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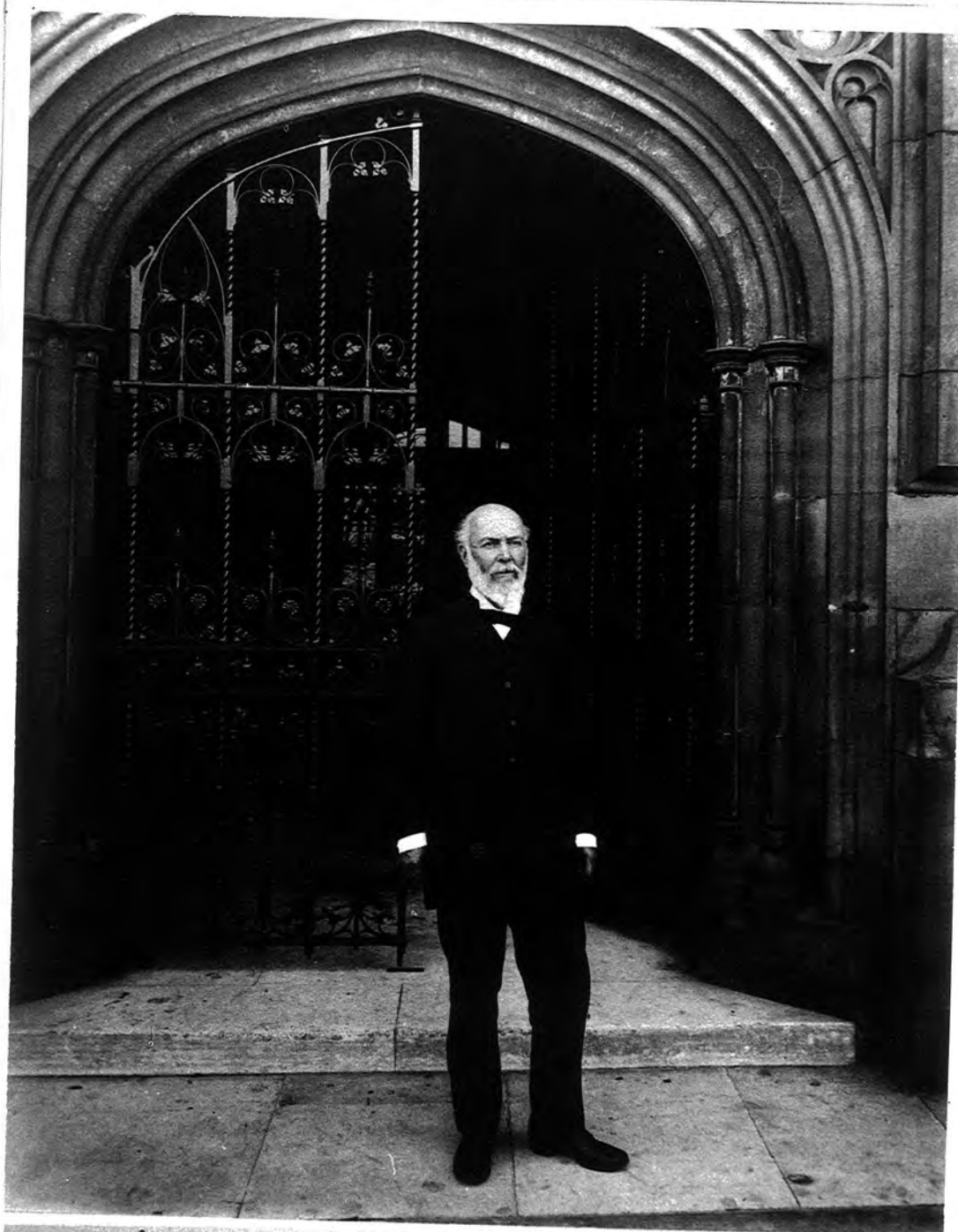
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ABSTRACT

The final years of the nineteenth century were an important period in the development of the English educational system as the legislation and reforms formed the foundations of the present system. The last occupant of the office of Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education, Sir John Gorst (1835-1916), was involved with many of these measures. He had been actively involved in the promotion of reforms in education and child welfare since his stay in New Zealand in 1860-3, and continued this interest and work after he lost office in 1902. Membership of the Fourth Party in 1880-4 ensured prominence for his early parliamentary career but as time passed his characteristically forthright manner and progressive ideas earned him the hostility of the Conservative party leaders but the approbation of the social reformers.

Gorst has, however, been curiously neglected by historians of education and there has as yet been no detailed study of his career. This thesis is an attempt to fill this gap by describing and evaluating his work, and whilst the main part of the thesis is concerned with Gorst's efforts and achievements during the period 1895-1906, attention is also paid to his earlier career and his various roles connected with improving the quality of the educational provision for the children of the nation.



1897 John E. Gorst
Vice Pres. of The Committee of Council

"Documents scarcely deserve the implicit reliance which is placed upon them. It is true that the words actually written down at the time may be faithfully preserved. But the motive with which they were written, the effect which they were designed to produce upon the person to whom the document was addressed, the facts and considerations omitted, because necessarily present to the mind of the recipient - all these things and many more, essential to the true interpretation of the writing, may be unknown or forgotten. Written as well as spoken words are sometimes used to conceal thoughts. From all this it results that history, however carefully compiled, must inevitably reflect to a very considerable extent the imagination of the historian, and that the real truth about events, even recent, even contemporaneous cannot always be discovered".

Sir John E. Gorst in his preface
to The Fourth Party by
H.E. Gorst, 1906.

THE EDUCATIONAL WORK OF SIR JOHN GORST

In Two Volumes

VOLUME 1

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
of the University of Durham by N.D. Daglish, B.Sc.,
October, 1974.

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(Miss Joan Clarkson)

PREFACE

Gilbert has stated categorically that:

"In searching for the origins of the popular demand for the reform and expansion of British social welfare institutions that manifested itself so strongly in the early years of the twentieth century it is impossible to overlook the work of Sir John Gorst".¹

Gorst, during this period, was primarily concerned with matters of educational reform and this activity was the culmination of a career in which one of, if not the, dominant thread(s) had been a concern for educational progress. Yet, apart from Gilbert's own works on Gorst's role in these matters, the great majority of historians:

"... have been content to accept him as a good deed in a naughty world, and he has passed into undergraduate history as a byword for an imaginative approach to borough Conservatism which an insensitive party orthodoxy foolishly chose to ignore".²

The tragedy of this is that whilst Gorst did achieve notable results in party organisation his most enduring and worthwhile achievements were in the field of education - a fact which most educational historians have ignored.

The reasons for this neglect cannot certainly be due to Gorst's lack of stature during his lifetime either as a parliamentarian or as a social reformer. Most of his peers acknowledged his almost unrivalled skill as a member of the House, and his activities outside the Commons received con-

¹Gilbert, B.B. 'Sir John Eldon Gorst: Conservative Rebel', The Historian, XVIII, No. 2, Spring, 1956, p. 151-2.

²Vincent, J.R. '"A sort of second-rate Australia": A note on Gorst and democracy, 1865-8', Historical Studies (Australia and New Zealand), 15, April, 1973, p. 539.

siderable coverage by the media of the day. One reason that does seem to be relevant is the fact that by the time Gorst became Vice-President the office was clearly regarded as one of the second rank, representing "... one of the first rungs on the career ladder",¹ and one in which the Vice President was expected to be subservient to the Lord President. Although Gorst's achievements belie this interpretation his activities have been overshadowed by the emphasis placed on Balfour and Morant. Another factor which may have some bearing on Gorst's neglect is the absence of any private papers or memoir.

This thesis is an attempt to rectify this neglect. Although Gorst's own private papers are lost considerable use has been made of those collections of papers which contain letters from Gorst, especially the Balfour, Churchill, Hughenden, Marvin and Salisbury Papers. These have been supplemented by the wealth of relevant material contained in the Public Record Office. Gorst's articles and publications have been analysed and utilised, as have many of his speeches and statements both in and out of the House. Sir Eldon Gorst's diaries and unpublished autobiography, and the letters of Canon Barnett have furnished useful glimpses of the man rather than the politician. These have been supplemented by photographs and cartoons, in an attempt to provide a more complete view of this aspect of Gorst.

¹Sutherland, G. Policy Making in Elementary Education, 1870-1895, p. 29.

Sutherland has stated in her discussion of the roles of the Lord President and the Vice-President that "... the political heads had both the greatest opportunity and the greatest incentives to shape policy of any of those who can be called potential policy makers".¹ Although Gorst's opportunities were marred as a result of both his earlier parliamentary activities and the debacle of the 1896 Education Bill it is believed that his achievements as Vice-President are comparable with those of any of his predecessors in that office. The aim of this thesis is to demonstrate the validity of this view as well as illustrating the efforts and activities of this somewhat lone figure to promote the progress of the educational system of this country.

¹Ibid., p. 13.

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Abbreviations

A.J.H.R.	Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives, New Zealand.
B.J.Ed.St.	British Journal of Educational Studies.
B.M. Add. M.S.	British Museum Additional Manuscripts.
Bul. Inst.	Bulletin of the Institute of Historical
Hist. Res.	Research.
3 Hansard	Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, third series.
4 Hansard	Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, fourth series.
Int. Rev. Ed.	International Review of Education.
J. Ed. Ad. Hist.	Journal of Educational Administration and History.
P.P.	Parliamentary Papers.
P.R.O.	Public Record Office.

CHAPTER ONE

The lineage of the Gorst family can be traced with certainty to the middle of the seventeenth century, and with less surety to the eleventh.¹ There is the faint possibility that the family was descended from the Seigneur de Jort, who accompanied William the Conqueror on his fateful crossing of the English Channel.² When, however, Elizabeth Lowndes gave birth to her second son on May 24, 1835, the branch of the family into which he was born had been established in Lancashire for the previous hundred years. Edward Lowndes, Elizabeth's husband, was a solicitor in Preston and the deputy clerk of the peace for Lancaster, as his father had been before him.³ Thus his latest son, John Eldon Gorst, was born into a prosperous family with minor landed gentry status.

Little is known of Gorst's early life apart from the fact that he was educated at the local grammar school where his editorship of the school newspaper resulted in it being suppressed by the school authorities.⁴ He proceeded to St. John's College, Cambridge, where he emerged in 1857 as the Third Wrangler in the mathematics tripos.

¹Personal communications from Miss Joan Clarkson and Dr. Peter Mellini.

²Personal communications from Mr. John Gorst.

³The eldest son of this branch of the Gorst family assumed the name Lowndes under the testamentary injunction of Robert Lowndes of Palterton. See Burke, The Landed Gentry, 1925, p. 1130.

⁴Gorst, H.E., The Fourth Party, p. 23-25.

Although he was then awarded a fellowship of his college, Gorst partook of a lengthy holiday in Central Europe and on his return to England started to read law, taking his dinners at the Inner Temple. This activity was abandoned in the autumn of 1858 when he returned to Lancashire in order to be close to his father who was dying, following an apoplectic stroke. It was at this period of his life that Gorst resolved to try a new way of life by going to the colonies, "determined ... to encounter any vicissitudes that gave promise of variety".¹ He left for New Zealand shortly after the death of his father in 1859, later claiming "My object in visiting the Colony was to investigate for myself the question how half-civilised people ought to be managed. From my arrival in May, 1860, to my departure in August, 1863, this was my one employment and pursuit".² A contemporary observation, however, reveals that at the time this may not have been his true reason, but one that, with hindsight, appeared to be correct.³

Whatever the reason, Gorst endured the 111-day

¹Ibid.

²P.P. 1865, XXXVII, p. 198-9. J.E. Gorst to Sir Frederic Rogers, December 20, 1864.

³"What Mr. Gorst will do, I don't yet know. All we have heard of him promises well. He has great ability as a mathematician and seems desirous of working away from the right motive". Alexander Turnbull Library, New Zealand, MSS Collection, Bishop Patteson to Sir. J. Patteson, March 23, 1860. (I am indebted to Mrs. J. Starke for this reference.) Patteson's last remark seems to confirm W.T. Stead's later observation that Gorst's intention was to become a lay missionary in the South Seas. Review of Reviews, IV, 1891, p. 576.

journey aboard the White Star liner "Red Jacket", acting as a substitute for the ship's doctor and helping in putting down a mutiny as well as becoming engaged to a fellow passenger, Miss Mary Elizabeth Moore, who was travelling to Australia with her father.¹ Gorst arrived at Auckland on May 17, 1860, and shortly after his arrival became acquainted with Bishop Selwyn. The latter was occupied with preparing the Melanesian Mission College buildings at Kohimarama for a reception to be given by the Governor - Sir Thomas Gore-Browne - for a number of Maori chieftains whom the Governor had invited to a conference on the subject of native grievances. Gorst and his fellow passenger, Mainwaring, helped the Bishop in his preparations, during which they were introduced "to the freedom of colonial manners. The Bishop at once took off his coat and waistcoat and worked like a day labourer ...".²

Gorst appears to have enjoyed this new found freedom and in June willingly accompanied the Bishop to Whangerei to try to refloat the Melanesian mission schooner "Southern Cross", which was stranded there. Although unsuccessful in their attempts, Selwyn taught Gorst the rudiments of the Maori language during their stay there. Gorst was also introduced to the concept of a person holding all civil offices - postmaster, custom-house officer, harbour master, magistrate, policeman, etc. - combined into one.

¹Gorst, J.E., New Zealand Revisited, p. 6-22.

²Ibid., p. 28 & p. 243.

"I thought this extraordinary at the time, little thinking that I was destined to fill a similar post in Waikato."¹

At the end of July Gorst left New Zealand to go to Australia in order to marry Miss Moore at Geelong, on August 18, the service being officiated by Bishop Patteson.² They returned to New Zealand in October, and soon afterwards went to stay at the Reverend Benjamin Ashwell's mission station at Taupiri on the Waikato River.³

Gorst was most struck by, "... the strange contrast between the material poverty and the mental attainments of the people. In all outward signs of civilisation the Maories proved to be extremely backward; their houses, clothing, food, and way of eating were of the most barbarous description; but in reasoning, especially on political topics, in making provision for their own government, and for the education of their children, they exhibited unexpected cleverness and good sense".⁴ As a result of his observations Gorst investigated more closely the village schools and found that, "the pupils could invariably answer simple questions on religion, read their own language well and in some schools showed a knowledge of arithmetic that filled me with surprise".⁵

¹Ibid., p. 31.

²Personal communication from Miss Joan Clarkson.

³Gorst, J.E., The Maori King, p. 4.

⁴Ibid., p. 5-6.

⁵Ibid.

It was whilst Gorst was staying with Ashwell that he met Wiremu Tamihana, the peace-loving Maori chieftain who was to save Gorst's life in 1863. Later in his life, Gorst was to write of Tamihana, "I have met many statesmen in the course of my long life, but none superior in intellect and character to this Maori chief, whom most people would look upon as a savage".¹ As a result of this initial meeting, Gorst was invited to visit Tamihana's schools at Peria.² As well as these visits Gorst became involved not only in observing schools but in teaching in them.³

A month before Gorst had arrived in New Zealand a war had broken out in the Taranaki region of North Island between the Maories and the settlers over the resistance by Wiremu Kingi, a Ngatiawa chief of Taranaki, to the sale of land to non-Maories. This attitude had been fostered - since the creation of the Maori King in 1858 - amongst the various Maori tribes, and the outbreak of warring parties in the island was thus a cause for concern amongst the settlers. Rather than viewing the King movement from the Maori point of view, i.e. complete dissatisfaction with the way the Colonial government had treated them - which

¹Gorst, J.E., New Zealand Revisited, p. 141.

²Gorst, J.E., The Maori King, p. 5.

³Gorst's efforts in this field resulted in his becoming "a favourite of the Church of England Board of Native Education, the Chairman of which was Bishop Selwyn". See K. Sinclair's editorial introduction to The Maori King, p. xi.

had caused them to set up their own form of law and order for their own survival, the settlers saw it as an object to be destroyed by force.¹ Gorst, on the other hand, as a result of virtually living and working with the Maoris saw that the use of force was not the solution to the problem. He thought that the removal of the King movement could be brought about by the application of a scheme based on English education and law to the Waikato region - where the base of the movement, at Ngaruawahia the Maori capital, was contained. He accordingly wrote, and had published, three letters explaining his point of view in an Auckland newspaper, the New Zealander, under the pseudonym of "Fabius".²

These articles provoked a denunciation in a leading article in the Southern Cross, the other Auckland paper, but they also drew Gorst to the attention of Gore-Browne, the Governor. This may have been due to the similarity between Gorst's letters and the contents of a letter, on advice about the Maori King, from the Governor of New South Wales - Sir W. Denison - to Gore-Browne a year earlier.³ Gore-Browne thought that Gorst could usefully

¹Gorst, J.E., The Maori King, p. 1-6.

²Ibid., Sinclair, K., p. xi-x; Gorst, H.E., The Fourth Party, p. 26-29.

³New Zealand Pamphlets, Occasional Paper No. 1, July 1, 1861, Sir W. Denison to Sir T. Gore-Browne, May 16, 1860, p. 3-8. "My view, however, of the Maori is very different - he is the subject of the Queen, and as such is entitled to have his rights respected, his feelings considered ..."

be employed in the Colonial Service: "I had ... so high an opinion of him, that I engaged to employ him and not having been able to do so before I left I recommended him officially to Sir G. Grey".¹

Grey arrived in September, 1861, to take up his second term of office as Governor with a new political climate prevailing. A colonial ministry had just been formed under the leadership of William Fox, and it was one which displayed a peaceful disposition towards the Maories. Since this coincided with the views which Gorst had expressed in his Fabius articles, Grey and Fox agreed that his services could be utilised by the Government. He was, consequently, "... sent on a mission into the Waikato district; ostensibly to inspect and report upon all the schools supported by the missionary societies, and the natives, and at the same time to keep my eyes and ears open, and learn all I could as to the state of things in general, and the sentiments at present prevailing among Waikato chiefs as to peace or war".² Gorst was thus provided with a chance to put into practice the view which he had expressed a few months earlier, i.e. that it was, "... absolutely essential that men should go and reside among the Maori; the race can never be civilised by men

¹National Archives, New Zealand, Gore-Browne Papers. Sir T. Gore-Browne to Sir Charles Clifford, September 20, 1862. (I am indebted to Miss J.S. Hornabrook for this reference.)

²Gorst, J.E., New Zealand Revisited, p. 160.

sitting at mahogany tables in Auckland".¹

Gorst set out at the end of October for the Waikato region, and by the beginning of December he had completed both his inspection and his report on the state of the Maori schools. This in spite of the fact that the only qualification he possessed in this field was a few months teaching of mathematics at Rossall School in the period 1858-9, gained whilst he attended his father on his death bed.² This task had, however, been lightened by the fact that some eight of the original seventeen schools in the area had been closed, as a consequence of the withdrawal of children during the Taranaki war.³ Considering the fact that the wildness of the terrain made travelling in the area somewhat hazardous, Gorst's activity in producing his detailed report so rapidly reflected industriousness on his part. A facet of his character that was to remain throughout his life.

In spite of his scepticism about his role, and the lack of results achieved by his predecessors, Gorst's examination of the nine schools was both diligent and

¹New Zealander, May 18, 1861. Quoted by Sinclair, K., op. cit., p. xiii.

²Gorst, H.E., op. cit., p. 25.

³Appendix to Journals of House of Representatives, New Zealand, 1862. E, No. 4, Gorst, J.E., "Native Schools", p. 4.

observant.¹ His report revealed that he had applied his perceptive mind to the task in hand. He observed that the standards of education attained in the schools fluctuated greatly as a result of the facilities provided by both the staff and the physical structures. Thus the school at Paetai, kept by Roka, in which Roka knew, "neither writing nor arithmetic", was sadly lacking in the quality of teaching offered compared with the superior mission schools operating at Taupiri, Otawhao, Waipa, and Kohanga.²

But all the schools in the area were hampered by the way in which the funds for native education were supplied. The schools which were both administered and run by the natives suffered the most in this respect, to the extent in some cases that no funds were received at all.³ Needless to say, this produced an objection from Gorst, even when the missionary schools were considered, for the grants were given on a per-capita basis, and this, "... pushes a sinking school down. Part of the cost of keeping up a school is independent of the number of children maintained ... and when the number is going down

¹Ibid., p. 10: "... the office [of Inspector] has been honorary and irregular, and never discharged twice by the same person. His function is that of simply reporting, and though the duties have often been most ably performed by gentlemen of high position in the colony, I do not learn that their reports ever produced action on the part of Government".

²Ibid., p. 3.

³This was mainly due to the fact that the Government gave annual grants "to three religious bodies, which have native schools under their superintendence". Ibid., p. 10. Thus schools having no connection with these bodies could be disbarred from the receipt of grants.

and the means decreasing faster than the costs, the position of the responsible manager becomes each day more perplexing".¹ This inadequate distribution had generated other factors responsible for the failure of some schools, as Gorst noted: "The cases of failure present great variety, hardly two schools have failed from the same cause, but they may be mostly embraced under two types: (1) where the teacher gets tired of the school: (2) where the school gets tired of the teacher. The former case might possibly be in some degree cured by giving the teacher a payment for his work; they have generally kept school for nothing, and few even of our countrymen would be so persevering as to do it for more than two years on such terms".²

It was, he maintained, only by a considerable re-organisation of Government finance in this area that any improvement in the provision of education for the Maories could be achieved. Gorst further contended that if the teachers' salaries were paid in all schools, then they could, "... be made conditional on the teaching reaching a certain standard of efficiency, the children being properly fed and clothed, and the buildings kept in repair", in the case of the Maori-run schools, whilst it would allow for the provision of efficient European teachers in the mission schools.³ But this concept of payment by

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 11.

results was not to be restricted to Maori-run schools. Gorst believed that its implementation, with the additional institution of a regular force of inspectors - who could recommend the withdrawal of grants from schools - would ensure compliance by the schools with government regulations. He also believed such regulations could be used in the provision of adequate school buildings, through government grants provided for this purpose. Thus, in these two aspects, Gorst's ideas were in sympathy with those of the Newcastle Commission and the 1870 Education Act - although the latter was some nine years hence.¹

By carrying out such innovations Gorst felt that the mission schools would improve in excellence - if they were able to take fewer children to be trained up, "in the decencies of civilisation as well as in learning habits of industry" - and these would act as good models for the Maori schools to imitate.² His rationale for this was that, "it is always easier to copy a pattern than to originate a design", and that as a result of this he felt that the native schools would increase in number thereby overcoming the present trend of decreasing numbers.³ It

¹Report of the Royal Commission on the State of Popular Education in England and Wales. P.P. XXI. 1861. Cmd. 2794. This was published on August 4, 1861, and it may well have been that a copy did not reach Gorst until after he had completed his report. His motives for his scheme were of a more beneficial nature than those motivating Robert Lowe in England: Elementary Education Act, 1870 (33 & 34 Vict. c 75). S. 7 & S. 18.

²AJHR. op. cit., p. 11.

³Ibid.

would also be possible, he thought, to extend the control of the missionaries over the new native schools through the appointment of the teachers to them.¹ Gorst probably was influenced in making this recommendation through his observations of the schools at Rawiri and Matamata, but it is unlikely that it could have been carried out with the continued growth of nationalism being produced by the King movement in the Waikato region.

Through his observations of the schools in the area, Gorst had discovered that the native schools could produce results comparable to those being achieved by the missionary-run ones, even in the absence of government aid and a European teacher. At Matamata, "All the children read Maori perfectly ... their knowledge of arithmetic was most creditable ... all the arithmetic was done in English",² and at Karakariki he was, "much astonished at the excellence of the English teaching" and finding that the pronunciation was hardly inferior to that in the school run by The Reverend A. Reid at Waipa.³ But, on the other hand, all the schools were hampered by the lack of relevant materials: his friend Ashwell, at Taupiri, had to use English lesson books published by the Commissioners for National Education in Ireland, which were not suitable for teaching English Language to Maories, albeit serving,

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 5.

³Ibid., p. 8.

"well enough for lessons in English pronunciation".¹ At Matamata the children had copy books but no ink, and the school at Waimate had "no copy books, no maps, a bad black board, no chalk, and only a few broken slates".²

He hoped that if the Government acted upon his report and its recommendations, the quality of education given to the native children would be vastly improved. Gorst saw that in addition to the benefit of "reducing the wild, dirty, and naked children of a native village to some kind of order and cleanliness ...",³ there would be the possibility of the mission schools becoming secondary ones. This would allow selected children to continue their education, and pave the way for the establishment of a college in which, "the best of the native race could be trained to scientific and learned professions".⁴ He repeated in the closing lines of his report his view that this was only a viable proposition if the provision of elementary education for the children was made efficient and more widespread.⁵

By the introduction of this concept of quality and quantity in native education, it would appear that Gorst was hopeful that the government would adopt a policy of conciliation rather than force towards the natives. In

¹Ibid., p. 4.

²Ibid., p. 10.

³Ibid.

⁴ & ⁵Ibid., p. 11.

such an instance, the government would be emerging from its apathy towards the Maories and, at the same time, removing one of the foundations of the King Movement. In the summer of 1861, Gorst had written in his letters to the New Zealander that he did not think the world at large would "think that there is much glory in a highly civilised nation of 28,000,000 of men crushing 50,000 "half-naked savages".¹ He went on to say that, consequently, "it becomes us to advocate every other means rather than the employment of force against so feeble a foe".² In the education of the children Gorst appears to have thought that this was one of the means, if not the means. He was, however, soon disappointed and disillusioned with the government.

Whilst he was inspecting the schools, Gorst was appointed as Resident Magistrate of the Upper Waikato district and he lived with his wife at Te Tomo, a house hired by the Government, from a settler, at Otawhao.³ Although armed "with proper legal powers", Gorst's jurisdiction, "was repudiated and set at nought by all the people amongst whom he lived except a few Pakehas".⁴ This was the result of a decree emanating some time earlier from the Runanga of Ngaruawahia forbidding the entry of Queen's magistrates within the King's dominions. When Gorst refused to leave Otawhao in spite of the threats of a

1 & 2 Gorst, H.E., op. cit., p. 28.

3 & 4 Gorst, J.E., New Zealand Revisited, p. 192.

zealous chieftain, Patene of Mohoaonui, shortly after his arrival there, his presence in his official capacity irritated the Runangas of the Waikato into forbidding any native to use the european court.¹

It was not surprising, therefore, that the Minister for Native Affairs, F. Dillon Bell, wrote to the former governor, Gore-Browne: "As to Waikato things are in a mess I think ... Gorst is getting extremely dissatisfied with things in general. He is writing a report that will be most interesting and will open the eyes of a good many people ...".²

Gorst's disillusionment manifested itself throughout the report mentioned by Bell, although it purported to be a report "which has been designed throughout as a bare statement of facts".³ At the beginning of the report Gorst described the present state of government of the Maories succinctly: "Amongst the members of a Maori tribe there is that absolute equality of condition, which is called democracy; and that want of organised government, which is known as anarchy".⁴ He went on to express the view, "that people with such a government ... are in a very low social state: the equality which exists among

¹Gorst, J.E., The Maori King, p. 162-4.

²National Archives, New Zealand, Gore-Browne Papers, GB1/2G. F.D. Bell to T. Gore-Browne, May 29, 1862.

³AJHR, 1862. E-9. J.E. Gorst, 'General Report on the State of the Upper Waikato', p. 19.

⁴Ibid., p. 10-11.

them is an equality of poverty and barbarism. Where the whole population consists of law-makers, magistrates, and soldiers, none are left to be farmers or stock-keepers, or to practice any sort of productive industry".¹ It was not surprising, he believed, that the natives had grown progressively poorer with the increase of the King Movement, and that this was being accompanied by a decline in the health of the Maories in the area.

Gorst only devoted a paragraph to the description of the education of the children in this report, but in it all the aspirations of his earlier report had been extinguished by the cold facts of the situation five months later:

"The education of their children is now totally neglected; they are left to run about the villages with the dogs and pigs, wild, naked, and dirty. Not only has the number of children in the Mission schools decreased by more than half, but almost all those village schools which gave so much promise a short time ago have come to nothing, and there is no effort and no desire to see them revived. And that there may be no hope of saving the young generations from growing up in ignorance and barbarism, the parents are firmly resolved that they will not accept the assistance of Government or of Europeans in doing that for their children which they will not do themselves". He concluded this depressing account, "Unless this state of things is very speedily changed, the next generation of

¹Ibid.

natives will be even worse educated than the present, and as ignorance increases the anarchy of the land will become still more difficult to cure".¹

In addition to the problem of education which his report revealed, Gorst felt that the only way for the colony and the Maories to get out of the morass into which they had gradually descended was Government - "I mean vigorous Government - I mean authority which is able to protect life and property by enforcing obedience to the law ... It is the last link between the sovereign and the subject, it is the police which is defective. If there existed a power which could take up and punish offenders against the 6th and 8th of the Ten Commandments, the sores of the land would be healed. Who will dare to organise and use such a power? ..."² But the government were not inclined to take Gorst's views to heart: "... they met it only with mild expostulations and persisted in making no change in the method by which Waikato and other native districts were to be administered".³

The government wanted Gorst to visit Auckland to see Sir George Grey but Gorst refused, adding that he had said all he had to say in his report and was also prepared to resign if the government decided to refute his findings. He was, however, persuaded to visit Auckland, and in the

¹Ibid., p. 12.

²Ibid., p. 19.

³Gorst, J.E., New Zealand Revisited, p. 223.

event spent a week having interviews with Grey. The latter managed to persuade Gorst to continue his work in the Waikato as Commissioner for the Upper and Lower Waikato, and to take his orders directly from himself rather than the Colonial government. Grey wanted to establish a police force at Otawhao, but Gorst persuaded him to establish a technical school there instead. This would act as a lure for the men in the King's army, and help undermine the King movement by teaching them a number of useful trades.¹ After this had been established Gorst was then to set up a police force at Te Kohekohe, a village on the Waikato River just south of the Mangatawhiri River, which the Maories regarded as the boundary between the King's land, to the south, and the Queen's land.²

A somewhat buoyant Gorst returned to Waikato to take over the school, house and estate at Te Awamutu, turning out the incumbent, Rev. Morgan, who had been 20 years in residence there.³ Support for the school came from Wiremu Tamihana and the peace-loving Maories, but Rewi Maniapatu and his clique opposed it - suspecting that it was a diversion whilst Grey prepared the colony for war. The Runangas, consequently, opposed sending their children to the school, which threatened the success of the venture. There were enough entrants, however, to enable the school

¹Ibid., p. 224.

²Ibid., p. 226.

³Ibid., p. 227: Gorst quoted Morgan as saying that he would give up his home as he would be no obstacle to anything which might be for the good of the natives.

to function. A European schoolmaster taught reading, writing and arithmetic whilst English artisans who spoke Maori were employed in teaching carpentry, shoemaking, tailoring, printing, etc.¹

In January, 1863, Grey journeyed to the Waikato and in a speech made to Maories at Taupiri stated that he would not fight against their king with a sword, but that he would dig round him with spades until he fell of his own accord. Gorst recalled: "The Maories said they had all looked round to see where the spades were at work, and they were convinced that the Government Commissioner [Gorst] was the principal spade and that the digging was going on most vigorously at Te Awamutu".²

The Maories' suspicions were even more aroused when a newspaper was published at the Te Awamutu school, as a reply to the Maori, pro-King paper, Te Hokioi. The new paper, edited by Gorst, was called Te Pihoihoi Mokemoke - and the first editorial (which had been revised by Grey), entitled "The Evil of the King Movement", on February, 1863, precipitated Gorst's departure from the Waikato.³ Rewi Maniapatu informed the Runanga of Ngaruawahia that he intended to expel both the press and Gorst from Te Awamutu in consequence of the article, and surrounded Gorst's

¹Ibid., p. 232.

²Ibid., p. 252.

³Ibid., p. 240. Gorst gave as a translation: "The sparrow that sitteth alone on the housetop". Sinclair, however, simplifies it to "the lonely groundlark". See p. 217, The Maori King.

house on March 25th. After an interview with Gorst the following day he agreed to allow Gorst three weeks grace in which to communicate with Sir George Grey, and withdrew his men.¹

Grey replied to Gorst on March 28th, approving of his actions in the Waikato and concurring with Bell that he, Gorst, was to use his own judgement about staying, but not to risk his or a member of his party's life. He concluded: "With this knowledge act entirely as you think fit, in the full assurance, that in anything that so meritorious a public servant as yourself may do, I shall always bear him out in what he does to the best of his ability, and with an evident desire to promote the Queen's service".²

Gorst, after this advice and also some from Wiremu Tamihana, decided to evacuate Te Awamutu for the safety of Auckland on April 18, as the possibility of war between the Colonists and Maories grew daily. Grey directed Gorst to take his family and party to his home on the Island of Kawau until he could reinstate Gorst at Te Awamutu. As Gorst remarked later, "how he intended to do this I never knew", and all possibility of doing so vanished when soldiers crossed the Mangatawhiri River and the Waikato War began.³

Gorst worked for Bell at the Native Office in Auckland until July, when he resigned his Commissionership, and then

¹Gorst, J.E., New Zealand Revisited, p. 266.

²National Archives, New Zealand, Grey Papers, G36/6.
Sir G. Grey to J.E. Gorst, March 28, 1863.

³The complete cessation of hostilities did not occur until 1872.

acted as a private secretary to Bell, who was suffering from an eye complaint, for a short time. This included accompanying him to Australia to recruit soldiers in August, and Gorst took his family with him as Auckland's safety was in question. Before leaving, the new Prime Minister, Domett, and Bell had "expressed an intention of putting me into a vacant seat in the Legislative Council". When news arrived that the Council was to be summoned whilst they were in Australia, Bell wrote to his colleagues in Auckland about Gorst's appointment; Gorst had mentioned his determination "to be in a position to express my independent opinions". The return mail brought no answer to Bell, and Gorst "was so indifferent to the result, that ... I sailed for England without waiting for a second post".¹

Gorst and his family arrived in England on December 14, 1863,² and shortly afterwards, faced with the necessity of providing for a wife and two young children, Gorst resumed taking his dinners at the Inner Temple: a practice he had ceased shortly before 1858. He also found time to write his first book, The Maori King,³ and an

¹P.P. 1865, Vol. XXXVII, J.E. Gorst to Sir F. Rogers, December 20, 1864.

²Gorst, Sir Eldon. Autobiographical Notes, Vol. 1, p. 1
Unpublished work of Gorst's eldest son, who distinguished himself as an administrator in Egypt. His career was cut short by an early death from cancer in 1911.

³Gorst, J.E., The Maori King, 1864.



John Eldon Gorst, c. 1863

article, 'Our New Zealand Conquests'.¹

The book was published in 1864 and, as its title suggested, dealt with the evolution of the Maori King movement in the North Island of New Zealand. Gorst's account of the movement and his own experiences of it whilst he was in New Zealand were delightfully, and yet perceptively, written. Reference has been already made to those parts of it concerned with Gorst's experiences as an inspector of schools; the main part of the book also revealed Gorst's concern for the Maories and their treatment at the hands of the Colonial government prior to, and during his stay in the country. His comments about the settlers did not escape their notice, and their printed comments ranged from allegations of "sour grapes" to one that he wrote the book, "to prove to his friends that he was an uncommonly clever fellow".² Sinclair, however, views the book as, "one of the very best of nineteenth century accounts of life among the Maories" and one that provides a good foundation to the understanding of the rise of the nineteenth century British Empire.³

The article, published a year later, aroused more indignation amongst the New Zealand settlers with Gorst's account of the Waikato War, and his condemnation of the colonial government for starting the war in which, "we

¹Gorst, J.E., 'Our New Zealand Conquests', Macmillan, June 1, 1865, p. 168-175.

²Sinclair in Gorst, J.E., The Maori King, p. xv.

³Ibid., p. xvi.

gained territory ... but we lost prestige" and for continuing it, "for the aggrandizement of the Auckland province at the expense of the British Government".¹ His attacks on the colonial government could be construed as bitterness over his failure to be accepted on to the Legislative Council in 1863, except for the fact that he had made similar complaints whilst he was in New Zealand. Gorst reserved his most scathing indictment, however, for the inhabitants of Auckland: "These shrewd commercial men cling to the profits of a war expenditure, and have petitioned the Queen to take away their constitutional rights, and make Auckland a Crown Colony, rather than thus prematurely deprive them of the profits of the Maori wars".²

There can be little doubt that Gorst saw his attempts, during his stay in New Zealand, to achieve a harmonious rapport between Maori and settler by rational means swept away by the onslaught of the Waikato War, instigated by the people who had rejected him. It is not, therefore, surprising that his attitude in 1865, whilst contesting Hastings at the general election, should reflect these views and emerge as an opposition to the lowering of the

¹Gorst, J.E., Our New Zealand Conquests, op. cit., p. 170-1.

²Ibid., p. 173.

franchise.¹ It need hardly be added that in an electorate that was, according to Gorst, 50 per cent working class, he was not elected.² He was, however, called to the Bar during the year, and thus could start to earn a living as a barrister.

Gorst had not apparently been too dejected by his Hastings experience for in 1866, through the intervention of one of the two Cambridge City M.P's., Francis Powell, he allowed himself to be nominated for the vacancy arising through the disqualification of the other Member, Forsyth.³ At the election on April 24, Gorst managed to scrape home as the victor, with a majority of nineteen votes.⁴ After taking his seat in the House, Gorst attracted little attention apart from a vigorous attack on the rather pompous Under Secretary for the Colonies, Adderly, during a debate upon the position of the colonists in Ceylon. This earned him the approbation of Disraeli - conveyed by Spencer Walpole:- "I thought you would like to know that Mr. Disraeli was extremely pleased

¹"... having witnessed the results of democratic Government in our Australasian Colonies, I am opposed to the lowering of the franchise". Hastings and St. Leonard's News, May 26, 1865, p. 3. Elections to the Colonial Assemblies "were lodged in one class - the labouring class, which was a great and monstrous evil". Ibid., June 9, 1865, p. 3. Quoted in Vincent, J.R., "A sort of second-rate Australia": A note on Gorst and democracy, 1865-8', Historical Studies (Aus. & New Zealand), 1973, 15, p. 539-40.

²Ibid., p. 540.

³Review of Reviews, IV, 1891, p. 578.

⁴Vincent, J.R., Pollbooks : How Victorians Voted, p. 90.

with your smart attack on Mr. Adderley".¹

Gorst did, in 1867, become involved in the creation of a national body of the Conservative Working Men's Associations; bodies which had been, and were continuing to be established throughout the country. In this he was joined by some other young Tories, e.g. H.C. Raikes, W.T. Charley, Edward Clarke and A.G. Marten, and their efforts resulted in the foundation, during November of that year, of the National Union of Conservative and Constitutional Associations. The first meeting of this Union was held at the Freemason's Tavern in London, on November 12, with Gorst as Chairman.²

Vincent has demonstrated that Gorst's activities during the period 1865-8 were based on fundamentally anti-democratic lines, and at the time when, through his work with the above associations, Gorst was laying the foundation of his future career as party organiser his, "anti-democratic feelings were at their sternest, and his confidence in the masses, in the future, and in the Tory leadership, most clouded".³ This state of Gorst's does seem to have been derived partly, if not wholly, from his experience of the settlers and their governing systems in both New Zealand and Australia. In view of this it must have seemed strange that a man making pronouncements against

¹Gorst, H.E., op. cit., p. 31.

²Minutes of National Union of Conservative and Constitutional Associations, November 12, 1867, p. 3-5.

³Vincent, J.R., op. cit., p. 543-4.

any further extension of the franchise should have become involved with working class associations, albeit Conservative ones. The mystery is possibly explained by the fact that the working men's associations, "... were generally under strong upper- and middle-class influence, tending to institutionalize the deferential relationship between the Conservative artisan and his social superiors, rather than serve as agencies for the promotion of working class independence and initiative in politics, and having stated objects that were severely Conservative in tone and placed little emphasis on specifically working-class interests".¹ Thus, what took him into party organisation was very much the reverse of both the "moderate liberalism of his own party at the time", and the political philosophy of Tory Democracy that he was to cling to for the rest of his career; which developed from his work in party organisation.²

The change in outlook that was soon to manifest itself, and was to produce an "enthusiasm for spreading the gospel to the working men", was initiated through Gorst's loss of his seat in the House, in common with many other Tory Members, as a result of the Liberal reaping of the harvest which Disraeli had sown in the previous year with his Reform Act. Gorst returned, in the first instance, to

¹Smith, P., Disraelian Conservatism and Social Reform, p. 117.

²Vincent, J.R., op. cit., p. 544.

the law and concentrated on building up his practice.¹
But in 1870, he was drawn back into the world of politics.

In March, 1870, Markham Spofforth's tenure of office as party agent for the Tories ended, a post which he had held since 1859.² His attributes for the post were summed up by Disraeli in 1875: "Mr. Spofforth served us for years, and years of adversity - if not always with perfect judgement, with great talent, honour and devotion. He was not well used by us, but he has never murmured".³ It was, however, apparent that a person in the same mould as Spofforth was not wanted by either Disraeli or Gerard Noel, the Chief Whip, as a successor to his post. By mid-April, Noel, writing to Disraeli, seemed to have found in Gorst the person he and Disraeli were looking for:

"I have been trying to find someone to fill the place and it occurred to me that we could not find a better successor than Mr. Gorst the late Member for Cambridge, provided he could be induced to undertake the (?) post ... I think Mr. Gorst com-

¹Gorst's own papers do not appear to have survived, but his eldest son, Eldon, recorded some of the events in his father's early career. See, Gorst, Sir Eldon, Autobiographical Notes 1, p. 1-3.

²Blake, R., Disraeli, p. 352.

³Cairns Papers, B. Disraeli to Lord Cairns, January 13, 1875. Quoted in Feuchtwanger, E.J., Disraeli, Democracy and the Tory Party, p. 107. Feuchtwanger gives a detailed account of this stage of Gorst's career. See also, Feuchtwanger, E.J., 'J.E. Gorst and the Central Organisation of the Conservative Party, 1870-1882'. Bul. Inst. Hist. Res. 32, 1959, p. 192-208; Hanham, H.J., Elections and Party Management Politics in the Time of Disraeli and Gladstone; and, Cornford, J., 'The Transformation of Conservatism in the late Nineteenth Century', Victorian Studies, 7.September, 1963, p. 35-50.

bines the necessary qualities, he is a gentleman, with a good manner, an excellent (?) ..., has had a legal education, and is also very energetic in all he undertakes".¹

Eight days later, Noel was more or less certain that the problem of Spofforth's successor had been resolved, although Gorst was hesitant about having to give up the House of Commons in order to undertake his new duties.² According to his son, Gorst's dilemma was solved by Disraeli's offer of office if the Conservatives were successful at the next general election.³ With this behind him, Gorst plunged into the task of reorganising the party. The basic task involved the creation of an organisation which could bring about the political conversion of the recently enfranchised electorate in those areas which were radical strongholds. As Gorst put it: "We are generally strong in Counties and weak in boroughs, and we shall never attain stable political power till the boroughs are conquered".⁴

This goal required, therefore, the establishment of

¹Hughenden Papers, B/XXI/N/114, G. Noel to B. Disraeli, April 14, 1870.

²Hughenden Papers, B/XXI/N/115, G. Noel to B. Disraeli, April 22, 1870.

³Gorst, H.E., op. cit., p. 32.

⁴Hughenden Papers, B/XXI/N/120a, J.E. Gorst to Hon. G.J. Noel, September 22, 1870. This utterance of Gorst's was a recognition of the effect the 1867 Reform Act had produced in the election of the following year. "The effect was to increase the middle-class vote in the counties and extend the vote to the artisans and better-to-do workers in the towns ... for the first time in English history, the boroughs had more votes than the counties". Thomson, D., England in the Nineteenth Century, p. 128-9.

local associations and committees to foster Conservative principles, mainly amongst the working classes. These bodies should, Gorst believed, also be responsible for the choice and management of candidates at elections. The obvious choice for the boroughs rested in the working men's associations, whilst in the counties and those smaller boroughs where Tory influence still dominated, committees could be created. The organisation, co-ordination, and development of these associations required the complete efforts of Gorst and his staff at 53, Parliament Street, Westminster. Initially they were duplicating some of the work carried out by the National Union under the direction of Leonard Sedgwick; a fact which did not generate confidence in the general organisation amongst the local associations. The problem was resolved by Sedgwick's resignation and Gorst becoming the honorary secretary of the Union, with the offices of both organisations being housed in 53, Parliament Street.¹

Gorst recognised the fact that the prospects of conversion to Conservatism amongst the working classes was closely linked with the variations existing in urban and economic structures:

"Where the artisans practice small trades ministering to the wants of the rich as in Birmingham, London and so many of the minor boroughs, it is easy to see the influences which make them dissenters and radicals. It is among the employés of large staple trades like the cotton trade or

¹Feuchtwanger, E.J., 'U.E. Gorst and the Central Organisation of the Conservative Party, 1870-1882'. Bul. Inst. Hist. Res., 32, 1959, p. 196-7.

ship-building trade that we must look in the first instance for conservative workmen".¹

He proposed, therefore, that a visit by Disraeli to Lancashire would help to demonstrate the existence of Toryism amongst the working classes, and also convince the sections of the Conservative Party that were disenchanted with Disraeli's policy of reform that it was a viable one. Lancashire was chosen by Gorst because he thought it the stronghold of the party, and the only county in which the Tories were the stronger party in the boroughs.² He reiterated the theme later in the year to Disraeli:

"Among the working classes of Preston, Bolton, Blackburn, Accrington, Clitheroe, Darwen, Burnley, - the men by whom the Lancashire borough elections were carried - there is a very strong desire that a working man's meeting should take place at either Blackburn or Preston. They want to see and hear you and they want you to see the newly enfranchised electors of your own creation. Amongst them at least you would receive genuine thanks for the Reform Bill of 1867 - and in their quaint old fashioned way, with guilds and strange customs and medieval ceremonies, they would give you a reception that would I think please you".³

It took a year of planning and gathering of information to ensure that Disraeli's visit would be with the consent of all the Conservatives in the county, but the meeting did not take place until April 3, 1872, at the Free Trade Hall, Manchester. The essential reason for the

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Hughenden Papers, B/XXI/N/120a, J.E. Gorst to G.J. Noel, September 22, 1870.

²Ibid.

³Hughenden Papers, B/XXI/G/236, J.E. Gorst to B. Disraeli, December 22, 1870.

delay was a reflection, by the apathy of some of the County Tories, of Disraeli's weak position as leader of the party. Gorst's activities in the promotion of this meeting also underlined the fact that the Disraelian concept of Toryism was not universally accepted in the Party. The success of the meeting, however, did much to establish Disraeli's position as the leader of the party, and it also confirmed the success of Gorst's efforts at reorganisation, at the grass roots level at least.¹

The amount of travelling carried out by Gorst in connection not only with the Manchester meeting but with the encouragement and stimulation of local efforts by the associations was prodigious. At the same time, it did also provide him with a unique insight into the machinations of party organisation. By the end of 1872, Gorst was able to report to Disraeli that 69 new associations had been formed - in addition to the already existing 420 associations - and the majority of them were in an efficient state.² This rapid growth, the success of the Manchester visit, and his contact with Disraeli in these matters, may have led Gorst to feel that his was not an insignificant position within the party, in spite of the fact that Lord Cairns was the only other Tory leader to take an interest in the activities of the Central Office.³

¹Gorst, H.E., The Earl of Beaconsfield, p. 135; Smith, P., op. cit., p. 160.

²Hughenden Papers, B/XXI/G/240, J.E. Gorst to B. Disraeli, February 12, 1873.

³Feuchtwanger, op. cit., p. 197; H.E. Gorst, op.cit., p. 32-33.

Gorst's feelings were rudely shattered during the Ministerial crisis of 1873. On the basis of information supplied by Gorst the Standard published the view that the Conservatives were willing to take office, but Gorst discovered that Disraeli had declined the opportunity. Thus his views were, in fact, at complete variance with those of the leaders. Gorst's anger at this discovery did not reveal itself fully until the following year, although he hinted at it in his letter to Corry, Disraeli's private secretary:

"Being however entirely in the dark as to the opinion and wishes of the leader, I was obliged to take the general sentiment of the Party as my guide".¹

With the realization that his present post was not yielding all he originally believed it could, Gorst started to become disenchanted, although he continued with the work and the feeding back of information to Disraeli from the local organisations. His emphasis continued to be on the value of the boroughs to the party's future hopes, and this was clearly revealed in a letter to Disraeli, about Forster's Education Bill of 1873:

"I ought to communicate to you my fear that a Party opposition to the Education Bill will alienate an important section of our supporters. With country gentlemen and farmers in the agricultural counties such a policy might be popular : they really dislike education and school boards altogether.

¹ Hughenden Papers, B/XX1/G/241, J.E. Gorst to M. Corry, March 17, 1873. See, Hughenden Papers, B/XX1/G/249, J.E. Gorst to M. Corry, February 19, 1874.

"But in the Boroughs and populous counties, our party embraces zealous and active promoters of Education, and Forster's Bill is founded on the very principles for which they have as they think ... contended. They look upon it as a great triumph of Conservative principles that the Govt. have felt compelled to turn their backs on the Education League and bring in such a bill as the present; and they desire to give the measure an active support and claim it as the expression of their own views. I confess that the idea of defeating the government and having an appeal to the country on this question fills me with dismay. We cannot carry the English majority we hope for without the active help of those, who on this question will be opposed to our policy".¹

On January 19, 1874, Gorst was writing to Disraeli about the government's negotiations with the leaders of the Nine Hours movement.² Some five days later, with Gladstone's sudden dissolution of parliament, he was embarking upon the final testing of the organisation he had laboured on in the three years previously.³

The general election was completed by mid-February, and Gorst's evaluation of the relevance of the boroughs was vindicated by the electoral successes of the Conservatives. They had almost doubled the number of seats in the large boroughs which they had taken in 1868 - 44 against 25 - and had more gains in numerous other working-

¹Hughenden Papers, B/XXI/G/1243, J.E. Gorst to B. Disraeli, June 21, 1873. Disraeli gave way seeing "the danger of disunion in such a course". Cranbrook Papers, T501/295. Hardy's diary, 27 June, 1873: Quoted in P. Smith, op. cit., p. 180.

²Hughenden Papers, B/XXI/G/247, J.E. Gorst to B. Disraeli, January 19, 1874.

³For a likely explanation of Gladstone's reason, see: Ensor, R., England 1870-1914, p. 25-6: Gorst, H.E., The Earl of Beaconsfield, p. 148-150.

class bastions, as well as gaining support from the middle classes.¹ As Gorst's son was to write:

"For the first time since the days of Peel the Conservative Party obtained a clear working majority".²

In the general euphoria of victory and the rush for the attendant spoils, the disenchanted aristocrats of the early '70s successfully stepped over the middle classes, who had worked for and gained the result, and filled the cabinet. The exception was Richard Cross - "the only cabinet representative of what might be called the new Liberal-Conservatism of the industrial, commercial, and professional middle-class, which had so much to do with the ministry's accession to office".³ The most conspicuous absentee from governmental office was Gorst, and the leaders' treatment of him at this time was such as to leave Gorst with a bitter taste in his mouth for the rest of his life, and to hamper relations between them and him in the future.⁴

An anomaly would appear to be present in the accounts of Gorst's attempts to obtain office as well as a seat in the House of Commons. In his son's record of these times,

¹Smith, P., Disraelian Conservatism and Social Reform, p. 190-192.

²Gorst, H.E., The Fourth Party, p. 33.

³Smith, P., op. cit., p. 194.

⁴e.g. Gorst's letter to The Times, February 6, 1907: "The aristocratic section which had despaired of Toryism in 1868, returned; most of the 'spoils' fell to them, and they showed no reluctance to reap that which others had sown".

Disraeli is supposed to have apologised to Gorst for his treatment of office: "Why did you not come and ask me for something? I have always been accustomed to people pestering me for appointments, and could not understand your keeping away. You have been very badly treated, and I am extremely sorry for it".¹ Yet only two months after the election, Gorst had written to Disraeli:

"An opportunity occurred yesterday for the fulfilment of the promise originally made to me by Noel, and recently confirmed by you.

"The seat at Midhurst is likely to be vacant, and it is understood that Perceval is ready to support anyone recommended by the Conservative leaders. Dyke offered the party interest, in accordance he said with your wishes, to Mr. Ward (?) Hunt, for Admiral Hornby.

"Now I would have given way in a moment to Admiral Hornby, if I had been asked to do so for the good of the cause, but I think that my claim to the consideration of the Party should have been recognised and not ignored".²

In spite of this pestering, Disraeli ignored Gorst and it was not until 1875, and in opposition to the party leaders, that Gorst re-entered the House; this time as the Member for Chatham.³ Only towards the end of that year did Disraeli, in fact, offer Gorst a minor governmental post - Secretary to the Local Government Board. Gorst declined the offer a few days later, believing that with the president of the Board also in the House he would be

¹Gorst, H.E., op. cit., p. 34.

²Hughenden Papers, B/XXI/G/251, J.E. Gorst to B. Disraeli, May 7, 1874.

³Gorst, H.E., op. cit., p. 35.

virtually shelved.¹ After the last reshuffle of Disraeli's government in 1878, Gorst remained out of office.

It would appear from this that Disraeli was very much aware of the antagonism which existed between Gorst and the party management. Furthermore he was not prepared to jeopardise his own fragile position, by the promotion of Gorst, whilst he remained in the Commons. However, with his ascent to the Lords Disraeli could make some partial amends for the treatment Gorst had received by apologising to him. This act preserved Gorst's faith in his leader:

"I have never supposed that you were either responsible for, or even cognizant of, the way in which the party managers have since 1874 behaved towards me: and I have regarded their hostility as the natural consequence of my steadfast adherence to those popular principles in politics, which you taught me, which won the boroughs in 1874, and which for the time being in discredit must ultimately prevail.

"I am to blame for not having asked for an interview with you before declining the offer you so kindly made me in 1875. But I then believed that, for a person like myself without social interest, the acceptance of such an office meant political extinction".²

Gorst's relations with the other party leaders had, however, deteriorated after the election success. In

¹Hughenden Papers, B/XXI/G/254, J.E. Gorst to B. Disraeli, November 20, 1875, in reply to Disraeli's letter of November 18.

²Hughenden Papers, B/XXI/G/259, J.E. Gorst to B. Disraeli, April 4, 1878.

November, 1874, he complained to W.H. Smith:

"I am by this time so accustomed to the refusal of every request that I make of the Conservative Government, whether on political or personal grounds, that I am neither surprised nor mortified at the announcement that the promise made to me on my brother's behalf is not to be fulfilled. My own attachment to the cause is I hope of a character that cannot be affected by anything the leaders of the party can do: but on political grounds, I greatly deplore the forgetfulness which all the members of the government exhibit of those men to whose exertions they largely owe their present positions ... I cannot see how we are to keep our party together, unless those who have worked and made sacrifices for the party in the days of adversity are to have some share in the advantages which attend success ...".¹

And in a similar vein to Dyke, now Chief Whip,

Gorst wrote:

"... looking back over the 9 months that we have been in office, I cannot but perceive that all our patronage has been divided between the personal friends of the ministers and our political opponents; and that with the exception of Keith Falconer's appointment ... nothing whatever has been done to reward those who shared with us the labours and troubles of opposition, and have done far more than some whose good luck has pitched them into places far above their merits ...".²

¹Hughenden Papers, B/XX1/D/463c, J.E. Gorst to W.H. Smith, November 11, 1874.

²Ibid., B/XX1/D/463b, J.E. Gorst to Sir W.H. Dyke, November 19, 1874.

Gorst's position as party agent had, theoretically, finished with the general election, but he stayed on, "at Sir W. Dyke's request and out of personal regard to him, to remain in a sort of undefined position until some fresh arrangements could be made ...".¹ He was still aware of the vulnerability of the Party's position with the electorate, and wrote to Disraeli on this point in December, 1874, just after the municipal elections:

"... I do not dissent from your view that the mass of the people is, or may be made, Tory. But masses cannot move without leaders; and in English Boroughs we are grievously deficient in Tory leaders. Those of the higher classes in Boroughs who take part in politics have everything to lose and nothing to gain by attaching themselves to the Tory party; and we therefore find wealth, influence, ability and all local political forces arranged against us.

"I was in hopes that the power and patronage which the possession of office has given us might have been at least so used to create in the boroughs a permanent Tory faction ...".²

On seeing this letter Dyke wrote to Disraeli, stating that he did not share Gorst's gloomy view about the boroughs, and then went on to discuss the problem of Gorst himself:

"I am obliged to trouble you now with some letters from Gorst which I have kept for some time to show you ... I dissected with him many of the cases he cites in his letter to me of November 19th, and they crumbled away: I did not touch upon the violent language he uses ... he says to his friends that we get on admirably together: he is I am bound to say of great use to me with all his

¹Ibid., B/XX1/G/258, J.E. Gorst to B. Disraeli, March 3, 1877.

²Hughenden Papers, B/XX1/G/463a, J.E. Gorst to B. Disraeli, December 2, 1874.

crotchets and since our talk the other day he writes to me a cheerful letter and he is working hard now at the St. Ives election ... Things are so quiet now that I am much disposed to keep Gorst in hand, crotchets and all".¹

Gorst grew gloomier as time passed, because he could see the organisation he had carefully constructed being allowed to rapidly disintegrate, and his powers with them, in spite of warnings to Disraeli and other leaders.² As a result of this, he grew increasingly 'crotchettier' towards Dyke and the others; the net effect being that Dyke informed Gorst in March, 1877, that he was being replaced. This provoked a letter from Gorst to Disraeli in which he aired his grievances, and at the same time pointed out what he considered to be the problems existent in the party organisation:

"During this period³ I have found myself without any power and with continually decreasing influence, having had little or no voice in the selection of candidates and the management of elections; and I have had the misfortune to witness the whole system, to establish which so much trouble was taken, gradually fall into decay. Our organisation in 1877 is greatly inferior to what it was in 1874: and the attempt to renovate and improve it has not come a day too soon. But to succeed in the attempt you must put a stop to that which has been the chief cause of all the mischief that has occurred - the system which Sir W. Dyke has been required to follow of managing elections at the Treasury. I always thought this a most unwise policy in the part of

¹Ibid., B/XX1/D/463, Sir W. Dyke to B. Disraeli, December 8, 1874.

²Ibid., B/XX1/G/253, J.E. Gorst to B. Disraeli, November 10, 1875; B/XX1/G/255, J.E. Gorst to B. Disraeli, November 22, 1875.

³After the election of 1874 and prior to his dismissal in 1877.

the late government, and since we have been in office, experience has justified that opinion ... I trust therefore that one part of the new arrangement may be to separate entirely and for ever the electoral management of the Party from the Government Department of the Treasury".¹

He went on to outline his recommendations for alleviating the problems - the management to be entrusted to an independent M.P., who in turn would be controlled by a finance committee. Gorst concluded that: "unless some energetic measures are speedily adopted, our organisation, whenever the election does take place, will be as inferior to that of our opponents, as it was superior in 1874 ...".²

Gorst's advice went unheeded, and his successor, W.B. Skene, found himself in a position inferior to that of Gorst's, being even less in touch with the party leaders. This fact, plus Gorst's observations to Disraeli, may be seen as portents of the Tories' chances in the next general election, which took place in 1880. They were also reflected in the result - the return of the Liberal party to power, with a majority of 137 over the Conservatives in the new parliament.³ Gorst managed to retain his seat, and in the life of the new parliament was to gain eminence through the use of tactics which were based mainly on the results of his experience as the party agent - adherence to Tory Democracy and antagonism towards the leaders of his party.

¹ & ² Hughenden Papers, B/XX1/G/258, J.E. Gorst to B. Disraeli, March 3, 1877.

³ Ensor, R.K., England, 1870-1914, p. 64.

CHAPTER TWO

Gladstone wrote of the Liberals' electoral victory, "The downfall of Beaconsfieldism is like the vanishing of some vast magnificent castle in an Italian romance", and contributed his win to an arousal of the nation's moral sense against "Beaconsfieldism".¹ Chamberlain on the other hand felt that it was due to the presence of a good Liberal organisation - the reverse of Gorst's estimate of the Conservative machinery.² It is most possible that the five per cent swing to the Liberals was due to a combination of the three factors.³ But what it did not achieve was a quenching of the ageing Disraeli's political fire.

At a meeting of peers and M.P's. held at Bridgewater House on May 19, Disraeli spoke for an hour and forty minutes indicating that he would, as he wrote later, "... take all steps in my power to sustain the spirit and restore the discipline of the Tory party ...".⁴ One of the first steps taken was the establishment of a committee, under W.H. Smith, to investigate the party organisation, and their discussions involved Gorst and the party leaders. Two basic results emerged from the investigation - firstly,

¹Quoted in Blake, R., Disraeli, p. 712.

²Ibid., p. 781-9.

³Hanham, H.J., Elections and Party Management: Politics in the Time of Disraeli and Gladstone, p. 192-3.

⁴Knebworth Papers, B. Disraeli to Lord Lytton, May 31, 1880. Quoted in Blake, op. cit., p. 721.

that in place of the previous ad hoc arrangement of Whips and party officials there should be a new, permanent committee to supervise the party organisation; this was later to become known as the Central Committee.¹ Secondly, Gorst was to be re-engaged as the party agent.

The latter's appointment was confirmed after an interview had taken place on July 7, 1880, between Gorst, Smith and Sir Stafford Northcote. Smith's notes of the interview clearly indicate that Gorst was aware of his bargaining power, and was insistent that any appointment would not hinder his independent position within the party. He declined the offer of office, if the party was successful, on the grounds of his treatment previously:

"I rejoined that he would be eligible for a law officers appointment only if he had practice and position at the Bar which would justify it and he fully accepted this view; but he contended that if an offer was made, it should be one which would not silence him in the House or deny him the chance of showing his own ability and claims for further political promotion.

"Mr. Gorst undertook to give his cordial assistance and all the time which his own profession did not require in the working out of the reorganisation required".²

Gorst's insistence on independence was a corollary to his attitude when leaving Australasia in 1863, but it was also possibly bound up with his thoughts about the future - and the way that this would be affected by his member-

¹Feuchtwanger, F.J., Disraeli, Democracy and the Tory Party, p. 143-4.

²Hambleden Papers, PS6/626. Notes by W.H. Smith of an interview between Sir S. Northcote, Mr. W.H. Smith and Mr. Gorst, July 7, 1880.

ship of the newly evolved Fourth Party. The latter had originated from Sir Henry Drummond Wolff's objections and obstruction to the avowed atheist M.P. for Northampton, Charles Bradlaugh, taking the oath at the beginning of the 1880 session in the House of Commons. In this Wolff was first joined by Gorst, and then Lord Randolph Churchill. Arthur Balfour was to join the trio shortly afterwards.¹

Gorst's bargaining power with Smith and Northcote may be seen in the amendments to Smith's proposals for an executive committee, whereby he extracted from Smith and Northcote a more powerful position than they had intended, although he still remained subservient to the Central Committee.² He was to be the head of the office and his prime responsibility was to be the organisation of candidates, although not having any right to promise any party money. At first this was to remain the Chief Whip's prerogative, but Gorst had the proviso included that he could "initiate proposals to spend money though he should

¹See: H.E. Gorst, op. cit., p. 51-60; Arnstein, W.L., The Bradlaugh Case: A Study in late Victorian Opinion and Politics, p. 34-52; Lucy, H.W., Memories of Eight Parliaments, p. 4-5, 214, 254-5. Drummond Wolff, Sir H.W., Rambling Recollections, 2, p. 258-261; Balfour, Earl of, Chapters of Autobiography, p. 133-150. James, R.R., Lord Randolph Churchill, p. 73-99.

²Hambleden Papers, PS6/646. Notes by W.H. Smith 1880. There was, however, disagreement between the Central Office and the National Union over Gorst's appointment. The National Union felt that Gorst would be too autocratic and would thereby allow it to sink into insignificance. "Eventually the affair ended in a compromise, whereby the National Union retained its independence, and Mr. Gorst his dignity - and the control of the party funds", Raikes, H. St. J., The Life and Letters of Henry Cecil Raikes, p. 158.

have no power to do this without the sanction of the Committee".¹ By the end of the interview, Gorst emerged with a position more to his liking, and one bearing a striking resemblance to the one he had outlined to Disraeli three years earlier.²

Only two months had passed since his appointment before Gorst was being antagonistic; this time towards the new Chief Whip, Rowland Winn, and one of Winn's protégés, Shaw:

"I will do my best to 'menager' Winn and his protégé, Shaw. My objection to the latter is more complex than the former supposes. Chiefly he is prone to corrupt practices, which accounts for his being in such request among corrupt constituencies. What Winn's phrases about not appreciating the money, etc., spent by Birmingham come to is that I won't fight corruption by corruption. To this I plead guilty: it is our policy to force the government to pass an Act that will stop as much corruption as possible, and if Harry Thynne and his friends will have corrupt practices on our side they must have them locally not fostered and organised from headquarters by Mr. Shaw or anybody else ...".³

Northcote was in agreement with Gorst over the corrupt practices that had gone on during elections, but he did not agree with Gorst's role as a member of the Fourth Party.⁴ That Gorst was aware of this emerged from the

¹Hamblenden Papers, op. cit.

²Hughenden Papers, B/XX1/G/258, J.E. Gorst to B. Disraeli, March 3, 1877.

³Hamblenden Papers, PS6/639, J.E. Gorst to W.H. Smith, September 8, 1880.

⁴Feuchtwanger, E.J., Disraeli, Democracy and the Tory Party, p. 149.

same letter to Smith:

"There is a regular intregue (sic) going on on the part of Bourke and others against Ld. R. Churchill, Wolff and myself. They tried to detach Balfour from us but failed. We mean to stick together and we shall be loyal to Northcote if he is loyal to us. But self-preservation is the first law of politics as well as of nature, and contingencies may happen which will end in your being obliged to take the place of the leader in the Commons whether you like it or not. Bon voyage".¹

What Gorst failed to see, apparently, was that the maintenance of his independent position as an aggressive Fourth Party member against both the Government and the Opposition front bench was not one that could easily be reconciled with his official position within the Conservative Party. This was pointed out to him by Northcote three days after Gorst had written to Smith:

"... I shall be very glad by and by to have a little talk with you about our organisation and our general prospects. We shall need both courage and care in the conduct of the Party next session, and we must be well prepared for the fight.

"... What I am therefore particularly anxious for is, that we should go into battle with clean hands and fight it on broad grounds - and we must be thoroughly united and harmonious. I am inclined to think that the 'Fourth Party' has done enough for its fame, and that it will be the wiser course for its members now quietly to take their places in the main body, where they will have work enough and to spare. There cannot be too much freedom of discussion among ourselves out of the House, but any appearance of disunion in the House is carefully to be avoided".²

¹Hambleton Papers, PS6/639, J.E. Gorst to W.H. Smith, September 8, 1880.

²Balfour Papers, BM. Add. MS. 49791, f1-3. Sir S. Northcote to J.E. Gorst, September 11, 1880.

With tongue in cheek, Gorst replied to Northcote four days later:

"Our little association, to which enemies to sow dissension among us have given the name of the 'Fourth Party', will I am sure prove one of your best instruments of political warfare. Each of us feels stronger for the support and wiser for the counsels of his fellows; and we are all determined to back you up loyally in fighting the battle of the Conservative cause against the combination of Whigs and Radicals who oppose us.

"You may rely on my letting you know anything which occurs in connection with our organisation ...".¹

But on the same day he wrote to Balfour and to Lord Randolph Churchill, separately, expressing the same sentiments to each - which revealed his true thoughts on the matter:

"I got a letter a day or two ago from the Goat² which nearly gave me a fit. Luckily I read it in bed - one can support mental shocks better in a horizontal position. After some banalities about organisation, etc. he went on to propose the dissolution of the Fourth Party ...

"Whose turn will it be next? These attempts of the Goat to sap the virtue of each of us separately are most disreputable".³

Gorst was obviously revelling in his ability to snipe at the 'Old Gang' on the Opposition front bench, which membership of the Fourth Party enabled him to do, possibly because it acted as a form of revenge for his treatment at

¹Feuchtwanger, E.J., Disraeli, Democracy and the Tory Party, p. 148-9.

²The contemptuous term applied to Sir Stafford Northcote by the Fourth Party.

³Churchill Papers 11, J.E. Gorst to Lord R. Churchill, September 15, 1880; Balfour Papers, BM. Add. Ms. 49791, f. 5-6, J.E. Gorst to A.J. Balfour, September 15, 1880.

their hands since 1874. In the first year or so of the Fourth Party's existence, the sniping was at a fairly light-hearted level:

"My dear Randolph,

"Since I wrote yesterday, a fresh idea has suggested itself ...

"Suppose that we were to treat the proposition of the Goat as a serious one and were after mature deliberation to accept it, that we should at his request give up the idea which we had never seriously entertained, of a separate Fourth Party, and consent at his invitation to take our 'places in the ranks'. We could then next session all four of us plant ourselves in a body on the second bench immediately behind Northcote. There we should have him completely under our thumb. He could not consult his colleagues without our seeing and hearing it: we should cut him off from his satellites, Dalrymple, Clarke & Fowler: he could not rise, if we pulled his coat tails and told him not to speak yet; and we could push suggestions under his nose all the time he was on his legs. After himself inviting us, he could not very well ask us to go away; and unless he made up his mind to a formal split in which he would be the aggressor, he could not avoid falling under our control. In short, we shall invade the front bench, make a prisoner of the Goat and set him up as our leader".¹

At a dinner given by Churchill shortly afterwards for the Fourth Party, Gorst's idea was rejected by the others - Churchill and Wolff were more in favour of trying to remove Northcote from his position as leader of the Tories in the House of Commons; Balfour humorously suggested that his legs were too long for him to sit behind the Treasury

¹Churchill Papers: 12, J.E. Gorst to Lord R. Churchill, September 16, 1880.

Bench.¹ Thus the quartet remained on the bench below the gangway for the following sessions.

The first two years of their party's existence saw the four men united in their activities outside the House of Commons as well as inside it.² Although Drummond Wolff had "planted the sapling: Apollos Rand. Churchill watered it so effectively that its proportions spread till they overtopped the trees of the forest" - the comment of a contemporary observer upon the growth of this party also reflected Churchill's emergence as the leader of the quartet in a short time after its formation.³ He used to entertain the other three members at his home in St. James' Place, where their presence was also enjoyed by his wife with as much excitement as their performances in the House.⁴ On Sundays, Gorst would entertain them at his home on Wandsworth Common,⁵ the party-minus Balfour - calling in at Mrs. Jeune's house in Putney for tea on their way

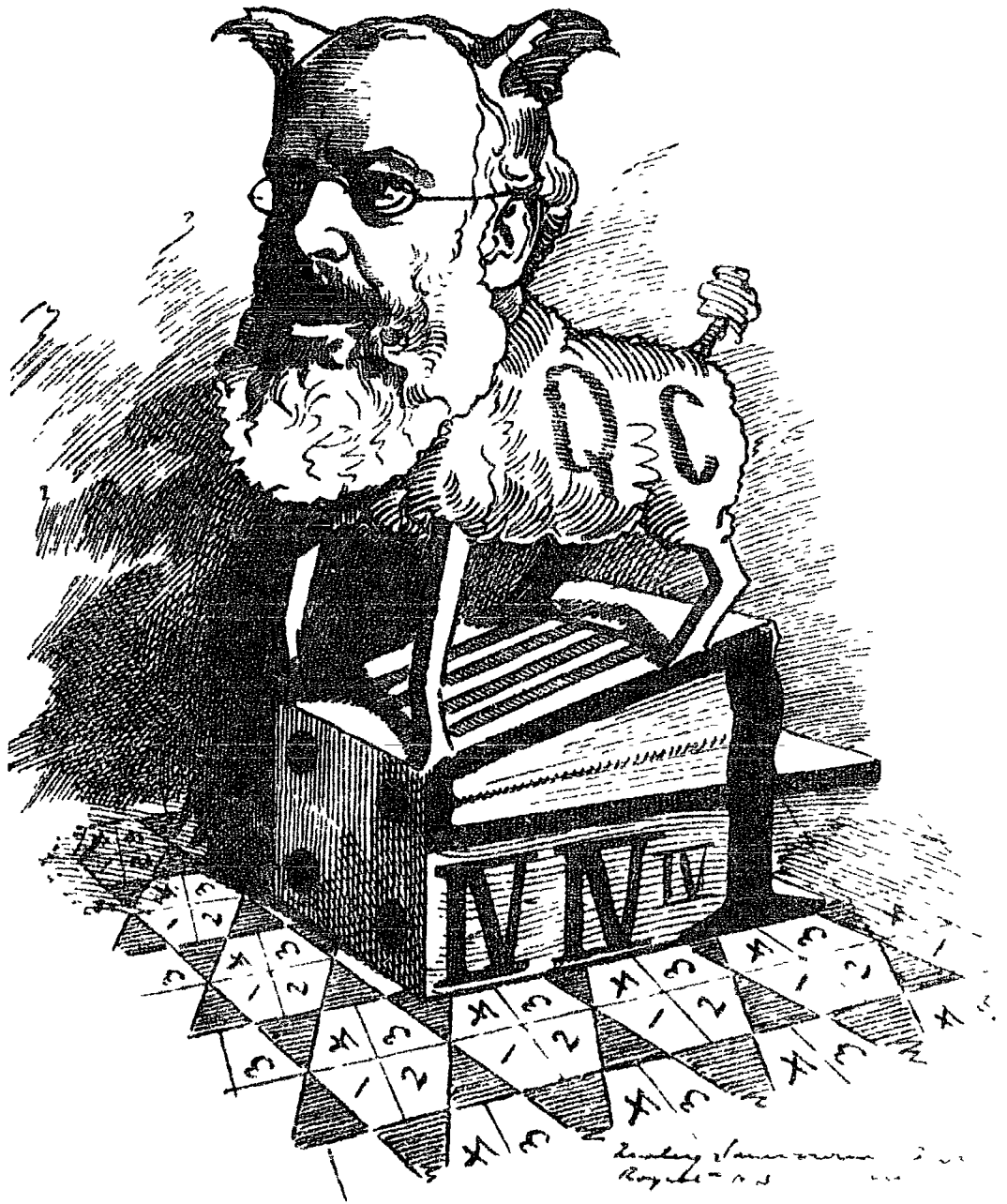
¹Churchill confessed some years later, to Sir Charles Dilke, that Gorst's plan would have enabled them to have been more effective in their efforts: Gwynn, S. & Tuckwell, G.M., Life of Sir Charles W. Dilke, 1, p. 267.

²Churchill Papers, Lord R. Churchill to Sir H. Wolff, October 2, 1882, "Gorst and I took a walk on Sunday on Hampstead Heath. I have never been there before. There is a capital inn there called 'Jack Straw's Castle', where Gorst and I agreed the Fourth Party ought to go for Saturday and Sunday during the session to recruit their strength". Quoted in Churchill, W.S., Lord Randolph Churchill, p. 137.

³Lucy, H.W., Memories of Eight Parliaments, p. 137.

⁴Cornwallis-West, G., The Reminiscences of Lady Randolph Churchill, p. 91-2.

⁵Gorst, H.E., op. cit., p. 101.



J. E. GORST, Q.C.,

OF THE FOURTH PARTY "QUORUM PAR MAGNA ILLI" - BUT IT NEEDS NO
"GORST" TO TELL US THAT.

there:

"In his best days Lord Randolph looked like a great schoolboy, full of fun and mischief, his busy brain always devising means by which he could upset his political opponents, and then bubbling over with fiendish glee at the traps he was setting for the unwary politicians of his own side ... I see him now lying back in his chair under a large copper beech which stood on the lawn at Putney, shaking with laughter at some mad prank he had played on someone, and concocting his endless schemes and plots, while Sir Henry Drummond Wolff and Sir John Gorst looked on with cynical approval".¹

Wolff, with Balfour, entertained his colleagues at the Garrick Club. With Gorst, he was one of the 'elders' of the party, but shared Churchill's ebullience, although inclined to be more flippant about serious matters.² Balfour later summed him up as, "a diplomat by profession, a man of the world by temperament and training, with a great aptitude for amusing and being amused, playing the game of life with gusto, and finding an interlude of Opposition politics, spent in congenial company, an occupation very much to his taste. Without being a great speaker, he had a quick eye for the possibilities of a Parliamentary situation and a tongue ready enough to turn opportunities to account".³

Balfour found his parliamentary feet in the Fourth Party, but, although he joined in their pranks initially, he never became a committed member, and towards the end of

¹St. Helier, Lady, Memories of Fifty Years, p. 272-3.

²Cornwallis-West, G., *op. cit.*, p. 91.

³Balfour, Earl of, Chapters of Autobiography, p. 136.

his career almost denied that he had ever been part of the group. Lord Roseberry described him as, "the outrigger of this frail but daring craft; he was of it for a time, but not in it".¹ Balfour's problem was that of reconciling the activities of the party with his membership of the Salisbury clan. His allegiance to the latter - coupled with hitching his future political career to Lord Salisbury's - compelled him to relinquish his membership when Churchill started to make his bid for the Tory party leadership. Of his colleagues in this particular group, the one who was to achieve most - in terms of membership of successive Tory governments - was Gorst; and as the years progressed their relationship deteriorated, with unhappy results for Gorst. His description of Gorst as a member of the Fourth Party seems to have been tempered by his experiences with Gorst later in his career:

"He was an acute and ready debater, of more force than charm, but clear and incisive if somewhat cynical. He certainly never left his hearers in doubt as to what he meant, or why he meant it. He was often unanswerable, but not so often persuasive".²

It is interesting, in view of subsequent developments, to note Lord Salisbury's approval of the Fourth Party's tactics during the first year,³ and six months after its

¹Roseberry, Lord, Lord Randolph Churchill, p. 144.

²Balfour, Earl of, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

³Churchill Papers, 14, J.E. Gorst to Lord R. Churchill, September 26, 1880. This letter is also most interesting because Gorst indicates his political philosophy in relation to his career: "... my ambition is not to wriggle into office, but to see a Conservative Party established which will win the confidence of the people".

formation, Gladstone's private secretary, Edward Hamilton, noted in his diary: "There are rumours that Lord Salisbury intends joining the 'Fourth Party' and throwing over Lord Beaconsfield. I can believe anything of that man".¹ This is surprising in view of the fact that Gorst had, some three weeks earlier, visited Lord Beaconsfield at Hughenden and had received his blessing upon the Fourth Party's activities, although tempered with consideration for Northcote's position:

"... Lord B was in his talk anything but goaty: he generally expressed great confidence in us thought we had a brilliant future before us, and promised to help and advise us as much as he could.

"... We sh^d always courteously inform N. through the Whip of any step we are about to take in the H of C and listen with respect and attention to anything he may say about it; his remarks even when we disagree with them will be well worth attention. But just at present we need not be too scrupulous about obeying our leader ...".²

Gorst continued to develop his plans for the Fourth Party's programme throughout the end of 1880, but did not neglect his work at the Central Office.³ By February of the following year, he was able to send a detailed report to Lord Beaconsfield of the routine work of the office and

¹Bahlman, D.W.R., (ed), The Diary of Sir Edward Walter Hamilton, 1880-5, 1, p. 82.

²Churchill Papers, 23, J.E. Gorst to Lord R. Churchill, November 9, 1880.

³Ibid., 35, J.E. Gorst to Lord R. Churchill, December 28, 1880: "I have come already upon some rich materials for embarrassing H.M. Govt., and when we meet I hope to be in a position to advise several lines on which we may develop attacks. We might revive some old forgotten weapons of Parliamentary warfare next session with effect".

of the work that had been initiated since August, 1880. Relations between Gorst and Northcote appeared to be satisfactory,¹ but within the party machine friction appeared to be developing again. Smith appealed to Balfour for help, who replied:

"... I cannot at this moment carry out your wishes as regards Gorst. As soon as I come to town ... I shall be most happy to do anything in my power to diminish any friction there may be in working what the Americans call 'the Machine'".²

Balfour's efforts do not seem to have had any long term effect, and even Lord Beaconsfield's death did little to deter Gorst from opposing Smith's proposals about rejuvenating local political efforts:

"... I will have the work we are doing in stimulating local effort pushed on. I don't however expect much practical result. Political activity seems to me to depend on causes too wide and deep to be controlled. A gardener might as well try to stimulate the rising of the sap in the spring. We may to some extent guide political activity when it does arise into useful channels - but create it - no. We can gain thoroughly reliable information as to the state of the constituencies and we can let the local leaders know that there is a body at headquarters to communicate with. Further than this we cannot go, until the local feeling awakes ...".³

¹Hambleton Papers, PO6/644, Sir S. Northcote to W.H. Smith, December 21, 1880.

²Hambleton Papers, PS7/1, A.J. Balfour to W.H. Smith, January 25, 1881.

³Ibid., PS7/21, J.E. Gorst to W.H. Smith, April 20, 1881. Three weeks earlier Gorst had written to Smith: "I have gone down home and shall probably not appear again for a few days. I am not exactly ill, but the difficulties political and personal with which I am surrounded so prey upon my mind that I want rest and repose to fit me to continue my encounter with them. I am beginning to think that I am growing too old for the task I have undertaken and that it won't be long before I break down altogether". Hambleton Papers, PS7/14, J.E. Gorst to W.H. Smith, March 23, 1881.

The relationship between Gorst and Smith became more strained towards the end of May when the question of financial remuneration for Gorst's services was raised. After a conversation with Smith, Gorst declined to accept a fee of 1,000 guineas for his former services,¹ but on June 23, he wrote to Smith to say:

"I am willing to continue to conduct the business of the Central Committee in the manner and upon the principles described in your letter until June 21, 1882, and to accept the sum named as a sufficient and satisfactory remuneration for the time and attention which the duties I have undertaken may demand ... It is of course meant that the sum you name has reference to the services of next year only, and that I am entitled to a like sum in respect of the services of the year that is past".²

Smith, on behalf of the Party leaders, sent Gorst a cheque for 500 guineas, which Gorst thought was outside the agreement made with the offer of 1,000 guineas.³ This brought an exasperated reply from Smith:

"I ask your acceptance of 500 guineas in no sense as a payment for services rendered to the party, or in discharge of any claim you may feel you have upon the leaders.

"I speak with positive knowledge when I say they were not aware that you desired or would receive any pecuniary acknowledgement for your work prior to the arrangement made with you on the 21st June.

"I will not argue the question with you but I state the fact - I repeat we are not paying a debt for which we expect to receive a receipt in full of all demands, but we are in some degree recognising recent work done, and we remain conscious of

¹Hambleden Papers, PS7/40, J.E. Gorst to W.H. Smith, May 27, 1881.

²Ibid., PS7/52, J.E. Gorst to W.H. Smith, June 23, 1881.

³Ibid., PS7/59, J.E. Gorst to W.H. Smith, July 15, 1881.

obligations for time and ability devoted to the service of the Party in the past".¹

Gorst remained obdurate:

"... I must state to protect myself against misunderstanding hereafter, that I did not last year volunteer my services to the party, and that I was never asked and did not consent to work for nothing, though the mode of remuneration was not finally settled till your letter of June 21st ... My position is that on June 21, 1881, I had rendered the party a year's services (if I went exactly into dates it is somewhat more) for which I am entitled to be paid 1,000 gns., that being a fair price and the one which you have yourself fixed for the future. If I accept the cheque for £525, it is in part payment of this amount".²

As Smith recorded, the matter came to a speedy conclusion:

"On receiving this letter of the 18th July, I wrote to Gorst enclosing a copy of his note of the 27th May and on seeing him at the House the next day he asked me to excuse him from replying to my letter as it was clear that we could not come to a satisfactory understanding seeing we took different views of the matter and he gave me to understand that he abandoned any further claims".³

Whether it was due to the animosity generated over this affair, or fatigue from his work both in the Central Office and in the House, is difficult to ascertain, but Gorst went off on a holiday to Jersey a few days after his encounter with Smith. He was pursued by letters from Smith complaining about his neglect of duties:

"You have made a serious mistake in going away without a previous understanding with your col-

¹Ibid., PS7/69, W.H. Smith to J.E. Gorst, July 16, 1881.

²Hambleton Papers, PS7/61, J.E. Gorst to W.H. Smith, July 18, 1881.

³Ibid., PS7/63, Note by W.H. Smith. No date.

leagues at St. Stephen's. Neither you nor I in the position we occupy are at liberty to do just what would be most agreeable at any given moment. We are bound to consider the claims of the Party and our friends.

"... I am bound to tell you that for your own sake you must control yourself and avoid erratic conduct of this sort. You can yet attain any position you please if you will be guided by common sense, but you disappoint and distress yr. friends by these eccentricities".¹

Gorst duly repaired on a journey encompassing constituencies in the North of England, Scotland, and Ireland in October, "meeting the local leaders of the party and trying to stir them up to greater activity".² On his return to England a problem arose for Gorst in his own constituency of Chatham, where some of the constituents wanted him replaced because of his attitude towards the party leaders. Gorst appealed to Lord Salisbury for help in this matter, and the crisis was averted by the latter's intervention.³

In August of the following year Gorst wrote to Salisbury again, this time recording his views on the possible outcome of a dissolution over the Arrears Bill.⁴ A month later, however, Gorst's attitude towards Salisbury appears to have changed to one of hostility, "... the

¹Hambleton Papers, PS7/81, W.H. Smith to J.E. Gorst, August 17, 1881.

²Churchill Papers, 52, J.E. Gorst to Lord R. Churchill, October 21, 1881.

³Salisbury Papers, J.E. Gorst to Lord Salisbury, December 5, 1881.

⁴Ibid., J.E. Gorst to Lord Salisbury, August 8, 1882.

revolt of the rank and file of the party at the end of the session against the Salisbury - Northcote - Gibson "ring" by whom the Conservative Party is exploited was most encouraging. It has destroyed their prestige and made their guidance distrusted".¹

In this letter to Churchill, Gorst appears to have helped in sowing the seed which was to lead to Churchill's bid for power in the following year: "The time seems ripe for the rise of the Democratic Tory Party, which was always Dizzy's Dream, at the head of which you might easily place yourself". He also went on to say that he wanted to write an article, "... on the feebleness of the Conservative party as a political organisation, pointing out that it is led by and in the interest of, a narrow oligarchic and land-owning class, and that the people in whom the real Conservatism of the Nation resides have no voice in the matter, nor are there (sic) interests ever consulted but I doubt whether anyone w^d print it".²

The article was printed two months later in the Fortnightly Review, and it followed the lines indicated by Gorst to Churchill.³ Although it was an anonymous article, the text's basic theme clearly indicated Gorst's authorship. The Chelsea Conservative Association passed a resolution, on November 14, calling for Gorst's replacement

¹ & ² Churchill Papers, 76, J.E. Gorst to Lord R. Churchill, September 10, 1882.

³ 'Conservative Disorganisation', Fortnightly Review, 32, November, 1882.

as party agent in view of his disloyal behaviour towards the party leaders.¹ Northcote was informed of the resolution and consequently wrote to Gorst, who in turn replied with his resignation from the party agency.²

Gorst's passage as the party agent in the previous twelve years had been anything but a smooth one. His own characteristics of plain speaking and 'crotchettiness' had not helped in his relations with the other Central Office workers and the party management generally. But the basic cause for the resultant friction lay deeper than one of personality conflict. After his induction as the party agent in 1870, Gorst had become converted to the concept of a democratic Conservative Party based on the interests and welfare of the masses, and saw the election result of 1874 as a vindication of this principle, and a reflection of his efforts.³ The awarding of the electoral plums to the "Old Identity", and the filling of the party management places by basically county members, who were opposed to a popular Tory Party, was anathema to Gorst. Matters were not helped by the deferential opposition of Northcote and the party leaders to Gladstone and his party.⁴

¹Feuchtwanger, E.J., Disraeli, Democracy and the Tory Party, p. 156.

²Salisbury Papers, J.E. Gorst to Lord Salisbury, November 17, 1882.

³Churchill Papers, 105, J.E. Gorst to Lord R. Churchill, January 29, 1883. "I regard the present Conservative Borough members as the members of the Tory Party of the Future ...".

⁴Northcote had been Gladstone's private secretary some years earlier, and could not rid himself of his old attitude towards his past chief. This caused consternation not only amongst the Fourth Party, but the rank and file of the Opposition, and even, on occasions, people like W.H. Smith.

The fact that non-county Members, like Smith and Cross could generally condone Northcote's actions, and thus precipitate the resultant disorganisation of the party, made Gorst even more antagonistic. He soon became aware of the hopelessness of his position in his second term as agent, and had to resort to unpopular moves in trying to get the party leaders to realise the errors of their ways, before it was too late, and to return to the path indicated by Disraeli. At first his attitude was generally mild, as shown by the boyish pranks of the early days of the Fourth Party, but the antagonism shown by the party leaders to what was supposed to be a helpful gesture confirmed Gorst's suspicions about the future fate of the Conservative party and resulted in total hostility on his part. His breaking with the party management gave him the freedom needed to continue this war of attrition, and made him a dangerous man for the party leaders to handle in the future.

In the period between the time of his re-instatement as party agent to the time of his resignation, the major part of Gorst's efforts had been utilised in the activities of the Fourth Party, with the result that ... "... the formal opposition of the Conservative party developed a ferocity of attack that disregarded all the accepted rules of parliamentary conflict".¹ At the same time, this band of four men was able to irritate the

¹Gardiner, A.G., Life of Sir William Harcourt, I., p. 369.

Government, and delay the implementation of governmental policies, whilst stinging their own leaders into carrying out their roles as an Opposition front bench.¹

During these two years an event had occurred which led initially to a reduction in the size of the Fourth Party, and a few years later to its destruction. The death of Disraeli in April, 1881, resulted in a dual control over the Conservative Party being exerted - in the House of Commons by Sir Stafford Northcote, and in the House of Lords by Lord Salisbury. It was obvious that these two men would have eventually to resolve the problem of a divided leadership, but were loath to engage in battle, and, therefore, were content to retain the status quo for the time. Randolph Churchill and Wolff, on the other hand, regarded Northcote as a second-rate politician and attempted to get Salisbury installed as the sole leader. Their first move came at a meeting of the Council of the National Union, of which they and Gorst were members, in which they proposed that the Union selected Salisbury as leader of the party.² The move was quickly scotched, but it was the beginning of a campaign by Churchill to gain the Party leadership, by utilising the forces of the National Union against the Central Committee. This was made with the

¹Harcourt Papers, WWH, 7/6-8, Sir W. Harcourt to his wife, 1882: "We had a dull dreary day. The Fourth Party have coerced Stafford Northcote into obstruction and the whole day was wasted ..."; Hamilton, Sir E., op. cit., 11, p. 400: "The head (the Front bench) is being wagged by the tail (the Fourth Party)"., February 21, 1883.

²Feuchtwanger, op. cit., p. 167.

hope that success would bring about the fall of the Committee, and that selection of the leader would pass to the mass of the Tory electorate via the Union.

Through his activities as Leader of the Fourth Party, Churchill had leapt from obscurity in the House of Commons to becoming a household word, due to his oratorical powers. His mercurial ascent in the House was, however, very dependent upon the accumulated experience of Gorst and Wolff. And in his bid for the National Union, Churchill could not have had a better lieutenant than Gorst, who knew as much about the Tory party organisation as anyone, if not more. But Gorst was not overly enthusiastic about Churchill's bid. In 1880 he had stated part of his political creed to Churchill,¹ and it was in the light of this that he had remained in the Fourth Party, "... because he believed that his colleagues shared with him a keen determination to revive Disraeli's policy of social reform as the soundest basis of empire".² To him the Fourth Party represented, "above all things, an independent group that protested against the degradation of politics into a mere pursuit of individual self interest".³ Gorst, however, was in an awkward position by the middle of 1882 - his position in the Central Office was becoming untenable through, amongst other things, his adherence to Churchill. His article in the Fortnightly Review indicated that he had by

¹Churchill Papers, 14, op. cit.

²Gorst, H.E., The Fourth Party, p. 246.

³Ibid.

then committed himself totally to following Churchill, if for nothing else than for the salvation of his own political career.¹

In his bid for the leadership of the National Union, Churchill was aided by the provisions of the Corrupt Practices Act, which had been passed whilst Churchill's scheme was being planned. For the Act removed the previous practice of paid political agents for electoral candidates, and, thereby, placed the emphasis in future elections upon the efforts of voluntary, party workers.² Thus the local associations, which constituted the backbone of the National Union, would become much more significant in party matters. Control of the Union obviously, therefore, would be a significant asset to its leader.

Gorst had in his days as party agent, as has been seen, advocated the use of such a force for electoral purposes, and had always been against the continued use of social influence and bribery. But whilst he undoubtedly realized the usefulness of the capture of the National Union, Gorst appears to have viewed the venture from a different point of view. For him, the possibility of the transference of power - that leadership of the Union would present - into the hands of the Fourth Party, revealed the potential

¹Churchill Papers, 183: J.E. Gorst to Lord R. Churchill, October 15, 1883.

²Cornford, J., 'The Transformation of Conservatism in the late Nineteenth Century', Victorian Studies, 7, September 1863, p. 49.

achievement of a more democratically organised Conservative party. This could be coupled with the concept of Tory Democracy to make the party, in his view, a really viable one for the future. His thoughts along this line were revealed in a letter to Churchill in early 1883, and also revealed how far Gorst had swung away from his own views of 1865-8:

"... I shall very much like the Fourth Party to make some explicit declaration in the House of Commons to identify itself with a section of the party which is favourable to the extension of the franchise ... To conciliate the support of the Tory aristocracy I regard as hopeless. Our real strength lies in popular support, and the more bold and fearless we are, the more decided our opinions and the plainer our declaration of a policy, the more will the rank and file of the Tory party adhere to us and compel their representatives to follow us".¹

Churchill basically concurred with Gorst on the question of extending the philosophy of Tory Democracy within both the party and the electorate. In an article written in April 1883 and entitled Elijah's Mantle, Churchill indicated that through his policy of continuing Disraeli's political philosophies, especially that of Tory Democracy, he had a claim on the future leadership of the Tory party.² The significance of this article, as far as Gorst was concerned, was not that it demonstrated

¹Churchill Papers, 105, J.E. Gorst to Lord R. Churchill, January 29, 1883.

²Churchill, Lord Randolph, 'Elijah's Mantle, 19 April 1883', Fortnightly Review, 33, May 1883. For a discussion of this article in more detail see, Churchill, W.S., op. cit.; James, R.R., op. cit., p. 125-6; Gorst, H.E., op. cit., p. 236-42.

Churchill's agreement with his views, but that it revealed for the first time Churchill's desire for personal aggrandizement. This factor was to result in the rift that occurred between the two men in the following year.

Balfour, sensing the direction Churchill was moving in as an attack upon his uncle, Lord Salisbury, quit the Fourth Party. His fears were confirmed when, in October, 1883, Churchill made his opening bid for power at the annual conference of the National Union in Birmingham. Churchill, speaking about the Union, had stated that he looked, "... to the Association to popularise the organisation of our Party. Our object is to obtain a representative executive who will hold itself responsible to the electors who appoint it".¹ This concept looked as though it would be achieved in the near future when it was revealed that a small, pro-Churchill majority had been elected to the Council of the Union.² It was also the beginning of Churchill's rapid escalation within the executive to the top of the National Union in the next few months, and his achievement of a negotiating position of some importance with both Northcote and Salisbury. But in these pursuits

¹Quoted in Robb, J.M., The Primrose League - 1883-1906, p. 33.

²Balfour saw the possible changes as far-reaching ones, "They were no less than the transference of all executive power and all financial control, from the nominees of the Leader, to the Council of the National Union". He also denigrated the move: "This revolution in Party organisation was sometimes treated as a contribution to the cause of Tory democracy, presumably on the grounds that the Leader of the Party did not represent it". Balfour, Earl of, op. cit., p. 159.

Gorst was not present; for Gorst had been engaged to carry out some legal affairs in connection with the coming of age of the Nizam of Hyderabad, and was required in India early in December.¹

Churchill, realising how much he was dependent on Gorst's knowledge of the intricacies of the National Union, pleaded with him not to go, but Gorst had to remain firm.² He had been involved in various legal activities in connection with Hyderabad for some ten years, and the financial sum offered for his services was - to a relatively poor man - too great to be refused; a fact which was understood by Wolff.³ Gorst pointed out to Churchill that his absence would help rather than hinder:

"In the National Union you will have much less difficulty with Northcote and the Central Committee in my absence because the element of personal jealousy will be eliminated and Stanhope⁴ will capitulate to you far more readily than he would to you and me conjoined".⁵

Gorst was also careful to remind Churchill, in a fairly subtle way, that he was dependent upon him

¹Churchill Papers, 206, J.E. Gorst to Lord R. Churchill, November 7, 1883.

²Gorst, H.E., op. cit., p. 260-1: Churchill Papers, 209, J.E. Gorst to Lord R. Churchill, November 9, 1883.

³Churchill Papers, 210, Sir H.W. Wolff to Lord R. Churchill, November 10, 1883: "I quite agree with you as to the great loss Gorst will be to us, but the sums given to him are to (sic) large, £1,000 a month, that I do not think it fair to ask him to give them up".

⁴Smith's successor at the Central Committee, hated by Churchill. See: Feuchtwanger, op. cit., p. 184.

⁵Churchill Papers, 209, op. cit.

politically:

"For myself personally I have not much political ambition left; notwithstanding what you so kindly say there is not much prospect of my ever rising to any eminence either in the law or in the state, and I only keep on in Parliament partly from habit partly from obstinacy, and partly because it will be pleasant to think hereafter that I have been the early colleague of a man who will rise so high as you will in the political world".¹

Gorst's stay in India, described in a delightfully written series of letters to Churchill, lasted until the end of February 1884.² By the time he returned to England, Gorst discovered that Churchill had succeeded Lord Percy as Chairman of the National Union Council, and was embroiled in discussions with Salisbury and Northcote over the National Union. Gorst was drawn into the negotiations and tried to adopt a conciliatory tone, even to the extent of having a private interview with Northcote.³ But Salisbury and Northcote upset Churchill by their modification of a letter which they had sent earlier, threatening to evict the National Union from St. Stephen's.⁴ As a result, a declaration of war emanated from the National Union, and was despatched to Lord Salisbury.⁵

In spite of the aggressive tone of this letter, con-

¹Churchill Papers, 209, J.E. Gorst to Lord R. Churchill, November 9, 1883.

²See: Churchill Papers, Nos. 230-240, J.E. Gorst to Lord R. Churchill, 1883-4.

³Feuchtwanger, E.J., op. cit., p. 181-2.

⁴James, R.R., Lord Randolph Churchill, p. 143-146.

⁵Gorst, H.E., op. cit., p. 275-283.

ciliatory attempts were still made between the Fourth Party and the leaders of the party in the ensuing months, but nothing concrete was achieved. Churchill therefore put his attempts at gaining control of the new Council - to be elected in July at the annual Conference of the Union - into full operation, basing them on the principle of Tory Democracy. Northcote wrote to Salisbury:

"... Various indications lead me to think that Randolph is going in boldly, and will ride 'Tory Democracy' pretty hard. If he does, we may come to a split, and the line of cleavage may alter, and some new adjustment of party forces may take place ...".¹

In the elections for the new Council, Churchill emerged victorious at the head of the poll, and with the Fourth Party and their candidates elected. The official nominee, Lord Percy, achieving only eighth place in the list.² It appeared to Gorst, therefore, that not only had his machinations been successful, but that the principles of Tory democracy had been accepted by the National Union. He consequently left Sheffield for a few days rest with his family on the Isle of Wight.³ He was astonished to learn that Churchill had had an interview with Salisbury and arranged terms of reconciliations: - "Churchill and his friends were to work harmoniously with Salisbury, the Central Committee would be abolished, the Primrose League officially recognised, Hicks-Beach to

¹Salisbury Papers, Sir S. Northcote to Lord Salisbury, May 19, 1884. Quoted in Feuchtwanger, op. cit., p. 185.

²Gorst, H.E., op. cit., p. 300-1.

³Ibid., p. 302-3.

become Chairman of the National Union and Salisbury to give a dinner to celebrate the reunification of the Tory Party".¹ At a stroke the Fourth Party and Tory Democracy were extinguished.

As in 1874, Gorst had been ignored. His anger with Churchill for this resulted in a split between them which emerged after 1886 and was not healed. He refused to attend Salisbury's dinner, and this action incurred for him the ire of Salisbury.² The hostility of other leading members of the party was directed against him, now that Churchill was in too powerful a position to be attacked.³ But Gorst wanted to survive politically, and his only possible protector was Churchill: consequently the letter he wrote to the latter after the reconciliation with Salisbury had taken place was politic:

"... There are many other considerations which make your declining to take the chair a good stroke of policy but they apply to me with almost equal force. We shall have much more power as independent members of Council criticising the acts of the Executive and we are almost certain to get our own way whenever we like to interfere ...".

Gorst went on to point out that it was pointless himself trying to persevere in the struggle without Churchill's support:

¹James, R.R., op. cit., p. 153.

²Gorst, H.E., Much of Life is Laughter, p. 142. Notes on the Fourth Party by Sir John Gorst.

³Gorst had anticipated this. In a letter to Wolff on June 4, 1884, he wrote: "... Seeing that Randolph is too strong and popular to be crushed, they will now make you and me the object of their attacks". Quoted in Gorst, H.E., The Fourth Party, p. 294-5.

"... I have no hope of being able to carry out my ideas. The leaders I can never trust again; I cannot like you throw myself on the Tory Democracy. With you the thing was difficult: without you it becomes impossible. After the experience of the Central Committee and W.H. Smith, I know the forces are too strong to contend with and I am not disposed to recommence a fruitless struggle".

He concluded that he had no interest, "either personal or political in separating from you and Wolff even in appearance", and thought that they had gained substantial successes, "we have destroyed the Central Committee: we have revolutionised party management: and defeated the leaders in their attempt at Sheffield to suppress us", and that they could, therefore, rightly sit back on their laurels.¹

Gorst did, however, remain unrepentant, and in the autumn session attacked an amendment to the Reform Bill made by Stanhope for Lord Randolph Churchill, in the latter's absence. This provoked a retaliation by Churchill on the following day and he castigated Gorst publicly.² He did not, however, forget his old comrade-in-arms in June of the following year when he asked Salisbury to find a place for Gorst in his new administration:

"I do feel very uneasy indeed about Wolff and Gorst and I cannot think that I have submitted to you their position as regards myself with the urgency which they are entitled to expect from me.

"... Gorst's disappointment is intense. He knows his powers, his position in the House, his hitherto

¹Churchill Papers, 455, J.E. Gorst to Lord R. Churchill, July 27, 1884.

²Churchill, W.S., op. cit., p. 288.

barely recognised claims and it makes me perfectly wretched to feel that it must occur to his mind that his failure to obtain that for which so many persons of knowledge consider he is fitted for in every way, is due to lukewarmness on my part".¹

Churchill pointed to his own following in the House and allowed this point to weigh upon Lord Salisbury's mind about his decisions. Salisbury replied that in the case of Gorst:

"... the case is more difficult on account of the feelings which he has created in the minds of a large number of the party. I shall be very glad if I am able to meet your wishes in this matter: but I do not feel that I can come to any decision, until I have had an opportunity of conferring with the new Lord Chancellor ...".²

According to Gorst's eldest son, who was acting as Churchill's private secretary at the time, Salisbury "wished to buy him off with the Judge-Advocate-Generalship, but he stuck out for being one of the Law Officers of the Crown, and after many ups and downs succeeded finally in getting appointed Solicitor General".³ Gorst informed Churchill of his position, which he had received notification of at the end of June, and after thanking him for his efforts on his behalf concluded:

"I hope we may for many years sit together in the H. of Commons and have many a political fight as allies".⁴

¹Salisbury Papers, Lord R. Churchill to Lord Salisbury, June 16, 1885.

²Ibid., Lord Salisbury to Lord R. Churchill, June 16, 1885.

³Gorst, Sir Eldon, Autobiographical Notes, Vol. 1, p. 30.

⁴Churchill Papers, J.E. Gorst to Lord R. Churchill, June 29, 1885.

But although they were of the same party, "the political alliance between the two had come to an end after the National Union fiasco", and Churchill felt that he had amply repaid any debts outstanding and was free to pursue his own career.¹ In an editorial, The Times felt that the Fourth Party, "has won ... a substantial share ... of recognition and power" which was beyond what one could have expected at the beginning of the little group.² But there can be no doubt that in Gorst's mind the achievements of the group were minimal, in that they were of a purely personal nature, and that the binding idealism of the group had been thrown over to achieve these. Once more he was alone on the path towards the achievement of the goal, which for the last ten years had been the principle of his political philosophy, and was now so instilled in him as to remain the guiding force for the rest of his parliamentary career.

¹Gorst, Sir Eldon, Autobiographical Notes, Vol. 1., p. 29.

²The Times, June 25, 1885.

CHAPTER THREE

Gorst had just entered his fiftieth year when he became a member of Her Majesty's Government in 1885, as Solicitor-General. The post was not only useful in terms of the status and the knighthood which accompanied it, but also for the income which it provided.

Gorst's family had trebled in size since his return from New Zealand. Whilst the eldest child, Eldon, was more or less independent - being 24 and acting as one of Lord Randolph Churchill's private secretaries whilst waiting to enter the Diplomatic Service - there still remained five other dependents, aged from 9 to 22 years.¹ The income was not to last for long, and Gorst was once more made partially dependent upon the financial resources of his eldest brother, Edward. This not only covered Gorst's career but also the schooling of his children; as well as the use of the estate of Castle Combe, which his brother

¹Gorst, Sir Eldon, Autobiographical Notes, 1, p. 22-8. Eldon had toyed with the idea of entering political life, but his father had advised him against it: "He strongly urged on me to take example from his career of the risks and dangers of a political career for a man without powerful friends or money". His father's advice stood him in good stead for he achieved eminence in the Diplomatic Service before his career was untimely ended by cancer.

had purchased in 1867.¹ Fortunately for Gorst his brother remained a bachelor throughout his life and there were, consequently, few other demands on his finances. Gorst's political career could thus continue along its somewhat tortuous path.

Gorst's career as Solicitor-General was a short-lived one, Lord Salisbury resigning on January 28, 1886, after his government had been defeated the previous day on an English agrarian amendment.² In the short interval between gaining and losing office Gorst managed to upset not only his party but also the Queen as a result of his speech on the Maamtrasna affair.³

¹Ibid., 2, p. 5. Eldon was, consequently, sent to Trinity College, Cambridge, like his uncle Edward, rather than to his father's college. Gorst did take his family away on holidays, as well as descending on 'Uncle Edward' as the family called him. In a letter to Churchill during the Fourth Party days one gets a small glimpse of Gorst the family man, "This place [Rhuda House, Croyde] selected by my wife as the summer residence of her children is a kind of 'ultima Thule' ... being half a mile out of the village on the most dismal and desolate shore you ever beheld. But there is a stretch of fine hard sand, pools, shrimps, shells and the open Atlantic before you: so that to the children it is a paradise. We get yesterday morning's papers about noon and there is no telegraph ...". Churchill Papers, 157, J.E. Gorst to Lord R. Churchill, August 15, 1883.

²Ensor, R.K., op. cit., p. 97.

³Buckle, G.E. (ed), Letters of Queen Victoria, 11. 3. p. 688: "Lord Salisbury deeply regrets that anything was said from the Treasury Bench ... which meets with your Majesty's disapprobation. He himself read with great regret the speech of the Solicitor-General". Salisbury to Queen Victoria, July 20, 1885; "Gorst's speech has given immense dissatisfaction to our supporters". Hart-Dyke to Lord Carnarvon, July 18, 1885; "Gorst's speech was quite indefensible", Salisbury to Carnarvon, July 22, 1885. Quoted in Hardinge, A., Life of the 4th Earl of Carnarvon, 3, p. 170. The Maamtrasna case was concerned with the particularly brutal murder of an Irish family in 1883.



LORD R. CHURCHILL.

SIR J. E. GORST.

SIR H. D. WOLFF.

"ONE OF US."

FIRST APPEARANCE OF SIR J. E. GORST AS SOLICITOR-GENERAL



THE COMPLETE CYNIC
(SIR J. GORST).

Punch. LXXXIX. July 25, 1885. p.48.

Pall Mall Gazette. Extra, No. 63. 1892. p.83.

Consequently, when Salisbury formed his second administration after Gladstone's defeat on the second reading of the Home Rule Bill in June,¹ some seven months later, Gorst was not re-appointed to his former position as Solicitor-General.² Salisbury and Churchill wanted him to accept a judgeship but Gorst appealed to Churchill for help in the matter, in a somewhat ingratiating letter:

"You know whether I am capable of helping you in your arduous task in the House of Commons ... You have risen so far above me in recent times, that I know less of your views and intentions than formerly, but I am sure that you will not, at a crisis like this, fail an old comrade and sincere friend of your earlier career".³

Churchill thought otherwise, at first, "What can I say? He is too impracticable for anything. He ought to jump at a judgeship",⁴ but a few days later, put forward the idea of, "Gorst as Education Minister" to Lord Salisbury, albeit with the proviso that, "I don't press Gorst for Education", because of the possible complications of fitting other people into the Government.⁵ The matter appears

¹Lucy, H.W., A Diary of the Salisbury Parliament, 1886-1892, p. 3.

²Salisbury Papers, Lord Salisbury to J.E. Gorst, August 9, 1899: "... I was unable to recommend you for the post of Solicitor-General again, because at a very crucial time, as Solicitor-General, you used publicly to the Ulster supporters of the Government very offensive language ...".

³Salisbury Papers, J.E. Gorst to Lord R. Churchill, July 29, 1886.

⁴Salisbury Papers, Lord R. Churchill to Lord Salisbury, July 29, 1886.

⁵Ibid., Lord R. Churchill to Lord Salisbury, July 30, 1886.

to have been resolved with Balfour's connivance, resulting in Gorst being made Under-Secretary of State for India.¹ This was for Gorst, as his son recorded, "... a very considerable come-down, especially from a pecuniary point of view", but he had managed, nonetheless, and in spite of considerable opposition, to retain a seat in the government.² The humbleness of his position within the government echelons must have grated on Gorst, especially as his political chief was Lord Cross - a member of the 'Old Gang', who had earned Gorst's contempt during the Fourth Party days.³ But Gorst, "possessed his soul in peace and laboured with dilligence for some years".⁴ There was a possibility that he would, towards the end of 1886, become the new Governor General of the Cape, but this did not materialise.⁵ And in the following year, Salisbury and W.H. Smith (as leader of the House of Commons), in their

¹Salisbury Papers, 146, A.J. Balfour to Lord Salisbury, August 1, 1886: "R[andolph] quite agrees with your suggestion about Gorst ... My own doubt is this:- our prime object in giving Gorst office is to prevent a coalition between him and Harry [Chaplin]. There is, therefore, no use in offering him a place which he will not accept:- for that would end either in the formation of the very cause you wish to avoid or in your making a second and higher bid for his (Gorst's) support, which I would think be humiliating and inexpedient. R. seems to have no doubt, however, that Gorst would accept India ... I confess I have my doubts - I have talked to R again about it. He says he is certain owing to language used by G. himself ...".

²Gorst, Sir Eldon, Autobiographical Notes, 2, p. 2.

³Cross was one half of "Marshall & Snelgrove", as Churchill dubbed him and W.H. Smith.

⁴Review of Reviews, IV, 1891, p. 581.

⁵Gorst, Sir Eldon, op. cit., p. 6-7.

evaluations of the worthiness of government members, prior to a Cabinet reshuffle, contemplated making Gorst Commissioner of Works, but decided against this because, "there is always the doubt whether Gorst's seat could be safely vacated".¹

Gorst diligently continued with his work in the India office in the following years, earning the approbation of an astute, contemporary observer for his work in the House:

"... Sir John, as has been shown on many occasions is equal at briefest notice to represent the government view on any question arising in connection with whatsoever department. He is the utility man of the Treasury bench, at home in the Soudan or Syracuse, Thibet or Thessalonica ... Sir John Gorst would have been invaluable in the Duke of Newcastle's Ministry, as, to tell the truth, he is in that of Lord Salisbury".²

A few months later, observing the debate on the Chinese opium trade, the same observer wrote that the debate drew from Gorst:

"... one of the most neatly-constructed and effectively-delivered bits of banter heard in the House of Commons in recent times. No newspaper reports it, though if it had ... been delivered by the late Mr. Disraeli - and, perhaps, no one else could have done it so well - everyone of the exquisitely framed sentences would have been preserved, and the passage would have become historical ...".³

¹Salisbury Papers, Lord Salisbury to W.H. Smith, September 19 & 29, 1887. Quoted in Chilston, Viscount, W.H. Smith, p. 264-5.

²Lucy, H.W., Diary of Salisbury Parliament, p. 153, February 22, 1889.

³*Ibid.*, p. 191, May 3, 1889. See 3 Hansard, 335, c. 1182-9 (May 3, 1889).

In July of the same year Gorst made a speech in the House which was interesting in that it revealed an adherence to Tory paternalism, when speaking on an amendment to the Cruelty to Children (Prevention Bill).¹ In his speech Gorst rejected the concept of State interference in the roles of the parents of poor children, arguing that the responsibility rested with the parents with respect to the education and employment of their children. He was realist enough to know that the parents in such financial straits were often dependent upon the work of their children, "to lighten the struggles ... with cold and hunger and all the other difficulties which beset the lives of the poorer classes", and therefore he would regard it as, "an act of tyranny ... to shut the door to such employment and determine that these children shall be deprived of the opportunity of assisting their parents in obtaining their daily bread".² He was also sceptical of the roles of School Boards and the Education Department with regard to the employment of children, and made a curiously prophetic remark in the course of this denouncement:

"... in the main (that) the School Boards should not go beyond the provisions required for educational purposes; and it is well known that schoolmasters are, as a rule, the natural enemies of recreation and amusement ... All the School Boards and schoolmasters can, and ought to do, is to see that the conditions prescribed by the

¹To prevent children from working in theatres - put by Sir R. Webster; Gorst's attitude was to change with regard to State interference within the next year, as a result of his attendance at the Berlin Labour Conference.

²3 Hansard, 338, c. 29-30, (July 10, 1889).

Education Acts are, in the case of theatrical children as well as others, properly fulfilled. If they are not fulfilled, by all means let the law take its course; but if it be found that ... all the educational requirements of the law are fulfilled ... then I see no reason ... why this House should interfere in this matter".¹

In spite of his arguments, the amendment was agreed to.

Gorst's pronouncements are interesting from two points of view: first, that in attacking this particular amendment he revealed an attitude of laissez-faire that was, in the 1880's, becoming somewhat antiquated in view of the advances made in social legislation by the executive. Furthermore, his attitude could possibly be construed as being a negation of the basic principles behind Tory Democracy.² Gorst's tenure of such an attitude, however, was soon to be lost, and he went on to promulgate and expand the views held by the people he was attacking in this debate - to such an extent that he incurred the wrath of The Times, in 1905, which charged him with the same "misdemeanours" that he was lampooning in 1889.³ The cause of this change, plus a closer binding to the principles of Tory Democracy, appears to have been generated through his presence as the Chief British

¹ Ibid., c. 31, (My emphasis).

² Ashworth, W., An Economic History of England, 1870-1939, p. 220-223.

³ The Times, January 2, 1905, A long diatribe denouncing Gorst's proposals for feeding schoolchildren as another increase in state interference, which would also result in a State which did, "everything for everybody and nobody is to do anything for himself that he is disposed to shirk doing ..." and that this would encourage "moral degeneration of the worst type", etc.

Plenipotentiary at the Labour Conference held in Berlin during March of the following year.

The Conference had been conceived in January, 1890, by the young Emperor of Germany, Wilhelm II, in the light of, and as a possible solution to, the growing agitation amongst the working classes, both in Germany and elsewhere.¹ The Emperor incurred the opposition of his formidable Chancellor, Bismarck, from the start.² Nonetheless, a decree was issued:

"... In the conviction that other Governments also are animated by the wish to subject to a common examination the aspirations about which the working men of these countries are themselves already carrying on international negotiations, it is my will that official inquiry be made by my representatives, primarily in France, England, Belgium and Switzerland, whether these Governments are disposed to enter into negotiations with us with a view to coming to an understanding as to the possibility of complying with the wants and wishes of the labourers as manifested by them during the strikes of the last few years and otherwise. As soon as my proposal is agreed to in principle, I

¹Chamier, J.D., Fabulous Monster, p. 48-50. The Victorian conscience had been aroused in 1883, in England, by the publication of The Bitter Cry of Outcast London : An Inquiry into the condition of the Abject Poor - a primitive attempt at house-to-house surveying in London under the sponsorship of the Reverend Andrew Mearns; it had then been horrified by the Trafalgar Square riots on February 8, 1886, of the unemployed, incited by John Burns. See: Gilbert, B.B., Evolution of National Insurance in Great Britain, p. 27-38.

²Chamier, Jop. cit., Bismarck apparently told Wilhelm, when the decrees had been drafted by him, at the latter's request, that they should go on the fire. The Times, February 7, 1890, believed: "... it must be inferred that the idea of this decree must necessarily have been the Emperor's own, as well as that it denotes a resolution on the part of his Majesty to strike out an independent path, not caring whether the Chancellor follows him on it or not ...".

shall empower you to invite the Cabinets of all the Governments who evince the same interest in the labour question to a conference for the purpose of further discussing it in detail".¹

Such a declaration must have aroused feelings of dread in Lord Salisbury, with his inherent belief in the maintenance of the status quo, but as a politician he recognised the necessity of England contributing to the conference.² Why Gorst and his colleagues were chosen is not clear, although Gorst's declared adherence to Tory Democracy would have made him a logical choice for such a mission.³ The Times saw the concept of the conference as:

¹Wilhelm II to Bismarck, February 4, 1890. Quoted in The Times, February 6, 1890.

²Smith, P., Lord Salisbury on Politics, p. 21: "His natural bent, (therefore) was towards the maintenance of the status quo, where that could be undertaken with some conviction of reasonableness ...": p. 27, "He was passionately anxious that the classes endowed with property and education should prevail, or at least succeed in holding the forces of indigence and ignorance in check, only thus could political stability and good government be maintained". A possible reason for the Government's acquiescence in this matter was given by Gorst some years later: "There was ... an idea prevalent among manufacturers in this country that they were handicapped in their competition with foreigners by the benevolent provisions of our laws, and that if foreign states could be persuaded to enact like protection for their people it would be beneficial to British industry. This opinion, although no doubt erroneous, may have had something to do with the readiness of the Government, which was falling more and more under capitalist influence, to take part in the Conference". See Gorst's introduction to Warwick, Countess of, A Nation's Youth, Physical Deterioration : Its Causes and some Remedies, p. x.

³Gorst's companions were the Ambassador to Switzerland, C.S. Scott; Sir W. Houldsworth, M.P., and Mr. D. Dale. They were assisted by T. Burt, M.P.; T. Birtwhistle (Secretary to the Weavers' Association); F. Whympers (H.M. Inspector of Factories) and J. Burnett (Labour Correspondent to the Board of Trade). The Times, March 14, 1890.

"... a most significant tribute to the power of that curious product of modern civilisation - the organised working man".¹

The conference started on March 16, with the delegates of 14 countries in attendance.² The programme of the following two weeks consisted of an examination of three basic aspects of working-class life; Sunday labour; the employment of women, adolescents and children; and work in the mining industries.³ The delegates, accordingly, divided themselves into three committees, each one dealing with one of the topics. Gorst was the leading British member on the mining industries committee, and shared responsibility with Houldsworth for the Sunday labour one. Houldsworth and Scott were in attendance on the committee investigating the employment of women, adolescents and children.⁴

Although Gorst was not a member of the committee concerned with children's employment, there can be little

¹The Times, February 7, 1890.

²The countries were: Germany, England, France, Italy, Austria - Hungary, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Holland, Luxembourg, Portugal and Spain. The Times, March 15, 1890.

³The Times, March 1, 1890, in an editorial, declared of the programme: "To observers at a distance it certainly appears a rather thin and colourless affair by contrast with the large though undoubtedly vague aspirations which it is intended to realize...".

⁴Gorst was assisted by Burt and Burnett on the mining committee, and by Burnett and Whympere on the Sunday labour one. Birtwhistle and Whympere were the assistants to the third committee. The Times, March 19, 1890.

doubt that he discussed the problems arising in that committee with the British representatives on it. He was also in frequent communication, by telegraph, with Lord Salisbury for his consent to any possible proposals which might be made by the British delegates.¹ Salisbury's intervention was apparent in the opposition made by the British contingent to a motion by Switzerland that the resolutions of the conference should be enforced by international legislation. Thus the final Protocol began, "In case Governments should give effect to the labours of the Conference, the following provisions are recommended ...".²

Gorst remarked a year after the conference had been held that the work of the British delegates was, "easy and very agreeable to their feelings of patriotism. They found that upon most of the subjects proposed at Berlin this country had already legislated ...".³ But there was one area in which Britain fell short of her European neighbours, and that was the age at which children could be employed. The conference decided that 12 years was a fitting age, and in this the British consented - with Lord Salisbury's approval - but they would not give way over the "half-time" system then prevalent in England. The conference also wanted to ensure that a child had reached a certain level of elementary education before it could be employed, and

¹3 Hansard, 354. c. 860 (June 18, 1891).

²Ibid., 862.

³Ibid., 859.

this proposal was incorporated into the resolution.¹ The wording of the Protocol, however, provided England with a convenient loophole with regard to this and the problem of half-timers, with the use of 'recommended'.

Other important proposals which resulted from the conference involved the concept of pensions and sick benefit for miners; the cessation of Sunday as a working day, except in certain cases; a restriction in the number of hours to be worked daily by females; that mothers should only be allowed to return to work four weeks after their confinement; and that the implementation of any measures introduced by a State should be carried out under the supervision of an inspectorate - "a sufficient number of specially qualified officials appointed by the Government, who should be independent both of employers and workmen".²

Gorst's contact with the members of other governments also interested in practical socialism was to have a profound effect upon his own philosophy, although the conference as such had little long term effects upon social reform in England. The Times' editorial on the conclusion of the conference was ambiguous:

"... the general adoption of the principles laid down by the Conferences will be an act of justice

¹The Times, March 31, 1890.

²The Times, March 31, 1890. This last proposal was probably one of the most important ones produced, for, "In education, factory and mines regulation, and public health the experience of inspectors and administrators was probably the most potent of all influences on the development of policy, and its strength increased as the number of those professionally concerned increased": Ashworth, W. op. cit., p. 221.

to our own labourers, who will no longer have to struggle against the cheap labour of immature children, or the seven-day week of the Continental workman.

"... the German Emperor, therefore, may pride himself upon having in a couple of months advanced the cause of humanitarian reform more than it has advanced in most countries during 50 years ... At any rate, it seems likely to be long memorable as marking the point at which the paths of the young Emperor and his venerable counsellor diverged".¹

Salisbury's administration was loath, in view of an impending general election, to enact any of the resolutions in the near future. They were, however, soon to be jolted into activity by Gorst who, now that his "sympathetic sympathy for suffering mankind" had crystallised - as a result of his presence at the conference - into "a definite interest in the welfare of the British wage-earner", set about producing a programme of social reform for the country, and taking this programme to the populace.²

His first steps in such a direction appear to have been taken in May, 1890, when he asked W.H. Smith if it would be possible for the government to instigate an enquiry into the conditions of labour at the government arsenals and dockyards. But, in spite of prompting Smith

¹The Times, March 31, 1890: The article was also complacent in tone: "The net results of the labours of the Conference corresponds very closely to our predictions. Our delegates have found themselves in the position of teachers, and in accordance with their teaching the Conference has, in effect, adopted the principles of our Factory Acts ...".

²Gilbert, B.B., 'Sir John Eldon Gorst : Conservative Rebel', The Historian, XVIII, No. 2, Spring 1956, p. 153-4.

again in June, nothing emerged from this proposal.¹ At a meeting in Hull on October 1st, Gorst gave a brief outline of the concept that was to form the basis of his reform programme - namely that the State, already a great employer of labour, should become an ideal employer. Using the example of the dockyard workers, he indicated that progress could be made in this direction, but argued against attainment of better conditions by revolution and bloodshed.²

In November, Gorst wrote to Lord Salisbury pointing out where he thought possible opposition to the raising of the age of child labour might lie.³ The reaction of the Prime Minister was the same as that of Smith earlier; nothing was done.

During the earlier half of the year, Gorst's wife had left England to visit her relatives living in New Zealand. Having recently moved house from London to Manningtree in Essex, Gorst used to stay at Toynbee Hall with Canon and Mrs. Samuel Barnett when he was in London.⁴ Even after the return of his wife, Gorst still continued to spend some part of every week whilst the House was sitting, with the Barnetts. According to Mrs. Barnett, "he hugely enjoyed

¹Salisbury Papers: J.E. Gorst to W.H. Smith, June 1, 1890: W.H. Smith to Lord Salisbury, June 2, 1890.

²Hull News, October 1, 1890 (I am indebted to Miss F.E. Daglish for this reference).

³Salisbury Papers, J.E. Gorst to Lord Salisbury, November 7, 1890.

⁴Toynbee Hall was a university settlement founded by Canon Barnett in Whitechapel in 1884.

the youthfulness of the men, and the go and stir of the place, and ... rejoiced in being asked questions and in expounding his views, which did not exactly fall into party lines or bear recognised labels".¹ Gorst no doubt benefitted immensely from the contact with the young university graduates, who were working with, and for, the poor in the East End of London, and also received useful information about the actual conditions of the working classes in that area, which he could incorporate into his plans for social reform. This friendship with the Barnetts was to last Gorst for the rest of his life, and was to help bring him into contact with other progressive people, although of different political convictions, during the next ten years.²

Gorst's first pronouncement on the programme of social reform he had in mind was to his constituents at Chatham in February, 1891. He also took the then unusual step of giving an interview about the speech, to the radical journalist, W.T. Stead, who was editor of the Review of Reviews.³ Gorst divided his proposals into two chief categories:- those which should be legislated upon immediately and those which, although not ripe for legis-

¹Barnett, H., Canon Barnett, p. 47-8.

²Inglis, K.S., Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England, p. 163. "Anybody who attended meetings at the settlement regularly from 1890 to 1900 would have heard many of England's leading liberals and moderate socialists, talking on problems of social and imperial policy: some lecturing, others introducing debates, and many taking more than a passing interest in the institution by becoming associates, or sympathizers unable to become residents".

³Review of Reviews, IV, December, 1891, p. 582-5.

lation, were important enough to warrant considerable attention being given to them.

In the first category he included the need for a comprehensive employers' liability bill; the need for legislation on prevention of loss of life at sea; the need for the settlement of industrial disputes - in this area, Gorst outlined the possible usefulness of a 'cheap, non-criminal tribunal' to which the disputants could have instant access, and also the need for a Board of Arbitration, established by the voluntary effort of the interested parties. Gorst went on to consider the raising of the child labour age to 12 - "let the little ones have twelve years exemption from toil before they have to put their shoulders to the wheel at which they must push all the rest of their lives"; the introduction of a six-day week; the extension of technical education - "the workman must be taught to use his tools"; - and the establishment of a Ministry of Labour.¹ In all of these subjects he was making suggestions which were based on the material discussed at Berlin in 1890, plus his own ideas on the subjects. Consequently, few of them were radical proposals. It was only the public discussion of them by a member of the Government, and in one fell swoop, that was slightly unusual.²

¹Review of Reviews, IV, December 1891, p. 582-4.

²Gilbert, B.B., 'Sir John Eldon Gorst : Conservative Rebel', The Historian, XVIII, No. 2, Spring, 1956, p. 154.

Gorst felt that subjects which could benefit from inquiry would be basically the conditions and hours of labour (and in this Gorst was loath for the State to intervene and establish a statutory, legal day of so many hours), and the whole question of Poor-law Relief. In the latter case, Gorst made it clear that he wanted distinctions to be made between those who required Poor-law help as the result of criminal activities, e.g. bankrupts, and those who should be regarded as "pensioners of the State" - the "worn-out veterans of industry". In the case of the criminals, Gorst felt they should be assigned to quasi-penal treatment, but the pensioners were to be treated with more care. Gorst also included the need for reform for the worse sufferers of Poor-law relief, the children of parents in workhouses, or those abandoned, neglected, etc. Both topics could, he felt, be usefully investigated by separate Royal Commissions.¹

The idea of the establishment of a Royal Commission at the end of the Government's life did not appeal to Salisbury and the party leaders. But Stead had passed Gorst's programme on to leaders of the Opposition, and Morley had, "intimated his readiness to move for a Royal Commission to inquire into the Labour Question, secure that he would receive in so doing the united support of the whole of the Liberal party".² As a result of this,

¹Review of Reviews, IV, December 1891, p. 584-5.

²Ibid.

the Government decided to set up a Royal Commission under the Chairmanship of the Duke of Devonshire, "To inquire into the questions affecting the relations between employers and employed, and the conditions of labour, which have been raised during the recent trade disputes in the United Kingdom".¹ The first meeting of the Commission, of which Gorst was a member, was held at Westminster Hall on May 21, 1892, but the final report was not issued until June, 1894.

Thus, barely a year after returning from the Berlin Conference, Gorst had managed to get the Government to carry out part of the plan which he had originated from the discussions in Germany. His success in carrying this out, however, had the effect of alienating him from the party leaders, mainly because he had taken an independent line rather than adhering to that of the party. Two more actions of his before the end of the first half of the year were to earn him more anger and censure from the leaders, and to place his parliamentary career in jeopardy.

The first of these occurred in the House of Commons on June 16, during the debate arising on the routing of a British force by a native one at Manipur, in the province of Assam. Gorst had been briefed by both Lord Salisbury and Lord Cross [Secretary of the India Office] on the attitude of the Government to be expressed during his defence of the Viceroy [Lord Lansdowne]. Unfortunately for

¹Royal Commission on Labour, Fifth and Final Report, P.P. 1894, XXXV, [c. 7421], p. 1.

the Government, Gorst, in replying to the demands of the Opposition spokesman, Sir William Harcourt, saw, and seized, an opportunity for expressing his beliefs about native participation in colonial affairs. Consequently Gorst attacked the Viceroy and Government of India rather than defending them, and also managed to include the Government, of which he was a member, in his remarks; some of which could be interpreted as relating to Gorst's own position:

"Governments have always hated and discouraged independent and original talent, and they have always loved and promoted docile and unpretending mediocrity. It is as old as Tarquinius Superbus; and although in these modern times we do not lop or cut off the heads of the tall poppies, we take other and more merciful means of reducing any person of dangerous pre-eminence to a harmless condition ...".¹

For good measure, he added:

"... it is a mortifying thing to have to confess, but I think Governments are very likely to be right in following this tradition. It is, perhaps, better that great ability and independence should be a disqualification for State Service; it is perhaps better and more for the peace and safety of the world that you should depend on mediocrities ...".²

Gorst was immediately attacked by a member of his own party, the young George Curzon, who claimed that he had never heard, "a more painful line of defence than that adopted by the right hon. gentleman on behalf of the Indian Government".³ W.H. Smith, writing his daily letter to the Queen, said: "Sir John Gorst defended the Government of

¹3 Hansard, 354, c. 567 (June 16, 1891).

²Ibid.

³Ibid., c. 572.

India in general terms, winding up with somewhat cynical observations as to the necessity in the interests of India of removing poppies ...".¹ The Queen had, however, already sent a telegram to Lord Cross: "Don't much like defence; it is weak and goes too far, even trying to palliate the arrest in Durbar, which I understood you to say you would not defend".² To which Lord Cross had replied, "The speech was certainly most unpalatable to the House. Sir John Gorst has been suffering much lately from the effects of influenza and gout".³ Gorst was made to feel the displeasure incurred by his speech, but the magnitude of it surprised even him:

"... I must express to you the deep sense I feel of the harshness with which I have been treated in reference to the matter ... My speech, I admit was a very bad one, but no one was more astonished than I at the peculiar effect it produced, for which to this day I cannot wholly account ... There are plenty of instances of a minister making a fiasco in debate; I doubt if there is one precedent of an old and faithful servant of the party being so savagely trampled upon for a single failure".⁴

It is doubtful if the full wrath of the fury had touched him when two nights after the Manipur debate, Gorst again went against the party line in the debate on an amendment to the Factories and Workshops Bill. The amendment, put by Sidney Buxton of the Opposition, was to pre-

¹Buckle, G.E., Letters of Queen Victoria, 111. 2, p. 43.

²Ibid., p. 44, Queen Victoria to Lord Cross, June 16, 1891.

³Ibid., p. 43.

⁴Salisbury Papers, J.E. Gorst to Lord Salisbury, September 15, 1891.

vent children under the age of 11 being employed in factories or workshops. Such a clause greatly appealed to Gorst as a chance to introduce one of the Berlin Conference resolutions. His speech was primarily a recapitulation of the events at Berlin with emphasis on the support provided by Lord Salisbury for the resolutions adopted there, especially the one relating to child labour. Gorst reiterated this in his conclusion:

"... So far as our labours at Berlin were concerned, however deeply the country may be under a moral obligation not to go back from those philanthropic sentiments which ... we professed at Berlin, Parliament is tonight perfectly free to come to that conclusion which will be best for the interest of the people of this country. I trust that the vote of the House of Commons tonight will be such as to promote that interest".¹

During the debate, the Government's point of view on this particular amendment was expressed by Matthews, the Home Secretary; but when the division was taken the government was defeated by a majority of 25.² Although Gorst did not actually vote, his participation in inflicting on the Government views contrary to those desired by it for the second time within the space of a few months did not pass unheeded, either by the party hierarchy or by other observers. The latter, however, made

¹3 Hansard, 354, c. 862 (June 18, 1891).

²Review of Reviews, IV, July 1891, p. 12. The Bill, which had been introduced by Matthews, also fixed the maximum hours of labour for women at 12, with an hour-and-a-half for meals, and it also touched on the problems of sweating and sub-contracting. See Ensor, R.K. op. cit., p. 204.

observations¹ to which not all of the former subscribed, as became apparent a few months later.

On Monday, August 24, 1891, Henry Cecil Raikes the Postmaster General and Member for Cambridge University, died from overwork.² A young contemporary of Gorst's at Cambridge, he and Gorst had been involved together in the early seventies in making the National Union of Conservative Working Men's Associations a viable entity. They both shared the same desire to retain independence of speech whilst in the House and Raikes had, like Gorst, known the bitterness of not receiving the rewards for his labours on behalf of the party. His death presented the Government with two awkward positions - one was the now vacant Post Master Generalship and the other the vacant seat at 'safe' Cambridge.³ For both of these vacancies, Gorst felt he was entitled to receive prior consideration - and as a result of this a considerable correspondence was generated between Salisbury, Balfour, the fast-declining Smith, Akers-Douglas [the Chief Whip] and Gorst.⁴

Balfour thought that the government post should be

¹Ibid., "... Sir John continues to act as Under-Secretary for India, deriving such satisfaction as he can from the fact that he is now recognised as the strongest man after Mr. Balfour, on the Conservative side of the House".

²Raikes, H. St. J., The Life and Letters of Henry Cecil Raikes, p. 405. See also p. 231-8, p. 246-50.

³Salisbury Papers, A.J. Balfour to Lord Salisbury, August 27, 1891.

⁴Salisbury Papers, J.E. Gorst to Lord Salisbury, August 28, 1891: "... there is an opportunity of partially fulfilling the promises that have been made to me, and I think you will feel that I have some claim on your consideration".

offered to Gorst or the Secretary to the Treasury, W.L. Jackson, and he plumped for the latter.¹ Smith felt that Gorst should become the Post Master General, but, if offered the post, should be made to defend this predominantly working-class seat at Chatham, "... or we should throw Chatham away".² The relative insecurity of Chatham was one of the major debating points which occurred in the correspondence - Gorst claiming that another candidate there would stand the same chance as himself.³ Balfour tried in the meantime to use his influence to prevent Gorst from being nominated by Cambridge.⁴

As the correspondence proceeded, Gorst's letters started to become acrimonious, and this raised the question of his party loyalty in the others.⁵ Smith felt that the opportunity was present for Salisbury to have a talk with Gorst on the latter's past behaviour, adding: "He is eccentric, clever, almost mad sometimes, and selfish, and he has more ability as a debater on our bench than anyone excepting Arthur and Goschen", but then went on to say, "Last session destroyed any claim he might have had if you

¹Salisbury Papers, A.J. Balfour to Lord Salisbury, August 27, 1891.

²Salisbury Papers, W.H. Smith to Lord Salisbury, August 29, 1891.

³Salisbury Papers, J.E. Gorst to W.H. Smith, September 1, 1891.

⁴Hambleton Papers, PS16/85, A.J. Balfour to W.H. Smith, September 10, 1891.

⁵Salisbury Papers, J.E. Gorst to Lord Salisbury, September 4, 1891.

think it right to take it so".¹

Balfour's machinations, meanwhile, had begun to have their effect and this caused Gorst to write to Salisbury and Akers-Douglas, pointing out his disapproval of Government interference, and hinting that he would not stand at Chatham if the Government did not let him stand for Cambridge:

"I do not myself regard the seat at Chatham as an unsafe one: but if it is pronounced to be such by the leaders of the party, I doubt very much whether it will be possible for me to contest it at the general election. I have to reckon with my elder brother by whom my election expenses are paid. He is naturally disappointed that after he has enabled me to fight 7 contested elections, and after I have served the party in and out of Parliament for more than 25 years, I am still only an Under-Secretary, and my seat is regarded by the leaders of the party as a bar to any further advancement. He is unwilling under these circumstances to advance me the funds necessary to enable me at the approaching general election to fight a 'critical' contest at Chatham, and he urges me to become if possible a candidate for some safer seat, which can be held without thereby surrendering all hope of promotion".²

Salisbury's reply to this outburst was very much a paternal one, but dealt plainly with Gorst's behaviour and position in the party. He disclaimed all knowledge of governmental interference at Cambridge in the choice of a candidate, blaming it upon Gorst's "enemies among the partisans of the Government", who had treated Gorst thus, because:

¹Ibid., W.H. Smith to Lord Salisbury, September 3', 1891.

²Salisbury Papers, J.E. Gorst to Lord Salisbury, September 4, 1891; Chilston Papers, J.E. Gorst to A. Akers-Douglas, September 4, 1891.

"You claim a much wider freedom in the expression of your independent opinions than is customary among members of a Government under our system; and you have in consequence embarrassed us considerably more than once during the past year. No serious evil resulted from it ultimately; but it gave rise to a good deal of angry comment in the party, at the time; and I should not be surprised if there were many who viewed your candidature with apprehension, as doubting how far you could be relied upon in difficulties".¹

Salisbury then dealt with Gorst's minor position in the Government:

"... I entertain - as everybody must do - the very highest estimate of your abilities; and I have seen with great sorrow the impediments you have thrown in your own way. I do not attempt to lay down any rule as to the amount of independence in his public action that a member of Government or a supporter of Government may reasonably claim, without acting incompatibly with those designations. It is a mere question of prudence. You complain that you have not got on to the extent your abilities justified you in expecting. In order to secure the general support and confidence of a political party something is more necessary than ability - and that is the general confidence that the party can rely upon you to stand by them at a pinch. No one can lay down by what acts, or by what abstinence from action, this confidence is to be won. I only express the fear, which what I heard in the session suggested to me - and what you now tell me confirms - that your action on two or three occasions has seriously qualified the confidence which your great powers should other wise inspire ... I wish you would think dispassionately how far the independent attitude you assume is likely to contribute to your wishes as to your own career on occasions on which you have reason to look for the confidence of the party".²

In his reply Gorst acknowledged the tone of Salisbury's letter but refused to compromise his position, especially

¹ & ²Salisbury Papers, Lord Salisbury to J.E. Gorst, September 7, 1891.

over the labour question, arguing that: "... I fear many of your colleagues are wholly out of touch both with their party and with public opinion of the subject". He went on to point out that it was, in his opinion, the "foolish jealousy" of some of the Cabinet members which was the result of their strained relations with himself. He concluded, in complete contradiction to his previous letter's tone, "But I care a great deal more about this question than I do about offices and seats, and if my political leaders leave me without sympathy or advice, I am compelled to proceed by my own poor light in the best way I can".¹

This reply of Gorst's effectively killed any possibility that may have existed for his promotion to the Post Master Generalship. Salisbury wrote to W.H. Smith:

"I gather you do not like my passing over Gorst. If you feel up to it - read the enclosed. You told me to exhort him - you will see the result of my parental efforts. I think after reading the enclosed ... you will admit that it was dangerous to 'endorse' him to the extent which such a promotion would imply ...".²

Two days later, he wrote to Balfour:

"I have had intermediately a correspondence with Gorst, whose claims of independence in respect to the labour functions were so vehemently (sic) expressed, that I felt it would be quite impossible to put him at the head of a department, where the labour question is constantly

¹Ibid., J.E. Gorst to Lord Salisbury, September 10, 1891.

²Hambleton Papers, PS16/87, Lord Salisbury to W.H. Smith, September 15, 1891.

cropping up and where he would have frequent opportunities of dividing us ...".¹

Smith, replying to Salisbury, remarked that Gorst's reply was, "... a great pity - a clever man who has completely thrown himself away",² and on the same day, writing to Akers-Douglas, he confided, "Gorst's reply puts an end to the possibility of promotion".³

Not only did Gorst thus upset Lord Salisbury and throw away a chance of promotion during September, but he then embarked upon a visit to Ireland⁴ which was to incur for him the wrath of Salisbury's "eminence grize", A.J. Balfour.

Ever since entering the government after the 1885 election success, Balfour - through a combination of family ties and his own ability - had started to climb the rungs of governmental hierarchy. By 1891 he held the position of Irish Secretary and had his Uncle's ear, as well as being a power in the House of Commons. The reported speeches of Gorst whilst in Ireland at first angered Balfour: "It is not I think possible to tolerate a Member of the Government going to Ireland and committing himself to opinions on the details of Irish

¹B.M. Add. M.S. 49689, f. 121, Lord Salisbury to A.J. Balfour, September 19, 1891.

²Salisbury Papers, W.H. Smith to Lord Salisbury, September 17, 1891.

³Chilston Papers, W.H. Smith to A. Akers-Douglas, September 17, 1891. Quoted in Chilston, Viscount, W.H. Smith, p. 355-6.

⁴B.M. Add. M.S. 49689, f. 124, A.J. Balfour to Lord Salisbury, September 21, 1891: "... Whither he [Gorst] has gone with a Fenian member of the Labour Commission [Austin] to study the wants of Ireland on the spot!".

Administration without consulting me and in opposition to my views".¹ They finally incensed him.² Salisbury agreed that, "Gorst has played you a very ugly trick - and I have no doubt it was intentional", but felt that Balfour's request that he (Salisbury) should censure Gorst would achieve little.³ The other alternative, getting rid of him from the Government, would possibly lead to a focusing, centred upon Gorst, of "the vague discontent which exists in the party - and which is always at its worst in the last year of a Parliament".⁴ Salisbury felt that by passing over the incident, Gorst would be "more powerless for evil where he is, than if he were sent below the gangway", and that his exclusion in a future Administration, "would not furnish the same ground of complaint as his dis-

¹Salisbury Papers, A.J. Balfour to Lord Salisbury, September 21, 1891. Cutting of Glasgow Herald, September 21, 1891, enclosed with letter from A.J. Balfour to Lord Salisbury of same date. The speech reported was concerned with state assistance to Irish, Roman Catholic schools: "Suffice it to say that the question is one of acute controversy:- that Sexton and the R.C. Bishop are always pressing me to do what Gorst supports, and that for reasons intimately connected with the religious difficulties which surround Irish Education, I have always refused".

²Ibid., A.J. Balfour to Salisbury, September 28, 1891. Balfour's letter began: "Gorst!!!", and went on to denounce Gorst's career, stating that: "he is inclaimably treacherous both by temper and calculation" and that to pass over his delinquencies "is to condone them". Balfour indicated that Gorst would probably have to be given an important position in a future Administration, and either out of fear or jealousy, wanted this possibility destroyed.

³B.M. Add. M.S. 49689, f. 128-131, Lord Salisbury to Balfour, September 24, 1891.

⁴Ibid., f. 135-136, Lord Salisbury to A.J. Balfour, October 1, 1891.

missal would supply now. I am anxious that if he goes, he should go in such a manner as to carry with him the minimum of influence. I think he is knocking himself to pieces".¹

Salisbury's wiley strategem prevailed, and Gorst was removed from the India Office in November and "promoted" to the position of Financial Secretary to the Treasury, replacing W.L. Jackson.² Gorst willingly accepted the office, in the belief no doubt that it held out a more reasonable prospect of further promotion than his position in the India Office. Unfortunately he was unaware of either Salisbury's scheming or that he had incurred Balfour's enmity. This last factor was to possibly harm him more in his career five years later, ironically in another matter also concerned with education, than if Balfour's wishes had been carried out.³ Salisbury's

¹Ibid.

²Milner Papers, Clinton E. Dawkins to A. Milner, January 4, 1892: "... But what an infernally bad joke of Sarum's, putting Gorst in Jackson's place. It is hard on the Chancellor [Goschen]. Gorst is a clever dog but I know him to be disloyal and unscrupulous and I fancy a cynic at heart. It will go against the Chancellor's grain, and break up the old Treasury's intimacy ...": Buckle, G.E., op. cit., 111. 2, p. 78: "... It will have the advantage of removing Sir John Gorst from the India Office, where as he showed last summer, he had considerable power of doing harm. He can scarcely do any harm at the Treasury". Lord Salisbury to Queen Victoria, November 5, 1891. Jackson took over Balfour's post, Balfour succeeding to Smith's positions on the death of the latter on October 6, 1891.

³Balfour seems to have been worried by Gorst's eminence with regard to the 'labour question', and that he would utilise "the old Fourth Party game" against him in the House of Commons if the Conservatives were on the Opposition side after the next General Election. Salisbury Papers, A.J. Balfour to Lord Salisbury, September 23, 1891.

moderation of Balfour's petulant outburst over a relatively minor controversy in education may well have been occasioned by the more important educational matter which he had been concerned with during the year, that of the abolition of fees in elementary schools. In the passing of this measure, Salisbury was primarily concerned with the preservation of the voluntary schools:

"If you choose to deal with 'assisted' education yourselves, you may put the voluntary schools into a position from which no future hostile majority can dislodge them : if you choose to pass the question by, you may be pronouncing their doom".¹

Salisbury was only partially correct in his assessment of the probable results of the measure, and it was with the problems arising from this, and other education issues, that Gorst was to occupy himself, successively aided and hampered by Balfour, in the last of the Salisbury administrations. Gorst was, however, towards the end of 1891 still primarily concerned with the 'labour question' and it was on this subject that he addressed an audience in the Drill Hall, Halifax on November 10. In his speech, Gorst considered the question of old age pensions and social insurance, and in doing so became, "the first front bench man to espouse the idea publicly" - expounding his ideas some eight days before Joseph Chamberlain announced

¹Salisbury's comments at the Carlton Club, March 20, 1890. Quoted in Cecil, Lady G., Life of Robert, Marquis of Salisbury, 4, p. 158. See also, p. 157-160 on this topic.

his own conversion to the principles of pensions.¹ The interesting point of Gorst's speech was that in making out the case for social insurance with state involvement, he indicated his belief that the power for such reforms no longer was the prerogative of the Government, but lay with the masses. Gorst, however, cautioned his audience to be aware that this power was limited: "... he hoped the working classes ... would address themselves to ... modest reform ... He should prefer them to accept small changes of reform, which were practical, to some great scheme which they might never live to see realized".² Even so, the fact that Gorst could seriously contemplate changes arising within society as a result of public interest rather than governmental directive initially was indicative of the changes which were taking place in the country. The rigid stratification of early Victorian society was starting to crumble, and was being replaced, albeit slowly, by a more flexible structure. For Gorst, this obviously represented the chance to propagate the tenets of Tory Democracy. The Tory party leaders were slowly awakening to the need to embrace such a philosophy, but whilst they were doing so the formation of the

¹Gilbert, B.B., 'Sir John Eldon Gorst': Conservative Rebel', The Historian, XVIII, No. 2, 1956, p. 156. Gilbert points out that Gorst's actual proposals for pensions and insurance mainly stem from the German Insurance plan, enacted two years earlier, and the 'Blackley Scheme', first proposed in 1878 by Canon Wm. Blackley and which was widely discussed in both the House of Lords and in the House of Commons in 1880 and 1887, respectively. See footnote, p. 155-156.

²The Times, November 11, 1891.

Independent Labour Party during the last decade of the nineteenth century was to ensure that the support of the working classes would be deprived them as the twentieth century gathered momentum.

More immediately, the Tories lost the general election in July, 1892. Gorst, however, was successful both in being adopted by Cambridge University and in winning the seat in the election. Thus in August, 1892, he returned to the House, but as a member of the Opposition: a position that was almost a definite way of life for him by now, irrespective of which side of the House he sat on. There was, consequently, no retardation in the development of his social policy in the subsequent years and, liberated from the restraints of office, Gorst's tongue was given free rein.

CHAPTER FOUR

Gladstone's biographer described the 1892 session, prior to the election that came in the summer, as one, "that was not very long nor at all remarkable". He went on to say, "Everybody knew that we should soon be dismissed, and everybody knew that the Liberals would have a majority, but the size of it was beyond prognostication".¹ Gladstone thought that the majority would be close to a three-figure one. In the event, his return to power was accompanied by a majority (40) smaller than that of Salisbury's (66) when he had recommended dissolution to the Queen.

In spite of the declarations of the Liberals' 'Newcastle Programme', which had been promulgated the previous October and in response to the effect upon the party of the lost Liberal Unionists, Gladstone's pre-occupation during his last administration was almost entirely centred upon Irish Home Rule. A fresh attempt at legislation was made to solve the problem which had constituted the driving force behind his political activities since 1886. The physical effort alone involved in his piloting of the Second Home Rule Bill through the 85 sittings which occurred after its introduction in February, 1893, drained him considerably; and the failure of the measure, because of its almost total rejection by the House of Lords, must have hastened his decision to leave

¹Morley, J., The Life of William Ewart Gladstone, 2, p. 547.

politics, which he did on March 3, 1894. After this the criticism which had been levelled at the Newcastle Programme - an attempt to make a majority by combining minorities - appeared to be verified. Hamer has described the position which resulted:

"The sudden removal of the two factors which had disciplined and concentrated Liberal politics over the eight years since 1886 - Gladstone's leadership and the preoccupation with clearing the Irish 'obstruction' - restored to view the basic disorganisation of Liberal politics. Sectionalism re-emerged, rampant and uncontrollable".¹

The welfare of the Liberal party was not aided by Lord Rosebery's acceptance of the office of Prime Minister, as it was generally felt that Gladstone's natural successor was Sir William Harcourt, in spite of the latter's overbearing attitude.²

Against this background of Irish-based politics and a weakened Government, Gorst's activities in and out of the House reflected his growing preoccupation with social legislation. The "Fourth Party" attitude which Balfour had feared would come into play once the Tories were in Opposition did not seem to materialise. Occasionally it looked as though it would, e.g. in his opposition to the passage of the Mutiny Bill, Gorst, along with some other Members, received a public rebuke from the Speaker.³ But

¹Hamer, D.A., Liberal Politics in the Age of Gladstone and Roseberry, p. 185.

²Ensor, R.C.K., op. cit., p. 215.

³Buckle, G.E., op. cit., III. 2, p. 243. Sir William Harcourt to Queen Victoria, March 24, 1893.

on the whole Gorst seems to have taken the opportunities, when they occurred, to press the Government for more efforts in social legislation; and in the latter years to have concentrated upon the increasing problems connected with education.

During the recess after Gladstone's accession to office, Gorst accompanied by his eldest daughter, Constance, visited his eldest son, Eldon, in Egypt during December.¹ Eldon had recently succeeded Alfred Milner as Under Secretary of State for Finance at the British Agency and Consulate General in Cairo.² As part of his official duties he went on a voyage of inspection up the Nile, and in this he was accompanied by his father and sister. In the last week of their holiday, Gorst and Constance visited the pyramids at Gezireh (Giza), dined with Lord Cromer as well as eminent members of the Egyptian aristocracy,³ and became further acquainted with the treasures of Egypt's past.

A few weeks after his return from Egypt, the new session commenced. At the beginning of March, Gorst - during the debate on the question of wages of work-people employed in Government dockyards - moved, "That no person should, in Her Majesty's naval establishments, be engaged

¹Gorst, Sir Eldon, Autobiographical Notes, 2, p. 33.

²Mellini, P.J.D., 'Sir Eldon Gorst and British Imperial Policy in Egypt 1907-1911' (Stanford University Ph.D. Thesis 1971), p. 108.

³Gorst, Sir Eldon, Diary, 1893, January 1-6.

at wages insufficient for a proper maintenance, and that the conditions of labour as regards hours, wages, insurance against accident, provision for old age, etc., should be such as to afford an example to private employers throughout the country".¹ The Government, in the form of the Secretary for War, Campbell-Bannerman, accepted this:

"... the Government should show themselves to be amongst the best employers of the country; that they should be, if I may use the phrase, in the first flight of employers",² but qualified acceptance with the phrase, "... but we do not take it to mean they should embark in new experiments far ahead of general practice".³ However, only a few weeks after Gorst had made his motion, preparations were begun to introduce an eight-hour day at Woolwich Arsenal; this being effected early in 1894. It was also extended during the next two years to cover the remaining ordnance factories, the naval dockyards and also some Post Office telegraph factories.⁴ As Gladstone had pointed out to Hamilton previously, the impulse to "socialistic legislation" was not arising within the Liberal Party but, "mainly from the party that pleased to call themselves Conservative ... Two generations ago they often no doubt made mistakes but they believed in their own tenets. Now

¹4 Hansard, 9. c. 1126 (March 6, 1893).

² & ³Ibid., c. 1129.

⁴Clegg, H.A., Fox, A., and Thompson, A.F., A History of British Trade Unions since 1889, 1, p. 222.

they were embarking on a most perilous course ...".¹

Not all of the Conservative party, however, shared the same convictions as Gorst over social legislation, and their views were manifested through the House of Lords in the blocking of such measures. Gorst felt that such gestures would not only be damaging to the Liberals, but also to the Conservatives in the long term, and expressed his fears on this point to Salisbury:

"The loss of the Employers' Liability Bill, as the result of the House of Lords insisting on their amendment, will inflict a very heavy blow on your working-class supporters. I do not doubt that this point has been properly brought under your notice, and fully considered by you.

"But having just returned from a political visit to the West Riding and the industrial corner of Cheshire, where I heard much to confirm the opinion I had previously formed, I feel impelled to add my testimony to that of others on this point".²

Gorst's views had little effect on his own party, and the Tory majority in the House of Lords continued to deal crushing blows to the legislation sent up from the Commons. In his last speech in the House, some two months later, Gladstone raised the issue of the problem of the House of Lords and its differences with the Commons, which had created, "a state of things, of which we are compelled to say that in our judgement it cannot continue", and this

¹B.M. Add. MS. 48659, f. 109-19, Gladstone to E.W. Hamilton, February 9, 1893. Quoted in Hamer, D.A., op. cit., p. 220-1.

²Salisbury Papers, J.E. Gorst to Lord Salisbury, January 28, 1894.

problem, "when once raised, must go forward to an issue".¹
A prophetic statement but the problem was not resolved until the next century.

During the first two years of the Liberal Government, Gorst's attendances in the House of Commons had been interleaved with his participation on the Royal Commission on Labour. But as 1894 advanced, the sittings on the Commission were completed and the final report appeared in the early summer. However, before then Gorst was involved in court proceedings arising out of the liquidation of the New Zealand Loan Company, of which he was a director.²

The inquiry into the activities of the directors of the company revolved around four basic facts. Firstly, the Company had issued between 1879 and 1892 'illusory debentures', i.e. debentures of which the holder did not in fact have any security on the company, although there was nothing in the wording of the certificates to demonstrate this fact. On this point the directors had failed to meet the opinion of counsel given in 1879: "... the directors are not justified in soliciting or taking money on the footing of the printed form of application ... We advise the directors not to issue any more of the printed forms of application in their present shape ...",³ and had

¹ 4 Hansard, 21. c. 1150-51 (March 1, 1894).

² New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Agency Company (Limited) before Mr. Justice Vaughan Williams, High Court of Justice, Chancery Division. The Times, May 8, 1894.

³ The Times, May 8, 1894. Speech of Mr. Justice Vaughan Williams.

been content to leave the matters in the hands of their managers. This misdemeanor was compounded by the second fact, that when they raised capital in 1892 on the basis of secured, 'Schröder' stock (so-called because Schröeders provided a large contribution in purchasing this stock, and were a financial company which "could not be hoodwinked with an illusory debenture which was good enough for the general public"),¹ they did not inform other stock-holders of the insecurity of their own stock, which could have been changed into Schröder stock.

One of the directors, Mr. Larkworthy, produced a report on the financial state of the company in 1890 which indicated the Company's loss of money, and the fact that there were no reserve funds left; but the board of directors suppressed it and other subsequent reports. To cover this state of affairs, alterations were made to published reports on the finances of the company which were, "calculated to mislead the shareholders as to their financial condition ...",² for by 1892 the losses were over £600,000.

There was also a financial transaction between the parent company and its subsidiary land company - the Waikato Land Company - which had been approved by a committee of the directors, and which was designed to benefit the shareholders of the Land company primarily, who turned

¹Ibid., Editorial comment on the case.

²Ibid., Mr. Justice Vaughan Williams.

out to be mainly the directors.¹ This fact had not been revealed to the shareholders nor, in fact, had the transaction.

The judge, in summing up the case, felt that it reflected on, "the standard of commercial morality of the directors", but that in most of the issues involved the directors had acted out of either ignorance or carelessness, leaving most of the decisions to their managers. He did, in mitigation, point out that most of the directors, including Gorst, stood to lose financially if the company failed except one, A.J. Mundella, who had sold all his shares just before the company was liquidated.² Although his son feared that the affair would harm Gorst's career, the fact that Mundella, then President of the Local Government Board, had been involved in the case may have helped to partially remove the glare of publicity from Gorst, especially as Mundella had not sold his holdings in other companies on taking office in Gladstone's administration.³ The Times let most of its editorial criticism fall upon Mundella who although he: "... may be no worse

¹Ibid. The directors of the company were: A.J. Mundella, Sir George Russell, Sir Edward Stafford, Sir John Gorst, Sir J. Fergusson, (the previous Post Master General - the post Gorst had failed to achieve in 1891), Mr. Larkworthy and Mr. Bristowe. The committee consisted of Gorst, Russell and Stafford.

²Ibid.

³Gorst, Sir Eldon, Diary, 1895. July 3: "I feared that the New Zealand Loan Company affair might be used as a pretext to leave him out in the cold".

than the rest ... he is in a position which requires of him that he should be much better ... we may point out that he does not give the guarantee given by some in the shape of personal interest in the success of the company", and only included Gorst, not by name, as one of the "Board composed in part, at least, of honourable men, yet collectively doing year after year the most dishonourable things".¹

Although he had escaped publicly, Gorst's loss of income through the failure of the company cannot have been very welcome at a time when, "Uncle Edward lunched with me at the club and gave me a gloomy account of the family finances".² He was, however, still enough in favour to be able to attend a Palace levee on June 29.³

He had another interview with W.R. Stead about his plans for Social Reform, which were published in the same month.⁴ The views expressed in the article were more or less the same as those he had announced in 1891 and in his minority report to the Royal Commission on Labour.⁵ In the latter Gorst dissented from the majority view about the solution of industrial disputes, and again put forward his

¹The Times, op. cit.

²Gorst, Sir Eldon, Diary 1893. June 22. Gorst's shares in the company at the time of liquidation numbered 500. See, The Times, op. cit.

³Gorst, Sir Eldon, Diary 1894. June 25 and 29.

⁴'A Conservative on Social Reforms. An Interview with Sir John Gorst', Review of Reviews, IX, 1894, p. 602.

⁵Royal Commission on Labour, P.P. 1894, XXXV, [c. 7421.] Report by Sir John E. Gorst, p. 148-151.

idea for an arbitration panel (this time under the name of Local Board of Industry) and the establishment of a Ministry of Labour. The local boards of industry would also have amongst their duties the determination of the length of the working day in their localities, and a co-ordinating and enforcement role with regard to the recommendations of the factory inspectorate. Again Gorst proposed, briefly, a scheme for increasing the statute with regard to employers' liability, in the shape of an insurance scheme.¹

Gorst's views in the article published by Stead were interesting in that they revealed Gorst's adherence to the Berlin Conference resolutions in respect of children, as well as his belief in female suffrage: "I say, treat women just like men, and do not hamper their activities by prohibitive legislation. The only interference which, in the interests of the State, is justifiable, is the law forbidding women to engage in manual labour immediately before and after child-bearing".² Gorst's continued adherence to these and his views generally on social reform, since the beginning of the decade, earned him a tribute from another periodical, The Humanitarian:

"Probably there is no member of the House of Commons who has given more attention to the questions affecting labour, or who has a wider and deeper sympathy with the social evils under which the

¹ Ibid.

² Review of Reviews, IX. June 1894, p. 602.

great mass of the people suffer, than has Sir John Gorst".¹

Gorst's attention was, however beginning to be more directed towards problems affecting the education of both children and adults. He believed that reforms and improvements in this field could possibly lead to a betterment of other social conditions. This attitude was revealed in his motion for the establishment of a Commission, or House of Commons Committee, to enquire into the general conditions of poor law schools. This followed the conviction of a Nurse Gillespie, at the Brentwood school, for gross cruelty to the children, plus increasing public concern over the large and insanitary, barrack-type schools being utilised by the Poor Law authorities.² Gorst's views were manifested in his article on 'English Workmen and their Political Friends', in the August edition of the North American Review.³ He referred to the problem of achieving progress in social legislation in the face of an apathy amongst the working classes. He saw their apathetic condition as being a reflection of their lack of understanding of their rights as human beings: "Their political power, if they knew how to use it, would be irresistible: they could confer the government upon whomsoever they would".⁴

¹The Humanitarian, June, 1894, quoted in Review of Reviews, op. cit.

²4 Hansard, 26, c. 121 (June 25, 1894) and c. 441-4 (June 28, 1894).

³Gorst, J.E., 'English Workmen and their Political Friends', North American Review, CLIX, August 1894, p. 207-217.

⁴Ibid., p. 207.

The only way to overcome this apathy was through education: "The public enthusiasm is wanting ... and this want is not likely to be supplied until education has made the workers far better judges of their own interests and necessities".¹

He continued in this vein at the end of the article, after passing through the familiar territory of arbitration, hours of labour, sweated labour, employers' liability, but this time he considered the condition of child education: "A great number recognize that to give a good education to their children is the surest way to bring about in the next generation a solid improvement in the condition of the people". But to achieve this ideal required, with the presence in Parliament of, "... a party government reluctant to stir in the matter, in the absence of any strong popular force to propel them", the concerted efforts of the people themselves:

"So soon as the mass of the people not merely acquiesce in the advantage of education for their children, but resolve that no trade interest shall obstruct their welfare, and have acquired the power to make their representatives in Parliament give effect to their will, British children will enjoy those rights which continental children have already obtained".²

Only when, he reiterated, the working class took an interest and used their sheer weight of numbers to compel the Government to take an interest, could discussion result in practical reform, "and when a more enlightened public opinion forbids the miseries of the young, the aged and the

¹Ibid., p. 210.

²Ibid., p. 216-7.

afflicted being used by society as a convenient object-lesson for teaching thrift to the able-bodied".¹

It is worth noting in passing that whilst Gorst's utterances on the relevance of education to social reform were not new to him in 1894, the concept was one which had other adherents, e.g. it was passionately believed in by Canon Barnett. In 1893 he had written: "The social problem is at root an educational problem ... without more knowledge, power might be a useless weapon and money only a means of degradation ...".² Whether Gorst's stays at Tonybee Hall and conversations with Barnett had resulted in the reinforcement of his belief in this concept it is more or less impossible to establish, but it is highly likely that his social philosophy was encouraged by the atmosphere created by Barnett and his colleagues.³ It is fairly certain that it was through his stays at Tonybee Hall that Gorst became fully acquainted with the ideals and practicalities involved in the University Settlement concept, and that he saw this as another way in which education could become harnessed to social reform. This was to be the theme of his public speeches by the end of the year. But before then success was achieved, as a result of his

¹Ibid., p. 217.

²Barnett, H.O., op. cit., p. 340.

³Ibid., p. 44. "Of some distinguished guests the Warden wrote: 1894 - The visit of Sir John Gorst illustrates one of the uses of the settlement, that of enabling men to get a close insight into the life of a great industrial centre".

agitation inside the House of Commons, and his and others' outside the House, for the establishment of a public enquiry into the Poor Law schools.¹ Both Gorst and Henrietta Barnett were appointed to the Committee by Shaw-Lefevre² in September in company with the Hon. Lyulph E. Stanley, the Reverend Brooks Lambert, Mr. W. Vallance, Mr. E. Nettleship and Dr. J. G. Fitch, under the chairmanship of A.J. Mundella.³

The terms of this Departmental Committee were, "to inquire into the existing systems for the Maintenance and Education of Children under the charge of Managers of District Schools and Boards of Guardians in the Metropolis, and to advise as to any changes that may be desirable".⁴ The Committee started listening to witnesses at 11 a.m. on

¹Gorst's speeches on June 25 and June 28 (op. cit) preceded a deputation to the President of the Local Government Board, organised by Henrietta Barnett and led by her brother-in-law, Ernest Hart, in July 1894. "A deputation waited on Mr. Shaw Lefevre, a deputation so big that it thronged the small chamber arranged for its reception, crammed the large room hastily offered, and overflowed into passages and down the stairs. Admirable was Sir John Gorst's speech, clear, incisive, from the standpoint of a Parliamentary veteran, and a tender father ... Of my own utterance I cannot report. I only know that I was in a terrible fright, and worn out with the labour of arranging the monster deputation. But it was worth while, for it resulted in the creation of a Departmental Committee, 'to inquire into the condition of Poor Law Schools' ..." Barnett, H.Q., op. cit., p. 293.

²President of the Local Government Board, March, 1894 - June, 1895.

³Annual Report of the Local Government Board, 1894-5, P.P. 1895.L. [c. 7867] p. cii.

⁴Ibid.

Wednesday, November 7, 1894, at 23, St. George Street, Westminster, and continued every Friday and Wednesday until the last interviewee had been seen on March 22, 1895.¹

Mrs. Barnett described the activities involved in being a member of the Committee:

"... for nearly two years we worked. During that time we sat fifty times, saw seventy three witnesses, and asked 17,566 questions. Each member inspected schools, when and where he deemed well. Usually, when I went to see Institutions outside London, Canon Barnett came too ... but to the Schools, Workhouses, or Village Communities, either in town or close by, one of the other members of the Committee and I went together. To hear Sir Joshua Fitch examine a school was in itself an education; but in all other matters - and they are the majority in Boarding schools - the men only saw what they were shown, driving home the necessity of having women Inspectors whose minds are agile and eyes clear. As the weeks went by, the work seemed harder. Sir John Gorst came to stay in Tonybee Hall every Monday. On Tuesdays² the Committee sat at Westminster, usually for five hours. On Wednesdays Sir John and I inspected all day. On Thursdays it was the meeting of the Board at Forest Gate, and on Fridays the Committee again put in five or six hours' work".³

All did not go smoothly, even when the Committee met, "My wife has had a very trying week on the Commission. Mr. -- is so ignorant and such a bully. Gorst is so able and so hasty that the elements soon make a blaze. They parted hotly on Wednesday, but I hope they may still so far come together as to get out a good report".⁴ But in spite

¹ Ibid.

² The Committee, in 1894, sat on Wednesdays and Fridays and not Tuesdays.

³ Barnett, H.O., op. cit., p. 293.

⁴ Ibid., p. 294. Canon Barnett to his brother Frank, December 7, 1895.

of these differences the Committee managed to persevere with their task throughout 1895, until the report was completed and published in 1896.

After the Committee had been established, and just before it commenced its task, Gorst was elected to the post of Rector of Glasgow University. His inaugural speech on November 2nd to the University reflected both his concern for the need for social reform and the influence of the Barnetts, for his lecture covered the work of University settlements in England and the U.S.A.¹ His emphasis on this aspect of social reform was directed not towards the working classes themselves, as in his August article, but towards the contribution that young, middle class graduates could make. His introduction was based on a short analysis of the causes of social deterioration in urban areas, and he followed this by an emotional appeal for help from the classes who were turning their backs on these increasing problems. Gorst's experience as a skilful orator was readily used in this appeal:

"The study of this alarming phenomenon of modern society is one to which the highest intellect, the most earnest research, and the most unwearied industry may not unworthily be consecrated ... the fact that a large portion of mankind, neither idle nor vicious, spend their lives in an unsuccessful struggle to provide themselves and their families with the barest necessities is a reproach to our Christianity and civilization ... But the evil may be on the increase. Almost every winter there is a panic lest the condition of the poor should

¹Gorst, J.E., Settlements in England and America. November 2, 1894. Reprinted in Knapp, J.M. (ed)., The Universities and the Social Problem, 1895, p. 3-29.

become intolerable ... The annual alarm may some day prove a reality, and the destitute classes may swell to such proportion as to render the continuance of our existent social system impossible ...".¹

The salvation of the guilty conscience, the attainment of a religious ideal, or the removal of fear could be induced by participation in the University Settlement movement. By working in such an establishment, from whatever original motive, equality of the classes could be achieved - but more than this Gorst felt that there was one overriding motive:

"It is the revival, as a real force for the guidance of human life, of the doctrines taught by Jesus Christ ... It is the recognition of the image of God in the most fallen and debased of the human race, and the conviction that the only life worth living is one in which the talents and capacities of the individual are spent in the service of mankind. To young men and women animated by such a belief the conditions of modern society are intolerable".²

This almost evangelical expression was a rare emergence in public of the religious convictions of Gorst - a complete contrast to the usually cynical Parliamentarian. His friends were aware of this aspect of his character, but the public rarely saw it.³

¹Ibid., p. 5-6.

²Ibid., p. 9.

³Barnett, H.O., op. cit., p. 49: "Under his cynical manner and often contemptuous words, under his dour silences or suspicious sentences, Sir John had a deeply religious nature, a capacity for enthusiasm, and a dogged sullen loyalty to his hopes for the future. The contradictions between the real and the apparent man were exceedingly annoying to those of his friends who cared for him, and all the more so because a certain strain of impishness in his nature made him enjoy puzzling people, and take pleasure in their not always courteous confusion".

Although this Christian spirit could be utilised in various agencies, he felt that: "... the University Settlement affords a very obvious and natural outlet for such feelings, and a large proportion of the residents in all the settlements are animated, whether consciously or unconsciously by Christian love of the human race".¹ To him this was the essential principle of the settlements:

"The first object, to which every other is subsidiary, is to make friends with the neighbourhood - to become part of its common life: to associate with the people on equal terms, without either patronage on the one side or subserviency on the other; to share in the joys and sorrows, the occupations and amusements of the people; to bring them to regard the members of the settlement as their friends".²

It was in the achievement of this principal aim that education was seen by Gorst to play its role:

"In most places the neighbours who offer least resistance to the advances of well-meaning friends are children, and the relation which more easily establishes itself between those who have knowledge and those who want it is that of teacher and pupil. This is the reason why the young form so large a proportion of the frequenters of settlements, and why so much of the practical work carried on is educational".³

But it would be a mistake, he contended, to suppose that the educational work was the only *raison d'être* of the settlements. It was through the friendships of the children gained in this work that progress could be achieved in, "... the family life, to means for improving the material

¹Gorst, J.E., *op. cit.*, p. 10.

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*, p. 10-11.

prosperity of the neighbours, to sociability and friendly discussion, and to the duties and obligations of civic life, until sympathy and brotherly kindness have invaded and conquered the entire life".¹

Not only would the neighbourhood around the settlement benefit and social progress be maintained, but the settlement workers would, as experience had already shown, "learn more than they have taught".² Their own views of life would be altered and given a wider, more understanding perspective - and thus society as a whole would benefit. Such relationships, Gorst thought, would also help to remove the agitators amongst the working classes, because the latter would have friends to turn to:

"There is the latent interest and the latent power in the masses; there is the latent knowledge and the latent ability in the men and women of culture. Make friends and associates of the two parties, and the problems which are insoluble to each alone become determinable by the two combined".³

The remainder of his speech was devoted to an analysis of the work achieved by the settlements in both England and the U.S.A., referring in the latter case to the work of Jane Addams in Chicago as an example of what could be achieved in seemingly unlikely situations. Gorst gave this analysis because he felt that his listeners, exhibiting a national tendency, may have been inclined to accept only

¹Ibid., p. 11.

²Ibid., p. 12.

³Ibid., p. 15.

results, distrusting in theories. He concluded that such an analysis demonstrated, "... that University Settlements have been a great success in the past, and are full of hope for the future".¹

Whether he was prompted by the favourable reception of this speech or whether his belief in the cause propelled him to arrange a conference on settlements at Tonybee Hall for January 1895, is difficult to ascertain. But the enthusiasm in his speech to the assembled audience at Tonybee Hall earned him the approbation of Mrs. Barnett.² The conference also appears to have resulted in the formation of another settlement - a fact which would have pleased Gorst³ - but the discussion generally Mrs. Barnett

¹Ibid., p. 28-9. For a discussion of University Settlements, see Picht, W., Tonybee Hall and the English Settlements; Inglis, K.S., Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England, p. 143-174; Kelly, T., A History of Adult Education in Great Britain, p. 239-242. Gilbert claims that, "The overall effect of the movement on society was in the long run very great, less perhaps because of any immediate accomplishment in the East End than because young men from settlements went on to careers in which they were able to improve the lot of the poor through legislation and political administration". Gilbert, B.B., The Evolution of National Insurance in Great Britain, p. 44. See also p. 40-45 for a discussion of the settlement movement.

²Barnett, H.O., op. cit., p. 50. "Perhaps the most interesting speech was by Sir John Gorst, who, fresh from a visit to America, told of the work of settlements in the United States, and spoke with enthusiasm of Miss Jane Addams who 'exercised a strong and beneficial influence in public affairs' ...".

³Ibid., p. 49. "Among the subjects on which he [Gorst] was enthusiastic was the creation of better relations between classes, and as he held that settlements promoted mutual understanding, he urged that steps should be taken to get others established".

seems to have found somewhat saddening.¹

1895 was to prove to be a very busy year for Gorst - with a general election occurring in mid-summer and, following that, the shouldering of the responsibilities as the head, in the Commons, of a government department when the Unionist party was returned to office. The first quarter of the year was devoted primarily to the completion of the work of the Poor Law Schools Committee, and this was achieved just before Easter. By the time the Report of the Committee was published,² there was a new political head of the Local Government Board, Henry Chaplin, and Gorst was himself holding Government office, but this did not prevent him from expressing his views within the Report.

The Report covered some 188 pages and was supplemented by 848 pages of evidence provided by the 73 witnesses and the Committee. In their conclusion to the Report the Committee pointed out that their recommendations were based upon the principal aim of securing for the children of Poor Law Schools, "more individual care and a more natural

¹Ibid., p. 441. "The discussion was admirable if saddening, for all seemed to agree as to the increasing separation of rich and poor in towns".

²February 28, 1896, the report was signed. "The report is signed, the 'all together' by all together. It really is a great triumph for my wife, and one she deserves. She has done most of the work, thought out the recommendations, executed the form, and then, more than all, by a mixture of tact and temper, has made the men sign. If one thinks of the opinions with which some started, the change is wonderful ..." - Canon Barnett to Frank Barnett, February 29, 1896, in Barnett, H.O., op. cit., p. 294. But it was not published until the beginning of April.

life".¹ To possibly emphasize this aspect of their work Gorst had been asked by the Committee to prepare a memorandum, from papers provided by the Local Government Board, on the three notorious cases which had aroused public indignation about the running of Poor Law Schools, and which had been instrumental in providing a case for the necessity of establishing the Committee. Gorst's memorandum, of only three pages, was a concise statement of the factors involved in the three cases, i.e. the Forest Gate School's fire of 1889, the accidental poisoning of children at Forest Gate schools in 1893, and the cruelties practised by Nurse Gillespie at Brentwood Schools prior to her sentence to penal servitude in 1894. Yet in his conveyance of the facts Gorst managed to integrate with them damning indictments of the people and authorities both directly and indirectly concerned with the events. In the case of the fire:

"Hare the officer in charge of No. 10 [a boys' dormitory on a second floor above the room in which the fire originated] seems to have been a heavy sleeper, and hard to rouse. But, when he was finally awake, there was no reason why every boy in No. 10 should not have escaped on to the roof of the dining hall, as the women on the same floor did, or down the back stairs into the yard. Hare had the key of the door at the bottom of the stairs [which had been locked].

"No steps seem to have been taken by anybody to arouse the boys in Dormitory No. 9.

"... Hare took no steps to see that No. 10 was clear of boys before himself coming downstairs, and no one explored No. 9 at all.

¹Report of the Poor Law Schools Committee, P.P. 1896, XLIII, [c. 8027] p. 170.

"... There were, in all, 26 boys suffocated, mostly in their beds ... It took three officers to identify all the victims".¹

The other two cases documented by Gorst were horrific, and would have provided Dickens with substantial material, except that he was dead and his works had been published some fifty years earlier.² Unfortunately, moreover, the Committee discovered during the examination of the witnesses that conditions had not improved uniformly as a result of the outcry originating from these three cases. Where a witness was present who had failed to carry out improvements in the conditions for the children when they had been reported by e.g. the Local Government Board Inspectorate, Gorst was a merciless and thorough inquisitor:

¹ Ibid., Appendix A., p. 176.

² Ibid., p. 177-8. In the second case the children had been given fly blown meat on June 17, 1893: "... the only questions on which difference of opinion can exist are (1) the number of eggs which the flies had deposited; (2) the degree of development which such eggs had attained". And then five days later they were given a soup, "... made chiefly of officers' waste, and very little fresh meat was used", although Duncan, the superintendent, had indented for 52 lbs of fresh meat (in error he explained later). Two children died (of ptomaine poisoning) and 148 "were seized by sudden illness". "There was a coroner's inquest, at which the jury returned a verdict of 'accidental death', and placed on record their confidence in Duncan, the superintendent of the school".

In the final case, Gillespie had been constantly caning the infants in her care and depriving them of water: "The infants were also day by day reduced to such straits for want of drinking water that they drank from puddles and water-closets. No effective means were taken to enable them to relieve their thirst". This was common knowledge amongst the staff, including the matron and superintendent, but it took a Local Government Board inquiry to reveal the case and result in Gillespie's sentence of five years' penal servitude. "The guardians and their committees ... were wholly unaware of the generally unsatisfactory condition of their school".

- "4709. Should you say, speaking now in your opinion, that 'the iron house is quite unfit to be inhabited by any class of children?' - No, I do not go so far as that.
4710. You know that Dr. Stephenson went as far as that? - I look upon it as a very unsuitable place.
4711. You know that Dr. Stephenson when he saw it a year ago had no hesitation in saying that it should be at once abandoned? - It is not a suitable place.
4712. Do you know that Dr. Stephenson said that? - I think so, sir.
4713. Has it been abandoned? - It has not been abandoned.
4714. Now, about the infirmary; do you consider that the present infirmary 'enjoys with the iron house the distinction of being the worst of your buildings at Sutton?' - I do.
4715. Does it disclose a state of affairs that nobody would have believed to be possible in these days? - I would not go so far as that.
4716. But Dr. Stephenson did, did not he? - He perhaps did.
4717. Did he not go so far as to say that your infirmary 'disclosed a state of affairs one would have believed impossible in these days', did he say so? - He may have said it.
4718. Has it been abandoned? - It has been considerably altered ...".¹

At times his cynicism flashed out:

"12,443 (Chairman). There are two named G-, Joseph and James? - That was the little boy with the scalded foot, upon whom Miss Mason made some very severe comments.

¹Ibid. Minutes of Evidence, p. 171, December 5, 1894. Gorst to C.E. Martin, Superintendent of the South Metropolitan District School at Brighton Road, Sutton.

- 12,444. (Sir John Gorst). Children with scalded feet are not generally bright and happy, are they? - ...¹

In an inquiry upon the dietary conditions of the children, early on in the Committee's functions, Gorst and the rest of the members were subjected at times to some frustrating witnesses:

"1156. (Sir John Gorst). Is it not the fact that some children cannot get on upon a diet which would suit an ordinary child? I mean are there not individual peculiar stomachs which require something special? - In private families undoubtedly.

1157. Well, are not the stomachs of the work-house children the same as the stomachs of children in private families? - It is a question of temper very often in the latter.

1157. I was going to ask whether a delicate child with a peculiar digestion would ever get satisfied with the uniform diet of a pauper school? - I have no information about such cases".²

But, on the other hand, some of the witnesses, e.g. Dr. Barnardo, were constructive in their evidence, and willing to help in possibly achieving an amelioration of the children's conditions.

The Committee's Report covered every facet of the field associated with the Poor Law Schools and from this emerged their list of recommendations for necessary reforms. They were particularly worried about the effect that the larger schools, of 800 to 1,500 children, were having upon the mental and physical development of the inhabitants:

¹ Ibid., p. 437, February 15, 1895. Gorst to W. Crooks, Guardian of the Poplar Union.

² Ibid., p. 52, November 14, 1894. Gorst to S. Stephenson, Ophthalmic Surgeon to Central London District Schools, at Hanwell.

"The community [of a large school] differs materially from an ordinary boarding school, and is wholly unlike a home. There is little room in it for honourable emulation, and not much to encourage aspiration after a higher standard of thinking and living. Such a school cannot furnish the training which will qualify its possessors to enter the ordinary market of the world, or to hold their own with children who have been brought up under more natural conditions".¹

In their investigations as to the existence of such schools, the Committee discovered that there was a common managerial belief that schools of this size were the cheapest to run, and that the Local Government Board sanctioned them, "simply from a disinclination to contest that opinion".² They pointed out that this was not the case, and that some of the 'cottage home' schools were equally efficient in running costs and without the attendant, deleterious effects of the larger schools.³

The Committee recommended that large schools should neither be built in future, nor present ones extended, and, wherever possible, they should be broken up into smaller units. This was advised on the grounds of health:

"... the medical witnesses are unanimous in condemning the accumulation of large numbers of children in one institution, as leading to the dissemination of diseases, especially such ailments as ophthalmia, ringworm and skin complaints generally ...",

as well as that of physical retardation:

"Mr. Hart, whilst admitting that the children have advantages in some respects over children

¹Ibid., [c. 8027] p. 14.

²Ibid., p. 16.

³Ibid., p. 17.

in poverty-stricken homes, such as regular and sufficient food, asserts that they have an excess of diseases of malnutrition. Indeed, he affirms that their whole condition, physical and mental, is inferior to that of other children of their own class. This opinion is confirmed by Dr. Warner ... by Dr. Downes, who, in the course of his inspection has found many cases of defective vitality among the younger boys in the larger schools; and by the Chairman of the 'Exmouth' Training Ship Committee who says that the boys from the schools have not the full muscular development and physique of other boys".¹

The evidence provided against such schools on the grounds of their effects on mental and moral development anticipated that of Bowlby, who described similar results some sixty years later.² Some witnesses felt that the effects observed derived from the form of molly-coddling which the children received:

"... the fact that at the schools the children have everything done for them, and that there is less activity in their life, accounts for the absence of mental alertness ... They are apt to become dull and wooden, and the girls very slow in everything they do ... even the teachers suffer from mental depression".

Some witnesses found that the children were, "... rather morose, sullen, and obstinate ... they cannot be individualised, but are apt to run in one groove, and those who enter the school with marked characteristics lose them little by little, and tend to become like the other children".³ The production of these effects lay, the Committee felt, in the routine followed by the schools plus the poor teaching

¹Ibid., p. 17.

²Bowlby, J., Child Care and the Growth of Love, p. 18-49.

³P.P., 1896, XLIII, [c. 8027] p. 17-18.

provided.

The Committee were highly critical of the teaching standards achieved as well as the quality of the teaching staff. Both were much lower than that which characterised the public elementary school, a fact which appears to be derived from the continued use of Article 114 of the General Consolidated order of 1847 by the Poor Law Schools: "... boys and girls shall, for three of the working hours of at least every day, be instructed in reading, writing, arithmetic and the principles of Christian religion, and such other instruction shall be imparted to them as may fit them for service and train them to habits of usefulness, industry and virtue".¹ Consequently whilst the public elementary schools had achieved developments in their curricular programme the Poor Law Schools had ossified: "English grammar and analysis, the systematic lessons in Geography, History, and Elementary Sciences, which now are found so useful in awakening the intelligence of children in the public elementary schools, form no part of the scheme of instruction".²

No reason could be seen, furthermore, by the Committee, why a child should suffer from inferior teachers and a substandard education simply because it had to attend a Poor Law School. Since the State had adopted these children, it should ensure that they received, "... as

¹Ibid., p. 39.

²Ibid. See Table 1 for a characteristic Poor Law school curriculum.

Table I.

KENSINGTON AND CHLSEA DISTRICT SCHOOL—TIME TABLE (BOYS)

MORNING MEETING								
DAY	Standards	5.50 to 6.00	6.00 to 6.30	6.30 to 7.00	7.00 to 7.30	7.30 to 8.00	8.00 to 8.30	8.30 to 9.00
Monday	I	PARADE, INSPECTION OF HANDS, SCHOOL OPENED WITH PRAYER	Arithmetic	Reading	Dictation	Recreation	Transcription	Old Testament
	II		Arithmetic	Geography	Reading	Recreation	Dictation	Old Testament
	III		Arithmetic	Geography	Dictation	Recreation	Reading	Old Testament
	IV		Arithmetic	Reading	Geography	Recreation	Dictation	Old Testament
	V and VI		Reading	Composition	Geography	Recreation	Arithmetic	Old Testament
Tuesday	I	PARADE, INSPECTION OF HANDS, SCHOOL OPENED WITH PRAYER	Word Building	Arithmetic	Dictation	Recreation	Reading	Old Testament
	II		Arithmetic	Geography	Reading	Recreation	Dictation or Spelling	Old Testament
	III		Arithmetic	Geography	Word Building	Recreation	Reasoning	Old Testament
	IV		Dictation	Reading	Geography	Recreation	Arithmetic	Old Testament
	V and VI		Composition	Reading	Geography	Recreation	Arithmetic	Old Testament
Wednesday	I	PARADE, INSPECTION OF HANDS, SCHOOL OPENED WITH PRAYER	Transcription	Reasoning	Arithmetic	Recreation	Dictation	New Testament
	II		Word Building	Grammar	Reading	Recreation	Arithmetic	New Testament
	III		Dictation	Grammar	Reading	Recreation	Arithmetic	New Testament
	IV		Arithmetic	Reasoning	Grammar	Recreation	Dictation	New Testament
	V and VI		Reading	Composition	Grammar	Recreation	Arithmetic	New Testament
Thursday	I	PARADE, INSPECTION OF HANDS, SCHOOL OPENED WITH PRAYER	Word Building	Arithmetic	Reading	Recreation	Dictation	New Testament
	II		Arithmetic	Grammar	Reading	Recreation	Word Building	New Testament
	III		Arithmetic	Grammar	Dictation	Recreation	Reading	New Testament
	IV		Dictation	Reading	Grammar	Recreation	Arithmetic	New Testament
	V and VI		Reading	Composition	Grammar	Recreation	Arithmetic	New Testament
Friday	I	PARADE, INSPECTION OF HANDS, SCHOOL OPENED WITH PRAYER	Mental Arithmetic	Reading	Dictation	Recreation	Arithmetic	Catechism and Scriptural Repetition
	II		Mental Arithmetic	State Arithmetic	Dictation	Recreation	Reading	Catechism and Scriptural Repetition
	III		State Arithmetic	Mental Arithmetic	Reading	Recreation	Dictation	Catechism and Scriptural Repetition
	IV		Mental Arithmetic	Reading	Arithmetic	Recreation	Dictation	Catechism and Scriptural Repetition
	V and VI		Mental Arithmetic	Composition	Reading	Recreation	Arithmetic	Catechism and Scriptural Repetition
Saturday	I	PARADE, INSPECTION OF HANDS, SCHOOL OPENED WITH PRAYER	Catechism and Scriptural Repetition	Mental Arithmetic	Writing or Spelling	Arithmetic	Recreation	Reading
	II		Catechism and Scriptural Repetition	Mental Arithmetic	Reading	Dictation	Recreation	Arithmetic
	III		Catechism and Scriptural Repetition	Mental Arithmetic	Mental Arithmetic	Reading	Recreation	Singing
	IV		Catechism and Scriptural Repetition	Mental Arithmetic	Reading	Arithmetic	Recreation	Singing
	V and VI		Catechism and Scriptural Repetition	Mental Arithmetic	Arithmetic	Reading	Recreation	Singing
AFTERNOON MEETING								
	Standards	1.0	1.30 to 2.00	2.00 to 2.30	2.30 to 3.00	3.00 to 3.30	3.30 to 4.00	4.00 to 4.30
Monday and Tuesday	I	ASSEMBLY	Drawing	Recreation	Arithmetic	Reading	Arithmetic	Singing
	II							
	III							
	IV							
	V and VI							
Wednesday and Friday	I	ASSEMBLY	Drawing	Recreation	Arithmetic	Reading	Arithmetic	Singing
	II							
	III							
	IV							
	V and VI							
Thursday and Friday	I	ASSEMBLY	Copy Books	Arithmetic	Recreation	Object Lesson	Transcription	Singing
	II							
	III							
	IV							
	V and VI							

NOTE.—Lessons are grouped in order that the teacher of the Standards I and II may receive assistance.

generous an education as possible, and one well fitted to enable them to lead an honourable and industrious life".¹ This goal could be achieved by a reversion to the system maintained prior to 1863, whereby these schools came under the jurisdiction of the Education Department. The granting of Education Department grants, dependent upon the reports of the Inspectorate, would, the Committee believed, act as an incentive for increased efficiency in the Poor Law Schools. But the best, and also the simplest solution to the problem could be achieved by allowing Poor Law children to attend the local elementary school, with care being taken to ensure that they were completely integrated with other children.²

The Committee discovered that the technical teaching provided by the schools tended to be on similar lines to that of Mr. Squeer's academy: "... the boys are too frequently engaged in sweeping, cleaning and scrubbing, and in attending on any workmen employed in buildings or grounds. ... The general aim is to get the household work done". Where teaching was provided, the quality tended to be poor due to the fact that, "The masters of the workshops are generally skilled artisans, though not necessarily efficient teachers of their trades".³ A general con-

¹Ibid., p. 39-40.

²Ibid., p. 42-44.

³Ibid. p. 46.

demnation of the technical education provided for the boys in the schools was given by one of the Inspectorate, who "... went so far as to say that masters who had experience of boys trained in poor law schools preferred to engage those who had not received any instruction in that particular branch of the trade for which they were intended".¹

Girls suffered even more, "They are engaged in scrubbing floors, laundry work, cooking, mending garments, and in miscellaneous household duties, mainly with the view to diminish the necessity of employing many hired servants".² The Committee felt that this was useless as it provided the girls with little insight into either running a home or being engaged in domestic service, due to the proportion of everything involved and the machinery used to deal with it.³ The strain of these labours also resulted in the girls being too tired to benefit from their normal school lessons. The Committee was, however, aware of the necessity of maintaining the good will of the ratepayers:

"... we wish to pay due regard to the demand which the ratepayers may justly make for economy in the administration of these schools. The children will profit by the discharge of light domestic duties suited to their capacities, and we therefore recommend that even the younger children will be familiarised to a moderate extent with such duties."⁴

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 50.

³Ibid., p. 51. In one school laundry, 35,000 articles were washed each week - thus the numbers involved and the methods of dealing with them were remote from everyday housekeeping.

⁴Ibid., p. 52.

Nonetheless, they recommended that changes in the routine of the school, and even in clothing, could have beneficial effects. It is incredible that the Committee had to suggest that the schools should allow the children a summer vacation instead of the usual, and only, two or three days at Christmas and Easter. The beneficial aspect of this had already been seen in some schools which had experimented on the subject: "The medical officer of the school has stated that 'for six weeks after the children's return he had no need to give them extra strengthening diet'".¹ They felt that the children should be provided with indoor shoes; and could thus go outside during inclement weather. (A practice which was not allowed in many schools where children only had one pair of boots; and such exercise would thus result, on their return, in dirtying the scrubbed floors) They also had to recommend the provision of different clothing for summer wear. The administration of the Poor Law Schools at the end of the nineteenth century still appeared to some extent to reflect the dictum widely held at the beginning of the century that poverty itself demonstrated a personal failing and that the gift of help, far from sanctifying the giver, contributed to and compounded the moral failing of the beggar.²

¹Ibid., p. 168.

²For a discussion of nineteenth century attitudes to paupers, see Gilbert, B.B., Evolution of National Insurance in Great Britain, p. 13-19.

The solution to these problems was already partially in existence when the Committee started its work, in the shape of the "cottage home" system. In this, smaller units of children, e.g. 40 boys or slightly fewer girls, were kept under one roof, and the small colony of houses were situated on a common 'campus'. Another scheme consisted of arrangements for "boarding out", whereby what were essentially foster homes were provided by cottagers. The Committee felt that this was the best system for coping with the problem of Poor Law children as it, "... secures to them the healthiest and most natural life, and gives them the best chance of escaping pauper associations and becoming absorbed into the respectable working population".¹ There was, however, the fact that at the end of 1894, there were in the metropolis area alone, some 11,539 pauper children, and obviously not enough potential foster homes. This was to be overcome by a greater utilisation of the cottage home type schools, encouraging emigration (chiefly to Canada), and a better control and management of the existing schools.

This, the Committee thought, could be achieved by the creation of a Central Metropolitan Authority, "which shall have the control and supervision of all the London institutions for Poor Law children", and that the schools were to be conducted as public elementary schools and thus

¹P.P. 1896, XLIII [c. 8027] p. 9.

come under the supervision of the Education Department.¹ Gorst and Mrs. Barnett felt, however, that the structure of the Central Metropolitan Authority was vaguely expressed. They, therefore, added a joint, dissenting memorandum, in which they stated their view that the authority, "should not be a Poor Law but an educational body, of a similar nature to that recommended by the Royal Commission on Secondary Education",² and that this body should be under the control of the Education Department. Their rationale was that this would help to remove the children from contact with pauper authorities, as well as from the inefficient management of the Local Government Board:

"We consider that the supervision of the Local Government Board has failed to develop proper treatment of children or to stop scandals in the institution, and that the Board might, with advantage, be relieved of the care of children ...".³

The Committee, as a whole, hoped that their recommendations would be useful in diminishing, "the evils of pauperism, by rescuing from the class of 'Poor Law' children the many bright and hopeful boys and girls who, through no fault of their own, have become dependent upon the State; and to make the way easier for them to take an honourable and useful place in society and in the market of

¹Ibid., p. 171.

² & ³Ibid., p. 173. It would be interesting to ascertain if Gorst wrote this memorandum before or after his appointment as Vice President of the Committee of Council on Education in July 1895. Unfortunately, no evidence appears to remain concerning this.

the world".¹

The publication of the report was not well received: "... made a press sensation, and let loose avalanches of angry remonstrance from Guardians, officers, and what Sir John Gorst called 'the army of traders' whose interest was in the maintenance of huge Institutions".² Also, it did not result in any action being taken by the Local Government Board. But Gorst, now in his new position as head of the Education Department, had already inserted into his new Education Bill, the way by which the Poor Law Schools could be transferred to the realm of the Education Department. This he presented to the House of Commons before the Report was published.³

It is interesting to note that Gorst's activities on the Poor Law Schools Committee, which necessitated his staying at Tonybee Hall with the Barnetts during the first half of 1895, would undoubtedly have brought him into contact with a tall, thirty-one year old man who had just returned from Siam. The latter had been appointed by the Barnetts to the staff of Tonybee Hall as a "Censor of Studies", and this provided him with a base from which to

¹Ibid., p. 172.

²Barnett, H.O., op. cit., p. 295.

³4 Hansard, 39, c. 540 (March 31, 1896). "... this authority [education committee of County and County Borough Councils] will constitute a body to which may be entrusted hereafter those unhappy children of the State who are to be found in industrial and Poor Law Schools, and this body may deliver them from the prison taint on the one hand and the workhouse taint on the other".

apply for a post in his chosen field of work, education.¹ Unfortunately, there is no record of Gorst's views of this man, R.L. Morant, at the time, but the result of the general election held during the summer of 1895 was destined to bring these two men together for what was to be the benefit of the English educational system.

¹Allen, B.M., Sir Robert Morant, p. 95.

CHAPTER FIVE

The fall of the Roseberry administration was unexpectedly achieved when a vote of censure was passed on June 21, 1895, against the Secretary for War, Campbell Bannerman, for inadequate procurement of cordite for the army. Rather than dissolve Parliament Rosebery resigned, after his efforts, and those of Harcourt, had swayed the majority of the Cabinet to accept this line of action against its will.¹ The Queen consequently asked Salisbury if he could form a new administration, to which he assented - having the support of the leaders of the Liberal Unionist faction, the Duke of Devonshire and Joseph Chamberlain.²

Salisbury's usual difficulties in distributing the various Government offices were compounded this time by having to include the claims of the Liberal Unionists. He managed to achieve a reasonable balance with regard to the holders of Cabinet posts, but there was a danger that the non-Cabinet offices would be biased towards the Unionists.³ This was, however, redressed, and in the offers that were sent out there was one to Gorst for the position of the Vice President of the Committee of Council on Education. But this was not done until after Salisbury had consulted the new head of the Education Department, the Duke of

¹Ensor, R.K., op. cit., p. 220-1.

²Queen Victoria. Memorandum, June 25, 1895. Quoted in Buckle, G.E., op. cit., iii. 2, p. 524-5.

³Salisbury Papers, A.J. Balfour to Lord Salisbury, June, 1895.

Devonshire.¹ In his letter to Gorst, Salisbury pointed out that he thought Gorst would find the work interesting; he would be fully employed in dealing with the "difficult but urgent" questions connected with education and he would be allowed more than the normal amount of independence for such an office. In view of his growing interest in the education and welfare of children, Salisbury's view of the prospects must have appealed to Gorst. But this would have been quickly dampened by the bitter pill he had to swallow in order to achieve such a future; for Salisbury went on to say:

"Your office is sometimes though not generally included in the Cabinet. At present I fear such an arrangement would be impossible, as the numbers of the Cabinet are swollen beyond all [?] former precedents. The coalition of two previously independent organisations makes the task of arrangement more than usually difficult".²

The relegation to a non-Cabinet post in what could conceivably be his last opportunity for Government office, now that he was 60, must have depressed Gorst considerably. And his chagrin would have been increased by the knowledge that in the five previous administrations the holder of this office was only twice not in the Cabinet. Something of his feelings can be gathered from the very terse acknowledgement of Salisbury's letter: "I will accept the Office to which you have designated me, and I will do my best to fulfil the

¹Chatsworth MSS. 340.2622. Lord Salisbury to Duke of Devonshire, June, 1895: "... What do you think of Gorst for [?Office] in the Commons - V.P. of Education (if he will take it)?".

²Salisbury Papers. Lord Salisbury to J.E. Gorst, July 1, 1895.

important duties which it involves".¹ On reflection, however, Gorst may have realised that his independent actions in the past may have been partially to blame for his present loss of fortune. As a contemporary observed:

"... Sir John Gorst had been given the post of Vice-President of the Council, in consideration of what might be expected from his parliamentary dexterity and personal craft - qualities no doubt admirable in themselves but largely dependent for their effect upon the direction in which they were exercised".²

This realisation may have tempered his outlook, especially when such actions and the New Zealand Loan Company affair could have been legitimate grounds for his exclusion from even such a position. Thus when Eldon Gorst, home on leave from Egypt, took the morning train to Maningtree on July 13, he found on his arrival at Lawford that all the family were, "well and happy at my father's appointment".³

In the general election which followed the dissolution of Parliament in July, Gorst was re-elected to his seat for Cambridge University. Not only was the election a victory for Gorst, but it was also a resounding success for the Tories and Unionists, having a majority of 152. Thus Salisbury's administration was able to return to the House in August with a confident outlook on the forthcoming session.

¹Ibid., J.E. Gorst to Lord Salisbury, July 2, 1895.

²FitzRoy, Sir Almeric, Memoirs, p. xviii.

³Gorst, Sir Eldon, Diary 1895, July 13.

Gorst's appointment was welcomed in various quarters: "The appointment of Sir John Gorst as Vice-President of the Council has given hearty satisfaction to practical educationalists ... the appointment of so honest and able a statesman as Sir John Gorst is a guarantee for the continuity of this [Acland's] policy of progress and thorough efficiency".¹ The Journal of Education was more restrained in its comments:

"If we must have an untried man we might have gone further than Sir John Gorst and fared much worse. His intellectual eminence is as unquestionable as his sympathy with the poor. The part which he played in the Berlin Conference is well remembered, and we shall look to him first to raise the age for half-time employment, and then to abolish the baneful system altogether. With regard to the general work of the Department, the example of his two immediate predecessors has set before him a high ideal which could not fail to stimulate any man of ability".²

The officials of the Education Department may have wondered what sort of person they had inherited as their departmental head, having had an opportunity to witness some personal habits of Gorst's:

"Sir John had remarkable habits. He used to ride to the Department on a bicycle of brilliant red, and was probably often mistaken for a Post Office official. He said that cycling was the finest exercise possible. ... He was by way of being fond of Art, and indeed was something of an artist, and he is reported to have attended classes at South Kensington during his term of office. In his room at the House ... it was his custom to employ his spare time in copying pictures. The room was

¹Davies, J.J., 'The New Minister of Education and his Work', Westminster Review, 144, September, 1895, p. 332-6.

²Journal of Education, 313, August, 1895, p. 459.

on the ground floor, looking on the Terrace, and inspection of his work through the window appeared to delight the younger and more frivolous Members, especially when it consisted, as it often did, in copying from the nude. Deputations and visitors seemed to be equally susceptible".¹

Parliament had hardly reassembled when the recess took place. Gorst, who had managed to avoid committing himself with regard to the future policy of the Education Department during the debate on the education estimates, put down the reins of office to go on a cycling tour of Normandy with his son Eldon, home on leave, and Eva, his second youngest daughter. Eldon's record of the holiday is, in spite of its brevity, a useful insight into the non-official aspect of Gorst's life, being one of the rare observations that remain:

"Friday, September 6. Left Dieppe early on our bicycles and rode to St. Valery en Caux where we lunched and stayed for the rest of the day. Bathed.

Saturday. Left St. Valery early and rode to Fécamp where we bathed and then had lunch. I was unnecessarily fatigued over the ride owing to my machine getting out of order. In the afternoon we rode on to Etretat where we stayed. There was some alarm on account of my dressing bag being missing when the rest of the luggage arrived. However, it turned up next morning.

¹Kekewich, G.W., The Education Department and After, p. 103-4. In this passage about Gorst one also gains an insight into his feelings about Kekewich: "... [Gorst] suggested that I should follow his example [of cycling] but that I had better use a 'lady's bicycle' ...". Kekewich, unaware of the sarcasm in the comment, thought that Gorst was demonstrating "... kindly care for my bones ...". Kekewich was the Permanent Secretary of the Education Department-and later the Board of Education- whilst Gorst was Vice-President.

Sunday. Stayed at Etretat all day. We bathed in the morning and went for a short ride before dinner.

Monday. Left Etretat very early for Le Havre where we arrived about 11 o'clock. Sent on our luggage to Trouville, got our letters and lunched at Frascatis'. After lunch by boat to Honfleur and rode into Trouville where we put up at the Bras d'or. It was a very hot afternoon and Dolly [Eva] and I were both rather knocked up. Bathed before dinner.

We shall have to alter our itinerary as Dolly cannot ride for a few days.

Tuesday. In the morning to see the bathing and bathed. In the evening took a short ride to Villans with my father.

Wednesday. Rode in the morning with my father through the Forest of St. Gatien to Pont L'Eveque and back to Trouville. Bathed. In the afternoon we walked about the town. After dinner to a concert at the Casino.

Thursday. Rode with my father through Pont L'Eveque, Beaumont and back to Trouville through Bénéville. Bathed. In the afternoon walked about with Dolly. After dinner my father and I went to the Eden Casino - a very stupid entertainment.

Friday. Rode in the morning to Dives where we put up at the Hotel Guillaume le Conquéran. In the afternoon we rode to Houlgate and Cabourg and I bathed. After dinner to a concert at Cabourg Casino.

Saturday. Started early and rode to Caen where we breakfasted and then looked at churches. Rode back again by a different route along the sea. Dolly and I bathed at Cabourg.

Sunday. Left Dives for Paris by early train. My father and Dolly continue their bicycling trip for a few days longer.

Thursday, September 19. Met my father and Dolly on the boat at Dieppe".¹

¹Gorst, Sir Eldon, Diary, 1895.

Gorst and his son had undoubtedly discussed the structure and potential of the new administration in England whilst they had been pedalling around Normandy, as well as the state of affairs in Egypt. But the holiday also enabled them to escape from the burdens of office and enjoy the land and seascapes of that part of France.

Refreshed by his sojourn, Gorst, on his return to England, resumed his duties in Whitehall where he discovered the recently completed Report of the Royal Commission on Secondary Education awaiting his attention.¹ The observations and recommendations of the Commissioners for the rectification of the increasingly chaotic situation in the administration of secondary education would have reinforced Salisbury's words about Gorst being fully employed in dealing with the "difficult but urgent questions connected with education". Although the necessity for dealing with the Report was apparent, Gorst's main aim was to appraise the situation *vis-à-vis* the voluntary schools, and to try and deduce the answer for the problem.

At this stage in the nineteenth century there was little doubt that the voluntary schools were a problem, and that the origins of the problem resided in two major facts. The first of these was the established Church's historical claim to the preservation of the link between it and the schools which it had founded. Such a claim meant that the Church would fight to maintain its administrative and

¹ Report of the Royal Commission on Secondary Education,
P.P. 1895, XLIII [c. 7862].

religious grip upon these schools. In areas where there were no alternative Board Schools, this state of affairs angered Nonconformists who had to send their children to such institutions. For not only did it mean that the teaching provided had a highly Anglican-biassed basis but that in a large number of cases, at least, the quality of education provided was less than that given in the Board School of equivalent status. The Church's claim, therefore, to a say in the education of children had, with the religious zeal and intolerance that existed in the nineteenth century, firmly split the educational world into two camps after the 1870 Education Act - the voluntary schools on one hand and in opposition, on the other, the School Boards. The second fact arose from the first, and this was the problem of finance.

The 1870 Act had provided the voluntary schools with an opportunity to put their house in order, and they had responded to the task by providing new schools and more places for children. In the years which had intervened since the passage of this Act, however, the problem of maintaining the schools as efficient structures had become an increasing one. And in trying to overcome this, the management of voluntary schools were hindered by the 17/6 restriction imposed by the 1876 Education Act, and also by the removal of school fees with the passing of the 1891 Education Act. Thus they had come to depend increasingly upon voluntary contributions for their maintenance. The Board schools, on the other hand, had almost unlimited rate aid. Consequently by the time Gorst became Vice-President,

the financial disparity between these two types of educational establishments was marked, as shown below:-

(a) Average cost of annual maintenance/scholar:

(1) in Voluntary Schools	£1.18.11 $\frac{1}{4}$ d.
(11) in Board Schools	£2.10. 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ d.

(b) Annual Parliamentary grant/child in average attendance:

(1) Voluntary Schools	£0.18. 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. in 1894
	£0.18. 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in 1895
(11) Board Schools	£0.19. 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. in 1894
	£0.19. 5 d. in 1895

(c) Voluntary contributions/child in average attendance:

(1) Voluntary Schools	£0. 6. 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. in 1894
	£0. 6. 9 d. in 1895
(11) Board Schools	£0.18. 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. in 1894
[Rates]	£0.19. 8 d. in 1895 ₁

But the most serious aspect of this gap between the types of schools and their ability to provide an efficient educational service was undoubtedly the fact that the majority of children were educated in the voluntary schools,² ie serious from the point of view that their financial resources were limited and thus they could only, in most cases, offer a restricted type of education compared with the Board Schools.

¹ Annual Report of the Committee of Council on Education, P.P. 1897, XXVI, [c. 8544, c.8545] p. 6-8.

² 4 Hansard, 39, c. 526 (March 31, 1896). Some 2,445,812 children were on the registers of Voluntary Schools compared with 1,879,218 registered with Board Schools.

Gorst's basic problem therefore was that he had to devise some scheme whereby the situation of the voluntary schools was relieved, from the public purse, in order to aid these schools in promoting a better educational service.¹ But in carrying this scheme out and trying, at the same time, to allow the Church to retain its independence of management over the schools, Gorst knew that he would immediately incur the severe displeasure of the Opposition and Nonconformists alike.

His thoughts about this somewhat thorny problem started to emerge in his speeches up and down the country during November. The first indication of what he envisaged as a possible solution to it emerged when he addressed a meeting of the Council for Women's Trades in Glasgow, and, "... commended to all social reformers the importance of turning their eyes to local authorities". If these bodies could be galvanised into action, then, he believed, there would be a beneficial result as far as the welfare of the people was concerned.² Gorst elaborated upon this theme, in respect to education, a few days later in London: "We have to collect into one centre the functions of the Government in Education now dispersed among separate and

¹Balfour had started also to contemplate the problems involved and wrote to his cousin, Lord Cranborne, for information: "... send me a small collection of the really effective literature upon the subject - I mean from a Church point of view ... I must try and think out some plan for myself, as I suppose that I shall turn out to be the member of the Cabinet who has got to help Gorst in the matter". Hatfield, Salisbury Papers, S/19/172. A.J. Balfour to Lord Cranborne, September 12, 1895.

²The Times, November 9, 1895.

conflicting Departments. We have to create local authorities to supervise and coordinate higher education".¹

He went on:

"We have to devise the means by which voluntary schools in town and country can be maintained at the highest possible point of efficiency and by which religious devotion can still be made available for the advancement of national education. We have to face the religious difficulty caused by our unhappy divisions, and, while protecting children from religious teaching offensive to their parents' consciences, we have to give them access to such religious teaching as their parents' consciences demand".²

This last statement indicated that Gorst contemplated, as part of the solution to the voluntary schools problem, the repeal of the Cowper-Temple clause of the 1870 Education Act. For if this was done, and the principles stated in his speech put into action, then there would be a reduction in the differences that existed between the two types of school - for each would have to offer religious teaching in accordance with parental wishes. No doubt Gorst believed that this levelling-off process would thereby reduce the grounds on which the Nonconformists could object to public expenditure on voluntary schools. Unfortunately such a concept only antagonised rather than pacified the Nonconformists, and did not prevent, either, a large deputation, led by the Archbishop of Canterbury, from presenting itself at the Foreign Office to Salisbury, Devonshire and Gorst, a few days later.

¹ Ibid., November 14, 1895.

² Ibid.

The deputation had presented itself in order to express concern to the Government about the position of the voluntary schools and to press for some form of relief. This view had been expressed in a memorial published in The Times a few days earlier, in which there was a demand for "... an increase of contributions from public sources [Imperial rather than rates] sufficient to meet the general increased cost of education throughout the country, to be administered in such a manner as will prevent what is harmful in competition between voluntary and Board schools".¹

After a few sentences from the Duke of Devonshire about the desirability of maintaining the voluntary subscription aspect of voluntary school finances, Lord Salisbury neatly avoided the whole issue with some very non-committal phrases. The subject was still under discussion by the Government and the deputation should not despair if the Government took a longer time than they would like, as it would be necessary, "to give them [the government] command of the sinews of war".²

Gorst, untrue to character, came out with some equally vague speaking the day after, in a speech at the Mercers' Hall in Cheapside. It was primarily devoted to the University extension movement, but at the end of his speech he turned his attention to education in general and stated:

"... What all of us desire in education is the greatest possible amount of efficiency, and no one

¹Ibid., November 16, 1895.

²The Times, November 21, 1895.

wishes to attain that by crippling any of the instruments of public education which either are doing good work in the country or are capable of being made to do good work in the country. The only desire which every lover of education ... can possibly have is that the utmost possible extension shall be given to our national system of education ... and that we should not level down but level up and make the institutions of the country as perfect for the education of the people as it is possible to make them. (Cheers)".¹

A stirring, ambiguous statement that could have been applied equally as well to the voluntary schools as to the institutions of higher education, and only indicated roughly the path that would be taken.

A fortnight later the measure to bring about the process of "levelling up", and act as the solution to the voluntary school problem was brought into the cold light of day when Gorst sent his, "first rough sketch of some clauses of an Education Bill" to Balfour. It was based upon a novel concept involving a "proposal for a new County Authority, which I understand from Kekewich you are prepared generally to approve".²

In these proposals for a new education authority, Gorst revealed not only his implicit acceptance of one of the main recommendations of the Bryce report, but carried it on to its logical conclusion, and, in so doing, made the curtailment of the powers of the School Boards a possibility:

¹Ibid., November 22, 1895.

²B.M. Add. M.S. 49791 f. 7,23. J.E. Gorst to A.J. Balfour, December 6, 1895.

"An Education Board to be appointed in every County District.

FUNCTIONS.

1. To be generally responsible for all Education in their District.
2. To initiate schemes for dealing with Educational endowments.
3. To interfere as little as possible with any person or body doing educational work efficiently.
4. To aid by grant such bodies and persons as may apply for assistance.
The grants are to be made for such purposes and subject to such conditions as the Education Board may prescribe within limits defined by statute.
5. To inspect schools which receive aid.
6. To provide additional schools where required, and to take over existing schools by agreement".¹

The foresight embodied in these proposals is quickly revealed by a brief examination of the current basis for the administration of schools in England. At the time, although the historical development of educational administration had led to such a possibility, these proposals must have seemed relatively revolutionary - especially when the financing of these new, decentralised structures proposed by Gorst was also examined:-

"The funds at the disposal of the Education Board would consist of:-

1. The grant from the Local Taxation Act 1890.
2. The Science and Art Grants.
3. A subvention from Imperial Funds.
4. A general county-rate.
5. A special rate on parishes receiving aid in which there is no school rate".²

¹B.M. Add. M.S. 49791 f. 23. Sketch of Education Measure by J.E. Gorst.

²Ibid.

Gorst's proposals involved, therefore, not only the deposition of powers for the administration of all schools within their area upon the county and county borough councils (which had only been in existence for six years), but also the distribution of educational funds which had previously been administered by the State.

Balfour was not particularly enthusiastic about Gorst's proposals, primarily because they went in the face of the agreements reached about the Bill at the two previous meetings of the Cabinet Committee on education. As Balfour was the principal member of this Committee, Gorst's proposals must have appeared as disregarding his wishes:

"Sir John Gorst does not appear to agree with the principles accepted by his colleagues, and not at the time objected to by himself. I enclose a Memorandum just received from him which seems to embody the whole result of his labours up to the present time. Personally I think it is quite unsatisfactory, and it certainly is not framed on the lines laid down by the Committee".¹

Such far-reaching proposals with regard to education would appear to have been also repulsive to the recipient of Balfour's letter, Lord Salisbury, according to Barnett: "Salisbury with insolence declares his (?) contempt for education but slowly he is driven along another course - I daresay in (?) his Govt. doing something for education".²

¹B.M. Add. M.S. 49690 f. 123-4. A.J. Balfour to Lord Salisbury, December 6, 1895.

²Barnett Papers, F/BAR/132, Canon Barnett to Frank Barnett: November 30, 1895.

Salisbury, however carried out Balfour's suggestion that he should instruct Gorst to have his clauses embodied by the Government draftsman into a Draft Bill. Balfour also wanted a memorandum by Kekewich, which had been sent with Gorst's clauses, drafted into another Bill, for comparison. Salisbury could see little reason for doing so, "The differences are not very evident to an inexperienced eye", but acquiesced.¹ Gorst, in his reply to Salisbury's directions about the draft Bills, confirmed Salisbury's feelings, and indicated error on Balfour's part: "There are not two schemes but one only, which Sir George Kekewich intended to describe by a memorandum and I by a sketch of the clauses of a Bill. If there are divergencies they are unintentional".² He also indicated that the draftsman was at work on a Bill. The director of the office of Special Inquiries and Reports, Michael Sadler, was summoned back from his educational tour of Germany by Kekewich on December 2 to help in the preparation of the Bill. On December 7, he was in consultation with Gorst and Kekewich. Sadler was instructed to start preparing the part of the Bill dealing with Secondary education, five days later.³ This logical choice of a member of the Bryce Commission to carry out the drafting of possible reforms in secondary education, more or

¹B.M. Add. M.S. 49690 f. 128. Lord Salisbury to A.J. Balfour, December 10, 1895.

²Ibid., f. 130. J.E. Gorst to Lord Salisbury, December 10, 1895.

³Sadler, M., Sir Michael Sadler, p. 144.

less ensured reinforcement of the Report's recommendations accepted by Gorst.

In the meantime, the Duke of Devonshire had forwarded Gorst's clauses and Kekewich's memorandum to Joseph Chamberlain, the Colonial Secretary.¹ Chamberlain returned them with his comments, on December 15, which were ones that would be expected from a leader of the National Education League in the 1870's:

"They are the very maddest proposals I have ever seen in the course of my life.

"They would absolutely break down in the interest of the Church and the Roman Catholics, the so-called compromise of 1870.

"... They would repeal the Cowper Temple clause and unite every Dissenter in the United Kingdom and every Liberal Unionist, with a spark of Liberalism left, in an unbending resistance".²

After continuing a little more in the same emotional vein, Chamberlain conceded, "I am ready to make such provisions as may be absolutely necessary to prevent the extinction of the voluntary schools", but, even so, "I could not hold up my head for a day after I had consented to such a Bill as that now suggested".³ He, accordingly, submitted a memorandum to the Cabinet outlining his objections to the proposed Bill and concluded:

¹Salisbury Papers, Duke of Devonshire to Lord Salisbury, December 17, 1895: "... Chamberlain is rather uneasy about Education. I left some papers with him, which I expect to get back from him tomorrow, and may have something to tell you which it may be important for you to know".

²Chatsworth MSS, 340.2670. J. Chamberlain to Duke of Devonshire, December 15, 1895.

³Ibid.

"... it may be stated that the mere introduction of such a Bill as proposed would do more to reunite a solid Liberal opposition, and to shatter the Unionist majority than could possibly be accomplished by any other means whatsoever".¹

In the face of such powerful opposition by one of the most influential members of the Cabinet, Gorst submitted a long memorandum to the Cabinet five days later, aimed at convincing the members of the validity of his measures. Gorst knew that if he failed now the Bill that eventually emerged would bear little resemblance to what he desired to achieve. His memorandum was, consequently, a detailed and lucid account of what was required in the educational field, and one which pointed out the possible consequences in political terms of not carrying out the suggestions proposed in the Bill. The major part of his argument was devoted to a treatment of the role of the new education authority, since this was to be the central theme of the Bill. In his explanation of the necessity for this structure, Gorst stated a point which was to become a dominant theme in his subsequent speeches and writings on education, i.e. the disparity existing between schools administered in country and in urban areas. He was aware of the status of Board schools which had resulted from the activities of the School Boards and, consequently, realised that they would have to be treated with respect:

"In County Boroughs which have School Boards, great care will no doubt have to be taken to prevent friction between the new authority and the School

¹B.M. Add. M.S. 49773 f. 86. Memorandum on Draft Scheme for an Education Bill, J. Chamberlain, December 16, 1895.

Board. All interferences by the new authority with the functions which the School Board is performing will have to be guarded against".¹

But there was a desperate need for a new education authority in those areas where there were no School Boards, if educational progress was to be achieved:

"The new authority is required not only for the co-ordination and development of higher education, but for purposes of elementary education besides that of aiding necessitous schools, such as the provision of pupil-teacher centres, of organising teachers, and of itinerant teachers. Most of the great School Boards advance elementary education by such means; the scattered rural school Boards cannot imitate their example, even if they desired to do so".²

And, as he pointed out, the use of the county and county borough councils as the authority was only a development of the "new education authority [which] has already sprung into existence for the purpose of spending the Local Taxation (1890) money".³ By making the authority a committee of the councils, this would obviate the need for a double election. Any possible friction between the duties of a School Board in an urban area and the new authority could be lessened, Gorst thought, by, "the creation of joint committee to coordinate the work of each", using as a precedent for this proposal the committee which was likely to emerge shortly in Cardiff.⁴

The real advantage of the new authority would be derived from the fact that they could both consider and

¹B.M. Add. M.S. 49791 f.9. Memorandum by J.E. Gorst, December 21, 1895.

2, 3, & ⁴Ibid.

deal effectively with the peculiar needs of their area. It would also have the advantage of allowing for a more careful monitoring of funds allocated by the central authority. In this procedure, Gorst relied on the vigilance of the authority as the necessary safeguard to reckless expenditure by schools. This fact could also be turned to beneficial effect in the distribution of the proposed special grant to necessitous schools. With regard to the need for extra grants, Gorst pointed out, "...that all prospect of reduced expenditure (I do not like to call it economy) in education is fallacious. The increased efficiency of the schools will increase the demand upon the National Exchequer; and it is impossible to curtail the power of future Parliaments to make provision for new developments in the education of the people".¹ Therefore, a grant had to be made to the voluntary schools for the sake of the education of the children attending them.

Gorst realised that the self-interest of the School Boards and their supporters would provide an awkward obstruction to the Bill's progress and the establishment of the new authorities, especially if elementary education was included in their powers. But, if elementary education was omitted, the growing chaos in secondary education, (which had been observed by the Bryce Commission), would ensure a relatively easy passage for the Bill since it contained a possible solution to that problem. The provision of a solution, he felt, could be used as a lever to overcome

¹Ibid.

resistance by Nonconformists to the proposal to grant state aid to voluntary schools.

He agreed with Chamberlain that a limitation of the School Board rate, or the making of an increase of it dependent upon the distribution of part to the voluntary schools in the area, would be disastrous: "... any attempts to reduce the quality of the education given in the elementary schools would raise a storm of indignation which even the present Government would be powerless to resist".¹ He, however, strongly disagreed with Chamberlain about the fate of the Cowper Temple clause, seeing its retention as, "a relic of religious intolerance, and an unnecessary interference with liberty"; a principle which, as has been seen, was cherished by Gorst above all others. He was, nonetheless, willing to subjugate his principles, at least temporarily: "... but if the repeal of the clause would raise such an outburst of Parliamentary indignation as Mr. Chamberlain describes, I would wait till public opinion was better educated on the subject".²

Gorst concluded his memorandum by pointing out that although his proposal for the new authority to become the School Board in rural areas had been unfavourably received by the Cabinet, it would be preserved, because of the inefficient running of rural schools. This latter fact, he felt, reinforced his main concept of the county council as

¹Ibid., f. 10.

²Ibid.

the new education authority:

"The methods of the Act of 1870, which have succeeded admirably in the towns, have failed miserably in the country. If County Councils had existed in 1870, I believe the Government of that day would have taken the county and not the parish as its educational unit; and if rural education is to be, I will not say improved but even maintained at its present low level, some reform is necessary".¹

No record, unfortunately, exists of the immediate reaction of Chamberlain and the other Cabinet members to Gorst's memorandum. They could not have disregarded the tone of authority and knowledge of the subject under discussion which emanated from it. Gorst's views represented the attitude required if the educational institutions of the nation were to be preserved, and educational progress made possible in the future. By the end of the following month there appears to have been still no expressed reaction to Gorst's proposals, but neither had any definite progress been achieved:

"Gorst was with us on Tuesday and up to the present the bill is all right but Salisbury is anti-popular. In his mind every educationalist is a faddist and this bill at its beginning may have to be lightened. The Almighty Joe has not yet approved. As far as I can see this Bill meets every difficulty which arises but I hope the [?mood] for Education will soon rise or the Tories will find means to get back to their post of ignorance".²

Early in February, 1896, Gorst's scheme for an Education Bill had been finalised, after the last Committee of the Bill had been held in January.³ The scheme for the

¹Ibid.

²Barnett Papers, 135. Canon Barnett to Frank Barnett, February 1, 1896.

³Sadleir, M., op. cit., p. 147.

Bill basically contained the concepts which Gorst had first stated in December.¹ The new authority was to be solely a committee of the council in all counties and in those county boroughs without a School Board: and in other county boroughs, half of the authority would be appointed by the council, and the other half by the School Board. The financing of the authorities was to be from the sums previously issued by the Education, and Science and Art Departments; but distribution by the new authority was to be in accordance with the regulations of the respective Department from which a sum emanated. This provided for a safeguard measure imposed by the central government.

There was also to be a sum, derived from Imperial funds, for necessitous elementary schools, of any type. The prime aim of this was to allow a certain ratio between staff and pupils to be reached, plus the achievement of a minimum level for the salaries of teachers. Gorst had referred in a speech to the problems prevalent in voluntary schools resulting, as far as the quality of education provided was concerned, from the use made of large numbers of children as "mere school drudges ... enabling managers to run schools by child labour in order to do it cheaply".² This provision of the Bill was to overcome such a problem. Only after these requirements had been met could the managers utilise any surplus from the sum granted for other purposes;

¹See Appendix 1.

²The Times, January 17, 1896. Gorst was referring to pupil teachers.

and evidence was to be furnished to the authority on how it had been applied. Thus by this measure, a degree of public control over the voluntary schools would be achieved, and this was to be further reinforced by the authority having the power to nominate managers for any school which received such a grant. This was an astute as well as a logical move, for by it Gorst not only achieved state aid for voluntary schools but also provided the public control which he knew the Nonconformists would demand.

The scheme also envisaged the control of secondary and technical education by the new authorities if there were sufficient funds available, extra to those derived from the 'whisky money'. Failing this, the authorities could make a start on the coordination of secondary education in their areas. This would allow utilisation of the relevant recommendations of the Bryce Commission to be made where appropriate. Thus Government action on the Report would be seen also.

In spite of the agreement in his December memorandum with Chamberlain over the inexpediency of curtailment of educational expenditure, one of the clauses in Gorst's scheme allowed that a School Board, in asking for a rate increase, would have to provide a similar sum to the education authority for expenditure upon the voluntary schools of the area. Implementation of this clause would provide severe curtailment of the School Boards' activities and it would appear that its inclusion, after Gorst's categorical rejection of such a concept, must have been at

Balfour's insistence.¹

Against the dire warnings provided by Chamberlain the Cowper Temple clause was to be repealed. The managers of the school would have to provide the parentally-desired religious instruction, as far as was practicable.

The prevention of the establishment of any new School Boards in rural areas was prescribed by a clause allowing the new county authority to levy a rate on the parish to aid the schools in that area. In the cases of deficiencies, the authority was to become the School Board to supply such deficiencies, and was to appoint the board of managers in such schools.²

In his scheme, therefore, Gorst had set out to achieve the election promises of his party, in aiding the voluntary schools, but at the partial expense of the School Boards. The latter were also to have their powers curtailed, which would, in turn, lead to a strengthening of the position of the proposed new authorities. It can be argued that this

¹Gorst had rejected the use of such a control from the inception of the Bill. B.M. Add. M.S. 49791 f. 7: "I have also sketched out a clause to carry out the suggestion which you made, but I am afraid that you will find on further consideration that it is not practically possible". Balfour's authorship of the control clause would appear to be validated by Lord Salisbury's comment: "... each scheme contains - though in Gorst's case with a protest - your checking clause. ...The pruning of the Board School expenditure on fancy education will evidently be the great fight of next session". B.M. Add. M.S. 49690 f. 128. The only checking clause in Gorst's rough sketch is (4), (see above B.M. Add. M.S. 49791, f. 23), and this refers to the distribution of grants by the education authority.

²B.M. Add. M.S. 49791 f. 19-20. Scheme for an Education Bill by Sir John Gorst, February, 1896.

was a detrimental move, in that the education provided in the School Boards would, if not deteriorate, at least stagnate, and thus affect the children attending such schools. On the other hand there was the need to get the voluntary schools as a whole into a reasonable state of efficiency and to prevent any unnecessary competition between them and the School Boards. It was in this latter area that the strategem of creating a more or less completely new authority for education as a whole at the local level was a brilliant concept. Not only could state aid be given to the voluntary schools, but there would be public control of both them and the Board Schools. Thus the coordinating powers of the education authorities would, in the long term, not only allow for a levelling-up of schools where needed, but would also lead to a coordination of educational activities. These could be geared to the requirements of a particular locality, without the central authority losing control over the funds that it provided. Thus efficiency in education could become a possibility of the near future, and bring to an end the strife which had arisen over the religious question since the enactment of the provisions of the Education Act of 1870.

Gorst appears to have been fortunate, in view of what had been expressed, in the reception given by the Cabinet to his more detailed proposals:

"Gorst has been with us during the week. He is in high feather having got his bill through the Cabinet, giving over two or three points for which he cared. When proposals for better education were urged, Salisbury growled "Made in Germany", but most got through and now we shall

see how Liberals bear this surprise ...".¹

Gorst, however still had to convince some members of the Cabinet of the effectiveness of his measures, in the case of the Bill being passed by the House of Commons. On February 12, he prepared a memorandum emphasizing the need for aid to the voluntary schools, plus the need to give grants to poor counties for general educational purposes. The former had to be a fixed sum, because of the problems connected with determining the sums necessary for each area.² The second proposal, "seeks to equalise the burden of education of the different counties", and he thought that, "this object could be best attained by making the Imperial Grant cover the proper cost of education. Counties would then suffer only for their own extravagance".³ He did not, under any circumstances, feel that the relief of both necessitous schools and counties could be achieved by one provision.

¹Barnett Papers, F/BAR/136. Canon Barnett to Frank Barnett, February 8, 1896. Canon Barnett went on: "... I don't believe the Tories will have it and the Bill will be cut down to a few concessions to voluntary schools. Gorst has not the patient temper to win over fools".

²Gorst had originally fixed on the sum of 2s.6d. but later revised it to 4s.0d. This was the sum required to be added to an average annual voluntary contribution/child of 6s.0d., out of an annual cost per child in average attendance of £2. £1 was derived from Parliament and the other 10s.0d. from the fee grant. See B.M. Add. M.S. 49791, f. 21. Note by J.E. Gorst, February 1896; and Annual Report of the Committee of Council on Education, 1895-6, P.P. 1896, XXVI [c. 8248; c. 8249], p. 5-8.

³B.M. Add. M.S. 49791, f. 11-13. Memorandum by Sir J.E. Gorst, February 12, 1896.

He was, however, to be disappointed in the reception of these ideas, as Canon Barnett recorded: "The bad news of the week is that the Cabinet has knocked out of the bill the proposed equal treatment of all poor schools and is going to allow special grants to voluntary schools. ... Gorst did say a few things [?born] of disappointment at the Cabinet Council".¹ Seven days later, Gorst's proposal was re-instated because of Chamberlain's concern for the School Boards: "The best news is - that by the help of Joe - ... clause in the Bill is once more driven back and we may have the Bill in on the 23rd or 27th".²

Gorst introduced the Bill to the House, in fact, at mid-day on March 31st, the last day before the Easter Recess. His speech, lasting exactly seventy minutes, demonstrated his skill as a Parliamentarian:

"JOHN O' GORST ... brought in Education Bill. Explained clauses in speech that was a model of lucidity. Nothing left unsaid, and all said in a few minutes over the hour. Speech as adroit in argument as it was finished in style".³

The first part of his speech was devoted to a consideration of the voluntary schools. Schools which, Gorst stated, "... are there, and there seems very little prospect

¹Barnett Papers, F/BAR/139. Canon Barnett to Frank Barnett, March 7, 1896.

²Barnett Papers, F/BAR/140. Canon Barnett to Frank Barnett, March 14, 1896.

³Lucy, H.W., 'Essence of Parliament', Punch CX, April 11, 1896. ~~179~~Lucy went on to say: "Give JOHN his chance, and he'd show himself what a few have always recognised in him - one of the deftest, cleverest, Parliamentary hands of the day". See also, Griffith-Boscawen, A.S.T., Fourteen Years in Parliament, p. 92.

of their disappearing within any definite time".¹ It was a futile occupation, he went on, to consider abolishing these establishments, in spite of the shaky educational and financial state which existed in some of them, because of the sheer enormity of expenditure that would be required to replace them. A sum of £25,000,000 would be required according to the latest estimates. Furthermore, these schools played an important part in the national education system which was best demonstrated in the rural areas. Gorst believed that, "If you were to replace the Voluntary Schools in the country by Board Schools you would degrade national education".² A point of view warmly received by the Unionists.

Gorst then turned his attention to the problem of secondary education with the statement: "It is not a question of whether we should now proceed to interfere with secondary education. We are interfering with secondary education [cheers], have been interfering with it for years; but the question is whether we interfere in a foolish or in a wise manner".³ The problem of chaotic administration existent in secondary education Gorst dealt with in a similar vein to his treatment of the voluntary schools, by providing a description of the organisations involved and their contributions to the resultant muddle. He cited the Bryce

¹4 Hansard, 39, c. 526 (March, 31, 1896).

²*Ibid.*, c. 532.

³*Ibid.*, c. 534.

Report as, "the justification of the Government for bringing in the Measure which they are going to ask the House to adopt", and then launched into a discussion of the Bill itself.¹

In this Gorst had a distinct advantage in that the Bill was still being printed, so that only he and the Government front bench knew the detailed proposals. Gorst described the theme of the Bill thus:

"The principle of the Measure is the establishment in every county and county borough of a paramount education authority. It is to be the one channel through which public money is to reach the schools; it is to supplement, and not to supersede, existing educational effort, and it is to be a sort of separate Education Department for each county and each county borough".²

He went on to elaborate upon the proposals for the rôles of these authorities contained in the Bill, during which he slipped in the clause allowing 4s.0d. to be paid to all voluntary schools and necessitous Board schools. He concluded his description with the words:

"This will tend to and I hope it will grow into a system under which all those parts of the county in which there are public schools will all be connected with and under the authority of the county education authority and will be maintained out of the general county rate".³

This presented an ominous view of the future for the School Boards of the country. But before it had time to sink in Gorst had progressed to other topics and, in the last few

¹Ibid., c. 537.

²Ibid., c. 538.

³Ibid., c. 541-542.

minutes of his speech, he hurried through all the other proposals of the Bill, ending briefly with a few words about the virtual repeal of the conscience clause (Cowper Temple) of the 1870 Act. Gorst hoped, "that this may be accepted by the House of Commons as a sincere attempt on the part of the Government to introduce a system of perfect religious toleration".¹

Gorst concluded his speech on an optimistic note: "I cannot, of course, expect that every clause will be generally accepted on both sides of the House, but I hope that the principle of the Bill will be, and that we shall all cooperate together to make this a real step in advance in the education of the country".² To the sound of the chamber ringing with cheers, Gorst sat down and his predecessor, as Vice-President, A.H.D. Acland, rose to reply as the main Opposition speaker.

Acland launched into a critical analysis of Gorst's speech after describing the proposed Bill as, "the most enormous change in the educational system which this country has ever seen".³ He soon came to the main point of the Bill which worried him, the working of the four shillings grant. Acland managed to pin Gorst down into revealing the exact conditions of the grant, and, on the basis of the information given, went on to criticise the

¹Ibid., c. 543.

²Ibid., c. 543-544.

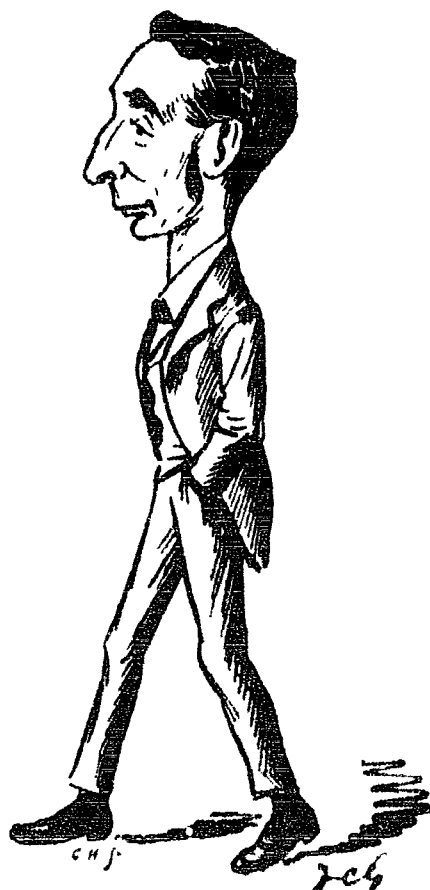
³Ibid., c. 544.

possibility of the voluntary schools being able to escape from having to rely, in the future, upon voluntary contributions for their maintenance. He also castigated the main theme of the Bill because, "... it seemed to him that this sudden and hasty plan of almost complete decentralisation was abnegating the authority and the influence of the State almost to too large an extent", and wondered how the central authority could raise the educational level if they found it falling in the future.¹ He ended his brief yet searing examination of the Bill's proposals with a discussion of the problem of removing the Cowper Temple clause, during which Gorst was induced to point out that he had not stated that the clause would be abolished. Acland thought that tempering with the mechanism which had worked well in the past 26 years would only create problems, rather than reducing them. He appealed, however, to Members to be fair-minded in their consideration of the Bill, and asked that: "... they should all do their best not to embitter it, and not to make it more controversial than it must inevitably be".²

Acland's appeal for reasonableness was repeated by Jebb, the other Member for Cambridge University and a member of the Bryce Commission. He congratulated Gorst on introducing a measure in which, "one of its greatest merits ... was its elasticity", and enthusiastically examined the

¹Ibid., c. 548.

²Ibid., c. 550.



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other proposals.¹ But he then presented a case for the inclusion of a Central Authority (as recommended in the Bryce Report) as a necessary precursor to the proper organisation of secondary education. Bryce, from the Opposition front bench, in his speech on the Bill, concurred with Jebb on this point. He believed that, "as far as the provisions relating to secondary and technical education were concerned, he thought these provisions were not only good, but eminently practical".² What worried him, however, was that the School Boards were to be excluded from the authorities for secondary education:

"School Boards were extremely sensitive as to their functions with regard to secondary education. They had established higher graded schools, giving efficient secondary education, and they would feel it to be a hardship, a slur, and an injustice to be excluded, as they might be, from this plan of having a voice in the secondary education in their boroughs".³

He also felt that the county councils were not knowledgeable enough to take over the control of elementary education, due to their relative youth. He also reiterated the Opposition view of the necessity for the retention of the Cowper Temple clause.

Opposition to the Bill's proposals, of a more vehement nature, was produced from the Opposition benches by J.H. Yoxall (Secretary of the N.U.T.) and F.A. Channing. Yoxall

¹Ibid., c. 551.

²Ibid., c. 571.

³Ibid., c. 573.

expounded the necessity of having, in the absence of a comprehensive central authority, "a proper local authority with local control over primary education under the system", in view of the grants which were going to be passed on to the voluntary schools.¹ He then went on to state:

"The Bill was in some respects an artful Bill - a Bill of high principle and high aim, but a Bill also tinged with a desire to make the voluntary school in a non-voluntary condition a permanent element in the mosaic of education in this country ... This proposal was utterly indefensible and must be opposed".²

He also warned the government not to tamper with the School Boards:

"There had grown up in this country a generation that knew the School Board and believed in it, and he did not believe that even this Government, with its immense majority even, would ever carry through this House a Measure restricting the powers of the School Board or making it possible to permit denominational teaching within the schools".³

All these points, he felt, were blots in the scheme of the Bill, and because of them the Bill would not succeed.

Channing's brief and bitter diatribe about the Bill probably best expressed the extreme, Nonconformist reaction to the proposals of the Bill. He saw the real purpose of the Bill as being the destruction of democracy through the abolition of the School Boards, a policy, "which had been pursued all along by the reactionary party at the Education

¹Ibid., c. 565. This was provided for in the Bill.
(See Appendix 2, clause 5.)

²Ibid., c. 569.

³Ibid., c. 569-570.

Office and in the country".¹ And in the handing over of lump sums of money, "... to a federation of schools they were creating irresponsible clerical boards which would spring up like mushrooms all over the country and be left a perfect free hand".² The whole Bill was, he stated, a repeal of the Act of 1870 and thus, "he had no doubt that many Members on his side of the House would use every effort, as he should, to defeat the Bill, and to prevent it becoming law".³

With the promise of battle to be joined in the near future, and after five and a half hours of speeches, the "Bill was ordered to be brought in by Sir John Gorst, Mr. Balfour, Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Lord George Hamilton; presented, and read 1^o; to be read 2^o upon Monday, 13th April".⁴ The House then broke up for the recess; and a time to peruse and contemplate the actual Bill, with the rest of the nation, was available.

There were three impressions of the debate recorded; Balfour's, Michael Sadler's, and Henrietta Barnett's. Balfour wrote that Gorst's introductory statement was one, "... of admirable lucidity; and one which was very well received by the House", and he felt that, "... the first of these stages has been got through as successfully as

¹Ibid., c. 576.

²Ibid., c. 577.

³Ibid., c. 578.

⁴Ibid., c. 580.

the most sanguine supporter of the Government had dared to hope, which, so far, is of good augury for the future".¹

Sadler's account of the event also contained enthusiasm for the Bill's future passage:

"The great occasion came today at 12.15. The House was staggered by the bigness of the Bill and the VP received congratulations on all sides. Decentralisation and Secondary Education are the features which attracted most attention. Nearly all the illustrations were supplied by our new section [Department of Special Inquiries and Reports], and all told splendidly. I think the Bill is too big to be dropped: it may even be made bigger. There will be amendments in detail, of course, but I hope we have decentralisation, gradual decentralisation, in sight at last".²

Henrietta Barnett's impression of the event, however, differed considerably from those of Balfour and Sadler, as her husband recorded:

"On Tuesday Henrietta went to hear the Education Bill introduced. She enjoyed the House but was of course much disappointed. The Bill is suddenly not liked by the Government and I fear the Government have somewhat spoiled its beauty".³

Unfortunately for Gorst, and his Bill, time was to prove Barnett's perception correct.

¹Buckle, G.E., op. cit., 111. 3, p. 38. A.J. Balfour to Queen Victoria, March 31, 1896.

²Sadler, M.E., op. cit., p. 147. Quotation from Sadler's diary for March 31, 1896.

³Barnett Papers, F/BAR/141. Canon Barnett to Frank Barnett, March 20, 1896. Barnett appears to have got his dates muddled since the Bill was not introduced until March 31.

CHAPTER SIX

In the contemplative period afforded between the first and second readings of the Bill a spate of articles was published which covered the proposals contained in the Bill. An indication of the rationale and the emotional vigour with which certain factions of nonconformists were to fight the Bill's proposals appeared in Dr. John' Clifford's article, Primary Education and the State.¹ This "stern, unrelenting High Priest of dogmatic non-conformity"² had written his article before Gorst's introduction of the Bill, but the views expressed in it were utilised with equal vigour after publication of the Bill. Throughout the article Clifford expounded his basic tenet of the necessity for the removal of any form of clericalism from the teaching or control of elementary schools. The language employed to express this belief at times conveyed the impression of Clifford's familiarity with the pulpit:

"The slavery of the teacher to clericalism:- one of the worst forms of bondage known to mortal men, is not yet extinct; but the teachers, in the interests of education and religion alike, are joining hands, forming guilds, and editing newspapers; - and the teaching profession is acquiring such strength, dignity and influence, as to make it rich in promise of incalculable advantage to the educational work of the coming century".³

¹Clifford, J., 'Primary Education and the State', Contemporary Review, 69, March 1896, p. 441-456.

²Justice, 11 October 1902. Quoted in Simon, B., Education and the Labour Movement, 1870-1920, p. 231.

³Clifford, J., op. cit., p. 445-6.

Clifford's fundamental attitude towards any possible clerical intervention in the running or curriculum of the Board Schools was plainly stated:

"The new legislation must not go back from the fundamental principle of the Act of 1870. Board schools must be kept true to the formative idea to which they owe their origin ... indeed, the utmost resistance must be offered to any and every attempt to make the constitution of our Board school less popular and representative".¹

For Clifford, and indeed many nonconformists, the Cowper Temple clause of the 1870 Act was one of the essential strands of the 'formative idea' behind the Board schools. Attempts to meddle with this were thus viewed as attempts to undermine the very foundations of the Board schools, and as an interference with the freedom of teachers in such establishments:

"... a Board-school teacher can only be free as long as the 'Cowper-Temple clause' is preserved from the slightest encroachment, and every effort to bring 'creeds and catechisms and religious formularies' into the curriculum of the school is successfully resisted. To get that clause abolished is the passionate desire of the Romanising Anglicans. That way lies clerical control and the destruction of the real character of the School Board system".²

With the expression and reiteration of these views in his article it is not altogether surprising that Clifford's thoughts about the new legislation concluded with a warning:

"... the new legislation should provide that the evolution of primary education shall be promoted on the lines of efficiency and economy, and not of weakness and waste; of popular and representative control, and not of a narrow and

¹Ibid., p. 447.

²Ibid., p. 448-9.

partisan clericalism ...¹

"It will be perilous to the new legislation if it contains a line that will make the Board schools less effective as centres of elementary education; less popular and representative in their control, or less unsectarian in their attitude towards religion".²

Clifford's views were reiterated in an article written by Lyulph Stanley after the publication of the Bill. The bias of the views was that of a person with a deep commitment to the Board schools - Lyulph Stanley then being Vice-Chairman of the London School Board. And the tone of the arguments expressed in defence of these views and in attacking the Bill was not one of religious fervour but that of bitter and hostile criticism:

"... it is a Bill so bad in its principles and essential details that no recognition of it should be admitted, and its faults do not admit of being corrected in committee after conceding a second reading".³

Stanley believed that the main theme of the Bill, rather than just being concerned with decentralisation, was aimed at nothing less than the total abolition of the School Boards:

"The fact is that the moment you give local administration to a body not chosen by those whose money they are to spend, you introduce a principle absolutely opposed to the history and principles of our local self-government; and all this is done to propitiate clerical opposition and to call into existence a new body which will supersede the hated School Board".⁴

¹Ibid., p. 452.

²Ibid., p. 450.

³Stanley, E.L., 'The New Education Bill', Contemporary Review, 69, May 1896, p. 742.

⁴Ibid., p. 745.

Not only was the proposed new education authority based on too large an area, for the members of it to understand fully the needs of the schools in different parts of their district, but the diminution of the role of the Board Schools, especially in secondary education, would be catastrophic:

"If the English working people allow themselves to be robbed of the national system which was slowly establishing itself among them, and was doing so much for their children, they will put back for years the date of their full intellectual and social enfranchisement".¹

Although J.R. Diggle shared Lyulph Stanley's view of the need to retain the School Board in London as the educational authority for that city, his views and proposals about the Bill were made in a far more moderate tone.² To such an extent, in fact, that he was able to support many of the Bill's proposals, and felt that it could be made even more workable during the committee stage. The concept of decentralisation basically appealed to him because: "... we have arrived ... at the precise point at which central control is beginning to lose its beneficial character".³ He did not, however, in accepting the principle, share the desire expressed in the Bill, "... to deal with all parts of the country in the same way".⁴ In the large county boroughs, Diggle argued, and especially in London, the

¹Ibid., p. 760.

²Diggle, J.R., 'The Education Bill, 1896', National Review, 27, 1896, p. 435-448.

³Ibid., p. 439.

⁴Ibid., p. 440.

School Board had been elected for a specific purpose and had, consequently, made considerable educational progress. From his experience as a Vice-Chairman of the London School Board, and as a member of the London County Council Technical Education Board, Diggle felt that the construction and election of county councils would not allow them to be, "... an effective authority either in the matter of economical administration or of educational progress".¹ If this matter could therefore be resolved, he felt that more progress could be achieved by the Bill. Unlike Stanley, Diggle could not perceive in the Bill a plot disguised as decentralisation but really aimed at School Board abolition:

"In no true sense of the word is the Bill an anti-School Board Bill or a sectarian Bill. Its defects are not those of intention but those of execution. When its intention, and the machinery to carry out these intentions, have been brought into harmony, it will constitute a considerable measure of reform".²

In fact, Diggle felt that the Bill could pave the way for even greater things in the world of education:

"... if its provisions are carried out in administration in the spirit in which I believe the Bill has been framed, the ground will be cleared for that still further measure of equity and of educational advance for which this Bill will prepare the way".³

The Spectator, in an exuberant article about the Bill's prospects, concurred basically with Diggle's estimation of its stature, describing it as, "... certainly

¹Ibid., p. 442.

² & ³Ibid., p. 448.

a very large, and ... a very statesmanlike measure".¹ In a very pro-Government style the author of the article briefly covered the main points of the Bill, and foresaw little obstruction to its passage through the House or its acceptance by the nation: "... we are inclined to think that the general provisions of Sir John Gorst's Bill will prove not only bold but wise, not only generous but popular".² Justice, however did not share The Spectator's enthusiasm: "Apart from the proposed raising of the age and the grant to secondary education, the measure may be described as wholly bad".³ The Times, in an editorial, veered on the side of caution in its estimation of the Bill's potential. A welcome was, however, extended to the main theme of decentralisation for providing a, "... promise of relief from the rigid and inelastic rule of the Education Department".⁴ It was also felt that criticisms of the grant to the voluntary schools, "... appear to be rather far-fetched". The conclusion reached about the Bill was, "... that a well-considered effort has been made to save the voluntary schools from extinction and this ... is an object of national importance".⁵

Four days prior to the second reading of the Bill,

¹The Spectator, April 4, 1896, p. 472-3.

²Ibid.

³Justice, May 9, 1896. Quoted in Simon, B., op.cit., p.160.

⁴The Times, April 1, 1896.

⁵Ibid.

Joseph Chamberlain made a speech at Birmingham Town Hall.¹ It was his first public utterance about the Bill, and in defining the contents of it he indicated his position with regard to it. After denying that the Bill proposed to alter the Cowper-Temple clause, Chamberlain dealt with what he considered to be the essence of the Bill, i.e. the preservation of the voluntary schools. He declared himself now to be in favour of preserving these schools which, as he admitted, was a complete reversal of his attitude prior to and for some considerable time after the 1870 Act. This new frame of mind was announced with the momentous words, "Well, gentlemen, I have changed my mind". But Chamberlain quickly pointed out that he had publicly stated this seven or eight years previously, and that this transformation bore no relation to his acceptance of office in the Government.² His reasons for accepting the need to preserve these schools were identical to those stated by Gorst in his introductory speech, i.e. the sheer number of children attending such schools and the vast cost of transforming all the voluntary schools into Board ones. The latter proposal would add an extra burden to the rates, and this Chamberlain would not countenance, "... I do not think it is desired by the majority of the

¹P.R.O., Ed. 24/13A., Chamberlain, J., Speech, May 1, 1896.

²For a discussion of Chamberlain's volte-face, see Ward, L.O., 'Joseph Chamberlain and the Denominational Schools Question', J. Ed. Admin. Hist., V. 2., July 1973, p. 21-24.

people of the country, and under these circumstances I feel that it is the duty of statesmen to take such measures as may be necessary in order to prevent such a result".¹

Gorst had thus gained the support of the most educationally-aware member of the Cabinet, a fact which must have given him confidence in his preparation for the second reading on May 5. He would also have been pleased to learn of the Cabinet decision empowering Balfour, as Leader of the House, to move that all the time of the House should be given to the Government.²

These factors no doubt contributed to the rather casual and jocular way in which Gorst introduced the second reading of the Bill:

"Opposition Benches crowded; an angered muster, 'breathing war from every nostril', ... enter JOHN OF GORST with Education Bill in hand, casually waving it as if it were red flag and the crowd before him a herd of wild oxen.

"Nothing milder than JOHN's manner, nor softer than his speech. Not once his voice uplifted above conversational tone: went ambling along, serenely assuming that everything might be taken for granted. Members opposite writhed on their seats, yelled contradiction, cut themselves with knives (... in a Parliamentary sense, of course). JOHN OF GORST jogged placidly on, just as if he had been reading his speech to the boulders that form Stonehenge".³

Gorst basically used the occasion to reiterate the main themes of the Bill, as well as for replying to critics

¹P.R.O., Ed. 24/13A, op. cit.

²Buckle, G.E., op. cit., 111, 3, p. 41. Lord Salisbury to Queen Victoria, April 22, 1896.

³Lucy, H.W., 'Essence of Parliament', Punch, CX, May 16, 1896, p. 239.

of it, rather than dealing with the details. He briefly sketched the four main barriers to educational progress:- opposition to the granting of aid to voluntary schools so that there could be a 'levelling up' of the education given in them compared with board schools; the finding of a solution for the replacement of inefficient, rural board schools; the presence of administrative chaos in secondary education and, lastly, the increasing burden being placed on the Education Department. The solution for all four was a relatively simple one, Gorst believed:

"By establishing in every county a paramount education authority - [cheers] - with power to supervise and control the general education of the children of the country. That is the principle of the Bill. All the rest is detail - detail of great importance and detail which involves very great principles but detail still ...".¹

The remaining 80% of his speech Gorst devoted to a consideration of the criticisms which had been brought against the Bill since its publication. He pointed out that there was nothing in the Bill which prevented the new education authorities from co-opting persons of experience in education on to the committees. This was a short answer to the criticism of people like Stanley and Diggle about the disparity between School Boards and County Councils, and yet it effectively demolished most of their arguments. Gorst was not so convincing in replying to the argument for the need for the provision of a central authority in the Bill. He cited the Committee of Council

¹4 Hansard, 40, c. 556 (May 5, 1896).

on Education as a central authority, "... that ... has the most perfect jurisdiction over the Education Department and the Science and Art Department, and can mould and combine those Departments as it pleases".¹ He failed to take cognizance of the fact that this existent authority was of little future value in terms of educational reform at the administrative level, in view of its failure to co-ordinate the activities of the two departments in the past. His answer to the possibility of there being an Education Minister with a seat in the Cabinet caused the chamber to reverberate with laughter and, yet, revealed Gorst's contempt for his fellow front benchers:

"Really, for the life of me I cannot see how the Vice-President of the Council can possibly be made more wise or more powerful by having his name changed and by his being required to attend the meetings of the Cabinet".²

In considering "the most contentious portion of the Bill", i.e. the part relating to the special grant for voluntary schools and necessitous Board ones, Gorst felt that it was, "... a matter of very great difficulty, and it is one which ought to be approached in a calm, philosophic spirit". Unfortunately it was, "... just the point

¹Ibid., c. 557.

²Ibid., c. 558. "JOHN OF GORST in finest Manipur mood ... Almost his philosophic calm deserts him as he contemplates this ignorant suggestion about the Minister of Education having a seat in the Cabinet. The Vice-President of the Council might be ill advised, mistaken, for, after all, he is almost human. But at least let him be spared the companionship of the Cabinet". Lucy, H.W., 'Essence of Parliament', Punch, CX, May 16, 1896, p. 239-40.

about which sectarian animosity and Party spirit rage".¹
 After pointing out that this had achieved little and the voluntary schools still remained in a state of financial hardship in many cases, Gorst stated that there were three choices open to Parliament:

"One is to accept the position that a large and fluctuating portion of our schools is to be continually inefficient. The second is to make education wholly an Imperial concern, and to throw upon the localities merely the cost of providing the buildings and staffs. The third is to give special aid to necessitous schools out of Imperial funds".²

Knowing that the majority of the House and the country were in favour of the third proposal, Gorst tied the acceptance of this in with the concept of a decentralised system of local authorities. He argued that only such an authority could ascertain the relative merits of the schools and ensure that the grant would be properly expended:

"You cannot do that without having a paramount authority which will hold the balance evenly between the Boards and the managers of the Voluntary schools - an authority which will take a calm and dispassionate view of the general educational needs of the district, which will distribute this inadequate special aid grant as far as it will go".³

¹4 Hansard, 40, c. 558 (May 5, 1896).

²Ibid., c. 559.

³Ibid., c. 561. Gorst had a few minutes earlier stated, in connection with the four shillings grant: "... I do not pretend for one moment that the amount of special aid to be granted is adequate to raise the efficiency of the Voluntary and poor Board schools up to that of the richer Board schools. It will, however, enable the authority to make a beginning ...". Ibid., c. 560.

Whilst treating the prospective role of the new authority to this examination, Gorst decided to answer the criticism that these authorities, if they came into existence, would herald the beginning of the abolition of the School Boards. In doing so he chose his words carefully:

"In this Bill, ... there is no attack whatever made directly on the School Boards. [Cheers and cries of 'Oh, oh!']. Every School Board, down to the smallest village, can go on if the people wish after this Act is passed, just as before. The only restriction put upon them is in a clause on a matter of detail which can be discussed in Committee - that they cannot increase their maintenance expenditure without the consent of that body which directly represents the ratepayer".¹

He was correct in stating that there was no direct attack upon the School Boards, but, of course, there would be an indirect one, via the committees of the county councils, when the Bill was passed. This did not escape the attention of the Opposition front bench as Gorst's speech light heartedly rolled towards its conclusion.

Gorst claimed to be surprised that criticism had been made that there would be a diminution of the Education Department's powers if this plan of decentralisation was enforced. He felt that he could, "... hardly conceive a scheme of decentralisation more cautious, more tentative, and which would keep the control more completely in the hands of the central authority than the scheme in this Bill. ... on the contrary ... the Department will be greatly strengthened by it. I would point out to the House that this is not a wholesale, abrupt, and instantaneous

¹Ibid., c. 561-2.

decentralisation, but a gradual and permissive one".¹ Gorst's surprise may have been superficial due to his recognition of the fact that it was this very concept of gradual decentralisation which was one of the vulnerable parts of the Bill, as far as implementation of the proposals went, should it become an Act.

The final part of his speech was devoted to what amounted to a plea for calm and rational reflection upon the proposal, contained in Clause 27, for greater flexibility in religious teaching in elementary schools.² Gorst felt that this clause, rather than undermining the foundations of the School Board schools, increased the principle of liberty as far as elementary education and parental choice were concerned. He acknowledged that the majority of parents was indifferent to, "... the form of religion in which their children should be taught". Nonetheless, the clause was the only way of ensuring fairness of treatment for the children of the religiously conscientious minority of parents. For in certain localities where there was only one school present, either Board or voluntary, the parents and their children suffered if the religious teaching conflicted with their religious principles. This clause, Gorst felt, solved that problem. And there can be little doubt that Gorst believed strongly in the principle embodied in the clause, and was annoyed at

¹Ibid., c. 563.

²See Appendix 2.

the turmoil which it had aroused. It was an issue which had been exaggerated into a political one and was not one which irrevocably divided the nation.¹ Since the controversies were not of an educational nature they should not, he thought, be allowed to prevent the Bill's passage. He concluded by maintaining that no slight was intended upon the 1870 Act, either by this clause or the Bill as a whole, as some people maintained: "... I think the best way of showing our appreciation of the past efforts of legislation is by efforts to make further progress. I claim, therefore, the support of this House for this Bill, not only because the Bill promotes progress, but because, without entrusting to the people themselves, as this Bill does, the work of education, further progress will be impossible".²

The jocular and lightweight nature of Gorst's speech undoubtedly masked to a certain extent his belief in the measure he was defending. The overall effect was heightened by the contrast presented with the speech of the principal Opposition speaker, H.H. Asquith. It was more the barrister's brief than the statesman's reply, with its minute examination of the details from a totally subjective point of view presented in a heavy, humourless manner.

¹4 Hansard, 39, c. 543 (March 31, 1896): "The religious difficulty is no difficulty at all in the schools. It is never heard of there. It is a difficulty which flourishes in Parliament and on the platform".

²4 Hansard, 40, c. 563-4 (May 5th, 1896).

Asquith began by stating that the main objection of the Opposition to the Bill lay in the fact that the Bill did not put education in the hands of the local authorities, whilst it also managed to, "destroy the machinery by which education is at present carried on".¹ Before amplifying this point Asquith did praise some of the features incorporated in the Bill i.e. the raising of the school leaving age, and the incorporation of some of the recommendations of the Bryce Report, "although, in our judgement, they embody those recommendations in a crude and imperfect form".² He went further in declaring that if the proposals as regards the special aid grant had incorporated some form of public control over the expenditure, then this would not have been resisted in principle. But, because these "beneficial [or] at any rate innocuous" proposals had been linked to a scheme, "which, whatever may be its intentions, will, in our deliberate judgement, have the effect of revolutionising the foundations, of dislocating the machinery, of impoverishing the results, and embittering the spirit of our whole system of national education", the Opposition was fully committed to total obstruction with regard to the passage of the Bill.³

Asquith devoted the remainder of his speech, which was twice the length of Gorst's, to a detailed examination of the

¹Ibid., c. 567.

²Ibid., c. 568.

³Ibid., c. 569.

faults he believed to be present in four main areas of the Bill. In addition to the ones covering decentralisation, Asquith scrutinised those affecting the School Boards, the financial provisions, and Clause 27. As regards decentralisation, he felt that an immediate effect of the creation of the new local authorities would be to reduce the Education Department to, "a spectral and disembodied authority". And the effect of this would be to produce, "an educational patchwork and administrative chaos".¹

This would be caused in part by transferring the control of education to non-educational bodies, which, he claimed, in many parts of the country were not basically interested in education.² This, in turn, would result in a lowering of educational standards - the present high standards having been due, "to the impartial, the unsleeping, and the ubiquitous activity of the Education Department".³ His own experiences as Home Secretary had convinced him that local inspection was not as effective as that carried out

¹Ibid., c. 570.

²A year after the failure of the 1896 Bill, Hart-Dyke wrote to Balfour about the attitudes of the County Councils: "... it must be noted that for many weeks after the introduction of the Bill, the only Co. Council that sounded a note of alarm was that of Northampton ... The storm raised later by the Bill in the House and the general excitement outside, no doubt terrified the County Authorities and made them anxious to repudiate the responsibility of dealing with such a mass of inflammatory material". B.M. Add. M.S. 49769 f. 141. Sir W.H. Dyke to A.J. Balfour, November 20, 1897. This change in attitudes by the County authorities is substantiated, for example, by the resolutions of Durham County Council on the Bill's proposals, but this did not take place until after the second reading (P.R.O. Ed. 24/13a). Therefore Asquith's assertion here seems not to have been based on fact.

³Ibid., c. 572.

by inspectors from the central authority. And if one had both local and central authority inspectors then it would merely be duplicating the system, whilst increasing the costs involved in the maintenance of both bodies. This fault would also be present in making non-educational bodies the educational authority, for time would be whittled away from their already numerous functions in order to cope with the extra burden added by their educational responsibility. Also, to deal with this problem the councils would require extra staff, which would inevitably cause an increase in the rates. His conclusion, therefore, about the Bill's plan of decentralisation was:

"... that you are taking away from the Education Department duties which no one alleges it does not efficiently perform, and at the same time giving the local authorities duties which there is no indication whatever that they have any desire to assume, but, on the contrary, which there is the best ground for apprehending they will perform less efficiently and successfully".¹

Turning to the School Boards and Gorst's claim that the Bill did not attack them directly, Asquith pointed out that the Opposition should have been better prepared, "for the animosity - I can use no other word - displayed in this Bill to the School Board system".² Lord Salisbury had plainly indicated his hostility to the system, and Balfour's election addresses had indicated that he was another Cabinet member who had "substantial sympathy with Lord Salisbury's

¹Ibid., c. 572-5.

²Ibid., c. 576.

views".¹ The hostility had been compounded recently - and here Asquith was referring to Chamberlain's speech at Birmingham - from, "a somewhat unexpected quarter". Asquith was unsparing in his cynicism about this speech:

"I read that speech ... with something akin to the same sense of admiring bewilderment which overtakes us when at an earlier stage of our life we first make the discovery that it is equally easy for an accomplished acrobat to stand upon his head or upon his heels".² As a result of these warnings it should not have been surprising to learn that, "... the efficient School Boards are to be sacrificed: they are to be hampered and mutilated, and the inefficient School Boards are not going to be improved". He was, "... all for levelling up, but the provisions of this Bill in relation to School Boards are, in my opinion, provisions for levelling down".³ Consequently he was, in view of the Bill's proposals, in favour of abolishing the School Boards completely, "... than to continue them in existence ... with impaired powers, with fettered hands, and with discredited authority".⁴ For retention of the School Boards after the creation of the new authorities would merely hamper the work of the former: "I believe it would have been impossible for statesmanship to devise a scheme

¹ & ²Ibid., c. 577.

³Ibid.; c. 578-9.

⁴Ibid., c. 580.

more calculated to engender friction and misunderstanding ...".¹ In the previous 25 years, Asquith postulated, there had been, "two great propelling forces in education - namely, the Education Department and the School Boards. This Bill proposes to paralyse the one force and to cripple the other".²

Moving on to the financial provisions, Asquith expressed his surprise at their relative generosity, "... in comparison with the penurious aspirations of the Prime Minister".³ But the provisions came down in favour of the voluntary schools, if only by a small provision. For Asquith, however, the insidious part of these proposals - which would result in educational stagnation - was that they would be permanent in their restrictive powers if the Bill became law: "However much the educational conditions of the country may change, and however great may be the rise in the stress of foreign competition, for all time to come, so long as this Act of Parliament remains unpealed, both School Boards and Voluntary Schools are to be limited to the existing scale".⁴ Not only was this proposal insidious but, Asquith felt, it was invidious that educational expenditure should be reduced whilst, "... you are spending upon Naval Defence out of the accumulated funds of last year and out of a mortgage of the funds of future years vast sums of money, at a moment when you are dipping into the surplus of this year to provide special relief for the owners and occupiers

¹Ibid., c. 581.

2, 3, & ⁴Ibid., c. 582.

of agricultural land ...".¹ These statements would have been admirable if Asquith had been committed to equity of capital and expenditure in the two types of schools. But he revealed that he was not: "By this Bill you are putting them [the schools], as it were, in water-tight compartments. You are preventing that possibility of rivalry between them which has been the most potent factor in the educational progress in the past".² Having uttered this total denial of the basic principle behind the Bill, Asquith's subsequent statements, criticism, and appeals must have fallen upon deaf ears on the Government front bench. What credence did his proposed amendments have if he basically wanted to retain the status quo?: the very position which had brought about the necessity for the measure that was being debated. Asquith seems to have credited Gorst, Balfour and the other Government members with a naivety which he seems, momentarily, to have displayed.

His concluding remarks were addressed to a consideration and rejection of the principles incorporated in Clause 27 of the Bill. He felt that parents, in the majority of cases, would not be bothered to demand the religious rights granted by the clause if it became law. There was not, he stated, any evidence to show that parents were dissatisfied with the current arrangements and that the insertion of this clause was purely due to clerical

¹Ibid., c. 583.

²Ibid., c. 584.

agitation. It would also introduce into local elections an increased amount of bitterness, based upon sectarian strife. Furthermore, he asserted, there was no inalienable claim of parents to have their children taught in any religion at the public expense. It was purely, "... a metaphysical figment of the newest and crudest invention", and it should therefore, be rejected.¹

Asquith stated that he was aware that his motion to adjourn the reading of the Bill would most likely be defeated in the Division Lobby by an overwhelming majority. "But", he went on, "this is only the preliminary stage in what is destined to be a stubborn and protracted campaign. You can succeed, if you are ill-advised enough to try the experiment, by the use of your overbearing Parliamentary majority, in placing this Measure with its absurdities and injustices, upon the Statute book. But be assured that, if you do so, you are not settling, but you are opening a controversy".²

The controversy, however, opened as soon as Asquith had completed his speech, and raged for five evenings. The speeches in the majority of instances allowed religious controversy to swamp the educational issues involved. An observation to this effect was made during the course of the second evening by James Bryce who, "had noticed that nearly all the speeches had been delivered upon questions

¹Ibid., c. 594.

²Ibid.

which had comparatively little to do with educational policy, and had turned mainly upon points of theological or political controversy".¹ This was Bryce's only support for Gorst, albeit indirectly, for the rest of his speech was taken up with a consideration of the differences between the Bill and the recommendations of 'his' Royal Commission. In spite of his warning on the need to avoid religious and political controversies, few members paid heed to Bryce in the five evenings of the debate. This was undoubtedly the main factor behind the observed behaviour of the House during this time:

"House usually full at question time. Questions over, SPEAKER observes, 'The Clerk will now proceed to read the Orders of the Day'.

"Instantly movement amongst serried ranks. Clerk's response quickens it. 'The Education Bill; Second reading! These simple words act upon gathering like a cry of 'Fire!'. Everybody makes for the door - everybody save JOHN OF GORST, who, as Minister in charge of Bill, must at least put on appearances of attending to debate; a Member of Front Opposition Bench deputed to represent a late and now absent Ministry; and some thirty or forty Members dispersed over benches. Every man of these last is clutching the paper he hopes to be able to read, hungrily watching the Member on his feet, anxious chiefly to know, not what he thinks of the four-shilling grant, the new local authority, or the Cowper-Temple clause, but at what precise minute he will sit down and make opening for another.

"... this the general aspect. Then comes PRINCE ARTHUR with the blessed shears ...".²

Balfour rising at 12.25 p.m. to close the debate, on May 12, observed:

¹Ibid., c. 689 (May 6, 1896).

²Lucy, H.W., 'Essence of Parliament', Punch, CX, May 23, 1896, p. 251.

"... this Debate ... has gone on for five nights, and I notice that many speakers at the end of the five nights have got into that confused frame of mind, which may naturally be the result of prolonged discussion, that they speak on one side of the question and announce their intention to vote on the other ...".¹

In his short speech, Balfour drew attention to the 'vulgar financial aspect' of the Bill and the fact that it had hardly been mentioned in the debate. He defended the principle of saving the voluntary schools by the granting of a financial subvention to them, and then turned his attention to the proposed new authority. Not unnaturally, he also defended this proposal and, at the same time, indicated what he felt about the proposal that the School Boards should be allowed to remain untouched as far as their authority was concerned:

"No principle seems to me more fundamental, or that we should strive more earnestly to carry out, than the principle which gives to those who have the general interests of any community, be it national or local, the whole control of the finances by which their schemes are supported. Thus, and thus alone, you will be able to combine true economy with liberality in education, of which certainly our municipal authorities have shown so many splendid examples. At present you have extravagances without responsibility".²

Balfour also indicated that whilst he was in favour of the Bill's proposals he would like to have seen them go one step further with regard to the School Boards, "... I should desire to see this Bill end in the long run in sub-

¹4 Hansard, 40, c. 1241 (May 12, 1896).

²Ibid., c. 1243-4.

stituting a Town Council management for a School Board management. Yes, Sir, I frankly admit that is my wish".¹ He went on to add that his rationale was that although the School Boards had done excellent work in the past, the work to be done in the future could be possibly improved upon, "... by concentrating the responsibility in one set of hands ...".² Consequently, "... the municipalisation and decentralisation of education, as far as they are effected by this Bill, are two great methods of improving education which every educational reformer ought to hail with satisfaction".³ Balfour added that he rejoiced in the step being taken by the Bill towards the municipal control of both primary and secondary education.

Having clearly indicated his preferences for the authority to control education, Balfour examined the criticisms about the unequal distribution of the special aid grant - notably made by Asquith. He regarded the latter's proposals in this area as futile and went on: "I do not deny that the Bill is unequal, locally, in its operation. But that is the very essence of our proposal. ... If the Bill were not unequal in that respect, it would not carry out its object ...".⁴ Asquith must have resented Balfour's elucidation of the Bill's main proposals in simple terms for his benefit, but Balfour had quickly transgressed

¹ & ² Ibid., c. 1244.

³ Ibid., c. 1246.

⁴ Ibid., c. 1247-8.

to the proposals of Clause 27. In his defence of this part of the Bill, Balfour quoted examples of European societies where the preference for voluntary schools with a religious basis was in the ascendant over state schools, e.g. in Prussia, Holland, Belgium and France. He felt that, on the basis of this selective, comparative example, "... there is insufficient ground for schism from the National Church which has been productive of incalculable harm in the history of this country". He concluded by stating that the Government had been induced to bring forward the Bill because it believed that, "... it is a great educational reform in local government; a great measure of official decentralisation, and that on all these grounds, every educational reformer in the House should give it hearty support".¹

Mr. Charles Shaw [Member for Stafford] rose to continue the Debate but was drowned by the cries of "Divide", which the House consequently did. As a result, the Bill passed its second reading with a majority of 267 - the Irish members having voted for it on the direction of their Bishops - and, "The announcement of the figures was received with loud Ministerial cheers".²

¹Ibid., c. 1251.

²Ibid., c. 1252. The Irish vote upset the Opposition: "The action ... caused an explosion of wrath in Nonconformist circles which would have very considerable consequences were the Nonconformists not a somewhat exhausted volcano ...". National Review, June 27, 1896, p. 463.

Optimism about the Bill's future increased both in and out of parliamentary circles as a result of the huge majority - the largest ever known in the history of the Commons, according to the Duke of Devonshire.¹ C.W.A. Brooks, in a hurriedly published pamphlet about the Bill, declared that the Bill "with... certainty" would pass into law.² The Queen thought that the time was ripe for something to be done in the subsequent debates for "... rendering education more practical for the working classes, who were being taught useless things". This was due, in her opinion, to the School Boards. "... being too exclusively bent on literary education, whereas the former County Councils, composed of all classes, would be sure to be more practical".³ Another person who thought the time was now ripe for modifying the Bill was Sidney Webb, who confided to fellow Fabian, Graham Wallas: "I think your articles on Gorst's bill are excellent by way of agitation. What will be more important, however, will be good committee amendments. The Government will not drop the bill now, and it must therefore pass, but we may be able to improve it ...".⁴ Webb had started his campaign for amending the Bill shortly

¹Buckle, G.E., op. cit., 111, 3, p. 43. Queen's Journal, May 13, 1896.

²Brooke, C.W.A., The Education Bill, 1896 and its Critics: Being the Tabulated Suggestions, Criticisms and Opinions of Public Bodies and Public Men.

³Buckle, G.E., op. cit.

⁴Passfield Papers, 4b. 152. S. Webb to G. Wallas, May 8, 1896.

after writing to Wallas, as his wife Beatrice recorded:

"Whitsun, 1896 - Sidney much enjoyed colloquy with Sir John Gorst [acting Minister for Education], Michael Sadler, Llewellyn Smith and others about Education Bill. On the whole he is favourable to the central idea of the Bill: that is, replacing ad hoc bodies by one set of representatives chosen to manage all the business of the locality (but doubtful whether the Bill, as it stands, will effect this): also, not against helping voluntary or denominational schools in return for a measure of control, which is bound to grow. Other clauses, enabling public authorities to subsidise private venture schools, he looks upon as radically bad. He however, recognised that it is no good for him to oppose the Bill - far better to appreciate the good in it and, by appreciating it, get some influence in amending it in our direction. And he is fortunately placed for this purpose. As originator and chairman of the most successful educational authority in London, as a friendly acquaintance of Gorst's¹ - as a friend of Llewelyn Smith and Sadler, and acquainted with all the education-
alists in London, he is able to be constantly suggesting amendments which are favourably considered by those in authority.

"This work, and pushing the London School and the Political Science Library, continue to force us more into political society on both sides. On Monday ... we dined at the House with Haldane and Asquith and other Liberals, on Tuesday, with Sir John Gorst and Lord George Hamilton ... Becoming too, every day more connected with the superior rank of civil servants, such as, Sir Alfred Milner, Sir George Kekewich, Henry Cunynghame and others".²

There were, of course, a few political commentators who did not share the general optimism about the Bill's future and would, had they known of them, have regarded Webb's machinations as a waste of effort:

¹This is, unfortunately, the first record of Gorst's acquaintance with the Webbs. There is little information about their relationship in the Passfield Papers, and of course none on Gorst's side.

²Webb, B., Our Partnership, p. 132-3.

"The Education Bill, which has aroused the fighting spirit of the Liberals, is not likely to pass as it stands, if indeed it passes at all. Its importance arises, not from what it proposes to do, but almost entirely from the effect which its proposals have upon the Liberal party. This has been immediate, and exists. What Sir John proposes to do will not come into operation for some time yet, if at all".¹

Public opinion on the whole, however, felt that the Bill seemed assured of reaching the statute book. Political friends as well as opponents of it believed, therefore, that the only way it could be either usefully modified or curtailed was to adopt the line proposed by Webb. Thus by the time the Bill went into Committee on June 11, there were 1,335 amendments to be considered and debated.

Michael Sadler had been taken away from his official duties by Kekewich to provide an analysis of the amendments put down, especially those dealing with Clause I. Due to Kekewich's mismanagement of the matters relating to this analysis - after Sadler had completed it with Morant's help - the printed version reached the Duke of Devonshire for use in the Cabinet before Gorst had had a chance to see it. When Gorst did receive a copy he discovered that Sadler's views were at variance with his on dealing with the amendments. In view of the fate of the Bill, it is interesting to conjecture what might have occurred if Balfour, when present at the Cabinet meetings, had been aware of Gorst's feelings on how the various amendments should be dealt with. For, in dealing with the Clause I amendments, Sadler had

¹Review of Reviews, 13.May, 1896, p. 390.

suggested that the Clauses's proposals should be extended to non-county authorities in the area of elementary education.¹ An important fact, in view of the subsequent debates on the Bill.

The Cabinet met on June 10 to discuss their position with regard to the Bill, and the following day the Committee stage in the House of Commons commenced. The first amendment, by W. Allen, proposed that consideration of the first Clause be postponed. Gorst opposed this on the grounds that the Clause was considered to be the most important one in the Bill by the Government and that, consequently, it should be considered. Gorst's opposition was carried, and the House started to debate the proposals for changes in the details of the Clause.² Liberal M.P. Luttrell wanted the word 'county' replaced by 'district', but Gorst pointed out that this would result in too large a form of decentralisation, which would be meaningless: "He confessed he should be glad if out of all the numerous areas they had been able to find a more satisfactory one but under the circumstances the only area was the County".³ Acland contested this statement, pointing out that the Liberal Party, "... could not agree that secondary and elementary education naturally went together and, consequently, thought that the county council was the wrong

¹Grier, L., Achievement in Education, p. 58-61.

²4 Hansard, 41, c. 862 (June 11, 1896).

³Ibid., c. 876.

authority for elementary education".¹ Gorst replied to this criticism with the remark that only the general supervision of elementary education lay with the counties and that the details would be executed by the school managers. Luttrell's amendment was defeated.

The next amendment to be considered had been put down by Sir Albert Rollitt (Islington South) who wanted the phrase, "and every council of a municipal borough" to be inserted after the word "council" in the Clause.² Rollitt, in proposing this amendment, was acting on behalf of the municipal corporations - being himself the Chairman of their Association - who were in danger of losing their powers in the administration of education if the Bill was enacted as it stood. Gorst replied that he obviously could not accept this proposal because it, like the previous one, would result in the creation of an enormous number of extra, independent, education authorities. In fact, an extra 241 authorities would have to be added, as well as an additional 49 urban district councils, to the proposed 128 authorities, resulting in a total of 418. The Government's choice of the county and county borough councils had been based on the findings of the Bryce Report, plus the fact that it would be difficult to subdivide the local taxation accounts which rested with the county councils. At this point in the debate, Balfour had sauntered in.³ An appeal was made by a

¹Ibid., c. 882.

²Ibid., c. 896.

³Lucy, H.W., A Diary of the Unionist Parliament, 1895-1900, p. 103.

Tory backbencher, Mark Oldroyd, to apply the principle of municipalising education which he [Balfour] had publicly accepted, by agreeing to this amendment.¹ Gorst must have felt bewildered when Balfour rose after Oldroyd's speech and said: "The very moderate and able speeches of the hon. Member and my hon. Friend, who moved the amendment

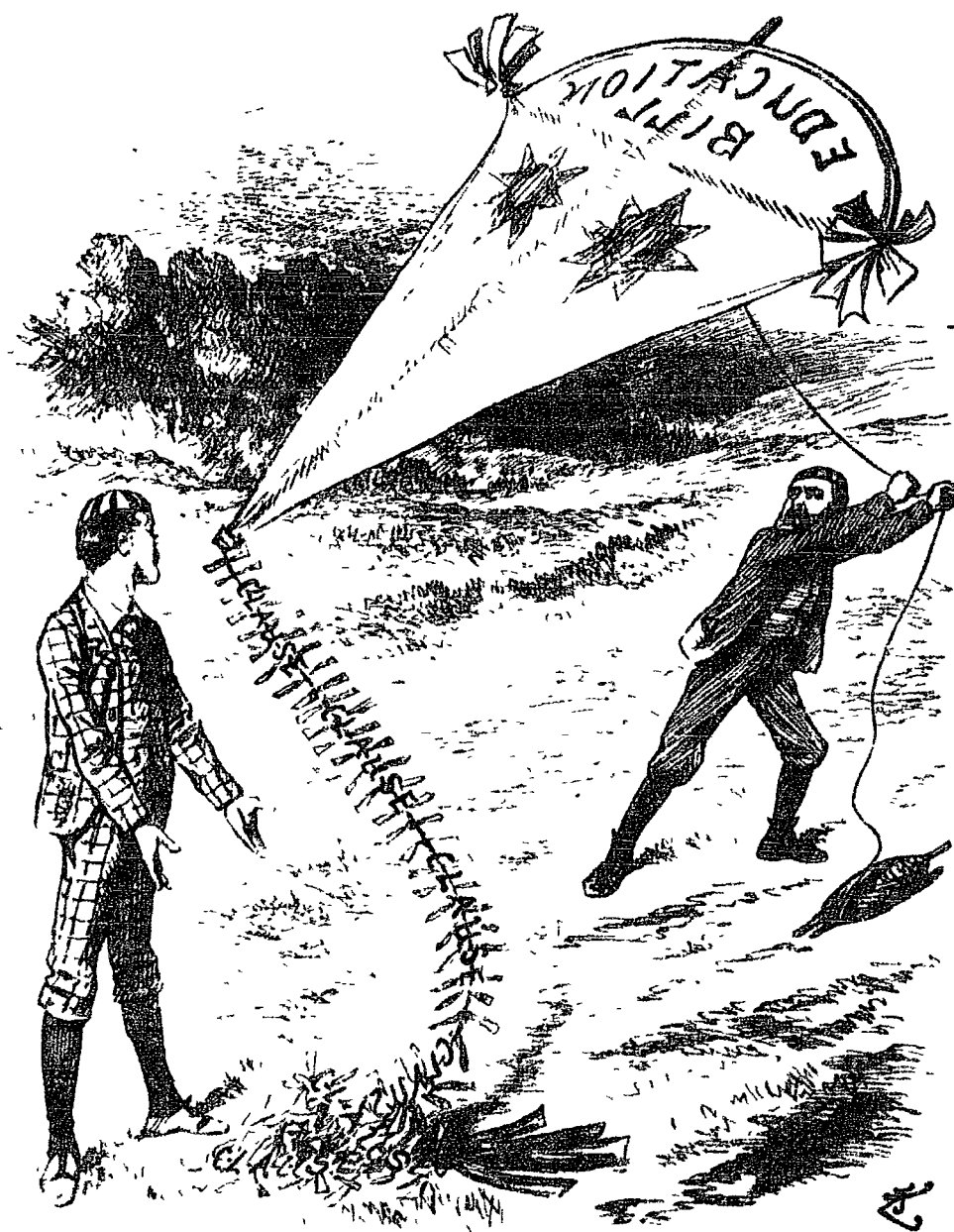
have convinced the Government that there are strong reasons for accepting some part of the Amendment ...".² For in a stroke Balfour had killed the Bill, as he had virtually opened the floodgates to other amendments, having rejected Gorst and the principle upon which the Bill rested. Henry Hobhouse, a Liberal, summed up the effect Balfour's concession made:

"Considering that the Vice-President in his opening speech told them that there was to be in every county a 'paramount' education authority, how could he reconcile that with the Amendment which had just been made? [Hear! Hear!]. This concession struck at the root of county government, and at the root of the Bill".³

¹4 Hansard, 41, c. 906 (June 11, 1896).

²Ibid. Balfour went on to say: "... I have come to the conclusion that if the Committee will put a limit of 20,000 to these authorities the Government will be prepared to risk the experiment, trusting to the public spirit and educational zeal of the Counties and of the non-County boroughs to get over the difficulties presented by the fact that the educational areas are in some cases too small for carrying out certain educational schemes". Rollitt altered his amendment to read, "and every council of a municipal borough in which it shall at any time appear from the census last held that there is a population of not less than 20,000", and it was carried by 332 to 83 votes.

³Ibid., c. 909.



A TANGLED TAIL.

MASTER ARTHUR B-L-F-R "I SAY JOHNNY GORST WE SHALL NEVER GET HER UP WITH ALL THIS!
I MUST CUT OFF ABOUT HALF OF HER TAIL!"

Progress during the next four nights in the debates, still concerned with Clause 1, was minimal.¹ During the night of June 15 some of Gorst's feelings about Balfour's action came to the surface in the debate on an amendment put by S. Evans:

"I am afraid that even when dealing with Education Bills, political considerations have often as great a force as educational, and, although no one, I think, doubted the correctness of my arguments from the educational point of view the great desire for independence and separation which animates - perhaps properly animates - the smaller municipal communities of this country made it necessary that 69 fresh authorities should be let in, and 69 fresh authorities accordingly were let in on Thursday last ... I must ask those who are the friends of this Bill, and who desire to see it carried into law, to support me in declining to admit any more local authorities".²

Sir William Harcourt naturally didn't share Gorst's sense of desperation, being delighted with the way the debates were moving: "The Lord hath delivered them into our hands. I have never known a Government so soon and so completely discredited. The chariot wheel will drag heavily and the horse and his rider will be cast into the sea".³

A meeting of the Unionist party had also been held at the Foreign Office on June 15, during which Balfour spoke

¹The Spectator, 76, June 20, 1896: "Every night ... both the verbal and substantial criticisms on the Education Bill multiply like the multiplication of clouds or locusts in the East, and for every controversy that is settled, two or three new ones are generated".

²4 Hansard, 41, c. 1108 (June 15, 1896).

³Harcourt Papers, WH 7/6-8. Sir W. Harcourt to his wife, June 16, 1896.

about the delays in the passage of the Education Bill. He stated that the Government did not want to use closure in dealing with the Bill, which they desired to see passed, nor did they want to emasculate it. They did, however, want the recess to start in early August and proposed, therefore, that progress on the Bill should continue, "... down to the middle of August when there would be an adjournment till January, and the work of the Session would then be resumed".¹ Although there was a general agreement about the suitability of such a proposal amongst the Party, the Queen did not share their feelings:

"I am somewhat alarmed at the position of the Government regarding the Education Bill ... I doubt the prudence of Parliament adjourning from August to January (of which proposal by the way I was not informed), thus subjecting this important Bill to months of attack from political agitators. Would it not be better for the Government to stand by their measure and re-assemble in November, and pass it more or less intact?".²

The Bill's fate, however, was rapidly being determined.³ At a Cabinet Council held on the 20th, a decision was taken, "... to drop the Education Bill and to reintroduce it in January. It was obviously impossible to proceed with it in opposition to the views of all the Cabinet Ministers who

¹The Times, June 16, 1896. See also, Griffith-Boscawen, A.S.T., op. cit., p. 104-5.

²Buckle, G.E., op. cit., 111 3, p. 52-3. Queen Victoria to Lord Salisbury, June 19, 1896.

³Sadler, M., op. cit., p. 148. Sadler's wife noted: "Gorst is in great straits over the Educ. Bill"., June 19, 1896.

sit in the House of Commons".¹ The Queen would not accept this decision, and asked Salisbury to hold another meeting of the Cabinet and, "... lay before it my views before any announcement is made as to the decision regarding the Bill.

"I deprecate in the highest degree a step which I consider may be disastrous to the Government, especially when at this present moment, with so many foreign difficulties, I feel more than ever the necessity for preserving a bold front".² Victoria's arguments held no ground with the reassembled Cabinet:

"... Cabinet was held according to your Majesty's commands; and the question was rediscussed. The Members of the House remained unshaken in the view that it was impossible to pass the Bill; and on this they were unanimous. This result is partly due to unexampled obstruction by the Opposition; partly to the character of the subject, which was exceptionally complicated. The Cabinet under these circumstances was compelled to drop the Bill".³

On the same day, June 22, Balfour addressed a House:

"... packed from floor to topmost range of galleries; the same throng at the bar; the same long lines in the side galleries; Press crowding entrance to their seats, like mob at pit or gallery of Haymarket Theatre when Trilby is on; the same electric air vibrating through crowded chamber. All the same, and yet a universe of difference".⁴

¹Buckle, G.E., op. cit., 111. 3, p. 53. Lord Salisbury to Queen Victoria, June 20, 1896. There does not appear to be any truth in the fable originated by Sir Almeric FitzRoy, and propagated by Allen, Armytage, Lowndes, Bishop, etc., that the Duke of Devonshire conveyed the news of the dropping of the Bill to Gorst with the words, "Gorst, your damned Bill's dead". Gorst claimed that although there was no truth in this, he couldn't recall anything truer or more characteristic of the Duke. See, Gorst, H.E., Much of Life Is Laughter, p. 125.

²Ibid., p. 54. Queen Victoria to Lord Salisbury, June 20, 1896.

³Ibid., Lord Salisbury to Queen Victoria, June 22, 1896.

⁴Punch, CX1, July 4, 1896, p. 11.

In the course of his speech he pointed out that on the basis of the past week, in which '2 lines - 14 words' had been passed, it would be physically impossible to pass the Bill in the current session. The only solution to the problem was, therefore, to drop the Bill and introduce one early in the following January. This would, Balfour promised, cover "... at least in part, the same ground". His motion, "... which will have the effect of destroying the Bill for the present session", was carried,¹ terminating the efforts of Gorst and the Education Department in the previous seven months. It is not, therefore, surprising that the only person of note absent from the House was Gorst. Something of his feelings of frustration and despair at this ignominious end to his Bill may perhaps be gathered from the brief comment about another interested party's reaction to the occasion: "E. [Sadler] to the House to hear the end of the Education Bill. It is a great smash and E. is very low".²

Queen Victoria was definitely not amused at the fate of the Bill, and Balfour's mishandling of it:

"Mistakes in framing so complicated a Bill, and miscalculations as to the opposition it might incur, I can perfectly understand. But that a very strong Government should on a Monday, with the unanimous approval of its supporters, determine a line of action affecting a measure of first-class importance and before the end of the week entirely abandon this decision, seems to me incredible, and will not I fear be any more understood by the country generally.

¹4 Hansard, 41, c. 1572 (June 22, 1896).

²Sadleir, M., op. cit., p. 148.

"I earnestly trust that there will be no further withdrawal of Queen's Speech Bills".¹

Mrs. Webb was also angry at the Bill's failure - possibly because Sidney had been seen to accept rather than oppose what had become an unacceptable piece of legislation:

"... The discreditable failure of this complicated measure only another instance of how impossible it is nowadays to succeed in politics without technical knowledge of the great democratic machine. ... 'In these matters I am a child', says Balfour! We do not want clever school boys at the head of our great departments, we want grown men ... In political life the standard of natural ability is remarkably high, the standard of acquirements ludicrously low. Who would trust the building of a bridge to a man who started with such an infinitesimal knowledge of engineering as Balfour and Gorst have of national education and its machinery? There seems to be a settled conviction that any clever man, trained to any profession whatsoever, will succeed in politics whether or no he knows anything about the details of public administration, or the facts of the common life he has to attempt to reform. That impression we must try to destroy".²

¹Buckle, G.E., op. cit., III. 3, p. 56. Queen Victoria to Lord Salisbury, June 23, 1896. The Queen appears to have followed the fate of the Bill with keen interest and was dismayed with the tactics of her government, according to one of her ladies-in-waiting, Marie Mallet (the wife of Balfour's private secretary): "The Queen talked of nothing but the Education Bill last night and suddenly turning round said, 'And pray what does your husband think?'". June 19, 1896. "The Queen is very much interested and excited about it all", June 20, 1896. "The Queen talked to me a great deal about the Education Bill last night, she is very cross at the way in which the Government have dropped it and cannot make out why they make such an open profession of weakness. What particularly strikes her (and indeed everyone) is the complete 'volte face' between Monday and the following Friday, if, as they declared the Party meeting on Monday was unanimous how could such a revolution have been effected in four days!". Quoted in Mallett, V., Life with Queen Victoria, p. 86-89.

²Webb, B., op. cit., p. 133-4. The interesting point about these comments of Beatrice Webb's lies in the fact that they were written in Whitsun, 1896. As this holiday ended on June 1 that year, and she started her diary entry with "Came back and found the Education Bill practically dead", how did she know this, when the Bill's end only came into sight in the last quarter of June?

The Spectator saw the failure of the Bill as the result of lack of cohesion in the Conservative ranks:

"The Government have evidently made up their minds that though with a united party behind them they could have defeated the Opposition and persuaded the country gentlemen to give up their cub-hunting and their pheasant shooting, they would have created too great a split in their own ranks by insisting on such a sacrifice in favour of a Bill for which there was not a little dislike among some of their own friends, and a rather languid support even amongst the remainder ... Further, Sir John Gorst was evidently distrusted by a good many of them, while others held that Sir Albert Rollit, with his municipal Tory democracy behind him, had gained too much influence over Mr. Balfour".¹

Lucy and Balfour's biographers, however, saw the extinguishing of the Bill as being the fault primarily of Balfour, and no one else. Lucy, as a contemporary observer, perceived that, "... in dealing with the Education Bill, Mr. Balfour, as mouthpiece of the Ministry in the House of Commons, seemed deliberately to go out of his way to do crass things".² Balfour's niece, Blanche Dugdale, thought that, "Tactically Balfour's intervention in the management of the Bill which was not his own may be counted as one of his few parliamentary mistakes",³ whilst Young observed succinctly: "Balfour's reputation as Leader was at its nadir".⁴

¹The Spectator, 76, June 27, 1896, p. 908.

²Lucy, H.W., A Diary of the Unionist Parliament, 1895-1900, p. 100.

³Dugdale, B.E.C., Arthur James Balfour, I, p. 245.

⁴Young, K., Arthur James Balfour, p. 179.

In evaluating the potential of the 1896 Education Bill and in examining the reasons for its failure, two questions have to be answered. The first of these is, did the Bill fail on its contents? or, secondly, was its failure due to mishandling by the Government, especially Gorst and Balfour? From these questions another arises - if the Bill failed primarily as a result of mishandling, was this due to, and a reflection of, the quality of the Bill rather than sheer ineptitude? This latter question is of importance from two points of view, i.e. the events which were generated by Gorst and Balfour after the Bill's failure, and the effect which the failure had on Gorst's career.

Although Gorst had claimed in both his introduction and subsequent defence of the Bill that there was a paramount theme i.e. the creation of new local education authorities, and that the rest of the proposals were detail, it has to be recognised that there were, in fact three main themes. The other two covered the areas of financial aid to the voluntary schools and the possible solution of the religious problem which existed in elementary education.

There can be little doubt, both from his speeches and his concept of the Bill at its inception, that Gorst's basic concern was for the introduction of a scheme to achieve a rationalisation of local educational administration. In drawing up his proposals he had obviously been impressed by the recommendations of the Bryce Report,

and also the result of his experience of local administrative bodies as Tory party agent in the seventies and eighties. It is not, therefore, really surprising that he seized the opportunity presented by the Bill to make a more sweeping proposal in providing the new authorities with responsibility for both elementary and secondary education.¹ By doing this he obviously thought that pressure on the central authorities could be relieved, and this would help them to overcome the administrative muddles which had developed at that level. This in turn, would obviate the need for a new central authority such as the Bryce Report had proposed.

Unfortunately there were two obstacles to the smooth operation of this proposal. The first was that relief of the pressure upon the Science and Art and the Education Departments would help them to a certain extent, but would not alleviate the administrative chaos as long as other bodies with a finger in the educational pie, e.g. the Charity Commission, Local Government Board, etc., were allowed to continue functioning as separate education authorities. Failure to take cognizance of this fact was a serious error of Gorst's, and his new authorities presence, on enactment of the Bill, would have only added

¹ Considering Kazamias's view that the Bill, "... was an outgrowth of a climate of opinion favouring some sort of change in the administrative structure of Education, and one which was strengthened by the Report of the Bryce Commission", Gorst was right to take this step. Kazamias, A.M., Politics, Society and Secondary Education in England, p. 91.

to the muddle rather than helping to remove it. The second obstacle, however, was a much larger one in the path of achieving a rational, decentralised education system, and that was the continued existence of the School Boards after the new authorities came into existence. As long as they were allowed to exist, as the speakers against the Bill amply demonstrated, the School Boards would resist bitterly any encroachment upon their powers. This would apply not only to central authorities, but also to the new local ones. The Boards' argument that the new authorities were unfit for their job on the ground that they had not been elected for that purpose, as the School Boards had, was fallacious. The County and County Borough Councils had demonstrated in the short time that had passed since the initial application of 'Whisky money' to technical education that they were competent to deal with education, as the results of their technical education committees testified. The School Boards' main strength lay in the fact that they had been in existence for 26 years on an elected basis and had achieved positive results, especially in large urban areas. Until they were removed or totally incorporated, any scheme to achieve rationalisation at the local level would not be successful, and the 1896 Bill could not achieve this. In view of this, it can be seen that Balfour's clause to check the expenditure of the Boards would only have aggravated the situation further.

At this point one must ask the question, why didn't Gorst go all out for the abolition of the School Boards in

order to achieve a secure foundation for the new authorities? After all, even Asquith had admitted that the Government could succeed in passing their measure, "... by the use of your overbearing Parliamentary majority".¹ The answer to this somewhat tantalizing question appears to reside in two facts. Firstly there was the considerable opposition of Chamberlain in the Cabinet to proposals against the Board Schools in spite of his May speech. And in the early days of the alliance between the Liberal Unionists and the Conservatives, deference appears to have been given to 'Almighty Joe' and his views in order to prevent any rift occurring in the alliance - which a proposal for the abolition of the School Boards would have resulted in. There is also the second fact that Gorst, not being a Cabinet member, lacked the status and availability of arguing his case for the Bill. He consequently had to rely upon the Duke of Devonshire's assistance in this matter, which was not, as contemporaries have observed, always considerable or effectual.² The appositeness of his remark about not being a member of the Cabinet³ probably struck Gorst when the Bill was being dropped by the Cabinet. The fact remains, however, that abolition of the School Boards and the creation of a new central authority were not proposed in the

¹4 Hansard, 40, c. 594 (May 5, 1896).

²Kekewich, G.W., op. cit., p. 92-9.

³4 Hansard, 40, c. 558 (May 5, 1896).

Bill, and these omissions would have been of considerable importance in making the Act a non viable one.¹

The opposition to the second main aim of the Bill, i.e. the granting of state aid to the voluntary schools in an effort to relieve them of their "intolerable strain", was based primarily upon the lack of public control over the expenditure of such sums. The passage of the Bill would have been smoother if this simple expedient, which was actually incorporated into the Bill, had been given more publicity by Gorst and Balfour during their defence of the Bill.² The most significant feature of this part of the Bill was, however, neglected by the majority of speakers on the subject. It was simply that the sum stipulated, i.e. four shillings, would effectually make only a minor contribution towards closing the financial gap between Board and voluntary schools. As Waddington indicated in 1896: "The Government proposes by some magical influence to make a double florin equal a half-sovereign, or, to put it more plainly, the State meets a deficiency of one and a quarter millions ... by a grant of half a million".³ This estimated deficiency between the actual requirements and the sum to be given would also have been compounded by the abolition of the 17/6d. limit, which was also proposed;

¹Devonshire admitted that this would have been the case, had the Bill been enacted, in his Cabinet memorandum on the Board of Education Bill, some two-and-a-half years later: "... we postponed the consideration ... for constituting a Central Educational Authority. I am now inclined to think that this was not only a tactical mistake, but also a mistake in principle", P.R.O., Ed. 24/8, Cabinet Memorandum by Duke of Devonshire, January 28, 1898.

²See Appendix 2. Clause 5.

³Waddington, R., 'The Voluntary School Problem', Westminster Review, 146, July 1896, p. 90.

for this removed the relatively necessary safeguard on voluntary contributions towards this type of school, and could have been quite a retrograde step - from the schools' financial aspect - in view of the agricultural depression which had been, and still was, affecting Britain since 1876. Asquith's emotional speech against the placing of such aid on the statute books because, "... it will deprive the House of Commons of that which I conceive to be the most fundamental and invaluable of all its constitutional functions - namely, its absolute freedom to decide how the money raised by taxation shall be spent", was fallacious.¹ As Gorst pointed out, but unfortunately not until September, there was nothing to stop a Liberal Government in office from voting, in supply, not to continue the sums required for such aid.² It would appear, therefore, that the execution of this proposal of the Bill would have only staved off the plight of the voluntary schools for a few years, and only minimally during that time.

One can agree with Gorst's sentiment that the Cowper Temple clause constituted, "a relic of religious intolerance and an unnecessary interference with liberty",³ but it had enabled School Boards to be formed and flourish from 1870 onwards. And it was clear from the outbursts of people

¹4 Hansard, 40, c. 583-4 (May 5, 1896).

²The Times, September 18, 1896.

³B.M. Add. MS, 49791, f. 10. Memorandum by J.E. Gorst, December 21, 1895.

like Clifford and Stanley that the principle of the clause was strongly adhered to by School Board supporters. Why then was the clause virtually repealing the Cowper Temple one allowed to remain in the Bill after Gorst had indicated in December that he was willing to withdraw it in view of the objections made by Chamberlain? It would appear that pressure from either Salisbury or Balfour was responsible for its inclusion as demonstrating support for the Church, whilst at the same time providing a minor attack on the School Board fortresses.

Gorst had clearly recognised that the furor which this clause generated in and out of Parliament was confined in the main to the public platform, rather than being a reflection of mass opinion. Charles Booth's survey of the working class of London during the last decade of the nineteenth century had led him to the conclusion that, "the bulk of the regular wage-earning class" was untouched by religion, except for sending their children to Sunday school, and Pelling's studies indicate that Booth's conclusion could have been equally well applied to any part of England.¹ It is also noteworthy that the sending of their children to Sunday school was a common characteristic of working-class populations and Pelling sees, "their willingness to do so, and their lack of concern about the character of the religious instruction given" as "further evidence of their tolerance, at all events as between the varying sects of Protestantism".² As the bulk of the

¹Booth, C., Life and Labour of the People in London, ser. 3. vii, p. 400. Quoted in Pelling, H., Popular Politics and Society in Late Victorian Britain, p. 28.

²Pelling, H., *Ibid.*, p. 28-30.

Board'schools' populations were derived from the working classes, it would follow that it was only a minority of articulate supporters of the Boards who were put out by Gorst's proposal to ensure liberty in the religious teaching to be offered in future in the public elementary schools. By turning this issue into a case for violent opposition, these School Board supporters took a rigid, reactionary stance which only increased the Government's growing alienation from them and the Boards. So whilst they effectively hindered the Bill's passage it was only a short term victory, and made subsequent measures against the Boards easier for the Government to take.

These, then, were the three main principles involved in the Bill, and it can be seen that basically the faults lay, as Diggle had stated, in defects not of intention but those of execution. The details of the Bill did not clear the path of the existent obstacles, which was necessary if it was to become a viable Act. By unnecessary antagonism in the details concerning the Boards and the religious problem, more opposition was generated than need have been. This, in conjunction with the failure to consult the relevant authorities over the proposals for a new authority, militated against the possible success of the Bill.¹ It is true that there were other proposals con-

¹As Kazamias has indicated: "Furthermore, and this is what created pandemonium which finally wrecked the Bill, by concentrating on the local level, politically the most touchy and contentious of English government, the Conservatives opened a Pandora's box of religious antagonisms, vested interests, and jealously guarded political gains". Kazamias, A.M., op. cit., p. 79.

tained in the Bill upon which there was a majority agreement, e.g. raising the school leaving age to 12, and the taking over of the Industrial, Reform and Poor Law Schools by the new authorities. They were humane proposals and undoubtedly emanated from Gorst personally. But compared with the other measures in the Bill they were truly details only. Looking at the Bill in toto, therefore, its potential as a viable measure designed to solve the problems for which it had been constructed would appear to have been very limited.¹ It was not so bad however, that it could not have become an Act and then have been subsequently modified to become a more useful instrument of educational reform. This, therefore, leads us to the problem, was it the handling of the Bill by Gorst and Balfour which led to its failure?

There can be little doubt that in the passage of the Bill through the Cabinet the importance of Balfour was paramount. This was unfortunate for Gorst in view of the personal antagonism that had developed between them - both strong willed personalities - and which was reflected in

¹Halevy described the Bill as "a clumsy makeshift", Halevy, E., A History of the English People, 1895-1905, p. 192. Cruikshank claimed that, "In the light of Conservative pledges the Bill was a piddling, makeshift measure", Cruikshank, M., Church and State in English Education, p. 65. The majority of contemporary writers dismiss it as abortive, but Eaglesham saw it as a Bill, "which though it did not survive ordeal by Parliament, was to have posthumous importance", Eaglesham, E.J.R., From School Board to Local Authority, p. 105. Clarke felt that, "... in the most important aspects it anticipated the 1920 Act", Clarke, P.L.P., 'The Education Act of 1902' (University of London, Ph.D. thesis), p. 383.



A.J. Balfour

Balfour's hostility towards some of Gorst's proposals.¹ Gorst's behaviour in his handling of the Bill was straightforward, if not always the correct one to ensure success, especially when compared with Balfour. Gorst can possibly be faulted on his defence of the Bill at the second reading. Instead of being quite so jocular he should have used the opportunity to explain the proposals in depth and to deal with criticisms of them in a similar vein, rather than waving them away as matters only to be considered during the committee stage. His jocularly masked his convictions about the Bill which was unfortunate, as they should have been displayed in defence of the measure against the growing opposition to it. He did this in the committee stage but before he could get into his proper stride, Balfour had intervened.

Balfour's behaviour over this Bill is difficult to decipher as there are important gaps in the evidence about him and his attitudes, especially during the crucial stages of the Bill, e.g. the events including June 15 through to June 22. It does appear that after submerging his animosity towards Gorst's original proposals, Balfour became involved in the development of aspects of the Bill, and came to recognise the important nature of Gorst's concepts. He was, until just after the second reading, a fairly firm adherent to the Bill's proposals. But it looks as though he rethought his ideas in the interval prior to the Committee

¹B.M. Add. MS. 49690, f. 123-4. A.J. Balfour to Lord Salisbury, December 6, 1895.

stage, and came to the conclusion that the Bill would prove to be unworkable in practice. Knowing that the Government were unwilling to apply closure to the Bill and force it through, Balfour, with all his parliamentary experience, must have been well aware what the consequences of accepting Rollitt's amendment would be. He must also have known that the plan to extend the Session and start again in January would still not provide enough time to deal with all the amendments down for the Bill. It would therefore appear, and this is substantiated by Lucy's observations as an impartial witness of the House's proceedings, that the only conclusion is that Balfour sabotaged the Bill, and thereby forced the Cabinet into dropping it.¹ If this is the correct conclusion, it would appear that Balfour's motives in carrying out what was an unfair treatment of Gorst were basically made from a position of statesmanship rather than personal antagonism.² That this was so may

¹"... in dealing with the Education Bill Mr. Balfour ... seemed deliberately to go out of his way to do crass things". Lucy, H.W., A Diary of the Unionist Parliament, 1895-1900, p. 100. T.J. Macnamara, however, felt that a different factor was the cause for Balfour's actions: "Thanks to his profound ignorance and rooted unconcern for the subject Mr. Arthur Balfour, in the most charming way possible spoiled the whole design in a complacent endeavour to placate a too importunate follower; and the great attempt of 1896 became abortive much to Sir John Gorst's ill-concealed chagrin". Macnamara, T.J., 'The Education Bill'. The Nineteenth Century, 49, June, 1901, p. 998. Lloyd George appeared to subscribe to a similar view as Macnamara's and not just concerning the 1896 Bill: "I could not do as Balfour did ... saunter down to the office at 11.30 and then play games in the afternoon in the House, and only half understand what was going on"; Stevenson, F., Lloyd George: A Diary, p. 321.

²Balfour, nonetheless, managed within the next few months to shift the blame for the Bill's failure, publicly attributed to him, to the unfortunate Gorst.

partly be deduced from Balfour's determined stand over the 1902 Education Bill, in which the principles involved were more or less identical to those of the 1896 Bill-albeit with the details much better produced.

The clearing of the way towards the production of a firmer base on which these details could be constructed was one of the prime reasons behind the events subsequent to the demise of the 1896 Bill. In these events Gorst was to play a large role, and thereby make a major contribution to the administration of English education. For now, more than ever, he was firmly convinced in his belief in the county and county borough councils as the authority for both elementary and secondary education. From the ashes of the Bill this Phoenix was to rise and contradict the impression produced by a popular ditty at the time:

"Here lies consigned to Lethe, via Styx,
The Education Bill of ninety-six,
And, done to death by over-vivesection,
Sleeps without faintest hope of resurrection".¹

¹Quoted in Allen, B.M., Memoirs of William Garnett, p. 66.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Gorst's feelings about the failure of the Education Bill may be derived from the evidence presented by contemporary and later accounts. Kekewich, in his somewhat malevolent book, stated that: "For some reason or other Sir John took umbrage at the failure of the Education Bill of 1896. He attributed to me, rightly or wrongly (I forget which it was now, but it matters little), the framing of the groundwork of the Bill, to which he objected and which in his opinion, eventually led to its withdrawal".¹ And this may have been the reason underlying the observations made by Eldon Gorst: "My father, very early in the day, quarrelled with all his political colleagues and took up the position of a sulky and discontented outcast".² Lady Randolph Churchill seems to have been more percipient, when writing to her son Winston early in 1897: "The Government seem to behave badly to Gorst - but I have no pity for him. Still it must be galling to have brought in a Bill of your own creation and to have Balfour take it out of your hands and not even consult you about it".³ It was undoubtedly, the way in which the Bill's progress collapsed that was the cause of Gorst's observed bad humour in the summer of

¹Kekewich, G.W., op. cit., p. 102.

²Gorst, Sir Eldon, Autobiographical Notes, II, p. 46.

³Churchill, R.S., Winston S. Churchill. Companion Vol. II to Vol. II p. 728. Lady Randolph Churchill to Winston S. Churchill, January 29, 1897.

1896. And it does appear that Gorst believed that the fault lay with Balfour, and the bungling of the Cabinet, in the first instance plus, of course, the opposition raised by the School Boards. This later point is revealed in a memo from Gorst to Kekewich, on the reply to be given to the Association of School Boards (about the draft Bill for payment of expenses in connection with representatives attending School Board Conferences):

"As no Bill on the subject whether introduced by Government or private members has the slightest chance of passing this session, I should tell them that the point will be considered in the Education Bill of the future. A provision of this kind might be a useful sop to School Boards and mitigate some of their hostility to the next Bill".¹

The bad humour, however, appears to have only been present when Gorst was in the company of his political colleagues or subordinates at the Education Department, as Canon Barnett recorded:

"Today we go off at 9 with 80 PT's [Pupil Teachers] to Cambridge and stay with Gorst. He was here on Monday and Wednesday. He is in good form but is not hopeful that the Government will do anything. He feels however that it cannot shunt him and that if a bill is demanded by the country, he must be used to draw it up ...".²

A possible explanation for the obviously conflicting moods of Gorst about the Bill may partially reside in a comment made by W.T. Stead in his review of the Bill's fate: "There is reason to believe that neither Sir John Gorst nor his Chief, the Duke of Devonshire, particularly regretted

¹P.R.O. Ed. 11/32. J.E. Gorst to G.W. Kekewich, July 3, 1896.

²Barnett Papers, F/BAR/143. Canon Barnett to Frank Barnett, July 11, 1896.

the failure of an attempt to subordinate the interests of education to the demands of clericalism".¹ Bearing in mind Gorst's friendliness with Stead since the beginning of the decade, it may be that Stead was privy to Gorst's thoughts about the whole affair, and that this comment was a reflection of Gorst's dissatisfaction with the way his concepts about the Bill had been mangled to fit in with the ideas of Balfour and the Church. The resultant Bill, although incorporating Gorst's principles, was too unbalanced for Gorst to envisage its success, and for this he blamed Balfour and the Department officials, especially Kekewich and Sadler. Balfour, and to a lesser degree the Cabinet, had added insult to injury by their treatment of the measure, which the public accepted as Gorst's; so that it is little wonder that Gorst should appear to have taken umbrage and have been discontented after its failure. Gorst's contrasting moods may also have partially been due to his observations that the press, both Conservative and Liberal, put the blame for the Bill's failure squarely on Balfour.² Which, no doubt, coincided perfectly with Gorst's view, and hence his optimism about his role in any future educational legislation. Unfortunately for Gorst this optimism was not shared by his political colleagues. In their attempt to find a scapegoat for the unprecedented success of such a small Opposition over the Bill, he seemed

¹Review of Reviews, 14, July, 1896, p. 6.

²Dugdale, B.E., Arthur James Balfour, p. 244: "Such an outcry arose against Balfour ...".

to be the logical choice. Their choice was no doubt reinforced by the tone of speeches Gorst made at the beginning of the Parliamentary recess, in which he did not let the Government forget its obligations in education before the dust from the Bill's failure had had time to settle:

"... it was true that the Education Bill was withdrawn, but no member of the Government had in any way backed out of the principles and policy of which that Bill was the exponent. Questions of procedure, of times, and of Parliamentary convenience, though they might be of great practical importance, did not in any way touch the principles upon which the Government were now pledged before the country to proceed. It was quite clear from the declarations of the Government and from the Bill which they brought forward that they regarded the preservations of the voluntary schools of the country as essential to a sound scheme of national education, and that their efforts, as long as they were in office, would be to preserve and to make as perfect and as efficient as possible the voluntary schools both in town and country".¹

In an earlier speech, he had adopted a similar stance:

"... he believed that every County Council had established a committee which was probably the embryo of the local education authority of the future ... nothing was more needed at the present moment in higher education than some authority or power which should co-ordinate the various agencies at work to prevent this overlapping, competition, and waste of energy".²

If only the friends of the Government, especially the clergy, would unite together and produce some common goals this act, "... would enormously strengthen the hands of the

¹The Times, September 18, 1896. Part of Gorst's speech at a ruridecanal conference held at Colchester on September 17, 1896.

²The Times, August 19, 1896. A speech by Gorst in the Senate House, Cambridge on August 7, 1896.

Government, and would enable them in the coming session to bring forward a measure of a comprehensive character which would really improve education ...".¹ These pronouncements of Gorst's and his concepts for any new educational measure were being overtaken rapidly by events taking place in the Education Department, unknown to him. These were outlined in a letter from the Duke of Devonshire to Lord Salisbury:

"I have asked the Education Department people to begin the preparation of some materials which I think may be useful when we begin to consider the new Education Bill, but before consulting Gorst upon it, I should like to know your ideas about him.

"I do not know whether Balfour spoke to you before leaving London, but I am pretty sure that he does not think that Gorst's conduct of another Education Bill would (?add) to its success, and it is clear that apart from any merits or demerits of the man himself, he would be under some disadvantages in conducting through the House a Bill which I (?think) will be of a much more limited (?nature) than the last. Is there any chance of changes which would place the Education Department in other hands? Personally I like Gorst and I should be very sorry to suggest any change which would injure his political prospects. I do not doubt that he will do his best to help in his Department to form a Bill on the line the Cabinet may decide on, and it is really more a question for Balfour as Leader of the House of Commons than for me.

"I have not the least idea what could be done for Gorst, but assuming that a vacancy could be made, I think that there are two men (both unfortunately in my own flock) either of whom would do admirably for the special business in (?). They are Hobhouse and Wodehouse. ... He [Wodehouse] is I should say much more in sympathy with the opinions on education of your supporters than Gorst is, and I should think would be most acceptable to both fractions of the party, except to such as may expect promotion for themselves ...".²

¹The Times, September 18, 1896.

²Salisbury Papers. Duke of Devonshire to Lord Salisbury, September 13, 1896.

That Gorst was unaware of these machinations is indicated by one of Canon Barnett's letters to his brother in the month following Devonshire's letter: "On Tuesday Gorst came - Government has as yet fixed on nothing. He has got a strong committee to overhaul South Kensington and he is very happy about his article and the sensation it makes. I fear he is playing with edged tools".¹ It appears from Barnett's last sentence that Gorst may have revealed to him his ultimate aim to be achieved from the workings of this Committee, namely, the subordination and eventual abolition, of the School Boards to the County Councils as the education authority of the future.

The article of Gorst's referred to by Canon Barnett in his letter was, "Prospects of Education in England", which had been published in the October issue of the North American Review.² The premises contained in it were to become the main themes of Gorst's speeches and articles during the remainder of 1896 and throughout 1897. The general tone set by the article, and continued in subsequent ones and his speeches, was one which revealed Gorst's thoughts about education at their most idiosyncratic level. It also indicated Gorst's ability to deliver jibes at the efforts of his colleagues as well as those of his foes with impartiality - undoubtedly a reaction to their handling of

¹Barnett Papers, F/BAR/152. Canon Barnett to Frank Barnett, October 24, 1896.

²Gorst, J.E., 'Prospects of Education in England', North American Review, 163, October, 1896, p. 427-37.

him in the earlier part of the year.

Gorst declined to pull his punches, as his opening sentences revealed:

"The chief obstacles to the progress of education in England are party spirit and religious intolerance. Proposals for educational reform are discussed and decided, not in a philosophical spirit, but with all the acrimony of partisans. Yet it is admitted that the case is a very urgent one; that England is engaged in a struggle with her foreign competitors not only for the supremacy but even for the very existence of her industries; that her workers are worse instructed than their rivals, and are on that account going to the wall; and that better education, both elementary and technical, is vital to the continuance of her prosperity. It is the fact that in both town and country elementary instruction is so backward that, even if adequate technical schools were provided, the mass of the people are unfitted to take full advantage of them. Yet, notwithstanding all this, English statesmen will postpone reform indefinitely if they can see their way to secure a party advantage thereby. The only hope is that public opinion may appreciate, before it is too late, the position of education, both elementary and technical; may become agreed as to the direction in which development ought to take place, and may force Parliament and the government to grapple with the difficulties which have to be overcome".¹

In this opening paragraph Gorst had clearly stated his view of the principal barriers to educational reform, and had also indicated one of his future, major themes. This was Britain's need for a better educated society if she was to survive in the increasing industrial and agricultural competition with Europe and the U.S.A.; a theme which Gorst had used since his return from Berlin in 1890, but one which he was to develop in the forthcoming months. There can be little doubt that the agricultural depression since the

¹Ibid., p. 427.

1870's, and which had only recently started to lift, had made an impression upon Gorst. This had been complemented by his observations upon the conditions existent in industry, which had resulted from his travels throughout the Kingdom (initiated by his work as Party Agent), and had been increased by his genuine desire for an amelioration of the conditions of the working classes.

Having thrown down the gauntlet, so to speak, Gorst went on to examine in more detail the educational system of the country and the inherent faults in it. After a minor survey of educational progress from 1870 to 1896, Gorst alighted upon the School Boards. Whilst praising the achievements of the Boards of the metropolis and the large county boroughs, Gorst thought that it was doubtful, "... whether any real advantage has been obtained by this arrangement [that members of School Boards were elected for the sole purpose of managing schools], and whether the same results would not have been attained if the school authority had been a committee of the Municipal Council".¹ The arguments of Stanley, Clifford, Asquith et al had obviously made no impression on Gorst. In spite of this, Gorst felt that two other barriers prevented further progress from being made by the School Boards. One was the early age of school leaving: "Until the school age is raised, English children cannot be turned out by the borough board schools as well equipped for further instruction as the Continental children who are to be their future rivals".² The other was the

¹Ibid., p. 428.

²Ibid., p. 429.

presence of the voluntary schools.

In his discussion of the problem of the voluntary schools i.e. their inefficiency compared with Board schools, but having a larger number of pupils in their care, Gorst reiterated the points he had made in his introduction of the Bill, namely, that the costs involved prohibited abolition of these schools, as well as the determination of a great number of people to have definite religious teaching in schools. The only solution, he believed, was that these schools should become efficient, for the benefit of the nation, and there were two ways open for accomplishing this. The first, an increased grant from the central authority, Gorst felt was ruled out as, "... it can neither be adequate nor permanent". And the attempt, in conjunction with such a small grant, "... to limit by a hard and fast line the cost of elementary education is as absurd as to attempt to limit the cost of a gun or a warship" - undoubtedly a backhander aimed at Balfour and Salisbury's limiting clauses of the 1896 Bill. The solution lay, he felt, in rate aid to the voluntary schools. If only political parties and affiliations were not allowed to be imposed, Gorst felt that amicable agreements could be reached between the schools' managers and the rate-payers; the latter's aid accompanied by their control over its expenditure would ensure the necessary increase in efficiency of the recipient schools:

"It would be adequate because it would be in the interests of the party representing the rate-payers to secure full efficiency in secular

instruction, and it would be permanent, because if arrangements acceptable to local authorities were once in satisfactory working order, Parliament would find it quite impossible to disturb them".¹

Gorst turned his attention to the plight of schools in rural areas, contrasting the success of the voluntary schools there with the relative failures of small rural School Boards. Even so, there was no room for complacency on anyone's part:

"If anyone contrasts the elementary and technical instruction imparted to the children of the peasantry in these [European] countries and in England, as well as the amounts spent by the respective governments thereon, there is no reason for surprise at the defeat of English agriculture ...".²

Part of the fault lay with those associated with agriculture, and here Gorst aimed a blow at the staunch supporters of the Tory party:

"The understandings of all those who are connected with the cultivation of the soil appear to be darkened. The landowners exhibit that dislike to intellectual development which is characteristic of a territorial aristocracy; the farmers regard the imitation of the methods of their forefathers as the highest agricultural art and scoff at the teachings of science; and the labourer's children are turned out of school to scare crows when eleven years old, and often by the connivance of the school attendance officers, who are under-the-thumb of the farmers, at a much earlier age".³

Although it appeared to Gorst that in rural areas, "... the voluntary schools can hold their own without further pecuniary support" - a statement guaranteed to add clerical

¹Ibid., p. 432.

²Ibid., p. 433.

³Ibid.

alienation to that of the aristocracy and the farmers - he thought that, "no improvement in education is possible in rural districts until the voluntary schools are grouped by some system of federation, and until the areas of school districts are enlarged and some educational authority is provided which is more fit to manage schools than the village board".¹ Although Gorst obviously envisaged here a future possible role of the county councils as local education authorities, the immediate goal was to start paving the way towards this more logical form of control.

Having considered the problems existent in the elementary education system of the country and suggested possible remedies for them, Gorst devoted the final part of his article to an examination of secondary education. After dismissing, as "ill-designed and ineffective" the Government's plans for secondary education, Gorst looked at the overlapping administrative systems which were part of the problem in this area. He thought that the Science and Art Department grants had upset the balance of the curriculum in many secondary schools - a point made in the Bryce Report - and thus it was, "... very likely that on the whole the distribution of these grants has produced as much evil as

¹Ibid., p. 434.

good".¹ Against this defect, Gorst felt that the interaction between the Science and Art Department and the Technical Education Committees of county and county borough councils had resulted in curricula which reflected the needs of local districts and were, therefore, of benefit to the inhabitants. Gorst felt that, consequently, "with so wide a definition, the Technical Instruction Acts might be so extended as to be applicable to all secondary education without any violent disturbance of their existing operation".² This was, of course, the logical expression of Gorst's thoughts about the body best fitted to become the local education authority of the future. But the comments which followed, about the functions of the Board's higher grade schools, made interesting reading, especially as Gorst's committee at South Kensington was getting under way in order to challenge these schools:

"The school boards are in this [higher grade schools] ... exceeding the functions for which they were originally designed: but in the absence of any more regular mode of providing the people with that secondary education which the necessity of

¹Gorst felt that literary subjects were being replaced by, or minimised by, too much emphasis on science subjects. The Bryce Report felt that: "The largest of the problems which concern the future of Secondary Education is how to secure ... that in all schools and in every branch of study the pupils shall be not only instructed but educated." This concept, which Katz has classified as the 'cultural-intellectual ideal', and the duty of schools to transmit, had been hindered by the policies of the Science and Art Department. The Commissioners were pleased to note that in future literary subjects would be encouraged. Report of the Royal Commission on Secondary Education, P.P. 1895, XLIII [c. 7862], Vol. 1, p. 28, 80. See also Katz, M., 'From Bryce to Newsom : Assumptions of British Educational Reports, 1895-1963'. Int. Rev. Ed. XI, 1965, 3, p. 293.

²Gorst, J.E., op. cit., p. 436.

the times so urgently demands, their proceedings are undoubtedly highly approved by the people for whom they act; and any attempt to curtail by legislation the operation of school boards in this direction, without providing some better alternative method by which the wants of the public could be supplied, would be unpopular".¹

His solution to this problem of overlapping authorities was a straightforward reiteration of the main principle of the Education Bill,

"It is indispensable to have for this purpose a paramount education authority in every district through which alone public money should flow. That district should be the county, because that is already the area of the Technical Instruction Acts. The county authority should have both primary and secondary education under its jurisdiction: first, because these two shade insensibly into one another, and it is impossible to draw a line with all the subjects of primary education on one side and all those of secondary education on the other; and secondly, because the higher grade schools, which are processes of the elementary education system, already occupy the ground. Two separate authorities would be in conflict from the outset, and there would be a certain margin of education to which each party would assert its claim, and which it would be impossible to assign satisfactorily to either".²

It appears from this article that the failure of the Bill a few months earlier, and the opposition that it aroused in and out of Parliament, had not deterred Gorst one iota from his adherence to the reforms he thought necessary in education to enable Britain to regain her position of supremacy in the industrial world. He had also indicated, both directly and indirectly, where he felt the blame lay for lack of progress in these reforms. In this he was assuredly correct, and he was sufficiently aware of

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 437.

his parliamentary status not to worry unduly about the reactions which would result from his observations. But the most important aspect of the article was the emergence of Gorst's determination to achieve these reforms which he believed to be necessary, in spite of all the obstacles which had so recently been thrown in his way. And what the public could not realise when reading the article was that the first step in this direction - in the guise of the South Kensington Committee - had already been taken.

Although Gorst had re-declared his points of view about education, and had started to try carrying them into effect, he had made little effect upon his political chiefs. Devonshire, writing to Balfour, stated: "I think I had better take the opportunity of telling him [Gorst] that you will take charge of the Bill, and that he will not be held responsible for its deficiencies: also that we hope he will prepare and take charge of a Secondary Education Bill".¹ The Cabinet started to debate the proposed Education Bill two days later with a memorandum on the subject prepared by Balfour, and there is no indication of any participation by Gorst in the matter. In fact, in his presentation of the ways in which aid should be distributed to schools, Balfour argued against the original proposal of Gorst's that it should be given to poor voluntary and Board schools, i.e. on necessitous grounds alone, and came down in favour of a

¹B.M. Add. MS. 49769, f. 112. Duke of Devonshire to A.J. Balfour, November 7, 1896.

grant to voluntary schools alone.¹

It is also doubtful if Gorst learnt of Balfour's proposals and the Cabinet debates, for some three days later, in a speech to the National Union at the Constitutional Club, Gorst was reiterating his views about voluntary versus Board schools, and the need for aid to both poor voluntary and Board schools to be distributed by a local rather than a central authority:

"The only other way of distributing the grant was to give it to schools, not because they were voluntary, but because they were necessitous - to those schools who most wanted it for the purpose of improving their education. Thus, the poor Board school would get a grant just as much as the poor voluntary school".²

This speech drew an admonition from The Times the next morning:

"It is open to observation that his [Gorst's] own conduct, both before the introduction of the Education Bill and since its abandonment, would have been improved by a clearer perception of what is wanted by those who are interested in the preservation of voluntary schools. We do not question for one moment, either Sir John Gorst's good faith or his good will, but we must remark that, though he is at the head of the Education Department, he is not a member of the Cabinet, and has, therefore, to speak with marked reserve".³

Gorst's ideas, however, on this problem seem to have coincided, to a certain degree, with those of Chamberlain, who, in a note to Salisbury, proposed that, "... a sum equal to 5/- per head should be made from State Funds for the aid

¹Salisbury Papers. Draft by A.J. Balfour on Education Question, November 9, 1896.

²The Times, November 13, 1896.

³Ibid.

of necessitous voluntary schools and of poor districts in which the School Board rate exceeds - in the £".¹

Chamberlain was, however, in favour of distribution of the grant by the Education Department; although in a final clause he stated: "The whole administration of Secondary and Technical Education to be placed in the hands of the County and Borough Councils and the School Boards to be strictly confined to the works of Primary Education".²

At the next meeting of the Cabinet on November 16, Balfour had to give ground to Chamberlain's views and for "other reasons, with which I need not trouble the Cabinet ... a scheme has been devised partly on the lines of my last Memo, partly on the lines suggested by Mr. Chamberlain:

- "1. The Education Department is to parcel out the country into divisions.
2. In each division the Voluntary schools are to be invited to form themselves into Associations, which will doubtless be denominational in character.
3. To each Association will be apportioned a grant ...
4. Schools not joining the Association, except for special reasons shown, will be deprived of any grant.
5. The Education Department will be responsible for dividing the money among the schools of the Association for certain fixed purposes.
6. Each Association shall be invited to form itself into an organisation on which the constituent schools shall be represented.

¹Salisbury Papers, J. Chamberlain to Lord Salisbury, November 11, 1896.

²Ibid. This statement seems to bear no relation to the rest of the proposals in his note which were concerned solely with the grant and its distribution.

7. This organisation, besides providing a useful machinery for improving the management of Voluntary Schools, will select a number of delegates, equal to the number of School Inspectors in the district, and the joint body thus composed shall advise the Department as to the distribution of the grants between the schools of the Association.
8. An Association neglecting or refusing to organise will thus be deprived of all voice in the distribution of its grant.

"... Accompanying this Memo is a draft Bill ... The Bill is restricted to clauses dealing with the grant in aid, the 17/6 limit, and the rating of the school buildings".¹

This draft Bill, as described in Balfour's memorandum, thus appears to have contained some of Gorst's proposals about distribution of the grant, i.e. the formation of associations (Gorst's federations)² and recognition of their possible use, "for improving the management of voluntary schools". It did, however, base the distribution of the grant upon Chamberlain's plan; and rejected both Gorst's and Chamberlain's view that it should also be given to the poor Board schools. In spite of this it may have been that Gorst's articles and speeches induced Balfour to consider alternatives to his own plan, and thereby constituted the, "other reasons with which I need not trouble the Cabinet". What must have disappointed Gorst was the relative smallness of the new measure. A policy of smaller Bills with regard to Education had been already decided upon, however,

¹Salisbury Papers. Cabinet Memorandum by A.J. Balfour, November 16, 1896.

²Gorst, J.E., Prospects of Education in England, op. cit., p. 432.

by the Cabinet.¹

Gorst's concern with the voluntary school problem was diverted when, in company with the Duke of Devonshire and Sir John Donnelly, he was at the Privy Council on November 26 in order to hear the representations of a deputation concerned with the necessity for early legislation with regard to technical and secondary education. The deputation included A.J. Mundella, Henry Hobhouse, Professor Jebb, Lord Playfair, Sir Bernard Samuelson, Sir Philip Magnus and Sidney Webb; and thus represented an august collection of persons closely connected with secondary education. Devonshire reassured them that, "... the Government have every intention - we hope in the next Session of Parliament - of dealing with the question of the better organisation of our secondary schools. I have already asked my right honourable friend, Sir John Gorst to consider in what form these proposals should be admitted to the Government".²

It would appear that Gorst was, in fact, already at work on the preparation of a measure dealing with secondary education, as the Barnetts perceived whilst staying with Gorst and his family at Cambridge during this period:

"We are here spending the days with Gorst. He is busy with clauses but I confess to feeling anxious

¹Salisbury Papers. Draft by A.J. Balfour on Education Question, November 9, 1896: "After the failure of last year's measures, the Cabinet wisely decided to bring forward their education policy, not in one but in several Bills. The relief of voluntary schools forms a natural and convenient fragment of that policy, and to this, as far as possible, the first of our new Bills should be confined".

²The Times, November 26, 1896.

as to whether this Government intend to keep him in such a post. The Government is angry at its own failures - is not likely to trace the failure to its own ignorance. The trouble is the members of the Government are either indifferent to or opposed to education. We shall see. There will probably be another cropper next session".¹

Had, therefore, the contents of Devonshire's letter to Salisbury in September, reached Gorst's ears by this time? They may well have done, but Salisbury obviously did not intend to act upon them. A similar effect to that advocated had, however, been effectively put into operation with Balfour taking over the construction and passage of the new Education Bill. A commitment which Balfour did not enjoy:

"I am oppressed at this moment with many cares - the lightest of them being the total impossibility of devising a generally acceptable Education Bill. I have expended treasures of ingenuity on this most thankless task".²

Balfour's task may not have been lightened by the publication of an article by Gorst on the voluntary schools during the month.³ The article was divided into three main parts, the first comprising a detailed, historical examination of the evolution of the voluntary schools from 1832. Gorst felt that this was necessary because, "It will also show how ignorant of the history of the past those party politicians were who brought against the proposals of the Government in the Bill of 1896 the accusation of

¹Barnett Papers, F/BAR/155. Canon Barnett to Frank Barnett, November 28, 1896.

²Young, K., Arthur James Balfour, p. 179. A.J. Balfour to Lady Elcho, November 28, 1896.

³Gorst, J.E., 'The Voluntary Schools', The Nineteenth Century, 40, November, 1896, p. 699-710.

novelty".¹ He demonstrated how attempts had been made repeatedly to introduce local education authorities, with powers to aid voluntary schools from the rates.² But failure to have the measures enacted had resulted in hampering the efforts of the 1870 Education Bill's proponents to provide effective local administration of education, due to, "... the non-existence in country districts of any efficient organisation for local self-government".³ Naturally enough, Gorst wrote his analysis of the evolutionary process which had occurred in the structure and functioning of the voluntary schools and attempts at financial aid to them, with such a bias that his conclusion for the creation of a paramount education authority for local administration appeared to be the only logical solution possible. He defended this view in the rest of the article which dealt with the voluntary versus Board schools problem, the exposition of which was more or less identical with that of his October article. Gorst did, however, give praise to the School Boards for their efforts, and especially in secondary education. With the clarity of hindsight, it can be seen that Gorst was not being completely honest, in his treatment of these schools, when he said that, "... it would be the height of folly to stop these laudable efforts, highly popular among the rate-payers concerned". For he

¹Ibid., p. 699.

²Ibid., p. 701. Gorst used the 1855 Bills of Russell and Pakington as evidence.

³Ibid., p. 704.

then wrote, "But whatever reasons may arise hereafter for placing secondary education in other hands, economy is not one of them".¹ This sentence escaped comment by reviewers, but was a true indication of Gorst's feelings on the matter.

In his advocacy of rate aid to the voluntary schools, Gorst believed that the plan would have to include details to ensure that the aid would be received by the schools and not the subscribers. He went on to say that acceptance of public money by the managers of voluntary schools would entail on their part acceptance of increased public control: "Managers must submit to such conditions as rate-payers may properly require for securing the efficiency of the secular education in their schools: they may have to surrender some part of (that) independence of management ...".² Gorst's statement, and, therefore, implicit acceptance of this concept, which was one of the principal arguments of the Opposition and nonconformists in the case of public aid for the voluntary schools, may have caused consternation in Tory circles. Was Gorst defecting to the enemy over the voluntary schools? The Review of Reviews thought that his article indicated this, "Whatever breath has been left in the high and dry old Tories after they have read his American manifesto ['Prospects of Education in England'], will be taken away by this".³ And Canon Barnett was prompted to

¹Ibid., p. 709.

²Ibid., p. 710.

³Review of Reviews, 14, November, 1896, p. 429.

ask Gorst, "... to consider why he is a Tory, he is so much with Liberals he forgets his essential difference".¹

There was, undoubtedly, some truth in Barnett's observations, but Gorst was in reality being practical about a policy that would have to be accepted at some time if the voluntary schools were to be given aid in the quantity required to raise them to the level of the Board Schools. His stance was more statesmanlike than that of the majority of the Conservative Party who, in their indifference to education and submission to clerical demands, were unwilling to accept this concept and could therefore only provide piecemeal aid to the voluntary schools; an attitude on their part which aggravated the situation rather than solving the problem. In fact, the Church was beginning to come round to the idea of utilisation of rate aid after the death of the Archbishop of Canterbury in the latter half of 1896. His successor, Dr. Temple, whilst Archbishop-designate, summoned a conference of the Canterbury and York convocations during November to discuss the question of aid to voluntary schools. A resolution was passed by which acceptance of rate aid became the policy of

¹Barnett Papers, F/BAR/156. Canon Barnett to Frank Barnett, December 5, 1896. He continued: "I think his [Gorst] distinction is that he believes - as Costelloe puts it, in the government of an aristocracy which has to justify itself to the people, whereas we believe in the government of the people by the people - at least we each say this is what we believe but probably in practice come near one another".

the Church.¹

Although Gorst's position on education had remained consistent throughout 1896, as he was genuinely interested in reforms for the benefit of education and not party credit, he was unfortunate enough to belong to a party which, although education had now become a national interest, basically was concerned with the curtailment of expenditure and intellectual development.² The events, therefore, of 1896, must have left a sour taste in Gorst's mouth, especially when the beginning of the year had seen his involvement in the planning of a comprehensive measure involving needed educational reforms whilst eleven months later he was removed from planning the next Bill, and reduced to having to make his opinions on education known through magazine articles. Undoubtedly some of the blame for his resultant loss of position must be apportioned to Gorst, as a close friend recorded later: "His temper is uncertain, and when he makes a failure, he comforts himself and reproaches things or persons and speaks inadvisedly".³ And his parliamentary conduct was not flexible enough to enable him to accommodate the wishes of his chiefs in order to achieve, ultimately, his own aims. He was, with the

¹Crumshank, M., Church and State in English Education, p. 66-7. Temple's predecessor, Benson, had firmly resisted the principle of rate aid to Voluntary schools. Presumably on the grounds that there would be loss of independence of management.

²Salisbury Papers: A.J. Balfour to Lord Salisbury, November 22, 1896: "With all you say about the 'educationist', I agree. He is insatiable ...".

³Barnett, H.O., op. cit., p. 182. Canon Barnett to Frank Barnett, 1901.

failure of the 1896 Bill, therefore presented with subterfuge as the only method left to him to achieve these aims. It could, therefore, be argued that Gorst's first complete year as Vice President was a failure, as, indeed, his-
 torians have. Conversely it can be pointed out that Gorst's actions subsequent to the failure of the Bill in June were to result in a complete overhaul of the English educational system in the following years. These actions, therefore, deserve some credit.

In the day-to-day running of the Education and Science and Art Departments, which was mainly the responsibility of the permanent civil servants, Gorst's hand may be detected in the policies pursued. The defence in the annual report for 1896 of the Education Department, of the increasing expenditure in public elementary education, revealed a Gorstian touch:

"The experience of those who are in charge of the schools shows them year by year how the education therein given ought to be improved in order that the nation may gain full benefit for the outlay which is made. It should be remembered, moreover, that large outlay is, if wisely directed, far from being necessarily open to the charge of extravagance. On the contrary, an excellent system of public education is one of the best forms of national investment. In commercial and industrial efficiency, in a higher level of civic duty, and, above all, in the wider diffusion of moral culture and religious feeling, the nation is amply repaid for what it spends".¹

Gorst's concern for the quality of the curriculum in elementary schools would have allowed his acknowledgement, if not positive encouragement, of the principle:

¹Annual Report of Committee of Council on Education, 1896-7, P.P. 1897, XXVI [c. 8544], p. 11.

"... for the introduction of manual training into all classes of schools, as a corrective to an excess of book-work. ... It is felt that the exercise of hand and eye, as well as of memory and the powers of verbal expression, is necessary to true education ... brushwork, clay modelling (with special reference to lessons in history and natural science) and cardboard work, have all been found useful in stimulating the activity and developing the inventive powers of the children".¹

His experiences of the 'object lessons' which he had observed during his role as school inspector in the Waikato region of New Zealand, must have been refreshed by this 'innovation' in English schools, and no doubt led to his approval for such teaching to take place.²

His work on the Poor Law Committee just before he became Vice President would also have provided Gorst with all the experience he needed to encourage the Education Department in its efforts to introduce and establish remedial classes in elementary schools:

During the past year our attention has been called to the fact that in a considerable number of the larger schools for boys and girls there are found groups of children, some nearly ten years of age, who at the time of their admission were almost wholly ignorant and quite without school habits. Among the causes for this deplorable state of things may be named, total neglect or irregularity of school attendance in early childhood, the migratory character of some families and their consequent evasion of the attendance officer; an abnormally slow development of intellectual power, in some cases bordering on imbecility; and delicacy of health in early childhood, due often to bad nutrition ...

"... We have ... instructed your Majesty's Inspectors to point out to the managers the desirability of adopting, according to circumstances, one of the three following plans ...

¹Ibid., p. 15.

²AJHR, 1862, E-4. Gorst, J.E., 'Native Schools', p. 9.

- "(a) The establishment of a separate preparatory mixed class of boys and girls in a classroom of its own:- this class should be, if possible, connected with the girls' department, and should be in the hands of a teacher specially skilled in training older infants ...
- "(b) The infant mistress may be made responsible for the instruction and training of these children in her school. ... These children should, if possible, be formed into a special class of the infant school, and should in no case be drafted into either of the lowest two classes.
- "(c) In a small number of schools the reorganisation of the staff of the boys' and girls' departments, coupled with a re-classification of the children, might enable the managers to devote the entire service of one teacher to such a class".¹

That he and the Department were in earnest about the necessity of this innovation was made clear:

"... we have also instructed your Majesty's Inspectors that unless some one of the above suggested plans ... is adopted, it will be their duty to recommend the lower discipline and organisation grant; and that it may even be necessary, after due warning, to withhold that grant altogether".²

Another humane measure effected during 1896, but affecting a larger percentage of children and teachers, was the revision of the grants supplied by the Science and Art Department for Science classes. In place of the payments for results scheme which had hitherto existed, attendance grants were substituted which depended upon the efficiency of the class as adjudged by the Inspector.³

¹P.P. 1897, XXVI [c. 8544], p. 19.

²Ibid., p. 20.

³Balfour, G., The Educational Systems of Great Britain and Ireland, p. 158.

This abolition of what was generally accepted as a cumbersome and inefficient method of teaching, coupled with the introduction of literary subjects into Organised Science Day Schools curricula in 1895 allowed a considerable reform to occur in the teaching in these schools in subsequent years.

The introduction of women into the Inspectorate, as sub-inspectors of schools, during 1896 - Miss R.A. Munday, in District Number 98 (East and West Lambeth), and Miss S.J. Willis, in District Number 96 (Greenwich)¹ - was regarded as an experiment which, by the end of the year, had "worked satisfactorily",² thereby paving the way for female Inspectors; a necessary reform which had been required for some time.

It can be seen from these policies and measures that Gorst's reign as Vice President to the end of 1896 had not been such a failure as the effects of the Education Bill's failure would lead one to expect. In the controversy over the voluntary schools, Gorst assuredly magnified the merits and demerits of the various situations involving both them and the Board schools in order to maximise the effect of the points he was making. But in spite of this he does seem to have been motivated by a genuine desire to produce a unified and efficient system of national education, not for the benefit of his party but for the nation and the children of the nation. In his proposals to achieve this he was un-

¹P.P., 1897, XXVI [c. 8544], p. 949.

²Ibid., p. 23.

doubtedly ahead of both his party and the majority of the Opposition, and his experiences during the year provided him with resolution to carry them into effect, which he started to do in 1897.

Balfour wrote to his uncle on January 6, from Chatsworth, pointing out that difficulties were still occurring in the planning of the Education Bill and that, consequently, he did not think it would be ready for January 13.¹ Some of the troubles lay in the "... great difficulty at getting at the concrete facts about the rating of the schools" - vital information required for the computation of the relief that would be provided by exempting the voluntary schools from the rates. The 'great difficulty' arose because it appeared that neither the Local Government Board nor the Education Department possessed the information and, consequently, it had, "... to be collected piecemeal as best we can from Inspectors and Local Authorities".² Compounding his troubles was the fact that, "Chamberlain and Ridley³ are both against giving relief from rates by direct enactment. They would like to see what can (?possibly) be done by a further Treasury grant. I see objections of all kinds political and financial to this

¹Salisbury Papers, A.J. Balfour to Lord Salisbury, January 6, 1897.

²Ibid.

³Sir Matthew White Ridley, Home Secretary, 1895-1900.

suggestion".¹ Balfour managed to struggle on and appears to have completed a draft of the Bill by January 21, as Devonshire indicated:

"I have sent the Draft Bill to Gorst and told Kekewich that he can give him any information he wishes for about it.

"I am told that he is now in a very good humour, but that remains to be seen ...".²

In spite of the production of the draft Bill, the government by their next action indicated that they were not unanimous in their approval of its proposals. After their experiences of the previous session, they were also going to be more cautious in their handling of the present one, to ensure that a repetition of those events did not occur. A resolution embodying the principles of the Bill was, therefore, presented, and discussed in Committee of the whole House, by Balfour on Monday, February 1.³ And it was only after two lengthy debates on this resolution that the Government were prepared to introduce the actual

¹Salisbury Papers, A.J. Balfour to Lord Salisbury, January 6, 1897.

²B.M. Add. MS. 49769, f. 148. Duke of Devonshire to A.J. Balfour, January 21, 1897.

³"There are occasions ... when it is considered to be desirable to anticipate second reading debate at the very outset. Some Bills are so important that the Government is reluctant to cast them into final shape or issue them to the public until their main principles have been discussed". Taylor, E., The House of Commons at Work, p. 146.

Bill, on February 4.¹ Gorst's only participation in the Bill was the nominal use of his name as one of the four persons who brought it in (the other three being the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Solicitor-General, and Balfour).² In view of this it is not really surprising that Gorst, whilst attending the debates, remained silent on the Front Bench. This behaviour proved too much for one Opposition member, Sir Frank Lockwood, who issued a challenge to Gorst during the debate on the night of February 15:

"... in one sense this had been a most extraordinary Debate. The subject had now been discussed for two nights on the Second Reading of the Bill, and it had been discussed at length upon the Resolution preliminary to the introduction of the Measure. And yet during all that time the House had not heard one word from the right hon. Gentleman, the head of the Department responsible for Education. [Cheers.] ... That state of things was without precedent. [Cheers.] ... He hoped that before the Debate closed, the right hon. Gentlemen on the Treasury Bench were in agreement with the heads of the Education Department".³

¹The Bill embodied the proposals of the resolution, viz.:-

- (a) An aid grant to voluntary Schools, from Parliamentary funds, was to be established, "not exceeding in the aggregate 5s. per scholar for the whole number of scholars in these schools". The total sum involved was in the region of £616,000 per annum.
- (b) The exemption of voluntary schools from the rates.
- (c) The repeal of the 17/6d. limit on Parliamentary grants to voluntary schools which had been established by the Education Act of 1876.

The Bill thus incorporated as its whole entity some of the proposals of the 1896 Education Bill.

²4 Hansard, 45, c. 1415 (February 4, 1897) [B111 119].

³Ibid., 46, c. 474-5 (February 15, 1897).

Lockwood's challenge proved effective, as his biographer recorded:

"... to the intense joy of the committee, in compelling Sir John Gorst, by far the most finished, but at times the shyest and slyest of all parliamentary speakers, to take part in the discussion of the measure".¹

Gorst rose, when Lockwood had finished his speech, to a background of, "ironical Opposition cheers and counter Ministerial cheers", as a result of the challenge, "which I feel it would be scarcely respectful to the House if I were not to take up".² His speech was short and basically serious in its treatment of the Bill's proposals. Gorst also managed to introduce a few remarks directed against his Front Bench colleagues, and especially Balfour, which somewhat enlivened the tone of his speech, as Lucy recorded:

"JOHN O'GORST to follow. Long time since House seen such delightful bit of high comedy. Everything perfect - the passive figure, the almost wooden expression on the face as the cheers and laughter rose and fell; the subtle modulation of the voice investing innocent syllables with barbed point. Nothing lacking, not even PRINCE ARTHUR [Balfour], evidently anxious but keenly appreciative, seated close by his docile colleague ... The crowning success is that, when closely examined, there is really nothing in the speech to which exception could be taken. One can imagine how the MARKISS [Salisbury], studying the newspaper report, would be puzzled to understand the occasion of the 'laughter', 'loud laughter', 'renewed laughter', recorded at every other sentence. On any other stage, in any other circumstances, before any other audience, the speech would have been an ordinary official

¹Birrell, A., Life of Sir Frank Lockwood, p. 190.

²4 Hansard, 46, c. 482 (February 15, 1897).

effort. But circumstances were compact: the actor, the moment, the stage, the audience".¹

Gorst took as his position that of the official representative of the Committee of Council on Education in the House, thereby underlining the differences between his speech and those of the other Front Bench speakers and the irony of his exclusion from the drafting of the Bill. The first third of his speech was an explanation of the reasons for acceptance of the Bill's proposals by the Committee of Council: "... it was (therefore) their business to do which lies in their power and to accept with gratitude any legislation which Parliament may pass to make those voluntary schools efficient. [Cheers.] "² Pointing to the existent differential between these schools and Board ones, Gorst stated, "First of all, they [voluntary schools] lack money, and then they lack organisation, and this Bill supplies both".³ These were for him ample reasons, therefore, for acceptance of the Bill, and, if it was passed, the Committee of Council would ensure that the money would really reach the schools and not the pockets of subscribers - a point which Opposition spokesman had repeatedly made. He concluded this part; "... I think that the present Bill will secure the object of putting larger sums of money into the hands of the managers of necessitous Board schools - [ironical cheers] - and if that money is properly spent the schools will become more efficient. [Opposition laughter]".⁴

¹Lucy, H.W., 'Essence of Parliament', Punch, CXII, February 27, 1897, p. 107.

² , ³4 Hansard, 46, c. 483 (February 15, 1897).

⁴Ibid., c. 484.

It can be seen that Gorst hoped that the Bill would fulfil the conditions of state aid to all necessitous schools, which he had campaigned for, by relieving the pressure on the voluntary school subscribers - and thereby allowing for an increase also to be made in the rate for the School Boards which were in a necessitous condition in various localities.

Gorst saw the prime role of the proposed voluntary school associations as helping in the distribution of the grant with the Education Department, and also ensuring that it reached the necessitous schools. But he also foresaw some other possible, useful side effects:

"... the governing body of these associations would be a body which would represent the managers of the individual schools. It would prevent that isolation of managers which is often legitimately complained of now ... the managers of various parishes would meet together ... and I presume that in a short time a considerable amount of experience and knowledge would be gained by the associated body, which would be of enormous value to the managers of individual schools, and would teach them better methods and encourage them in a very much improved management".¹

He felt that contact between the Education Department and the associations in the distribution of the grant would ensure that the relevant teachers' salaries would be increased:

"There are many schoolmasters and mistresses who are now receiving salaries far below those they ought to receive. ['Hear, hear!'] They are exercising one of the most important functions to society; upon their efforts depend the welfare of the rising generation, and how can poorly-fed and poorly-clad men and women fulfil duties of that kind in a manner in which they ought to discharge them? ['Hear, hear!'] I believe many hon. Members

¹Ibid., c. 485.

little know the enormous strain which is put upon the teacher".¹

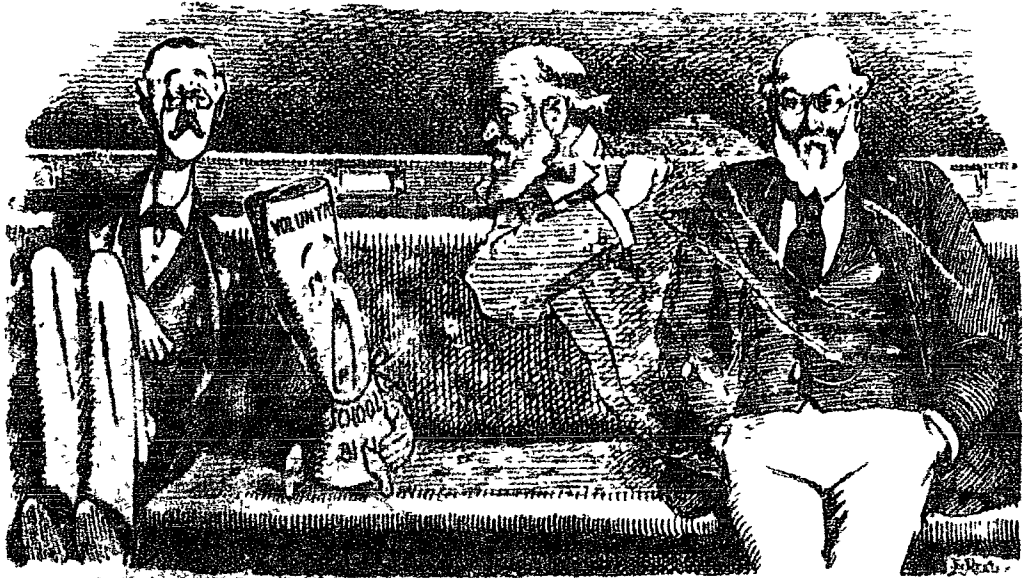
After also indicating that the grant could also be used to provide better apparatus in the schools, Gorst reached the end of his speech with concluding remarks that ably demonstrated the rift existent between him and the rest of the Government, as well as showing his general feelings on the matter:

"I am quite certain that the Government - I do not know that I have a right to speak for my right hon. Friend the First Lord of the Treasury, who is not here at present - [Opposition ironical laughter] - but I can speak as far as the Committee of Council is concerned - any Amendment which really goes to secure that this State aid grant shall be used really for the purpose of promoting and improving the education of the country will be welcomed by the Government. [Opposition cheers.] ... I hope I have been short and practical - ['Hear, hear!'] - and I hope I have not been betrayed into taking any part in the party Debate, in which I would have joined with very great reluctance ... Both he [Acland] and I have had a great deal too much to do practically with this question to enjoy seeing it made the shuttlecock of Parties on the floor of this House - ['Hear, hear!'] - and both he and I know that 30 years hence, when the consistency or inconsistency of the Gentlemen who ornament the two front Benches will be forgotten, those children whom our legislation will affect will be the men and women upon whom will depend the destinies of the Empire [Cheers.]".²

This was Gorst's only speech during the entire course of the debates on the Bill. He did speak briefly during the Committee stage - following the second reading - to clarify the interpretation that would be put upon a word in one of the clauses, for which he earned the approbation of

¹Ibid., c. 488.

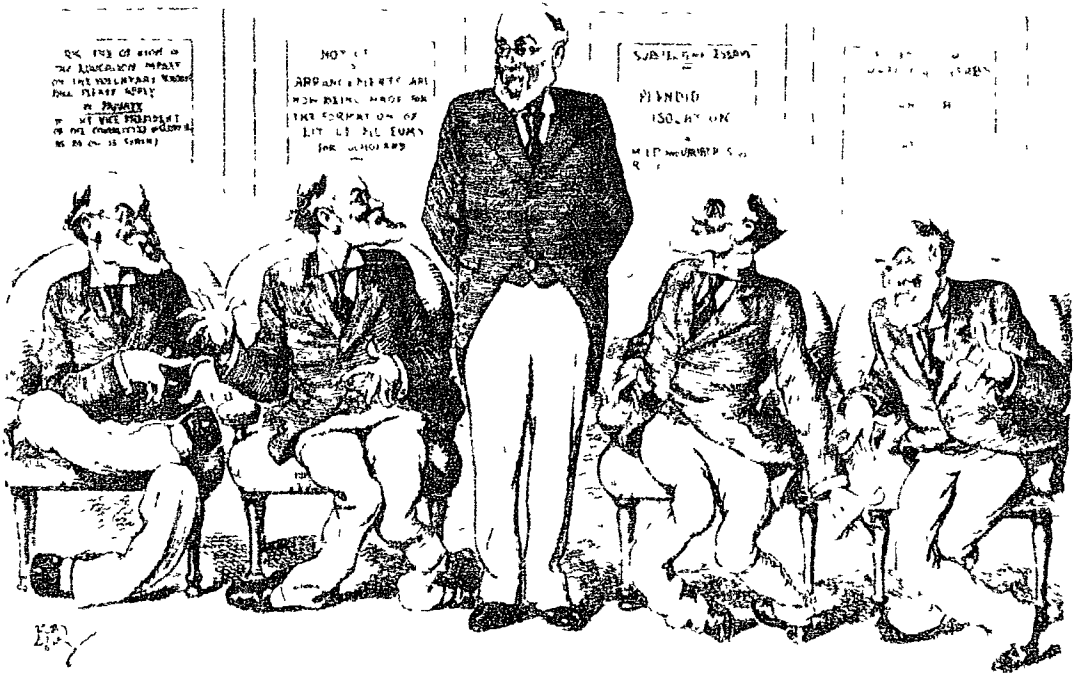
²Ibid., c. 488-9.



A GHO(R)STLY VISITANT!

(During the Discussion on the Voluntary Schools Bill.)

Did Our Artist's eyes deceive him, or did Sir John's astral body really emerge in the twilight and give form to his hidden feelings?



IGNI ET PRÆTEREA NIHIL!

I don't know the name of the man who said that. But Lord John's astral body was not here at all. He can speak as far as the COMMITTEE of Council is concerned. The Committee of Council are a body of very practical men. Sir J. Ansell in Education's Debate.

Punch. CXII. March 13, 1897. p. 132.

Punch. CXII. February 27, 1897. p. 107.

John Morley.¹ His speech during the second reading, however, did not placate the future leader of the Liberals, Campbell-Bannerman:

"They could not speak of the Vice President because they did not know where to find him, either in a physical or in a moral sense. [Laughter.] He was now here and now there - now in one part of the House and now in another; now writing in one magazine or in another, but never, until last night, taking any part in the explanation of this Bill to the House. ['Hear, hear!'] He had become, in fact, a sort of Parliamentary will-o'-the-wisp. [Laughter.] And he did not know that any great satisfaction would be derived by Her Majesty's Government from the defence he made of the Bill yesterday when he spoke. ['Hear, hear!'] He said nothing of the Amendment now before the House. He said nothing of the main points of attack which had been directed against the Bill, but he wove a hypothetical web which, with his great powers of ingenuity, he embroidered with all sorts of gorgeous colours, showing what the educational associations might become if he had a hand in their formation and direction".²

It would be difficult not to concur with the basic tenor of Campbell-Bannerman's objections if Gorst's role in the Bill had been of his own choice. Balfour's actions had dictated otherwise, as has been seen. Gorst, moreover, was correct in his description of the possible functions of the associations - to the extent that he was in charge of the department which would administer the Bill's provisions when it was enacted. And Balfour was determined that this Bill should become an Act for, after the Bill received a majority of 205 on the second reading, he applied the use

¹ 4 Hansard, 47, c. 861 (March 17, 1897): "... when the right hon. Gentleman [Gorst] spoke, the Committee felt itself in the hands of a Minister who was thoroughly familiar with the details of the subject. [Opposition cheers.] Between the language of the Vice President of the Council and the language of the First Lord of the Treasury there was all the difference between the language of an expert and that of an amateur. [Opposition cheers and Ministerial cries of 'Oh!']".

² 4 Hansard, 46, c. 585 (February 16, 1897).

of closure vigorously during the committee stage. The latter was concluded by March 18, and the Bill passed the third reading on March 25, "amidst loud Ministerial cheers".¹

Beatrice Webb recorded, during the early stages of the Bill's progress, that Gorst did not feel upset over his treatment by the Government:

"Last night, being the second night of the education debate, Gorst entertained a lively party of young people at dinner, retiring afterwards to his private room where we laughed and smoked, whilst division bells were ringing and count-outs were threatening. As we sat on the sofa, Gorst became confidential in a curious spasmodic way. 'The newspapers say this is a humiliation for me, the Education Bill. But it's the Duke who is humiliated. Salisbury told me from the first that I was to be under-secretary and that the Duke would be responsible for the educational policy in the Cabinet. The Duke is quite as much against this Bill as I am. He told the Cabinet so: and when they insisted he shrugged his shoulders!'.²

Gorst's feelings about Balfour and the government also emerged:

"I ventured to say that Balfour was discredited - at which Gorst looked pleased. 'He doesn't know anything', he remarked contemptuously, 'we are on the eve of a crisis: there will be a revolt presently of the urban Tories. They can't go on watching their seats being taken from under them.'³ As for social reform: all chance of that is gone. When first this Government came into office,

¹Ibid., 47, c. 1420 (March 25, 1897). The Queen was also pleased: "The Education Bill having passed was a great thing ...". Queen Victoria's Journal, April 1, 1897. Quoted in Buckle, G.E., op. cit., 111.3, p. 147. Some of the clauses of the 1896 Bill, basically had become law, thereby, and the plight of the voluntary schools was relieved, temporarily at least.

²Webb, B., Our Partnership, p. 137, February 3, 1897.

³The Liberals had achieved spectacular success in recent bye-elections. Review of Reviews, 15. March, 1897, p. 208.

they honestly intended to do something. I know, as a matter of fact, that Salisbury said to Chaplin soon after the Government was formed, 'Chaplin, can't you do something for the unemployed?'. At this my gravity gave way,¹ and Gorst's eyes twinkled merrily ...".²

In spite of this version of the events, the fact remained that Gorst had been passed over on this measure, and his speech during the second reading cannot have helped to heal the breach between himself and the rest of the Government. This was revealed in a letter from him to Balfour, which indicated that he was in danger of being excluded from the planning of the next Bill:

"I have asked for and got a copy of the latest draft of the Board School Bill. I had not seen it before. I am told it was not circulated because Ritchie [President of the Board of Trade] was aghast at its complicated look and was considering how it could be simplified".³

This undoubtedly low point in Gorst's tenure as Vice President was not eased either by a controversy with an important public figure, the Archbishop of Canterbury, over the contents of a speech which he [Gorst] had made at Girton on March 20. In the speech, which Gorst had mainly spent dealing with his theme of agricultural competition

¹Henry Chaplin - the very antithesis of a social reformer: "... a cross between squire Western and John Bull, who hunted six days a week and kept four packs of hounds. He was a man with whom the horse came first, so much so that when he became engaged to a daughter of the Duke of Sutherland, his first thought was how to provide her with a mount ...". Wilson, J., A Life of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, p. 148. Little wonder that the gravity of Gorst's talk was dispelled.

²Webb, B., op. cit.

³B.M. Add. MS. 49791, f. 30. J.E. Gorst to A.J. Balfour, March 2, 1897.

with Europe and the need for improved educational facilities to rectify the problem, he made some remarks about the proposed associations of voluntary schools, as outlined in the Education Bill. Gorst, "... hoped they would be comprehensive. He hoped they would not be narrowed down to a single sect, because the work of improving secular education in village schools was not a thing which touched any question of religious difference".¹ As a consequence of his comments in a speech on March 30 about this statement, the Archbishop received a prickly letter the following day from Gorst:

"I observe that your Grace is reported to have said in your speech last night that I was inclined to 'try as much as I could to undenominationalize the voluntary schools'.

"As such an attempt would be entirely contrary to my opinions and principles, I shall be glad to know on what authority your Grace has made this statement".²

To which the Archbishop replied, on the same day:

"I referred to the speech you made at Girton a short time ago in which you expressed a hope that the Associations to be formed under the new Bill when it became an Act would be comprehensive and not confined to any particular sect ... Now these Associations are likely in time to have considerable influence on the schools they represent. If they are undenominational that influence will be towards undenominationalism. They will have a tendency more or less to undenominationalise the schools.

"... am I to understand that you have no desire at all that the denominational character of the

¹The Times, March 22, 1897.

²P.R.O., Ed. 24/2099/5. J.E. Gorst to Archbishop of Canterbury, March 31, 1897.

Voluntary Schools should be in the slightest degree discountenanced".¹

Gorst explained in his letter of the following day:

"... I have all my life consistently supported the principle that there should be no restrictions upon religious teaching in a Voluntary school, and no compulsion upon parents who object to send their children to receive it.

"But there does seem to me to be a real distinction between the Schools and the Associations. I should rejoice to see unions of all Voluntary Schools, such as exist in some places already, formed for the distribution of the Special Aid grant and for the promotion of their common interest in the preservation of the Voluntary School system. I can understand that in the minds of some, danger from such a union to the distinctive religious character of the individual schools may be apprehended: but rightly or wrongly I do not share such apprehension and therefore made the remarks at Gorton".²

In his next paragraph, he revealed, however, the fragile nature of his position in the Government:

"I should be grateful if your Grace could ... say a few words in the House of Lords which would prevent the misapprehension which your speech ... may create in the minds of some".³

The Archbishop yielded to Gorst's request and would, "... take an opportunity of doing you justice tomorrow", although he did not agree with his views about the associations and the possibility of mixing the denominations, "... for there will inevitably creep in a desire, very much to be deprecated, to do good to their own schools but also to damage the other schools". He did concur that, "The one

¹ Ibid., Archbishop of Canterbury to J.E. Gorst, March 31, 1897.

² Ibid., J.E. Gorst to Archbishop of Canterbury, April 1, 1897.

³ Ibid., Gorst was presumably thinking of Salisbury and Devonshire.

thing to be said for the amalgamation is the greater ease of administration". But, "To sacrifice solid advantage to ease of administration is the great temptation of all central Departments", and, he concluded, "I beg of you not to yield to it".¹

Gorst had thus safeguarded his position and had, therefore, turned his attention to other matters. These were to result in positive measures for educational reform and, consequently, an improvement of his position in the future, which now began to look more hopeful for him.

¹Ibid., Archbishop of Canterbury to J.E. Gorst, April 1, 1897.

CHAPTER EIGHT

One of the observations made by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman during his criticism of Gorst's speech on the Voluntary Schools Bill was that Gorst had become something of a Parliamentary will-of-the-wisp. A contributory factor in the explanation of this behaviour was that Gorst had, since the end of October 1896, been chairing meetings of a small committee in the Science and Art Department in South Kensington.¹

The committee had arisen from a minute produced by the Duke of Devonshire, no doubt at Gorst's request, on October 28, 1896. Initially the committee's function was that it, "... should inquire into the mode in which the grants to Science and Art Schools (sub-head D of the Science and Art vote) are distributed, and to report whether any alteration should be made therein".² A month later, however, the terms of reference were extended, "... to that part of the sub-head G of the Science and Art vote which deals with the payment for Drawing and Manual Instruction in Elementary Schools".³

The members of the committee had obviously been selected by Gorst with great care and with a view to producing the results he desired. Three of them had been members of the Bryce Commission, and two of these had

¹ See above, p. 228

² & ³ Report of the Committee appointed to inquire into the Distribution of Science and Art Grants, P.P. 1897, XXXIII [c. 8417], p. 421-430.

sympathetic leanings towards Gorst's philosophy of educational reorganisation, i.e. Sir H. Roscoe, F.R.S.¹ and Professor R.C. Jebb, M.P.². The third, Mrs. Henry Sidgwick, was notable for being, amongst other things, the elder sister of A.J. Balfour. The other members of the committee were, Lord Balfour of Burleigh (Secretary for Scotland and a Cabinet member), Mr. G.L. Ryder (representing the Treasury), Mr. W. Armstrong (Director of the National Gallery, Dublin) and Major-General Sir John F.D. Donnelly (Permanent Secretary of the Science and Art Department). Another official of the Science and Art Department, Captain W. de W. Abney, acted as secretary of the committee.³

The committee pursued their investigations, during the course of 22 meetings, with Victorian diligence. Not only did they examine the Report of the Bryce Commission and receive deputations from School Board associations, the local examination delegacies of Oxford and Cambridge, associations of directors of technical institutes, head

¹Roscoe had tried in 1890 to introduce a Bill, "intended to clear up any doubt as to the legality of the provision of a technical and manual instruction in public elementary schools", but had been unsuccessful in his attempt. It was he who had cross-examined Kekewich during the sittings of the Bryce Commission as to the type of education being provided in elementary schools, which, in turn, had led to Hobhouse raising the question of the possibility of a court of law restraining the School Boards in their illegal activities. Royal Commission on Secondary Education, P.P. 1895, XLIII c. 7862, Vol. III. Minutes of Evidence, p. 494-497.

²Jebb was the other Member for Cambridge University, and had supported Gorst during the debates on the 1896 Bill.

³P.P., 1897, XXXIII, p. 421.

masters, art masters, head masters of higher grade and organised science schools, as well as the Scottish association for the promotion of technical and secondary education, but they also sifted through the evidence provided by a host of other institutions involved in secondary education.¹ A direct consequence of their efforts was the production of a report in which six major recommendations were made. Of these the first was to have the most drastic and immediate effect, although several of the remaining ones were to have beneficial, long-term effects upon teaching in schools. The recommendations were incorporated into a revised version of the Directory of the Science and Art Department and thus became part of that Department's Code for 1897.

Their first recommendation dealt with the management of schools and classes, and was based upon one paragraph in the Bryce Report which dealt with evening and continuation schools, and technical schools and institutes.² The Bryce Report acknowledged the work of these schools in the realm of secondary education, and went on to deal with the organisation needed:

"But, whatever particular type they belong to, whether they are 'organised science schools', or are connected with elementary schools, or belong to what are called mechanics' institutes, or are maintained by town councils, or are technical schools pure and simple, they seem properly to

¹Ibid.

²Royal Commission on Secondary Education, P.P. 1895, XLIII [c. 7862], Vol.1.Report, p. 290-1, para. 93.

fall within the scope of the action of the Local Authority for Secondary Education, which can best correlate them with the other agencies under its control and help them by such pecuniary resources as it may possess. We therefore recommend that they, and in speaking of them we include evening classes and technical classes as well as schools, be declared to be within the jurisdiction of that authority".¹

The concept embodied in this paragraph so coincided with that of Gorst's for both elementary and secondary education, that little modification was required to convert it into a regulation which, although only concerned with secondary education, gave to the county and county borough councils that which had been denied them by the failure of the 1896 Bill - the chance to become the local education authority for their area:

"In counties and county boroughs in England possessing an organisation for the promotion of secondary education, the Authority so constituted may notify its willingness to be responsible for the Science and Art Instruction within its area. In such case, while the rights of the Managers of existing schools and classes will be preserved, no managers of a new school or class will, except under special circumstances, be recognised unless they are responsible to such Authority. In Wales the Intermediate Education Authority is for this purpose regarded as the Authority for the promotion of Secondary Education".²

The committee felt that this clause (VII in the Code) in establishing recognition of local authorities, "... as those who should be responsible for secondary instruction will, in our opinion, simplify the work of central administration, secure greater efficiency in the schools and be a protection against their undue competition and multi-

¹ Ibid.

² Report of the Committee appointed to inquire into the Distribution of Science and Art Grants, P.P. 1897, XXXIII [c. 8417], p. 421.

plication".¹ The committee with their second recommendation - aimed at the promotion of literary subjects within the curriculum of the schools covered by clause VII - tried to ensure that the secondary education to come under the jurisdiction of the counties and county boroughs was a complete rather than a part entity. As Morant's biographer has pointed out the clause, "... did not make any substantial innovation on existing practice" but it did ensure official recognition of the councils as the local authorities for secondary education.² These two recommendations also ensured a braking action on the efforts of the School Boards. For although the rights of the School Boards had, theoretically, been safeguarded in clause VII, new schools or classes established by these bodies would come under the surveyance of the committee of the county and county borough councils. Thus not only was Gorst on the way to achieving his objective of a rationalisation of local educational administration, but he was, at the same time, going to curb the efforts of those who were in opposition to him.

The other recommendations of the committee, also embodied in the 1897 code, dealt with such matters as, examinations for honours in science, the abolition of restrictions as to the means of students, and drawing and manual instruction in elementary schools. These were more

¹ Ibid.

² Allen, B.M., Sir Robert Morant, p. 115.

administrative measures than implementations of policy in comparison with the other two recommendations. The committee reported early in 1897, and shortly afterwards the new Code for 1897 was published. There was a time lag between this and the repercussions which developed from it, and during this period Gorst was allowed to introduce and pilot a new Education Bill through the Commons.

Although Balfour had successfully steered the Voluntary Schools Bill through the House by the judicious application of closure, in February, 1897, the Government were obviously still uncertain as to the reception which awaited further educational measures of theirs. Something of their hesitancy was reflected in an article by T.E. Kebbel, written during the passage of the Voluntary Schools Bill:

"Mr. Balfour has to choose between two alternatives which are both extremes. He may either let legislation take its chance, thinking it enough that the people know the reason why: or he may secure the efficiency of parliamentary government by curtailing some of that liberty which members seem determined to abuse. He may either abdicate his functions or uphold them by main force. The great party which he leads must decide between these alternatives, and let him know which they prefer, not only for the Education Bill, but for all Bills - not only for this session, but for all sessions".¹

Consequently, like Balfour previously, Gorst introduced the proposed measure to the House in the form of a resolution on April 5:

"That it is expedient to authorise the payment out of moneys to be provided by Parliament of an addition to the grant payable to School Boards

¹Kebbel, T.E., 'The Political Prospect', Blackwood's Magazine, 161, March 1897, p. 454.

under Section 97 of the Elementary Education Act 1870, by increasing the sum of 7s.6d. therein mentioned by 4d. for every complete penny by which the rate therein mentioned exceeds 3d., provided that the said sum as so increased shall not exceed 16s.6d."¹

In his brief introduction to this small measure, Gorst explained the reasons necessitating its introduction and, secondly, how the Bill would provide a solution to them. He pointed out that the financial provisions of the 1870 Act had rested upon the principle of division of the costs involved between the State and the localities involved. The sum so established had been 7s.6d., i.e. that which could be raised from a 3d. rate in the pound. This sum, however, had proved to be a miscalculation for, with the passing of the years, the sums involved in providing teachers' salaries, the maintenance of school buildings, evening schools and administrative costs - "... in some places ... extravagant clerks at an extravagant rate for the small number of children they have to educate" - plus the recent additional cost of educating blind and deaf children, had increased greatly.² Thus, the costs of School Boards had risen and the rate which had to be levied was, on average, now in the region of 9d. in the pound. Unfortunately, the sums and rates involved fluctuated from School Board to School Board, and in providing extra aid to these schools the Government could not fix on a uniform rate for the whole country.

¹4 Hansard, 48, c. 539-40 (April 5, 1897).

²Ibid., c. 541-3.

"Therefore the Government concluded that they must measure the necessities of a School Board district by the amount of rate which it is necessary to levy, and that they must give a higher amount of assistance to places where the rates are high, and less assistance to those where the rates are low".¹

This proposal, Gorst went on to say, was the essence of the Bill. It would provide a sliding scale of adjustment to the sum of 7s.6d. mentioned in the 1870 Act, which would now run from 7s.10d. to 16s.6d., in proportion to the rate of the School Board - this latter was a scale which was to run from 3d. to 2s.6d. in the pound.

"The higher the rate the higher the figure ... If any district has a 2s.6d. rate, the Act will be read as if 16s.6d. were substituted for 7s.6d., which will bring in a very large number of schools having a very high rate, and will give them a very large amount of relief".²

According to his calculations, Gorst postulated that out of some 769 School Board districts in England and Wales, 555 would get relief under the sliding scale of the Bill, and that the total sum which would be distributed would be £110,602. This, he thought, was, "very ample provision for those districts which find any difficulty in performing their duty under the act of 1870 and the education law of the country".³

Acland, in his reply to Gorst's motion, indicated that whilst any proposal to aid School Boards would be welcomed by the Opposition, he felt that the sum involved was

¹Ibid., c. 544.

²Ibid., c. 545.

³Ibid., c. 546.

"exceedingly inadequate". He compared the average sum of 1s. per child that would be given to School Boards under this provision with the 5s. per child which had only just been given to voluntary schools, and found it wanting. As a result, he felt that:

"... many localities would make great complaints when they found how little they were likely to receive ... under the Bill. He did not feel that the great mass of School Board districts could possibly accept this grant ... as a just and final settlement ...".¹

Balfour, in his defence of the proposed measure, pointed out that the Government was concerned with, "... relieving necessity where necessity exists", and this concept was reflected in their last as well as this Education Bill. He indicated that perhaps the country ought to struggle towards a position whereby, "... the whole cost of elementary education should be borne out of public resources" in the future, but, desirable as that was, the present role of the House was to preserve the system established under the 1870 Act. "And this House ought to come to the relief of the necessity of those parts of the system ... which are really in urgent need of such public assistance".² He felt that the Opposition's continual chorus of fair division of any sums involved, for both Board and voluntary schools alike, ignored the essence of the problem confronting them: "... any attempt to arithmetically compare them [the needs of poor voluntary and poor Board schools] is, and must be, founded on a fundamental mis-

¹ Ibid., c. 550.

² Ibid., c. 553.

apprehension of the problem".¹

The debate which ensued reflected the Opposition's bitterness at the size of the relief being offered, as well as some uncertainty as to what the rate mentioned referred to. This puzzlement was shared by some members of the Government side so that Gorst, in winding up the debate, had to clarify the matter:

"When he spoke of the sliding scale and of the amount of assistance depending upon the amount of the rate, he ought to have explained that by that he meant not the rate levied, not the rate paid, but the rate which was needed for the annual expenses of the Board and which was actually paid by the rating authority to the treasurer of the Board".²

The conclusion of the debate on the resolution had to be postponed for three days, owing to pressure on the time of the House, but was speedily concluded then, and the Bill was introduced.³

The confidence of the Government in the Bill had apparently increased by the time it reached its second reading on April 26, just after the Easter Recess. So much so that no preliminary speech was made from the Treasury Bench at the beginning of the debate, the second reading being, as one member observed, "moved by a mere nod to the Chair".⁴ The Opposition members had little that was new to say about the Bill, and the majority of them merely reiterated statements about the injustice of the Bill with

¹Ibid., c. 554.

²Ibid., c. 574.

³Ibid., c. 832 (April 8, 1897).

⁴Ibid., c. 1085 (April 26, 1897).

regard to the sums that their constituency would or would not receive when it became an Act. Sir John Lubbock, following the main Opposition speakers, neatly summarised their speeches as ones which referred to, "... minute details rather than general principles",¹ and saw this as a reflection of their basic commitment not to oppose the measure. Gorst, in his speech towards the end of the debate, dealt with the questions raised in a cool, well-informed manner. He pointed out that the majority of speeches opposing the measure had been argued from the point of principles involved in the Education Act of 1870, rather than how the Act could best be made to function efficiently at the end of the nineteenth century. If the Government:

"... had attempted, not to amend the Act of 1870 as in operation, but to pass an entirely new section and to carry out the mistaken intentions which the authors of the Act of 1870 contemplated, they would have been embarking on a perfectly impossible course, and would have been quite unable to carry such a scheme".²

He went on:

"All they [Government] have attempted to do ... is to make the operation of the 97th section of the Act of 1870 more just, more equitable, and to give better assistance to the School Boards which are in considerable danger".³

Gorst then neatly demolished the arguments of various Members about the inequality of the grant in various areas, according to their calculations, by producing an official

¹Ibid., c. 1090.

²Ibid., c. 1109-1111.

³Ibid., c. 1111.

estimate of the sums involved. He also effectively castigated the Members who had rambled on about the deprivations their constituencies would suffer:

"I must point out that the purpose of this Bill is not a kind of prizegiving ... It is not intended that the Exchequer should give money to School Boards in proportion to the excellence of their schools and the good which they have done to the community ... This is not a Bill to found prizes and rewards to local authorities for the way in which they have discharged their duties. It is a Bill to help those districts where the number of children to be educated bears an undue proportion to the rateable value".¹

Shortly after this the motion was put, and the Bill passed its second reading.

The Committee stage of the Bill, after the acceptance of an amendment proposed by Gorst on a technical point, was more or less a non-event for, as Acland confessed:

"They had to accept from the Chancellor of the Exchequer the sum he thought fit to name, and they must take it or leave it, although they might disapprove of the general relief which it gave. Therefore, as it was perfectly obvious that £110,000 was better than nothing, they must not vote against the clause ...".²

Lord Salisbury's eldest son, Viscount Cranbourne, proposed that a new clause be added to the Bill, which was designed to curb the expenditure of School Boards receiving a grant under the Bill. He felt that many School Boards had been needlessly extravagant in their expenditure on education, and that if a curb was not introduced, they would continue in the same vein.³ Gorst resisted the amendment, pointing

¹ Ibid., c. 1113.

² 4 Hansard, 49, c. 126 (May 10, 1897).

³ Ibid., c. 134-138.

out that it was not the place of the Education Department but that of the ratepayers to exercise the necessary control over School Board expenditure.¹ In supporting his brother's amendment, Lord Hugh Cecil seems to have shared his father's views about the work being done by the School Boards:

"... the energy of the Board schools as well as their money was frittered away on things which really had no educational value, but which happened to be the fancy of this or that educational expert. The peculiarity of a School Board was that it must be composed of educational experts, who only wished to spend as much money as possible on education, and could not look at the matter from an economical point of view".²

Nonetheless, the Salisbury view did not prevail and the Bill passed on to its third reading. The debate which took place was a minor one, and Gorst's short speech was one which looked to the future rather than at the Bill:

"... money was not the only thing, not even the chief thing, the rural School Boards required. They required organisation a great deal more than money and he ventured to say that there would never be a satisfactory condition of public education in rural districts until there were much larger areas and authorities exercising jurisdiction over much wider areas ... Those who entertained a sort of fetish respect for the Act of 1870 must make up their minds that that system must be amended in certain particulars, that the small rural School Board must put an end to, and that the authority for education must be an authority ... able to organise and co-ordinate education in a proper manner. [Hear, hear!]"³

The Bill was passed a few minutes after this statement of intent.⁴

¹Ibid., c. 138.

²Ibid., c. 145.

³Ibid., c. 949-50 (May 20, 1897).

⁴The Bill became the Elementary Education Act, 1897, 60 Vict. c. 16.

Although evidence of his participation in the drafting of this Bill is meagre, the passing of the Bill was a small triumph for Gorst, for the principle embodied in the Bill had been advanced by him in 1895 and incorporated into the 1896 Bill. His persistence in supporting the proposal after 1896 appeared to have paid dividends, although Balfour had not seen fit to include it in the measure introduced at the beginning of the 1897 Session. Although the Board Schools Bill was a minor measure, the restrictions on the sum provided seemed to have emanated from the Treasury rather than the Education Department.¹

Gorst had conducted the passage of the Bill through the House in exemplary manner, and more or less single handed:

"Delightful to watch his [Gorst's] face ... as he sat on Treasury Bench actually in charge of an Education Bill. Behind him, visible to the mind's eye, flit ghostly figures of the Committee of Privy Council on Education. Now and then he furtively looked up and down the Treasury Bench to see if he was truly left in untrammelled charge. Practically that was so. Occasionally PRINCE ARTHUR stole in with studiously casual air. Possibly secretly anxious to learn if the Vice-President of the Council had broken out in any fresh place. Anxiety concealed behind smiling countenance. Would not presume to approach his own seat as Leader of the House. The Leader pro. tem., the Minister in charge of an important Bill, was his esteemed friend the Vice-President of the Council, With him at the helm all was well with the Ship of State".²

¹B.M. Add. MS. 49791, f. 31. J.E. Gorst to A.J. Balfour, April 1, 1897: "The question between the first and second schemes ... is mainly one of amount: if the Chancellor of the Exchequer will give the larger sum I should prefer the latter, ... I still prefer a continuous rise to penny jumps".

²Lucy, H.W., 'Essence of Parliament', Punch, CXII, May 15, 1897, p. 228.

With, however, the successful passage of these two Education Bills the immediate crisis in education was deemed solved by the Government, which turned its attention to other matters - the gathering storm clouds over South Africa being one of them.¹ For Gorst this must have been something of a relief, as he now found himself left more in charge of educational matters in the House.

Shortly after the above Bill had passed through the House, Liberal Member J.H. Yoxall questioned Gorst about the interpretation of Clause VII of the new Science and Art Directory with regard to the powers that could be assumed under its provisions by county and county borough councils. Gorst realised that Yoxall was trying to draw him on the possible effects the Clause would have on curtailing the activities of School Boards, and thus replied evasively: "The language of section 7 was purposely left general by the Committee, and I do not think the interpretation put upon it by the Question would apply in all cases".² A.J. Mundella tried the same tactics ten days later, in a more subtle way, asking Gorst:

"... if he would explain ... what is meant ... by the possession in counties and county boroughs of an organisation for the promotion of secondary education, whether technical instruction committees or School Boards (having organised Science Schools or Science and Art Classes) are to be understood as amongst such organisations, and as constituting an authority responsible for Science and Art instruction within its area; and what will be the

¹"It must not be forgotten ... that with the disappearance of the Education question and the Agricultural relief question, the two most contentious subjects which the Government had before them when they entered office ... were proportionately diminished". Kebbel, T.E., 'A Healthy Change', Blackwood's Magazine, 162, August, 1897, p. 295.

²4 Hansard, 49, c. 502 (May 14, 1897).

organisation in districts where both such authorities are or may be in operation?".¹

Although remaining elusive in his reply, Gorst did indicate some of the lines he was thinking along:

"The term 'organisation for the promotion of secondary education' appears to allude to bodies established by law in Welsh counties and to voluntary combinations of public bodies to prevent overlapping which exist in some, and are desirable in all, English counties. Technical instruction committees and School Boards would come within the category if they were generally accepted as the medium for the dispensation of Science and Art grants. In districts where no voluntary combination is made, and where rival authorities are in operation, the proposals of the Departmental Committee for preventing overlapping cannot be carried into effect without legislation".²

Henry Hobhouse repeated the questioning about Clause VII in July, asking Gorst if:

"... the term 'authority' is intended to include any statutory body at present existing in England or only such joint committees or combinations of the various bodies interested in technical and secondary education as may be formed by voluntary action; and, if in recognising such authorities the Department will take care to reserve the rights of any statutory authorities for secondary education that may be hereafter created?".³

Gorst, again, refused to be drawn, claiming that the committee did not intend the use of the word 'authority' in the clause:

"... to confer coercive powers upon any statutory body, but only to encourage the various public bodies dealing with secondary and technical education to combine for the purpose of preventing overlapping. Care will be taken to prevent the

¹ Ibid., c. 1133 (May 24, 1897).

² Ibid.

³ 4 Hansard, 51, c. 10 (July 13, 1897).

growth of interests which might interfere with the action of statutory authorities hereafter created".¹

Thus, by his skilful use of nebulous language, Gorst managed to avoid the pitfalls set for him. At the same time, by not committing himself about the bodies to become the new authorities he kept the choice open, in the case of rival bodies making applications, thereby securing a more than reasonable chance of attaining his objectives. With the advantage of hindsight it can also be seen that in the last sentences of his answers to Mundella and Hobhouse, Gorst had indicated the lengths he was prepared to go in order to realise these objectives.² Fortunately for him his answers seemed to have either satisfied or deterred his critics for the time being, and his Parliamentary and official life could flow smoothly on for the time being.

One member of the House recorded at the end of the 1897 session, "boredom was writ large over the whole place", an observation in which there was more than a grain of truth.³ The government had proceeded cautiously in their domestic legislation after the experiences of 1896, and only

¹Ibid., c. 11.

²In his speech opening the debate on supply for education, Gorst had indicated his desire for a rapid settlement of the problem of overlapping authorities: "The moral of ... [the] state of things is that every year which passes over our heads without a proper reorganisation of our system of higher education above the elementary, not only makes the problem more complicated and more difficult of solution, but raises up a crop of opposition to any kind of reform that may be proposed, which may make either legislation of administrative reform absolutely impossible". 4 Hansard, 50, c. 297 (June 17, 1897).

³Griffith-Boscawen, A.S.T., op. cit., p. 131.

introduced small measures as a consequence. Added to this was the preoccupation of Cabinet members with the problem of Germany, plus the growing agitation in South Africa; matters which took place out of the Chamber and thus did not lead to lively scenes within it. But, undoubtedly, one of the main reasons for the lack of activity which had produced the boredom was the lack of any positive leadership in the Opposition. Lord Roseberry had resigned the leadership at the end of 1895, mainly as a result of Harcourt's obstructionist tactics in and out of the Cabinet, and Harcourt had assumed the mantle, but without the party's official sanction, in the Commons.¹ The Liberal party's disillusionment with Harcourt increased as a result of his activities during the meetings of the House's Committee on the Jameson Raid, in the first half of 1897. It was to be some time before the party was united behind their next leader, Campbell-Bannerman, when he took over the leadership in 1899.²

If the 1897 session was a dull one, the year itself was one of celebration to mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. But, as Halevy remarked, "No longer, as in 1887, was it simply an act of almost religious homage paid to the person of the aged Queen, it was an act of homage to the Empire". In the celebrations there was, "a gesture of defiance flung by England to the nations of the world. Possibly she was

¹ & ² Wilson, J., A Life of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, p. 259-293.

isolated, her isolation ... splendid. The world might hate Britain. Britain by herself was a world".¹ Something of the growing feeling of uncertainty about England's future, even in the midst of all the splendid celebrations, was captured in Kipling's Jubilee poem, reflecting on the mortality of empires and even Elgar's newly composed Imperial March - "the popular music for the popular mood, broad, simple and richly garnished" - was subdued and reflective in many passages.² In his participation of one of the events planned as a celebration of the Jubilee i.e. the Naval Review at Spithead, Gorst would have had cause for reflection when, on board H.M.S. "Teutonic", he found himself seated next to Lady Randolph Churchill for dinner. Churchill's partisan wife had encouraged her husband in his snubbing of Gorst after 1886, and it was ironical that they should be placed next to each other. Lady Churchill, however, managed to suppress her feelings and engaged in conversation with Gorst.³

During the parliamentary recess, Gorst absented himself from the Education Department in Whitehall, preferring to get on with his work at the Science and Art Department in South Kensington. Kekewich claimed that this was due to Gorst taking umbrage at his treatment with respect to the

¹Halevy, E., A History of the English People, 1895-1905, p. 40.

²Young, P.M., Elgar, O.M., p. 79.

³Cornwallis-West, J., Lady Randolph Churchill's Reminiscences, p. 158. For comments on her attitude to Gorst, see James, R.R., Lord Randolph Churchill, p. 253.

Voluntary Schools Bill.¹ It is more likely that Gorst felt able to get on with his work, especially that involving the implementation of the new Science and Art Directory, more efficiently in freedom from Kekewich's obstructive administration and away from the Duke of Devonshire. In spite of this absence, Gorst's influence still appeared in the annual report of the Education Department's activities for 1897.² It was seen most clearly in the section dealing with school attendance, parts of which were almost identical with his 1896 article on Prospects of Education in England, e.g.:

"... Some of the most important factors in it [withdrawal from school] are economic and social rather than educational in the narrower sense ... in many rural districts at any rate, there is a rooted belief that elementary education, as commonly practised and understood, produces a disinclination among many of the more promising children to enter upon a life of agricultural labour. This conviction lies behind much of the defective administration of the school attendance laws in country districts ... In some country districts there appears to be no effective public opinion behind the Elementary Education Act".³

It was obvious from this that Gorst was not going to restrict his attacks on obstruction to educational reform to parliamentary and public speeches - he was going to utilise as many aspects of communication as possible.

¹Kekewich, G.W., op. cit., p. 102.

²Report of the Committee of Council on Education, 1897-8, P.P. 1898, XXII, [c. 8986].

³Ibid., p. 8-9. Compare this with Gorst's attacks in his article on agricultural committees: Prospects of Education in England, op. cit., p. 433.

It is interesting to note that in this report the emphasis was not placed upon the effects of the new Education Acts, but on the change which had taken place in the inspection of schools - a change which affected all rather than a fraction of the education system. This can be assumed to be another result of Gorst's influence i.e. his concern for the education and welfare of the children involved in the system rather than exploitation of the system for Party gain. Some of Gorst's humanity emerged in this part of the report:

"We believe that a teacher who is competent for his duties and zealous in their discharge does his work best when he is given freedom in the choice of methods and liberty to adopt his course of instruction to the needs and abilities of his pupils. The most permanent and valuable results of education are not those which can be elaborately displayed on an annual field day. It is misleading to attempt to measure a teacher's educational skill or the more lasting effects of his instruction on the faculties and character of his pupils by a test which tends to throw the chief stress on the re-production of a certain amount of knowledge on an appointed day. Such a system inevitably encourages sham rather than true education".¹

The concept of the inspectorate was also undergoing a change from that formed in previous decades, and was reverting to the original concept envisaged by Kay-Shuttleworth some fifty years before:

"The inspector has the opportunity of observing the teachers' methods, of conferring with and advising them ... at each inspection a short time is devoted to conference - with the head teacher, on the general organisation and conduct of the school, and with the members of the teaching staff on points of detail in class teaching".²

¹P.P. 1898, XXII [c. 8986], p. 20.

²Ibid., p. 21.

A start had been made to remove the rigours and horrors of inspection which had for so long accompanied the payments by results system, the latter having completely vanished by 1897.¹

It must have been gratifying for Gorst to note that the remedial classes proposed in the previous year had got under way and were proving to be beneficial: "... the plans ... for the special treatment of very backward children in schools for older scholars have conduced to the better organisation and educational efficiency of the classes concerned".²

But whilst it must have been pleasant to review these reforms which had been effected in the past year, Gorst did not forget his plans for even more radical reforms to raise the level of England's educational system. The need for a better system of education, which involved the sorting out of the post-elementary chaos, was the message put forward in his speeches towards the end of the year, and addressed to the wider audience of the public. The first in this vein was made on November 17, at the annual prizegiving of the Birmingham Municipal Technical School. Gorst was careful at the outset to indicate that he was speaking not as a member of the Government but as an individual. The interesting fact about this particular speech is that in his survey

¹"In specific subjects, the last stronghold of the Revised Code, payment was to be at the rate of one shilling for each twenty-four hours devoted to the subject, and payment by examination ceased". Balfour, G., op. cit., p. 38.

²P.P. 1898: XXII [c. 8986], p. 31.

of the scene of post-elementary education, Gorst had obviously been doing a lot of fact checking. But, although the facts were used in his analysis, they were not always directly related to the topic under discussion. For example, in the first part of his talk, Gorst discussed the relationship of School Boards to higher education and then said that he had been, "... reading recently a correspondence which passed between the School Board of Bradford and the [Education] Department many years ago in which the Bradford Board explained that higher schools had sprung up almost without their knowledge".¹ Granted it was an illustration of the point he was making at the time - that higher schools had 'evolved' in certain areas - but the question that is raised is, why had he been reading the old correspondence of the Education Department? A little later on he stated that it was not possible to get an analysis of the types of higher schools which existed, and then immediately followed this statement with a fairly complete analysis of the schools in London engaged in this field of education. And towards the end of his speech, Gorst provided detailed statistics of similar classes being provided by county councils; county borough; non-county borough and urban district councils.² It must be accepted that these illustrations were all used by Gorst to develop the points he was making, and they did serve to illustrate that over-

¹The Times, November 18, 1897.

²Ibid.

lapping was occurring in secondary education. But it can also be argued that they indicated that Gorst had been ascertaining how matters stood in relation to the proposals contained in Clause VII. In connection with this it should be pointed out that the bias in his speeches for this period, i.e. November-December, 1897, was directed at reorganisation of secondary education administration almost to the exclusion of everything else - a position which he had not adopted before.

In his speech of December 20 at the Enfield Grammar School Prize day, Gorst dealt with the possible effect upon England in her competition with Europe if the educational system of the country was not reformed and made more efficient. The place for such reform lay not with Parliament, he thought, but at the local level:

"The people had much power in the matter. The county councils received from the national exchequer something like three-quarters of a million which they could apply to purposes of higher education, and which some of them did so apply. Then again, urban district councils had powers for rating their districts, and so establishing schools for higher education, while in the Science and Art Department they had an organisation anxious to work with them and prevent, as far as possible, overlapping and waste ... there was no reason why the Urban District Council of Enfield should not promote such additional technical and other instruction as might be necessary for the people with the assistance of the County Council".¹

At Bristol on December 23, Gorst repeated this theme, but in a slightly different form, which included a back-hander aimed at the Government:

¹The Times, December 21, 1897.

"The government would not, [raise the school leaving age] because the members of the Government were selected from a class that was not entirely concerned with the necessity or the desirability of higher education for the people. They held the opinion that there were certain functions which had to be performed in the modern life of civilised communities which were much best performed by people who were ignorant. They thought and said sometimes that there were special duties which had to be performed and for which education would unfit men".¹

He went on to state that reform, therefore, was in the hands of the people as far as education was concerned, but would not be achieved until they and their children recognised the advantage that higher education would bring them. They should press the Government to do something for them in this field, and at the same time ensure that a start was made at the local level to reform the administration involved in this sector of education. A point upon which Gorst proffered advice:

"There was nothing to prevent technical instruction committees being made thoroughly representative and becoming a real organisation for the promotion of higher education, which would be generally acceptable to the people of the locality ... He believed no one could render at this moment a higher service to the country than by securing the advancement of technical education".²

From the contents of his speeches and the results of his activities it must have appeared that Gorst visualised the achievement of the educational reforms required evolving from the implementation of Clause VII. The establishment of the county and county borough councils as

¹The Times, December 24, 1897.

²Ibid.

the authorities for secondary education would be the first step towards a rationalisation of the position in the elementary education area. The experience with the 1896 Bill no doubt was an influential factor in Gorst's decision to achieve these goals by administrative rather than legislative means.¹ The aptness of this choice was reflected by the fact that little opposition had been generated in respect of the applications made by 33 county and county borough councils within the first year of the implementation of Clause VII. This harmonious state was disrupted towards the close of 1898 when London County Council applied for recognition. Gorst had also created a certain amount of disquiet with a speech he made in the House, so that the calm of 1897 was rapidly dissipated, and educational matters were brought to the fore.

¹Lyulph Stanley noted some years later, "... Sir John Gorst ... openly makes the boast that as he failed by legislation to supersede School Boards by county councils, he will do administratively what he cannot do by law". Stanley, E.L., 'Higher Elementary Schools', The Contemporary Review, 78, November, 1900, p. 615.

CHAPTER NINE

In his speeches at the close of 1897 Gorst had made some scathing remarks about the Government. This he continued to do during the first months of 1898. At Cambridge, on February 5, he indicated his unhappiness with the way the Cabinet had interfered in educational matters:

"... If they [Education Department] were left to themselves, and if proper support and encouragement were given to them by the Government, they might do extremely good work and make Englishmen more fit to compete with their rivals on the continent of Europe".¹

A month later Gorst took the opportunity to attack a section of Conservative supporters:

"You are deluding yourselves if you expect that you will find the majority of the territorial aristocracy in this ... country very zealous for the diffusion of greater mental capacity among the people. Are the farmers in favour of education? Everybody ... connected with night schools and technical education ... knows that the opposition of the farmers ... is a difficulty that always has to be surmounted".²

The cause for the attitude displayed by Gorst in these speeches may have been his exclusion from the planning operations that were taking place for the next major piece of educational legislation, i.e. the creation of a central authority. Kekewich noted that Gorst's exclusion, "... caused additional friction", which was not unwarranted in view of the effect such an authority could have upon the reorganisation of education at the local level.³ For Gorst

¹The Times, February 7, 1898.

²Ibid., March 3, 1898.

³Kekewich, G.W., op. cit., p. 103.

the frustration of his exclusion was compounded by the fact that the proposed measure was very much a departmental, rather than a Cabinet matter. He had reached the nadir of his term in the office of Vice-President, with regard to the lack of consideration shown for his position and responsibilities.

It was not surprising, therefore, that he had little time for the manner in which a resolution was introduced into the House on the evening of April 19 by the Member for Carnarvon, David Lloyd-George. The resolution desired the achievement of:

"... a just and efficient system of National Education [and] that there should be within the reach of every child in England and Wales a public elementary school under local representative management, and that there should also be provided increased facilities for the training of teachers in colleges free from sectarian control".¹

Lloyd-George's speech was verbose and emotionally presented, and dealt with two main points. The first was the problem of religious education in elementary schools, and the second was the barring of nonconformists from teacher training colleges. In both cases well-trodden ground was repeatedly covered during his speech, although he did manage to introduce novel statistical material with regard to the voluntary schools, and the results of the education being provided by them:

"Take the cases of Birmingham, which is a Board school district, and Liverpool, which is a city of rampant denominationalism in schools, and every-

¹4 Hansard, 56, c. 479 (April 19, 1898).

thing else. Looking at the criminal statistics, which give a test of the amount of self-restraint inculcated and disciplined in a district, what do we find? The criminal statistics in Liverpool are three times as high as those of Birmingham. Again, London is far more of a Board school district than Liverpool, and although there is the same class of population to deal with, the criminal statistics in Liverpool are three times as high as those in London in proportion to the population, and the same results will be shown to be applicable all over the country".¹

It was a consequence of this poor education, and also the smaller funds available, he contended, that the teachers in voluntary schools were of a poorer quality than their contemporaries in the Board schools. And what, he asked, was the overall purpose in maintaining the voluntary schools? "The inalienable right of a parent to call upon the State to teach his children his particular theories or ideas about religion".² A right which Lloyd-George challenged strenuously, concluding that, "The nature of a child is like that of a plant, and one gleam of sunshine produces a healthier growth than a ton of theology ... Whilst priests are wrangling as to who shall be greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven, the children are suffering".³

In his reply, Gorst demolished the basic principle incorporated into Lloyd-George's argument, in a brusque manner:

"No one can hold the office that I do without being peculiarly painfully conscious of the shortcomings

¹Ibid., c. 487. Lloyd-George appeared to believe his facts, even if the House felt that their credibility was suspect.

²Ibid., c. 484.

³Ibid., c. 487-8.

of our national educational system, and of the urgent necessity that there is for some improvement. It is therefore with impatience, and with some degree of indignation, that one turns from questions of real importance to discuss a fictitious plank in the creation of a platform which affords quite needless obstruction to legislation. There is, as I have often said in this House, no religious difficulty in the schools. The difficulty is a difficulty created in Parliament, and is formidable only because it obstructs necessary legislation".¹

He went on to reject Lloyd-George's statements about discrimination in entry to training colleges on religious grounds; and his solution to the poorer pupil-teachers in voluntary schools by the creation of more rural School Boards. Gorst dwelt upon the position of the rural pupil-teacher, and his description was one of sombre hues, presenting the subjects as ones who "... sink into school drudges"; a description which contained an implicit criticism of the voluntary schools.² What he did not do, however, was to offer a solution to the problem, and at this point some of Gorst's frustration emerged. A Committee had been set up under his authority:

"... to consider how the position of these pupil teachers could be improved, and before the Committee had even taken their scheme into consideration, or pronounced any opinion upon it, it was denounced from all sides, even from such bodies as the National Society".³

All he could do was to reject the proposal for more School Boards as, "... one to which the Committee of the Council

¹Ibid., c. 494.

²Ibid., c. 495. Gorst was opposed to the large use made of pupil teachers, rather than qualified teachers, by the voluntary schools.

³Ibid., c. 495-6.

have the strongest objection on educational grounds".¹

He was, however, more positive in his approach to the problem of provision of more training colleges, and suggested that a possible solution could be found in the county councils:

"If you want more training colleges I would suggest that the proper way would be through some local educational authority. Some of the local educational authorities - for instance, the County Councils - can, so far as I know, open colleges without legislation. More training should be provided, and that is a thing to which the Committee of Council agreed most cordially".²

In his conclusion, Gorst indicated his feelings about the need for educational reform:

"It is acknowledged that this Parliament cannot pass a comprehensive scheme in the development of education. It is, therefore, necessary that the fragmentary efforts of Parliament should not only be in accordance with some settled policy, but should be taken in the order of their urgency ... The idea is to get more children into the existing schools, to get them there in a condition fit to receive instruction, and to keep them there until a later age".³

There were problems, however, connected with these aims:

"With your School Boards and your attendance officers, and all your Government machinery, of those [children] who are on the books nearly one-eighth are continually absent. Many of the buildings in which the children are collected are insanitary. Many of the children - the percentage unknown - come to the school starved in certain seasons of the year in different places; they are in a condition not only unfit to receive instruction, but in a condition in which it is absolute cruelty to attempt to instruct them".⁴

¹Ibid., c. 497.

² & ³Ibid., c. 499.

⁴Ibid., c. 499-50.

These were the real problems for the provision of a just and efficient system of national education, not the religious controversies pursued in and out of Parliament. Until they were solved;

"... you cannot compete in technical or commercial education with your Continental rivals. Your higher schools will languish for lack of a sufficient supply of scholars properly grounded in the elements, and your labour and your money will be, to a great extent, thrown away".¹

Sir William Harcourt, who followed Gorst, indicated the root of the problem confronting Gorst, and the one which had to some extent been responsible for his lack of positive suggestions for dealing with the graphically described problems:

"I am perfectly conscious that the right hon. Gentleman is a reforming educationist at heart, and if we can only strike off his arms those fetters which restrain his true inclinations we might get something for the advantage of this country ... I am extremely sorry that the right hon. Gentleman is not put in a position to carry his convictions more completely into effect".²

If Harcourt and Gorst were somewhat despondent about the possibility of the real educational problems being tackled, one of the teachers' representative M.P's., Earnest Gray, did not find matters quite so gloomy, because of Gorst's efforts in the past:

"I have always regretted that we have not the Bill of 1896, but though that Bill did not find its place on the Statute Book, I am convinced it did a great deal of good. It not only succeeded in educating the country, but it largely educated

¹Ibid., c. 500.

²Ibid., c. 504.

the House of Commons itself. Indeed, I have been particularly amused to hear both the mover and seconder of this Resolution advocating some of the very clauses of the Bill of 1896 to which they then most strenuously objected. I believe many of us will live to see the day when the principles of the Bill of 1896 will find their place on the Statute Book of the country to the country's benefit".¹

Gray went on to commend Gorst's opposition to the Resolution, making the perceptive point that:

"The whole difference between the speech of the Vice-President and the speech of the mover of this Resolution was that while the one treated it from the standpoint of national education the other viewed it from the standpoint of sectarian differences. It is true that my right hon. Friend, whenever he addresses the House, does give surprises right and left,² for the simple reason that he does not treat it from the standpoint of the average political partisan. He takes a high ground, and considers it as affecting the welfare of the child and the good of the school".³

The Resolution was defeated by a majority of 73.⁴ If, however, Gray saw cause for congratulating Gorst, as did The Spectator a few days later,⁵ the Archbishop of Canterbury felt that there were grounds for complaint. It was not, however, until three months later that he aired his grievances in the House of Lords. He was obviously

¹Ibid., c. 505.

²Sir William Harcourt, at the beginning of his speech, had made the observation about Gorst's speeches: "There is to me always a charm in the right hon. Gentleman's speeches on the subject of education. There is the charm of surprise; you never know what he will say first or what he will say last. It is a delightful salad in which the vinegar and the oil are well mixed, and gives flavour to all he says". Ibid., c. 500.

³Ibid., c. 505-6.

⁴Ibid., c. 526.

⁵The Spectator, April 23, 1898, p. 568-9.

aggrieved by one statement of Gorst's in which the latter had contended that in urban areas: "... I am not at all certain, if it came to a real test, that you would not find that the facts and history of the Christian faith are better taught to the children in the Board schools".¹ The Archbishop felt that since religious instruction was not inspected by the Education Department, Gorst was stepping beyond his limits as the representative of that Department. He was at a loss to understand how Gorst could have come to such a conclusion since, "All the evidence that I can get together points entirely in the opposite direction".² The Duke of Devonshire was, therefore, called upon:

"... to explain in some satisfactory manner how it is that the Education Department are stepping out of their province in this way, and also on what authority and what evidence the Vice-President bases such a criticism on that which he has, properly speaking, nothing to do".³

The Duke, in a general defence of Gorst's statements - since he also went on to deal with Gorst's later speech on the Education estimates - was "loyal and chivalrous".⁴ He was not moved by the beseechings of the Archbishop, observing instead that:

"... that statement of the Vice-President does not appear to me to be of a very aggressive or irritating character, but it appears to have called down upon him the severe animadversions and criticisms of some supporters of Voluntary Schools, and especially, I believe, of some of the Church papers".⁵

¹4 Hansard, 56, c. 496 (April 19, 1898).

²4 Hansard, 61, c. 633 (July 12, 1898).

³Ibid., c. 634.

⁴Ibid., c. 642. Marquess of Londonderry.

⁵Ibid., c. 635.

And as Gorst had, apparently, written to him and pointed out that his observations had been an expression of his own personal opinion, he was not sure that there had been any justification in the attacks upon his subordinate. There would appear to be some justification for Devonshire's attitude as the hostility to Gorst may have been founded on a dislike of plain statement of facts. It may also have been compounded by hypersensitivity about the voluntary schools' poor teaching standards, in view of the aid provided in the previous year to improve these standards.¹ That there was a dislike of Gorst's method of plain speaking was demonstrated after his Education Estimates Speech of June 17.

Gorst used the debate of the Committee on Supply on June 17 as a vehicle for making some general observations on the state of the national educational scene. He pointed out to the House that there existed, "... obstacles which prevent the expenditure of these sums obtaining fully the purpose desired", and that he, "... should be wanting in candour to the Committee of Supply if, in moving this large vote (£11.5 m) I did not warn the Committee what these obstacles

¹The money provided under the Voluntary Schools Act, 1897, i.e. some £600,000.

are".¹

There were seven main obstacles, he believed, in the way of educational progress. To the majority of his listeners in the House, and to students of his speeches, the obstacles assumed familiar shapes; the raising of the school leaving age; voluntary and Board school pupil teachers; the inferiority of urban voluntary schools; the obstruction of the aristocracy, and the reorganisation of educational authorities. But, for the first time in a major speech, Gorst introduced two other topics - the problems of half-timers, and malnutrition. Furthermore, he had come armed with facts derived from official sources to substantiate his observations about the national system. The criticisms of his previous speech had obviously left a mark, although Gorst did not in any way dull the keen edge of frankness which was an integral feature of his speech. He was, consequently, impartial in his treatment of the topics, and thus voluntary, as well as Board, schools came in for criticism as well as praise.

¹4 Hansard, 59, c. 585 (June 17, 1898). Most of the Government front bench quit the chamber at the beginning of the debate, but Balfour and Chamberlain remained: "As Sir John Gorst stood at the table, in appearance the impersonation of almost rustic innocence, it was curious to see Mr. Balfour seated a little to his right-hand side, whilst on his left, unobtrusively but effectively completing the condition of custody, sat Mr. Chamberlain. To the ill-regulated mind, prone to harbour fantastic notions, the situation suggested the case of a child, known to be subjected to ungovernable paroxysms of naughtiness, sent out to take a constitutional under the supervision, not of one able-bodied nurse, but of two". Lucy, H.W., A Diary of the Unionist Parliament, 1895-1900, p. 239.

In the first part of his speech Gorst effectively dealt with the problems of the low school leaving age [11 years], 'half-timers' [children who worked in the morning and only attended school in the afternoon], and attendance. What was the point in providing more secondary and continuation schools if, because of these problems, "... little more is done in them than to teach over again at the public expense that which was already taught at the public expense a very few years before, and which has been entirely forgotten".¹ This, of course, was based on the assumption that the children had attended the schools in the compulsory period of their lives. But, as he went on to demonstrate, school attendance was in a gradual decline, from 81.61% in 1895 to 81.50% in 1897; a fact, Gorst believed, directly attributable to laxity in the administration of the law, as well as a peculiar attitude to education in many parts of the nation:

"There are many districts in this country in which you may keep your children away for years, and if you are summoned at all, you are let off with a caution or small fine: whereas, if you took your bicycle out and rode it on the footpath, or took your dog out without a muzzle, you would be 'run in' immediately".²

He used statistical evidence to substantiate the difference in attendance rates at both types of schools throughout the country, not hesitating, either, to name the specific localities involved. Nor was he hesitant in coming

¹4 Hansard, 59, c. 590 (June 17, 1898).

²Ibid., c. 591.

forward with the view that in certain rural areas part of the fault lay with the territorial aristocracy wanting cheap labour at times convenient to themselves, using extracts from the reports of H.M.I's. to illustrate his arguments. When he turned to his oft-stated views about the inferiority of voluntary schools in urban areas, and their superiority in rural ones, he used another illustration, which was to earn him a certain amount of notoriety amongst the Tory party:

"The farmer and the squire are no friends to elementary education. They associate agricultural depression and low rents with compulsory education, and they grudge to pay for that teaching which deprives them of servants and furnishes their labourers with wings to fly from the parish. On the other hand, the labourer has not learnt the value of education. The earnings of his children are important to him, and the present shilling obscures the future pound. What is good enough for them is good enough for their children. It is rare to find a boy over 12 in a country school".¹

Gorst had been careful to preface the quotation with the remark that it was not his opinion, but that of the H.M.I's. - although he obviously concurred with the sentiments expressed. He also demonstrated that he did not feel that his criticisms concerning urban voluntary schools could be attributed to the faults of either the managers or authorities. It was purely a financial matter: "They have not got the funds with which to make their own schools as efficient as the Board Schools".² But in his observations and discussion about the urban voluntary schools, Gorst

¹ Ibid., c. 600.

² Ibid., c. 596-7.

could find little to praise when comparing them with the Board schools. A situation which he did not find satisfactory: "These facts, which I might suppress, but which I cannot alter, are most unpleasant to those who, like myself, desire the maintenance of the voluntary schools". His opinion that they were useful schools was based on the principle of liberty in religious instruction being provided in the school system, and, "... secondly, on intellectual grounds, because these schools are independent of the natural uniformity inseparable from a state-supported system".¹

The inefficiency of the voluntary schools was also, to a certain extent, dependent upon the poorer quality of their staff as, again, compared with those in the Board schools. Only 45 per cent of two-year trained teachers entered the voluntary schools; and in the case of three-year trained, only 35.78 per cent of the men and 23.88 per cent of the women took up appointments in voluntary schools. Thus these schools were having to depend upon two unsatisfactory sources for the bulk of their staff: "Article 68" teachers,² and pupil-teachers. Gorst quoted a damning report by the inspectors about the former class, and in addition to inspectors' reports about the latter opined:

¹Ibid., c. 599. This was the, "... only passage in which a flush of emotion varied the terribly level flow of his speech", Lucy, H.W., A Diary of the Unionist Parliament, 1895-1900, p. 242.

²Women teachers whose only qualifications were to be aged 18 or over, to have been vaccinated, and to have been approved by an H.M.I.

"Pupil teachers were... originally sanctioned ... in the expectation that they would be only temporary, but, in practice, they are so extremely useful as furnishing in the schools cheap labour that the object of their institution is liable to be lost in the secondary purpose which they serve. The life of a pupil teacher is not generally a happy one ...".¹

In his treatment of the problem concerning the organisation of secondary education, which he covered in the last few minutes of his speech, Gorst indicated that the School Boards' activities in this field were not passing unnoticed:

"Now, the greater school boards have been so impressed by the necessity for higher education as the necessary adjunct to elementary teaching in the elementary schools that they have, without any very great or very direct Parliamentary authority, established higher grade Board schools, which are real secondary schools, in most of the great towns ... thus taking the law into their own hands ...".²

His conclusion was a familiar and yet sensible theme, that post-elementary education could only be built upon a sound foundation of elementary education. To achieve this required the reform of the obstacles discussed. °

Sir William Harcourt, as the main Opposition speaker, thought that Gorst's exposition was "... interesting, important, and above all, honest. There has been no attempt to hide ... defects, and I believe that the statement ... will be one which will have, as it ought to have, an immense influence upon this House and upon the country".³

¹4 Hansard, 59, c. 603 (June 17, 1898).

²Ibid., c. 605.

³Ibid., c. 605-6.

He also pointed to the divergence of opinion about the value of education which existed on the Treasury bench, and felt that Gorst's speech had proved the point that the money provided for education was not being used efficiently. His main plea, in accord with Gorst, was for the need to overcome the obstacles to efficiency in the provision of new legislation. Balfour, however, in a cynical commentary about Harcourt's observations - whilst not denying the lack of knowledge on educational matters of the Treasury bench - pointed to the lack of legislation prepared under the previous Liberal government, and their obstruction of any legislation on the subject introduced by the present one. His speech, however, was not one that really fully supported Gorst's, and his only useful contribution was to indicate that the Committee should not get sidetracked into religious differences, but should concentrate on the educational system of the country.¹ This point was reiterated a little later by Henry Hobhouse,² after an acrimonious exchange between Harcourt and Viscount Cranborne, based mainly on religious differences.

The main criticism of Gorst's speech, however, was that he had failed to indicate what measures could, or would, be taken by the Government to overcome the obstructions to progress in the education system. This criticism was voiced from both sides of the House, but the most virulent

¹Ibid., c. 622.

²Ibid., c. 646.

attack came from a Tory backbencher, Viscount Cranborne. Rather than admitting the facts exposed by Gorst, Cranborne felt that unless there was a specific measure afoot to remedy them the matters should not be entertained, let alone discussed: "I do not see that any object can be attained in referring to a matter unless there is a reasonable prospect of some proposal being made to deal with it".¹

Gorst, in his conclusion at the end of the debate, dealt swiftly and effectively with his critics. To the defenders of the voluntary schools he pointed out, "... that it is the wisest and the best thing for the voluntary schools in the towns that the truth should be told about them, in order that they may be made efficient ...", adding that adequate funds would greatly help in achieving this.² For his defence of the criticism about his lack of remedies, Gorst felt that his observations indicated what the remedies should be, and that many of these had been embodied in the 1896 Bill. He was, nonetheless, pleased to observe: "Criticism of course there has been, but on the whole it has been favourable, and there has been an absence of that heat which sometimes has characterised debates on educational matters".³ His pleasure was to be short lived, for the heat of unfavourable criticism was inflicted upon him the following day, and in the weeks to follow.

A hostile leader appeared in The Times the day after the debate:

¹Ibid., c. 640.

²Ibid., c. 696.

³Ibid., c. 699.

"Sir John Gorst's speech ... was distinguished by that amazing and embarrassing candour which makes people sometimes wonder why he has so long remained either a member of the Ministry or a representative of the University of Cambridge ... If an educational autocrat with the unfettered will and enthusiasm of the German Emperor were seated at Whitehall, we might, perhaps, look for a new heaven and a new earth. But Sir John Gorst can hardly hope that this mission is reserved for him ... after all, it is the primary duty of an English Minister to carry on the work of his department as a going concern, unless he feels so much out of sympathy with the policy he has to administer that he is called upon, by the voice of conscience, to resign. Sir John Gorst seems to have come close to the latter point, though he has not actually reached it. ... it is not consistent with usage - scarcely, indeed, with decency - that a Minister, responsible for that system, who does not bring forward proposals to remove them, should denounce them from his place in Parliament".¹

Gilbert has interpreted these views as ones, "... urging the cabinet to dismiss him [Gorst] from the Education Department".² Yet the grounds for The Times' comments were scarcely creditable. It was, indeed, the very fact that he was the minister in charge of the education department but who had had his powers for the creation of new legislation severely curtailed that was the cause for this type of speech by Gorst. With this state of affairs the only course left open to him was to expose the facts concerning education, and thus try to prod his Treasury bench colleagues into action. As the Review of Reviews commented, "... his statement of facts was simply unanswerable. You cannot dismiss a Minister for proving

¹The Times, June 18, 1898.

²Gilbert, B.B., 'Sir John Eldon Gorst: Conservative Rebel', The Historian, XVIII, No. 2, Spring, 1956, p. 166-7.

that 2+2 makes 4".¹

The Duke of Devonshire appears to have begun to realise the worth of his colleague for, in a speech to the House of Lords on July 12, he ably defended Gorst's speech on the Education Estimates:

"I have read ... that speech with a great deal of attention, and I confess that I do not find in it any traces of that hostile spirit towards the Voluntary schools which has been imputed to my right honorable Friend. The speech is evidently that of one anxious - sincerely anxious - to increase the efficiency of both Board and Voluntary schools, and of one who is deeply impressed by the difficulties under which elementary education suffers now, and which render the result obtained from it inadequate in comparison with the enormous expenditure incurred upon it".²

He did concede, however, that it may have been Gorst's forthright manner in speaking on the subject that could have given rise to the subsequent consternation:

"... in enforcing these points my right honourable Friend has dwelt upon deficiencies which he sees in our existing system, and especially those affecting Voluntary schools, in a manner which appears to have alarmed, and to some extent irritated, their supporters".³

Devonshire felt that he had to make an attempt to subdue the wrath of the party supporters who had been angered by Gorst's quotation about squires and farmers. He regretted that such a statement, although conceivably true in certain areas, should have been made by "... any official in the service of the Department, and I regret also that the

¹Review of Reviews, 18. July 2, 1898, p. 12.

²4 Hansard, 61, c. 637 (July 12, 1898).

³Ibid., c. 639.

assertion should be repeated in an official statement by a representative of the Education Department", as he was aware that, "... there is probably no class, as a class, that has done more for the cause of elementary education than country gentlemen, or have done it at a greater pecuniary sacrifice";¹ a point that was reinforced by the Marquess of Londonderry - who observed that Gorst had quoted the original statement with "considerable glee" - and Viscount Halifax.²

Apart from this admonition Devonshire supported what Gorst had said, as he was, "... tolerant of the liberties of expression which Sir John allowed himself, and inclined to attribute his idiosyncracies to friskiness rather than disloyalty".³

Although in making his speech Gorst had perhaps allowed the official mask to slip too far, the most devastating aspect of it was that it was substantiated by departmental evidence, and was not one of Gorst's cynical and puckish efforts. Lucy was struck by this aspect:

"If the Vice-President of the Council, with whatever winning eloquence, had raved round mere assertions, had pelted the edifice of church schools with insinuations or assumptions, it would not have greatly mattered. But here was the responsible Minister of the department concerned quietly producing, from official archives, documents sub-

¹ Ibid., c. 641.

² Ibid., c. 644 and c. 646. The Earl of Kimberley however sympathised with Gorst and thought that, "... he did good service to the cause of education in pointing out the defects in the schools which form part of the system".

³ Holland, B., Life of Spencer Compton, 8th Duke of Devonshire, p. 273.

mitted in the ordinary course of business, reading them in level tones, and with unemotional manner, as if they were milk accounts. Sir John Gorst did not assert that ... the country is spending between eleven millions and twelve millions a year on a system the most inefficient, the most imperfect, the most ridiculous in the world. He just cited the testimony of experts transmitted to the Education Department, in the ordinary business way, which, being collated, irresistibly led to that conclusion.

"What added to the weight of the indictment was the obvious sincerity and honest of purpose of the Minister. He was there not to make matters smooth and get his vote through with as little talk as possible. The growth and progress of national education was a momentous interest solemnly committed to his charge. At any cost he would fulfil his duty".¹

What Gorst had become aware of was that if there was to be any hope of reform in education in the near future, he would probably have to sacrifice his career to achieve it. Thus he, "... played the part of propagandist and advance agent. He readied public opinion for necessary but unpopular reform, and sacrificed himself in doing so".² The general tenor of his speeches in 1898 indicate that Gorst had willingly shouldered this burden. But after the Supply speech Gorst temporarily disappeared from the public's eye, and busied himself in departmental matters.

His main preoccupation whilst he was at the Department in the summer of 1898, was with a minor legislative measure, an "Omnibus Bill". The chief aim of this Bill was to achieve, "Desirable Amendments of Elementary Education Acts",

¹Lucy, H.W., A Diary of the Unionist Parliament, 1895-1900, p. 241-2.

²Gilbert, B.B., 'Sir John Eldon Gorst: Conservative Rebel', The Historian, XVIII, 2, Spring, 1956, p. 160.

and the majority of the proposals involved were innocuous enough.¹ Some of them were modified clauses of the 1896 Bill, e.g. the introduction of a new definition of "average attendance". For the purpose of aiding financial calculations, (involved in producing the moneys dispersed in Parliamentary grants to schools), average attendance where fee grants were involved was to be, "calculated in accordance with the Elementary Day School Code".² This did away with the need to try and produce, "... one average attendance for fee grant and another for annual grant" - a task which the Education Department had found impossible.³

Another clause provided relief for School Boards with regard to the provisions required of them by the Elementary Education (Blind and Deaf Children) Act of 1893. Under the Act, School Boards in an area in which a District Council was also a school authority had to contribute to the rate levied by the Council for the purposes of the Act, as well as contributing themselves for the same purposes. The new clause provided their exemption from this form of double rating.

There were two clauses which were aimed at increasing attendance at elementary schools, as well as paving the way towards an increase in the school leaving age. The first of these clauses increased the attendances required for the

¹P.R.O. Ed. 31/18.

²Ibid. This was in effect, the proposal of Clause 23 of the 1896 Bill. See Appendix 2.

³Ibid.

'Dunce's certificate' from 250 to 350, and the second proposed, "... to make it lawful for School Boards and School Attendance Committees to extend their bye-laws so as to make attendance at school under them compulsory up to 14 years of age".¹

What turned out to be the most controversial proposal in the Bill, since it was seen by the Opposition as a proposal for rate-aid to voluntary schools, was the second clause:

"The Guardians of any Union may contribute towards such of the expenses of providing, enlarging or maintaining any public elementary schools as are certified by the Education Department to have been incurred wholly or partly in respect of scholars taught at the school, who are either resident in a work-house, or in an institution for which they have been sent by the Guardians from a work-house, or boarded out by the Guardians".²

There can be little doubt that this proposal, as well as the ones for increasing the school attendances and leaving age, emanated from Gorst. The proposals of Clause 2, ostensibly to relieve parishes of the cost of educating poor law children, also enabled these children to attend ordinary elementary schools more easily in the future - a recommendation which had been made by the Poor Law Schools Committee in their Report of 1896.³

¹Ibid. The 'Dunce's certificate' enabled pupils to leave schools without achieving a satisfactory performance in the required standard, since it was based purely on a number of attendances, i.e. 250 prior to the enactment of the Omnibus Bill.

²Ibid.

³P.P., 1896, XLIII [c. 8027], p. 43. A proposal aimed at integration of the children as much as possible into the 'outside world' - as well as providing them with a better education than that given in the majority of the Poor Law Schools.

The work on the Bill had started in May for, by the end of the month, Kekewich suggested to Gorst that the above proposals:

"... might be put into an Omnibus Bill in which you might get the Duke to concur. I don't think that any of the matters are contentious, but when the Bill is in draft, it will, as to one or two clauses, have to be submitted to the Local Government Board".¹

A week later, after Gorst had communicated with him on the subject, the Duke wrote to Gorst:

"The Cabinet as a whole can have no objection to this Bill, but the Treasury and possibly the Local Government Board may have something to say to some of its provisions. Will you take the necessary steps to get their concurrence".²

The two departments were sent a draft of the Bill on June 10, and twelve days later the Treasury alarmingly pointed out:

"... My Lords believe that the first of the proposals would involve a certain increase of not less than £5,000 per annum and that the seventh [raising of the school leaving age], so far as it became operative, would lead to a further additional charge".³

In spite of this lack of enthusiasm for a measure that would involve increased expenditure by the Treasury, Gorst was undaunted - as Kekewich's reply to that department revealed:

"... the seventh Clause so far as it became operational would no doubt lead to a further additional charge. But My Lords are strongly of opinion that the continued attendance of children up to 14 years of age should be so far as pos-

¹P.R.O. Ed. 31/18. G.W. Kekewich to J.E. Gorst, May 27, 1898.

²Ibid., Duke of Devonshire to J.E. Gorst, June 5, 1898.

³Ibid., June 22, 1898. H.M. Treasury to Education Department.

sible encouraged ...".¹

The Treasury gave way, but with a warning:

"... they [Lords Commissioners of H.M. Treasury] have no objection to the presentation to Parliament of a Bill to amend the Elementary Education Acts in the sense of the memorandum which accompanied your letter of the 10th ultimo.

"I am however to say that any increase of charge resulting from the Bill must then be taken into account in considering any Educational proposal affecting the Exchequer".²

By July 6, the consent of all the departments concerned had been obtained, and Gorst ordered that, "... the necessary steps to have a Bill drafted", should be taken.³

Six days later Kekewich reported to Gorst:

"This is the draft of the Omnibus Bill. It seems all right. I suppose it will now have to be circulated by you, with the assent of the Lord President to the Cabinet.

"Before such circulation, however, I suppose copies will be sent to the Home Office,⁴ and LGB, in case they desire any alteration. Shall I send these copies?

"And also one to the Lord President?".⁵

Gorst's reply was in the affirmative, but left distribution to the Cabinet to Devonshire,⁶ which in effect meant Kekewich contacting Sir Almeric Fitzroy, the Duke's Secretary:

¹Ibid., G.W. Kekewich to H.M. Treasury, June 28, 1898.

²Ibid., H.M. Treasury to Education Department, July 6, 1898.

³Ibid., J.E. Gorst to G.W. Kekewich, July 6, 1898.

⁴Industrial Schools, which came under the Home Office's jurisdiction, were involved in a minor clause.

⁵Ibid., G.W. Kekewich to J.E. Gorst, July 12, 1898.

⁶Ibid., J.E. Gorst to G.W. Kekewich, July 12, 1898.

"This is the draft of the Omnibus Bill, which the Lord President said that the Cabinet, as a whole, could have no objection.

"Will the Lord President now circulate it to the Cabinet? I have 24 more copies. I do not know whether (?there is) an objection to a Bill being introduced at so late a period of the Session. But, so far as we know, it is absolutely non-contentious, though I suppose amendments might be moved in Committee with the object of extending its scope.

"We have obtained the consent of the Treasury, the Home Office, and the Loc. Govt. Bd -

"I send the papers, in case they may be needed for reference".¹

An obstacle to the smooth passage so far enjoyed by the Bill suddenly loomed up, when the Duke sent a note to Gorst on the day he received his draft:

"I think that you had better speak to Mr. Balfour about this Bill and see whether he has any objection to its being introduced. Of course if it is opposed or amendments moved upon it, it cannot pass at this time of the Session".²

Gorst saw Balfour that day, and the Bill's progress came to an abrupt halt, as Gorst informed the Duke:

"I have spoken to Mr. Balfour and he reports to say that the introduction now of an Omnibus Education Bill would be contrary to a pledge which he has given in the House of Commons".³

Thus, when the London School Board sent a memorial to the Education Department in early December:

¹Ibid. G.W. Kekewich to A. Fitzroy, July 21, 1898. It is interesting to note that Gorst had instructed Kekewich to send the copies at once, but it took 9 days for them to traverse the length of a corridor in Whitehall.

²Ibid., Duke of Devonshire to J.E. Gorst, July 21, 1898.

³Ibid., J.E. Gorst to Duke of Devonshire, July 21, 1898.

"... to obtain the enactment of a measure containing the following provisions:-

- "(1) That, in ordinary circumstances, exemption for whole time be not granted in the case of any child under 13 years of age, and:
- "(2) That, whole time exemption from attendance at school be granted in the case of a child over 13 and under 14 years of age, only on condition that such child has made 350 attendances annually during five of the six years immediately preceding.
- "(3) That the maximum penalty under the Bye Laws and Sections XI and XII of the Elementary Education Act of 1870 be increased from 5s.0d. to the amount allowed under the Scotch Education Act, viz:- £1,"¹

and to which Kekewich added:

"I don't know whether the £1. would not be too much but I think there could be no objections to 10s. maximum fine ...",²

Gorst's reply reflected his mood about the Government:

"... As to the three recommendations:

- "(1) I entirely agree with the L.S.B. but there is little chance of Govt adopting it.
- "(2) This is already in our Omnibus Bill.
- "(3) We might propose an addition to the Omnibus Bill raising our maximum to the Scotch maximum".³

By March of the following year Gorst was rapidly losing interest in the matter, due undoubtedly to his pre-occupation with the initial stages of the Cockerton case, as a note to Kekewich indicated: "... I shall be very glad

¹Ibid. Memorial from London School Board to Education Department, December 6, 1898.

²Ibid., G.W. Kekewich to J.E. Gorst, December 15, 1898.

³Ibid., J.E. Gorst to G.W. Kekewich, December 17, 1898. The final version of the Bill included this proposal.

to see the matter postponed I hope 'sine die'".¹ And a week later, he wrote: "I don't think it matters what is done to the Bill. It will never be passed".²

It may have been this mood of despair at getting the Cabinet to promote educational legislation that prompted Gorst to come out in whole-hearted support in 1899 for the Private Members' Bill of W.S. Robson, the Liberal M.P. for South Shields. The Bill was a proposal to raise the school leaving age from 11 to 12; one that had been contained in the 1896 Bill - a fact which Robson acknowledged: "... this very Bill which I am now proposing is nothing more than the clause taken from the Bill of 1896 ...".³

Gorst's speech in support of the measure, about which he had no qualms: "... as far as education goes, there is really no doubt that the adoption of this Measure would improve the education of the country ...",⁴ was interspersed with official figures to substantiate his arguments for the measure. As far as he was concerned, "... the only question we have to consider is whether the people of the country will pay the price which they would have to pay for this national advantage".⁵ Since the government in 1890 had agreed that a similar proposal made at the Berlin Conference could be carried out, Gorst saw few obstacles to the enactment of the

¹Ibid., J.E. Gorst to G.W. Kekewich, March 9, 1899.

²Ibid., J.E. Gorst to G.W. Kekewich, March 16, 1899.

³4 Hansard, 67, c. 922 (March 1, 1899).

⁴Ibid., c. 938.

⁵Ibid.

Bill; a view that was not shared by the present Government, as Asquith indicated:

"The state of the Treasury Bench during the Debate has not betokened a very widely diffused or a warmly enthusiastic interest in the subject, and perhaps it is not altogether uncharitable to suspect that those colleagues whom we do see sitting on the Bench with the right honourable Gentleman [Gorst] are there rather in the character of detectives than of supporters".¹

In spite of the Government's coolness towards the measure, it passed through both Houses and duly became law.²

The fact that the only educational legislation introduced into the House, since the Board of Education Bill of the previous year, had been by a private Member may have induced the Cabinet to look more favourably upon the Omnibus Bill in July, 1899. According to the Duke's new secretary, Riversdale Walrond: "The Cabinet raised no objection to the Bill".³ But the Bill would not be introduced that year, and it was, therefore, consigned to gather more dust during the parliamentary recess.

During December, 1899, a suggestion was made that Clause 3 of the draft Bill should be introduced as a separate Bill and that, "Clauses 6 and 7 of the Omnibus Bill are no doubt quite unsuitable now, since Mr. Robson's Bill has become law".⁴ When shown these proposals, Gorst applied more logic to his answer than the proposer had shown in his

¹Ibid., c. 942.

²Elementary Education (School Attendance) Act, 1893 (Amendment), 1899.

³P.R.O. Ed. 31/18, R.Walrond to G.W. Kekewich, July 31, 1899.

⁴Ibid., H. Pooley to G.W. Kekewich, December 13, 1899.

suggestions:

"I see no objection to passing Clause 3 as a separate Bill: but it would be just as easy to pass the whole Bill in the House of Commons as the single clause. Clauses 6 and 7 do not require alteration in consequence of Robson's Act. Clause 6 subjects to local bye-laws children up to 14 years of age; and Clause 7 raises the number of attendances which qualify for the Duncce's Certificate - both as desirable now as before Robson's Act was passed".¹

Other proposals were made at the beginning of 1900 to alter the Bill, as a result, "... of the Law Officers' opinion now given as to the effect of Mr. Robson's Act".² H.M. Lindsell thought that a reduction of the 350 attendances proposed for the 'Duncce's Certificate' to 300 would be useful, "... so as to make the standard of due attendance uniform both for half-time exemption under the bye laws and for exemption under the Act of 1876 ...".³ Gorst, however, would not yield, in his determination to secure a longer period of education for all children: "I am not in favour of reducing the attendances which are to qualify for the Duncce's certificate below 350. We ought to discourage that certificate in every way possible".⁴

By February Kekewich was slightly optimistic about the Bill's future: "... The changes proposed in the law are of course most desirable and possibly the Bill may be got through this Session".⁵ This may have prompted Gorst to

¹Ibid., J.E. Gorst to G.W. Kekewich, December 16, 1899.

²Ibid., H.W. Orange to H.M. Lindsell, January 4, 1900.

³Ibid., H.M. Lindsell to H.W. Orange, January 8, 1900.

⁴Ibid., J.E. Gorst to G.W. Kekewich, January 14, 1900.

⁵Ibid., G.W. Kekewich to J.E. Gorst, February 7, 1900.

notify Devonshire the following day that the Bill, "... is now ready to be introduced, whenever the government give directions for this to be done".¹ There was a slight delay whilst Devonshire tinkered with the Bill:

"The Lord President directed that a clause providing for the approval of Bye Laws by the Board of Education instead of by Order in Council should be inserted.

"The Bill, draft B, was circulated to the Cabinet on 19th inst.". ²

It was, therefore, not until March 26, 1900, when the Bill was introduced into the Commons by Gorst. His introduction of the Bill was very brief, not occupying more than five minutes. Unbeknown to the Opposition, this brevity was to be a characteristic of the Bill's passage through the House. He merely sketched an outline of the clauses after stating that the Bill, "... embodies some small amendments which the experience of administration has proved to be necessary in the various Education Acts".³

The second reading took place three months later. There were only five speakers besides Gorst, and the Opposition members admitted to being agreed that the Bill was a satisfactory measure, with the exception of Clause 2. They took exception to this, albeit somewhat mildly, as they thought they detected the use of rate aid - without public control - for the voluntary schools, in its provisions.

¹ Ibid., J.E. Gorst to Duke of Devonshire, February 8, 1900.

² Ibid., R. Walrond to J.E. Gorst, February 23, 1900.

³ 4 Hansard, 81, c. 334 (March 26, 1900).

Gorst was aggrieved that such an accusation could be levelled at him: "Unless I had heard the speeches delivered by hon. Members opposite, I should never have dreamt that it was possible to conceive that there was such a diabolical plan underlying so innocent a clause".¹ He explained the reason behind its inclusion as being, "... the conviction of the Education Department of the enormous advantage of poor-law children going to the ordinary elementary schools of the country and mixing with other children".² As he indicated a little later, "Nobody every dreamt of subsidising voluntary schools or reviving building grants or introducing into the election of guardians strong sectarian elements".³ The Opposition were placated, and the Bill passed into the Standing Committee on Law.

It emerged from the Committee intact, a fact which annoyed Mr. Mendl at the Bill's third reading:

"This is a measure which passed through the Committee stage without amendment of any kind, verbal, technical or otherwise. It has always seemed to me manifestly impossible for a Bill to be drafted in such a perfect manner as to need no amendment of any kind, and, therefore, the forcing of Bills through Committee without alteration appears to me to be a violation of the spirit of the procedure of the House ...".⁴

Gorst countered this criticism, and others of a similar nature, about the Committee stage by pointing out that amendments had been put forward with regard to the first

¹4 Hansard, 84, c. 678 (June 21, 1900).

²Ibid. A reiteration of the 1896 Poor Law Schools Committee's recommendation.

³Ibid., c. 679.

⁴4 Hansard, 87, c. 184-5 (July 31, 1900).

two clauses of the Bill. The fact that at the end of the debates upon them they had been rejected by large majorities was hardly un-parliamentarian.¹ This deflation of the Opposition critics brought the reading swiftly to a close, and the Bill was passed. The royal assent was given eight days later and with its enactment, the Bill completed yet another step forward in achievement of the aims of the 1896 Bill.²

The planning stages of the Omnibus Bill provide a certain insight into Gorst's status as Vice-President during 1898-9, especially when they are compared with those of the 1896 Bill. In the latter case Gorst was undoubtedly the chief planner, a position that was reflected by the type and number of memoranda presented to the Cabinet. He was able to present his arguments against the cases put forward by Cabinet members and, generally, was actively involved in every stage of the Bill's preparation. Examination of the planning of the Omnibus Bill demonstrates a complete contrast to this. Gorst had become almost an official 'rubber stamp' for the activities of his subordinates, although there was the odd occasion when he did not allow alterations to be made to clauses he believed to contain worthwhile proposals. He was in a sort of limbo existence, being the layer between the two active but immiscible structures of the Education Department and the Cabinet.

¹ Ibid., c. 189.

² Elementary Education Act, 1900.

The minor proposals contained within the Omnibus Bill, and its uncontentious nature, also revealed the extent to which Gorst's powers as Vice-President had been curtailed by the Government. He was still only entrusted with the handling of minor measures in the House, and, even so, Balfour was usually in attendance to ensure that he did not kick over the traces. The inordinately long time that it took for the Omnibus Bill to be accepted by the Cabinet and included in the Commons' time table was also a reflection on Gorst's loss of power.

Gorst's treatment by the Government since the fiasco of the 1896 Bill was severe and unwarranted, as Members on both sides of the House observed:

"... surprise was generally expressed that he was willing to retain office after receiving such a slight. The more he was brushed on one side, however, the more he appeared to glory in his position, continually referring to himself by the long circumlocution of 'Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education', at which the House laughed hilariously".¹

But Gorst's adhesion to office in spite of these setbacks may have been made with the knowledge that he could possibly achieve more by so doing, than from the back benches. The events of the next few years were to demonstrate the validity of this point.

¹Griffith-Boscawen, A.S.T., op. cit., p. 115.

CHAPTER TEN

Public attention had been focussed once more, albeit briefly, on educational matters as a result of Gorst's two major speeches in the House during the first half of 1898.¹ A more persistent attention, however, was given to the issues arising from the implementation of Clause VII of the previous year's Science and Art Directory, by a small number of M.P's. throughout the session.

The member for Leicester (Bosworth), Mr. McLaren, asked Gorst for clarification about several points which had arisen from the clause's insertion in the Directory:

"I beg to ask the Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education whether his attention has been called to the recent applications by county councils to become local authorities for secondary education; whether these applications are looked upon with favour by the Education Department, having regard to the opposition of existing education authorities, and to the fact that the country has not yet had an opportunity of making itself acquainted with the Government proposals as to Secondary Education,² and under what statutory powers does the Science and Art Department appoint local authorities?".³

Gorst's reply was brief and he did not expound upon any of the points raised:

"No, my attention has not been called to any application of the kind; but several county councils

¹In a review of the Parliamentary Session, Gorst's speeches and the reaction to them were accorded a prominent place. Kebbel, T., 'The Last Six Months', Blackwood's Magazine, 164, August, 1898, p. 305-6.

²A measure promised in the Queen's Speech, but which only appeared in the form of the Board of Education Bill in August.

³4 Hansard, 53, c. 242 (February 10, 1898).

have, under Clause VII of the Directory, notified their willingness to be responsible to the Department for the Science and Art Instruction within their area, and such notifications are looked upon with favour by the Committee of Council. The Science and Art Department has no statutory power, and has never attempted to appoint local authorities. The County Council is, by the Fourth Section of the Technical Instruction Act, 1889, constituted a local authority for technical instruction which, by Section 8 of the same Act, includes Science and Art instruction".¹

This last sentence was, by the time he had entered upon his autumn campaign of speech making, to become one of the main prongs in his attack against the School Boards.

Early in June a Return was ordered:

"showing the extent to which, and the manner in which, local authorities in England, Wales and Ireland have applied, or are applying, funds to the purposes of technical education (including science, art, technical and manual instruction) during the years 1896-7 and 1897-8 ...".²

A variant of this was asked for a few days later, during question time, by Mr. Flower (Bradford, W.):

"... how many technical instruction committees of county and county borough councils have applied to the Science and Art Department to be recognised by the Department as responsible for the science and art instruction within their areas; how many such applications have been complied with; and if he will state the proportion of representatives of school boards placed upon each such authority?".³

Gorst was able to reply that out of 33 applications received, some 21 had been granted, and the rest were under consideration. He would not, however, commit himself to school board representation: "School Boards are generally

¹Ibid., c. 243.

²4 Hansard, 58, c. 1150 (June 9, 1898).

³4 Hansard, 59, c. 576 (June 17, 1898).

represented on the committees, but the proportion varies in different cases".¹

Three weeks later Mr. Flower returned to the attack, and tried, with the aid of two colleagues, to pin Gorst down on the question of school board representation:

"I beg to ask ... whether the Department have done anything, and, if so, what, to assist the formation of local authorities for secondary education and if the Department are exercising their influence to secure that such authorities shall contain at least one third of their number members of school boards?".²

Gorst refused to commit himself:

"The Committee of Council have assisted in the formation of local organisations for the promotion of science and art instruction in their districts. The Committee of Council have no power to prescribe the promotion of representatives of school boards".³

Flower, aided by one of the teachers' representative Members, J.H. Yoxall, now tried a different tack:

Mr. Flower: "May I ask whether the Committee of Council will not in any case in which their advice is sought recommend the adoption of the proposal of the Royal Commission?".⁴

¹Ibid.

²4 Hansard, 61, c. 328 (July 8, 1898).

³Ibid.

⁴The Bryce Commission had recommended, in the case of county authorities: "... the presence on these bodies of persons possessing such educational experience as teachers should be required"; and that county borough authorities should have, "... one-third of the members of the new borough authority for Secondary Education", appointed by the School Board. Report of the Royal Commission on Secondary Education, P.P. 1895, XLIII [c. 7862], Vol. 1, p. 269-70. This concept had been included in the Bill of 1896, but Gorst's increasing aversion to the School Boards no doubt accounted for his refusal now to commit himself on their inclusion in new local education authorities.

Mr. Yoxall: "Does not the Committee of Council decline to adopt the recommendations?"

Sir John Gorst: "They have no direct power to decline to recommend these bodies, and they have no power to prescribe the exact proportion of representatives of School Boards".

Mr. Flower: "Will they recommend in any case the adoption of the proposal of the Royal Commission?"

Sir John Gorst: "I could not undertake that they will advise a fixed proportion of such representatives. The Committee of Council always advise the organisations to have representatives of School boards, but sometimes there are no School Boards engaged in science and art instruction to be represented".¹

Fortunately for Gorst, a question which would have forced him to disclose his attitudes to the School Boards was ruled out of order by the Speaker, and the grilling ceased, for the time being.

Support for Gorst's general concept about the structure for new local education authorities was provided by the Duke of Devonshire some three weeks later, when he introduced the Board of Education Bill in the House of Lords. By referring frequently to the better aspects of the 1896 Bill, and more especially to the concept of local authorities embodied in it,² the Duke made out a substantial case for the establishment of a new central authority. In so doing, he also looked favourably upon the effects of Clause VII; and this led to some criticism of the possible illegality of the school boards' ventures into the field of secondary education:

¹ 4 Hansard, 61, c. 328 (July 8, 1898).

² "I believe, ... , that the principle, ... adopted in the Bill of 1896, was a sound principle - that local authorities should be created, and that much should be left to their discretion", 4 Hansard, 63, c. 670 (August 1, 1898).

"They [new local authorities] would have had to deal with school boards as to the higher grade schools, many of which are practically giving secondary education ...

"... it is impossible to distinguish between ordinary elementary schools and the higher grade schools, or to state with any approach to accuracy what amount of public money derived either from the Exchequer or from the rates is now being applied by school boards to what is practically secondary education.

"We have ... the school board, with no statutory authority, extending the operation of elementary and evening schools, under the evening school code, into the region of science and art, and applying the rates to that purpose".¹

These not too heavily veiled hints to the School Boards were interspersed amongst his speech, as were comments about their schools which were designed to help in the deflation of the Boards' growing pride about their achievements: "We all desire to see the establishment of a sound system of secondary schools, which shall be open alike to the most promising students from the elementary schools, and to the middle classes generally".² If the school boards in their expansionist mood had forgotten the origin of the majority of their pupils and the hierarchical structure of Victorian society, this sharp reminder indicated that the Government had not.

The general tone of Devonshire's speech indicated amongst other things that there now existed a rapport between himself and Gorst, at least in the way the organisation of education should develop. No doubt this

¹Ibid., c. 668-672.

²Ibid., c. 673.

recognition of his views by one member of the Cabinet, of some standing with Balfour, may have strengthened Gorst's resolve to become more open in his views about the School Boards and, also, to develop his attack upon them. An opportunity to do so presented itself, four days after the Duke's speech, when the House was in Committee on Supply: "On the vote to complete the sum of £600,781 for salaries and expenses of the Department of Science and Art".¹

J.H. Yoxall, in opening the debate, elaborated on the theme that the School Boards should be represented in the new local authorities set up under Clause VII. He felt that the arrangements for the new authorities already established:

"... has not been a good one at all, and that it has caused considerable feeling which is far from inducing friendly co-operation in any given area between the persons having to deal with secondary and technical instruction".²

These arrangements he felt were the result of the Science and Art Department's policy; one which he saw as: "... a despairing effort to retain to itself the central authority", since "In order to do that they have started to hold public inquiries, which differ from those which they used to hold in the fact that they are conducted more privately".³ Obviously Yoxall believed that cloak-and-dagger methods were being used to conceal more sinister purposes.

¹4 Hansard, 64, c. 352 (August 5, 1898).

²*Ibid.*, c. 353.

³*Ibid.*, c. 354.

Gorst, however, saw the other side of the coin as far as the implementation of Clause VII was concerned:

"The friction in the administration of the Act has arisen from one quarter. It was not a spontaneous objection, but an organised objection by a body called the Association of School Boards, which has entirely misapprehended the purpose of this clause, and which has disseminated a good deal of misleading information to its constituent School Boards".¹

He went on to consider the positions of the two overlapping authorities, concerned in the carrying out of Clause VII's provisions:

"You have the technical instruction committees of the town council which possess statutory authority under the Technical Instruction Act to provide technical instruction, which includes science and art education for the people. They have funds at their disposal, ... and they have also a limited power of rating. Then you have got the School Boards, which have no statutory authority whatever in regard to science and art education, and which have never been recognised by the Science and Art Department, but have the control of the elementary schools and the higher grade schools, that are the natural feeders of the science and art schools".²

But, having stated the position as he saw it, Gorst then tried to placate the Boards' supporters: "I would not do anything to prevent the provision of higher grade education, of science and art education, or of secondary education in these districts by these bodies". Better that the two authorities should work together, "... in concert and union ... rather than in discord and rivalry", - and preferably on a joint plan of post-elementary education.³ As

¹Ibid., c. 360.

²Ibid., c. 362.

³Ibid.

far as the idea had gained ground that the Science and Art Department was engaged in a "... dark conspiracy ... to interfere with higher education", he was, "... not conscious of it. I have never heard of such a thing. I have no idea whatever that there is ... any desire whatever to curtail the operations of School Boards in the provision of higher education for the people".¹

In answering a query at the end of this part of the debate, by Ernest Gray, about what would happen to educational bodies who disregarded the advice of the Science and Art Department on the establishment of a new authority, Gorst's non-committal reply was slightly ominous:

"If the authorities want to slight and disregard our advice and insist upon having some body which is not generally acceptable to the people of the district, I will not say what might be done, for such a case has not yet occurred".²

The time, however, was fast approaching when such a case did present itself and the educational world could observe what would be done.

Gorst's 'autumn campaign' began with a talk on, "The Incapacity of Parliamentary Government to Effect Social Reform", to the students' union at the London School of Economics and Political Science - the Webbs' 'child'.³ The general tone of his speech was humorous, but, nonetheless, some thoughts about his general treatment by the Government

¹Ibid., c. 363-4.

²Ibid., c. 365.

³Webb, B., op. cit., p. 241.

came to the surface, especially when he was discussing the roles played by Ministers:

"He would accept the unbounded faith which the general public had in the extraordinary ability of Ministers. [Laughter.] He would merely point out that these abilities were general and not special ... there was an even greater evil. Those political officials were not influenced either in administrative or legislative reforms by their own views. If they were at liberty to carry out what they themselves thought was right and just, he ventured to say much better measures would be put before the country and carried into practical operation. But their opinions and judgements were limited - first of all by Parliamentary possibilities - by what was possible in Parliament - and also by the expectations and the desires of the electors".¹

Speaking at Liverpool nine days later, Gorst turned his attention to two educational matters. The first of these, the problem of school attendance and half-timers, had been the basis of his speech at Sheffield the day before. He devoted, however, the major part of his time to the second issue, that of the struggle going on over the implementation of Clause VII. In his discussion of it Gorst was more hostile to the School Boards than he had been in the House:

"Of the two great authorities named the Technical Instruction Committee was the only one which had any statutory mandate from Parliament to engage in education.² The School Board had no statutory authority to deal with anything except elementary education".

And he went on to blame them for the opposition being created to the working of Clause VII:

"... it was extremely to be regretted that in so many places School Boards had set themselves in direct opposition to the operation of the section and had refused to entertain any proposal for voluntary combination with other local educational authorities".

¹The Times, October 20, 1898.

²Gorst meant post-elementary education.

Gorst also did not disguise the fact that his ultimate aim was: "... to see the day when there would be in every district one sole authority responsible to the people and possessing its confidence which would arrange the whole of the education, elementary and secondary".¹ He did, however, point out that the arrangements possible under Clause VII did allow:

"the people who understood the needs of their own districts to devise, in each place, a scheme by which the same authority would be created to exercise a general supervision over the education in that district".²

This lack of confidence in the central authority became the focal point of a speech he made at Cambridge a fortnight later. It was that authority's detachment from the hard facts of contemporary life which Gorst believed made them unfit to govern:

"They who had been engaged a long time in political life know what blunders, what unutterable blunders were made with the very best intentions by the very best men in legislation in the doctrines which they promulgated through pure ignorance of the conditions of the people whose interests and whose welfare they really desired to consult ...".³

Two days later he gave vent, in a similar tone, to his thoughts about the unsuitability of the School Boards as the local governing bodies of education: "... the School Boards must give up the position that they were the exclusive authority, chosen by the people to manage education".⁴ For

¹The Times, October 29, 1898.

²Ibid.

³The Times, November 16, 1898.

⁴The Times, November 18, 1898.

they were, he believed, becoming the stumbling block to progress in the organisation of post-elementary education. The reverse, however, was true of the county councils, as he indicated:

"In counties there would be no difficulty, for the councils were armed with legal power to provide education in almost everything which constituted higher education, except Latin and Greek. The ground was clear for them, as they had no rivals, and they had only to devise a plan".¹

He hoped, therefore, that in the county boroughs, voluntary agreements would be arranged between council and Board. But, he warned, the Science and Art Department had: "... no power to compel such agreements ... nor had it power to dictate the terms on which they could be made".²

This flexibility of planning pleased his audience on the platform, who were representatives of the L.C.C. Technical Education Board, for Sir Joshua Fitch commented, after Gorst had finished, that if the Government, "... took up the question of secondary education, [they] would find the work of the London County Council full of suggestion and valuable help".³

Gorst was to develop what he considered to be a suitable voluntary arrangement in the formation of new local authorities twelve days later, when he attended the annual prize-giving of the Foundation School, Whitechapel Road.

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

Gorst indicated that he felt that the body which was best suited to initiate the formation of a new local authority was the Technical Instruction Committee: "... because the legislature nearly ten years ago endowed them with the power to provide for the people of their district, not only technical instruction, but also commercial education and teaching in modern languages". But, in the setting up of the authority, the committee would be wise:

"... not merely to carry out a scheme of their own, but to enlist for the common benefit of the district ... all the agencies which were working within that district ... He felt quite confident that if the leaders of the county and county borough councils and the leaders of the School Boards and the trustees of endowed schools and of the great charities which existed in some parts of the country sat down together at a sort of round table conference, animated by the common desire to arrive at some solution of the difficulty, they would succeed in their efforts in 99 cases out of 100".¹

The important fact was that it was to be the technical instruction committees who were to be the initiators, and chairmen of the discussions: the School Boards were lumped together with other minority groups in the area. This bias of interpretation must have given heart to the London Technical Education Board who had just decided to apply for recognition under Clause VII; a fact which Gorst indicated to his audience: "... he believed the metropolis itself was actually now engaged in considering how a plan ... could best be devised".² What Gorst could not have pos-

¹The Times, November 30, 1898.

²Ibid.

sibly been aware of was the magnitude of the struggle that was to emerge between the County Council and the School Board of London over this application.

It has been seen that Gorst's attitude towards the School Boards, as expressed in his speeches during the autumn of 1898, underwent a change from guarded disapproval to overt hostility over their actions in the field of secondary education, as well as their lack of co-operation in forming new local authorities. Hand in hand with this increasing hostility, Gorst made more open declarations about the suitability of county and county borough council technical instruction committees as the basis of the new education authorities. This reached its most outspoken form in a speech he made at Cambridge on December 10, where he made no reference whatsoever to School Boards when discussing the composition of new local education authorities:

"Another essential was that there must be some local authority. They now had technical instruction committees of the county council. These had already done a great deal of very sound work; they were, in his opinion, a body capable of understanding the wants of their particular neighbourhoods, and, with a little more money and a little more legal power, they might be developed into a very satisfactory education authority".¹

Halevy has proposed that there were two possible reasons why Gorst demonstrated this change of attitude. Firstly, "... the obduracy of the school boards" in not participating in the voluntary formation of the new authorities - in spite of Gorst's pronouncements in favour

¹The Times, December 12, 1898.

of this during the first nine months of 1898 - caused Gorst to "... lose heart".¹ This seems a more likely possibility than the second cause advanced, i.e. "... did the pressure brought to bear on the government departments by the educational reformers, or possibly by the Anglicans, finally prove too strong?".² All the available evidence tends to contradict this. Gorst's attitude towards the School Boards' forays into secondary education had briefly emerged in his speech at Birmingham in November, 1897.³ Since then he had taken a characteristically independent line of thought on these educational matters which remained unaltered, as far as one can see, in spite of various criticisms - notably of his speeches of April 19 and June 17. In fact, the evidence appears to show that in the latter half of the year other members of the Education Department were tending towards agreement with Gorst's line of thought, in particular the Duke of Devonshire and Robert Morant.⁴

As far as Halevy's first suggestion is concerned, the obduracy of the School Boards over the issue may have resulted in Gorst's swing away from them. But it must be

¹Halevy, E., op. cit., p. 196.

²Ibid., p. 196-7.

³See above, p.285.

⁴Devonshire's speeches of July 12 and August 1, indicated support for Gorst and his ideas; Morant's article on Swiss Education (see below) revealed a close similarity of thought about the work of the English School Boards with Gorst's.

noted that the change in his attitude towards them increased in momentum during the autumn of 1898, i.e. after the first reading of the Board of Education Bill. It may have been that Gorst saw, with the Bill's implementation, the need for strong, or cohesive, local education authorities to complement the new central authority. But as long as the School Boards and voluntary schools were competing in the elementary education sphere, and whilst conflict between the Boards and county and borough councils remained in secondary education, little effective progress could be made towards the achievement of these cohesive units. The possible illegality of the Boards' work in secondary education provided an opportunity for restricting their activities,¹ and also for bringing them more into line with the voluntary schools. This would enable the councils to become established as the secondary education authorities for a long enough period, so that when the need arose for comprehensive local education authorities covering the fields of both elementary and secondary education, they would be the logical choice. The evidence for this hypothesis partially resides in Gorst's speeches during the autumn, and also in the drafting of a Bill, for the local authority for secondary education, which took place during the first week of December, 1898.

The original planning of this Bill by Gorst appears to have taken place in some secrecy, for Kekewich was

¹By challenging the Boards in a court of law.

caught unawares by the receipt of a letter from the Chief Parliamentary Counsel, Sir Courtenay Ilbert:

"Will you 'regularise' matters by getting the Treasury to send us formal instructions for the preparation of the Bill which I have drawn up at the request of Sir John Gorst?".¹ The bewildered Kekewich wrote to Gorst: "I don't know what this Bill is - the Duke sent me a copy of a Bill about the Local Authority for Secondary Education. What shall I do about this Bill?".²

Gorst informed Kekewich that Ilbert's request should be carried out, and H.W. Orange duly wrote to the Treasury:

"I am directed by the Vice-President ... to request you to be so good as to instruct the Parliamentary Counsel to prepare a Bill for introduction by him into the House of Commons next session, to the following effect:-

"To make better provisions for the application and administration by the Councils of Counties and County Boroughs of money granted to those Counties and County Boroughs under Section 1 of the Local Taxation (Customs & Excise) Act 1890. The Bill should provide:

- "(1) that the residue paid under this section to any county or borough fund must be expended on the purposes of education other than elementary.
- "(2) that it shall be administered by the council through an education committee appointed in accordance with a scheme approved by the Education Department".³

This Bill was not proceeded with as events rapidly overtook it and obviated the necessity for it. But it does

¹P.R.O. Ed. 24/42D. C.P. Ilbert to G.W. Kekewich, December 5, 1898.

²Ibid., G.W. Kekewich to J.E. Gorst, December 5, 1898.

³Ibid., H.W. Orange to H.M. Treasury, December 7, 1898.

indicate that Gorst was obviously determined that only the technical instruction committees should become the new secondary education authorities. To ensure this the councils were no longer going to have the option to spend the 'whisky money' on secondary education; it was to become compulsory.

Two events, one minor and one major, occurred during October, 1898, which were, by December of that year, to help Gorst in his campaign for the establishment of the county and borough councils as the new local education authorities.

The minor of these was the completion of a report on the Swiss educational system by Robert Morant.¹ The report was, by any standards, a remarkable document; for not only did it provide a comprehensive and analytical survey of the Swiss system, but it also made a devastating comparison of the English system with that of the Swiss. It is this latter fact, plus the attack made on the activities of School Boards with regard to higher grade schools, that has ensured the permanence of the report in the annals of educational history.

Morant's biographer² has rightly been rebuked by Eaglesham³ for his description of Morant's references in the

¹Morant, R.L., 'The National Organisation of Education of all grades as practised in Switzerland', Special Reports on Educational Subjects [c. 8988], 3. 1898, p. 1-82.

²B.M. Allen.

³Eaglesham, E.J.R., From School Board to Local Authority, p. 116.

report to the illegality of rate expenditure upon higher grade schools by School Boards as, "... those few sentences and (the) small footnote, hidden away ..." and the implication that they were forbidden topics.¹ For, as Eaglesham has indicated:

"... no one reading this report with an open mind could accuse Morant of conspiratorial intentions; one cannot fairly call a man Guy Fawkes if he drives up to the House of Commons in an enemy tank with a machine-gun firing".²

Morant's report was littered with denunciations of the English system to such an extent that it, "... might almost have been entitled 'The Absurdities of English Education' as illustrated by the Comparative Excellence of the Swiss System".³ Like Gorst, Morant was horrified at the administrative chaos existent in England:

"... where not only are local authorities for each different grade of education usually either non-existent or else lacking in coordination of effort, but even the Central Authority has wholly separate branches for some grades of schools, and absolutely no department at all for others".⁴

Unlike Gorst, however, the solution to this problem, Morant believed, lay in the establishment of a powerful central authority:

"... central control is the very first essential to the permanent existence of a democratic State ... without this 'control by knowledge' in the sphere of public education of all grades just as in other spheres of national life, a democratic

¹Allen, B.M., Sir Robert Morant, p. 122.

²Eaglesham, E.J.R., op. cit., p. 117.

³Eaglesham, E.J.R., 'Morant on the March (1895-1901): A Great Administrator's Earlier Educational Assumptions', Yearbook of Education, 1957, p. 221.

⁴Morant, R.L., op. cit., p. 31.

State must inevitably be beaten in the international struggle for existence, conquered from without by the force of the concentrated directing brain power of competing nations, and shattered from within by the centrifugal forces of her own people's unrestrained individualism".¹

He also made it clear that one example of the effects of such unrestrained individualism had been shown by the School Boards:

"... many School Boards have desired to improve their higher Elementary Education and to extend its scope by providing Day Schools of a higher grade; but they have frequently been told by the Central Authority that they cannot take any such steps as would involve the School Board in any expense for this purpose, that it would be illegal to spend their rates in such a manner, inasmuch as they were only empowered by the Act of 1870 to use the rates to provide Elementary Education".²

Especially when their actions were compared with the enfeebled county and borough councils:

"both ... are unable under the Acts of 1889-91 (except in Wales) to aid or provide Secondary Education, as such, at all, unless they can veil their efforts under the form of aid to Technical Instruction only".³

Morant thus wanted to see established in England a system of educational administration in which the cogs interlocked as a completely integrated machine under the control of the State:

"... To realise the relative values, for the life of the nation of each of the various grades of education, is in itself an immeasurable achievement: and to embody that realisation in practical measure and in proportionate expenditure is a national benefit of the first magnitude".⁴

¹Ibid., p. 24.

²Ibid., p. 47.

³Ibid., p. 47-8.

⁴Ibid., p. 63.

Many educational historians have seen in this report of Morant's the initial step in the attack on the School Boards which was to result in the Cockerton case.¹ Such a point of view, however, ignores the evidence that Gorst had already initiated the events which culminated in the Cockerton case during the autumn of 1896. He had also started to publicly decry the illegal activities of the school boards in secondary education in 1897, and had received the support of the Duke of Devonshire in this. Thus Morant's article, in so far as its treatment of School Boards was concerned, did not break new ground. In fact it supported the general views which Gorst had been propounding since he became Vice-President, about the need for rationalisation of the administrative structure. When the events of the Cockerton affair are considered it is difficult to ascertain the significance of the report. At the most it can only be considered to be minor in view of the fact that it did not break new ground, and also that it was unlikely to have come to Gorst's attention before the final sequence of events in the affair was started.² It only helped Gorst in that it substantiated his thoughts on the subject but, apart from this, it would appear that Morant's report, and indeed his role in the affair, has been magnified with the advantage provided by hindsight of his later career, as well as general ignorance about Gorst's.

¹See, Allen, B.M. op. cit., p. 121-131; Van der Eyken, W., op. cit., p. 72; Grier, L., op. cit., p. 72-74.

²Morant's report was not published until after the confrontation between the London County Council and London School Board had commenced.

The second, and major, event occurred when the Technical Education Board of the London County Council decided to apply for recognition, under Clause VII of the Science and Art Directory, as the body responsible for science and art instruction in London. The first step taken was to ascertain whether the schools which would come under the aegis of the authority would assent to the County Council rather than the School Board being that body. This was carried out by Dr. William Garnett, towards the end of October 1898, and the reply from Mr. Francis Black of the Camden School of Art and others was in the affirmative:

"Replying to your circular letter of the 25th instant, we, the undersigned headmasters and mistresses of Metropolitan Schools of Art, in conferences assembled, beg to say (without consulting our committee), that it is highly probable that our institutions would be willing to come within the organisation that it is proposed to establish.

"We venture, moreover, to express the hope that this event will be speedily consummated, for we know of no other local authority capable of so effectively coping with the multifarious phases of Secondary Art Education.

"... and we venture to hope that should the important 'Trust' of the future welfare of the Art schools of the metropolis be consolidated in the hands of your Board, this nearer approach of the schools to their responsible head will result in far greater good to the community of this vast metropolis".¹

Similar replies were also received from the London polytechnics, technical institutes, day schools, etc., by

¹Department of Science and Art: Accounts and Papers, P.P. 1899 (121), LXXV, p. 1028. F. Black to W. Garnett, October 29, 1898.

the latter half of November.¹ Under their chairman, a Liberal M.P., Edward Bond,² the Technical Education Board came to the conclusion, by the end of the month, that: "... such recognition would conduce greatly to better organisation and improvement of the teaching in the schools receiving aid from this Board".³

But, in view of the 'considerable importance of the matter' the Board did not want to proceed with the application without the sanction of the Council. The Board's resolution signifying its willingness to become the new authority was, therefore, passed to the General Purposes Committee for consideration. The London School Board representatives on the Technical Education Board were, naturally, alarmed at hearing this proposal and the School Board requested a meeting with the Council prior to that of the General Purposes Committee. The County Council acceded to the request and representatives from the School Board -

¹Ibid., p. 1024. C.J. Stewart to Sir John Donnelly, December 22, 1898. See also p. 1027.

²Surprising that a Liberal M.P. should make a move against the School Board, but Canon Barnett seemed to appreciate Bond's motives for doing so, as well as Gorst's "... On Wednesday we had an interesting dinner - Gorst, Bond, Sargent and Macdonald with others. There was talk about education and as Bond is Chairman of the Technical Education Board, the talk was with knowledge. Opinion went against School Boards - 'Why should they not control education?' said the School Board man. 'Because of the elementary teacher' said Bond and Gorst. The answer was convincing. An ad hoc board must fall under the army of its own officials ...". Canon Barnett to Frank Barnett, 1899, quoted in Barnett, H.O., op. cit., p. 27.

³P.P. 1899, LXXV, p. 1027. Adjourned Report of the Technical Education Board.

including Lord Reay (Chairman), Lyulph Stanley (Vice-Chairman), G. Wallas and T.J. Macnamara - met Bond and other Council representatives on December 14.¹

The School Board wanted:

"a postponement of the proposed notification under Clause VII, until the Government shall have dealt with the problem of secondary education, upon the ground that, in their view, such application, if granted, would have the effect of prejudicing the question of the composition of any secondary education authority for London which might hereafter be established by Parliament".²

The Council representatives, however, rejected this proposition on the grounds that they did not think that their proposed application would have this effect. They, therefore, recommended to the General Purposes Committee:

"(.. we feel) that we cannot advise the Council to neglect this opportunity of acquiring useful powers which affect technical education only, and which will simplify the co-ordination of schools which are already largely supported by the Council's grants".³

They also felt that it should be the Council itself rather than the Technical Education Board which should make the application, on the ground that it was actually the Council which received Parliamentary moneys in respect of technical education, rather than the technical education board; a point of view with which Bond agreed.

These recommendations were accepted by the General Purposes Committee at their meeting on Tuesday, December 20th, and the application to the Department of Science and Art was

¹ Ibid., p. 1025.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

sent two days later to Sir John Donnelly. The School Board had, however, sent a letter to Donnelly, two days earlier, pointing out that, but for the, "... repeated statements of the Lord President of the Council and of the Vice-President", that there should be voluntary agreements between school boards and councils in the establishment of the new authority, they "... might themselves have applied under the same clause for recognition".

The Board indicated, "... that the proposed recognition of the London County Council under Clause VII is not acceptable to the School Board, but that on the contrary they have many strong objections to urge against it". Their plea ended with the hope that an inquiry would be held in which, "... the School Board will have an opportunity of being heard in opposition to the application and of submitting their views".¹

Donnelly's reply to both bodies was sent on January 14, inviting them to an inquiry to be held in the Board Room at South Kensington at 3 p.m. on January 27.² In the event, however, the inquiry took place on February 1. The School Board had also, however, taken the opportunity of producing a memorial for the Duke of Devonshire, in the event of Donnelly refusing to hold an inquiry. The sheer length of the document would have been almost a sufficient guarantee that Devonshire would not have read it.³

¹Ibid., p. 1023. G.H. Croad to Sir John Donnelly, December 20, 1898.

²Ibid., p. 1031-2. Sir John Donnelly to Clerks of London County Council and London School board, January 14, 1899.

³See Kekewich, G.W., op. cit., p. 95.

The first part of the document was taken up with quotations from the speeches of Gorst and Devonshire to demonstrate that they, the official heads of the departments involved, had stated their willingness to see voluntary agreements between Boards and councils in the cases of implementation of Clause VII. The Board also claimed the historical precedent of sanction to their activities by previous Presidents, Vice-Presidents and secretaries:

"The School Board for London, without attempting to define precisely the boundaries of Elementary and Secondary education, submit that the limits of the former have been more and more generously extended of late years by successive heads of the Education Department possibly because no satisfactory system of Secondary Education exists, or from the fact that, in any case, a border land must exist, in which both systems would naturally operate.

"Higher Grade schools and Schools of Science have been created and maintained in many cases by School Boards, not merely with the assent of the Education Department, but by their direct encouragement and Presidents and Vice-presidents and the Secretary of the Education Department have for more than twenty years taken part in the opening of these schools, and have spoken words of encouragement to their promoters".¹

In making such a statement, the School Board was undoubtedly correct in its facts.² There was an historical

¹P.P. 1899, LXXV, p. 1033.

²This had been implicit in a private memorandum circulated by Acland in 1894. "... but so far as is known to the Education Department, no objection is usually taken to any expenditure however advanced a curriculum in a School which is recognised by the Education Department as a Public Elementary School". P.R.O. Ed. 24/7, Paper C, The present connexion of the Education Department with Secondary Education. Quoted in Holmes, G.M., 'The Parliamentary and Ministerial Career of A.H.D. Acland, 1886-97'. Durham Research Review, IV. September, 1964, p. 134. The question of legality of the School Boards' activities had been raised regularly since at least 1879 (Times Weekly Edition, August 1, 1879), in and out of the House, but had been consistently ignored by the Parliamentary heads and civil servants of the Education Department.

precedent for their actions but this was a weak one to wave in the face of a person who had only recently been referring to the questionable legality of such actions, and whose political colleague had obviously been unearthing facts in the previous year about the legal position, and who was determined to break with the past.

The main case upon which the School Board was to rest its objections at the inquiry - the interpretation of the Education Code (1890) Act, 1890, only received passing mention in the memorial:

"The School Board for London would remind your Grace that, by the Education Code Act, 1890, the word 'elementary' disappears from the limitations of School Board work in Evening Continuation Schools. Your Grace has referred to the want of Statutory Authority for School Boards to earn grants under the Science and Art Department. No local authority, and no group of managers has statutory authority to earn such grants. It is the absolute power of the Science and Art Department to work by minutes, which are not laid before Parliament, like the Education Code, which enables that office to take the action to which the School Board is now objecting".¹

But the independent attitude of the Board that was to cause alarm in Gorst at the inquiry, emerged towards the end of the memorial:

"Whether a class receives grant from the Science and Art Department or not the School Board will undoubtedly do what they can to secure for all the poorer classes of London the fullest opportunities for self-improvement in the various branches taught in their evening schools ...".²

¹P.P. 1899, LXXV, p. 1035.

²Ibid., p. 1036.

The expression of such attitudes, coupled with the Board's claim to its right in the field of secondary education in this memorial, if it had been sent, would have been to produce a similar reaction undoubtedly in the Lords of the Committee of Council as the inquiry did.

The six representatives of the London County Council at the inquiry included Edward Bond and William Garnett, whilst the seven of the School Board contained Lyulph Stanley and Macnamara. Other representatives included Sir Philip Magnus and Dr. R.P. Scott.

Garnett had sent a memorandum to Donnelly, prior to the inquiry, indicating the illegalities committed by the Board in the running of its day schools and also dealing with the interpretation of the Education Code (1890) Act which had been postulated in a letter to The Times.¹ Donnelly was thus well briefed to meet the tactics of the School Board.

Lyulph Stanley, as the Board's chief spokesman, contended that:

"... for all grades and types of Education within the County of London the School Board was an authority superior to the County Council for ... the rate which could be raised under the precept of the School Board was unlimited and, since the passing of the Code Act of 1890, was applicable to all grades and subjects of Education, including University and Technical Education, in evening and day schools".²

¹Garnett, W., 'A Retrospect. How the County Council became the Local Education Authority for London', Educational Record, April, 1929, p. 753; Allen, B.M., Memoir of William Garnett, p. 80-85.

²Garnett, W., op. cit.

Garnett countered, for the Council, with the statement that the title of the Act, upon which Stanley laid great store, in fact only made operative certain articles of the 1890 Education Code, since certain articles in that Code had been found to be contrary to the 1870 Act. The Board replied that, like the marginals, the title of an Act was not in fact part of an Act.¹ Garnett did not agree, and had in fact made out a substantial case to this effect in his memorandum to Donnelly.² Macnamara then took up the running for the Board, and stated that if the application of the Council was granted then the Board would open more new institutions, in the vicinity of existing Council-run ones, with a view to increasing the overlapping problem between the two authorities.³ If Gorst, in spite of his own convictions, had been uncertain about reaching a decision on the respective claims of the council and the Board, the general tone of the speeches of Stanley and Macnamara proved to be a deciding factor.⁴

Garnett claimed that the decision to approve the application of the County Council was made in Gorst's rooms in

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Allen, B.M., *Memoir of William Garnett*, p. 86.

⁴Gorst's feelings about the School Board's obstructionist tactics are revealed in one of Canon Barnett's letters. Although Barnett has dated the letter February 5, 1898, the contents indicate that it should in all likelihood be 1899: "Gorst spent the night with us. He is as despondent as ever and is now angry that Stanley and the School Board people are blocking his attempts to establish educational authorities under his Science and Art Department". Barnett Papers, F/BAR/183, Canon Barnett to Frank Barnett, February 5, 1898.

Whitehall immediately after the close of the inquiry. It seems rather curious that Gorst should have repaired to the Education Department, when he had his own room at South Kensington in which to discuss the matter with Garnett, Donnelly and Kekewich. This notwithstanding, a delay occurred in the publication of the decision, for it was decided to seek Cabinet approval as a result of the possible effects such a decision might initiate. It was, consequently, not until February 14 that the Council and School Board were notified, and by that time other steps against the School Board's activities had been initiated by Gorst.

In view of Gorst's legal training and experience, plus his period of office as Solicitor-General, it is rather difficult to believe Garnett's account of how these anti-School Board measures were initiated:

"After the close of the formal meeting at Whitehall the Vice-President pointed out to the writer that it was impossible for the Education Department to carry out their duties if they did not know the meaning of the Acts which they had to administer. The interpretation put upon the Code Act of 1890 by the School Board was, he said, new to the Department, and he asked how an authoritative interpretation of that Act could best be obtained. The answer, of course, was that it was the function of the High Court to interpret an Act of Parliament ...".¹

Even if one discounts Gorst's legal background, the very fact that he had the year previously been rummaging in the departmental archives looking for examples of School Board illegalities; that he had had, as a member of his 1896 South Kensington Committee, Sir Henry Roscoe, who had initiated

¹Garnett, W., op. cit., p. 754.

the questions of the Bryce Commission upon the legality of the School Boards' activities in post-elementary education which had resulted in the statement that they could be challenged in a court of law;¹ and that Gorst had read Garnett's memorandum, plus, possibly, Morant's on Swiss Education - then all these facts would tend to erode the credibility of Garnett's account. The account was written thirty years after the event and it would appear that Garnett had, with the passage of time, muddled the bias of the discussions, i.e. rather than Gorst asking naive questions, the questions put by Gorst were used as a check against his own conclusions about the matter before putting them into action.

At this same meeting it was decided between Gorst and Garnett that the best way of getting the matter into the High Court: "... was to obtain a surcharge on the School Board by the District Auditor, against which the School Board would be sure to appeal". The problem about this solution was the difficulty of, first, finding a cheque drawn by the School Board which was only connected with an illegal payment, for: "... it was held by the School Boards, and apparently accepted by the District Auditors, that unless the precise amount of illegal payments were ascertained, no surcharge could be made on the signatories of a cheque". There was also, secondly, the fact that, "only a ratepayer could appeal to the District Auditor and that the members of the

¹P.P. 1895, XLIII [c. 7862] Vol. III, p. 494-497.

Governing Bodies of nearly all the schools affected by the policy of the School Board could only act in their private capacity, a very invidious and troublesome task".¹

Contact between Gorst and Bond shortly after this meeting resolved the problems. Bond contacted Francis Black, the headmaster of the Camden School of Art, who not only agreed to act as the ratepayer in bringing the issue before the District Auditor, but also found not one but two cheques in the School Board's account, of questionable legality. The cheques were for payment of local fees, by members of the School Board, for the examination of School Board pupils by the Science and Art Department i.e. for subjects not covered by the Education Code issued by the Education Department and, therefore, technically of a non-elementary nature.

Black enlisted the aid of F.W. Hales, a solicitor and member of the school's governing body, and together they brought the issue to the attention of T.B. Cockerton, the District Auditor, in March, 1899. This had been done after Gorst had arranged to be publicly questioned in the House so that he could indicate his, and therefore the official, sanction for such an action being made:

Mr. Bousfield (Hackney, N.): "I beg to ask the Vice-President ... whether complaints have been received by the Science and Art Department from Schools of Art or from Science and Art classes connected with the Department to the effect that their efficiency is crippled and their existence imperilled by the competition of free classes providing advanced instruction in Science and Art, and established and maintained by the School Board for London, in con-

¹Ibid., p. 755.

travention of Clause VII of the Department's Directory; and whether he is aware of the statutory authority enabling school boards to charge upon the school fund any portion of the cost of instruction given to pupils who are not earning Parliamentary grants in accordance with the Minutes of the Education Department, but are registered in day or evening schools under the Department of Science and Art?".

Sir John Gorst: "Yes, such representations have been received. The Committee of Council on Education have always been of opinion that the school fund cannot legally be applied to supply instruction which is not under the day school or evening school Code of the Education Department. This opinion of the Committee of Council was communicated to the London School Board in a letter from the Department of Science and Art of 20th January, 1888".¹

Four days later one of Lord Salisbury's sons, Evelyn Cecil, asked the President of the Local Government Board, Henry Chaplin, in the House, when School Board expenditure could be challenged. Chaplin's reply would have bolstered Black and Hales' resolution:

"The audit of the accounts for the half-year ended September 29th. last, is now in progress and whilst it continues any ratepayer may at any time attend to object to any payment in the accounts. Moreover the auditor would be willing to make a special appointment to hear any such objection, if application is made to him for the purpose before the audit is closed".²

Hales seems to have found such encouragement in these statements, plus an article published anonymously in

¹ 4 Hansard, 66, c. 1091, (February 16, 1899.) The letter was in fact, from the Education Department, under the Secretary's signature (P. Cumin), and warned that it was illegal to use School Board rates for Science and Art instruction to children not in the standards, or to mix the accounts of such instruction with the accounts of the Public Elementary School. PRO. Ed. 24/83, 32.

² Ibid., c. 1446, (February 20, 1899.)

Education on March 4, by Garnett, on the illegality of School Board expenditure, that he decided to challenge, by himself, the total expenditure of the School Board on its evening schools.¹ Thus when he and Black presented themselves before the auditor, T. Barclay Cockerton, there was not one but two issues for Cockerton to decide upon. The complexity of the matters involved three appearances by Black and Hales before Cockerton, the first being on April 26. It was not, therefore, until June that Cockerton reached his decisions about the School Board's activities. He decided for the Board in connection with their expenditure on evening schools, but found against them in the case of the two cheques. He, therefore, surcharged the members of the Board with the expenditure which they had sanctioned in the cheques. The School Board objected to this decision and decided to lodge an appeal in the Court of Queen's Bench, as Gorst and Garnett had hoped and anticipated that they would.² The appeal was not heard until December 5, by which time the initiator of the events culminating in this was engaged in other activities. He could, however, stand back and watch as events proceeded in the manner he desired, and achievement of his aims was becoming more of a possibility.

¹Eaglesham, E.J.R., From School Board to Local Authority, p. 120.; Allen, B.M. Memoirs of William Garnett, p. 91-3.

²Ibid.; See also, Garnett, W., op. cit., p. 755.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The beginning of 1899 saw Gorst's participation in the events which resulted in the Cockerton case. It also found him involved in a completely separate educational matter i.e. the problems of wage-earning school children and school attendance. Gorst's examination of these problems resulted in the social reforming aspect of his character coming to the fore in his campaign about them. He did not restrict his energies to occasions outside the House, but, in his inimitable fashion, made it the focal point of his parliamentary speeches during the session. His attention and time were, however, diverted from the issue by the events generated by the Cockerton affair at the end of the year. These occupied him fully for the next few years, until the 1902 Bill was passed, but then he was free to return to the total problem of child welfare and throw himself wholeheartedly into the affair. This he did, and campaigned vigorously for reforms in this area of education.

Commenting upon a speech of Gorst's at Cambridge on December 11, 1898, the Review of Reviews stated that, "One of the most encouraging things to be noticed in the speeches of last month was the unexpected cheerfulness with which Sir John Gorst spoke on the problem of rural education in Cambridge".¹ In his treatment of the problem of age and attendance at schools, towards the end of this speech, Gorst

¹Review of Reviews, 19, January 2, 1899, p. 15.

was not endowed with the good nature ascribed to him:

"He had mentioned these matters in the House of Commons over and over again. He had said the same things at meetings: he had preached this question of age and attendance till he was almost in despair and indisposed to preach it any more. But the short facts of the case were these, and they could not be too earnestly taken to heart by all those who desired to see the education of the country improved. Of the children who ought to be on the register of elementary schools one in five never got on the books at all".¹

Speaking at the Bradford Mechanics' Institute a month later, Gorst used a more statistical approach in his treatment of the same subject. He indicated that although there were supposed to be five and a half million children attending elementary school:

"... there were 606,000 children not on the books at all and 928,000 absent on any given day, or a total of children not attending of 1,534,000. As head of the Education Department, he was a little ashamed to admit that there were no accurate statistics as to how many children were exempted by law, most unhappily, he thought, from attendance at school, but, so far as could be gathered, these did not number more than 400,000".²

Making allowances for the operation of the variety of bye-laws concerning school attendance, and the 'dunce's certificate' exemption from attendance, Gorst estimated that there were almost a million children not attending school who should have been. He labelled these unfortunates, the "derelict million", and, whereas at Cambridge Gorst had pointed out that not only the children but also the schools would suffer from this lack of attendance, at Bradford he

¹The Times, December 12, 1898.

²Ibid., January 12, 1899.

indicated another possible effect of their absence:

"... this was the class from which our criminals and paupers were mainly recruited. Between the ages of 5 and 14 they were surely reclaimable, but if nothing was done they grew up to require an enormous expenditure in police and magistrates and prisons in order to prevent them from preying on society. On the other hand, if they were reformed they would grow up into honest men and women, who would enrich the country in which they lived".¹

In the annual report for 1898 of the Committee of Council of Education, a brief mention was made of the problem of school children who were also wage earners, as the result of the findings of a Parliamentary Return.² Gorst's influence emerged in this part of the report:

"The statistics ... show that 147,349 children were known to be so employed. In some cases no reasonable objection could be raised to the nature or extent of the employment. In others it is palliated, though not excused, by the poverty of the parents. There remain cases, only too numerous, in which the educational welfare and even the bodily health of the children are evidently being sacrificed to parental selfishness or indifference".³

This comment upon the problem was mild in comparison with Gorst's examination of the same subject in his speech during the debate upon Supply on April 28; a speech which "... out-Manipured Manipur", according to Lucy:

"In the main Her Majesty's Ministers flee from the Treasury Bench when le gamin of the Government has innings. Tonight the First Lord of the Treasury and the Secretary of State for India were among the audience ... But Mr. Balfour managed by a subtle distinction to mark his relations with this par-

¹Ibid.

²Parliamentary Return, No. 205, 1899.

³Annual Report of the Committee of Council on Education, 1898-9, P.P. 1899, XX [c. 9400], p. 14.

ticular colleague. The place of the Leader of the House is immediately facing the brass-bound box. Sitting there he is the representative of the Established Government, of whom the colleague at the moment addressing the House is the authorised spokesman. Tonight Mr. Balfour, irresistibly drawn by curiosity as to what dreadful things the Vice-President ... might say, avoided his official seat, taking one lower down the Treasury Bench. He, the general in command, was there in mufti as it were. If anything compromising were said he was not joined in responsibility for its utterance, nor was he bound to take notice of it in his official capacity".¹

Gorst's speech was relatively short but, even so, he devoted four-fifths of his time to the problem of attendance and wage earning amongst school children. After praising the effect of raising the school leaving age achieved by Robson's Bill a month earlier, Gorst reminded the House of his speech on Supply in the previous session, and, in particular, of his comments about the physical state of children in elementary schools. These comments had been largely the result of conjecture on his part, although he had utilised information about schools in the south and east of London,² but now he could reveal the truth. His evidence was now provided by the above mentioned Parliamentary Return, which was, he admitted: "... a painful and disappointing return. It casts a very lurid light on the social condition of large classes of the population, and it propounds a most difficult social problem for Governments and Parliaments to ponder over".³

¹Lucy, H.W., A Diary of the Unionist Parliament, 1895-1900, p. 285-6.

²It may be that Gorst's thoughts had been reinforced from reading Charles Booth's Life and Labour of the People in London, as well as his conversations with Canon Barnett and others at Tonybee Hall.

³4 Hansard, 70, c. 833 (April 28, 1899).

This was in spite of the fact that the Return was not complete, due to misunderstanding on the part of the correspondents who were required to complete the questionnaire distributed by the Education Department to 20,002 elementary schools in England and Wales. Therefore, although the return provided the names of 144,000 children who were full-time students and were engaged in working for wages: "... this is only a part of the number of children so employed, and ... there are multitudes of children working in this way whose names do not appear in the return". The 'multitudes' included those who carried out casual or seasonal employment, as Gorst illustrated:

"During the hat-sewing season, which usually lasts from about February to Whitsuntide, many girls of all ages are employed, both before and after school hours, in sewing hats for their mothers. Some have been known to work from six a.m. to the time for coming to school, and again from school closing in the afternoon till bedtime".¹

Some children's occupations were not recorded because certain correspondents felt that: "as their occupations are not injurious to health, we do not suppose they come within the limits of your inquiry".² But those children who did, and whose occupations, conditions of working and wages were entered in the Return, provided Gorst with a fund of ammunition with which to jolt the House, and his own front bench particularly, into a more meaningful understanding of the conditions of their fellow countrymen's children. The

¹ Ibid., c. 834.

² Ibid., c. 835.

facts presented a ~~mini~~-sociological survey of the lives of working-class children at the end of the nineteenth century, and some of them equalled in pathos the findings of Booth, Rowntree and Mearns.¹

Just under a third of the total number of children covered by the Return were ten years old, or younger; a figure which included 131 children aged six or under.² Of these children, Gorst provided illustrations of their work which must have softened even the hardest of hearts in the House, if only momentarily:

"I find a little boy of six is engaged in peeling onions 29 hours a week for a weekly wage of 8d. ... There is a little boy engaged in pea picking at 1s.3d. a week, and the champion boy, who is under six years of age, works in a brickfield at brick-making and earns a wage of 3s.6d. a week. A little girl under six carries milk for 35 hours a week for her parents, and she receives no wages. Another little girl is engaged in seaming hose for 15 hours at a weekly wage of 1d. Another is a nurse girl - a nurse girl under six! - who works 29 hours a week for 2d. and her food ...".³

Gorst turned his attention to the hours of employment of these 144,000 children, and, provided illustrations to further jolt the House's conscience with regard to some of the children who were working more than 70 hours a week:

"... A boy of 12, in Standard IV, is ... returned as a farm labourer working 87 hours a week for a wage of 2s.6d. A newspaper boy of the age of 12,

¹Booth, C., op. cit.; Rowntree, S., Poverty: A Study of Town Life; Mearns, A., The Bitter Cry of Outcast London: An Inquiry into the Condition of the Abject Poor.

²4 Hansard, 70, c. 836 (April 28, 1899).

³Ibid., c. 837.

in Standard VI, works 100 hours a week, that is including Sundays, and receives 3s.6d. and his meals. ... There is a girl 13 years of age in a shop. She is in Standard V and works 72 hours a week for a wage of 2s. ...".¹

After analysing the earnings of these school-children and calculating that the average was 1 shilling per child per week, Gorst made no other comments about the Return - for none were really necessary. He simply concluded this major part of his speech by saying: "Now, ..., we have certain facts upon which we can go".² An indication, no doubt, of where he hoped the Government's future plans for reform would lie. The fact that he was powerless to initiate such reforms Gorst indicated at the close of his speech. His statement also effectively dissociated himself from the Government and from the department which allowed the state of affairs he had illustrated to exist:

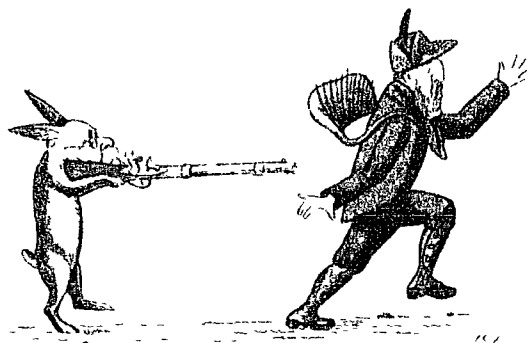
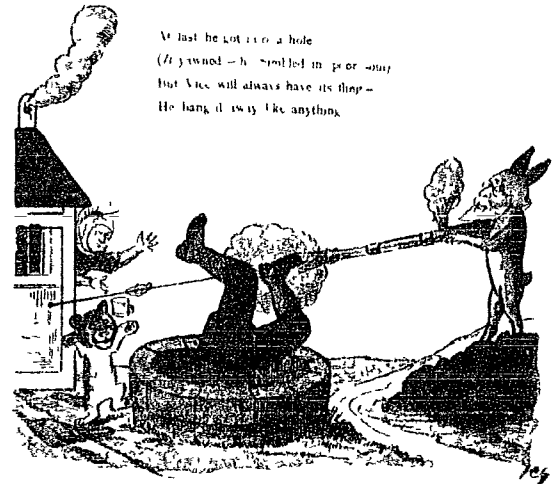
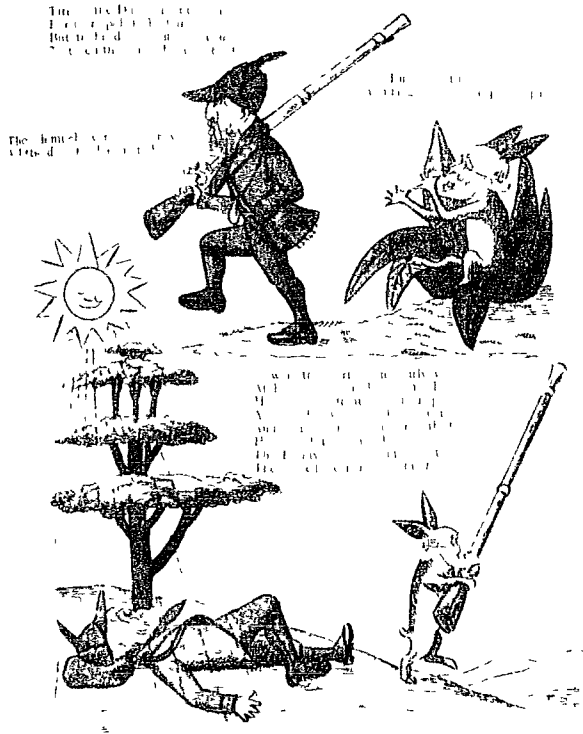
"I have sat here on many occasions in silence, and I have heard powers and authorities attributed to me which the office of Vice-President does not possess, and I have heard responsibilities attempted to be forced on me which do not in any way belong to my office ... It is not an ancient office ... on the contrary, it is a very modern office ... and the duties of the office are most plainly and clearly described in the Order in Council ... I will read the first section of the duties of the Lord President and the Vice-President - 'That ... the Education Department be placed under the Lord President of the Council, assisted by a member of the Privy Council, who shall be the Vice-President ... and shall act under the direction of the Lord President and shall act for him in his absence'.

"These are the functions which I was appointed to discharge. I have endeavoured to the best of my

¹Ibid., c. 838.

²Ibid., c. 839.

5. The Story of the Duke and the Bunnygorst



ability to perform those functions and I shall continue to do so as long as Her Majesty retains me in my present office".¹

The manner in which Gorst delivered this conclusion was recorded by Lucy, and indicated Gorst's contempt for his Government colleagues, as well as his frustration at being unable to initiate the reforms he desired to see accomplished:

"The House, listening to Sir John, watching the quietly scornful manner with which he touched with tips of reluctant fingers the Order in Council, noting the amused scorn the inflection of his voice managed to shower on the hapless Lord President of the Council, thought, not for the first time, what an actor was lost to the comedy stage when he turned his steps towards the field of politics ...".²

Whilst Gorst's speech revealed his concern about the problem of school attendance and wage earners amongst school children, his emphasis of the point to the exclusion of nearly all other educational issues revealed another point. This was his anger at being thrown over by the Government, on two clauses in the new Education Code, in a debate on the matter some 11 days previous to his Supply speech.³ No doubt Gorst's anger had been intensified by the fact that the Clauses were designed to improve the lot of pupil teachers in rural schools, and thereby achieve increased efficiency in the teaching in these schools. Since the majority of rural schools were voluntary ones this increase

¹Ibid., c. 841.

²Lucy, H.W., A Diary of the Unionist Parliament, 1895-1900, p. 285.

³4 Hansard, 69, c. 1403-5 (April 17, 1899).

in efficiency would have possibly contributed to a lessening of the gap in standards between them and the Board schools. It might thus have also had the additional effect of producing a diminution in the attacks and criticisms made by the opponents of the voluntary schools. But the vested interests of the clerical body prevented them from viewing the matter from the long-term point of view, and with their pleas of financial hardship if the clauses were introduced they captured the attention of the Government. Devonshire, as well as Gorst, was thrown over, therefore, on this issue. Gorst's frustration with such a Government, and the weakness of his chief in his inability to resist such a move, was, therefore, channelled into his Supply speech. Unfortunately for him, his attempt to dissociate himself from the Government, by posing as a mere official carrying out orders, misfired. This not only damaged his position within the House, albeit temporarily, but it had the more serious effect of putting the emphasis of the Supply debate on to another subject, and little was heard about the wage-earning school children.

The first indication of the way the debate was moving came in a speech by Augustine Birrell. It was devoted entirely to a criticism of Gorst's interpretation of his role as Vice-President. Birrell was at a loss to understand this sudden change in Gorst's behaviour, for:

"The House had seen him, year in and year out, turning his cheek to the smiter with such docility and frequency that it would seem as if the right honourable Gentleman had come to regard the process as a kind of moral massage to which he had to submit

for the good of his soul and his moral constitution".¹

But the real weakness of Gorst's tenure of the Vice-Presidency, Birrell asserted, resided in the fact that Gorst: "... was content not to insist upon his right as a Member of the Government, or upon his duty as the representative of a great Department, to require these reforms which his Department thought to be necessary". He believed that such a relationship as that which existed between Gorst and the Education Department, "was ... most unsatisfactory, and he regretted that it continued".² (One can but wonder what Birrell's comments upon Gorst's position would have been if he had had to make them after his own experience of frustration at Balfour's hands, albeit via the House of Lords, over educational matters.)

With the participation of Lloyd-George in the debate shortly after Birrell had spoken, the quagmire of religious controversy was entered rather than skirted. Lloyd-George's verbose meanderings threatened to seal the fate of the debate as far as the plight of the wage-earning school children was concerned. But relief came in the shape of James Bryce, and the debate was restored to the level on which it had started.

The first half of his speech was devoted to a survey of the current educational scene, and his observations carried an implicit agreement with the points which Gorst had repeatedly made in the past. He, too, was concerned for the

¹4 Hansard, 70, c. 847 (April 28, 1899).

²Ibid., c. 848.

future of the country:

"... we are considering how we are investing money which is to bear fruit in an active, useful, energetic generation 30 years hence. We are sowing the ground and we ought to be satisfied with the quality of the seed we put in, and from which, 30 years hence, we expect to reap our harvest".

It was, therefore, a sad fact to be observed that in this, and other educational debates: "... by some unhappy law, they appear almost always to run in the channel of purely theological controversy", rather than being concerned with the progress that was being achieved by the education departments.¹ His examination of the problems of the school leaving age and of inadequate school attendance led him to the conclusion that unless something was done about them, the English educational system would remain in an inefficient state compared with those of her European neighbours. Add to this the problem of using pupil teachers as a major teaching source in the elementary schools, he concluded, and it was difficult to provide the firm foundation of sound elementary education upon which technical education might be built.

On these observable facts of the English system, Bryce and Gorst were in accord. But Bryce's interpretation of the cause of these deficiencies, whilst partially agreeing with Gorst's observation that he was a tool of the Government, revealed his belief that Gorst's retention of the Vice-Presidency was hindering the progress of educational reform:

¹Ibid., c. 869.

"When we hear the Vice-President we must take it, I suppose, that we are not hearing any views which come from his own knowledge, and which have the weight of his own knowledge and experience. His own knowledge is entirely suppressed, and the weight of his own experience is entirely excluded. We are listening merely to the views which he is compelled by his superiors to express. We are therefore in this position, that when this very important question of education arises in the House, the House is entirely deprived of that guidance which an experienced and able Minister ought to give it ... That does not appear to create a very satisfactory position. The right honourable Gentleman is not the skipper, he is not even the pilot, he is merely the boatswain of the Educational Ship, who repeats the order which somebody else gives. And, apparently, that position is to continue, and while it does continue there is very little use in our arguing educational questions here, because when we have convinced the Vice-President we can go no further".¹

What Bryce found even more invidious than the removal of power from Gorst's office was his belief that:

"... there is some secret influence which controls and guides the Cabinet in educational matters which is not that of the Lord President, ... and certainly not that of the Vice-President, because whenever he lifts the veil from a small corner of his mind we clearly perceive that it is not the mind of the Government. ... I would venture to say ... that it is an influence which thinks more of sectarianism than education".²

This statement no doubt helped to mitigate some of the effects of his remarks upon Gorst's position, but he had, nonetheless, indicated to Gorst the erroneous position he had taken over his role as Vice-President:- a position, no doubt, adopted because of feelings born of anger and frustration, but one which had not helped in the achievement of necessary reforms in the field which he had been championing.

¹Ibid., c. 873.

²Ibid., c. 874.

Gorst may, therefore, have been in a somewhat contrite mood when he decided to try again to draw the public's attention to the plight of these children, and wrote an article about them.¹

The article benefitted from the fact that Gorst had to write it for a wider public, and thus he was not constricted by the terms of reference of the Committee on Supply. It provided, therefore, a more balanced illustration of the situation, although his major source of information still remained the Parliamentary Return he had used in the Supply debate. But in using a broader canvas, Gorst possibly failed to completely capture the public's attention because he did not use the rivetting examples he had quoted to the House.

His introductory paragraphs, prior to his examination of the available evidence, included, as the justification for his article, the fact that the moneys popularly voted for education, both in and out of the House, were being utilised in an inefficient manner. One of the major contributory factors in this state of affairs was the unsatisfactory school attendances of wage earning children. It was this one factor which the public was determined to ignore and which represented, Gorst felt, an anachronism in a leading industrial nation:

"People cannot deny these facts, but they are determined to ignore them. They shut their eyes to the monstrous folly of their system. What would be

¹Gorst, J.E., 'School Children as Wage Earners', The Nineteenth Century, 46, July 1899, p. 8-17.

thought of the intelligence of a manufacturer who provided, at great cost, the most approved modern machinery, and then fed it with raw material unfit to produce the article intended? This is exactly what the English people, who boast of their eminently practical character, are about in their educational system".¹

Gorst believed that the reason for this attitude resided in the competition between education and the labour market. The latter justified the use of children for reasons which Gorst broadly classified as parental poverty; the functioning of certain industrial processes; and the recreational pursuits of the wealthy. He did not deny that, as far as the first category was concerned, there were parents who were absolutely dependent upon the wage-earning capacity of their offspring. But he did believe that in the majority of instances where parental poverty was cited as the factor involved in a child having to work, parental greed rather than need was the motivating force. In this unsubstantiated view, Gorst conflicted with the evidence provided by Charles Booth.²

Gorst was, however, undoubtedly correct in his assertion that the employment of children in manufacturing processes

¹Ibid., p. 9.

²Booth had found that in East London alone, in the very poor category (Class B), some 38,000 children in an earning population of 100,000 contributed to their families' welfare, as a result of necessity rather than parental greed. As the numbers of wage-earning children recorded by the Parliamentary Return was 144,000 in England and Wales, it could be argued from an application of Booth's statistics, that most of them were doing so because of parental circumstances: a fact which Gorst appears to have failed to notice. Fried, A., and Elman, R., Charles Booth's London, p. 55-9.

rested on historical precedent. Observation of modern processes in Europe revealed, he stated, that children were not necessary for the maintenance of industrial processes. This fact could also be applied to the agricultural situation, for, he asserted: "A great deal of the work to which rural children are set is monotonous, uninstructional, and very much calculated to deaden than to develop their faculties".¹ He had no objection, however, to school children helping in the recreational pursuits of the wealthy: "The work is light and healthy; it is regarded by the child rather as play, and the pay is very good".²

Gorst turned his attention to the contents of the Parliamentary Return which he had used so extensively some two months earlier. He indicated the incomplete nature of the document but felt that, nonetheless, some useful, general conclusions could be drawn from it, all of which were condemnatory about the system that existed. Not only were more than half the total number of children concerned very young, working inordinately long hours for "contemptibly small" wages, but, "The occupations are for the most part not in themselves desirable, they are not instructive, and are not calculated to develop an intelligent and skilful worker".³ Furthermore, these conditions had a deleterious effect upon the education of the children, more than half the total

¹Gorst, J.E., 'Children as Wage Earners', Nineteenth Century, 46, July, 1899, p. 11.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 12.

number being in or below Standard 4. Some did not attend school at all and many others who did attend, arrived at school "in a state totally unfit to be taught".¹ He felt that in the case of non-attendance, there were instances where the inflexibility of the attendance laws was to blame:

"In England the child must according to law spend most of the summer in school. Abroad, at these seasons of the year when the help of children in agricultural pursuits is required, the schools are altogether closed, and very young children may be seen helping in hay-making, minding cows, taking care of flocks of goats, to the great advantage of their physical growth; and as the outdoor life of summer alternates with a very regular and constant attendance at school during the winter up to the age of thirteen, fourteen and fifteen, the result of the system is as advantageous to the mind as it is to the body".²

It was particularly the wage earners who were sent to school in a physically unfit state who commanded Gorst's sympathy: "It is impossible for a child to do exhausting labour and learn at the same time. Half-timers who work in the morning in factories generally spend the hours of afternoon school in slumber".³ His remedy for this problem was to borrow, and modify, the European organisation which he had cited: "If children are to be employed in serious labour at all, the work must be relegated to one period of the year and the school to another. It is quite impossible to carry on the two processes at one and the same time".⁴

¹Ibid., p. 13.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 14.

⁴Ibid., p. 15.

The article, in its examination of the various issues, was written in a more rational manner than the rhetorical approach adopted by Gorst in his speeches to the House and audiences around the country. If it differed in this quality, it resembled his speeches in not providing any really positive solutions to the problems which he had demonstrated. This seemed to be rather unusual, for Gorst was not adverse to propounding a stratagem if he thought there was the slightest chance of it becoming accepted, e.g. his activities in relation to county councils as local education authorities. It may have been that he was rather despondent about the Government accepting proposals for reforms from him, especially after their treatment of him over educational matters of a relatively innocuous nature. But whatever the cause, his concluding remarks and proposals in the article proved to be something of an anti-climax. Thus his general solution was based on the premise that:

'Under present social conditions it is impossible to suppress altogether the working of school children for wages or profit, and therefore, '... all that can be done is to attempt so to regulate it [the employment] that it shall not cause the immense injury to the child which long hours of labour combined with attendance at school must cause' .¹

One humane proposal did emerge, however, and that was in relation to children's right to play:

¹Ibid., p. 15. At a meeting in Balliol College, Oxford on June 14, Gorst went so far as to state, on this matter: "No one could put a stop, and no one wished to put a stop, to the employment of children altogether". The Times, June 15, 1899. Gorst was, presumably, being practical in his outlook in making this statement, and thinking of the families who were very dependent upon the earnings of their children for survival.

"The old adage 'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy', seems to be thought inapplicable to the poor, and our arrangements are to be made as if recreation were not a necessity for all children, but a luxury appropriate only to the children of the rich ... it seems hard that the children of the poor, who have little to look forward to in the future but a life of monotonous toil, should be altogether deprived of the pleasure of play, so necessary for every young animal in its early years".¹

Gorst's belief in this point was such that a similar proposal was incorporated into the annual report of the Education Department.²

Gorst felt that the regulation of a child's labour should, wherever possible, rest with its parents. Regulations to prevent children from being overworked should be devised and imposed by local authorities, who were bodies better acquainted with the needs of the locality than the central authority. In support of this he cited the case of Liverpool, which, by a local Act of 1898, had devised regulations with regard to the conditions of children trading in the streets of the city, which had benefitted the children so employed. And in connection with this proposal, Gorst thought that the teachers could be utilised by local

¹Ibid.

²Report of the Committee of Council on Education, 1898-9, P.P. 1899, XX [c. 9400], p. 14: "We are glad to observe that the movement for making organised school games a more prominent feature of public elementary school life is steadily gaining ground. Much that is valuable can be learnt from a well-played game. Certain kinds of discipline, self-subordination, physical endurance, esprit de corps, can indeed be more healthily developed in the playing field than within the four walls of a schoolroom. Hitherto, the organised games of the scholars in public elementary schools have suffered rather by defect than by excess ...".

authorities to ensure that the children were arriving at schools in a fit state, in so far as they could report any abnormalities in behaviour, etc., of the children. Parents of children who wilfully sent, "a child to school starving, or wet through, or dirty, or insufficiently clad, or exhausted by labour", had, Gorst thought, committed an offence against morality which should be made into an offence against the law.¹

It was in relation to the problem of undernourished children that Gorst envisaged a plan which would allow for the feeding of such children by local authorities, whilst, at the same time, overcoming the indignation of Victorian society at such an outrageous idea:²

"To attempt to work the brain of a starving child when its body has no reserve supply to replace the exhausted tissue is just as much a piece of cruelty as to work an over-driven horse. A child must be fed before it can be taught. If a parent, who from neglect, from laziness, or from drunkenness, not able to plead the excuse of poverty and inability, sent a child to school unfed, were sure to receive the well-merited punishment for such an offence, there would then be less economic danger in giving breakfast at the public expense to school children

¹Gorst, J.E., 'School Children as Wage Earners', op. cit. p. 16.

²Ever since the feeding of schoolchildren had been undertaken by the various voluntary organisations concerned, the latter had tried to ensure that such an undertaking as school feeding did not encourage the parents to rely on charity. To provide meals from the rates would be envisaged as an even more retrograde step in the social and moral decline of the parents and the children receiving such aid. Such a move was seen by The Times, in 1905, "as putting a premium upon laziness, meanness, and self-indulgence, and, at the same time, discouraging all who still endeavour to resist these degenerate vices". The Times, January 2, 1905. See also, Gilbert, B.B., The Evolution of National Insurance in Great Britain, p. 104-5.

who were starving because their parents had no bread to give".¹

The punishment would also have the beneficial aspect, he was sure, of making negligent parents reform their treatment of their children. This, in turn, would ensure that children did not suffer as a result of their working for wages.

Amid the article's contents, the two concepts of play and feeding undernourished children by local authorities stand out as very worthwhile proposals. Although the latter concept had been utilised in a simplified form by Margaret McMillan in her work as a member of the Bradford School Board, (and other bodies prior to, and coexistent with, her efforts),² Gorst's view that the onus should be on the local authorities indicated the acceptance of such an idea by a prominent politician. An idea that was, in relevant circles, being realised as the only solution to the enormous problem of hunger that confronted education authorities.³ One of the

¹Gorst, J.E., 'Children as Wage Earners', op. cit., p. 17.

²The London School Board appointed investigators, in 1899, to survey the charitable institutions providing food for hungry school children. Their findings indicated that 43,888 school children, i.e. 12.8% of the children in London schools, were habitually in need of food - and only half of this number was being provided for by the voluntary agencies. Thus the London Schools Dinner Association was created to try to organise these agencies - but was not a success. By 1901 the Association was running at a deficit. Quoted in Gilbert, B.B., The Evolution of National Insurance in Great Britain, p. 105-6.

³Ibid., p. 105-7. As Gilbert has indicated, the acceptance of such an idea by a prominent politician is one of the important steps towards the idea becoming a political one, in the technical sense, and hence standing a change of being incorporated into, or initiating, a new legislative measure.

side effects of the Boer War, i.e. the problem of finding suitable recruits, was to aid Gorst in his championing of this concept in subsequent years.

At the time of publication, Gorst's article had little effect upon the public, although the Review of Reviews thought: "The educational reformer is evident in every paragraph which Sir John Gorst contributes ... to the Nineteenth Century ...".¹ It definitely did not have any effect upon the Government's attitude towards social reform. In fact it was some considerable time even after the necessity for carrying out such reforms had been indicated as a result of the nation's experiences in the Boer War, that the Cabinet stirred themselves into any semblance of action. The relevance of the article, therefore, apart from publicising some of the findings of the Parliamentary Return, appears to have been that it may have encouraged workers in this particular area to persevere with their efforts by indicating that there were people in the House of Commons who were aware of the need for social reforms in this area.² The article, however, marked a temporary halt in these activities of Gorst's and his return to the Government fold as an active Vice-President of the Committee of Council.

Towards the end of June Gorst was given the responsibility of piloting the Board of Education Bill through the House.

¹Review of Reviews, 20, July, 1899, p. 69.

²For example, by 1903 the Independent Labour Party at Bradford had put "... child feeding in the forefront of their municipal programme ... to force the city authorities to face up to the position". Simon, B., Education and the Labour Movement, 1870-1920, p. 279-80.

It is true that this task was not an exceptionally difficult one, as the Bill had already been negotiated through the Lords by the Duke of Devonshire. But, nonetheless, the Government entrusted to Gorst's hands the only piece of educational legislation of the session. There were several possible reasons for this return to favour; one or a combination of them being the decisive factor. Balfour was, through the recurrent illness of Lord Salisbury, having to act as premier at a time when there were numerous issues competing for his attention. The Government may have been made aware of their emasculation of Gorst's office by the constant speeches on the matter from the Opposition benches. Indeed, it was thought to be an almost un-parliamentary method, as Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman indicated:

"... here again, not for the first time, but for the twentieth time, we find the Minister who specially represents the Education Department in this House, and who is qualified above almost any man in this House to be at the head of that Department, and to give assistance to that Department on account of his ability of which it would be impertinent of me to speak, and of his interest and enlightened views of the subject, has very little to do with the matter; and whenever he attempts to introduce a little alteration of a beneficial character he is liable to be ignominiously ignored, or thrown overboard. I cannot think that is a good, although it is an entirely novel, as far as I am aware, Governmental arrangement ...".¹

It was, therefore, perhaps the Government's view that a redress of the honour of their educational prophet was called for. Or it may well have been that they thought the matter innocuous enough to be handled by Gorst. But what-

¹4 Hansard, 69, c. 1411 (April 17, 1899).

ever the reason(s), the effect of such a gesture was to have a galvanising influence on subsequent educational matters.

For Gorst needed the services of someone to help him in dealing with the educational intricacies which such a Bill would raise, whilst he was in charge of its passage. He, therefore, asked Kekewich to arrange for the temporary release from the Office of Special Inquiries of Robert Morant. Allen claims that the choice of Morant by Gorst was made on the basis of recommendations from the Barnetts, plus Morant's growing reputation within the Education Department.¹ Sadler's son felt that there were some unexplained facts behind the choice, wondering how Morant's reputation could have reached Gorst.² As likely an explanation as any is that Morant's article on Swiss education, as well as his other reports, with their indication of the author's ability to understand and utilise effectively administrative detail, revealed to Gorst the presence of a person in the Department possessing the qualities which could aid him in the passage of the Bill. Qualities which Gorst believed did not reside in either Kekewich or Sadler - the logical choices for such a post.³ Considering the fact that, "Morant had expressed to Sadler the greatest contempt for Gorst and his rotten ideas", the offer was accepted with remarkable alacrity.⁴ Morant

¹Allen, B.M., Sir Robert Morant, p. 135.

²Sadler, M., op. cit., p. 171.

³Ibid., p. 172.

⁴Grier, L., op. cit., p. 74.

departed from Manchester within an hour of receiving the offer, via Kekewich, and his climb to power had begun - one which was to have notable effects on the progress and structure of English education.¹

Gorst's introductory speech on the second reading of the Bill was perfunctory, and dealt only briefly with the main concept embodied in the Bill - the creation of a new central authority: "... a Department of State suitable and fitted to have conferred upon it powers in relation to secondary education ...".² An authority which, in the Government's view: "... must be created and arranged before the local authorities in the country can be set on foot, ... a proper central Department ... to exercise the sort of functions recommended by the Royal Commission ... on Secondary Education ...".³

He reviewed, equally briefly, some of the roles that it was envisaged that the new Board would have - the taking over of some of the educational functions of the Charity Commissioners, the inspection of secondary schools, and its relationship with the proposed consultative committee. In his treatment of these topics, and the concept of the Board itself, Gorst's main theme was that the details about these matters should be left by Parliament for the Board to resolve. The House should be content to pass the Bill so that this

¹Sadleir, M., op. cit., p. 171-2.

²4 Hansard, 73, c. 613 (June 26, 1899).

³Ibid.

process could begin:

"... it is a Bill to make preparation for secondary education by establishing at headquarters such an organisation as will enable Parliament hereafter to confer upon those who have charge of education such functions and powers as the condition of the country in the matters of secondary education will require".¹

Gorst resisted attempts by various members, in the ensuing debate, to make him commit the Government to more definite proposals in relation to the Bill's contents.

James Bryce expected:

"... an explanation of the Bill, which he admitted himself was somewhat vague, somewhat obscure, and rather in the nature of a blank cheque, to be fitted up by the Education Department. It is not very easy to criticise a blank cheque; and while a blank cheque contains great possibilities which may be used in different ways, it becomes rather essential to convey to the House what the possibilities are and to point out the different uses that may be made of the Bill".²

He did, however, concede that: "the Bill has been conceived in a very judicious spirit, though it is a very little Bill", and that, "the object at which the Bill aims is right".³

The non-contentious nature of the Bill was revealed by the majority of the debaters indicating their approval of its basic nature. Viscount Cranborne, however, agreed with Bryce about the Bill's quality of vagueness, feeling that the fault for this lay with the Education Department: "The Education Department is a remarkable Department. It is sometimes loquacious, as in its Code; it is sometimes extremely reticent, as in this Bill; but it is always obscure".⁴

¹Ibid., c. 617.

²Ibid., c. 630.

³Ibid., c. 630-631.

⁴Ibid., c. 644.

Henry Hobhouse, however, thought that the Government's plan indicated a move in the right direction, "... by proposing to begin with organisation at the top, rather than at the bottom", and he was pleased with the thought that, "The first part of the Bill professes to give us a really responsible Minister of Education which the House so earnestly desires. We shall ... have no longer a divided responsibility on the matter of education, but have a Minister who can grapple with the matter as a whole".¹

The debate was nearly adjourned shortly after Hobhouse's contribution owing to the possible lack of a quorum, but 40 Members were in place after the Speaker had started counting. Evelyn Cecil introduced a little frivolity into the debate by his remarks on the choice of April 1 as the birth date of the new Board.² A more serious air was introduced by a clash between Lord Edmond Fitz Maurice and Balfour. The former proposed an amendment which would allow Gorst the chance to reply to the various criticisms made of the Bill, but Balfour objected on the grounds that the debate would be unnecessarily prolonged. When it was pointed out, in a polite way, that he had only just arrived and that there was, "a feeling prevailing on both sides of the House that in a Debate of this importance the House is entitled to have some answer from the Vice-President of the Council ...",

¹Ibid., c. 656.

²Ibid., c. 668: "... I have no doubt that the Government in no sense adopted 1st April because of its tricky and delusive associations, I trust that the reputation of 1st April in this respect will be belied ...".

Balfour relented.¹

Gorst's reply was brief, and dealt only with two points raised. In the first instance as to why a Board of Education had been decided on, Gorst stated:

"As my noble friend the President of the Council has given his reasons in another place, it is rather hard for me to be asked to explain the matter. But inas-much as there is a Board of Trade, a Local Government Board, and a Board of Agriculture, it was thought that it would be in accordance with the general desire of the House that there should be a Board of Education".²

Taking as his second point Bryce's accusation about the Bill's air of vagueness, Gorst stated that the vagueness: "... really consists in leaving a considerable amount of discretion to the Board of Education and the Consultative Committee", and if the Government had proposed a cut-and-dried scheme, it would have provoked a considerable amount of discussion which, in turn, would have endangered the Bill's passage during the Session.³ The Bill passed its second reading after this conclusion of Gorst's reply.

Interest in the final debate on the Bill appears to have been, like the second reading, minimal, for the question of quorum numbers had to be raised again. In fact, at one stage, there was a danger that the Bill was to be dropped due to lack of parliamentary time. Balfour was, however, prevailed upon to ensure that the final stages could be completed before

¹Ibid., c. 675.

²Ibid., c. 676.

³Ibid., c. 679.

prorogation.¹ Gorst's refusal to accept any amendments in the final debate helped to ensure that it reached the concluding stages in time. The House of Lords accepted the Bill from the Commons on the same day, August 1, and eight days later the royal assent was given.

With the conclusion of the Bill's passage through the Commons, Gorst decided to write to Lord Salisbury about his position in the Government:

"The Board of Education Bill has passed, and it is understood in the Department that the Duke of Devonshire will be the new President. I think I am entitled to ask that you will take an early opportunity of transferring me to some other branch of Public service.

"When I accepted the office of Vice-President in 1895, it was understood that I was to be the virtual head of the Department. I was to have an 'unusually free hand', because the Lord President, my nominal Chief would be wholly occupied with his duties as chairman of the new Committee of Public Defence. This expectation has not been fulfilled, but I have found in the Duke of Devonshire a loyal and sympathetic chief; there has been abundant scope for my energies; and down to the beginning of this year I have managed to keep the officials of the Education and Science and Art Departments fairly well in hand. This was the more easy because Acland had been the real head of the office, and the officials became habituated to defer to the opinion and directions of the Vice-President. But the Board of Education Bill has completely changed the position. Parliament has now declared that the office of Vice-President should be abolished, and has thereby taken away its prestige and authority. The officers of the Department look upon the Vice-President as a mere Under Secretary, and if he attempts any initiative as a meddling Under-Secretary. I have already had several practical proofs of the change of estimation in which I am held. The Duke of Devonshire would alter this if he could, but it is not in anyone's power to do this. The Act of Parliament may preserve my title and salary; but it cannot preserve my occupation which is gone.

¹Bishop, A.S., The Rise of a Central Authority for English Education, p. 266-7.

"When you and Lord Randolph obliged me in 1886 to give up my profession, I became entirely dependent on the public service for employment. I do not complain of the subordinate position in which I have been ever since kept: but now that I find my ("that is it") slipping away from me, I think I have some right to make an appeal to your consideration. An ornamental sinecure office is most unsatisfactory, and I hope you will as soon as you can place me in a position in which I can at least suppose myself to be of some use to the public service".¹

Lord Salisbury could have accepted as genuine grounds for grievance Gorst's claim about his recent treatment as the Vice-President, plus his fears about his future. But the pathetic tone of the last paragraph, in which Gorst refused to face up to the consequences of his past behaviour as a politician, must have earned him the contempt of Salisbury. However, another matter concerning Gorst arose before Salisbury could reply, in connection with a speech Gorst had made on July 28 at Dunmow in Essex.

In the course of his speech, devoted to an examination of English rural education, Gorst referred to the quotation he had used in the House of Commons, about squires and farmers being the greatest enemies of education in the country, and went on to qualify this comment:

"... he had never said they were wrong for opposing education as it was at present. He thought there was a very great deal to be said in their favour, and he was not at all sure, if he were a labouring man, he would not do his best in summer time to get his child out of school and employed in the hayfield and harvesting, acquiring health and strength, and he did not believe losing very much through not being shut up on a hot summer's day learning grammar or the rules of arithmetic".²

¹ Salisbury Papers, J.E. Gorst to Lord Salisbury, August 2, 1899.

² The Times, July 29, 1899.

Unfortunately for Gorst, this reference to his original quotation was seized upon by some Tory backbenchers as the basis of a complaint about him to Salisbury-

"In a speech made by Sir John Gorst on 'Rural Education' at Dunmow, and reported in 'The Times' of Saturday July 29th, page 10, are these words; 'He had said in the Ho: of Commons that the greatest enemies of education in the country were the squire and the farmers ...'.

"After all the sacrifices that country gentlemen have made in order to support voluntary schools, we think it intolerable that the head (in the Ho: of Commons) of the Education Department, and a Minister in the Government which is so strongly supported by the squires and the farmers, should not only make such offensive statements in the Ho: of Commons, but also reiterate them in the country, and we desire to call yr: lordships attention to the matter - ".¹

Salisbury's habit of rarely reading newspapers would not have helped undo the mischief caused by this letter's misrepresentation of the facts, as his reply to Gorst indicated:

"The Duke of Devonshire forwarded to me on the 4th. your letter antedate the second inst. telling me at the same time to wait for some observations which he told you he desired to make on it ...

"I think his explanation of 'the change of estimation in which you are held' according to your own observation, is a more probable one than yours.

"I fear that I see no prospect of being able to meet your wishes by offering you another post.

"The same day that the Duke sent me your letter, another letter was written to me by six members of Parliament on our side representing various parts of England. The following extract gives the most important part of it ... [Salisbury quoted all the letter].

¹Salisbury Papers. Jeffreys, A.F., Lockworth, M., Dunscombe, H.V., Rasch, F.C., Brassey, A., and Bill, C. to Lord Salisbury, August 4, 1899.

"I am sure that you say in your letter that I and Lord Randolph 'obliged you in 1886 to give up your profession'.

"I cannot admit to historical accuracy of this sentence. You were at perfect liberty to pursue your profession in 1886: but I was unable to recommend you for the post of Solicitor General again, because at a very critical time, as Solicitor General you used publicly to the Ulster supporters of the Government very offensive language: as you have now done to the Squires and the farmers.

"I have received the most earnest remonstrances during this last session from many on our side against the attitudes you have again assumed to the Government supporters and measures. I do not think it necessary to lay before you again the consideration I submitted to you in 1891, when you applied to me for Raikes' office. But I evidently could not offer to you another office, without associating myself with your peculiar line of conduct".¹

Salisbury communicated with Devonshire over the points raised in both Gorst's letter to him, and his reply to it. Devonshire's reply, in turn, indicated that he was still prepared to support Gorst:

"Thanks for your letter, I shall send mine to Gorst today. The Board of Education Act does not come into operation till April 1/1900, so it is unnecessary to make any appointment under it at present.

"I think that your members are rather unjust to Gorst. I saw a short account of his speech, and what he said was that he had been charged with making the statement quoted, but that he had never said that the squires and farmers were not quite right in opposing the kind of education which was now given to children in the rural districts. Nothing he said could be more unsuitable for them than the 3 Rs and especially the study of grammar.

"I suppose he has some ideas about the proper education for the agricultural labourer, which I will endeavour to elicit ... But he is so (?strong) in his ways that I doubt whether we can make (?) much of him".²

¹Salisbury Papers. Lord Salisbury to J.E. Gorst, August 9, 1899.

²Salisbury Papers. Duke of Devonshire to Lord Salisbury, August 9, 1899.

Gorst in the meantime had repaired to the Lake District, to join all the family, except his son Harold, on holiday at Windermere, where they had taken a house. Eldon was on leave from Egypt, and the 'Normandy trio' were soon occupied in cycling expeditions to Grasmere, Dungeon Ghyll and Ravenstone.¹ Gorst also appears to have spent some time on the continent after this, so that he did not read Salisbury's letter until his return to London on September 23. After mulling the matter over during the weekend, he wrote to Salisbury. He refuted the complaint made by Jeffreys et al., by quoting his speech to demonstrate their misrepresentation of the facts. The rest of the letter was given over to a defence of his conduct:

"Ever since I entered political life, a certain clan in the party has seemed at times to be half afraid of me, at times to dislike me personally, and to withhold from me its confidence and favour. But those of the party who approve and support me, in Parliament and in the Constituencies, are vastly more numerous; and though they mostly belong to a class whose opinions are less likely to reach your ears, they are from the point of view of maintaining the party majority in the elections far more important. In the building up of that majority, which is the basis upon which your power rests, I have had no small share.

"My zeal for the propagation of political truth may sometimes have made me forget my own interests and the feelings of others, and led me to make proposals you were not prepared to endorse. But 'if party politicians are on every subject to be precluded from expressing an opinion and trying to guide the forces of public opinion, unless they have the formal and official assent of those with whom they act in other questions, a great and a very unfortunate limitation will be placed on our activity'.

¹Gorst, Sir Eldon, Diary, 1899, August 7-14.

"These are Art. Balfour's words not mine, but they express the principle on which I have always acted. I believe the Conservative cause has on the whole been greatly advanced by my speeches and writings.

"You say that at the close of your letter that you have received the most earnest remonstrances during this last session from many on our side against the attitudes I have again assumed to the Government supporters and measures.

"I have no idea what this means. I cannot recall any incident in the last session capable of such a construction.

"I appeal to your sense of justice, to let me come and see you, and hear specifically to what these remonstrances refer, and to suspend your judgement until I have had the opportunity of being heard in my defence".¹

Gorst probably discussed his thoughts on the matter with Eldon the following evening when they dined at Boodles,² but was no doubt disappointed with Salisbury's reply which arrived a few days later. It was obvious that his protestations of innocence, coupled with his claims of influence in the party, had failed to move Salisbury one iota:

"I doubt if oral communication is the best for a matter so largely personal as this. But I have taken no note of the complaint which reached me in the earlier part of the year: and could not trust my memory to reproduce them with accuracy now.

"Speaking generally, I should say that the cause of much of the hostility you have evoked, is that when you are defending the policy of the Government, you give both to friends and foes the impression that you are attacking it. Your manner of fencing seems to involve a, not infrequent, backhander, aimed at those who are standing by your side, or behind you. You are evidently yourself unconscious of this peculiarity in your manner - but the impression that it exists prevails largely".³

¹Salisbury Papers, J.E. Gorst to Lord Salisbury, September 26, 1899.

²Gorst, Sir Eldon, op. cit., September 26, 1899.

³Salisbury Papers. Lord Salisbury to J.E. Gorst, September 27, 1899.

Gorst's reply was an attempt to put on a brave face in a matter in which he realised an impasse had been reached. He also, however, managed to find a scapegoat with regard to blemishes attributed to his character:

"... I acquiesce in what I understand to be your view ... You acquit me of consciously attacking the Government or its supporters: I will bear with patience the misconstruction which results from mere peculiarity of manner. But am I not in this the victim of that propensity of modern journals to invent with temerity for everyone in public life a character, which is often ludicrously unlike the reality? That which has fallen to my lot is not a pleasing one, and has I hope, no counterpart in fact. The Times has a special blackened version of me - the result of some affront which the editor says I gave him 16 years ago, and which I have, if he has not, forgotten. Words spoken in all the innocence of good temper and good nature give offence, therefore the press has thought fit to attribute a peevish and cynical character to the person who utters them. Unfortunately for me, few of the leading members of the party know much of me personally so that in my case there is little chance of the false character being modified and corrected to the true one".¹

Looking to the immediate future Gorst must have realised that his lot was to remain as Vice-President. Surveying his future from a longer term point of view he must have also become aware that this office could also possibly be his last one in a government. Salisbury's age and failing health were against him remaining as Prime Minister for much longer, and with the new holder of the office appearing more certainly, as time passed, to be Balfour, Gorst's hopes of being offered a new position were remote. There was, however, the faint possibility, towards the end of the year, that the war in South Africa might occupy the

¹Salisbury Papers, J.E. Gorst to Lord Salisbury, September 30, 1899.

Cabinet to such an extent that he would regain the freedom in educational matters which he had experienced in 1895 and the first half of 1896. To aid him if this possibility materialised, he had the resources of Morant at his disposal, the latter having accepted Gorst's offer of the post of his private secretary, which had become vacant with the resignation of the holder in November.¹

Gorst had begun to immerse himself in departmental matters and to make the initial preparations for a measure to ensure success in the county council - School Board struggle, in the eventuality of the Cockerton judgement not being upheld. His position as Vice-President was, however, not completely secure, due to intrigue on the part of the Duke of Devonshire's former private secretary, Sir Almeric FitzRoy:

"December 28th, 1899. Council at Windsor. Mr. Balfour, Ritchie² and myself went down ...

"I took the opportunity of suggesting to him [Balfour] that the vacancy in the Chief Charity

¹ Morant's reasons for doing so seemed to vary with the person discussing the matter. To Sadler he claimed that it would provide him with an opportunity to press for Sadler's being made the head of the new secondary education department of the Board of Education, and he would give Sadler the extra money he earned, so that help required - due to his absence from the Special Inquiries Office - could be procured. To R.P. Scott, Morant explained that his acceptance of the position was based on financial reasons, due mainly to a growing family. Whatever his true reason, Sadler thought that Morant's willingness to serve a man whom he had indicated he despised showed a lack of moral taste. Grier, L., op. cit., p. 75-6: Sadler, M., op. cit., p. 172.

² President of the Board of Trade.

Commissionership caused by the premature and lamented death of Sir H. Longley, offered an excellent opportunity for disposing of the Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education. He was quite alive to the value of the suggestion, and, though apprehensive of some difficulty with the Treasury, approved my intention to communicate with the Lord President on the subject.

"Gorst's relations with the Secretary have recently become so strained,¹ and his attitude of slumbering rebellion towards the Lord President is so persistent, that something ought to be done to bring the situation to an end before the Board of Education Act comes into operation, by which the anomalies of the Vice-President's position will be greatly enhanced.

"Gorst, as Chief Commissioner, is qualified to do some good work, and might thus regain some of the reputation so needlessly lost in the last few years. The difficulty will be in his reluctance to abandon a place by virtue of which he can direct his shafts against his colleagues from the Treasury Bench. He believes, too, that the Government having stood so much from him, are afraid to press matters to the only logical issue".²

Fortunately for Gorst and English education, FitzRoy's plan did not succeed and Gorst was able to continue with the development of his plans, unaware of what had occurred.

¹No doubt over the somewhat unethical promotion of Morant to the private secretaryship of Gorst, which further antagonised Kekewich.

²FitzRoy, Sir A., Memoirs, p. 28.