result, the need to control the rate burden became a consistent theme, and in the place of the high ideals of 1918 and the attempt to anticipate national developments such as continuation schools, there emerged a reluctance to adopt new policies being suggested by the Board of Education. This applied in particular to the issues which came to dominate educational debate after the publication of the Hadow Report in 1926: the idea of dividing the elementary schools into junior and senior departments in order to provide post-primary instruction for all children over the age of eleven, and the proposal to raise the compulsory school-leaving age from fourteen to fifteen.

The economy measures associated with the Geddes axe dominated London education for nearly two years after the re-election of the Municipal Reformers in 1922. The chairman of the Education Committee defended the economies as a necessary evil at a time of national emergency and claimed that essential educational facilities were unimpaired, although the opposition parties complained that London had been forced to suffer more than other authorities. In spite of these circumstances, the Committee did return to the planning of future policy during 1923: the particular teaching difficulties of older children in the elementary schools were given consideration,

40. The Times Educational Supplement, 24 Feb. 1923, which also indicates Cyril Jackson's concern - unusual in his party - to raise the school-leaving age to fifteen when finances permitted.
and it was decided that in order to provide greater continuity in policy, a new three year programme should be drawn up to replace the suspended scheme of 1920. The new programme, which was eventually presented to the full Council in 1924, contained many familiar proposals. Higher education was to be developed by building or extending twenty secondary schools, by providing additional scholarships and free places, and by expanding technical training; and in elementary education the main improvements were to result from the resumption of the '40/48' scheme of accommodation, the building of twelve new central schools and the extension of junior county scholarships. 'On the whole', the document concluded, 'it will be seen that there is a close correspondence between the scheme of 1920 and the programme for the three years 1925-28'.

The new programme indicated the extent to which Municipal Reform attitudes towards education remained unchanged in the early 1920s. The upper stages of the elementary schools were to be improved by changes in the curriculum, but beyond this two out of every three adolescents were to be excluded from the benefits of secondary or central school education. This commitment to the 1920 scheme without continuation now begun to arouse criticisms from outside Progressive and Labour circles. The Board of Education became more critical of the L.C.C.'s reluctance to link up secondary and central schools, which it attributed both to the manner in which the various sub-committees of the Education Committee operated independently, and to the survival of the old School Board tradition that 'higher grade' education of the central school type was most beneficial to children.

41. L.C.C., Education Committee, Minutes, 16 July 1924, p.496.
of poor parents. A more radical criticism came from sections of the educational press, who attacked London's inability to follow the lead of other education authorities now working towards a distinct course of education for all children after the age of eleven in a variety of post-elementary schools. This criticism was not, however, taken up by the London Labour Party, now the major opposition at County Hall: the Labour minister C.P. Trevelyan made a point of approving the L.C.C.'s initiative in presenting a programme; and at the Council election of March 1925, Labour's manifesto referred not to post-primary reform but to the concern of 'those impressed by the desirability of carrying out the proposals', that economy measures might once more intervene. In other words education was not the cause of acute party controversy in the aftermath of the Progressive decline, although clear areas of disagreement existed between Municipal Reformers and Labour, most notably over the provision of free secondary education. Blair's successor as Education Officer, George Gater, nevertheless pointed out in 1925 that the new programme was acceptable to all parties on the Council, and that the main differences concerned the speed with which agreed proposals were to be implemented.

The steady implementation of the new three year programme, which began to operate from April 1925, was threatened at the end of the year by the publication of the Board of Education's restrictive

42. E.H. Pelham to Mrs. Phipps, 11 Oct. 1923, P.R.O. ED 97/208; Selby-Bigge to Mr. Chambers, 7 Nov. 1923, ibid.- indicating the Permanent Secretary's concern at the 'very unsatisfactory' central school position.
43. The Times Educational Supplement, 1 Sep. 1923.
Circular, No. 1371. This intrusion of national politics into local affairs threatened a return to the economies of the early 1920s, and posed for London the twin problems of finding immediate savings and the possible abandonment of the cherished percentage grant from the Exchequer. The President of the Board, now the Conservative Lord Eustace Percy, quickly sensed that the circular had been a mistake, however, partly through a consideration of the special circumstances of London: he had been keen to encourage the revival of local authority programmes, and realised that a modification of the L.C.C.'s scheme could have serious political consequences. In return the Municipal Reform majority made clear its attachment to the percentage grant but refused to join with other authorities in condemning the circular, and the Education Committee chairman Harold Webbe later noted that the small reduction made in 1926-27 did not affect progress under the three year programme. As the threat of economies receded, the Committee returned its attention to policy for the adolescent by devising another three year programme to cover the years 1927 to 1930. This move was designed to bring London into line with all other local authorities submitting programmes under the minister's initiative, although the result was an overlap between the existing and proposed schemes. The new programme, which once more followed the proposals of 'the Council's scheme of 1920... and those now in operation under the 1925-28 programme', was formally adopted in

46. Cabinet standing committee on expenditure, 11th meeting, 21 Dec. 1925, P.R.O. CAB 27/303; E. Percy to J.M. Gatti, 9 Dec. 1925, P.R.O. ED 24/1480.
February 1927; the Education Committee had thus reaffirmed its determination to proceed along well established lines, despite the recent findings of the influential Hadow Report.

Municipal Reform members had played a minor role during the early 1920s in the deliberations of the Hadow committee, whose final report recommended post-primary instruction for all children and the raising of the school-leaving age to fifteen within six years. Harold Webbe had served as a member of the committee, and others gave evidence to be considered, notably John Gilbert, acting on this occasion as a spokesman for the Catholic Education Council. After the publication of the Hadow Report, officials and members of the Education Committee combined to produce a statement claiming that L.C.C. policy was in accordance with the Hadow suggestions for post-primary reform, although falling far short of the ultimate ideal. At the same time it was claimed that school life should only be extended at the behest of individual education authorities - a reflection of Webbe's role as one of three members of the Hadow committee to dissociate himself from the idea of raising the school-leaving age nationally.49 This response was strongly criticised by educational associations in the capital, but after a long delay it was ultimately adopted as official Council policy. In November 1927 the Municipal Reform majority, in the face of amendments from the opposition parties on the Education Committee, carried resolutions declaring that it was not desirable at present to alter the existing nomenclature in order to provide primary and post-primary education; that it was

not possible in view of the cost to standardise teachers' salaries and accommodation in proposed modern schools to match that of secondary schools; and that it was not intended to put forward plans for raising the school-leaving age. 50

Municipal Reform policy towards the adolescent therefore remained essentially unchanged throughout the 1920s. At the L.C.C. election of March 1928, the party gave an undertaking to continue extending the ladder provided by the secondary and central schools, but the raising of the leaving age was firmly opposed and there was no mention of reorganising the elementary schools into junior and senior departments - a policy which the Board of Education now officially sanctioned. 51 There were several reasons behind the attitude which Municipal Reformers adopted towards the adolescent, the most important being the continuing strength of the belief that extending the educational ladder alone constituted a sufficient policy. Cyril Cobb, still an active member of the Education Committee, encapsulated this when he said that there was common agreement about every child having the opportunity to go on to higher education at eleven, but not about the need for every child to be transferred to a separate school and compulsorily retained until the age of fifteen. The tradition of supporting the voluntary bodies, which were initially lukewarm about carrying out Hadow reorganisation, and a preference for continuation schools as a better alternative than keeping the

50. Ibid., 2 Nov. 1927, p.610.
51. L.M.S., London County Council Election, Thursday March 8th 1928, Manifesto of the Municipal Reform Party, 24 Jan. 1928, p.6. Since 1925 the L.C.C. had been experimenting with a small number of reorganised elementary schools, but after considering the Board of Education's Circular, No.1397, it agreed only to extend the experiment: L.C.C., Education Committee, Minutes, 20 Mar. 1929, p.165.
majority in school until fifteen, further accounted for the equivocal attitude of the Committee towards post-primary reform.\textsuperscript{52} In addition to these educational considerations, Conservative opinion in London as a whole showed little enthusiasm for a new direction in policy. Many leading party members still held the view that any education beyond fourteen was wasteful, on the grounds that 'the true education of the boy and girl begins when they go out to work'; and a sensitivity to electoral needs was evident in the complaint of one parliamentary candidate that the idea of reorganising schools in his area broke 'the custom of over fifty years, and the parents are protesting'.\textsuperscript{53}

The determination of Municipal Reformers to retain the essence of London's pre-war education caused disquiet at the Board of Education, where the President expressed private concern at the cautious approach to reorganisation; and it acted as an important dividing line between the parties at County Hall. The Labour group had in fact been ambivalent in public about the need for elementary reorganisation, but its commitment to raising the school-leaving age was clear, and came to be reinforced by the actions of the second Labour government in office after 1929.\textsuperscript{54}

The Labour minister Charles Trevelyan returned to the Board of Education with a commitment to raise the leaving age to fifteen by April 1931, although he was quickly made aware that little support would be forthcoming from the majority party on the L.C.C. In July

\textsuperscript{52} See the comments of Cobb and Gilbert in The Schoolmaster and Woman Teacher's Chronicle, 10 Nov. 1927.

\textsuperscript{53} W.C. Towler (Secretary L.M.S.) in L.M.S., London municipal parties and policies, 12 Dec. 1927, p.13; A.W. Goodman (Candidate Bow & Bromley) to Percy, 14 Mar. 1929, P.R.O. ED 97/210.

\textsuperscript{54} For Percy's anxiety, see Pelham to A.V. Symonds, 14 Dec. 1927, P.R.O. ED 16/502.
1929 London stood alone as a 'doubtful quantity' at a conference of local authority representatives, with John Gilbert, now chairman of the Education Committee, arguing that the projected date did not allow time for adequate preparations and reiterating his personal preference for continuation schools. The Committee did, however, during the course of 1929, begin to revise its attitude towards elementary reorganisation as the second major element of post-primary reform. In October 1929 the Council's Chief Inspector produced a report which commented favourably on the experimental senior divisions introduced in the mid-1920s, and under this administrative guidance the idea of wholesale reorganisation became a possibility for the first time; according to one observer, Gilbert's volte face would be important to Catholic opinion and so allow the problem of dividing the voluntary schools to be faced. At the same time the Municipal Reform conversion to Hadow reorganisation was only partial and reluctant; the new three year programme introduced to cover the period 1930 to 1933 contained no specific reference to this issue, promising instead to consider individual proposals for reorganisation on their merits. In the short-term the more flexible attitude towards reorganisation primarily served to provide Municipal Reformers with an additional objection to raising the school-leaving age, since it could now be claimed that the standard of post-primary instruction

55. 'Conference between the President of the Board of Education and representatives of the three associations of local education authorities and of the L.C.C. with reference to the raising of the school leaving age', minute by S.H. Wood, 30 July 1929, G.L.R.O., EO/PS/1/28. See also the later account by Wood (12 Aug. 1930) in P.R.O. ED 24/1138.

56. L.C.C., Education Committee, Minutes, 30 Oct. 1929, p.432; G.G. Williams to Pelham, 8 Nov. 1929, P.R.O. ED 97/210. Williams added that Gilbert's attempt to justify his change of heart was 'a masterpiece'.

had to be raised before any benefit was possible from an extended
course of study.

The withdrawal of Trevelyan's first school attendance bill and
the introduction of a second measure in May 1930 infused into the
debates about post-primary education the question of how far the
voluntary bodies should be given financial assistance for the purposes
of reorganisation and raising the school age. The decline of the
Progressive Party meant that there had been very little controversy
surrounding the church schools during the previous decade: in 1925
one London official thought that the government's recently revised
attitude towards attending church in school hours would provoke 'very
considerable excitement', although in practice it was accepted calmly
by all parties on the Education Committee. The tradition of strong
support for the voluntary schools by Municipal Reformers emerged
clearly in the context of the Committee's revised attitude towards
elementary reorganisation, when at the request of the Bishop of London
an extensive survey of Anglican schools was carried out with a view
to creating junior and senior departments. Similarly in response
to Trevelyan's new bill, the Committee reaffirmed its original position
on the school-leaving age but declared support for the moves aimed
at reaching an agreement about providing additional grants to the
voluntary bodies. This attitude was strengthened by the introduction
of a third school attendance bill in October 1930, which again omitted
any reference to a religious settlement. Municipal Reform leaders

59. Gilbert minute to Gater, 24 May 1930, G.L.R.O., EO/GEN/1/4;
L.C.C., Education Committee, Minutes, 3 June 1930, p.335.
acted quickly to stimulate discussions designed to secure denominational agreement, and after these talks failed it was clear that John Gilbert exercised considerable influence behind the scenes in the passage of the 'Scurr amendment' - an alliance of Conservative and Roman Catholic Labour M.P.s which undermined the government's bill by carrying the motion that the school age could not be raised without prior agreement on extra grants to the church schools.\textsuperscript{60} These twin concerns were made the centrepiece of the Municipal Reform education proposals at the L.C.C. election of March 1931: the party would continue to oppose the raising of the leaving age and would continue to support the voluntary bodies, upon whom it was said the Labour Party were seeking to place heavy burdens.\textsuperscript{61}

The experience of the second Labour government between 1929 and 1931 had both clarified and modified Municipal Reform policy towards the adolescent. The proposed extension of the period of compulsory attendance, to which the government and the London Labour Party attached considerable importance, had been resisted for a variety of reasons. The London Municipal Society believed that such a reform would be highly unpopular electorally, and at one point challenged the legality of the government requesting advance preparations from local authorities in the absence of parliamentary legislation. The likely cost to the ratepayer was a further concern of Conservative opinion as a whole, especially as economic conditions deteriorated

\textsuperscript{60} Gilbert to Cobb, 30 Dec. 1930, G.L.R.O., EO/GEN/1/4. For the influence of Gilbert and the idea of the Scurr amendment as a 'Tory intrigue', see the later comments in the Chuter Ede diary, 7 Dec. 1942, Add. Mss. 59695, p.187.

\textsuperscript{61} L.M.S., London County Council Election, Thursday March 5th 1931, Manifesto of the Municipal Reform Party (Leaflet No.3), 31 Jan. 1931, p.5.
during 1930. The Education Committee had equally raised numerous objections, including a disingenuous claim by Cyril Cobb that finding accommodation for the 'bulge' passing through the schools would be difficult. The primary complaint, however, voiced in a letter signed by all the chairmen of the Education Committee since the war, was that the quality and form of post-primary instruction must come before the length of the school course. The Committee's recent conversion to Hadow reorganisation marked the only major modification in Municipal Reform policy in the 1920s, although party spokesmen had only been reluctantly weaned from their reliance on the value of the educational ladder by the combined influence of administrative guidance and advice from national party figures. In fact neither the new London programme nor the Municipal Reform electoral programme espoused the cause of reorganisation; rather in response to the Labour party's accusation that parents' wishes were being ignored, it was claimed that any reform had been cautious in order not to antagonise parents, school managers and teachers, and that only the government's proposed legislation had required a more forward policy. The implications of this view were that the position of secondary and central schools would remain vital to London education, and that the process of elementary reorganisation in the capital was undertaken in spite of, and not because of, the attitude of the majority party.

62. L.M.S., Minutes of Executive committee, 3 June 1930, Guildhall Library, Ms.19528, Vol.2; The Times Educational Supplement, 12 July 1930.
63. Cyril Cobb - 244 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.1133, 6 Nov. 1930; The Daily Telegraph, 6 Nov. 1930 - the only exception here was Cyril Jackson, who had died in 1924.
64. For the influence of Lord Eustace Percy in particular, see below, p. 268.
The remaining three years of Municipal Reform rule were once more overshadowed by the need for economies in expenditure. The Education Committee approached the task with varying degrees of enthusiasm, with members such as William Ray, a former vice-chairman, declaring insistently that at a time of national crisis even cherished aspects of the London service such as scholarships would have to suffer. The unprecedented reductions imposed by the Committee in line with this attitude aroused widespread criticism, notably over the scrapping of school prizes, although the Council's difficulties had been greatly compounded by the government's decision to withdraw the percentage grant on educational expenditure. This action threw a considerable extra burden on the rates at a time when the Exchequer contribution had been curtailed, and the Committee retained the right to reopen the issue of finance as soon as the national emergency had passed.

In the meantime policy towards the adolescent tended to revolve around economy, especially after the National government introduced means tested 'special places' as a substitute for the traditional 'free places' in secondary schools. The labour movement nationally regarded the Board of Education Circular, No. 1421, as a direct assault upon the principle of access to secondary schooling for children of poor parents, and in the most strongly worded protest of the inter-war period, the Labour opposition in London also denounced this 'reactionary and class policy'. The Education Committee, however, agreed to implement the policy, and Gilbert's successor Edward Cobb defended

the new system as a means of securing reductions without inflicting hardship. 68 The debates over special places nevertheless pushed Municipal Reformers onto the defensive, and the party's defeat in the L.C.C. election of March 1934 was ironically accompanied by the most complacent statement of education policy since the war. The emphasis was placed exclusively on the party's record since 1922 in extending secondary and central schools and in promoting technical instruction: there were no promises of advances to come and no indication of any intention to depart from well-established policies. 69

The Municipal Reform record in the period between 1922 and 1934 had in fact resulted in steady but unspectacular progress for London education. Secondary education remained the weakest element: although there was a gradual increase in the number of school places available, this rise never reached the standard mentioned by the 1920 Scheme and consistently lagged behind the provision made by other authorities. In elementary education there had been continuous development of the central schools, though again without reaching the target set in 1920; as well as recent attention to providing junior and senior departments, which resulted in nearly eighty per cent of the provided schools being reorganised by 1934 - an outcome which compared favourably

with many other areas. The manner in which reorganisation had occurred indicated the variety of forces that combined to shape the school structure, with the Municipal Reformers in this instance playing only a minor role. Thelma Cazalet-Keir, in later recalling her activities as head of the elementary education sub-committee in the later 1920s, referred not to reorganisation but to the difficulty of persuading Gilbert as chairman that the cost of providing toilet paper in the schools must be borne by the authority. Within this context of the recurrent need for economy, the developments of the period did for the most part reflect the wishes of the majority party. The sole emphasis on the educational ladder had now been slightly modified, but the key underlying theme of linking up school and work remained as before - hence the expansion of central schools and the new priority of the 1930 programme on improving access from the elementary school to the university on the technical rather than academic side. In party terms, it was not quite the case - as Gilbert suggested - that Labour amendments in education were always of the 'Oliver Twist variety'. The London Labour Party had clearly expressed its wish for improved access to the secondary schools and

70. See Appendix 7, 'Local education authority provision of secondary and technical education, 1925-1935', which illustrates the manner in which the L.C.C. remained behind in secondary education while continuing its predominance in technical instruction. In March 1934, 78.1% of children in provided elementary schools in London had been reorganised, compared with 62.6% in England and Wales as a whole, 70.9% in all County Boroughs and 47.9% in all County Councils. The corresponding figures for non-provided schools were much lower at under 20%. See L.C.C., Education Committee, Minutes, 15 May 1935, p.216.


72. L.M.S., London education, speech by Gilbert, 17 Nov. 1930, pp.9-10, from which the quote below is also taken. The emphasis on technical studies had remained the central concern of London Conservatism throughout the previous decade: see, for example, Kennington Conservative Association, Executive Council minutes, 19 Feb. 1926, p.93, London School of Economics, Coll. Misc. 463.1.
greater urgency in post-primary reform, or at least in raising the school-leaving age - it remained to be seen whether these preferences would produce any major alterations in the nature and scope of the London education service.

IV

The majority secured by the London Labour Party in 1934 marked a personal triumph for Herbert Morrison, who had dominated the party during the 1920s and who subsequently directed L.C.C. policy in many areas. For the Municipal Reform Party, a further defeat in the municipal election of March 1937 was to have a profound effect, leading to pressure from the party nationally to carry out a wholesale reorganisation of local Conservative forces. In the short-term the party's relegation to the role of opposition in London resulted in many changes in personnel, a process reflected on the Education Committee. Cyril Cobb and H.C. Gooch, for example, were not reappointed, and the death of Sir John Gilbert shortly afterwards in 1934 enhanced the break with the past and left responsibility for Municipal Reform education policy to less well-known councillors such as Eric Hall and W.F. Marchant. The issues which concerned Municipal Reformers in the years before the outbreak of war had generally been raised in the previous decade: the school-leaving age, which was raised to fifteen with exemptions by the re-elected National government in 1936; and the nature and extent of post-primary reform, which

was raised by a further investigation of the Board of Education's Consultative Committee. The aim of this final section is to examine in what ways Municipal Reform attitudes altered in the second half of the 1930s, and to analyse whether the Labour controlled Education Committee initiated any important changes in education for the adolescent in the capital.

Under the leadership of Eveline Lowe, the new Education Committee acted swiftly to reverse the Council's policy towards the school-leaving age. In May 1934 a report was adopted recommending that the government both raise the leaving age to fifteen and provide maintenance allowances where necessary. The Municipal Reform minority similarly adhered to its earlier position, with Marchant moving an unsuccessful amendment suggesting that the Committee concentrate instead on ensuring that maximum educational benefit was being secured from the division into junior and senior schools. This long-standing attitude was modified, however, as the government moved towards advocacy of raising the school-leaving age with exemptions for 'beneficial employment'. Municipal Reformers quickly fell in behind this proposal, with Harold Webbe - now the leader of the party on the L.C.C. - claiming that it was desirable to take up employment where available and that any comprehensive system of maintenance allowances would be only 'the thin end of the wedge'. Despite the Labour Party's hostility to the 1936 Education Act, the L.C.C. was among the first local authorities to hold a regional conference aimed at finding ways of implementing the new legislation; and the Education Committee

75. L.C.C. Education Committee, Minutes, 9 May 1934, p.156.
76. Ibid., 7 Nov. 1934, p.406.
was ready to operate the new system in 1939 when the war intervened. The issue of the school-leaving age thus remained throughout the 1930s an important dividing line between the parties in London: the majority party had consistently sought to extend school life but found itself frustrated by the government; while Municipal Reformers remained lukewarm about the whole issue, although they had for the first time accepted in principle the need to raise the leaving age.

The general nature of post-primary reform also received early attention from the Labour Education Committee, in the first place in the context of the decision to reintroduce the suspended programme procedure. The scheme initiated for the years 1935 to 1938 indicated Labour's greater sense of urgency on this issue: for the secondary schools, it was proposed to increase both the number of places available and the proportion of scholarships; while in the context of elementary reorganisation, the staffing and accommodation of senior elementary schools was to be improved with a view to working towards the Hadow proposal of standards approximating to those of the secondary schools.\textsuperscript{78} In May 1935 a joint sub-committee report took this thinking further by producing a report which suggested that post-primary education should be organised so that all children after the age of eleven attended a single multilateral school rather than proceeding to one of several types of institution.\textsuperscript{79} This proposal would have entailed a radical new direction in policy towards the adolescent in the capital, although at the time the report was not adopted by the Education Committee as a whole - a decision which reflected both the restrictive influence of existing government regulations and a division of opinion.

\textsuperscript{78} L.C.C., Education Committee, Minutes, 30 Jan. 1935, p.17.  
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 29 May 1935, pp.264-5.
among Labour members themselves. As the Education Officer noted in his submission to the Board's Consultative committee, the Labour administration in London had yet to make up its mind about the form of post-primary organisation it favoured when elementary reorganisation was finally completed. In the meantime the Committee's main concern was to proceed more rapidly with the expansion of the pre-existing structure for the adolescent, a theme repeated in a second programme for the years 1938 to 1941 which was suspended following the outbreak of war.

The main objections raised by Municipal Reformers to the Labour programmes concentrated not on the ultimate status of post-primary schools but on the emphasis given to expanding the secondary schools. Both Eric Hall and Harold Webbe took up the theme that Labour policy was too heavily biased towards academic education at the expense of technical and practical instruction, which it was claimed 'is thrust in the background'. This concern about technical studies was reflected in the unsuccessful attempts of the Municipal Reform minority on the Education Committee to move amendments to the first three year programme aimed at increasing trade scholarships at the expense of junior county scholarships. There were other issues which concerned the wider Conservative movement in London in the years after 1934, notably the anxiety about the influence of socialist

ideas in the schools and the alleged anti-patriotism of the Education Committee in discouraging military training in maintained secondary schools.\(^8^3\) For the most part, however, party differences about education for the adolescent centred on the importance to be attached to different forms of post-primary instruction. In these debates, the Labour Party ironically emerged as the principal defender of the traditional grammar school, arguing that Conservatives wanted to restrict opportunities for higher education only to those whose parents could afford to pay fees. In reply, the Municipal Reform Party pledged that it would continue to improve the secondary schools but would also place more emphasis on technical and commercial studies, 'which the Socialists have neglected', on the basis that 'true education is something wider than the imparting of academic knowledge'.\(^8^4\)

The five year period between 1934 and 1939 therefore witnessed subtle changes in Municipal Reform attitudes towards the adolescent, some of which had been taking place over a longer period. In the absence of interference from the party either locally or nationally, members of the Education Committee now embraced a more flexible view of post-primary reform than previously. Edward Cobb, for example, maintained that the statutory distinction between secondary and elementary should be replaced by a division into primary and post-primary, with the latter being available to all children over the age of eleven – an idea which had been directly rejected by Cobb's

\(^8^3\) L.M.S., London education, speech by E. Hall, 13 July 1936, esp. p.8.
namesake after the publication of the Hadow Report. In the place of the educational ladder alone, Municipal Reformers were now coming to advocate a post-primary system in which some children at least would remain until fifteen and in which all would receive a distinct course at eleven plus: the minority in the form of an academic secondary training and the remainder benefiting from vocational (in junior technical schools) or at least practical (central schools or senior departments) instruction. This conception overlapped in certain respects with the policy pursued by the Labour Education Committee after 1934, while differing in tone and emphasis. The Committee, aided by the improvement in the national economy, increased education spending slowly and directed resources in particular to the expansion of London's secondary schools and scholarships. By contrast, the development of central schools was taken no further and elementary reorganisation proceeded gradually, hindered by the problem of bringing in the voluntary schools, despite the terms of the 1936 Act. Herbert Morrison was known to attach little value to education as a vote-winner, and Harold Webbe was able to conclude that the Labour administration had introduced nothing new into London's education service. In education, as has been shown to be the case with the other major domestic problem of the period, housing, changes in L.C.C. policy after 1934 were difficult to make and reflected

just as much responses to a network of constraints as they did deliberate choices. 88

The period between the wars ultimately witnessed only modest improvements in educational provision for the adolescent in the capital. The number of secondary school places and scholarships available had grown steadily, particularly under the Labour administration, but London's rate of progress never equalled the standard set by other education authorities; and despite the constant attention paid to the reorganisation of the elementary schools, the benefits of a senior education were still not available to all children by the outbreak of war in 1939. This outcome was of course due to many forces - local and national, administrative as well as economic - operating to varying degrees of importance at given moments. The primary political responsibility, however, rested with the Municipal Reform Party, which controlled proceedings at County Hall for most of the inter-war period. The leading members of the Education Committee in particular had consciously defended the shape of London's school structure. Their record was aptly summarised by the well-known critic of London government, William Robson, who commented that education and one or two other services in the capital 'are not things to be ashamed of by any means. They could with advantage have been conceived and carried out on a far broader and more comprehensive basis, but that would have contravened the limits of the Municipal Reformers' outlook'. 89

The outlook of local party members in London as a whole had certainly favoured, especially in the 1920s, a high degree of continuity with the school system established before the First World War. The concerns of most Municipal Reformers were clear-cut: the preservation and extension of the educational ladder to the secondary and central schools; defence of religious education; and the encouragement of practical and vocational teaching in order to equip local schoolchildren for their working lives. These priorities do not mean, however, that education as a political issue in London corresponds to a national model of concerted opposition to radical demands. In the first place, the London Labour Party - while bringing greater urgency to office after 1934 - found like its predecessor that various constraints prevented the possibility of rapid change. The Labour group, though divided internally over the scope and direction of reform, was of course in favour of progressive policies to benefit the adolescent, but this should not obscure the related point that Municipal Reform opinion gradually came to embrace certain minimum reforms demanded by Labour. During the late 1930s local spokesmen accepted, for example, that some children would remain in school for longer - an idea hitherto fiercely resisted - and also adopted a more flexible approach to post-primary reform. The London example therefore reinforces the idea that continuities, as much as sharp differences, characterised inter-war education policy; and indicates that local party opinions were gradually converging on the question of improving facilities for the adolescent. In London, as with the Conservative Party nationally, the acceptance of the 1944 Act can only be explained with reference to pre-war policies and attitudes.

The framework adopted in this study, which permits room for an assessment of only one area, cannot of course allow judgements
to be made of Conservative controlled education authorities as a whole between the wars. Any final judgements require further and extensive case-studies, especially as the limited number of surveys already undertaken indicate the scope which existed for variations on the London pattern in accordance with particular circumstances. In Liverpool, for example, religious education continued to be politically divisive throughout the period; whereas in Birmingham local Conservatives endorsed elementary reorganisation prior to the publication of the Hadow Report. It is possible, however, to comment finally on the particular traditions of London and the links which existed between local and national policy. The close connection between locality and centre in the case of the L.C.C. in fact highlighted the complex operation of party policy. In one direction, several Municipal Reformers went on to parliament to serve on the Conservative education group, thus indicating the importance of local government representatives in shaping national opinion. Conversely, policy in London could equally be influenced by national considerations. This was shown first in the abandonment of the capital's continuation schools, and later in the debates about raising the school-leaving age, when one M.P. complained about the number of 'friends and admirers' that Eustace Percy had on the Council. For much of the time, of course, London's policy was devised by a few individuals acting in accordance with local considerations, such as the practical need to prepare children for employment. The close links which existed

91. P. Harris - 239 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.1557, 29 May 1930.
were nevertheless important in explaining the similarities between Municipal Reform and national party attitudes - in defending the concept of the educational ladder, resisting the compulsory extension of school life, and only slowly becoming more flexible about post-primary reform. In their unexceptional administration of the London education authority, Municipal Reformers mirrored many of the aspirations and limitations of Conservative Party education policy between the wars.
Appendix 1

The administrative county of London between the wars

Appendix 2

L.C.C. election results, 1913-1946

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Number of Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Municipal Reform party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: K. Young, Local politics and the rise of party (Leicester, 1975), p.223.

Appendix 3

Chairmen and vice-chairmen of the L.C.C. Education Committee, 1918-1944

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Chairman</th>
<th>Vice-Chairman</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1918-1921</td>
<td>Sir Cyril Cobb (M.R.)</td>
<td>Mr. H.W. Liversidge (M.R.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921-1922</td>
<td>Mr. H.C. Gooch (M.R.)</td>
<td>Viscount Hill (M.R.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922-1923</td>
<td>Sir Cyril Jackson (M.R.)</td>
<td>Sir John Gilbert (M.R.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923-1926</td>
<td>Mrs. Wilton Phipps (M.R.)</td>
<td>Mrs. Wilton Phipps (M.R.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926-1928</td>
<td>Mr. W.H. Webbe (M.R.)</td>
<td>Mr. William Ray (M.R.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928-1932</td>
<td>Sir John Gilbert (M.R.)</td>
<td>Mr. W.H. Webbe (M.R.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932-1934</td>
<td>Captain E.C. Cobb (M.R.)</td>
<td>Mr. Harold Swann (M.R.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934-1937</td>
<td>Mrs. Eveline Lowe (Lab)</td>
<td>Mr. Harold Swann (M.R.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937-1944</td>
<td>Mr. Charles Robertson (Lab)</td>
<td>Captain E.C. Cobb (M.R.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mr. W.F. Marchant (M.R.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mr. Charles Robertson (Lab)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mr. T.H. Jones (Lab)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: L.C.C., Education Committee, Minutes of Proceedings.
Appendix 4

L.C.C. schools and pupils in attendance, 1918-1939

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Number of Elementary Schools</th>
<th>No. of Secondary Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Central</td>
<td>Provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>531</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>No. of Elementary School Pupils*</th>
<th>No. of Secondary Pupils</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Central</td>
<td>Provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>479,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>479,842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>471,921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>21,409</td>
<td>433,946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>24,370</td>
<td>400,777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>26,870</td>
<td>374,493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>27,779</td>
<td>318,423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>26,911</td>
<td>266,538</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Based on average attendance.

N.B. Figures for Central Schools unavailable 1918-24; number of elementary pupils for these years do not tally with total because small number of other schools not maintained by the Council are excluded.

Appendix 5

Biographical details of Municipal Reformers

Cyril Cobb (1861-1938) Educ: Newton Abbott College and Merton College, Oxford; Barrister-at-Law; Chairman L.C.C. 1913-14; Conservative M.P. Fulham West 1918-29 and 1930-38.

Edward Cobb (1891-1957) Educ: St. Paul's School and R.M.C., Sandhurst; military service First World War, cr. Captain 1915; Member L.C.C. 1925-34; Conservative M.P. Preston 1936-45; Parliamentary Private Secretary to Under-Secretary of State for Air 1938-39, to President of Board of Trade 1939-40, to Secretary of State for India 1940-41.

John Gilbert (1871-1934) Educ: St. Joseph's College, Clapham; assistant master London secondary schools 1892-96; Vice-Chairman L.C.C. 1917-18; Chairman L.C.C. 1920-21; Chairman General Purposes Committee L.C.C. 1921-27; Chairman Catholic Education Council 1920-27; Secretary Catholic Education Council 1927-34; contested seat of London University (Conservative) 1929; member Burnham Committee 1931-34.

Henry Gooch (1871-1959) Educ: Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge; called to the Bar 1894; member of London School Board 1897-1904; Conservative M.P. Peckham 1908-10; member L.C.C. 1907-10 and 1914-34; Vice-Chairman L.C.C. 1922-23; Chairman L.C.C. 1923-24; member General Nursing Council.

Ernest Gray (1857-1932) Educ: St. John's Training College; master of public elementary schools; member Board of Education Consultative Committee 1900-08; member L.C.C. 1907-25; Vice-Chairman L.C.C. 1915; Conservative M.P. Brixton 1918-22; President and Secretary National Union of Teachers.

Cyril Jackson (1863-1924) Educ: Charterhouse and New College, Oxford; Barrister, Inner Temple; member London School Board; Head of Education Department, West Australia 1896-1903; Chief Inspector, Board of Education 1903-06; member L.C.C. 1907-23; Chairman L.C.C. 1916; Governor of Imperial College, London.

Thelma Cazalet-Keir (1899- ) Member L.C.C. 1925-31; Conservative M.P. Islington East 1931-45; P.P.S. to the Parliamentary Secretary at the Board of Education 1937-40; Chairman London Area Women's Advisory Committee 1943-46; Parliamentary Secretary at the Ministry of Education 1945.

William Ray (1876-1937) Educ: St. Thomas' School, Lancaster; military service First World War; member L.C.C. 1913-34; Conservative M.P. Richmond 1932-37; Chairman British Electrical Development Association 1933-36; leader Municipal Reform party 1925-34.


Appendix 6

Total expenditure of the L.C.C. on higher and elementary education, 1917-1937

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Expenditure (£)</th>
<th>Miscellaneous Income</th>
<th>Exchequer Grants</th>
<th>Charge on Rates</th>
<th>Equivalent Rate in £</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1917-18</td>
<td>6,678,824</td>
<td>142,576</td>
<td>2,528,351</td>
<td>4,007,897</td>
<td>21.821d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918-19</td>
<td>7,823,547</td>
<td>163,067</td>
<td>2,840,567</td>
<td>4,819,913</td>
<td>25.408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919-20</td>
<td>9,712,510</td>
<td>276,280</td>
<td>4,692,270</td>
<td>4,743,960</td>
<td>24.972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920-21</td>
<td>13,780,981</td>
<td>233,217</td>
<td>6,721,209</td>
<td>6,826,555</td>
<td>35.912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922-23</td>
<td>12,824,809</td>
<td>331,876</td>
<td>6,181,610</td>
<td>6,311,323</td>
<td>31.088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924-25</td>
<td>12,192,541</td>
<td>370,276</td>
<td>5,767,227</td>
<td>6,055,038</td>
<td>29.210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925-26</td>
<td>12,564,257</td>
<td>385,784</td>
<td>5,925,631</td>
<td>6,252,842</td>
<td>29.759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926-27</td>
<td>12,269,868</td>
<td>409,490</td>
<td>5,737,136</td>
<td>6,123,242</td>
<td>26.305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927-28</td>
<td>12,450,154</td>
<td>482,898</td>
<td>5,835,712</td>
<td>6,131,544</td>
<td>26.341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928-29</td>
<td>12,888,851</td>
<td>452,333</td>
<td>6,065,549</td>
<td>6,370,969</td>
<td>26.947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929-30</td>
<td>12,971,461</td>
<td>465,103</td>
<td>6,093,864</td>
<td>6,412,494</td>
<td>26.784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930-31</td>
<td>13,185,494</td>
<td>461,542</td>
<td>6,224,441</td>
<td>6,409,511</td>
<td>28.539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931-32</td>
<td>12,617,310</td>
<td>485,126</td>
<td>5,359,639</td>
<td>6,792,545</td>
<td>27.475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933-34</td>
<td>11,922,251</td>
<td>454,290</td>
<td>4,273,679</td>
<td>7,194,282</td>
<td>28.716</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934-35</td>
<td>12,241,541</td>
<td>450,999</td>
<td>4,499,811</td>
<td>7,293,731</td>
<td>28.796</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935-36</td>
<td>12,879,344</td>
<td>463,020</td>
<td>4,848,187</td>
<td>7,568,137</td>
<td>29.615</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936-37</td>
<td>13,099,268</td>
<td>481,368</td>
<td>5,089,665</td>
<td>7,528,235</td>
<td>30.052</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Appendix 7

Local education authority provision of secondary and technical education, 1925-1935

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Secondary Education</th>
<th>Technical Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Places per thousand of the population</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Other Counties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHAPTER 9


The shape of the state education system was significantly transformed during the Second World War. The effects of war stimulated widespread discussion of educational issues, and in 1944 the coalition government introduced legislation which reformed many aspects of the inter-war education service. The old statutory division between secondary and elementary schools was finally abandoned, and in future all children were to receive a connected course of first primary and then secondary education, which was usually to be provided in grammar, technical or modern schools. Fees for this compulsory secondary training were abolished, except in a limited number of 'direct-grant' grammar schools; and the school-leaving age was raised to fifteen, with a further extension to sixteen planned when circumstances permitted. In the newly defined area of further education, the 1944 Act improved the provision made for technical instruction and revived the continuation school idea, stipulating that all young people no longer in full-time education were to attend County Colleges until the age of eighteen.

The Act also succeeded where previous attempts had failed in reaching a settlement to the problems of the dual system. The church schools were now to be integrated into the national system by giving them the option of choosing between 'controlled status', which relieved the owners of all financial obligations but vested control over the appointment of teachers in the local authority.
and confined denominational instruction to not more than two periods per week; or - with the Roman Catholics in mind - 'aided status', which offered financial assistance for half the capital cost of adapting or building schools where managers retained the power of appointing teachers and providing denominational teaching. The wide-ranging nature of this reform - which also reorganised both the central and local administration of education - thus marked the first major legislative change for over twenty years, and laid the foundations of the modern school system in England and Wales.

The 1944 Act has been discussed in two main contexts by historians. The first concerns the origins of the legislation traditionally associated with the Conservative minister, R.A. Butler. The idea that the success of the measure owed much to the personal qualities of the President was emphasised by early biographers of Butler and by historians of education such as Nigel Middleton, who concluded that the education bill clearly reflected the personal ideas of its sponsor and architect. In recent years, however, this emphasis on the 'Butler Act' has been challenged and turned on its head. Paul Addison, for example, in his study of wartime politics, has claimed that the President himself acknowledged the influence of senior Board officials in originating the plans for which he later took credit; and a more vigorous assault on the traditional notion of the Butler Act has been made by R.G. Wallace, who claims that the leading civil servants who devised the so-called

Green Book were in fact the 'principal authors' of the education bill. The second context in which the 1944 Act can be considered concerns the relationship between war and social reform. Historians of education have generally fought shy of this question, preferring instead to concentrate on the Act purely in terms of its educational importance as a triumph for progressive reform. Peter Gosden's study of wartime education does, however, provide some guidance in this respect, concluding that the experience of war produced a new public awareness of the importance of education, so stimulating the official action which resulted in legislation.

These existing debates will inevitably be raised by any examination of the background to the 1944 Act, but they do not provide the main focus of attention in the following account. Similarly, the framework adopted here does not permit a detailed discussion of the wide-ranging debates on education which took place in various quarters after 1939, or of the diverse aspects of policy raised by a string of official reports during the war years. These issues are instead considered only where they impinge upon the central theme of this chapter - the Conservative Party's role in educational reform. By examining the involvement of ministers and party members in the movement for reform, it becomes possible to make judgements not only about

4. P.H.J.H. Gosden, Education in the Second World War, pp.431-3. See also K. Jefferys, 'R.A. Butler, the Board of Education and the 1944 Education Act', History (forthcoming), which attempts to link these debates by modifying the emphasis on civil service influence - without reverting to the idea of the 'Butler Act' - and by indicating the ambiguous nature of educational reform within the context of wartime social policy.
Conservative education policy after 1939, but also between the wars. The party's approach during the Second World War must be considered within a wider context: the extent to which policy derived or departed from attitudes already expressed in the inter-war years. The aim of the following account is therefore to examine the significance of the 1944 Act for the major concerns emphasised throughout this study: the nature of Conservative ministerial policy and party opinion; the implications of education policy for the working of the Conservative Party; and the operation of education as a political issue. The chronology of events which led to reform during the war, from the Board's Green Book through to the publication of a White Paper in 1943 and the subsequent passage of the education bill, has been well documented elsewhere; and so provides only a background for the two main issues raised here - the Conservative Party's responsibility for, and reaction to, the 1944 Education Act.

II

The impact of war led to widespread public and private discussion about the need for educational reform. At the Board of Education several senior officials began to formulate their ideas on the desirable direction of post-war policy, and by the summer of 1941 the views of these officials had been summarised in a document known as the Green Book. This called for many reforms popularised between the wars - the creation of a new code of regulations governing secondary education, the raising of the school-leaving age to fifteen, and the revival of continuation schools. Although the Green Book achieved

5. Board of Education, Education after the war (London, 1941), chs. 1 and 2.
considerable publicity and many of its ideas were eventually embodied in the education bill, it does not follow - as R.G. Wallace claims - that 'Rab' Butler, who only arrived at the Board shortly afterwards, was 'too late to influence the main points of the Act which now bears his name'. 6 This can be demonstrated by looking at the circumstances in which Butler was appointed to office, and by concentrating in this first part of the chapter on the role of Conservative ministers in promoting reform.

In order to become anything more than a collection of ideas, the Green Book required at the outset some form of ministerial endorsement. This in fact had been provided by Herwald Ramsbotham, the Conservative minister serving at the Board since the creation of the Churchill coalition in May 1940. Ramsbotham had looked forward to the remodelling of the education system when serving as a junior minister in the 1930s, and it was not surprising that he now supported the Green Book as a suitable basis for action at the end of the war. 7 An unrecognised feature of this period, however, was that Ramsbotham's public support for the Green Book provided the main cause of his removal from office in July 1941. The Prime Minister had made it clear that he would not consider controversial measures which might threaten the continuance of coalition between the Conservative and Labour parties; and with prompting from some of his associates, Churchill was soon persuaded that the education minister posed a danger. As his successor was later to observe, under the circumstances

7. For Ramsbotham's earlier views, see above, pp. 123-4. On the war period, see Ramsbotham to Lang, 18 Feb. 1941, Lang papers, vol.33, f.227; and The Times, 17 Mar. 1941.
of war Ramsbotham had managed to publicise ideas for which he would have been severely rebuked by senior Conservatives in peacetime. The implications of this incident were clear: with the removal of a minister committed to the Green Book, there was little prospect in the summer of 1941 that reform of any sort would reach the statute book. In order to account fully for Conservative involvement in educational reform, it is necessary to concentrate on events which followed, rather than preceded, Butler's appointment to the Board.

The government changes of July 1941 were accompanied by some press speculation that Churchill was seeking to disperse those ministers identified with 'appeasement', and that Butler had been neutralised by being sent to the 'dumping ground' at the Board of Education. A more plausible explanation was simply that on his past record - as a conscientious junior minister at the India and Foreign Offices - Butler was more likely than his predecessor to stick to the Prime Minister's instruction about concentrating on evacuation. It was thus ironic that the subsequent progress of educational reform should owe so much to the character and style of the new President. In 1940 Butler had already taken on the chairmanship of the Conservative Party's committee on post-war problems - an indication that he understood the domestic consequences of the war much more clearly.

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8. Chuter Ede diary, 21 July and 8 Aug.1941, Add. Mss. 59690, p.6 and p.28. Butler added that "whispers of displeasure at Ramsbotham's advanced ideas" had been conveyed to him.
9. Lord Butler, The art of the possible (London, 1971), p.90: "You will move poor children from here to here", and he lifted up and evacuated imaginary children from one side of his blotting pad to the other; "this will be very difficult". It was also felt later at the Board that Butler may have been moved because he did not get on with his political chief at the Foreign Office, Anthony Eden. See Ede diary, 12 Jan. 1942, Add. Mss. 59692, p.30.
than many of his colleagues. He believed that if the party was to accommodate itself to the wartime shift in popular opinion, a more positive approach to social issues such as education was required. Before being offered the post at the Board, Butler had indicated his interest in education and was aware that it posed an important area of possible reform in the near future. As a result, he was keen to accept the Prime Minister's offer, and at his first meeting with the Labour Parliamentary Secretary at the Board, James Chuter Ede, dwelled on the idea that the war provided a unique opportunity for improving the educational system. This attitude highlights the importance of examining proceedings at the Board after July 1941. Without the minister's determination, there would have been little prospect of reform, but his willingness to act in itself provided only a starting point from which to tackle the first obvious obstacle - that of determining the shape of possible legislation.

The Board adopted a dual procedure during 1942 in order to determine the necessary scope of reform. Externally a long series of negotiations were held with the various pressure groups interested in education, and internally these discussions were used as the basis upon which ministers and civil servants jointly formulated policy. The combination of ministerial and official influence in reaching decisions after July 1941 can be illustrated by the main items ultimately

10. J.A. Ramsden, The making of Conservative Party policy, pp.97-8; Note by R.A. Butler, 8 May 1941, Butler papers, Trinity College, Cambridge, G13, f.4: '..I thought India and education were the two problems most needing solution'.
12. At a later stage when internal discussions reached a controversial stage, Butler was to tell Board officers that it would be necessary to 'stick to the main items which we have defined together' - Butler minute to M. Holmes, 3 Feb. 1943, P.R.O. ED 136/378.
incorporated in the government's bill. The most serious problem
confronting the President, which was to dominate discussion for at
least eighteen months, was that of securing agreement over the position
of the church schools. The proposals of the Green Book for reform
of the dual system were quickly abandoned, as Nonconformists proved
irreconcilable to the implied perpetuation of dual control. In the
spring of 1942 the Board put forward an alternative scheme, known
as the White Memorandum, which was rejected in turn by Anglicans
on the grounds that it required the compulsory transfer of their
schools to local authority control. By the end of the year, however,
a plan for controlled or aided status had been devised which was
broadly acceptable to Anglicans and Nonconformists, although Roman
Catholics remained hostile. This plan was not primarily the
responsibility of Board officials. The Permanent Secretary, Maurice
Holmes, had become so frustrated that he urged Butler to end the
dual system altogether - a suggestion unlikely to appeal to a Conservative
minister with Anglican sympathies.\(^{13}\) The lead in discussions with
the voluntary bodies had in fact been taken by Chuter Ede, who drew
up the White Memorandum and urged the President to make the Anglican
managers face up to their failure as a building body.\(^{14}\) In the
reconciliation of denominational differences, Ede played a more prominent
role than he has been credited with.

\(^{13}\) M.A. Cruickshank, Church and state in English education, chs.9
and 10; 'The dual system', note by the Permanent Secretary, n.d.
(Feb. 1942), P.R.O. ED 136/219.

\(^{14}\) It was Ede who pointed out that less than two hundred of the
Church's nine thousand elementary schools had been built after
1905. These figures clearly impressed Butler, who took the credit
for placing them in front of an Anglican deputation in June 1942.
Butler later conceded that this was perhaps the vital moment
in shifting the Church of England towards an acceptance of a
compromise solution. See Ede diary, 29 May 1942, Add. Mss. 59693,
p.49; and Butler, op.cit., p.102.
The achievement of a workable compromise on the religious issue has of course been regarded as one of Butler's major contributions to the 1944 Act, an impression enhanced by his own later writings. In 1942, however, the President was less confident of achieving a settlement than his recollections suggest. He questioned at one point whether the whole issue could not be bypassed altogether, and his willingness to sanction any scheme which promised success was illustrated by his support for both the Green Book and the White Memorandum, despite the latter being coolly received by Anglicans. Butler's frustration at the lack of progress also vented itself in private criticism of those involved in the negotiations, such as Archbishop Lang, who was said to have 'little religion in him'. Nevertheless, private reservations did not prevent the minister from conducting a skilful and conciliatory course in public. The negotiations with the Church improved after William Temple succeeded Lang as Archbishop of Canterbury, and Butler subsequently made painstaking efforts to reconcile Anglo-Catholics still opposed to the government's plan. He also refused to be provoked by the continued intransigence of Catholics, even when they appeared to regard him - as in one case - as a 'forthcoming ox who was about to be laid upon the faggots'. The President's ability to reconcile divergent viewpoints, which was consciously based on his experience of the India bill in the

1930s, ultimately confirms his important role and responsibility for achieving a settlement which eluded his inter-war predecessors. In a wider context, the religious issue provides an obvious example of decisions about the scope of legislation being taken after July 1941, with ministers rather than civil servants in this instance taking the initiative in the formation of policy.

A similar pattern was evident in the sections of the Board's proposals relating to compulsory full-time schooling. R.G. Wallace has claimed that the main ideas in this respect all derived from the Green Book, and were successfully defended by Board officials in spite of 'considerable doubts on Butler's part'.\(^\text{19}\) It was the case that Butler, shortly after his arrival at the Board, had watered down a speech by Ede commenting favourably on the Green Book proposals; and himself refused to make a public commitment to a remodelled secondary system until the spring of 1942. This reticence stemmed, however, from the President's awareness that he would have to tread carefully if he was not to suffer the same fate as Ramsbotham. Hence his public references to reform post-dated both a degree of support from government colleagues and a special series of meeting with Board officers in 1942 on the scope of any legislation. At these meetings Butler, far from having considerable doubts, expressed himself as in agreement with the broad line of advance favoured by officials and embodied in the Green Book. He regarded a school-leaving age of sixteen as desirable but impracticable in the short-term, and although he had some sympathy for the multilateral school, this was only as an addition - not an alternative - to the 'tripartite' 

\(^{19}\) Wallace, op.cit., p.286.
structure of secondary schools advocated by officials. The real need, he maintained, was to aim for 'social equality in the secondary schools of various types'. 20 The President's only major doubts were about the retention of fees in direct-grant grammar schools. His views on this remained open until a late stage, and at one point he appeared to be close to endorsing the desire of a special report from the Fleming Committee in favour of abolishing fees altogether. 21 The final decision to retain fees in certain schools was reached, moreover, not in accordance with departmental views, but as a result of pressure from Butler's Conservative colleagues 22 - an indication that if the Board's ideas on reform were to proceed any further, they would have to command an acceptable level of political support.

The problem of translating ideas into legislative reality had of course required simultaneous attention to political obstacles from the outset. The most celebrated difficulty with his government colleagues, which Butler himself later emphasised, was that of overcoming the Prime Minister's hostility to controversial reform while the war was in progress. The importance of this obstacle has arguably been exaggerated, however, especially in claims that the President was taking a 'political risk' in defying Churchill's famous injunction

20. Ede diary, 10 Dec. 1941, Add. Mss. 59691, p.94. See also Butler to H.G. Wells, 2 July 1942, P.R.O. ED 136/215: the real need was not for the 'common school', but to 'hasten the day when the four types of secondary schooling will be equal in quality, though different in character'.
of September 1941. Butler was, after all, keenly aware of the need to proceed cautiously behind the scenes, at least in the short-term when both the political and educational situations remained uncertain. The Prime Minister's attitude also became of less importance as the war situation improved, although Butler realised that he could not approach Churchill again without the prospect of an advance on the religious issue. In November 1942 he noted that Churchill was 'watching us with some amusement, thinking we were squelching about in the mud'; for several days the Prime Minister was reported to be carrying round in his pocket a letter to The Times from the Catholic leader Cardinal Hinsley, attacking the Board's latest plan for a religious settlement. By this time Butler was nevertheless confident that Anglican acceptance of controlled status for the church schools would sway Churchill. He even predicted - before approval for an education bill had been given - that if a religious compromise was possible, Churchill 'would want the thing done - he was like that'. Thereafter the Prime Minister's indifference to education was unlikely to pose a serious obstacle. The President periodically informed Churchill of developments, and was now only concerned that unless the Board kept proceeding, Churchill's 'sinister bodyguard' - Lords Beaverbrook and Cherwell - might take charge of reorganising export trade and so push education 'out of the picture'.

23. Addison, op.cit., p.173; Churchill to Butler, 13 Sep. 1941, cited in Butler, The art of the possible, pp.94-5, where the Prime Minister warns that he would not tolerate the revival of religious or political controversy.
An equally serious difficulty for Butler in 1942 was that of securing support from members of the coalition government as a whole. His major concern here was not with the war cabinet, whose acquiescence seemed certain after the reshuffle of February 1942. The main problems arose rather among the home front ministers, notably at the Lord President's Committee, where the sensitive nature of the religious issue was reflected in the denominational allegiances of individual ministers. In addition, the general sympathy for educational reform shown by Labour ministers was offset for a while by the reluctance of some Conservative ministers; when plans for legislation were discussed in July 1942, sharp divisions along party lines were revealed. These divisions were narrowed during the autumn, however, partly because Anglican members of the government became reconciled to controlled status, and partly as a result of encouragement given by individual ministers. Ernest Bevin in particular intervened at this critical stage. He was, in the words of Chuter Ede, a tough statesman capable of giving the Tories 'a good kick up the pants' when necessary - a tactic which succeeded in December 1942 when the Lord President's Committee gave Butler permission to proceed with the drafting of an education bill. This marked the crucial point in winning support for the principle of educational reform, although opposition from individual ministers continued in the year which elapsed before the

27. Note by Butler, 4 May 1942, P.R.O. ED 136/228.
29. Even at an early stage, some High Churchmen, notably Lord Cranborne, believed that the church schools were "done", especially as the council schools were 'better equipped and had "vita" glass.. which appealed to the parents' - note by Butler, 4 May 1942, P.R.O. ED 136/228. On the influence of Bevin, see R.G. Wallace, 'The man behind Butler', The Times Educational Supplement, 27 Mar. 1981. See also Ede diary, 21 Oct. 1942, Add. Mss. 59695, p.122, and Lord President's Committee, conclusions of meeting, 18 Dec. 1942, P.R.O. CAB 71/10.
introduction of legislation. Herbert Morrison, for example, thought that education would not command public attention, and wanted to see the Beveridge plan for social security made the centrepiece of the government's reform programme.\textsuperscript{30}

The reservations of Morrison indicated the related problem which Butler faced with his government colleagues: that of securing permission to proceed in advance of other schemes of social reform already under consideration. In April 1942 the President had been alarmed to discover that plans for a new system of social insurance were well advanced, and he complained that Beveridge had no right to broadcast his views when they had not been put before any official government committees.\textsuperscript{31} In the following months, however, Butler became more confident that his cautious and thorough approach behind the scenes would pay dividends. In June he noted that 'my only competition appears to be Sir William Beveridge, whose shield is fortunately tarnished by grimy coal and oil stains'.\textsuperscript{32} The President also had the advantage, which he stressed when seeking permission to draft a bill, that the cost of educational reform was likely to be much lower than a comprehensive scheme of social security. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, in a sentiment shared by the influential Lord President of the Council, told Butler that he would rather provide money for education than 'throw it down the sink with Sir William Beveridge'.\textsuperscript{33} This attitude persisted

\textsuperscript{30} Ede's diary confirms Morrison's attachment to the Beveridge proposals, noted in Addison, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.222-3.

\textsuperscript{31} Butler minute to Holmes and R.S. Wood, 11 Apr. 1942, P.R.O. ED 136/351.

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 6 July 1942.

\textsuperscript{33} Note by Butler, 14 Sep. 1942, P.R.O. ED 136/229. A year later he noted that 'John Anderson said to me that he and the Chancellor had decided to back the education proposals, because they were not yet ready for Beveridge' - 'Diary', notes by Butler, 9 Sept. 1943, Butler papers, G15, f.81.
throughout 1943, with the result that no rival schemes were sufficiently advanced to be presented to parliament. The President therefore secured priority and permission to go ahead for a variety of reasons, though overall he thought that his government colleagues had not gone 'very deeply' into the subject. 'They have been prompted to come the way of education', he concluded, 'because it has been very difficult to obtain agreement between the Parties on any matters which involve property or the pocket'. This points to the importance of considering a further crucial element in the background to educational reform, which has been prominent throughout this study - the attitude towards reform of the political parties, especially the Conservative Party.

III

Butler's concern with political opinion focused primarily on finding agreement among the Conservative and Labour forces at Westminster. There was, however, a new element which occupied the minister's attention in the political arena, especially in the early years of the war. This was the Conservative sub-committee on education, one of several bodies set up by Butler himself as chairman of the party's machinery on post-war problems. The work of the sub-committee has already received some attention from historians, but several questions remain outstanding, and the object of the following account is to highlight the sub-committee's purpose and role in educational reform, as well as its place in party thinking towards education.

34. Ibid., f.90; Butler, op.cit., p.117.
35. For the most detailed study of the committee, see D.W. Dean, 'Problems of the Conservative sub-committee on education, 1941-45', Journal of Educational Administration and History, III, 1 (1970), pp.26-35.
The aims of the sub-committee - the only Conservative body established since 1918 specifically to investigate education - were in fact ambiguous from the outset. The chairman of the sub-committee was the publisher Geoffrey Faber, who had recently joined the party in the belief that it was becoming capable of promoting a 'really national programme'. Faber was initially confident that the committee could serve a 'useful' purpose: this would require acting independently of both the party's national machinery and the President, who interfered little in the early proceedings. Butler, however, was clear in his own mind about guiding and controlling the findings of the sub-committee. He was not only instrumental in determining the composition of the group - a mixture of representatives from industry, local government and the parliamentary party - but also laid down the terms of reference and remained confident about intervening when necessary. For the President, the sub-committee's main task was simply to provide publicity which would identify the Conservative Party with the cause of reform.

In this, the committee was to have mixed fortunes, as became evident when its first two reports were published in September 1942.

Faber was personally responsible for the drafting of the first report, Educational aims. This novel attempt to define the purposes of education developed four main themes: that too much emphasis had

36. See Appendix II for biographical details of Faber; Faber to Sir Fred Clarke, 18 Aug. 1942, cited in Dean, op.cit., pp.26-7.
37. Faber to J.G. Barrington-Ward, 23 Jan. 1942, Conservative sub-committee on education papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford, Box I, 'Correspondence with Committee I'.
38. The committee, which usually numbered about fifteen members, included I.J. Pitman of Pitman's Commercial Colleges; Byng Kenrick, former chairman of the Birmingham Education Committee; and M.P.s such as R.H. Morgan and Harold Webbe. For Butler's confidence in his ability to control the sub-committee, see his minute to Holmes, 3 Apr. 1942, Butler papers, H70, f.51.
been placed on individual self-development, and not enough on fostering an understanding of the needs of the state; that religious instruction should be made the basis of any school curriculum; that education should help to revive 'civic morale', which reinforced the idea of the individual acting as part of the community; and that the necessity for training future leaders should never be overlooked. Hartmut Kopsch, in his study of wartime Conservative policy, has placed this forty page document in the context of a dilemma between Tory and Neo-Liberal strands of thinking. It could be argued, however, that the report was essentially a reflection of Faber's social background and personal experience, in particular his family's long association with the Anglican Church and his public school education at Rugby. Educational aims above all sought to apply public school values and traditions to the state system. The report made no mention of the state elementary schools, and its four major themes were all recognised characteristics of private education. Faber had in fact drafted a special section on the public schools, which he only omitted on grounds of length; the assumptions upon which his arguments were based emerged clearly in his references to self-discipline, the training of 'character' and the need to aim at 'the bold qualities of adventurousness, initiative, enjoyment of difficulty and danger, the fighting spirit - in a word, grit'.

41. Faber hoped to publish a separate report supporting the continued independence of public schools from central and local control - see his 'Memorandum on educational aims. Appendix', n.d., Conservative sub-committee papers, Box III. See also Educational aims, pp.32-4.
The reverence shown to the public schools did not, however, attract attention following the publication of the report. Instead, the emphasis on education serving the needs of the state produced some concern about sinister - possibly authoritarian - motives. For the most part, though, political and educational opinion raised few objections to Faber's bland conclusions. From the President's point of view, the sub-committee had provided useful publicity at a time when the Board was seeking to encourage reform. Butler congratulated the chairman on the reception given to his report, and took particular pleasure in noting - with the Prime Minister's attitude still uncertain - that Churchill was pleased by references to the training of the young. Butler was also fortunate in avoiding a remaining area of potential criticism. Faber's determination to defend religious education had prompted him to make certain contentious proposals for the dual system, in particular the suggestion that the Cowper-Temple clause be abolished in order to allow denominational teaching in council schools. This proposal was of course likely to embarrass the minister's negotiations for a religious settlement, especially with the Nonconformists, and attempts had been made behind the scenes to modify this section of the report. Fortunately for Butler, however, the publication of Educational aims was preceded by a hostile statement from the Trades Union Congress. This called for a radical approach to the dual system and the incorporation of all voluntary schools into the state sector, unless they were able to provide their own funds. The President was therefore concerned

42. Butler to Faber, 9 Sep. 1942, ibid., Box I, 'Correspondence with R.A.B. ECI'. For the generally favourable reaction of the Labour party, see Ede diary, 1 and 8 Sep. 1942, Add. Mss. 59695, p.60 and p.71.
43. Educational aims, pp.28-9; Butler to Faber, 11 Apr. 1942, Conservative sub-committee papers, Box I,'Correspondence with R.A.B. ECI'; Trades Union Congress, Memorandum on education after the war (London, 1942).
that some observers were 'nervous of the "churchy" aspects' of Faber's approach, but he remained satisfied that the sub-committee had served a useful purpose. The report would primarily cancel out the claims of the T.U.C., rather than prejudicing a religious settlement.  

Butler's satisfaction with the sub-committee was almost immediately undermined by the reception given to a second report published soon afterwards. This document, A plan for youth, was primarily the responsibility of another committee member, William Oakeshott, a master at St. Paul's school who served at Faber's request, despite not being a party member. Oakeshott argued that pending the introduction of continuation schools, it was necessary to establish a national movement for training all young people between the ages of fourteen and eighteen. This movement was to be supervised by a new body called the 'Federation of Youth', and it was suggested that all adolescents should be required to attend classes at specific times. The storm of criticism which followed, with accusations that a compulsory scheme smacked of fascism, completely overshadowed the reception given to the first report. On the basis of this reaction, the sub-committee has even been depicted as a 'quasi-fascist' group. Faber defended the scheme against 'malicious misrepresentation' by pointing out that the Federation of Youth was only a temporary measure, and by denying any intention of suppressing existing youth movements.

44. Butler to Faber, 9 Sep. 1942, Conservative sub-committee papers, Box I, 'Correspondence with R.A.B. ECI'.
46. N. Middleton and S. Weitzman, A place for everyone, p.262.
47. The Daily Telegraph, 22 Sep. 1942; Faber to Maxwell Garnett, 2 Oct. 1942, Conservative sub-committee papers, Box II, 'Correspondence with outsiders and outside bodies I'.
Although A plan for youth must be treated with caution as an example of Conservative thinking on education, the assumptions behind the plan make it difficult to justify charges of fascism. If anything, Oakeshott was following the example of his predecessor in unconsciously seeking to apply public school values to the state system. His approach was based on the view that youth training could only be tackled by inculcating military values - a subject which the public schools had been considering for some time.\(^48\)

In the short-term, the attacks made on the report in the press and educational circles proved highly embarrassing for the President, especially when Conservative Party supporters of voluntary youth organisations joined in the criticism.\(^49\) Butler was now caught between strongly expressed disapproval of the document on the one hand, and the desire not to discredit a party group for which he was effectively responsible on the other. In order to escape from this dilemma, he refused to accept offers of resignation made in private by Faber and Oakeshott, but made his own views obvious when the issue came before the party's annual conference in October. After stating in his 'judicial' capacity as President that the sub-committee was free to promote its views alongside others, Butler referred warmly to the first report while carefully distancing himself from A plan for youth. The government, he claimed, at present still favoured

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\(^{48}\) Oakeshott to Faber, 18 Feb. 1942, ibid., Box I, 'Correspondence with Committee I'; Dean, op.cit., p.29, who notes that Oakeshott was much influenced by activities at Gordonstoun.

\(^{49}\) e.g. The Observer, 4 Oct. 1942, where an anonymous article signed by 'a Conservative M.P.' stated that the report badly underrated the strength of the view that democracy and the compulsion of youth were incompatible.
compulsory continuation schools and voluntary youth service. With careful management, the conference was unable to pass any resolutions on Oakeshott's controversial scheme, thus leaving the President to wait for the storm to pass.  

50 He was naturally displeased with this sudden public controversy, though not entirely unhappy with the recent course of events. The two reports of the sub-committee had indicated the difficulty of finding common policies to unite Conservative opinion, but they had at least pushed education to the forefront as pressure for the introduction of legislation intensified. As the editor of The Times told Faber, statements of Conservative policy had rarely 'compelled so many in other quarters of politics to put on their thinking caps'.  

51 After the controversy over the first two reports, and with the publication of the government's plan for educational reform, the sub-committee became less prominent during 1943. Faber was largely left to his own devices, and still looked forward to an investigation into the future of the public schools, 'which is so evidently a question in which the Conservative Party is vigorously interested, that we think it impossible for us to ignore it'.  

52 In the meantime, the committee drafted a report on the school-leaving age and continuation classes, but the possibility of this being taken any further was prevented by Faber's absence on a long visit abroad and by the decision

50. For the offers of resignation, see Faber to Butler, 5 Oct. 1942, Butler papers, H70, f.139. On the party conference, see Ede diary, 29 Sep. 1942, Add. Mss. 59695, p.94, where the President was reported to be 'sweating blood' about his speech; and The Times Educational Supplement, 3 Oct. 1942.
51. Barrington-Ward to Faber, 7 Oct. 1942, Conservative sub-committee papers, Box II, 'Letters from Outside Bodies and People II'.
52. Faber to Butler, 28 Jan. 1943, ibid., Box II, 'Correspondence with R.A.B. ECII'.
of the government to go ahead first with a White Paper and then an education bill. Butler's real concern now was that the sub-committee should be seen to support his plans, and in fact the draft report was subsequently rewritten and published under the title *The statutory educational system* in January 1944. This third report approved the main lines of the education bill: the introduction of primary and secondary education for all, the raising of the leaving age, the revival of continuation schools, and even the religious settlement, which came as near to the committee's preferences as 'an accepted compromise could'. The existing accounts of the Conservative sub-committee have depicted this outcome as the product of intervention by Butler and national party leaders. D.W. Dean has argued that the final version of the third report was so different from earlier drafts that it did not represent committee views; and Nigel Middleton has taken this further by claiming that the President had to coerce a show of support from a 'thoroughly reactionary' body. These interpretations, however, arguably misunderstand the working of the sub-committee once more, and so fail to grasp the significance of the report for Conservative attitudes towards education.

There were only two major changes made to the committee's report on the statutory system during 1943. The first concerned a long statement originally included as a critique of the Nuffield report on education and industry. Butler believed that the sub-committee's own views on this subject would be more beneficial; Faber readily

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agreed and rewrote the appropriate section in August 1943. The second serious amendment came after the introduction of the education bill, when Butler argued that it would be impolitic to make further references to youth service. Faber subsequently worked intensively to prepare the report for publication, and included some further minor amendments suggested by the President, but there was no attempt at coercion on important points of principle. It was the case that individual members still favoured exemptions to a higher school-leaving age, but - as in the earlier period - they were not representative of the committee as a whole. In fact as far back as December 1942, the sub-committee's attitude towards the state schools had been indicated by Faber's response to the programme of reform outlined by the Council of Educational Advance. He had written to The Times unofficially expressing approval of many of the ideas now being canvassed: the provision of free secondary education for all, the raising of the leaving age to fifteen and ultimately to sixteen, and the revival of continuation schools. The letter was not accepted for publication, but its significance was clear. It both undermines the idea that the third report did not represent the views of committee members, and casts doubt on the concept of a 'thoroughly reactionary' body. When the sub-committee had finally come to look

55. Butler to Faber, 15 July 1943, and Faber to Butler, 14 Aug. 1943, Conservative sub-committee papers, Box I, 'Correspondence with R.A.B. ECII'.

56. Dean, op.cit., cites one such pronouncement, but a commitment to exemptions was not evident in the committee's official draft, Third interim report: the school-leaving age and continued education, Apr. 1943, Conservative sub-committee papers, Box III.

57. Faber to The Times, n.d. (Oct. 1942), ibid., Box II, 'Letters from Outside Bodies and People II'.
at state education, it provided further evidence of Conservative
Party opinion becoming more receptive to the need for reform.

The public role of the committee effectively ended with the
publication of the third report. Although remaining in existence
until the end of the war, Faber admitted that the committee had gone
'stale', and further publications were never seriously considered. 58
To the chairman's disappointment, the sub-committee had never succeeded
in seriously affecting the course of educational reform. Faber's
sense of frustration owed much to the committee's ambiguous place
in the party's policy-making machinery, and to the difficulty of
persuading Conservative leaders of the importance of investigating
education. In the aftermath of the first two reports, he urged Central
Office to avoid the impression that the documents were 'mere kite-
59 flying' and would soon be forgotten. A more important factor behind
the committee's circumscribed role, however, was the attitude of
the President. Butler was of course willing to consider all views
when formulating policy, but fortunately for him the committee provided
ready agreement on the reshaping of the school structure, and even
reversed its initial scepticism about a religious settlement. Beyond
this, Butler was only looking for publicity for his cause, and in
this he could be satisfied with the sub-committee. The first report
had aroused both interest and support; the second he regarded as
unfortunate in not being thought out from the 'political angle';
but the third report was particularly welcome, 'if only out of self-
interest, since it will be a great help in getting the Bill through

58. Faber to Butler, 17 May 1945, ibid., Box I, 'Correspondence
with R.A.B. ECIII'.
59. Faber to Sir Robert Topping, 26 Nov. 1942, ibid., Box I,
'Correspondence with R.A.B. ECII'. 
to have a published statement of Conservative views which is virtually an endorsement of many of the points of principle underlying the measure'. The remaining, and more pressing, problem for the President was to convince the Conservative Party in parliament of the need for educational reform.

IV

As far as political opinion generally was concerned, Butler was aware that his chances of success rested ultimately on the continuance of the wartime coalition. This in fact was coming under increasing strain as the Board prepared its draft legislation. The Allied successes in the war during and after 1942 gradually removed some of the constraints on party controversy, and dissident elements on both the Conservative and Labour benches were becoming more confident in their attacks on the government. By the end of the year there was growing discontent among Labour members at the absence of any concrete measures of social reform. In November Chuter Ede warned Butler that his party were prepared to cause trouble unless 'something on account' was provided in social policy, adding that Labour feared in particular a repetition of what he termed the '1918 trick' - keeping them in government until victory was assured, and then pushing them out to restore pre-war standards. The chief difficulty with political opinion, however, was undoubtedly provided by the Conservative Party,
which held a large majority of parliamentary seats. The President had some reason for being grateful that the Beveridge Report had been 'bruited abroad', thereby ruining its chance of acceptance. The Report, he noted, 'has not marched hand in hand with that gentlemanly instinct which is so vital a feature of the Conservative Party, and without which the Conservative Party cannot be brought to undertake any reform. There is a feeling that Beveridge is a sinister old man who wishes to give away a great deal of other people's money'.

Although in this sense Butler gained what Beveridge had lost, it did not mean - as the President soon discovered - that Conservatives in parliament showed any great enthusiasm for educational reform.

The nervousness which Butler showed about Conservative opinion in his early months at the Board clearly continued into 1942, when he was warned by one supporter about the 'abysmal ignorance of the Tory M.P.s on education'. Similarly, it required the belligerence of Ernest Bevin to secure final approval for the drafting of an education bill, for Butler himself held back in the autumn: he had been warned by senior colleagues that Conservative back-benchers did not want legislation, especially if the opposition was thought to be gaining an advantage. The hostility or indifference of many

63. 'Diary', notes by Butler, 9 Sep. 1943, Butler papers, G15, f.91.
64. Ede diary, 8 Apr. 1942, Add. Mss. 59693, p.82 - the comments were made by Byng Kenrick, one of the leading members of the Conservative sub-committee.
65. Ibid., 20 Oct. 1942, Add. Mss. 59695, p.120. Butler himself (p.131), was scathing about the party, which he said was at 'sixes and sevens'. Most back-benchers simply 'spent their time in the Smoking Room consuming expensive drinks and intriguing amongst themselves'.
back-benchers - a characteristic feature of Conservative opinion between the wars - could be more readily faced, however, once the decision to introduce legislation had been taken; the party's commitment to the war effort would now make unlikely any wholesale defiance of the government line. Butler could also take comfort from the wide variety of attitudes traditionally expressed by Conservatives, which ensured support from certain sections of the party at least. The Education Committee, for example, which numbered about thirty members during the war, continued its pre-war tradition of supporting ministerial initiatives. In addition, the education bill was actively encouraged by the Tory Reform Committee, a back-bench group of some forty M.P.s established in 1943 to promote more progressive social policies. It was ironic that the 'young Tories', regarded by the President as the surest source of support within his own party, were to provide the most serious threat to the successful passage of the government's legislation. 66

After the decision to proceed had been reached in December 1942, Butler had to ensure that the actual details of a bill would be acceptable to both the parties. The concerns of the parties had of course been taken into account from an early stage, but an extended consideration of parliamentary views developed when difficulties in drafting led first to the introduction of a White Paper. The President, in the recent recollection of his private secretary, 'took advantage of this turn of events by proclaiming it as a thoroughly

democratic way of proceeding, publishing the Government's proposals in advance and taking account of the reactions to them in the Bill'.

In practice, the minister was far more concerned with overcoming the reservations of the senior partner in the coalition. This had been evident from early on, particularly in the decision that the problems of the public schools - which had been widely discussed during the war - would be excluded from any reform. Butler hoped that the whole question would 'lie quiet' under the consideration of the Fleming Committee, conscious that Conservatives would be 'up in arms' if the public schools were challenged. An equally important consideration for the party was the religious settlement: 'they, like the Prime Minister', Butler noted, 'are satisfied that the established Church and the Cecil interest have accepted the need for a measure of this sort'. As the prospects for reform came closer, the President gave in to Conservative views on the direct-grant school, and deliberately introduced the ideas of diversity and variety as integral parts of the White Paper - themes which were further encouraged by the publication of the Norwood Report shortly afterwards. Butler also went to considerable lengths to side-step potential points of criticism in the education bill itself. He was concerned, for example, that separate clauses were to be used for introducing the statutory duty of providing secondary education and for the abolition of fees; this, he said, would cause grave misgivings.

69. 'Diary', notes by Butler, 9 Sep. 1943, Butler papers, G15, f.92.
among Conservatives, who were 'a stupid lot'. As a result the idea of using one clause only, declaring that in consequence of secondary education becoming a duty fees were to be abolished, was adopted as a form of words which Butler felt would make the change appear inevitable to the Tory mind.  

Butler's concessions to Conservative opinion paid off when educational reform eventually came before parliament. The concern most widely expressed on the back-benches was with the religious settlement. The tradition of resistance to reform of the dual system, which had been championed before 1939 by Lord Salisbury, clearly continued into the early years of the war. Lord Selborne, in particular, the chairman of a parliamentary committee on Christian education, stood out against proposals such as the White Memorandum on the grounds that 'Blackmoor school happened to be my own private property, and I certainly would not give it up to anybody for such a scheme'.  

The concept of controlled status, however, effectively overcame the hostility of High Church Conservatives, and in parliament Henry Brooke took a prominent part in conveying the view of the National Society and the Anglican episcopate that a suitable compromise had been reached. The most persistent opposition to the religious settlement came from Roman Catholic M.P.s, some of whom threatened a repeat of the Scurr amendment; but Butler remained confident that most party

73. 396 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.273, 19 Jan. 1944: 'the majority opinion in the Church of England, I believe, accepts this offer with thankfulness'.
members would not be prepared to jeopardise the hard-won agreement.74

The remaining sections of the bill were endorsed with much less controversy. Although some members expressed regret at the abolition of fees, the need to provide secondary education for all children up to the age of fifteen was accepted without challenge. The revival of continuation schools was welcomed by Conservative back-benchers, who also took the lead - through members such as Patrick Hannon, Vice-President of the Federation of British Industries - in encouraging the development of technical education.75 At the committee stage the President faced some criticism from members of the Tory Reform Committee for not acting decisively enough, especially on the question of raising the school-leaving age to sixteen. Most back-benchers, however, were now content to acquiesce quietly in the passage of the bill. The main danger, as Butler noted, was simply that the Tories were quickly getting bored.76

By contrast, the enthusiasm already shown by Labour ministers for reform was shared throughout Labour ranks. When G.D.H. Cole and Harold Laski visited the Board as spokesmen for Labour's education advisory committee, Butler found that they were generally sympathetic; and in March 1943 Ede noted that the parliamentary Labour Party was

74. e.g. Arthur Evans (M.P. Cardiff) - ibid., cc.309-10, called for the Scottish solution. Butler was aware, however, that his proposals had driven a wedge between Anglicans and Roman Catholics. This was reflected in the Conservative party itself: at the 1943 party conference, for example, one speaker accused the Catholics of exploiting the situation to discredit the government, 'at which the "colonels in the back row" applauded vigorously' - Ede diary, 7 Oct. 1943, Add. Mss. 59697, p.26.

75. e.g. 396 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.1679, 8 Feb. 1944, where Harold Webbe calls for a Central Advisory Council to deal with technical education. See also B.J. Evans, 'Further education pressure groups: the campaign for continued and technical education in 1944', History of Education, 11, 1 (1982), pp.50-3.

'most cordial' in its reception of the draft education bill. At the parliamentary stage, Labour members accepted the necessity of both compromise on the dual system and improvements in further education, though there were criticisms of the bill for not going far enough in certain respects. The major complaints were over the retention of fees in direct-grant schools and the absence of any prospective date for raising the leaving age to sixteen, and on both these points Labour members were defeated in divisions at the committee stage. The majority of the parliamentary party did not, however, share the view expressed with force by some sections of Labour opinion - especially the National Association of Labour Teachers - that genuine equality of opportunity was only possible if all children attended a common secondary school. Most Labour members during the war, including consciously 'right-wing' figures such as Ede, regarded multilateral schools as useful additions to the secondary system, but the main goal was still seen as the achievement of parity between different types of school. By the time that Labour opinion began to polarise between those who regarded multilateralism as a necessary alternative to a tripartite structure, and those who still saw it as a notable addition, the success of the government's education bill was already assured.

77. Note by Butler, 12 May 1942, P.R.O. ED 136/215; Ede minute to Butler, 30 Mar. 1943, P.R.O. ED 136/378.
78. 398 H.C. Deb., 5s., c.755 and c.1300, 21 Mar. 1944.
79. R.S. Barker, Education and politics, pp.75-80. R.G. Wallace, in 'Labour, the Board of Education and the preparation of the 1944 Education Act', claims that the Act represented a defeat for Labour, although it could be argued that this only applied to those sections of party opinion which demanded multilateral schools as a complete alternative.
The parliamentary obstacles to educational reform were therefore overcome for a variety of reasons. To an extent of course party reactions were constrained by the practical need for holding together the coalition while the war was in progress; and the government always retained the ultimate power to treat opposition to the bill as an issue of confidence. This was demonstrated just when it appeared that the committee stage would pass off smoothly, with the defeat of the government on an amendment designed to secure equal pay for women teachers. The sponsors of the amendment, Mrs. Cazalet-Keir and other members of the Tory Reform Committee, were themselves disconcerted by their success; they were now left to face the consequences of Butler's anger at being defeated on what he considered a minor issue. The Prime Minister, concerned that Tory Reformers were seeking to make a name for themselves by criticising government policy, immediately seized upon the opportunity to 'rub their noses in it' by calling for a confidence motion in the Commons; as a result, his continued leadership was overwhelmingly endorsed. With the easing of constraints on party controversy, however, parliamentary management and the position of the coalition were not alone sufficient to explain the success of the education bill. It was equally important that Butler had managed to find common ground among the parties: there was little in his legislation which the Labour Party had not previously demanded, and nothing to which Conservatives could not be reconciled.

80. T. Cazalet-Keir, From the wings (London, 1967), pp.143-5. See also Ede diary, 3 Apr. 1944, Add. Mss. 59698, p.62, for the surprise of Tory Reformers; and notes by Butler, Apr. 1944, Butler papers, G16, f.90, for the anger of the President and the Prime Minister.
V

What then was the significance of the Second World War for the main themes emphasised throughout this study - the nature of Conservative ministerial policy and party opinion, the implications for Conservatism, and the operation of education as a political issue? These themes can all in fact be linked with developments during the inter-war period. This is particularly evident in the case of the first issue, the nature of Conservative policy, which can best be judged within the context of the historical debates which have dominated existing accounts. On the origins of reform, it has been indicated here that R.A. Butler's personal contribution to the success of the 1944 Act was considerable, both in devising the Board's plans and in circumventing the political obstacles to reform. This does not of course imply the need to return to the traditional idea of the 'Butler Act', bearing the indelible imprint of a sole author; an interpretation which clearly understates the complexity of the forces contributing to the final outcome. The role played by the President does, however, highlight the inadequacy of accounts which place the primary emphasis on the Green Book in determining the shape of legislation. The background to the Act, it may be argued, is only fully explicable in terms of pre-war origins of the measure being taken up and developed as a particular product of the wartime coalition. The most important features in this process were clearly short-term: the ideas given currency by the Spens Report of 1938; the concern with social equality which arose early in the war; the combined efforts at the Board to draw up reform proposals; and the success of these proposals in political circles. 81 Several of the principles eventually embodied

81. These were the features emphasised by Butler himself in his memorandum written for the official historian, Sophia Weitzman, in May 1945 - P.R.O. ED 136/692.
in the Act, however - in particular the recasting of education for
the adolescent, the religious settlement and linking of education
with industry - had been promoted over a much longer period. In
these earlier endeavours, Eustace Percy among Conservative ministers
had played a prominent part, indicating that Butler's success was
to an extent built upon pre-war foundations. This would suggest -
to adapt the wording of R.G. Wallace - that there was a distinction
between the authorship of the 1944 Act, which involved ministers
and officials acting jointly after Butler's appointment; and the
origins of the measure, which embraced Percy's policy as part of
an accumulated body of educational thinking stretching back to the
1920s.

The idea of consolidation rather than innovation as a characteristic
feature of Conservative ministerial policy also emerges from a
consideration of the Act in terms of the second existing debate -
the relationship between war and social reform. The impact of war
clearly had an important bearing on the speed with which it was possible
to implement reform, helping for example to soften denominational
tensions. There were also some signs that the war helped to alter
official attitudes: the Green Book may have derived from the
conventional wisdom of inter-war reformers, but it nevertheless
marked a significant shift on the part of Board officials. Under
the pressure of war, the Board began to promote reforms which had
been sternly resisted following the publication of the Spens Report.
In this sense, it is possible to endorse the idea of the war
stimulating the action which resulted in legislation. It does not
follow, however, that 1944 represented a straightforward triumph
for progressive reform, or that in the case of education, the war
had produced decisively new attitudes towards social policy in
official circles. The Board's new approach stemmed at least in part from a fear of more radical changes being enforced later in the absence of immediate action; and judging by the example of the Prime Minister, the coalition government as a whole attached little new importance to education. Butler's attitude in private reinforces the point. Although he received considerable personal credit as a reforming minister, the President conceded that he had made only cautious progress. The public, he said, always imagined that legislation of this sort was quite new, when in fact it was really 'codifying existing practice, which always seems to me to be the hallmark of good legislation'. The 1944 Act thus represented in this further context a continuation of pre-war ideas: the Second World War had altered the terms of debate and hastened the introduction of reform, but it produced no radical departure in official education policy.

The theme of continuity can also be reinforced by commenting on the nature of Conservative Party opinion as a whole during the war years. The main characteristics of party thinking on education remained unaltered. Attitudes ranged from the enthusiasm of the Tory Reform Committee to the intransigence of individual back-benchers; and it was social background and practical experience - especially

82. This is the traditional idea of the war put forward by R.M. Titmuss, Problems of social policy (London, 1950), esp. pp.507-9.
83. On the Deputy Secretary's fears about the wartime shift in public opinion, see 'Policy and planning for post-war education', R.S. Wood, 17 Jan. 1941, cited in Gosden, op.cit., p.248. After the defeat on the equal pay amendment, Churchill at first intended to refer to the bill in the Commons as a 'milk-cart'. He eventually settled for 'perambulator'; Butler reflected that he clearly did not regard it as a 'sherman tank' - notes by Butler, Apr. 1944, Butler papers, G16, fos.91-5.
84. Note by Butler, 25 May 1943, ibid., G15, f.37.
that of public school training - which continued to determine opinion, rather than any attachment to 'Tory' or 'Neo-Liberal' theories. Similarly, many Conservatives still had no interest in educational issues. This was made clear by Butler's reticence about the introduction of legislation and by his efforts to safeguard certain party concerns - diversity and variety in the state system, the importance of religious education, and the autonomy of the public schools. The President in fact ascribed his success in winning over the party entirely to careful handling on his part. By a variety of means, he concluded privately, 'the Conservative Party has been brought to think the reforms less awful than they might'.

The importance of ministerial persuasion should not, however, obscure the role of pre-war attitudes in accounting for the acceptance of reform. The aspects of the Act most readily agreed to by Conservatives in parliament - the provision of secondary education for all, the raising of the school-leaving age, the religious settlement and the revival of continuation schools - had all been foreshadowed by the movement in party views during the 1930s. The sub-committee needed little encouragement to endorse the proposals put forward by Butler, and at local level also - at least in the case of London - existing attitudes acted as a platform from which to welcome the education bill. This once more highlights the place of developments between the wars: the Conservative Party's acquiescence in reform during the war resulted from preference as well as persuasion.

85. 'Diary', notes by Butler, 9 Sep. 1943, ibid., G15, f.92.
The question remains of Butler's underlying motives and assumptions in promoting educational reform. This can most conveniently be considered within the context of the third major theme pursued here - the implications of education for the working of the Conservative Party, and for the relationship between thinking and practice in particular.

It has been shown that before 1939 most Conservatives opposed the extension of state power in education, and with it the creation of a more flexible social order. R.A. Butler, however - like Eustace Percy before him - was genuinely concerned to apply the Baldwinian concept of 'one nation' to education policy, especially by creating equal opportunities at the secondary stage. The President's approach owed much of course to his understanding of wartime politics. He believed that Conservatives must encourage social reform in order to counter the growing public sympathy for the Labour Party. The nation, he told the 1922 Committee, was 'in for change', and Conservatives would have to 'fashion it now, or rue it later'.

At the same time, his concern with change implied some fundamental adjustments of pre-war Conservatism. Butler was convinced, for example, that the power of the state should be increased after the war, though still used to enhance individual enterprise; and he urged that the Beveridge idea of universal provision in social policy be adopted, but never turned into uniformity - hence his desire that secondary schools provide 'equivalent opportunities to be different'.

88. Notes for speech to 1922 Committee, 17 Mar. 1943, Butler papers, H61, fos.208-14. He initially wrote, but then scribbled out: 'chance to change and to conserve new conquests for Party'.
89. Butler to C. Allport, 21 Aug. 1942, ibid., G14, f.68; notes for speech, 17 Mar. 1943, ibid., fos.208-14.
points to the paradox of Butler's reform: the 1944 Act, by removing many of the iniquities of the inter-war education service, was presented and accepted as a progressive measure, but it was simultaneously designed to accommodate Conservative Party interests. By reinterpreting these interests in the light of wartime circumstances, Butler foreshadowed the new style of Conservatism which was to emerge after 1945, accepting a more active role for the state and encouraging the creation of a more flexible, meritocratic social order.

The ambiguities of Butler's Act should also be borne in mind when commenting finally on the operation of education as a political issue during the war years. The parliamentary debates on education had shown that the parties remained sharply divided on several aspects of policy, notably the direct-grant schools, the raising of the leaving age to sixteen, and the future shape of secondary education. The latter issue was technically excluded from the terms of the bill, though Labour members declared their support for multilateralism and for parity of esteem, whereas some Conservatives rallied behind the preservation of grammar school standards. The continued existence of party differences does not, however, justify the contention that policy-making in education revolved around concerted hostility to a well-defined series of radical demands. This conclusion ignores not only the complexity of wartime reform, but also the various constraints which continually helped to shape and define policy. Butler was fortunate in that some of the difficulties facing his predecessors - especially the attitude of the Treasury - had altered under the impact of war, though it still required his political abilities to overcome the remaining obstacles to reform. Moreover, the focusing of party disputes on new areas of policy indicated that
the proposals contained in the education bill had now become more widely acceptable. In this sense, the Second World War both highlighted and brought together the two central features of education as a political issue between the wars - the element of continuity in the policies of successive administrations and the increased level of overlap in party thinking. The 1944 Act was the particular product of wartime politics, but it was based on ideas popularised before 1939. The Act was accepted by Labour, who were willing in the circumstances to settle for what Butler was prepared to offer - the minimum demands of party policy for the past twenty years; and by Conservatives, partly as a result of prompting from above, but also because reform was seen as the logical extension of policies which had recently been endorsed.
APPENDICES

Appendix I
Ministers and leading officials at the Board of Education, 1918-1944

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<tr>
<th>Government</th>
<th>President</th>
<th>Parliamentary Secretary</th>
<th>Permanent Secretary</th>
<th>Deputy Secretary</th>
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<tr>
<td>Coalition</td>
<td>H.A.L. Fisher (Lib)</td>
<td>Herbert Lewis (Lib)</td>
<td>L.A. Selby-Bigge</td>
<td>W.N. Bruce (1918-21)</td>
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<td>(1918-25)</td>
<td>E.K. Chambers (1921-25)</td>
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<td>Unionist</td>
<td>Edward Wood</td>
<td>1- Eustace Percy</td>
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<td>(1922-24)</td>
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<td>2- Earl of Onslow (from May 1923)</td>
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<td>Labour</td>
<td>Charles Trevelyan</td>
<td>Morgan Jones</td>
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<td>(1924)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>Eustace Percy</td>
<td>Duchess of Atholl</td>
<td>A.V. Symonds (1925-31)</td>
<td>E.B. Phipps (1925-29)</td>
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<td>(1924-29)</td>
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<td>Labour</td>
<td>1- Charles Trevelyan</td>
<td>Morgan Jones</td>
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<td>(1929-31)</td>
<td>2- H.B. Lees-Smith</td>
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<td>(from Mar 1931)</td>
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<td>National</td>
<td>1- Donald Maclean</td>
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<td>(1931-35)</td>
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<td>2- Lord Irwin, Vt</td>
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<td>Halifax (Con - from June 1932)</td>
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<td>National</td>
<td>1- Kingsley Wood</td>
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<td>(1935-40)</td>
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<td>2- Herwald</td>
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<td>Ramsbotham (Con - from Nov 1931)</td>
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<td>Coalition</td>
<td>1- Herwald</td>
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<td>(1940-44)</td>
<td>Ramsbotham (from Apr 1940)</td>
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<td>2- R.A. Butler (Con - from July 1941)</td>
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Appendix II

Conservative education policy: biographical details of ministers, M.P.s and party supporters

Nancy, Viscountess Astor (1879-1964) M.P. Plymouth Sutton 1919-45; first woman to enter parliament.

Katharine, Duchess of Atholl (1874-1960) Educ: Wimbledon High School and Royal College of Music; member of Central Agricultural Wages Committee for Scotland 1918-20; member of Perthshire education authority; Vice-President Association of Education Authorities in Scotland 1919-24; M.P. Kinross and West Perth 1923-38; Parliamentary Secretary, Board of Education 1924-29; member of the Royal Commission on the Civil Service 1929-31.

George Banbury, Baron Southam (1850-1936) Educ: Winchester; M.P. Peckham 1892-1906, City of London 1906-24; Chairman, Great Northern Railway.


Clement Anderson Montague-Barlow (1868-1951) Educ: Repton and King's College, Cambridge; called to Bar, Lincoln's Inn 1895; Lecturer, Law Society and London School of Economics; Municipal Reform member of L.C.C. 1907-10; M.P. Salford South 1910-23; Chairman of Sotheby & Co. 1909-28; Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Labour 1920-22; Minister of Labour 1922-24; member of Church Assembly.


Lord Henry Cavendish-Bentinck (1863-1931) Educ: Eton and Christ Church, Oxford; M.P. Nottingham South 1895-1906 and 1910-29; Municipal Reform member of L.C.C. 1907-10; Lt. Colonel, Derbyshire Yeomanry; served in South African War, First World War.

John Birchall (1875-1941) Educ: Eton and New College, Oxford; Major, Gloucestershire Yeomanry; military service, First World War; Alderman, Gloucester County Council; M.P. Leeds North East 1918-40; second Church Estates Commissioner; member of National Assembly of Anglican Church.

F.N. Blundell (1880-1936) Educ: the Oratory School and Merton College, Oxford; member of Lancashire County Council; landowner and farmer; military service, First World War; Chairman of Catholic Education Council, 1927-36.

R.A. Butler, Baron Butler of Saffron Walden (1902-82) Educ: Marlborough and Pembroke College, Cambridge; Fellow Corpus Christi College, Cambridge; M.P. Saffron Walden 1929-65; Under-Secretary of State, India Office 1932-37; Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Labour 1937-38; Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs 1938-41; President of the Board of Education 1941-45; Minister of Labour 1945; Chancellor of the Exchequer 1951-55; Home Secretary 1957-62.

Edward Cadogan (1880-1962) Educ: Eton and Balliol College, Oxford; military service, First World War; Barrister; Secretary to the Speaker of the House of Commons 1911-21; M.P. Reading 1922-23, Finchley 1924-35, Bolton 1940-45; Deputy Chairman, Great Western Railway; Chairman, Board of Education Juvenile Organisations Committee; co-opted member of L.C.C.

Lord Hugh Cecil, Baron Quickswood (1869-1956) Educ: Eton and University College, Oxford; Fellow of Hertford College, Oxford; Lieutenant, Royal Flying Corps; M.P. Greenwich 1895-1906, Oxford University 1910-37; Provost of Eton 1936-44.

James Gascoyne-Cecil, fourth Marquis of Salisbury (1861-1947) Educ: University College, Oxford; M.P. Darwen 1885-92, Rochester 1893-1903; Chairman of the Church Parliamentary Committee until 1900; served South African War; Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs 1900-03; Lord Privy Seal 1903-05; President of the Board of Trade 1905; Lord President of the Council 1922-24; Lord Privy Seal 1924-29; Leader of the House of Lords 1925-30; member of the National Assembly of the Church of England.

Cyril Cobb - see above, p. 273, 'Biographical details of Municipal Reformers'.

Edward Cobb - see above, p. 273, 'Biographical details of Municipal Reformers'.

Henry Craik (1846-1927) Educ: High School, Glasgow, Glasgow University and Balliol College, Oxford; Senior Examiner in Education Department; Secretary Scottish Education Department 1885-1904; M.P. Glasgow and Aberdeen Universities 1906-18, Scottish Universities 1918-27; Principal Queen's College, Harley Street 1911-14.

C.W. Crook (1862-1926) Educ: St. James' National School, Barrow and St. John's College, Battersea; headmaster of Wood Green Secondary School; member of executive, National Union of Teachers; President N.U.T. 1916-17; member of Burnham salary committees; member of the Senate of London University; M.P. East Ham North 1922-23 and 1924-26; Secretary Conservative Teachers' Advisory Committee.

Thomas Davies (1858-1939) Educ: private study; pupil-teacher and certificated teacher; County Councillor for Campden 1899-1910; Alderman Gloucester County Council 1910-21; Vice-Chairman and Chairman of Education Committee 1910-21; M.P. Cirencester and Tewkesbury 1918-29; Governor, Royal Agricultural College.
William Davison, Baron Broughshane (1872-1953) Educ: Shrewsbury and Oxford; Barrister; military service, First World War; Chairman, East Surrey Water Co.; President of Kensington Chamber of Commerce; Mayor of Kensington; M.P. Kensington South 1918-45; Chairman, Metropolitan Division of the National Union of Conservative Associations.

William Duckworth (1879-1952) Educ: private study and grammar school; chartered accountant; military service, First World War; member of Blackpool Town Council 1921-39; Chairman of Blackpool Education Committee 1930-37; member and Vice-President of the Association of Education Committees 1932-39; M.P. Manchester Moss Side 1935-45.

Geoffrey Faber (1889-1961) Educ: Rugby and Christ Church, Oxford; military service. First World War; Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford; called to the Bar, Inner Temple 1921; President of Faber and Faber, publishers; President of the Publishers' Association 1939-41.

Ernest Gray - see above, p.273, 'Biographical details of Municipal Reformers'.

Patrick Hannon (1874-1963) Educ: Royal College of Science and Royal University of Ireland; M.P. Birmingham Moseley 1921-50; Vice-President, Federation of British Industries; Secretary, Industrial Group of M.P.'s 1921-29; member of the House of Commons Estimates Committee 1921-38; President, Central Chamber of Agriculture; Vice-President, National Association of British Manufacturers.

Henry Hibbert (1850-1927) Educ: Hutton and Chorley grammar schools; flour merchant; Mayor of Chorley 1889-91; Chairman of Education Committee, Lancashire County Council; Chairman of Education Committee, County Councils Association; M.P. Chorley 1913-18; Chairman, Lancashire County Council 1921-27; member of Board of Education Consultative Committee.

T.E. Hickman (1859-1930) Educ: Cheltenham College; military career, Brigadier-General in South African War; M.P. Wolverhampton South 1910-22; Director Haunchwood Collieries Ltd. and other companies.

Geoffrey Hutchinson, Baron Ilford (1893-1974) Educ: Cheltenham College and Clare College, Cambridge; military service, First World War; member Hampstead Borough Council 1931-37; President, Non-County Boroughs Association 1937-44; M.P. Ilford 1937-45, Ilford North 1950-54; Alderman London County Council 1964-69; Chairman, water companies.

Thelma Cazalet-Keir - see above, p.273, 'Biographical details of Municipal Reformers'.

Philip Magnus (1842-1933) Educ: University College School and University College, London; Lecturer and examiner in Mathematics; Secretary, City and Guilds of London Institute 1880-88; member of London School Board; member of the Senate of London University 1898-1931; M.P. London University 1906-22; member of Education Committee, Surrey County Council.


Richard Onslow, fifth Earl of Onslow (1876-1945) - Educ: Eton and New College, Oxford; diplomatic service; military service, First World War; Civil Lord of the Admiralty 1920-21; Parliamentary Secretary Board of Agriculture, Ministry of Health, Board of Education 1921-24; Under-Secretary for War 1924-28; Paymaster-General 1928-29; Deputy Speaker, House of Lords 1931-44.

Roundell Palmer, Viscount Wolmer and third Earl of Selborne (1887-1971) Educ: Winchester and New College, Oxford; M.P. Newton 1910-18, Aldershot 1918-40; Parliamentary Secretary, Board of Trade 1922-24; Assistant Postmaster-General 1924-29; Minister of Economic Warfare 1942-45; Member of House of Laymen, Province of Canterbury.

Eustace Percy, Baron Percy of Newcastle (1887-1958) Educ: Oxford; diplomatic service; M.P. Hastings 1921-37; Parliamentary Secretary Board of Education 1923, Ministry of Health 1923-24; President of the Board of Education 1924-29; Minister without Portfolio 1935-37; Rector, Newcastle Division of Durham University 1937-52.

Basil Peto (1862-1945) Educ: Harrow; building contractor; Director, Morgan Crucible Co.; M.P. Devizes 1910-18, Barnstaple 1922-23.

Kenneth Pickthorn (1892-1975) Educ: Aldenham School and Trinity College, Cambridge; Fellow, Dean and President of Corpus Christi College Cambridge 1914-44; M.P. Cambridge University 1935-50, Carlton (Nottinghamshire) 1950-66; Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Education 1951-54.

Herwald Ramsbotham, Viscount Soulbury (1887-1971) Educ: Uppingham and University College, Oxford; called to Bar 1911; military service, First World War; M.P. Lancaster 1929-41; Parliamentary Secretary Board of Education 1931-35, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries 1935-36; Minister of Pensions 1936-39; First Commissioner of Works 1939-40; President of the Board of Education 1940-41; Chairman of the Assistance Board 1941-48; Chairman of Burnham Committees 1942-49.

William Ray - see above, p.273, 'Biographical details of Municipal Reformers'.

Annesley Somerville (1858-1942) Educ: Queen's College, Cork and Trinity College, Cambridge; assistant master at Eton 1885-1922; member of Eton Board of Guardians; Chairman of Eton Urban District Council; M.P. Windsor 1922-42; President, Independent Schools Association 1927-42.
Oliver Stanley (1896-1950) Educ: Eton; military service, First World War; called to Bar 1919; M.P. Westmorland 1922-45, Bristol West 1945-50; Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Home Office 1931-33; Minister of Transport 1933-34; Minister of Labour 1934-35; President of the Board of Education 1935-37; President of the Board of Trade 1937-40; Secretary of State for War 1940.

Harold Webbe - see above, p.273, 'Biographical details of Municipal Reformers'.

Edward Wood, Baron Irwin and Viscount Halifax (1881-1959) Educ: Eton and Christ Church, Oxford; M.P. Ripon 1910-25; Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Colonies 1921-22; President of the Board of Education 1922-24; Minister of Agriculture 1924-25; Viceroy of India 1926-31; President of the Board of Education 1932-25; Secretary of State for War 1935; Lord Privy Seal 1935-37; Lord President of the Council 1937-38; Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs 1938-40; British Ambassador in Washington 1941-46.

Howard Kingsley Wood (1881-1943) Solicitor; member of L.C.C. for Woolwich 1911-19; member of National Insurance Advisory Committee 1911-19; M.P. Woolwich West 1918-43; Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Health 1924-29, Board of Education 1931; Postmaster-General 1931-35; Minister of Health 1935-38; Secretary of State for Air 1938-40; Lord Privy Seal 1940; Chancellor of the Exchequer 1940-45.

Source: Who was Who; Dod's Parliamentary Companion; Dictionary of National Biography.
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