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ABSTRACT

The first three chapters examine the school leaving age in elementary and secondary schools before the establishment of a national compulsory elementary system of education between 1870 and 1880. When elementary education had become compulsory there was a minimum school leaving age of ten which was related to a minimum standard of education. The remaining chapters are mainly concerned with the legislation which raised the minimum leaving age from ten to fifteen with the provision for it to be raised to sixteen. There are, however, two chapters which survey the school leaving age in secondary schools at the end of the nineteenth century and developments in these schools up to the Second World War. Although legislation relating to the school leaving age applied almost entirely to elementary education, these two chapters provide an important link in the main theme; for the final minimum leaving age was closely related to the leaving age which had been considered desirable, though not legally enforced, in secondary education.

This study, in which special consideration has been given to the legislation concerned with the raising of the school leaving age, shows how an educational question with social and economic implications was increasingly linked with political issues. The attitude of parents, employers, teachers and other pressure groups are examined. Changes in public opinion are noted.

The concluding chapter attempts to review the main facets in the overall process of raising the school leaving age.

**The School Leaving Age -
A Historical Study, with particular
reference to Legislation relating to
School Leaving up to 1944**

by

M. R. BAMFIELD

**Thesis submitted for the degree
of M.Ed.**

October, 1967

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CHAPTER 1.

THE SCHOOL LEAVING AGE IN THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY

Economic changes had gained momentum during the second half of the eighteenth century, and by the early years of the nineteenth century society was undergoing a transformation as a result of these developments. Changes were beginning to take place in the field of education. The last two decades of the eighteenth century had seen the rapid growth of Sunday schools, and in the first two decades of the nineteenth century the monitorial system spread. These two movements had considerable influence on educational provision before the beginning of state aid in 1833 and inspection in 1839.

The picture of school leaving in those years is hazy and nebulous. Education was not compulsory, there was no need to keep records, and few schools had clear regulations about the age of leaving. The attempts to establish state-supported schools in the early nineteenth century did not, until 1833, concern themselves with age limits. However, in the debate on Whitbread's Parochial Schools Bill in 1807 John Simeon objected to any system of compulsion and said that in rural areas the poor parents

could send their children into the fields "from the ages of seven to fourteen".¹ By implication, therefore, he thought that compulsory education would have kept them in a school room until fourteen. In 1833 J.A. Roebuck's proposal for "the universal and national education of the whole people" was that every child in Great Britain and Ireland should have to attend school between the ages of six and twelve. Five years later in its report to Parliament the Select Committee on the Education of the Poorer Classes said, "Your Committee think it desirable to afford children of the working classes (more especially those in large towns) means of instruction until the age of thirteen."² With this as the background it is useful to gain some impression of the age at which young people and children were leaving school.

Many schools had been established or re-established since the early sixteenth century. Many of the earlier foundations, which dated from the

¹ Hansard: Parliamentary Debates, 1807, Vol. IX, p. 858.

² R.A. Slaney: Suggestions as to the improvement of the State of the Lower Classes in Large Towns, 1847, p. 18.

sixteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth century, had provided, and continued to provide, a grammar school education. These schools were giving instruction in the classical languages. The leaving age of pupils (always boys) in these schools ranged from fourteen to nineteen. It seems fairly clear that the number who stayed beyond fifteen was few. At Christ's Hospital, London, in 1816 it was reported to the Select Committee enquiring into the Education of the Lower Orders of the Metropolis that scholars left at fifteen except those who were intended for college entrance or service at sea.¹ Only ten or twelve, presumably in any one year, completed all the stages of a classical education; there was no indication of the number who left to serve on a ship. Yet a hundred and thirty boys were admitted into the school each year. At Evesham Free Grammar School in the rules of the Corporation (which was the governing body) no boy was to remain at school after the age of sixteen.² At St. Olave's School in Southwark, a Free Grammar School,

¹ Enquiry into the Education of the Lower Orders of the Metropolis, First Report, 1816, p. 108.

² G. Griffith: The Free Schools of Worcestershire, 1852, p. 202. These rules had been made at a date (not specified) before 1830.

sixty out of a total of two hundred and seventy boys were in the grammar or Latin school. The headmaster of the school, the Rev. James Blenkarne, told the Committee of Enquiry in 1816 that these sixty remained after the age of fourteen until their parents decided to remove them.¹ These three examples illustrate the diverse patterns of leaving in these schools which provided a classical education.²

Many schools founded in the late seventeenth century and up to the middle of the eighteenth century were designed to provide elementary education. These were the so-called "charity schools". An analysis of information about some of these schools shows that many had an upper age limit for their pupils, and this was usually fourteen or fifteen.³ Sometimes it was expected that the pupils would go on to an apprenticeship or, in the case of girls, be employed in service.

M.E. Marsault, the master of the Blue Coat School, Westminster, said, when giving evidence in 1816, that

¹ Enquiry into the Education of the Lower Orders of the Metropolis, Third Report, 1816, p. 243.

² See Appendix I for further examples.

³ See Appendix II for this analysis.

boys and girls were admitted to his school at seven and left at fourteen when a premium (for purpose of indenture) was provided for them by the Foundation.¹ J.G. Wilson, the master of the parish school in Hemmingsrow, St. Martin's in the Fields, London, stated at the same enquiry that at his school boys left at fourteen and were apprenticed; the girls left at fifteen to go into household service.² In both these schools the old method of teaching was used. This indicated that the monitorial system had not been introduced. In Stourbridge, an urban area in the Midlands, it was still the practice in 1852 at Wheeler's School for the boys to stay until fourteen, when they became apprentices.³ At Bengeworth, a village near Evesham, in Worcestershire, it was intended that boys should attend the school from the age of eight until they were apprenticed, presumably at about fourteen.⁴ All these examples are of schools which had been founded in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth centuries.

¹ Enquiry into the Education of the Lower Orders of the Metropolis, First Report, 1816, p. 67.

² Ibid., First Report, 1816, p. 92.

³ G. Griffith: The Free Schools of Worcestershire, 1852, p. 387.

⁴ Ibid., p. 15.

Some schools founded at the end of the eighteenth century had the same policy for leaving. At Boldre, in Hampshire, at a school opened in 1791, the usual leaving age was thirteen or fourteen.¹ At a school in Tamworth, founded in 1802, the age of leaving was thirteen or when a boy was fit to be apprenticed.² At Bobbington, a village in Staffordshire, at a school established in 1792 the regulations stated that none was to be admitted before seven or to remain after fifteen.³

There was probably a fairly strong tradition that those children who received a school education should stay until about fourteen. This tradition must have been in the mind of William Crawford, a member of the Committee of Spitalfields Lane School in London, who enquired in the Spitalfields area about the need for education among children aged six to fourteen.⁴ Again, S. Bevington, a treasurer to the British and Foreign School Society in Bermondsey, referred to those who did not receive education between the ages of six and fourteen, when he reported to the committee investigating education in the metropolis.⁵ But it was on grounds not of tradition

1 Reports of the Society for Bettering the Conditions of the Poor, T. Bernard, 1809, pp. 106-107.

2 G. Griffith: The Free Schools and Endowments of Staffordshire, 1859, p. 331.

3 Ibid., p. 443.

4 Enquiry into the Education of the Lower Orders of the Metropolis, Third Report, 1816, p. 189.

5 Ibid., p. 195.

but of physical capacity and well-being that James Mill, the Benthamite, in his article, "On Education", argued that for the majority of young people fifteen or sixteen years was a satisfactory age for employment.¹ Before that age "a firm foundation may be laid for a life of mental action, a life of wisdom, and reflection, and ingenuity, even in those by whom the most ordinary labour will fall to be performed".

There is evidence to show that schools which adopted a monitorial form of education, and the Sunday schools thought in terms of a much shorter period of schooling. If this schooling began at six (the age which William Crawford and Mr. Bevington obviously thought suitable), the leaving age would be much earlier than fourteen. Joseph Booker, the Secretary to the Association of Catholic Charities, reported that at five schools they admitted children at six, and fourteen was the maximum age to which they were educated.² Only a quarter stayed until that age, and the average stay was three years. These particular schools used the Lancasterian system. William Allen, a Quaker, who was

¹ James Mill: On Education, ed. F.A.Câvenagh, 1931, p.63; article referred to published in the Supplement of Fifth Edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica, 1818, reprinted in 1828 and 1836.

² Enquiry into the Education of the Lower Orders of the Metropolis, Second Report, 1816, p. 143.

Secretary of the British and Foreign School Society, in a report on the regulations of his society, maintained that it catered for children aged six to fourteen, but gave the impression that this period could be shortened when it became the custom for children to start school at an earlier age.¹ G.F. Jameson, a master of a school in Horseferry Road, London, where a modified Lancasterian system was used, did not wish children to leave before the age of thirteen, but he found that many did so.²

The education given in Sunday schools was primarily concerned with reading. At Hoxton Academy Sunday School the secretary thought that after one year a child would be able to read.³ If the children wished to learn writing and arithmetic, they could attend on Monday evenings. However, a Sunday school teacher, Edward Wentworth, reckoned it required three years for a child to be taught to read.⁴ At Percy Chapel Sunday School, St. Pancras, London, the children attended Sunday School

¹ Enquiry into the Education of the Lower Orders of the Metropolis, Second Report, 1816, p. 163.

² Ibid, First Report, 1816, p. 187.

³ Ibid., Second Report, 1816, p. 156.

⁴ Ibid., First Report, 1816, p. 143.

between the ages of seven and fourteen, but it was clear that it did not take this length of time for them to acquire skill in reading.¹ The Secretary to the East London Auxiliary Sunday School Union Society said, "Upon an average we think that our children do not continue with us above two years."² He thought children learnt to read satisfactorily in about three years. The rector of St. Clement Danes preferred the children at his Sunday school to stay for two to two-and-a-half years in order to be able to read.³

This evidence from early nineteenth century Sunday schools stresses that the main work of these schools was teaching children to read, and that this limited the time which the children spent in school. It is probably worth noting that at two schools founded about a hundred years before, where the sole purpose of the school was to teach reading, the upper age limit was ten, much earlier than the usual age of apprenticeship. Thus at Leek in Staffordshire at Road's Charity School, founded in 1712,

¹ Enquiry into the Education of the Lower Orders of the Metropolis, First Report, 1816, p. 163.

² Ibid., First Report, 1816, p. 98.

³ Ibid., First Report, 1816, p. 28.

the pupils learnt to read English and were above six and under ten.¹ In Evesham, Worcestershire, at John Gardner's Charity School, founded in 1694, it was specified in the will that twenty-five children should be taught to read. The pupils' ages ranged from four to ten.²

The questions and answers given in the Enquiry into the Education of the Lower Orders of the Metropolis showed that some felt that a shorter period in school was desirable. The Rev. R. Simpson, who was in charge of the Whitechapel National School, said that it would take a boy of "natural ability" two years to learn to read.³ To the question, "What is the longest time that you take a boy for education?" the Rev. T.T. Walmsley, Secretary to the National Society, replied, "We admit them at seven years old, and they may remain until they are fourteen; I should conceive two years abundantly sufficient for any boy."⁴ Lord Brougham put this question to Mr. Carmichael, the school-master of the parish

¹ G. Griffith: Free Schools and Endowments of Staffordshire 1859, p. 539.

² G. Griffith: Free Schools of Worcestershire, 1852, p. 204.

³ Enquiry into the Education of the Lower Orders of the Metropolis, First Report, 1816, p. 61.

⁴ Ibid., First Report, 1816, p. 57.

school of St. Giles; "Do you not think six years a long period for a boy to learn only reading, writing and arithmetic?"¹ The reply indicated that a great deal depended on the capacity of the boy.

Teachers, especially those in the older schools, seemed to think that it was better for children to stay until fourteen, but it seems clear that there were pressures which produced a demand for a shorter period of schooling. That employers wanted child labour, especially in the areas where machinery was increasingly in use, there can be no doubt. Some parish officials were prepared to provide such labour from among pauper children.²

There is, however, much evidence to show that parents removed their children as soon as the children could earn wages. At the school at Boldre in the New Forest, to which reference has already been made, a report in 1798 said: "It is presumed that as soon as they (the children) are made really useful their parents will wish to take them away."³ The words "really useful"

¹ Enquiry into the Education of the Lower Orders of the Metropolis, First Report, 1816, p. 48.

² Ibid., First Report, 1816, p. 16.

³ Reports of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor, T. Bernard, 1809, pp. 106-107.

were in italics. At Campsall in Yorkshire children were not expected to attend school when the parents could find profitable employment for them or when their services were needed at home.¹ An industrial school at Lewisham, founded in 1796, where the children worked at spinning, winding and knitting, with reading lessons on a rotation system, drew this comment two years after its foundation: "It is found that in proportion as the children become skilful and useful, their parents and friends, learning their value, become desirous of withdrawing them, because they can employ them to more advantage."²

A footnote adds that no-one in the school had reached the age of twelve, and that a little weaver of ten had received an advantageous offer and left school.

Robert Owen said that he found parents ready to remove children from school as soon as they could "perform mechanical parts" of reading and writing fluently. But he mentioned that there were some parents "who can afford to spare the wages which the children could now earn".³ W.F. Lloyd, Secretary of the Sunday

¹ Reports of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor, T. Bernard, 1809, p. 168.

² Ibid., p. 189.

³ Enquiry into the Education of the Lower Orders of the Metropolis, Third Report, 1816, p. 240.

School Union Society, maintained that when the child became useful to his parents he was taken away from school.¹ In schools at Stratford le Bow, in St. Giles' parish and in Spitalfields teachers and a school official admitted that fourteen was a regular leaving age for apprenticeship, but that parents sometimes removed their children earlier than this.² In one area it had apparently become difficult to apprentice boys, and this might be one reason why parents removed children earlier - as soon as there was a chance of employment.³ William Crawford observed that in Spitalfields parents would probably object to sending their children to school if the silk trade was flourishing, and E. Wentworth, a Sunday school teacher, pointed out that in a silk manufacturing area like Bethnal Green children began work at five or six years of age.⁴

Robert Owen compared the length of stay at school of children in Newcastle, Manchester and Leeds.⁵

¹ Enquiry into the Education of the Lower Orders of the Metropolis, Second Report, 1816, p. 9.

² Ibid., First Report, 1816, p. 145.

³ Ibid., Second Report, 1816, p. 145.

⁴ Ibid., Third Report, 1816, p. 90, and First Report, 1816, p. 143.

⁵ Ibid., Third Report, 1816, p. 239.

In Newcastle the children stayed on an average four years, whereas in Manchester and Leeds it was on an average three or four months. The explanation that he gave was that there was "no manufacture in the neighbourhood of Newcastle to induce the parents to withhold the child from attending school". John Jenkins, one of the assistant commissioners who investigated elementary education in the middle of the nineteenth century, commented in his report that early withdrawal from school was on the increase in South Wales, especially near the works.¹

These examples seem to pinpoint the fundamental reason why parents withdrew their children from school at an early age. In those districts where children could be wage-earners parents had no hesitation in taking them away from school or never sending them to school at all. The increasing use of the monitorial system - in one sense the factory approach applied to education - enabled many new and some of the older schools to reduce the period of education. The growth of industry, especially in those areas where the new techniques were

¹ Royal Commission on Popular Education, vol. II, 1861, p. 470.

being practised, was leading to an increased demand for labour, much of it unskilled, and this made children's labour useful as well as cheap. The parents were particularly willing for their children to be employed because much of this period was a time when the cost of living rose, and an extra wage-earner was an asset to the family unit.¹ This was an inducement, then, to reduce the time spent at school, even though more schools were being established. It is clear that in this period of industrial growth and change there was a tendency for children to leave school at an earlier age.

¹ J.L. and B. Hammond: The Town Labourer, 1917, vol. I, p. 157.
There has been much discussion on living standards at this time. An article, "Progress and Poverty in Britain", History, Vol. XLV, No. 153, Feb. 1960, p. 25, suggests that during the period 1795 to 1840 "the progress (in living standards) of the working class lagged increasingly behind that of the nation at large".

CHAPTER 2

SCHOOL LEAVING IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS PRIOR TO 1870.

Quite early in the nineteenth century industrial growth, especially in textiles, had led to the development of factories and the employment of juvenile labour in them. The abuse of this labour by some employers provoked an outcry and resulted in Parliamentary action. A succession of laws regulated conditions of employment in factories from 1802. In that year the first Factory Act, entitled "The Health and Morals of Apprentices" Act, although primarily concerned with the physical conditions under which pauper apprentices lived and worked in wool and cotton mills powered by water, provided for the instruction of these young people in reading, writing and arithmetic.

The year 1833 saw education given emphasis in a Factory Act which provided for the first time an adequate system of factory inspection. Clause 22 of this Act authorised inspectors to establish or procure the establishment of a school so that two hours' education per day might be given to all children under thirteen who were employed in the cotton, wool, worsted and flax mills. The alternate day system could be applied for purposes of education. The minimum time to be spent on education per week was twelve hours. Since

it was generally impossible for children, who could be employed for eight hours a day, to attend a day school whose hours were usually 9 to 12 and 2 to 5, the employer who attempted to implement this Act found that he had to establish his own school. By 1842 Leonard Horner, the Inspector of Factories, advocated a half-time system and suggested it should be enforced by appropriate legislation, for, in his experience, if an employer provided education on a half-time basis, the parents withdrew their children from that factory and sent them to another where there was no loss of wages through time spent on education. In general the Factory Inspectors were convinced that any system of education which existed through the Factory Acts must come under the control of the state.

Therefore, in 1843, Sir James Graham, the Home Secretary, introduced a Bill which proposed to allow employment in textile factories from the age of eight, but to limit children under thirteen to six and a half hours of labour per day, and for these children a period of three hours' education per day was to be provided. These schools were to be largely under the control of the Anglican Church, though nonconformists might contract

out. The Exchequer and the Poor Rate were to bear the costs. Fees not exceeding threepence per week could be deducted from wages. The nonconformist elements in the country strongly opposed this Bill. For this reason the 1843 Bill was dropped, and in 1844 a new Bill was brought forward which avoided the religious question. This Bill became law; in section 30 it enacted the half-time system, and section 27 required a register (from which the inspector could demand extracts or information) to be kept of children and young persons employed in a factory. The half-time system thus established required children to work not more than six and a half hours in any one day, so that a half-day was left free for education. Children were to attend school for three hours daily, and factory inspectors were given the right to refuse recognition to unqualified teachers. As in the 1833 Act, children could, instead of working the half-time system each day, spend ten hours in the factory on each of three alternate days in the week and on the other days attend school. It now became legal for children to be employed in textile factories from the age of eight, though between eight and thirteen they were compelled to

receive some education. A year later, in 1845, the Print Works Act prohibited the employment in calico print works of children under eight, and required children under thirteen to attend school for thirty days in each half year.

In 1833 Parliament had also provided financial assistance for education, and after 1839 inspectors were appointed to report on schools receiving this grant. Parliament assisted elementary education, but it did not legislate to provide a state system of education. H.A. Mess has said, "The earlier Factory Acts were also Education Acts: they prescribed a minimum of schooling."¹ The close connection between the provision of education and the laws concerned with the employment of children and young persons has made it essential to sketch in this background of factory legislation.

In the year in which it first provided the grant for elementary education Parliament asked for a report on the state of education. A Select Committee of the House of Commons was set up and it reported in 1838. One of the questions asked related to the age at which

¹ H.A. Mess: Factory Legislation and its Administration, 192 p. 87.

children left school. When the results of the enquiry were published unfortunately they did not, from the point of view of this historical survey, give any information about the returns concerned with the school leaving age.

In 1851, as part of the Census of Great Britain, an enquiry was made into the educational provision which existed in England and Wales. The returns called for the number of scholars in the following ranges: under five; five and under ten; ten and under fifteen; fifteen and under twenty; twenty and upwards. The returns themselves do not, therefore, provide any useful information regarding the age of school leaving. More useful is the introduction to the report which estimated that the average duration of schooling for each child between five and fifteen would be $4\frac{3}{5}$ years.¹ This was qualified by a statement that for working class children this figure needed to be reduced to about four years. The Census report used took fifteen as the upper limit in considering the average duration of schooling. The reason given for this was that the age "where a scholar is considered too mature for further

¹ Report on the Census of Great Britain - Education in England and Wales - 1851, p. xxii.

school instruction" varied according to the different views of different parents, and could fall anywhere between ten and seventeen, but the latest age at which school education generally terminated was fifteen.¹

These observations in the report are not, however, supported by statistical evidence of value, and, where statistics are given about ages, there is no distinction drawn between the children attending elementary schools and those attending other schools.

Ten years after the 1851 Census the Commissioners who, under the chairmanship of the Duke of Newcastle, had been given the task in 1858 of enquiring into Popular Education in England and Wales made their report. This report is of considerable value in making an estimate of the school leaving age in the period immediately before elementary education was provided on a nationwide, universal basis. The report is of value first because selected areas were used as the basis of the investigations by assistant commissioners, and these covered agricultural, manufacturing, coastal, mining and urban districts in various parts of the country. Secondly, a specific enquiry was made about the age of

¹ Report on the Census of Great Britain - Education in England and Wales - 1851, p. xxii.

leaving school. The instructions to the assistant commissioners stated: "This will enable you to ... form an opinion as to the age at which boys and girls respectively usually leave school. You cannot bestow too much labour in ascertaining this cardinal point with accuracy, and in grounding your conclusions on sound, clear and tangible evidence. It forms the basis of all the questions which relate to the will and power of parents to send their children to school and to keep them there."¹ Thirdly, the Commission made certain recommendations to the Government, and these reflect to a considerable extent the views of the governing classes in the mid-Victorian period.

The point which has just been made reminds us of the caution which needs to be exercised with the information in the report. There is much to suggest that the ideas and the views were those of the upper and middle classes, those who legislated, those who provided the grants for education. But at least one assistant commissioner was concerned to discover what the working classes, for whom the education was provided,

¹ Royal Commission on Popular Education (Newcastle), 1861, vol. II, p. 10.

thought on educational matters. Patrick Cumin, who investigated the areas around Bristol and Plymouth, said, "I confess I attach more weight to the evidence derived from the work people themselves than from any other source."¹

A second point for caution concerns the statistics. Dr. W.B. Hodgson, who enquired in the London area, pointed out in his report that the returns about the length of school life were unreliable since the registers were often carelessly kept.² Historians of education have pointed out the doubtful statistics of the report.³ Furthermore, it is necessary not to confuse the average duration of school life, which an assistant commissioner could provide from his collection of statistical data, and the age at which children normally left school.

With these reservations in mind it is, however, possible to obtain a fairly accurate picture of the ages at which children left school in this period.

¹ Royal Commission on Popular Education (Newcastle), 1861, vol. III, p. 26.

² Ibid., 1861, vol. III, p. 514.

³ B. Simon: Studies in the History of Education (1780-1870), 1960, p. 347.

Most children, it was said, had their names on a school register between the ages of six and ten, but by the age of eleven the majority would have left. Those few who continued their education would have left by the age of thirteen. All the assistant commissioners, except the two who enquired into popular education in manufacturing districts, confirmed that about ten or eleven was the age when children left school. Sometimes they suggested there might be slight variations; for example, the Rev. James Fraser thought girls might stay up to twelve, two years longer than boys, in the agricultural areas of the West Country and the West Midlands.¹ This was suggested also, from a different angle, by the Rev. Thomas Hedley, who investigated rural areas in the East Midlands and East Anglia.² He reported that girls passed out of the school from eight onwards, but less rapidly than boys. Some of the assistant commissioners made the point that the children of the "best" or "respectable" working class parents tended to leave school at a later

¹ Royal Commission on Popular Education (Newcastle), 1861, vol. II, p. 46.

² Ibid., 1861, vol. II, p. 170.

age than other children with a similar class background.

There is an interesting contrast between the findings of George Coode, who investigated the manufacturing areas of the West Midlands and the Potteries (where the Factory Acts did not apply), and those of J.S. Winder, who reported on the textile manufacturing areas of Yorkshire and Lancashire (where the Factory Acts did apply in the textile industries). In the Potteries the children were hardly ever at school above the age of seven or eight, and from the information relating to child labour in the Black Country it appears that the situation was similar in that area. In the textile areas the children were less likely to be at school between seven and eight than they were between twelve and thirteen. Thus one effect of compulsory, though half-time, education was that children left school at a later age. Two other effects worth noting were that often parents did not send their children to school before the compulsory half-time education in the textile industries forced them to do so, and that there was a tendency for children to go to work at an earlier age when half-time conditions existed. It should, however, be noted that the employment of children before

the age of ten or eleven was found in the main in the manufacturing areas and not elsewhere.

The general impression gained from this enquiry is, therefore, the wide variety of ages for leaving school - the range being chiefly from eight to thirteen with a particularly high rate of leaving at ten and eleven. The leaving age clearly depended very much on local conditions, the kind of employment available to children in a particular locality, and probably to a considerable extent on the attitude of parents and employers.

With regard to the attitude of parents, the Commissioners stated forcefully in their general report that parents were not prepared to do without their children's labour. "They (the parents) are not prepared to sacrifice the earnings of their children for this purpose (education) and they accordingly remove them from school as soon as they have an opportunity of earning wages of an amount which adds in any considerable degree to the family income."¹ The Prince Consort was

¹ Royal Commission on Popular Education (Newcastle), 1861, vol. I, p. 175.

quoted as having said, in 1857, that the children of a working man were not only his offspring but part of his productive power - and that his daughters were his handmaids.¹ The evidence of all the assistant commissioners, except for John Jenkins, had helped to produce this verdict on the part of the Commission. John Jenkins had investigated the mining areas of Wales, and he said, "It is not a vice or a moral delinquency that we have to deal with, but a state of opinion. The parents think that they are discharging a duty to themselves and their families in withdrawing their children from school at an early age when their labour becomes remunerative."² Jenkins added that the parents, who were moral, serious thinking parents, felt it to be a duty to put their children in a way of earning a livelihood. The distinction to be drawn from Jenkins' views of the parents' attitude and those of his fellow assistant commissioners is not related to the wage-earning itself and the consequent withdrawal from school. Whereas many parents sent their children to work at an early age for selfish

¹ Royal Commission on Popular Education (Newcastle), 1861, vol. I, p. 188.

² Ibid., vol. II, p. 474.

reasons, Jenkins implied that Welsh parents were more concerned for the well-being of the children themselves.

Countless examples were given by the assistant commissioners of the importance of the wage-earning capacity of the children and its influence on school leaving, the consequence being early withdrawal. The Rev. Thomas Hedley was impressed by its impact on family life in the rural communities of East Anglia and the East Midlands when he said, "Three children in a family, above eight years old, can double the weekly income of the house."¹ But the assistant commissioners also mentioned other factors in the parental attitude to education and school leaving to which the final report did not give as much weight. There was plenty of proof that the uneducated or the semi-educated got on just as well as the children who stayed at school longer. Another point was that length of stay at school did not necessarily mean, and was unlikely to mean, a higher wage. Girls were sometimes removed from school early to look after younger children in the family. The Rev. James Fraser suggested that the learning of agricultural skills

¹ Royal Commission on Popular Education (Newcastle), 1861, vol. II, p. 149.

as well as the earning of wages was a reason for leaving school.¹ J.S. Winder gave as the reasons for the parental neglect of children's education "poverty, indifference, inaccessibility and inefficiency".² Poverty would certainly lead to wage-earning at as early an age as possible; inaccessibility would not be likely to influence school leaving to any extent; but indifference and inefficiency might well influence the age at which children left school.

Although so much evidence was given to show the cause of early leaving to be wages, it may well be asked whether due emphasis was given to the demand of the Northumberland and Durham pitmen for compulsory education up to the age of ten and the possibility of continued education up to the age of thirteen.³ Probably this demand expressed the wishes of only a section of the working classes and was not representative of the working classes in general, but it illustrated, without a doubt, how, if they were organised, these people could express a demand for compulsory education, even if the school leaving age was to be comparatively low.

¹ Royal Commission on Popular Education (Newcastle), 1861, vol. II, p. 46.

² Ibid., 1861, vol. II, p. 200.

³ Ibid., 1861, vol. I, pp. 196-197.

Since the report laid such emphasis on the wage-earning reason for leaving school, it is useful to consider what it said about those who paid the wages - the employers. The main report ignored this aspect almost completely. An exception was the commendation given to the London Lead Mining Company in Durham, who gave considerable "private compulsion" for education to be provided for the children of their employees.¹ Nevertheless, the assistant commissioners touched on the attitude of the employers and the demand for juvenile labour. The evidence they gave showed that large employers of labour were more likely to want the advantage of educated workmen. In this connection the emphasis was on "large", and most employers did not come into this category. In some industries - pottery was a good example - the employers of children would sometimes be working men themselves.

There was a constant reminder that the demand for juvenile and child labour exceeded the supply, and though the possibility of the use of educational proficiency certificates might be mooted there was no

¹ Royal Commission on Popular Education (Newcastle), 1861, vol. II, p. 366 and vol. I, pp. 217-218.

likelihood of this method being adopted as a method of private compulsion while child labour was required. James Rogers, surgeon of Ystalyfera, told John Jenkins that if there was a law to keep children at school until the age of twelve the cost of production would thereby be increased.¹ George Coode said that in the Black Country, where the employers of child labour were often small employers of labour and members of the working class, the manufacturers were not concerned with their own or the children's mental and moral culture.² It was reported that some farmers (especially in Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire) required the children of the men they hired to work for them.³ The Commission which enquired into the employment of children in agriculture in 1867 revealed that the farmers and other employers of labour in the countryside had little desire to see children educated to any degree of proficiency. The Rev. W. Thomason, vicar of Burgh-le-Marsh, said that employers of labour did not wish labourers to be wholly ignorant "but more than a little (education) is by much too much".⁴ Captain C. Parker, a magistrate, of

¹ Royal Commission on Popular Education (Newcastle), 1861, Vol. II, p. 590.

² Ibid., Vol. II, p. 247.

³ Ibid., 1861, vol. II, p. 149.

⁴ R.C. Russell: The Revolt of the Field in Lincolnshire, 1956, p. 13.

Langtoft, reported at the same time that a restriction on children's labour would raise the price of men's labour and that this would be hard on the small farmer.¹

Another magistrate, Robert Everard of Spalding, said, "The labour of children in the locality is absolutely necessary for the proper cultivation of the land," adding, "and the comfortable maintenance of their families."²

Thus, it is clear that many employers, both in industry and in agriculture, thought that their production costs would rise if child labour were removed. Any attempt to keep children at school longer would remove this source of labour, and it was therefore in the employers' interests to ensure that children could continue to be withdrawn from school at an early age. Some employers wished the education provided for the children to ensure "good conduct", and the amount of education given was of no real interest to them. Josiah Wilkinson reported that "they (the large employers) all concern in requiring that it (a certificate or testimonial of educational attainment) should vouch not so much for length of attendance as for good conduct".³ Although, as we saw

¹R.C. Russell: The Revolt of the Field in Lincolnshire / p. 12 1956,

² Ibid., p. 10.

³ Royal Commission on Popular Education (Newcastle), 1861. vol. III, p. 361.

earlier, large employers of labour were more likely to value educated workmen, this type of employer was not necessarily concerned about the length of attendance, and it seems fairly clear that the employer of smaller groups of workmen was even less concerned with educational proficiency. Therefore, the employer class, who might have influenced the age of school leaving by encouraging a longer period at school, was on the whole unwilling to do so. The Newcastle Commission, significantly, ignored this aspect of early leaving. The members referred to early leaving as an evil, but preferred to think it was an evil created by parents. In no sense did they suggest that the employer class was to blame for this state of affairs.

Even though it seems the Newcastle Commission ignored a basic factor in the reasons for leaving school early, it did consider - largely within its terms of reference - the measures which might be used either to extend a child's stay at school or to continue his education. The Commissioners considered the award of prizes, mainly of money, as a possible means of inducing children to stay at school longer. The general consensus of opinion was that such schemes might influence a minority, but that parental indifference would mean

that the majority of children would remain untouched. Most of the assistant commissioners saw that only the best children and the best schools would be influenced to a significant extent by such schemes. One assistant commissioner, the Rev. T. Hedley, was told in the agricultural district he investigated that prize schemes might improve regularity of attendance, but they would not make children stay at school longer.¹

The Commission considered whether or not some form of industrial training would keep children at school to a later age. Some of the assistant commissioners had no comment to make on this, because in their districts there was no evidence that any such training was undertaken. Outside the textile manufacturing areas it appeared that working class parents did not wish their children to receive industrial training. Another difficulty would be the provision of facilities and materials; the latter especially might require continual financial expenditure. Josiah Wilkinson, who had taken a particular interest in founding a National School at Highgate, London, where industrial training

¹ Royal Commission on Popular Education (Newcastle), 1861, vol. II, p. 150.

was given, reported that the result was "singularly opposed to our expectations".¹ Children did not stay at school to a later age than in other schools.

J.S. Winder pointed out that in the textile areas industrial training already existed in one form - half-time education and half-time employment in factories. He was sure that the parents would not wish to see it in any other form; they would not submit to "playing at that which is now a reality paid for in hard cash".² The other assistant commissioners also commented on the possibility of extending the half-time system to other parts of the country. In the agricultural areas it would be unworkable in the form that was operative in the industrial areas. No other assistant commissioner seemed to think it was very desirable. George Coodè, giving his opinion for the Potteries, thought the introduction of a half-time system - which would cause children to attend school to a later age, even if only for part of the day - might not be seriously opposed, though it was likely to receive less support from the parents than from the employers.³ The general report

¹ Royal Commission on Popular Education (Newcastle), 1861, vol. III, p. 364.

² Ibid., vol. II, p. 196.

³ Ibid., vol. II, p. 285.

of the Commission did not suggest extension of the half-time system but rather increased power of inspection and improvements in the system then in existence. Since the half-time system certainly kept children at school to a later age we might wonder why there was no encouragement of an extended half-time system. Possibly it was that such a system, as has been pointed out earlier, led to a later age for beginning school education.¹ But it may also have been the conviction of the Commission, following the reports of the assistant commissioners, that the development of evening schools was the answer to the evil of early withdrawal.

Josiah Wilkinson "found evening schools very popular with parents of children, and that several most intelligent managers and masters looked to them as the most effectual remedy to counteract the prevalent evil of leaving school so young."² The Rev. James Fraser, having expressed admiration for the earnestness of those who attended evening classes, and having pointed out that this proved that the poor valued education, said, "I will only add that all I have seen

¹ See page 26 in this chapter.

² Royal Commission on Popular Education (Newcastle), 1861, vol. III, p. 381.

convinces me that they (the evening schools) are the instrument of education which, under our actual circumstances, there is most need to use, and most chance of using successfully."¹ There was a clearly expressed opinion that the evening schools should be "assimilated" in the day school system. Some concern was felt that the evening schools needed to cater for two main groups - those who needed to remedy deficiencies in their earlier education, and those who required post-elementary instruction. The Commission, in its conclusion, on the subject of evening schools maintained that there was an insufficient number. It recognised that the evening school could provide the education that the early school leaving age did not allow the day school to give, and it quoted an opinion expressed in a letter more than twenty years before, in 1839, from Bishop Hinds (Bishop of Norwich) to Mr. Senior.² In this letter the Bishop had said that, since labour employment took children away from school at twelve years of age or even earlier, evening schools might be "the means of continuing their schooling for a few

¹ Royal Commission on Popular Education (Newcastle), 1861, vol. II, p. 54.

² Ibid., 1861, vol. I, p. 39.

years longer".

In its report the Newcastle Commission maintained that most of the evidence showed that a compulsory system of elementary education was not desired for the children of working class parents, even, with very few exceptions, by those parents themselves. State compulsion in education might lead those who had the social duty to educate their children to cease "to acknowledge and discharge it".¹ The Commission suggested that compulsion might lead also to financial assistance being required for the education of the poor. Rather than be involved in causing a decline of social duty or adding to taxation and rates, the Commission recommended that right-minded employers, clergy, landowners and other influential persons could continue to exercise moral pressure on their poorer neighbours in the matter of education.

Moral pressure was, then, at this stage considered to be the best means of encouraging parents to educate their children, and it was assumed that this kind of pressure would eventually remove what had been evaluated (from the moral standpoint, presumably)

¹ Royal Commission on Popular Education (Newcastle), 1851, vol. I, p. 200.

as an evil - namely, the early age at which many children left school. The Commission, since it did not recommend compulsory education, did not consider a school leaving age within the framework of purely educational legislation. Nor did it suggest that, through factory legislation and a minimum age for employment, those children who attended school might remain attached somewhat longer if their employment became no longer possible at an early age. Perhaps somewhat significantly the extension of the Factory Acts to other industries in the period 1862 to 1867 was in no direct sense the implementation of educational measures, but rather prevention of child labour chiefly on humanitarian grounds. Indirectly, for those children in the industries involved - pottery, hosiery and lace, paper staining, percussion caps and cartridges, lucifer matches, blast furnaces, copper mills, paper, glass, tobacco, to name some of the main ones concerned - education now became compulsory on a half-time basis, and, as we have already noticed in the textile industries, children left school at a later age. But this was a by-product of factory legislation, not a direct result of educational concern and legislation.

As far as the children of the working classes were concerned, the Commission considered that direct

educational legislation was undesirable and that the school leaving age should be left to the demands of the labour market, the economic pressures of the age. In this sense it reflected the spirit of the times - a spirit which encouraged as little interference as possible with the commercial, agricultural and industrial interests of those who held or had recently acquired political power. Yet the Commission had to admit that early leaving was an evil which ought to be attacked by moral pressures. This revealed a dichotomy in thought and action on the part of those concerned with the education of the children of the working classes. At this point the Commissioners as a body were not prepared to recognise that economic pressures could be removed, possibly to the economic disadvantage of some of the legislators, only by educational legislation which would restrict the economic activities of the employer class. In one sense the working class parents were made the scapegoats for an economic system which worked to the advantage of the employer and ruling classes. Fundamental to an understanding of the reasons why school leaving was "at an early age" is an appreciation of this attitude, expressed by the Newcastle Commission

in these words: "Neither the government nor private persons can effectually resist or would be morally justified in resisting the natural demands of labour when the child has arrived, physically speaking, at the proper age for labour, and when its wages are such as to form a strong motive to its parents for withdrawing it from school."¹

1

Royal Commission on Popular Education (Newcastle).
1861, vol. I, p. 225.

CHAPTER 3

THE SCHOOL LEAVING IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS PRIOR TO 1870.

During the first half of the nineteenth century there was some pressure, especially in the growing urban centres of industry and commerce, for changes in secondary education. This pressure was seen in the introduction of new schemes of instruction in some endowed schools and in the passing of the Grammar School Act of 1840. The latter legalised new schemes for the introduction of modern subjects, so bringing about modifications in a purely classical curriculum. Competitive entrance to the Civil Service and reforms in the armed services gave impetus to the growth of proprietary and private schools. The boarding schools (both endowed and proprietary) had grown in number and influence by 1860. This was especially true of the public schools, where it was the policy of the headmasters to build up the boarding side of their schools ^{reduce} and/the number of local boys.

Complaints about the education provided in the public schools (the nine great schools)¹ led to an investigation of conditions in these schools between 1861 and 1864. By 1864 much of the educational system

¹ Eton, Winchester, Westminster, Charterhouse, St. Paul's, Merchant Taylors', Harrow, Rugby, Shrewsbury.

of England and Wales had been investigated.¹ To complete the picture a Royal Commission under the chairmanship of Lord Taunton was set up in that year to enquire into the education in endowed, proprietary and private schools engaged in secondary or grammar school education. It reported its findings in 1868, and these are particularly useful as a guide to the leaving age of children in secondary schools.

Since the Newcastle Commission had used selected areas of the country, it is useful to discover from the Taunton Commission's Report for these same areas the general pattern of school leaving in secondary education - the term "secondary" being used here in the sense that such schools were non-elementary, and in many cases their endowments had required an education in the tradition of the grammar school, with the emphasis given to the study of one or more of the classical languages.

There is no value in comparing the numbers of secondary schools established in these areas, for the historical background was different, the travelling conditions and, therefore, the availability of education varied considerably, and the boarding element would

¹ Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, 1850-1852.
Elementary Schools, 1858-1861.
Public Schools, 1861-1864.

further complicate any judgment based on such an analysis. Secondly, the position in the Metropolitan area does not appear representative of the remainder of the country. In the other districts there was, however, a general pattern of classical, semi-classical and non-classical schools - with gradings one, two and three. For our purpose the grading given by the Commission is important, for a Grade I school was one where at least ten per cent. of the pupils were above sixteen, a Grade II school were at least ten per cent. were above fourteen, and a Grade III school/^{one}where education ended at about fourteen.

In those schools where the grading was either I or II it might still be true that the great majority of the pupils left by the age of fourteen. At Lincoln Grammar School there/^{were}one hundred and three day scholars, chiefly between the ages of ten and fourteen. No indication is given of the age range of boarders, but since there were only seventeen of them they were a very small proportion of the school's population.¹ But the Commissioners put this school into the Grade II category,

¹ Schools Inquiry Commission (Taunton), 1868, vol. 16, p. 260

so ten per cent. of the pupils must have been above fourteen. Some boys must have been at least sixteen, since the average age of the five boys who studied Latin in the top class was sixteen. In Bristol the Free Grammar School was in Grade I. There were no boarders, and the two hundred and thirty day scholars were classified as follows: under fourteen, a hundred and fifty-five; between fourteen and sixteen, fifty-five; over sixteen, twenty.¹ This was a large grammar school by comparison with many others, especially those in rural areas. It apparently just qualified for its particular grading, yet almost two-thirds of the pupils were under fourteen, which fact suggests that the tendency was for some to leave at about fourteen. The assistant commissioner in his report about this school said that the age of leaving was fourteen to fifteen, commenting that "the majority of them leave early".² Yet by comparison with the elementary schools at this time fourteen or fifteen was an advanced age.

The figures for Newcastle-under-Lyme Free

¹ Schools Inquiry Commission (Taunton), 1868, vol. 15, p. 24.

² Ibid, 1868, vol. 15, p. 19.

Grammar School also are fairly comprehensive and indicate the position already suggested in the previous examples. Of fifty-three day scholars five were under ten, thirty-two were ten and under fourteen, ten were fourteen and under sixteen, and six were sixteen or above. Of the twelve boarders ten were ten and under fourteen, and no information is given about the other two.¹ This school was classified as Grade I, for it reached, but only just, the ten per cent. required over the age of sixteen.

Not all the assistant commissioners provided the detailed evidence which has been given in some of these examples. However, some indicated that the majority of pupils left at fourteen or fifteen. This was stated by the assistant commissioner at Dudley Grammar School. Here, at the age of fourteen or fifteen, the sons of the local coal and iron masters and tradesmen went into business.² At Bishop Auckland School, where there were only twelve day scholars, the pupils were mainly aged ten to fourteen.³ At Wigton Grammar School

¹ Schools Inquiry Commission (Taunton), 1868, vol. 15, p. 435.

² Ibid., 1868, vol. 15, p. 556.

³ Ibid., 1868, vol. 19, p. 19.

nineteen of the twenty-six day scholars were less than fourteen years of age.¹ At Rochdale Grammar School most of the thirty-seven day boys were under fourteen, and the assistant commissioner pointed out that few remained after fourteen.² At Bury St. Edmunds most of the hundred-and-twenty-four pupils of the Guildhall Commercial School were under fourteen.³ The Queen Elizabeth Grammar School at Gainsborough had only sixteen pupils, mostly tradesmen's sons who left at about fifteen to go into business.⁴ At Hereford Cathedral School there were fifty day scholars. Thirty-five were between ten and fourteen, three over sixteen, and therefore it can be assumed that most, if not all, the twelve others were from fourteen to sixteen. This school had, however, forty boarders; their average leaving age must have been higher than that of the day boys, for the first class in Religious Knowledge, Greek and Latin had an average age of sixteen.⁵

From these examples of the evidence which fills twenty volumes of the Taunton Commission's Report -

¹ Schools Inquiry Commission (Taunton), 1868, vol. 19, p. 248.

² Ibid., 1868, vol. 17, p. 393 and p. 391.

³ Ibid., 1868, vol. 13, p. 146.

⁴ Ibid., 1868, vol. 16, p. 202.

⁵ Ibid., 1868, vol. 15, p. 218.

examples taken from those sample areas studied by the Newcastle Commission at almost the same time - it seems clear that the middle classes kept their children at school till the age of fourteen or fifteen, and in a few cases until sixteen, seventeen or eighteen. Those who stayed at school until the later age were usually intended to enter one of the universities, a branch of the armed services or the Civil Service. The Taunton Commission gives support to this view in the lists of pupils proceeding to university or passing examinations.

Although, as we have seen, there is the occasional adverse comment about early leaving from secondary schools, this is not a view generally expressed. The main criticism is not of the leaving age, but of the curriculum in some schools and the general organisation of the schools. The Commissioners did not think that any change was needed in the ages at which children were leaving school. This was clearly a matter for the parents, and it seemed to the Commissioners that parents could be classified on the basis of the age at which they wished their children to leave school.¹ Thus, in their recommendations, the

¹ Schools Inquiry Commission (Taunton), 1868, vol. 1, pp. 15-20.

Commissioners thought in terms of three grades of secondary education and correspondingly three ages for leaving school.

The parents of the children who stayed at school until about eighteen were men with considerable unearned incomes, or professional men or highly successful business men. These parents were similar to those who sent their children to the nine great schools investigated by the Clarendon Commission. In these schools the leaving age was about eighteen. The boarders in the endowed schools were the pupils who tended to stay at school to a later age.¹ Those children who left at around the age of sixteen also had parents who belonged to one of the professions or the poorer gentry. Implicit is the view that these were less wealthy men who nevertheless recognised the value of the classical or semi-classical form of education. The parents of the children who finished their school education at fourteen were typified by the small tenant farmer, the small trader or shopkeeper and the superior artisan or skilled workman. These parents were not concerned with the classical element in the education

¹ See page 47 - Hereford Cathedral School. Also Ipswich, Christ's Hospital School (Schools Inquiry Commission (Taunton), 1868, vol. 13, p. 210) and Sherborne, King's School (Schools Inquiry Commission (Taunton), 1868, vol. 14, p. 128),

of their children, but rather that their children should be proficient in reading, writing and arithmetic. There is a suggestion that in some cases these parents, especially the tenant farmers, sent their children to the endowed grammar schools in order to give them a class distinction from the children of labourers.¹ Two factors here are of importance. Wealth, in mid-Victorian society, was a determining factor in the length of a boy's education. Status, often associated with the degree of wealth, and the desire that one's children should retain this status, were also of significance.

Not only did the Taunton Commission produce evidence from which it is possible to draw certain conclusions about the school leaving age, but also it made certain recommendations which threw light on the thought of the upper and middle classes. Aware that the growth of manufacturing industry would lead to a greater demand for skilled craftsmen, engineers and those with a degree of technical knowledge, the Commissioner recommended that the urgent educational need was for good schools of the third grade where boys could remain

¹ Schools Inquiry Commission (Taunton), 1868, vol. 1, p. 20.

until fourteen. There should also be schools of the second and first grades with appropriate leaving ages, but these would be fewer than the Grade III schools. Each grade of school would provide an education complete in itself for the particular leaving age, and it would be expected that the boys from each type of school would proceed to particular occupations, or, in the case of Grade I schools, a quarter to a fifth of the pupils would go to university. There might be the opportunity for a very limited number of boys to move from Grade III to Grade II and Grade I schools, for ability should be able to find "its proper opening", and it was also suggested that Grade III schools could be fed from a number of elementary schools with "picked scholars".¹ The Commissioners said, "If the son of a labourer can beat the sons of gentlemen that goes a long way to prove that he is capable of using with advantage the education usually given to gentlemen."² However, except for this determination to use talent and so extend the education of a small number of boys, the main recommendation was

¹ Schools Inquiry Commission (Taunton), 1868, vol. 1, pp. 95 & 603.

² Ibid., vol. 1, p. 596.

to develop a system in which the school leaving age and the type of education depended on the wealth and social status of the parents and the sex of the child. The Commissioners thought that the system of education could be improved and better organised, but it would nevertheless be a fairly rigid system as far as the leaving age was concerned. They said, "The functions of a school are best fixed by fixing the grade of the school ... To do this effectively a maximum limit of age for the scholars must be prescribed, and an entrance examination enforced."¹ It was in this context that they said, "The sections of the population which require an education terminating at the ages of twelve, fourteen, sixteen and eighteen or nineteen, are respectively smaller as the age is greater."²

The Commissioners did not at this point in their report comment on the fact that, because of the inadequacy in the provision of secondary education for girls, the vast majority of pupils remaining at school after twelve years of age were boys. But later they did comment on education for girls, because by the middle

¹ Schools Inquiry Commission (Taunton), 1868, vol. 1, p. 184.

² Ibid., 1868, vol. 1, p. 183.

years of the century middle class parents were demanding facilities for girls' secondary education. The report said that it was unjust that girls' education was not supplied in the endowed school system, and pointed out that in many cases the founders of these schools had set them up in the framework of a different period. In any case, many girls of the upper and middle classes received their education at home. The Commissioners did not think that middle class parents would want their daughters to be mixed with those of a working class background, but if the same rules were to apply for boys' and girls' secondary education it would be inevitable on a "merit" system that this would happen.

What the Commissioners noticed in the few girls' schools that existed was that most of the pupils left school at sixteen or seventeen. In a more general statement they expressed this view: "that up to the age of twelve girls held their own in the ordinary subjects of instruction with boys; that their education should be the same up to the point when the professional instruction of boys begins, or up to the age of sixteen."¹

¹ Schools Inquiry Commission (Taunton), 1868, vol. 1, p. 554.

Up to fourteen they found it satisfactory that the sexes should be educated together.

This picture of the leaving age in secondary education would not be complete without emphasizing that this sector of education was outside the influence of grants from the government. Since secondary schools did not receive government grants the question of wasting public funds on early school leavers did not arise. It did, however, seem important that, within the limits provided by the endowments of the schools concerned, those few pupils whose merit suggested the value of a lengthy education should receive it. What the Commissioners ignored in this respect was that wealth and status could provide a better education in early life, and this would determine that those with this advantage would also be those who, in the main, would receive the advantage of staying at school for a longer period. The Commissioners, in their recommendations, urged that the freer the competition the better would be the results, and that "the selection is sure to be right".¹ In their eyes the system was satisfactory, for it

¹ Schools Enquiry Commission (Taunton), 1868, vol. 1, pp. 595 and 596.

reflected the virtue of competition which was the basis of economic life; also, in an age which had so recently received the Darwinian ideas on natural selection, science appeared to give further justification to the various grades within the system of education.

Although many recommendations of the Commissioners were not embodied in legislation, their ideas influenced the pattern of secondary education - and the school leaving age in this sector of education - for most of the remainder of the century.¹

¹ The Endowed Schools Act of 1869 followed the Commission's Report. An Endowed Schools Commission, 1870-1874, whose powers were later merged with those of the Charity Commissioners, prepared new schemes for endowed schools. This work proceeded slowly during the next three decades.

CHAPTER 4

COMPULSION AND THE SCHOOL LEAVING AGE
IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

The Liberal Government which came to power in 1868 initiated, during its six years in power, a number of significant changes. Among these was the foundation of a national system of education provided for by the Elementary Education Act of 1870 (Forster's Education Act). Further Education Acts in 1876 and 1880 completed the establishment of a compulsory elementary education system.

In 1870 local school boards were allowed to enforce school attendance; in 1876 compulsion was exercised through restriction on employment combined with voluntarily adopted by-laws of local school boards and school attendance committees; and in 1880 universal compulsion was introduced. The introduction of compulsion during this decade established a school leaving age, though because of local variations in the by-laws it was not yet possible to think of this as one particular age accepted by all local school authorities. A national minimum age for leaving was established; by-laws, which related to the standard of education reached in particular localities, could

compel children to stay beyond this age.

It is impossible to consider the arguments put forward about school leaving without placing them in the context of the discussions relating to compulsion. This can be considered first on the evidence from the Parliamentary debates. In 1870 those who were anxious that the Education Act should compel children to attend school argued along the following lines. The upper and middle classes already compelled their children to be educated, and it was equally desirable for children of the poorer classes to receive education (though there was no suggestion that it should be of a similar type). The state needed to provide the paternalistic structure because some parents neglected their children.

A.J. Mundella, M.P. for Sheffield, said, "The cry for compulsion came directly from the people." ¹ By the "people" Mundella probably meant the skilled workers who had helped to elect him to Parliament, men who had in many cases been given the vote under the terms of the 1867 Reform Act. Another of those who took a similar view to Mundella was Sergeant Simon,

¹ Hansard, 3rd series, vol. 202, 1870, p. 1730.

the M.P. for Dewsbury.¹ But Jacob Bright, M.P. for Manchester, made the point that though compulsion was favoured by the electorate in his constituency, this did not mean that it was desired by all classes.² Certain pressure groups favoured compulsion. Sir Charles Dilke listed them as the Manchester Educational Union, The National Education League, and the Nonconformist Churches, and added that many of the clergy and inspectors advocated this type of legislation.³ Another body not in his list was the Trades Union Congress.⁴ Without doubt during the previous decade public opinion had become increasingly favourable to some kind of compulsory system. The Rev. H.W. Holland made this point in his paper on "The Proposed National Arrangements for Primary Education", though admitting that there were arguments against compulsion.⁵ Some

¹ Hansard, 3rd series, vol. 203, 1870, p. 44.

² Ibid., vol. 203, 1870, p. 49.

³ Ibid., vol. 202, 1870, pp. 515-516.

⁴ H.W. Holland: The Proposed National Arrangements for Primary Education, 1870, p. 142, and p.64 of this chapter

⁵ Ibid., p. 127.

maintained that it was fatal to be permissive. John Platt, M.P. for Oldham, who described himself as "a large employer of labour", said, from experience in his own provision of education, that to make the Act work satisfactorily it was essential to compel attendance at school.¹ Joseph Pease, M.P. for South Durham, said that compulsion ought to be established through the Department of Education so that the application of local by-laws would not lead to the unpopularity of certain people in any locality.² He also argued that compulsory education would diminish poverty and crime.

There were arguments against compulsion. A basic point in these was that enforcement would be necessary. This would demand police action, and so interfere with the rights of the individual. Since most elementary education was on a denominational basis, clearly there might also be interference with the religious views of the parents. Some parents might object to compulsion because of their poverty, and for poor people the vital need was that their children should be able to earn wages. The agricultural interests

¹ Hansard, 3rd series, vol. 202, 1870, pp. 1739-40.

² Ibid., vol. 202, 1870, pp. 1718-19.

emphasized the importance of the labour of boys in farming. The Earl of Shaftesbury, pioneer of factory reform though he was, would have liked to see the upper limit for compulsory education set at ten, because the parents needed the services of the child at that age.¹ It was asserted that only a minority of the working classes really wished for a compulsory system of education for their children. Since the Education Act would give power to school boards to pass by-laws relating to compulsion, some maintained that the operation of different by-laws would provide the kind of difficulties experienced with the permissive type of legislation that had, in previous decades, proved to be somewhat ineffective. One speaker in the House of Commons was against compulsion because of the difficulty which would arise if the head teacher or managers wished to expel a pupil.² Another point put forward was that prospects for future employment ought to be a means of persuasion and could provide all that was necessary.³ One further argument was that compulsion was foreign to the English way of life, and where it had been introduced

¹ Hansard, 3rd series, vol. 203, 1870, p. 848.

² Ibid., 3rd series, vol. 203, 1870, p. 52.

³ Ibid., vol. 202, 1870, p. 1748.

overseas, for instance in the Canton of Vaud, as described by Matthew Arnold, or in the U.S.A., as described by James Fraser, it had been difficult to put into practice.¹ Forster, the architect of the Bill, was firmly against the introduction of direct compulsion on a national basis, believing that the use of local by-laws would provide valuable guidance for further legislation about compulsion.²

During the committee stage of the Bill certain changes were made. Instead of school boards being compelled to establish by-laws, they were given the option to suggest by-laws for approval by the Education Department. The ages between which compulsion could be enforced in any locality were from five to thirteen, though a child could leave at the age of ten. This change was the result of pressure, especially from the agricultural interests, which emphasized the usefulness of boys from the age of ten.³ Originally it was intended that where by-laws for compulsory attendance were provided they would apply to all children between five and twelve.

¹ Hansard, 3rd series, vol. 202, 1870, pp. 1726-1727.

² Ibid., vol. 203, 1870, pp. 47-48.

³ Ibid., vol. 203, p. 53-4.

The amendment raised the upper limit to thirteen, but made it possible for children to leave school any time from the age of ten provided certain requirements were fulfilled.¹ Partial or total exemption from school attendance between ten and thirteen could be obtained if one of the inspectors certified that the pupil had reached an appropriate standard in reading, writing and arithmetic. The suggestion that the criterion for total or partial exemption should be geared to an educational standard, and not an age limit, came from the debate in the House of Lords and was accepted at the report stage by the House of Commons.

The 1870 Education Act was passed by a Parliament in which the working classes had no spokesman from their own ranks. George Howell, Secretary of the Parliamentary Committee of the T.U.C. from 1871 to 1875, in an article in the "Contemporary Review" in 1889 dated the arrival of working class Members of Parliament in the House of Commons as 1874, with the election of Alexander MacDonald for Stafford and Thomas Burt for Morpeth.² There is, therefore, some value in considering

¹ Hansard, 3rd series, vol. 203, 1870, p. 56.

² Contemporary Review, vol. LVI, September 1889, p. 416, article by George Howell: "T.U. Congresses and Social Legislation".

the views of the working class at the time of the 1870 Education Act.

The evidence of working class opinion on the question of education shows that where this opinion was vocal, and in many cases it was expressed through the trade union movement or working men's associations, it favoured rate-aided education under the control of school boards. In 1869 at the Trades Union Congress held at Birmingham G. Potter, a member of the society of London carpenters and of the London Working Men's Association, read a paper on "The Disorganisation of Labour". In the course of this paper he said, "We have six millions of workmen; and we will have the other thing, a free, a secular, and a universal education to enable them to work victoriously ... Steam multiplies force; education shall magnify manhood."¹ George Austin of Sheffield read a paper on "Strikes and Lockouts". The report of his discourse said, "One remedy proposed was the better education of the working classes; for he believed they suffered more from the action of their own class than by anything done by the

¹ Report of T.U.C., 1869, R.S. Kirk, August 24th, 1869 (Manuscript form with no page numbers).

employers."¹

Towards the end of the week in which the Congress was held R. McRae of the Birmingham Trades Council read a paper on "Primary Education".² Having outlined the deficiencies in education, he said that the remedy was "the establishment of free unsectarian schools for poor children", for "the uneducated lower classes would become a source of great peril and danger to the state". On compulsion he said, "The objection to compulsion would be met by the fact that compulsion would not be required. If slight compulsion were necessary at first, the advantages accruing from a system of general education would abolish all necessity for compulsion. A scheme of free education must necessarily be rate supported." Charles Hibbs, representing the National Education League (the centre of their activities was Birmingham), read a paper on "The National Education League".³ He emphasized that attendance should be made compulsory, because the education of children was a matter of public concern and therefore it did not lie with the parents to decide on the education of their

¹ Report of T.U.C., 1869, R.S. Kirk, August 26th, 1869.

² Ibid., August 27th, 1869.

³ Ibid., August 27th, 1869.

children. He concluded by pointing out how education could assist the development of the trade unions.

Discussion followed the reading of these papers, and several resolutions were put forward. One was carried unanimously. This was the resolution of W.R. Cremer of the Marylebone (London) Working Men's Association: "Nothing short of a system of national, unsectarian and compulsory education will satisfy the requirements of the people of the United Kingdom."¹

The impression given by the papers and speeches was that working men wanted free and adequate provision of education; there was probably less agreement on compulsion. Compulsion was urged for reasons of security for the general public or for its value to trade union development, rather than for its benefits to the children who would, under a system of compulsion, receive it.

The 1870 Act provided facilities for education. Perhaps it is significant that the T.U.C. meetings at London in 1871 and Nottingham in 1872 did not have papers or discussion on education, the excuses being that the

¹ Report of T.U.C., 1869, R.S. Kirk, August 27th, 1869.

papers were not prepared or that there was no time for them to be read.¹ The 1870 Act had provided the section of the working classes represented at this time by the T.U.C. with the facilities for education that it wanted. The pressure for universal direct compulsion came during the next few years mainly from the middle class-led National Education League and other middle class groups.

Further evidence of working class opinion in 1870 can be found in newspapers. At a Working Men's Conference on National Education held at the Free Trade Hall in Manchester in 1870 and attended by ninety-seven delegates from a variety of trades, the second of three resolutions called for a compulsory system of education.² (The first resolution advocated a secular form, and the third called for a free system.) At a meeting at Exeter Hall, London, in June, 1870, there were four resolutions submitted by fifteen working men, who represented a number of trades. The first resolution affirmed the need for compulsory, unsectarian education.³ The other resolutions advocated the compulsory setting up

¹ There was no T.U.C. meeting in 1870.

² "Birmingham Daily Post", April 23rd, 1870, p. 7.

³ Ibid., June 15th, 1870, p. 8.

of school boards and the sending of a deputation to the Prime Minister, W.E. Gladstone. Reports later in June and early in July indicated that W.E. Forster, Vice-President of the Council and in charge of Education, met representatives of some of the Metropolitan trade societies. When the latter met Forster they "found fault with the Government Bill because it allowed a further extension of the denominational system, did not restrict education to strictly secular subjects, and did not make compulsion general".¹ Forster sympathised with their desire for compulsion and indicated that within a year or two "the country will be determined to get over the attendance difficulty in some way or other".² He had no doubt that provision of schools must precede compulsory attendance and said, "With regard to compulsion I may acknowledge that I have a more advanced opinion about that than many other persons, but you cannot compel attendance till you have compelled provision for the schools."³

Two letters in the "Birmingham Daily Post"

¹ "Birmingham Weekly Post", July 2nd, 1870, p. 6.

² Ibid., July 2nd, 1870, p. 6.

³ "Birmingham Daily Post", June 27th, 1870, p. 6.

provide some idea why the question of a national system of compulsion was not considered vital by many of the middle and working classes, even those who supported the National Education League. One was from E.C. Brambley (apparently a National Education League supporter) of the Alliance Offices, Birmingham.¹ He advocated that permissive legislation for compulsory attendance at school need not be a failure, illustrated the success of permissive legislation in the establishment of a free library in Birmingham, and concluded, "When part of a nation only is ripe for legislation ... permissive legislation in such a case would be transcendently politic and statesmanlike."

The other letter came from Thurlow Astley of Bennetts Hill, Birmingham. Its subject was "Evening Schools". The writer said, "Working men with whom I have conversed are very strongly in favour of young persons between thirteen and eighteen attending night schools, and they are in favour of every inducement being held out for their voluntary attendance; but I do not think that public opinion at present would approve of a compulsory law with its attendant penalties to secure such attendance."

¹ "Birmingham Daily Post", June 23rd, 1870, p. 5.

² Ibid., June 6th, 1870, p. 5.

While it is true that this letter was concerned with compulsory attendance at evening schools for children from thirteen to eighteen, it reflected the desire of working men for educational facilities to be made available, but it indicated an unwillingness (though not necessarily on the part of all working men) to apply the principle of compulsion for their use.

Although compulsion had been a major point in the programme of the National Education League, it is clear that during June and July, 1870, when the Education Bill was passing through the Committee stage, the religious or denominational issue became more important than the question of compulsion. In its editorial on June 15th, 1870, the "Birmingham Daily Post" outlined the main issues involved in the Bill. One was, "Shall compulsory attendance be made absolute instead of permissive?" but, "The great question of all, however, is the religious difficulty."¹ In the same paper there is a report of a meeting at St. George's Hall, West Bromwich, on the Education Bill. Most of this report is concerned with discussions on the religious difficulty, though at the very end there was a resolution calling for

¹"Birmingham Daily Post", June 14th, 1870, p. 4.

compulsory education.¹ In a circular letter sent out by the National Education League during the same week the first two items concerned grants to denominational schools and religious teaching. The third item refers to the government's unwillingness to concede "the principle of direct and general compulsion".² A few days later a meeting of nonconformists in Cheltenham passed a resolution against perpetuation of denomination-
alism at the public cost, but there was no reference to the need for a compulsory system of attendance.³

Those who had been the main protagonists for direct compulsion in 1870 were a minority group both in the House of Commons as a whole and in the Liberal Party itself.⁴ Some of their opponents argued that compulsion was unnecessary, since the working classes were said to be fully in favour of education for their children. Opinion seemed to indicate that the working classes did not want a system of compulsion, and that those who were trying to enforce such a system were basically

¹ "Birmingham Daily Post", June 14th, 1870, p. 8.

² Ibid., June 18th, 1870, p. 5.

³ Ibid., June 29th, 1870, p. 6.

⁴ "Aris's Birmingham Gazette", July 16th, 1870, p. 6.

concerned with their own and not the interests of working class children. In an article in the "Birmingham Town Crier" of June, 1870, there was a satirical comment on the liberals who advocated compulsory education: "Thus the Joyless Radical has become a convert to the belief in Education ... and by diligent searching finds out that even the lower classes are the better for a trifle of brains, and that on the whole nothing tends to develop 'brain' more than education."¹

The joyless radicals may have been a minority, but they represented in considerable measure many of the large towns like Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield, Bristol, Brighton, Stoke, Bradford and the Metropolitan boroughs.² It was the application of permissive compulsion in areas such as these, the homes of the industrial working classes, which would help to determine future legislation related to compulsion.

¹ The "Town Crier", Birmingham, June, 1870, p. 3.

² "Birmingham Daily Post", July 4th, 1870, p. 4.

CHAPTER 5

DIRECT COMPULSION REPLACES PERMISSIVE COMPULSION.

1870-1880

By the time of the Committee of Council on Education's first report after the passing of the Education Bill of 1870 many school boards had already been established, and three had received approval for by-laws concerned with compulsion. These were the boards of Liverpool, Bootle and Stockport.¹ Partial exemption was possible when the pupils had passed the fourth standard, and total exemption at the fifth standard. This was to be the ruling in many school board districts during the next few years. Seven other urban school boards had asked for school by-laws to be approved. These were Manchester, Rochdale, Burnley, Blackburn, Hanley, Oxford and Barnstaple.² Seven out of ten of these early requests for by-law approval came from the cotton manufacturing region, an area where compulsory half-time education had already been in existence for almost forty years.

A year later, in its report for 1871-1872, the

¹ Reports of Committees of Council on Education, 1870-1871, pp. xvii, xciv, xcvi, cii.

² Ibid., 1870-1871, p. xvii.

Committee of Council stated that the requests for compulsion under by-law provision covered one-third of the total population and two-thirds of the population of the boroughs.¹ In this report one of the inspectors, Mr. J. Bowstead, who had visited schools in Gloucestershire, said that school managers, both lay and clerical, were already anxious to secure the compulsory powers vested in school boards.² He admitted that if such powers were provided it would be better, in rural areas, for these to be on a union board rather than a parochial board basis. In country districts the exercise of these powers by a parochial board would require moral courage on the part of its members. By the time of the report in 1875 forty-six per cent. of the whole population of the country and eighty-two per cent. of the borough population were covered by the compulsory by-laws.³ Reference was made in this report to the way in which the by-laws reflected the industrial requirements of the districts they served. In the same year the Committee of Council made regulations

¹ Reports of Committee of Council on Education, 1871-1872, p. xviii.

² Ibid., 1871-1872, p. 45.

³ Ibid., 1875-1876, p. xxi.

which provided a national standard for certain groups of children. This was because the Factory Act of 1874 had declared, "A person of the age of thirteen years and under the age of fourteen years shall be deemed to be a child and not a young person" unless there was a certificate of proficiency in reading, writing and arithmetic. The Committee decided that this proficiency should be that required for the fourth standard.¹

Another example of the Committee's use of a similar criterion was its decision on the standard up to which a parent could claim a poor relief allowance for the education of a child. This followed the passing of the 1873 Elementary Education Act which made education compulsory for the children of parents receiving outdoor relief from the Poor Law Board of Guardians. In this case the Committee decided that the third standard should be considered suitable.²

By 1875, as the evidence of the Committee showed, most of the boroughs had by-laws. The standard for total exemption ranged from the third to the fifth, and for partial exemption from the second to the fourth.

¹ Reports of Committee of Council on Education, 1875-1876, p. 199.

² Ibid., 1875-1876, p. 202.

The successful implementation of the by-laws had led George Dixon, M.P. for Birmingham and Parliamentary spokesman for the National Education League, to put forward, in 1874, a Bill to set up elected school boards in all districts, and to compel all school boards to provide by-laws for compulsory attendance at school. In 1875 Dixon again introduced an Education Bill for this same purpose, and by this time it was becoming clear that public opinion and a good number of M.P.'s were convinced of the need for compulsion. Dixon quoted the attitudes of two school boards in Northamptonshire as evidence of the need for a national approach to compulsion.¹ One of the school boards, composed of working men, had decided to provide by-laws and thus secure a good attendance. In the other case, where the school board was composed of a nobleman, a squire and three wealthy farmers, no action leading to a compulsory system had been undertaken. In his speech Dixon said that the morning papers a year before had referred to those who were against compulsion as "the champions of lost causes", and "The Times" had indicated that the controversy over compulsion was coming to an end. Compulsion was by

¹ Hansard, 3rd series, vol. 224, 1875, p. 1575.

1875 accepted as necessary; any argument was now concerned with the methods of administering compulsion.

Dixon's 1875 Bill received support from only 164 M.P.'s.¹ This was not enough to enable it to get a majority, so Dixon introduced a further Bill on the same lines in April, 1876.² This received slightly less support, but the excuse made was that the government was to introduce its own measure within a short time. Lord Sandon, the vice-president of the Board of Education, introduced the government Bill on May 18th, 1876.³

The debates on the Sandon Bill indicated a general recognition that it was desirable that every child should receive some degree of education, but emphasized that a majority favoured an indirect means of attaining this end. Furthermore, certain interests were anxious that the minimum leaving age should be as low as possible.

J.A. Hardcastle, M.P. for Bury St. Edmunds, wished that local authorities could establish a minimum

¹ Hansard, 3rd series, vol. 224, 1875, p. 1611.

² Ibid., vol. 228, 1876, p. 1251.

³ Ibid., vol. 229, 1876, p. 929.

leaving age of nine rather than ten.¹ Pressure was exerted on behalf of the agricultural interests, especially by G.M.W. Sandford, M.P. for Maldon, and B.B.H. Rodwell,² M.P. for Cambridgeshire. An attempt to reduce the maximum age for leaving from fourteen to twelve was not successful. Efforts were also made to reduce the minimum age of leaving from ten to eight years of age. As a result of this certain concessions were made so that children above eight in rural areas could work in husbandry for not more than six weeks in any year.

Some people argued that education of too high a standard might be provided. D.R. Onslow, M.P. for Guildford, hoped that there would be no attempt to educate children too well, for "it would have the effect of driving away manual labour from the country."³ In the House of Lords Earl Fortescue thought it was "unwise to tempt some of the rather more intelligent boys all over the country to quit their natural sphere of labour."⁴ A. Mills, M.P. for Exeter, a member of the London School Board, cautioned the members to

¹ Hansard, 3rd series, vol. 230, 1876, p. 1288.

² Ibid., vol. 230, 1876, pp. 1290, 1439.

³ Ibid., vol. 229, 1876, p. 1931.

⁴ Ibid., vol. 231, 1876, p. 944.

exercise care with regard to compulsion where it concerned poor parents.¹ His experience proved that there were difficulties in applying the law to this particular group, and that there was a need to learn how best to approach this problem.

Although there was opposition of this kind to the Bill, its main purpose was achieved without great difficulty, and this is evidence that the adoption of compulsion, even though indirect and on a localised basis, was generally acceptable. The Act in its final form stated: "It shall be the duty of the parent of every child to cause such child to receive efficient elementary instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic."² A child in terms of this Act was aged between five and fourteen. To ensure this, a person was not allowed to take into his employment any child under ten years of age, or any child of ten years and under fourteen years without a certificate.³ The certificate was to provide evidence of reaching a standard of education - to be the

¹ Hansard, 3rd series, vol. 229, 1876, p. 1951.

² Ibid., vol. 230, 1876, p. 1545 and 39-40 Victoria, chapter 79, clause 4.

³ 39-40 Victoria, chapter 79, clause 5.

fourth standard by 1881 - or 250 attendances per annum from the age of five over a five-year period in not more than two schools. Lord Sandon explained that the age of thirteen in the 1870 Act had been raised to fourteen in the 1876 Bill, since the Factory Act of 1874 had raised the age for half-time employment in factories from thirteen to fourteen in textile factories.¹

To enable a greater degree of compulsion to be used, Lord Sandon provided in his Bill for the setting up of committees of Town Councils and Boards of Guardians, who would have powers similar to those of School Boards, and who would be able to operate in districts where a School Board did not exist.² Perhaps the chief criticism of the Bill was levelled by U.J. Kay-Shuttleworth, M.P. for Hastings (the son of the educational pioneer, Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth), who feared that some children might be kept away from school altogether. This would be possible if the child lived in a district where there was no system of enforcement under a local by-law. Kay-Shuttleworth summed up its effect in this way: "It will be a compulsory

¹ Hansard, 3rd series, vol. 230, 1876, p. 1513.

² Ibid., vol. 229, 1876, p. 942.

Bill which does not compel; and I am afraid it will be an Education Act which will not educate."¹

The Committee of Council on Education set out in its report for the year 1876 model by-laws for the enforcement of school attendance.² No doubt they did this in the expectation that many local authorities would be anxious for guidance once Sandon's Bill became law. For total exemption the model by-law recommended that scholars should have reached the fifth standard, and a marginal note stated that the Committee would not accept a standard lower than the fourth. For partial exemption the model by-law left blank the actual standard required, but a marginal note said that the third or some other standard should be inserted.

The reports of the Committee of Council over the next few years indicate that more and more local authorities made by-laws to enforce compulsory attendance. As a result more parents found themselves liable to a fine of up to five shillings for not sending a child to school under the terms of the Act. In 1876 the Committee

¹Hansard, 3rd series, vol. 230, 1876, p. 29.

² Reports of the Committee of Council on Education, 1876-1877, pp. 292-293.

reported that fifty per cent. of the whole population and eighty-four per cent. of borough populations had by-laws enforcing attendance.¹ By 1879 the report indicated that seventy-three per cent. of the whole population and ninety-seven per cent. of the municipal boroughs were covered by such legislation.² In the period between 1876 and 1879 six million people had come under the operation of the by-laws, and five million of them were living in rural areas.

A Liberal government came to power in 1880, and one of its first actions was to ensure that in all areas by-laws would exist to enforce compulsion. Earl Spencer introduced into the House of Lords a Bill to abolish the loopholes that existed.³ He said that the proposed law would make it unnecessary for school attendance committees to wait for a body of ratepayers to sign a requisition for by-laws to be made. Furthermore, by the end of the year all school attendance committees would be required to have made by-laws to effect compulsory attendance. This, he maintained, would

¹ Reports of Committee of Council on Education, 1876-1877, p. xx.

² Ibid., 1879-1880, p. xxx.

³ Hansard, 3rd series, vol. 253, 1880, p. 1615.

bring a population of 5,580,000 under these new provisions, and about five million of these people would come from rural areas.

Although it was a Liberal government which introduced the measure, a Conservative spokesman in the House of Commons, Lord George Hamilton, made it clear that he would support the measure to make compulsory education a nation-wide system.¹ What in effect had happened was the adoption throughout England and Wales, to a great extent by voluntary agreement but in a few places by compulsion, of by-laws which varied in character, but which made it necessary for every parent to send his child to school. A ten-year experiment was complete.

As a result of the 1880 Act (usually called Mundella's Act) no child could be employed under the age of ten. Local authorities (School Boards or School Attendance Committees) had the duty of ensuring that children aged five and under ten attended school. In order to leave school a child must have a certificate showing that he had reached the required standard in reading, writing and arithmetic, or a certificate showing at

¹ Hansard, 3rd series, vol. 254, 1880, p. 2023.

least 250 attendances per annum over a period of five years, or he must have reached the maximum compulsory age determined by the by-laws. The regulations provided by the Factory Acts were to apply with equal force alongside the Education Acts.

By 1880, therefore, for the first time over the whole of England and Wales, the minimum school leaving age was ten. By-laws enforcing compulsory attendance ^{that} ensured/w^{ithin} a few years all children would begin school at five. This would make it possible to require higher standards from older children, and the by-laws could be adjusted appropriately.

CHAPTER 6

THE MINIMUM SCHOOL LEAVING AGE BECOMES ELEVEN.

The development of elementary education after 1870 was investigated by the Cross Commission which made its report in 1888. It recommended that the minimum age for half-time exemption from school attendance should be raised to eleven, and that the minimum age for full-time exemption should be thirteen.¹ It suggested that the children who lived in rural areas should be given special consideration along the lines already established by the 1876 Education Act.² The Commission said that there had been requests from school boards and teachers for a uniform standard of leaving, and suggestions had been made that this standard should be fixed by the Education Department.³ Although it was clear that the general expression of opinion was "very strongly in favour of a longer school life" the Commission recognised that the needs of agriculture and some other forms of employment made "a prolonged school

¹ Royal Commission on the Elementary Education Acts (Cross), 1888, vol.V, p. 109.

² See chapter 5, p. 76.

³ Royal Commission on the Elementary Education Acts (Cross), 1888, vol. V, p. 108.

life incompatible with the practical instruction of the field or workshop, which must necessarily commence at an early age".¹ The Commission's recommendation, therefore, supported the prevailing system.² It would appear that the Commission made its recommendation to raise the minimum age limits in the belief that the gradual extension of compulsory education since 1870 had not met with any serious opposition from the wage-earning classes.³

Only one member of the Commission, F.R. Sandford, objected to this recommendation.⁴ His reasons were that children of ten were needed in employment, especially in agriculture, and that it was unwise in a country of early and fruitful marriages to prevent children from contributing at an early age to their own support.

Two years after the Commission's report there was an international labour conference at Berlin. This conference, to which the British government sent representatives, was convened by Wilhelm II who had

¹ Royal Commission on the Elementary Education Acts (Cross), 1888, vol. V, p. 109.

² See chapter 5, pp. 81-82.

³ Royal Commission on the Elementary Education Acts (Cross), 1888, vol. V, p. 111.

⁴ Ibid., vol. V, p. 230.

recently become Emperor of Germany. He wished to show his interest in social questions. The conference recommended that the minimum age at which a child should undertake full time employment should be twelve.

No government legislation followed either the recommendations of the Cross Commission or the Berlin Conference. However, in 1891 during the passage of a government measure, the Factory and Workshops Bill, the Bill was amended so that the minimum age for half-time employment was raised from ten to eleven. The men who took the lead in amending the Bill were mainly of left wing liberal or socialist persuasion. Their presence in the House of Commons at this stage was the result of the increased voting power of the working classes following the 1867 and 1884 Reform Acts.

During the debate on the second reading of the Factory and Workshops Bill, E. Matthews, the Home Secretary, defended the government's retention of ten as a suitable age for half-time employment, and said that the Berlin Conference's recommendation that full time employment should not begin before the age of twelve did not take into account the existence of a half-time system such as existed in Britain. Matthews defended

the half-time system, saying that it was "a combination of technical education, which so many people desire nowadays, with the scholastic or literary education, and, the mixture of the two sharpens a child's wits."¹ J.M. Maclean, M.P. for Oldham, also argued that the half-time system was an attractive form of technical training, and suggested that anyone who asked a half-timer whether he preferred school or work would find he chose the latter.²

It is probable that these gentlemen who defended the half-time system on such grounds thought of technical instruction as training which would fit a person to do the same work for the remainder of his life; it is unlikely they were concerned with instruction which would give a real understanding of the processes and technology of manufacture. G. Osborne Morgan, M.P. for Denbighshire, said, "It is idle to say that the children receive any advantage in the way of technical instruction at the mills," and he went on to describe the monotonous work of thread tyers.³

¹ Hansard, 3rd series, vol. 350, 1891, p. 1718.

² Ibid., vol. 354, 1891, p. 820.

³ Ibid., p. 835.

E. Matthews, who had advanced the argument in favour of half-time as a form of technical instruction earlier in the debate, said later that its value lay in the manual training, especially useful since the children would continue to be involved in the same trades for the remainder of their lives.¹ Another M.P., H. Byron Reed of Bradford East, who defended the half-time system, said that he represented a constituency where there were seven thousand half-timers.² In one mill at Burley-in-Wharfedale, where a vote had been taken on the half-time system, ninety-three per cent. of the employees had voted in favour of it. Other arguments used by Reed were that the system was in the interests of trade (especially of Bradford), of the working classes, of the wage-earning capacity of people and in the interests of the country at large. At least, he did not suggest that the half-time system was a form of technical instruction, and therefore he probably more honestly reflected the true reasons for retaining the system.

A number of those who spoke in the debates concerned with the 1891 Factory and Workshops Bill were

¹ Hansard, 3rd series, vol. 354, 1891, p. 869.

² Ibid., vol. 354, 1891, p. 842.

connected with Lancashire, many parts of which were districts where the half-time system was still popular. But it was, nevertheless, declining. Sir W.H. Houldsworth, the M.P. for North-west Manchester, pointed out that in 1875 the number of half-timers was 125,000.¹ In 1891 the number was 86,000. This showed a reduction of thirty-one per cent. on the 1875 figure. In 1875 the half-timers had been thirteen per cent. of the total number of workers; in 1891 they were only eight per cent. Houldsworth considered that it was only a question of time before the half-time system would disappear.

Houldsworth was quite clear, however, that the main opposition to the ending of half-time employment of children would not come from the employers but from the operatives themselves. This is a point of view reiterated by other Members of Parliament. Some employers were probably willing to continue the system for their own benefit, but without doubt the operatives, especially those who were parents, clearly favoured the half-time system. Two M.P.'s who maintained that the operatives wished to retain the half-time system were

¹ Hansard, 3rd series, vol. 350, 1891, p. 1759.

Viscount Cranborne of Darwen and F.S. Powell of Wigan.¹

In spite of these arguments for the retention of the half-time system, two speakers in the debates, J. Leng of Dundee² and Sydney Buxton of Poplar, stated that the trade union movement was in favour of raising the school leaving age. Buxton qualified this by referring to the trade unions "in all large towns".³ There is, then, this interesting dichotomy within the working classes - the official view-point as expressed by the trade unions' demand for the raising of the school leaving age and, by implication, the reduction of the half-time system (which was particularly widespread in Lancashire and Yorkshire), and the view-point of many of the workers, who had no wish for children to attend school any longer than the law demanded.

One man who was confident that he represented the working classes better than Viscount Cranborne was J. Wilson, M.P. for Mid-Durham.⁴ He maintained that the question of the raising of the school leaving age

¹ Hansard, 3rd series, vol. 354, 1891, pp. 839 and 855-6.

² Ibid., vol. 350, 1891, p. 1785.

³ Ibid., vol. 354, 1891, p. 811.

⁴ Ibid., vol. 354, 1891, pp. 839-40.

could not be settled on the basis of a region like Lancashire. Furthermore, employers did not consider it an important matter, and there were more vital interests than those of the parents. These were the need to raise educational standards. Another working class representative, Henry Broadhurst of Nottingham, reflected on the fact that at the age of ten the children of the aristocracy had hardly left their governesses.¹ Thomas Burt, M.P. for Morpeth, felt it was hypocritical for members to urge the poverty of the parents and their pecuniary interests as a reason for not raising the school leaving age.² He asked how members would like their children to leave at the age of ten.

The spokesman who put forward the main arguments to amend the Bill so that the school leaving age would, in effect, be raised was Sydney Buxton, M.P. for Poplar.³ These arguments tended to be directed against half-time employment in factories, because most opposition to the amendment to raise the school leaving age had come from

¹ Hansard, 3rd series, vol. 354, 1891, p. 848.

² Ibid., Ibid., p. 858-9.

³ Ibid., pp. 803-815.

those who favoured half-time employment from the age of ten. He was concerned, therefore, to show how many children would be affected by his amendment - intended to raise the school leaving age to twelve, but in two stages. The first stage would be to raise the age to eleven on January 1st, 1893 and would affect 25,000 children. At a later stage another 35,000 children between eleven and twelve would no longer be able to engage in half-time employment. These figures did not take account of the children who could get part-time exemption from school, and who would not be covered by the Factory and Workshops Bill when it became law because their type of employment did not come within its purview.

Mr. Buxton's arguments were concerned with health, education, morality, finance and the obligation to accept the Berlin Conference decision. He quoted letters from doctors and teachers to show that the health of half-timers was inferior to that of full-timers. An interesting sidelight in his argument was connected with Blackburn. Blackburn Rovers had won the football cup eight out of ten times, and since Blackburn was a centre of half-time employment it had been suggested

the that/half-time system was not injurious to health. Buxton showed that the Blackburn team was largely "imported" and that only one member was a half-timer.

The reports of inspectors and of the Cross Commission proved that the educational standard of half-timers was lower than that of full-timers. The moral argument rested on the view that parents often wished to get "premature profit out of children's labour", and he quoted Jeremy Bentham that parents had in it "a sinister interest". As far as employers were concerned, it was immoral because child labour was a form of cheap labour.

Buxton's financial argument reflected the recent decision to give grant aid to schools and end, for most parents, the payment of fees for elementary education. Since the parents would not now need to pay fees, it might be expected that they could afford to keep their children at school to a later age.

The final argument was that the government should accept the decision of the Berlin Conference, since government representatives had been present at the discussion.

During the course of the debates the attitude

of teachers, School Boards and managers was mentioned. Elliot Lees, M.P. for Oldham, blamed the proposal to raise the leaving age on "the work of educational faddists and pedants in the House and of pedagogues outside",¹ Earlier in the debates Sir U. Kay Shuttleworth, M.P. for Clitheroe, had said that teachers found it much more difficult to teach half-timers than full-timers, though probably, as Leng mentioned, this was a problem which could be solved by the setting up of efficient schools catering especially for half-time pupils.² S. Smith, M.P. for Flintshire, quoted Mr. Heller of the Teachers' Association as saying that the unanimous opinion of the teachers was that ten was too early an age at which to leave school.³ Sir W.H. Houldsworth mentioned that he had two resolutions from the Manchester and Salford School Boards asking for the leaving age to be raised to eleven and then to twelve.⁴

Sydney Buxton and his supporters regarded their

¹ Hansard, 3rd series, vol. 354, 1891, p. 877.

² Ibid., vol. 350, 1891, p. 1784.

³ Ibid., p. 1756.

⁴ Ibid., vol. 354, 1891, p. 826.

amendment¹ of the Factory and Workshops Bill as a compromise, but it became the basis for an Education Act which was necessary to relate the law to the educational system. In July, 1893, a Bill was introduced "to raise from ten to eleven years the age of full attendance at school".¹ There was only a short debate on this measure, for the real arguments for and against the raising of the school leaving age had already been put forward two years earlier. Only by putting the age into an Education Act could the law relate to children who were not affected by the Factory and Workshops Act; only so could the minimum age for leaving school be raised to eleven.

Parliament did not at this stage consider the question of when further progress might be made by raising the age to twelve. In the House of Lords Lord de Ramsay said at the time of the debates on the Factory and Workshops Bill, "At all events I think it is a sign-post of public opinion that we need go no further than eleven."² The Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, admitted that government representatives had been at the Berlin

¹ Hansard, 4th series, vol. 15, 1893, p. 54.

² Ibid., 3rd series, vol. 354, 1891, p. 1694.

Conference, but more important in his view was that the employers and operatives over a large part of the country held very different views from those of the Berlin Conference.¹ In fact, it was probably not those who pleaded for a school leaving age of twelve, nor those who preferred the status quo, but the compromisers, for example, the Earl of Kimberley in the House of Lords² and A. Illingworth in the House of Commons, who made advance possible.³

Buxton and his supporters had been able to achieve some degree of success through the Factory Act in raising the minimum school leaving age. This did not, of course, affect the by-laws which still operated on the basis of the standard reached. However, Buxton's attempt to raise the upper age limit for half-timers from thirteen to fourteen was defeated. The grounds for this amendment were clearly educational and less concerned with health, morality and finance. No appeal could be made to the decisions of the Berlin Conference.

¹ Hansard, 3rd series, vol. 354, 1891, p. 1699.

² Ibid., p. 1698.

³ Ibid., p. 917.

It is doubtful whether the school leaving age was raised in 1893 for educational reasons alone. Other influences were clearly at work. As Matthews said at the conclusion of his speech on the Factory and Workshops Bill, "This is rather a social than an educational question."¹

¹ Hansard, 3rd series, vol. 354, 1891, p. 872.

CHAPTER 7

A PRIVATE MEMBER'S BILL.

The raising of the school leaving age to eleven, following Sydney Buxton's amendment to the Factory and Workshops Bill of 1891, was a compromise measure. Not until 1899 did any further change in the leaving age take place. Many of the arguments for and against raising the leaving age were similar to those used in 1891. Perhaps because debate centred round an Education Bill, and not a Factory and Workshops Bill, the agricultural interests showed more concern than on the previous occasion. In 1891 the left wing liberals and socialists in Parliament had fought the Conservative government to get through Parliament their amendment on what was a government Bill. The 1899 Education Bill was a private member's Bill, introduced because a government Bill of 1896, designed among other things to raise the school leaving age, had not gone beyond a second reading, and since that time the Conservative government had not felt it advisable to produce a similar Bill to raise the school leaving age. The Bill's non-party character may have helped to ensure that it became law; the voting figures suggest that it received general support from both major

political parties. The opposition to it centred mainly among those concerned to uphold the half-time system, especially in the textile industries, and, in the initial stages, the supporters of agricultural interests.

The Bill to raise the school leaving age on January 1st, 1900, was introduced by W.S. Robson, M.P. for South Shields, on March 1st, 1899.¹ He stressed that continental countries, such as France, Switzerland and Germany, had a higher minimum school leaving age than England. Germany, Britain's chief commercial rival, did not use child labour. Thus the old argument used in support of child labour and the half-time system was thoroughly undermined by the evidence from continental countries. He condemned in particular the half-time system on the grounds of health and the way it disorganised schools. He attacked the idea that the half-time system was necessary because of poverty and quoted the findings of investigators of the "Daily News" (a Liberal newspaper), which showed that the aggregate wages of families with half-timers was about £3.10.0 per week, to which the contribution of a "half-time" child was 2/6 per week.

¹ Hansard, 4th series, vol. 67, 1899, p. 920.

As for its being a form of technical education, he showed, using Bolton as an example, that in a town with three to four thousand half-timers only one out of 538 scholarships for technical and other forms of education had been won by a half-timer. Robson quoted the Blue Book on Education in 1898 to draw attention to the remark of an inspector, who had said that children were withdrawn at the point when "education in the proper sense begins". He concluded his argument by saying that "prosperity, unaccompanied by mental and moral advancement, is in itself a very dangerous thing".

Robson drew attention to the contradiction in the views put forward by the Bolton Operative Spinners' Association who, on the one hand, stated that children did not suffer physically or intellectually in mills, yet, on the other hand, said that conditions in the mills caused cotton spinners to contract chest complaints and pulmonary consumption. Other speakers in the debates high-lighted the fact that it was unions within the textile industries which were anxious to retain the half-time system and maintain the present school leaving age. George Whiteley, M.P. for Stockport, was compelled to admit that it was particularly the weaving trade unions

which were against raising the age.¹ He stated that ninety per cent. of the weavers of Lancashire who had replied to a circular on this question were against the change, and eighty-four per cent. of those who replied were members of trade unions, but to suggest that these members would be willing to sacrifice the lives of their children, as the National Union of Teachers said, was an outrage. Later in the debates James Kenyon, M.P. for Bury, pointed out that in the Weavers' Union sixty-two per cent. of the membership was composed of unmarried girls - not parents of half-timers.²

Although these textile-worker unions supported the half-time system, the trade union movement as a whole was in favour of raising the school leaving age. Kenyon stated that the Yorkshire trade unions favoured a rise in the school leaving age.³ Sir F. Powell, M.P. for Wigan, brought a message from 50,000 trade unionists giving approval to the Bill to raise the leaving age.⁴ James Duckworth, M.P. for Middleton, referred to the support of the trade unionists of

¹ Hansard, 4th series, vol. 67, 1899, p. 942.

² Ibid., vol. 72, 1899, p. 1126.

³ Ibid., vol. 67, 1899, p. 937.

⁴ Ibid., vol. 67, 1899, p. 957.

Middleton and of Rochdale for the Bill.¹ J.H. Yoxhall, M.P. for Nottingham, said that the Trades Union Congress had been asking for the ending of the half-time system for years.² Samuel Smith, M.P. for Flintshire, said that he had collected evidence which showed that ninety per cent. of the trade unionists were in favour of raising the school leaving age to fourteen, with compulsory attendance at night school up to fifteen.³ C.W. Schwann, M.P. for Manchester North, made a significant statement.⁴ He quoted Allan Gee, general secretary of the weavers and textile workers, Ben Turner, general organiser of the weavers, and Drew, president of the Bradford operatives, as saying that there was nothing in the argument that dexterity in manipulating yarn was acquired by beginning at a younger age. In effect some of the leaders of those very unions which were most strongly opposing the raising of the school leaving age were quite sure that the arguments produced to retain the

¹ Hansard, 4th series, vol. 72, 1899, pp. 1102-1103.

² Ibid., vol. 72, 1899, p. 1112. Yoxhall was General Secretary of the National Union of Teachers.

³ Ibid., vol. 72, 1899, p. 1115.

⁴ Ibid., vol. 72, 1899, p. 1119.

half-time system for young children were wrong.

The "Daily News" had already shown that poverty could not be used as a reason for continuing the half-time system. The influence of socialist thought was felt quite strongly when, as George Whiteley was reading a letter from a man with five children who said that he needed the half-time working of his children, John Burns interjected the remark, "Raise his wages!"¹ J. Wilson, M.P. for Mid-Durham, who in 1891 had been active in getting the leaving age raised from ten to eleven, also spoke strongly about the need for the payment of higher wages to the fathers of poor children.²

J. Duckworth told of his own experiences as a former half-timer.³ He admitted that the system had not apparently been injurious to his own health, but added that few of his companions from the half-time days remained alive. J.T. Middlemore, M.P. for Birmingham North, supported the abolition of the half-time system, saying that medical opinion in the country was "dead against the

¹ Hansard, 4th series, vol. 67, 1899, p. 943.

² Ibid., vol. 72, 1899, p. 23.

³ Ibid., vol. 67, 1899, p. 964.

half-time system".¹

Other members referred to the need for improvement in the elementary educational system in order that secondary and technical education could be better used, and many speakers saw this as a lengthening of school life. Some people realised the importance of improving technical education if Britain were to retain her place as a leading industrial power. Competition in the industrial field was not limited, according to James Kenyon, to European countries; he recognised that Japan's industrial potential was growing.²

Reference has already been made to the opposition from some areas of Lancashire. One M.P., Sir E. Lees, representing Birkenhead, feared that those who supported the Bill might lose their seats at the next election.³ He referred to the results of the 1892 election as giving support to his argument. Viscount Cranborne, though no longer representing a Lancashire constituency, came forward with support for the half-time system, as did

¹ Hansard, 4th series, vol. 72, 1899, p. 20.

² Ibid., vol. 67, 1899, p. 936.

³ Ibid., vol. 67, 1899, p. 971.

men like George Whiteley, W.E.M. Tomlinson and Colonel Pilkington, who represented constituencies in the cotton manufacturing areas.¹ In this sense the 1891 attitude was repeated.

But in 1899 at the second reading very strong opposition came also from the agricultural interests. These had been active in opposition to a compulsory system of education in the eighteen-seventies, and so the approach in 1899 was only a continuation of this tradition. Major Rasch, M.P. for South-east Essex, opposed the raising of the school leaving age on grounds of the financial needs of the parents and the healthy occupation provided by the tasks given to a young farm labourer, but he also mentioned that agriculture was in a depressed state.² A.F. Jeffreys, M.P. for Hampshire North, referred to the low wages of farm labourers and emphasized the low state into which agriculture had fallen.³ Sir John Gorst, M.P. for Cambridge University and Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education, who had been Britain's representative at the

¹ Hansard, 4th series, vol. 72, 1899, p. 19; vol. 67, p. 94
vol. 72, p. 11; vol. 67, p. 985.

² Ibid., vol. 67, 1899, p. 950.

³ Ibid., vol. 67, 1899, p. 962.

Berlin Conference, thought some consideration ought to be given to the needs of agriculture.¹ He pointed out that in countries like Switzerland flexibility in the dates of schooling made it possible for children to give assistance on farms. W.S. Robson, at the Committee stage of the Bill, included an amendment which allowed partial exemption from the age of eleven for children in rural areas but provided for them to stay at school until the age of thirteen. This amendment was favourably received by representatives of the agricultural interests. The way in which the needs of agriculture were met contrasts with the unwillingness to compromise on the half-time system in the textile industries. Probably there was a general recognition of the sorry plight of agriculture and of the economic insecurity of the farmers, and the weight of Sir John Gorst's argument was real, whereas, even with overseas competition, the textile industries still appeared to be in a flourishing condition. Some speakers referred to the boys in rural districts who were going to the towns to seek employment or finding work on the railways. Therefore the amendment which

¹ Hansard, 4th series, vol. 67, 1899, pp. 976-977.

assisted the farming community was genuinely designed to help in solving the problems of the countryside, and, as one speaker said, it had the good effect of keeping some rural children at school until the age of thirteen.¹ The Archbishop of York interpreted this benefit in moral rather than educational terms, and regarded it as a means of keeping rural children away from the temptations of the towns.²

Some speakers in both the Lords and the Commons spoke of the change in public opinion since 1893. There had been a fear that evil results would follow the raising of the leaving age to eleven. This fear had proved groundless, and so on the whole public opinion, as reflected by the Members of Parliament, had been less opposed to the raising of the leaving age in 1899 than in 1891. Sir F. Powell, M.P. for Wigan, exemplified the swing in public opinion when he explained that whereas he had opposed the raising to eleven in 1891, he gave his support to the age being raised to twelve in 1899.³ He pointed out that the raising of the standards

¹Hansard, 4th series, vol. 72, 1899, p. 1116.

² Ibid. vol. 73, 1899, p. 1122.

³ Ibid., vol. 67, 1899, p. 958.

which operated through the by-laws had created a system whereby the age of leaving, if raised to twelve, would coincide fairly well with the standard required to receive exemption from school attendance. This, in his view, was the significant change in the educational sphere during the decade. Educational standards for exemption were higher, and therefore children were already staying at school longer in order to reach them. An amendment, at the Committee stage of the Bill, which was designed to give local authorities the power to fix an age rather than a standard of education for purposes of leaving, was withdrawn, because it was maintained that this would, in fact, lower the educational standard.¹

The higher standards were determined by the Committee of Council, which was responsible for deciding what was required for any particular standard, and by the School Boards and School Attendance Committees, which decided the standards in any particular area. Much credit was due to the teachers in the schools. Through their organisations and the local school authorities the teachers, as well as government inspectors, were

¹ Hansard, 4th series, vol. 72, 1899, pp. 25-29.

anxious to get the minimum leaving age raised. According to those who opposed the raising of the leaving age, it was the teachers alone who were responsible for this demand. But as J.H. Yoxall, M.P. for Nottingham West, said, the teachers and managers of schools would not gain financially from the raising of the age, and so far as half-time pupils were concerned there would, in fact, be a financial loss in grant aid.¹

The raising of the leaving age was, therefore, in 1899 much more influenced by educational pressures than in 1891. G. Harwood, M.P. for Bolton, maintained that there "always comes a time when public opinion, sufficiently developed, should be backed by law".² He followed this by referring to the lessening need for child labour in mills because of the developments in the speed and size of machinery. Economic, industrial and commercial conditions were indeed helping to create a climate of opinion which was favourable to lengthening elementary school education. Some of the speakers in the debates had talked of the need for evening schools,

¹ Hansard, 4th series, vol. 72, 1899, p. 1112.

² Ibid., vol. 72, 1899, p. 1123.

continuation classes and facilities for secondary education. An increasing recognition of the power of education to improve the economic and social status of an individual was responsible for this climate of opinion. In some quarters this led to the fear that the working classes, the operatives, would "get above themselves" and not accept the station of life in which they had been placed. This was the kind of argument that had been heard twenty years earlier.¹ Britain, however, was no longer the only industrially developed power, and the need to use its talent as fully as possible was recognised by some of the industrial and commercial employers. In addition, the demand for social justice on the part of the growing left wing groups, who now had a foothold in Parliament, helped to create the climate of opinion which, in the course of the last decade of the nineteenth century, raised the minimum age for leaving school from ten to twelve.

¹ Hansard, 3rd series, vol. 254, p. 1995.
vol. 231, p. 944.

CHAPTER 8

SECONDARY EDUCATION AT THE END OF THE
NINETEENTH CENTURY

The years between 1870 and 1900 witnessed the growth of the elementary school system. In this period political parties were realigned, the most significant change taking place in the eighteen-eighties, when Joseph Chamberlain and his supporters moved from the Liberal to the Conservative ranks. Britain's supremacy in the industrial and commercial field was challenged by other nations. Trade unions grew in numbers and strength; other socialist and labour movements developed. Although reports during the last two decades of the century high-light the amount of poverty in some areas, for a considerable number real income increased and the standard of living rose.

The challenge of overseas countries focused attention on the need to provide an adequate system of technical education. Legislation to encourage this was passed in 1889 and 1890. This legislation, coupled with the growth of "higher grade" elementary schools and the provision of grant aid from the Science and Art Department to some of the endowed grammar schools, revealed the unsatisfactory state of secondary education. Recommendations by bodies as diverse as the Bradford Independent

Labour Party and a conference called by the Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University led the Liberal government of the day to appoint in 1894 a Royal Commission to investigate the whole system of secondary education. Its chairman was James Bryce.

The member of the government who induced Gladstone to appoint a Royal Commission was A.H.D. Acland.¹ He had written with H.L. Smith in 1892 a book on secondary education in which he had expressed concern about its development over the previous thirty years.² He said that the country was slowly making up its mind that, whatever the wealthy part of the community did, "provision of a public kind shall be made for all those in the middle class or the working class who demand an education above the elementary schools, cheap, effective and close to their doors, with some public guarantee for its efficiency." The urgent need was to provide facilities for secondary education for workmen's children, and it was in the interests of all classes that this should be in the same schools as those attended by the middle classes. Up to that time the only machinery was that of

¹ A.H.D. Acland was Vice-president of the Council for Education, with a seat in the Cabinet, in the Liberal Governments between 1892 and 1895.

² Acland and Smith: "Studies in Secondary Education", 1892, pp. 306-7.

providing scholarships for the pupils of elementary schools. What was needed was a good supply of scholarships and the payment of maintenance allowances. There were many children in elementary schools whose lives were stunted, whose abilities were crippled because the opportunities for able children of the working classes had been deficient.

The Bryce Commission considered the nature of secondary education. It suggested that secondary education should be regarded as the education lying "between the elementary school and the university".¹ This contrasted with the Taunton Commission's criterion of secondary education where the basis and grading of secondary education had rested on the age at which the pupils left school.

The evidence of the Bryce Commission came largely from seven counties selected for particular examination.² The report showed that in these areas the number of scholars in the endowed schools had doubled between 1864 and 1894.³ However, secondary education was still

¹ Royal Commission on Secondary Education (Bryce), 1895, vol. I, p. 131.

² Ibid., vol. I, p. 42. Bedford, Devon, Lancashire, Norfolk, Surrey, Warwick, West Riding of Yorkshire were the counties selected.

³ Ibid., vol. I, p. 42.

No. of scholars at endowed schools	1864	1893
	10,130	21,424

limited to a few children (2.5 per thousand in the selected counties).¹ The leaving age for these children over the previous thirty years had risen on an average by one or two years. Using the grading classification of the Taunton Commission, it seemed that in the first grade school the leaving age was often nineteen, in second grade schools seventeen or eighteen, and in third grade schools fifteen or sixteen. The reasons deduced by the Bryce Commission for the rise in the leaving age could broadly be considered as social and educational.²

As far as the first grade schools were concerned, it was now customary for pupils to leave at eighteen or nineteen, because college scholarships had an age limit of nineteen. E.E. Bowen, an assistant master at Harrow, in his evidence to the Commission, maintained that games, possibility of scholarships and the pleasantness of school life tended to keep boys at these schools to a later age.³ He did not agree with this trend, which, he said, was a disfavour to the boys and meant a relaxation of school discipline. Boys, he added, should

¹ Royal Commission on Secondary Education (Bryce), 1895, vol. I, p. 48.

² Ibid., vol. I, p. 133.

³ Ibid., vol. VIII, p. 10670.

enter the university before the age of eighteen. He was not alone in this view. But in another part of the report the headmasters of these first grade schools were said to argue in favour of the later leaving age, because the attainments of the pupils had improved, and monitors or prefects of increased age were useful.¹

The commissioners thought that the leaving age had risen in second and third grade schools because of the introduction of new subjects in the curriculum.² To some degree this was linked to the preparation for special forms of employment or examinations. The latter might narrow the field of studies, but their influence was also responsible for a rise in the leaving age.³

The Bryce Commission did not ignore the development of the higher grade elementary schools. These schools provided an advanced type of elementary education for the few pupils whose parents wished them to stay at school beyond the normal leaving age. In the selected counties already mentioned there were

¹ Royal Commission on Secondary Education (Bryce), 1895, vol. I, p. 232.

² Ibid., vol. I, p. 133.

³ Ibid., vol. VIII, p. 14125.

thirty-five higher grade elementary schools, twenty-one of which made provision for the education of girls. Most of these pupils left at fourteen or fifteen.¹ The Commission reflected, "We may hold it as certain that these schools have risen to meet a legitimate demand, and admit of correlation and development, but not of abolition or even repression."² During the previous thirty years the distribution of income had changed, and a group of parents with modest incomes had come into existence. These parents saw value in an extended period of education for their children. The present secondary school provision could not meet their demand.³

The Commission discovered that most of the sixty higher grade elementary schools established outside London and outside Wales were in Durham, Lancashire and Yorkshire (more than half were in these three counties) and in the Midlands and eastern counties.⁴ It was mainly in the industrial areas that these schools had developed.

The report of the Cross Commission, to which

¹ In these counties 22,480 scholars were attending these schools or classes which provided a similar type of education. Only 3,434 were over fourteen and under sixteen, and 216 were over sixteen. These figures would suggest that about eighty-four per cent. of the pupils left at fourteen, or even earlier. (Figures quoted from Royal Commission on Secondary Education (Bryce), 1895, vol. I, p. 54).

² Royal Commission on Secondary Education (Bryce), 1895, vol. I, p. 144.

³ Ibid., p. 156.

⁴ Ibid., p. 54.

reference was made in an earlier chapter, had also thrown light on the growth of this higher grade elementary education. Most of these higher-grade elementary schools had developed in industrial urban centres, such as Huddersfield, Sheffield, Bradford, Birmingham and Manchester. They were providing education, according to one witness, Dr. Crosskey, for children from about the age of twelve to fourteen or fifteen.¹ The curriculum of these schools was determined largely by the grants available from the government under the provisions of the Elementary Education Code or the grants provided by the Science and Art Department. Their bias was towards the study of scientific subjects. These schools tended to provide a cheaper form of education than the endowed secondary (grammar) schools, yet at the same time they were meeting the educational demands of parents for their children.

Both the majority and minority reports of the Commission spotlighted the desire for some children to stay at school beyond the normal leaving age. The majority report emphasized the importance of providing

¹ Royal Commission on the Elementary Education Acts (Cross) 1888, vol. V, p. 169.

sufficient exhibitions "for deserving elementary scholars needing further instruction at those (secondary) schools."¹ The minority report said, "There are, however, a few scholars whose ordinary day school education might properly be extended for about one year more."²

These scholars were often the children of the more well-to-do class - clerks, shopkeepers, farmers, foremen, overlookers and warehousemen. The parents would be willing to pay for an extra year's education.

The Bryce Commission had no doubt that the improved elementary education had meant that capable children were passing the standards at a younger age, and their parents wished them to have an opportunity for further schooling. The report said that schools providing secondary education were needed "at a price sufficiently low to place them within the reach of parents of limited means".³ A way was sought whereby children of scanty means and exceptional ability might prolong their education.⁴

In its report the Commission said that there was a remarkable degree of unanimity among witnesses as

¹ Royal Commission on the Elementary Education Acts (Cross), 1888, vol. V, p. 171.

² Ibid., 1888, vol. V, p. 317.

³ Royal Commission on Secondary Education (Bryce), 1895, vol. I, p. 79.

⁴ Ibid., 1895, vol. I, p. 167.

to the desirability of providing scholarships for these children. These scholarships should be within reach of the poorest, but should be awarded "to candidates of exceptional rather than average ability".¹

Scholarships would not only cover tuition fees for the wage-earning classes, but also provide additional money towards maintenance "or to replace earnings". The age range for the award of these scholarships would be eleven to fourteen, with a decided preference for the earlier age. The award would be based on a selection process through examination, since "examination is the only fair way in the long run, and all selection is apt to degenerate into personal favouritism".² When girls had been considered the whole question of selection had been made perfectly clear; scholarships were "to enable the cleverer girls" to go to secondary schools and to stay longer.³

The scholarship system would, for those who received the awards, provide free secondary education. However, the members of the Commission were quite sure that it was undesirable to make secondary education free

¹ Royal Commission on Secondary Education (Bryce), 1895, vol. I, p. 168.

² Ibid., 1895, vol. I, p. 171.

³ Ibid., 1895, vol. I, p. 78.

for all who might wish to follow such a course. Taxpayers and ratepayers would be burdened. The weightiest argument, said the Commission, had been expressed by H.J. Roby, who stated that a free system for any who wanted secondary education would be "wasting a lot of public money by paying the fees of well-to-do people who are perfectly well able to pay for their own children".¹ For there was general agreement among the witnesses who gave evidence that if free secondary education were provided for all it would be difficult to find funds from national or local sources. In concluding their arguments on this point the Commission said, "The desire for this measure (provision of secondary education) is still comparatively small", and "scarcely within the horizon of practical politics."²

Though the demand might be small, it had been extended in one particular direction since the Report of the Taunton Commission thirty years before. This was in respect of girls' secondary education. In 1864 there had been twelve secondary schools for girls; in 1895 there were eighty such schools. In these schools

¹ Royal Commission on Secondary Education (Bryce), 1895, vol. I, p. 186.

² Ibid., 1895, vol. I, p. 186.

girls could stay up to the age of nineteen, but the Commission noted that there was a need for secondary schools which provided accommodation for girls who wished or needed to leave at about the age of sixteen.¹ There was a need not only for schools but also for scholarships for girls. In London, where scholarships were given to girls under the Technical Instruction Acts, a larger share went to boys than to girls. It had been intended to give these scholarships in equal proportions, but since there were twice as many boys competing as girls the scholarships had been awarded in those proportions. Apparently in the higher grade elementary schools established outside of London and Wales girls formed about thirty per cent. of the total number of pupils.²

Both the Cross and Bryce Commissions' reports showed a growing demand for secondary education, especially in the industrial areas where it had developed along scientific, technical and commercial lines through the establishment of higher grade elementary schools. The Bryce Commission's Report led eventually to the

¹ Royal Commission on Secondary Education (Bryce) 1895, vol. I, p. 76.

² In the selected counties no distinction is made between boys and girls in statistical information provided.

legislation of 1899 and 1902. The 1899 legislation provided a centralised form of administration for national education; it did not, however, provide a co-ordinated system of secondary education at local level. 1899 also saw the raising of the school leaving age to twelve; as we have seen already, this was not a government measure.¹ The government deferred action on the establishment of a secondary school system because any legislation of this kind would be closely related to the question of rate aid for voluntary schools. Only after the Cockerton Judgement had shown that the issue of rate-aided support for higher grade schools could no longer be avoided did the government take action. The 1902 Education Act, Part II, gave local authorities, which were the county and county borough councils, the power to establish secondary schools. The local authorities replaced the school boards, although the influence of the school boards was seen in the retention of Part III authorities (councils providing only elementary education).

¹ See chapter 7, p. 97.

Local authorities were now permitted to provide rate-aided secondary education; it was not, however, free for all pupils who received it. The regulations laid down by the Board of Education in 1907 prescribed that any secondary school which received a grant from the Board should make twenty-five per cent. of its places free. But the total number of places was very limited, and local authorities were not compelled to provide secondary education.¹ Any compulsion would be indirect; it would come through the pressure exerted by the ratepayers in any locality.

Children whose parents could afford to keep them at school longer were joined by those who were regarded as meriting a longer education. For a small number of children from elementary schools whose parents allowed them to be selected by examination the opportunity was provided of staying at school beyond the normal leaving age. Thus, for a small group who would otherwise have left school possibly at twelve and usually by fourteen at the latest, the school leaving age would be raised to about sixteen or even to eighteen. Further demands

¹ In 1908-9 there were 47,200 free place pupils out of a total of 150,799 pupils in grant-aided secondary schools. This was 31.2% of the number in grant-aided secondary schools. There were 6,033,954 pupils in elementary schools. Therefore free place pupils were .76% of the total school population in grant-aided elementary and secondary schools.

for the raising of the school leaving age were stimulated when this privileged group of mainly working class children was given the opportunity to receive secondary education.

CHAPTER 9

THE EDUCATION ACT OF 1918

The 1899 Education (School Attendance) Act, which raised the minimum leaving age to twelve, was followed a year later by another Education Act, which gave permission to local authorities to extend the by-laws to include children up to the age of fourteen.¹ Increased penalties were possible for the infringement of the law. The maximum fine was no longer five shillings; now it was twenty shillings. The Board of Education Report for 1900-01 mentioned that already one thousand, three hundred authorities had applied for new sets of by-laws to be sanctioned, and that only a hundred-and-fifty of the authorities who had applied for the revision had not taken the opportunity of substituting in their localities the age of fourteen for thirteen.² In this same report the drop in the number of half-time pupils was also noted. From 126,896 in 1895 the number had dropped to 95,621 in 1899 and to 89,036 in 1901.³ The report added, "The decrease may

¹ Education (School Attendance) Act, chapter 53, clause 6 (i), 1900.

² Board of Education Report, 1900-01, p. 11.

³ Ibid., p. 20. In 1901 58.7% of all half-timers were in Lancashire.

be attributed in part to the raising of the minimum age at which children may be employed as half-time scholars, and in part to the abolition in certain districts of the half-time clauses of the by-laws." Since the large decline had taken place between 1895 and 1899, when there had been no change in the minimum leaving age (the 1899 Act was not applicable until 1900), the significant factor must have been the change in by-laws or the decision of parents to keep their children at school on a full-time basis. Probably the implementation of the Education Act of 1891 in more and more schools - resulting in a reduction in the number of fee-paying scholars in elementary schools - assisted in reducing the number of half-timers.

The tendency during the next decade was for more local authorities to adopt by-laws which created the age of fourteen as the limit of elementary education unless the standard for exemption had already been reached. The policy of the Board of Education and of some local authorities was to raise the standard for exemption. This was made administratively simpler after 1902, when the host of School Boards and School Attendance Committees was replaced by 328 Local Education Authorities of

county councils, county borough councils, municipal boroughs or urban districts.¹ By 1905 the Board could state that during the previous five years the number of scholars leaving at the age of eleven, twelve and thirteen had decreased considerably, while the number leaving at fourteen had increased enormously.² From this they concluded that children were leaving at a later age. Similarly the number of half-timers was declining, a point the Board noted with satisfaction, since two years earlier it had been concerned because it seemed that the decline in half-timers had been halted.³

By 1914 the number of half-timers had been reduced to 69,555; a further reduction had taken place by 1917 when the figure was 64,894.⁴ The number of children who were the age of twelve or over also increased steadily. The reports of the Board during the early years of the war show some increase in the partial and total exemptions at an earlier age than just prior to the war.⁵ This was explained as due to parental requests

¹ See chapter 8, p. 121.

² Board of Education Report, 1904-1905, p. 31.

³ Ibid., 1902-1903, p. 27.

⁴ Ibid., 1914-1915, p. 28; 1917-1918, p. 13.

In 1914 59.4% of all half-timers were in Lancashire, 25.5% were in the West Riding of Yorkshire.

⁵ Board of Education Report, 1915-1916, p. 7.

because the management of households had been disrupted by the war, and also to requests for employment on agricultural tasks. Apparently where neighbouring local authorities had different by-laws there was particular difficulty in the stringent application of the by-laws.

By the time of the first world war there was a greater interest in and desire for education.¹ In a later chapter the effect of this on the growth of secondary education is noted, but its influence, combined with the ideas of reconstruction provided by the war itself and the drive and energy of H.A.L. Fisher, is part of the background to the 1918 Education Act.²

The Education Act of 1918 provided the next major landmark in the raising of the minimum school leaving age. It had been preceded by a Bill, which was abandoned after passing through some of its stages in 1917. A similar Bill, except that it reduced the administrative power of the Board of Education, was introduced in the following year.

One major proposal in the 1918 Bill was to establish, on a national basis without exemptions or

¹ Board of Education Report, 1923-24, p. 23.

² See chapter 12, pp. 179-180.

half-time education, a minimum school leaving age of fourteen. Sir F. Banbury opposed it on the grounds that a man was as good a farm labourer with little or no education, but he was comparatively isolated in this extremely conservative approach.¹ A number of members reflected on the change in attitude during the war and the work of popularising the measure by the President of the Board of Education, H.A.L. Fisher.² Perhaps it is useful to observe at this point that in the House of Lords on the second reading Lord Gainsford, a former President of the Board of Education, while admitting Fisher's work of popularisation and the impact that the war had made on educational thinking, credited the local education authorities with having paved the way in their areas by the provision and supervision of adequate elementary education.³ In fact, a school leaving age of fourteen was increasingly the rule for many children before the 1918 Act was implemented.

In the Committee Stage of the Education Bill discussion on clause 8 (this defined the ages of compulsory

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Commons, vol. 104, ^{1918,} p. 433.

² Ibid., 5th series, House of Commons, vol. 104, p. 336.

³ Ibid., 5th series, House of Lords, vol. 30, p. 1043.

education) reflected a little more fully the implications involved in the raising of the minimum leaving age to fourteen. Colonel Wedgwood, not opposed to the extension of educational provision, was concerned at the possibility of time wasted at school if education to a later age was compulsory, and the loss of earnings, in a time of high prices, by these children.¹ Other members, Captain A. Smith, F.H. Booth and Philip Snowden in particular, were concerned at the financial implications for the parents.² Snowden produced the results of ballots held in Lancashire to prove that the workers were more willing for the disappearance of half-time schooling rather than the general raising of the leaving age.³ Discussion took place on the question of keeping children at school until the end of the term in which they were fourteen, and Smith and Snowden felt that such measures did not take into consideration the economic hardships of the working classes.⁴

The attitude of these Members of Parliament

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Commons, vol. 106, p. 848.

² Ibid., 5th series, vol. 106, pp. 1064, 1066, 1070.

³ Ibid., 5th series, vol. 106, pp. 1068-1069.

⁴ Ibid., vol. 106, pp. 1082-1083.

is particularly interesting. They were Labour members, mainly of Lancashire constituencies. It was already clear that the policy of the Labour movement was to raise the school leaving age to fifteen or sixteen. Yet these men were not fully committed to the policy. Two things are significant. One was that their opposition was based on financial hardship, and they pleaded for the extension of the system of maintenance allowances. Snowden said that he would strive for economic reforms "which will be some compensation to the parents for the sacrifices they will be called upon to make", and later he pointed out that when the trade unions and Labour conferences had passed resolutions on the raising of the school leaving age the question of maintenance allowances had been associated with them.¹ Colonel Wedgwood thought that a maintenance allowance system would do away with the need for compulsion.² Another point advanced was the need to change the attitude of the parents. F.H. Booth suggested that parents should be educated in advance to recognise "the ultimate permanent advantage to their children of having a better education".³ Snowden

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Commons, vol. 106, p. 1070.

² Ibid., p. 1718.

³ Ibid., p. 1067.

pointed out that the House was "in advance of the opinion of the people who are likely to be most affected by it".¹

In the discussion on this clause there were also attempts to show the need for a later minimum school leaving age. The clause gave permission for local authorities, if they wished, to raise the age to fifteen by the application of by-laws. Fisher did not think, largely because of the financial implications, that authorities would take action under the by-law.² Captain Smith thought that any change should be on a national basis, and in this he was supported by Sir F. Banbury.³ Quite a number of Labour M.P.s took the opportunity during this part of the discussion to reiterate the demands of organised Labour for the raising of the school leaving age to fifteen or sixteen. W.C. Anderson wanted progressive Local Education Authorities to be able to raise the age. Charles Roberts was anxious to amend the age to sixteen.⁴ J.H. Whitehouse thought

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Commons, vol. 106, p. 1068.

² Ibid., vol. 106, p. 860.

³ Ibid., vol. 106, pp. 853 & 861.

⁴ Ibid., vol. 106, p. 854.

that fourteen was too early an age for a child to enter industrial life, and mentioned that the Workers' Educational Association wished Local Education Authorities to be able to raise the age to sixteen.¹ Colonel Will Thorne said that the Trades Union Congress had asked for a school leaving age of fifteen, and his own union, the Gasworkers' and General Labourers', was in favour of a leaving age of sixteen.² A. Richardson explained that railwaymen in the Sheffield area wished for education to be compulsory to the age of sixteen.³

What these Members were saying had already been suggested for some years in Socialist and Labour circles. In 1896 Will Thorne at the Trades Union Congress held at Edinburgh had persuaded the Congress to support a resolution to abolish child labour until fifteen.⁴ In the same year a meeting of International Socialist Workers and the T.U.C. held in London had agreed to a resolution proposed by Sidney Webb that the minimum age at which children should be exempted from full attendance

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Commons, vol. 106, p. 858.

² Ibid., vol. 106, p. 865.

³ Ibid., vol. 106, p. 868.

⁴ T.U.C. Report, 1896, p. 62.

at school "should be gradually, but as quickly as possible, raised in all countries to at least sixteen years."¹

In the first decade of the twentieth century the resolutions continued, and eventually the Workers' Educational Association and other bodies joined in the plea. An example of this can be taken from the "Amalgamated Toolmakers Monthly" of May, 1917, which published a resolution passed at a conference of working class and educational bodies at Birmingham during the previous month.² The resolution called for the raising of the leaving age to fifteen without exemption within three years; the raising to sixteen after a further three years; necessary provision to be in the curriculum for children over twelve; and maintenance allowances for children over fourteen where necessary.

The other major proposal in the Bill was the establishment of day continuation schools where children who left school at fourteen would attend up to the age of eighteen for not less than 320 hours per year. There was more opposition to this measure than to the raising of the school leaving age to fourteen. An

¹ Report of International Socialist Workers and T.U.C., 1896, p. 36.

² "Amalgamated Toolmakers Monthly", May, 1917, p. 18.

investigation by the Federation of British Industries was quoted to show that very few firms (23 out of 2044) approved of part-time continuation schools for all children.¹ However, at least half the firms which replied to the questions put by the F.B.I. approved of the idea of whole-time education for selected children beyond the minimum school leaving age. During the debate the Bill was referred to as regards day continuation education as "the charter of the worker's child".²

Yet there was opposition to this development. It came from those who represented the interests of the employers, especially in coal and textiles.³ The question of the loss of juvenile labour, even if for only part of the week, was considered to be a major weakness of the Bill. Although this was one line of attack, another came from those who considered that the continued division of the educational system on a social basis made the Bill unsatisfactory. The Bill did not lead all the children from the elementary school into the secondary school. There was still the selection system which

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Commons, vol. 104, p. 346.

² Ibid., vol. 104, p. 735.

³ Ibid., 104, pp. 444-447.

applied to the elementary schools, and yet, in J.H. Whitehouse's words, there was "no system of selection with regard, broadly speaking, to the whole of the children of the well-to-do classes".¹ He asked if four years at a day continuation college were the equivalent of a full-time course to the age of sixteen in a secondary school.

What was to be done in the four years from fourteen to eighteen? Some feared that it would be so devised in areas where employers had influence on education committees that it might be a form of technical instruction to make the young employee a better craftsman or machine-minder.² In this sense it would contrast with the general education given in secondary schools.

There was the problem of finance, too. Children's wages would be reduced because of the compulsory nature of the day continuation schools. Furthermore, the expense of providing buildings and staff for the day continuation schools would be added to the money already needed to give full-time compulsory education up to the age of fourteen. However, when

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Commons, vol. 104, p. 402.

² Ibid., 5th series, House of Commons, vol. 105, p. 2117.

Banbury used the argument that it would cost £10,000,000 per annum, he was interrupted by Whitehouse, who remarked that this was the cost of the war for one and a half days.¹

Finance was linked with the need for additional teachers. The whole question was related to the status and position of the teaching profession, and some M.P.s were urging a new look at salaries and pensions. The importance of having teachers who would provide a curriculum suited to the needs of the children was brought out during the debates.²

The Bill became law; the major concession was that part-time day continuation education was to be provided for young people initially from fourteen to sixteen, and, in seven years' time, for young people from sixteen to eighteen. All children now had to attend school full-time until the age of fourteen, though those at elementary schools could continue to sixteen. Fee paying in elementary schools was abolished. It continued, however, for secondary schools, unless a child had been provided with a free place.

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Commons, vol. 104, p. 432.

² Ibid., vol. 104, pp. 406-407.

As it passed through its final stages in the House of Commons, J.H. Whitehouse expressed dissatisfaction with the content of the Bill.¹ He made this point after Herbert Fisher, President of the Board of Education, had assured Members that children could stay at an elementary school until the age of sixteen.² In Whitehouse's view it would "intensify the difference between elementary and secondary education". He ended his speech by saying, "Let the term 'secondary school' stand not for a class system of education, but for the education appropriate to a certain age and not to a social class."³

The Labour Party and Socialist thinkers did not feel that the resolutions and demands of two decades had been met in this Act. As they had seen the development of secondary education under the 1902 Act, they were dissatisfied with its provision and with the means of selection. They had hoped that a minimum leaving age of sixteen would have established secondary education as the natural process to follow elementary

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Commons, vol. 108, p. 786.

² Ibid., vol. 108, p. 748.

³ Ibid., vol. 108, p. 787.

or primary education. Day continuation might provide education on a part-time basis up to sixteen or eventually eighteen, but in one sense this was a continuation of the half-time system under a different name and in a different way. They could not view it as a raising of the school leaving age. Josiah Wedgwood expressed very strongly his view of this aspect of the Bill, for it had been "engineered" by companies like Tootal Broadhurst who had in view "the protection of a working class proletariat who shall be drilled, disciplined and efficient tools for purpose of production".¹

It was this sense of being deprived of a national system of secondary education available to all which led R.H. Tawney (on behalf of the Labour Party) to produce only four years later his book "Secondary Education for All", and in 1924 the first Labour government called on the Consultative Committee under Sir W.H. Hadow to enquire into "the organisation, objective and curriculum of courses of study suitable for children who will remain in full-time attendance at schools, other than secondary schools, up to the age of fifteen". In a sense the book by Tawney and the report of the Consultative

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Commons, vol. 108, p. 967.

Committee were to justify the demand of left wing thought for the raising of the school leaving age. This justification would be primarily in terms of education, but it was clearly linked with economic and social factors.

CHAPTER 10

THE FIRST ATTEMPT TO RAISE THE SCHOOL LEAVING
AGE TO FIFTEEN

The optimistic outlook at the end of World War I was shattered within three or four years. The atmosphere during much of the next twenty years was coloured by the economic depression which was particularly severe during the early nineteen-thirties. It created social problems in some of the older industrial areas where the cotton, shipbuilding and coal industries were in a state of decline. It was in this period that the general raising of the school leaving age to fifteen became a practical point of legislation. There is value in studying the arguments for and against a general advance to fifteen, reflecting as they do the link between educational, economic, industrial and social aspects of the whole question.

R.H. Tawney published in 1922 on behalf of the Labour Party the book, "Secondary Education for All - a Policy for Labour". Tawney had said that "we need to envisage education as two stages in a single course which will embrace the whole development of childhood and adolescence up to sixteen, and obliterate the

vulgar irrelevancies of class inequality and economic pressure in a new educational synthesis".¹ This was a plea for social justice. Later in the summary of the proposals Tawney said that the nation should create "a system of universal secondary education extending from the age of eleven to sixteen ... It is the end towards which policy should be directed."² Not only should this education be free for all, but a system of maintenance allowances would be necessary. Teachers and accommodation were clearly needed also.

Tawney's statements for the Labour Party expounded at some length the resolutions already put forward and agreed to by Labour Party conferences and Trade Union Congresses as well as other left wing organisations. The significance of 1922 is that a political party now had the raising of the school leaving age as part of its educational policy. In fact it may be true to say that for the first time a political party had an educational policy. It might well be expected that when the Labour Party came to power it would begin to implement this educational policy, and this

¹ R.H. Tawney: Secondary Education for All, 1922, p. 19.

² R.H. Tawney: Ibid., p. 77.

would mean government legislation to raise the school leaving age. The first Labour government lasted for only ten months (January to November, 1924). It set up the Hadow Committee "to consider and report on the organisation, objective and curriculum of courses of study suitable for children who will remain in full-time attendance at schools other than secondary schools up to the age of fifteen ..."¹

In its report the Hadow Committee pointed out that from 1st July, 1922, which was the day appointed by the Board of Education for Section 8 (1) of the 1918 Education Act to come into operation, all exemptions from school attendance up to the age of fourteen had ceased. The Departmental Committee on Juvenile Education in relation to employment after the war/^{stated} concerning the immediate post-war situation: "In a sense it is true to say that the statutory leaving age is already fourteen, but the ways in which earlier exemption can be obtained are so numerous, and in many localities are so freely taken advantage of, that the effective leaving age often approximates rather to thirteen than to fourteen".³

¹ Report of the Consultative Committee on the Education of the Adolescent (Hadow), 1926, p. xvii.

² Ibid., p. 142.

³ Ibid., p. 141.

Up to the outbreak of war approximately forty per cent. of the children left school before reaching the age of fourteen. Thus the implementation of the 1918 Act brought about a significant change - all children now remained at school until the end of the term in which their fourteenth birthday occurred. But the Hadow Report went on to show that there had also been "a striking increase in the number and proportion of children remaining at school beyond the age at which attendance ceases to be legally obligatory". The report then produced statistics to show that in 1913-1914 pupils over fourteen in public elementary and special schools formed seven per cent. of children of the age ten to eleven attending school, whereas in 1922-1923 they formed 26.1 per cent.² This might partly be explained by the fact that children had by 1922-1923 to remain at school until the end of the term in which they were fourteen, but it was not a complete explanation. It was noticeable that "the increase is not spread evenly over the whole country". and "it is most noticeable in the areas of those Authorities which have been at pains to improve the provision made for the older children".³ It

¹ Report of the Consultative Committee on the Education of the Adolescent (Hadow), 1926, p. 142.

² Ibid., p. 142.

³ Ibid., p. 142.

could also be shown that children over fifteen attending elementary schools had multiplied nearly threefold during the ten years from 1913-1923. From being 0.8 per cent. of the ten to eleven age group the proportion had become 2.1 per cent.¹ It is worth quoting the next two sentences in full: "The truth would appear to be that the last ten years have seen a change in the attitude both of children and parents towards the work of the schools. The improvement in the quality of the education, and, in particular, the success of the efforts which are being made to meet more effectively the requirements of the older pupils, has met its natural but welcome response in a heightened appreciation of the value of education and in an increased willingness on the part of parents to make sacrifices in order that their children may continue to receive it."²

The next paragraph went on to consider "the question whether it is expedient to raise the age of compulsory school attendance to fifteen".³ The Royal Commission on the Poor Law in its majority report had

¹ Report of the Consultative Committee on the Education of the Adolescent (Hadow), 1926, p. 142.

² Ibid., p. 143.

³ Ibid., p. 143.

suggested that as a means of protecting young persons against demoralisation of character the school leaving age should be fifteen.¹ The Departmental Committee considering juvenile employment after the war sympathetically considered the idea, though it rejected its practical application because "public opinion was not yet ripe for the change".² The Report of the Ministry of Reconstruction on Juvenile Employment during the War and after, which appeared in 1918, advocated the raising of the school leaving age to fifteen partly on educational and partly on economic grounds.³

The 1918 Education Act had permitted Local Education Authorities to make by-laws requiring children to attend school up to the age of fifteen. Where this had been done up to 1926, there had been liberal use of the power of granting exemption.⁴ Such Local Education Authorities appeared to have employed the by-laws as a means of retaining at school children who would otherwise have entered unsuitable employment rather than as a

¹ Report of the Consultative Committee on the Education of the Adolescent (Hadow), 1926, p. 143.

² Ibid., p. 143.

³ Ibid., p. 143.

⁴ East Suffolk and Caernarvonshire were the two counties concerned.

means of establishing any general system of education for all children up to the age of fifteen.¹

The Hadow Committee had tried to discover how Directors of Education would view a proposal to raise the age of compulsory attendance to fifteen. Therefore two questions had been posed: (1) Was the time ripe for compulsory attendance to fifteen? and (2) What period was necessary, if the proposal to raise the school leaving age became law, in order to provide the teachers and the accommodation needed?² The replies indicated that the majority thought it educationally advantageous to raise the age of compulsory attendance to fifteen. A considerable number thought it could be done at once, but a larger number believed it could not be done in the immediate future. The latter group did, in many cases, think that within a few years it would be possible to secure the necessary teachers and accommodation. In some areas this would be helped by the decline of the birth rate. A statement had already been made in the House of Commons that during the period from 1926 to 1929 there would be a fall of twenty per cent. in the number

¹ Report of the Consultative Committee on the Education of the Adolescent (Hadow), 1926, p. 143.

² Ibid., pp. 143-144.

of children over the age of eleven in elementary schools.¹

Then the Report considered the arguments, educational, industrial and social, which related to this question. It is interesting to notice that on educational grounds there was every good reason to think that raising the school leaving age was desirable.² The additional school life would have not only a quantitative effect, but also a qualitative one. But other factors were involved, the chief of which was financial. The Hadow Committee in one sense balked at this issue. It said, "On the financial aspects of the question we do not feel called to express an opinion," suggesting in the next sentence that it was qualified to deal only with educational matters.³ However, two pages later the financial needs of parents were mentioned: "In such circumstances (pressure to withdraw children to earn wages) the proposal to raise the age of compulsory attendance to fifteen, unless accompanied by some form of financial provision to ease

¹ Report of the Consultative Committee on the Education of the Adolescent (Hadow), 1926, p. 144.

² Ibid., p. 146.

³ Ibid., p. 145.

the strain, is exposed to the possibility of opposition, even in quarters in which on educational grounds it would meet with approval. This difficulty is genuine and must not be underestimated. On the other hand it must not be exaggerated."¹ This led on to a clear statement that local authorities could pay maintenance allowances to children above a certain age in elementary as well as secondary schools. It was thought that "public opinion would regard favourably some extension of expenditure in those cases where serious hardship would be involved if no financial assistance were forthcoming".²

Apart from the financial issue, but clearly related to it, was the provision of teachers and buildings. The Committee thought that the announcement of the date of the raising of the school leaving age to fifteen some time in advance of its implementation would enable Local Education Authorities to plan for an increased school population. The report continued, "The course of wisdom, therefore, it appears to us, would be to pass legislation fixing the age of fifteen as that up to which attendance at school will become obligatory

¹ Report of the Consultative Committee on the Education of the Adolescent (Hadow), 1926, p. 147.

² Ibid., p. 147.

after five years from the date of this report - that is to say at the beginning of the school year 1932."¹ The above words were in italics. At the end of the same paragraph were the words: "The time has come, it seems to us, when the country should be prepared, even at the cost of some immediate sacrifice, to take a step that will ensure that such education shall have larger opportunities of moulding the lives of boys and girls during the critical years of early adolescence."

The report recommended the reorganisation of elementary education. It said: "Primary education should be regarded as ending about the age of 11+. At that age a second stage, which for the moment may be given the colourless name "post-primary", should begin; and this stage which, for many pupils would end at 16+, for some at 18 or 19, but for the majority at 14+ or 15+, should be envisaged as far as possible as a single whole, within which there will be a variety in the types of education supplied, but which will be marked by the common characteristic that its aim is to provide for the needs of children who are entering and passing through

¹ Report of the Consultative Committee on the Education of the Adolescent (Hadow), 1926, p. 148.

the stage of adolescence."¹ In effect, this meant for all, and not a few selected children, a break at eleven plus leading to post-primary (or secondary) education. When the Board of Education began to take action on the report of the Hadow Committee it emphasized the matter of reorganisation and reduction of classes without giving equal emphasis to the raising of the school leaving age.² Circular 1395 of January 23rd, 1928 was a reply to the resolution of the Association of Education Committees advocating the raising of the school leaving age. Lord Eustace Percy, the President of the Board of Education, stated clearly, "It is evident that Parliament cannot be asked to apply this kind of force to parents until it is satisfied that Authorities are, at least, in a position to provide proper education for all the children affected."³ The President then argued that reorganisation, in the view of the Hadow Report, preceded the raising of the school leaving age, and therefore the emphasis must be laid on this in local authority planning. He added, "To force children generally to stay longer in the ordinary

¹ Report of the Consultative Committee on the Education of the Adolescent (Hadow), 1926, p. 71 and pp. 172-3.

² Board of Education Circular 1397, p. 1, 1928.

³ Ibid., 1395, p. 2, 1928.

elementary school would be, from the parents' point of view, a somewhat arbitrary exercise of authority, and from the point of view of education it would be the merest eyewash."¹

The next paragraphs, supported by the figures from the appendices, where the government actuary had estimated the future numbers of children in public elementary schools, set out to prove that the number of children aged from eleven to fourteen in 1933 would, because of the declining birth rate, be approximately the same as the number of children aged from eleven to fifteen in 1938.²

But it could be argued that because of the fall in the birth rate there would be more accommodation in the primary schools. The reply of the President to this was the importance of this decline in numbers in helping to reduce the size of classes and assisting in the repair or replacement of black-listed schools. Special problems existed, in particular in non-provided schools and in rural areas.³

Finally the President answered the critics who would advocate the spending of more money on buildings

¹ Board of Education Circular 1395, 1928, p. 3.

² Ibid., p. 5.

³ Ibid., pp. 6 and 7.

and teachers. He said, "I do not think any of you will take that line."¹ The rate of progress in building, he maintained, was "as rapid as we can reasonably expect." The basis of the argument was, then, that it would be foolish to increase expenditure in order to raise the school leaving age in 1933 (a date approximating to the suggestion of the Hadow Report), when the reduction of numbers of post-primary education by 1938 would enable the school leaving age to be raised then without an undue increase in expenditure. But although the circular implied 1938 as a possible year for raising the leaving age, there was no suggestion that legislation would be enacted to implement such a change.

There is, then, an interesting divergence of opinion between the Hadow Committee and the President of the Board of Education. The President maintained that the Hadow Committee had not taken statistical evidence.² The President himself gave statistical

¹ Board of Education Circular, 1395, 1928, p. 7.

² Ibid., p. 4.

evidence. Table B, which gave the estimated number of children in thousands aged seven last birthday at 31st March in the undermentioned years, is reproduced below.¹ The figures from 1930 show a gradual decline. The children aged seven in 1930 would be fifteen in 1938. This explains why the President implied that 1938 was a year when it might be possible to raise the school leaving age. Looking at these figures in a different way, it might be possible to argue that the post-war high birth rate between 1920 and 1922 was an important factor in preventing the Conservative government from implementing the recommendations of the Hadow Report at an early date.

While still considering the Hadow Report's recommendation, the note added by S.O. Andrew, S. Taylor and W.H. Webb should not be forgotten. They emphasized in this note the importance of the "character

¹Board of Education Circular 1395, 1928, p. 11.

1921	-	725;	1928	-	784;
1922	-	706;	1929	-	746;
1923	-	652;	1930	-	676;
1924	-	650;	1931	-	664;
1925	-	550;	1932	-	637;
1926	-	555;	1933	-	632;
1927	-	715;	1934	-	604.

of the education" to be offered to those who could stay later at school, and linked this with the reorganisation considered necessary earlier in the report.¹ They then said that they differed from others on the Committee because they thought that it would take "a much greater time to fulfil the conditions which our colleagues have accepted as fundamental." They believed that the efforts of Local Education Authorities should be fostered so that "the time will naturally come when the educational machine has so far developed that it is capable without disaster of taking in, by a general raising of the school leaving age, the comparatively small number of children between fourteen plus and fifteen plus who will still remain outside it."²

The Conservative government had stressed the need for reorganisation before the raising of the school leaving age. However, when the Labour government came to power after the election of 1929 it proceeded to encourage reorganisation by additional grant aid. At the same time it decided to introduce legislation

¹ Report of the Consultative Committee on the Education of the Adolescent (Hadow), 1926, p. 186.

² Ibid., p. 188.

to raise the school leaving age.

Sir Charles Trevelyan's Bill to raise the school leaving age to fifteen was introduced in November, 1930. Sir Charles referred to this in his speech on the second reading as "the charter of the average child."¹ It was only right that the children of the working classes should be able to stay at school longer, as the children of the upper and middle classes already did. He spoke confidently of the process of reorganisation and of new building which was taking place. He did not see any difficulty regarding the supply of teachers. He saw this Bill as an aid to the problem of unemployment since it would remove the fourteen-year-old age group from the labour market. A system of providing maintenance allowances for those with low incomes was incorporated in the Bill so that those in poverty would not find the raising of the school leaving age an undue burden. He recognised, he said, that the main opposition to the Bill would come from the decision to provide maintenance allowances.

There were a number of speakers like Percy Harris and Sir Cyril Cobb who did not quarrel with the principle behind the Bill but urged caution about the

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Commons, 1930, vol. 244, p. 1099.

date of its implementation.¹ Sir Charles had suggested that the date for raising should be April, 1931, but these speakers were sceptical of the wisdom of so early a date. Another criticism, made by Sir John Withers, was that there was no opportunity for exemption.² In Committee, when there was a debate on the financial provisions, the Duchess of Atholl pointed out that the school leaving age had never been raised before without the possibility of exemption, and that in 1918 fourteen had been accepted because it had already become "almost universal".³

The speakers who favoured the measure saw it as a move to equalise the opportunities of children throughout the country. Chuter Ede thought that separation at eleven was one of the worst things in the education system and that this Bill, by raising the school leaving age, would reduce the inequality of a system which divided children's education at eleven.⁴ Dr. Forgan, in addition to arguments that the opponents

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Commons, 1930, vol. 244, pp. 1117 and 1133.

² Ibid., p. 1154.

³ Ibid., p. 1616.

⁴ Ibid., p. 1125.

of the Bill kept their own children at school to seventeen or eighteen, and that too much money was spent on armaments, pointed out that one benefit was that children between fourteen and fifteen would be under medical supervision through the school health service.¹

The opponents of the Bill aimed at showing that it was impractical to raise the school leaving age at this time, and that the payment of maintenance allowances to all was a bad principle. Lord Eustace Percy (President of the Board of Education at the time of the Hadow Report) declared that the need of the day was to maintain the purchasing power of the masses and the employing power of the employing classes.² He saw the payment of maintenance allowances as still reducing the purchasing power of the working classes (the five shillings proposed maintenance allowance would be less than a fourteen-year-old would earn), and the employing classes would be paying extra taxation. The implication was that this meant that they would not be able to pay employees higher wages or employ so many at present wage rates.

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Commons, 1930, vol. 244, p. 1151.

² Ibid., p. 1101.

He differentiated between payment of allowances to children in secondary and central schools and to those in senior schools. In the former the allowances were paid for the extra expenses, but this would not be the case in the latter. Later in the debate Annesley Somerville emphasized this differentiation when he said, "What matters most is the education you give your leaders," and Sir Hilton Young suggested that any money available should be spent "in a selective way on the brains and minds of those who are most capable to profit by it".¹ The Duchess of Atholl spoke against the payment of maintenance allowances to children irrespective of merit.² Lord Eustace Percy went so far in the third reading as to say that the Labour Party had not thought out "an idea of working class education".³ The last quotations illustrate the class and meritocratic basis of the education system which these speakers wished to retain.

Another aspect of opposition was voiced by Lord Eustace Percy when he touched on the industrial side of the question.⁴ The birth rate was declining,

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Commons, 1930, vol. 244, pp. 1174 and 1186.

² Ibid., 1930, vol. 244, p. 1618.

³ Ibid., 1931, vol. 247, p. 314.

⁴ Ibid., 1930, vol. 244, p. 1105.

and the need for juvenile labour by employers was considerable. (He did not point out that juvenile labour was cheaper than adult labour, and that there were many unemployed workers at this time.) It was important for children to enter factories at fourteen, for the processes in industry were changing and the children ought to be in touch with the machines. This view was supported later by Dr. Davies (M.P. for Royton), who said that both employers and workpeople in Lancashire maintained "the little piecers in mule spinning are no longer as their predecessors" and went on to blame the abolition of the half-time system for this.¹

However, the key words in Lord Eustace Percy's opening speech were that the Bill was fatal in the present circumstances with an economic crisis looming ahead. Sir R. Horne repeated this sentiment when he asked whether it was the proper time to indulge in this expenditure.² In spite of the opposition on the grounds that the nation could not afford additional government expenditure, the Bill passed all its stages in the House of Commons and went to the House of Lords for

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Commons, 1930, vol. 244, p. 1164.

² Ibid., 1930, vol. 244, p. 1542.

its second reading. Here the chief opposition speaker was Lord Hailsham. He opened his speech by a reference to the unemployment situation and the gravity of the financial and economic condition of the country.¹ He quoted the National Confederation of Employers' Associations, who said that too much was spent on the social services - which imposed a burden on industry. Increased social services insured people against risks, but this had, in large measure, deprived people of employment, the greatest security of all. He maintained that the government estimate of expenditure was lower than the amount which would be needed.

Much of his argument was that money ought not to be spent on ^{children} not selected by examination at eleven or on those whose parents did not wish them to stay at school longer. The interesting point was that Lord Hailsham, who had argued against increased expenditure on maintenance allowances, pleaded near the end of his speech for more money to be spent on assistance to non-provided schools.²

Much of Hailsham's speech had been devoted to the necessity to curb expenditure, and he had been

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Lords, 1931, vol. 79, p. 1060.

² Ibid., 1931, vol. 79, p. 1072.

helped by quoting the request of Philip Snowden, Chancellor of the Exchequer, made a few days before, for economy. Lord Sanderson pointed out that this request had been "used" by Hailsham, because Hailsham had in fact put down his rejection for amendment some days before Snowden's speech.¹ Sanderson said that the wastefulness was not in the spending of money to enable education for many children to go on longer, but rather in the ninety per cent. of children who did not receive a secondary education.

Lord Gorell, who had been a member of the Hadow Committee, stated clearly that the Hadow Committee was unanimous in desiring the school leaving age to be raised, and that it had been seen as part of the whole system of reorganisation.² Hailsham, he said, was a lawyer and not an educationalist.

The Archbishop of York (William Temple) spoke in favour of raising the school leaving age.³ He thought that the maintenance aspect was already covered

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Lords, 1931, vol. 79, p. 1122

² Ibid., p. 1141.

³ Ibid., p. 1083.

by the 1921 Act, which already permitted Local Education Authorities to provide maintenance for children over the age of twelve in elementary schools. He looked on the brains and character of people as the nation's capital, and wished to see the school-leaving age raised so that this capital could be developed. He concluded by saying that the principle of the Bill was "the goal of that section in the Labour movement most influenced by idealism".

This sentence is significant. The House of Lords killed the Bill, for at its second reading it was defeated by 22 in favour and 168 against it. The House of Lords was able to do this easily because it could call on a considerable force of Conservatives, whose attitude was opposed to legislation designed to extend the social services at a time of national economic crisis. The House of Lords could feel that it brought realism - particularly financial realism - into the discussion of a Bill which had an idealistic basis. The arguments against the Bill ignored the fact that the Hadow recommendation had been made in 1926, and that between 1926 and 1929 the Conservative government had produced nothing in the way of legislation to raise

the school leaving age. It was easier to kill the Bill by financial and economic arguments in 1930 than it would have been in 1928. The Bill had financial implications, and the House of Lords, because it has no control over money bills, could not have defeated the measure on these grounds alone. But it defeated the Bill on the matter of the principle of raising the school leaving age. Since the raising of the age and the payment of maintenance allowances were tied together in the Bill, it was not difficult for this defeat to be achieved without breaking the precedents established under the Constitution.

CHAPTER 11

A SCHOOL LEAVING AGE OF FIFTEEN WITH EXEMPTIONS:

During the course of the second reading in the House of Lords of Sir Charles Trevelyan's Bill, the Bishop of London had said he doubted whether, if this Bill were defeated, the Conservatives would introduce a new Education Bill.¹ The economic crisis of August, 1931, brought a new government to power - a National Coalition government which was highly conservative in its outlook. No government education measures appeared before the next election in 1935, so the Bishop had been proved right.

The next attempt to raise the school leaving age was by Sir Percy Harris in 1933. He brought in a private member's Bill of two clauses.² In the first clause he aimed at raising the school leaving age to fifteen by one term per year over a three-year period so that its full impact would not be felt until 1937, by which time, as the figures quoted earlier show, the birth rate drop of the middle nineteen-twenties would be affecting the number of older children in elementary

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Lords, vol. 79, /p. 1098. 1931,

² Ibid., House of Commons, vol. 283, /p. 1193. 1933,

schools.¹ In the second clause he gave power of exemption if parents applied to the Local Education Authority, and if the Local Education Authority was satisfied that suitable employment was available. This Bill was defeated on its second reading in the House of Commons, but it is useful to hear some of the arguments in the debate which took place at this time.²

The government spokesman, Herbert Ramsbotham, said that it was primarily a Bill which related to employment, and that only secondly did it deal with education.³ There would be administrative difficulties over granting exemption, and difficulties would occur in schools in the planning of courses for a shrinking school population. Yet other Conservative speakers thought exemption was a practical expedient which outweighed administrative disadvantages. Viscountess Astor admitted that exemption in Plymouth (where the school leaving age had been raised to fifteen) had caused a muddle in the schemes of work, but she did not think a Bill could become law without the granting of exemptions.⁴ Lord Eustace Percy, who supported the Bill in division, and therefore may well have considered its merits instead

1 See chapter 10, p. 153.

2 Hansard, 5th series, House of Commons, vol. 283, p. 127

3 Ibid., vol. 283, p. 1265.

4 Ibid., vol. 283, p. 1246.

of voting on purely party lines, felt that exemption was not unsatisfactory if it reflected a policy on the part of industry - a policy of training.¹ At least this kind of argument was more intelligent than that of another opponent of the Bill. H. Williams, (son of a self-made schoolmaster), who blamed the teachers for advising the raising of the school leaving age, thought ~~that~~ that teachers should be Civil Servants and blamed the strikes in South Wales for making it a derelict area.²

The Conservatives were returned to power in 1935, and within a short time, in February 1936, a Bill to raise the school leaving age was before the House of Commons. This had been foreshadowed in the King's Speech shortly before, and in the course of the debate which followed the speech from the throne the Leader of the Opposition, Clement Attlee, had said that there was no mention of maintenance allowances in the statement of government policy.³

For this reason on the day before the second

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Commons, vol. 283, p. 1228.

² Ibid., vol. 283, pp. 1208-1217.

³ Ibid., vol. 307, 1935, p. 63.

reading of the Bill to raise the school leaving age to fifteen, A. Short, M.P. for Doncaster, put forward a resolution that maintenance allowances should be paid to children who remained at school after the age of fourteen.¹ Labour M.P.s produced evidence to show that such allowances were desirable. For instance, Eleanor Rathbone quoted the University of Liverpool survey which showed that twenty-five per cent. of the children of Liverpool were living in poverty.² John Banfield, M.P. for Wednesbury, said that at fourteen children began to cost more, but that there was a case for maintenance grants to be paid to all children.³

The opposition to the payment of maintenance allowances came from the Conservative side of the House. Oliver Stanley, the President of the Board of Education, suggested that the payment of allowances was a political device to make the raising of the school leaving age a less unpopular measure than it would otherwise be.⁴ As another speaker, Vyvyan Adams, M.P. for Leeds, put it, the parents were reconciled to the

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Commons, vol. 308¹⁹³⁶, p. 979.

² Ibid., vol. 308, p. 1004.

³ Ibid., vol. 308, pp. 997-998.

⁴ Ibid., vol. 308, p. 1025.

instructional aspect of education, and they must now be reconciled to its economic aspect; maintenance grants would help in this respect, as well as shortening the queue for exemptions.¹ Probably the most subtle opposition to maintenance grants came from Henry Strauss, M.P. for Norwich.² He argued that if maintenance grants were to be paid because children were not employed it was a payment in lieu of something which, according to the educationist, was not beneficial anyway; therefore why compensate it? Educational advance - the raising of the school leaving age - should not be determined by its popularity but by its very quality and worth.

The result of the debate, especially after the speech of the President of the Board of Education, was a foregone conclusion. The original motion was defeated by 140 votes to 179, and this was followed by a vote on a motion that it was undesirable to give maintenance grants to children in elementary schools, although encouragement should be given for children to stay beyond

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Commons, vol. 308, p. 1010.

² Ibid., vol. 308, p. 987.

the age of fourteen.¹ This latter resolution was approved by 181 votes to 134.²

Next day, the President of the Board of Education moved the second reading of the Bill; its main aim was to raise the school leaving age to fifteen.³ In his speech the Minister indicated that it would not be operative until September 1st, 1939. The reason for this was the need to provide buildings and teachers and to complete reorganisation. These were arguments for delay which had been used almost ten years before, yet they still applied with real force. The Bill allowed for exemptions if the employment would be beneficial to the child. The principle of exemptions (which Herbert Ramsbotham had said in 1933 would produce administrative difficulties) had been accepted as possible. The administration would be in the hands of Local Education Authorities. Exemption had proved a workable system before 1918, and this approach would make the success of staying longer depend on convincing the parents of the worthwhileness of education. If

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Commons, vol. 308, p. 1036.

² Ibid., vol. 308, p. 1042.

³ Ibid., vol. 308, p. 1167.

children remained at school until fifteen it would not be because of the school attendance officers and the magistrates, but because of the wishes of the parents and the interests of the children. This system of exemption was already at work in areas where local authorities had, under the 1918 Education Act, produced by-laws to raise the leaving age to fifteen. In some of these areas, East Suffolk, Cornwall, Plymouth, Chesterfield and Bath, the President was pleased to show that the average school leaving age was 14.6 - a rise of three months, since 14.3 was the average for the whole country.

Much opposition to the Bill was formulated in amendments. Labour party speakers argued that the government itself thought that fifty per cent. would get exemption, and the "Times" correspondent thought it would be as high as eighty-five per cent.¹

The local authorities opposed it on the grounds that its administration would be difficult. W. Rostron Duckworth, M.P. for Moss Side, gave the names of bodies who had passed resolutions condemning this aspect of the Bill.² Although it had been decided not to pay

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Commons, vol. 308, pp. 1190-1191.

² Ibid., vol. 308, p. 1197.

maintenance allowances, this subject again entered the debate. The area where maintenance allowances were paid in elementary schools was Caernarvonshire, and Major Owen, M.P. for the county, said that as a result of these payments exemptions had fallen to twenty-seven per cent.¹

Chuter Ede saw the Bill as a form of regulation for employment; he did not feel it had additional merits.² In the course of his speech he advocated sixteen as a possible school leaving age. Following the same line of thought, Morgan Jones spoke strongly about the division created when secondary education was made distinct from elementary.³ He felt it perpetuated a class system in the minds of the parents.

Lord Eustace Percy returned to the theme that the right kind of schools must be built, and that as the education system improved the parents would be convinced that longer schooling was better than the security of employment.⁴ This type of thinking was echoed in different words by Kenneth Pickthorn at the

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Commons, vol. 308, p. 1239.

² Ibid., vol. 308, p. 1231.

³ Ibid., vol. 308, p. 1262.

⁴ Ibid., vol. 308, p. 1265.

third reading, when he said that the best way to raise the school leaving age was to make the child reluctant to leave.¹ Oliver Stanley reiterated the value of a system of exemptions when he referred back to the Fisher Act with its suggestion of compulsory continuation schools.² These schools had not worked because they were out of touch with public opinion, and by implication those who strove for a raising of the school leaving age without exemptions were equally out of touch with public opinion.

The debates in the House of Lords followed lines similar to those in the Commons. Lord Sanderson pointed out the statistical confusion arising from the use of phrases like "the average leaving age" and the percentage of those expected to wish for exemption.³ He criticized the approach made in the suggested curriculum, especially since it emphasized practical subjects. He was concerned that children should be trained for leisure, for life and not just for work.

There was a certain scepticism about "beneficial employment". Sanderson thought employers were anxious

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Commons, vol. 312, p. 2047.

² Ibid., vol. 312, p. 2088.

³ Ibid., House of Lords, vol. 101, p. 35.

to get cheap juvenile labour. Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede felt this matter of employment would be a means of the employers' getting at the parents who, in many cases, did not wish their children to stay longer.¹ The Marquess of Dufferin and Ava thought this was the critical point.² Parents were not convinced of the "rewards of education in the elementary schools, though they did see a reward in secondary education."

In the House of Lords at the Committee stage the pressure of the textile industry was seen in Lord Mount Temple's amendment to prevent a child needing to wait until the end of the term in which he or she was fifteen.³ He had been an M.P. for a Lancashire constituency for twenty years. In Lancashire adult labour depended on juvenile labour, and therefore it was especially important for children of this area to be able to go to work when employment was available. He thought it wasteful to spend money on certain things "which can be of no use to the child in after life in the ordinary humdrum trades". He quoted in support the

¹Hansard, 5th series, House of Lords, vol. 101, p. 63.

² Ibid., vol. 101, p. 69.

³ Ibid., vol. 101, p. 290.

resolution of a thousand delegates from Conservative working men's clubs in Cheshire and Lancashire.

The debates in the Upper House ended on this note. Earl de la Warr, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education and until 1931 a supporter of the Labour Party, said that it had certainly taken twenty years for fourteen to become the accepted school leaving age.¹ It could, under the system of exemption laid down in the new Bill, take a shorter time to establish a school leaving age of fifteen for all children. This would depend on whether teachers and schools changed public opinion. Teachers and schools were, however, never given the opportunity. At the point when the Act would have been implemented the Second World War broke out, and the application of the law was suspended.

It is worth noting the degree to which reorganisation, which had been stressed as essential in any plan to raise the school leaving age, had taken place up to 1938. The table at the foot of the following page shows the percentage of pupils over

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Lords, vol. 101, p. 314.

eleven in reorganised schools.¹ The years when the advance was considerable are those during and immediately after a Labour government. The Labour government had increased the grant to Local Education Authorities to provide assistance for reorganisation schemes from twenty per cent. to fifty per cent. during its term of office, 1929-31.² This grant was reduced after the economic crisis of 1931. The Conservative government in 1936 decided to raise to fifty per cent. again the grant aid for this purpose.³

Reorganisation might have been speedier between 1932 and 1936 if grant aid had not been reduced during this period. It is important to remember that the

¹ Board of Education Reports, 1929, p. 7; 1934, pp. 6 and 8; 1935, p. 38; 1936, p. 14; 1937, p. 13; 1938, p. 6.

1928	-	9.5
1929	-	12.6
1930	-	24.7
1931	-	32.5
1932	-	42.1
1933	-	48.8
1934	-	53.0
1935	-	56.0
1936	-	59.0
1937	-	61.5
1938	-	63.5

² Board of Education Report, 1929, p. 5.

³ Ibid., 1936, p. 2.

voluntary schools were slower to reorganise than Local Education Authority schools. Even after the 1936 Education Act, when special provision was made for increased aid to the voluntary schools, progress was very slow. The rate of reorganisation from 1936 to 1938 was less than it had been during the period 1932 to 1936. Reorganisation, which was regarded as a necessary precursor to the satisfactory raising of the school leaving age, may well have been hampered by the lack of finance, but it was also retarded by the existence of voluntary schools, a survival of elementary education before the state established a national compulsory system which allowed voluntary schools to exist within its framework.

CHAPTER 12

DEVELOPMENTS AFFECTING THE SCHOOL LEAVING
AGE IN SECONDARY EDUCATION BETWEEN 1900 and 1944.

Local authority support for education "other than elementary" was possible after 1902, but between that date and 1944 no Act of Parliament was concerned with the development of secondary education. The definition of secondary education and its significant development were the result of the administrative activity of the newly-created Board of Education.

The 1902 Act allowed local authorities in counties to raise a sum equivalent to a rate of twopence in the pound for expenditure on education other than elementary. This remained the basis for rate aid to secondary and higher education until 1918.

The 1904 regulations of the Board stated that a secondary school must provide a general education up to the age of sixteen and beyond.¹ It was assumed that the courses in the schools would last for at least four years and that the average age of the scholars in any class beginning the course would be not less than twelve years.² There is evidence to show that those

¹ Board of Education Report, 1903-4, p. 18.

² Report of Consultative Committee on Secondary Education (Spens), 1938, p. 67.

who made the regulations were determined that the secondary schools would be set in the framework of a classical kind of education. To this extent the technical and scientific developments of the higher grade elementary schools would be submerged by the traditions of the endowed schools.

The Spens Report made in 1938 had an interesting comment on these developments. It said that the development of secondary education by local authorities after 1902 - reinforced and fostered by the regulations for secondary schools - was along the main lines of the traditional grammar school curriculum.¹ This had been further helped by the growth of the School Certificate examination system from 1917 onwards. Although the Spens Report could see value in this development, it deplored "the fact that the Board did little or nothing ... to foster the development of secondary schools of quasi-vocational type designed to meet the needs of boys and girls who desired to enter industry and commerce at the age of sixteen".² The Reports of the Board of

¹ Report of the Consultative Committee on Education (Spens), 1938, pp. 71-72.

² Ibid., 1938, p. 73.

Education during the nineteen-twenties and nineteen-thirties refer from time to time to the development of technical education, mainly on the basis of evening classes and a little part-time day education, with very few full-time technical school courses. The whole emphasis of secondary education was non-technical and non-commercial.

In 1907 the Board stipulated that as a condition of receiving a state grant at least twenty-five per cent. of those who entered a secondary school in any one year should be given free places.¹ From this decision the growth of a meritocratic basis of selection for secondary schools stemmed. The number of free places awarded increased.² The 1933 regulations by which free places were replaced by "special" places, awarded strictly on merit and carrying total or partial exemption from fees in cases of need, gave further emphasis to this trend.³

It is in the light of this general background that the developments in the leaving age in secondary

¹ Board of Education, Regulations for Secondary Schools in England 1907 (cd. 3952) Regulation 20.

² Board of Education Report, 1926-27, pp. 25-26.

³ Ibid., 1935, p. 12.

education must be seen. Up to around 1914 it had been difficult to enforce fully the secondary school leaving regulations of the Board of Education; otherwise the Board would have been compelled to strike many schools off the grant list, and this would have destroyed the hope of future development.¹ The difficulty of getting pupils to stay at school was blamed on economic conditions which were beyond the control of the schools or the Local Education Authorities. The great majority of employers at the beginning of the twentieth century attached little importance to education.² Boys were sent to the grammar school by their parents for a year or so to "finish". The parents were often anxious for the child to be earning a few shillings, and the employers' main concern was that a boy could write a decent hand and add up figures. No preference was given by employers to a sixteen- or seventeen-year-old over a fifteen-year-old.

Around 1914 there was suddenly a real demand for secondary education.³ The Board of Education thought

¹ Board of Education Report, 1923-24, p. 21.

² Ibid., 1923-24, p. 21.

³ Ibid., 1923-24, p. 23.

this was due to a number of factors. There was the background of the growth of an appreciation of education among parents, and this was probably the result of the efforts of the previous twenty years. Then the war wages made the payment of fees easier. This demand was not transitory but continued after the war, even when economic conditions had become more difficult. In 1924 the Board was asking what would happen if this demand continued to be thwarted.¹ It might lead to a determination to make another way to secondary education, but on the other hand it might lead to the old indifference. The growth of secondary school education continued into the nineteen-thirties. There had been a three-fold expansion numerically between 1910 and 1935; the percentage of scholars from elementary schools and the percentage of scholars exempt from payment of fees had increased.² In 1935 the Board

¹ Board of Education Report, 1923-24, p. 37.

²

Year	Total scholars in elementary schools	per 1000 of population	% of ex-chn. in secondary schools	% of pupils in sec. schls. exempt from fees
1910	156,337	4.4	62.6	34.9
1935	456,783	11.3	75.7	47.3

Figures from Board of Education Report, 1935, p. 13.

of Education report showed that £18,500,000 was spent on higher education (non-elementary). A comparison of the number of children in elementary and secondary schools and the amount of money spent on their education shows that per head the child at a secondary school benefited considerably.¹

The increased demand made it possible for local authorities to expect far more willingness on the part of parents to keep their children in a secondary school for a longer period. Up to 1914 a three-year undertaking had often been required, "but with the outburst and demand during and since the war, undertakings to stay until the age of sixteen have become almost universal."² Comparisons between the average length of school life and the average leaving age show that most secondary school pupils were spending a longer time at school. The average leaving age at the end of the first decade of the century had been fifteen

¹ Amount spent on elementary education per annum: £64,700,000
5,402,052 pupils in elementary schools.
Amount spent on higher education per annum: £18,500,000.
(The major part was spent on secondary education.)
456,783 pupils in secondary schools.
Figures from Board of Education Report, 1935, p. 35.

² Board of Education Report, 1923-24, p. 22.

years, eight months; in 1938 it had become sixteen years, seven months.¹

Associated with the increase in the length of school life at a secondary school was the tendency during the first three decades of the century for the age of entry to be eleven rather than twelve.² The 1925-26 Board of Education Report said that it was becoming generally realised that eleven was the most suitable age for beginning secondary school life.

Before 1933 it appears that not only had the percentage of free place pupils increased but also that these were the pupils who stayed at school on an average for a longer period, and to a greater age, than fee-paying pupils.³

A considerable influence on the leaving age of some pupils was the Board's suggestions for the education of prospective teachers. In 1907 the Board

¹ Board of Education Report, 1923-24, p. 22, and 1938, p. 15.

² Ibid., 1923-24, p. 21, and 1925-6, p. 47.

³ Percentage of free place pupils in grant-aided secondary schools

1906-7	24.08
1928-9	40.9

In 1926-7 free place boys left at an average age of 16 yrs. 4 mths.

-do- free place girls -do- 16 yrs. 6 mths.

These average ages were six months higher than for fee payers.

announced that a secondary school education to at least sixteen, and possibly to seventeen or eighteen, should steadily replace the pupil teacher centre system of training. In 1926 the Board said that it hoped all who entered teacher training colleges after that year would have stayed at school until the age of eighteen.²

Each year the Board of Education provided in its report the average age of leaving in secondary schools. The Spens Report suggested that it might be useful to consider the proportion of pupils who remained at school at the age of sixteen or over. Investigation showed that the proportion had in fact fallen slightly between 1925 and 1937.³ The same investigation revealed that in 1937 just over a quarter of the secondary school pupils between the ages of fourteen and sixteen left school before their sixteenth birthday.⁴ Thus the average leaving

¹ Report of the Consultative Committee on Secondary Education (Spens), 1938, p. 73.

² Board of Education Report, 1925-6, p. 92.

³ Report of the Consultative Committee on Secondary Education (Spens) 1938, p. 96.

	<u>1925</u>	<u>1932</u>	<u>1937</u>
No. of pupils aged 16 and over	37,531	51,747	46,082
As % of 11-16 age group current year	12.9	14.7	11.8

1932 was a year in which older pupils had exceptional difficulty in finding employment.

⁴ Ibid., p. 97. 27.6% left between 14 and 16.

age might be above sixteen (in 1937 it was sixteen years six months) but a considerable number of pupils did not stay at school until their sixteenth birthday.

After 1917 the School Certificate examinations influenced more and more the life of the secondary schools. However, the number of children who left after the age of fourteen and who did not take the School Certificate examination was in 1936-7 about forty per cent.¹

It appears that the proportion of girls taking the examinations tended to fall during the nineteen-thirties.² It is also significant that in this same period secondary school places for girls were provided at a less satisfactory rate than for boys.³

¹ Report of the Consultative Committee on Secondary Education (Spens), 1938, p. 100.
Boys - 36.6% Girls - 44.4%

² Ibid., p. 100-1.

	<u>School Certificate</u>	<u>Higher School Cert.</u>		
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
1924-5	21,962	19,485	3,383	2,411
1936-7	37,221	26,784	6,652	3,405

³ Board of Education Report, 1930, pp. 113 and 148-9, and Ibid., 1938, pp. 96 and 135.

	<u>Elementary Schools</u>		<u>Secondary Schools</u>	
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
1930	2,801,591	2,725,522	206,598	186,170
1938	2,545,538	2,489,738	246,568	222,264

For girls to have had the same opportunity as boys in seeking entrance to secondary schools there needed to be about 10,000 more places for girls in 1930 and about 20,000 more places in 1938.

The Spens Committee also noted that the rapid growth in the number of pupils at grammar schools during and after the first World War had resulted in the inclusion in those schools of pupils who were often described as "non-academic" or "misfits".¹ Some came from the elementary schools and some from private schools. The number varied from area to area, but could amount to from twenty-five to thirty-five per cent. The Spens Report said it was quite sure that these children had a place in secondary schools, but that the curriculum ought to be better suited to their needs. This can be seen in some measure as a criticism of the way in which secondary school studies had developed as a result of the suggestions of the Board of Education and the requirements of the School Certificate examinations.

There was, then, a certain dissatisfaction with secondary education as it had developed after 1902. The Hadow Report had thrown some light on this; the Spens Committee illuminated it further, and, in so doing it made certain recommendations about the school leaving age. The Spens Committee stated categorically that "parity of schools in the secondary stage of education is essential."²

¹ Report of the Consultative Committee on Secondary Education (Spens), 1938, p. 168.

² Ibid., p. 293.

The need to remove the differences, especially those which gave a prestige value to some schools, was vital to achieve this parity. As this theme was developed one subject which came under discussion was the school leaving age. The Committee observed that political events (legislation; the passing of the 1936 Education Act which raised the school leaving age to fifteen) had been the response to a forward urge which had been caused by the fuller provision of education for older children and by an increased appreciation on the part of parents of the value of a longer school life.¹ Events would show the degree of success of the raising of the school leaving age to fifteen, due account being made for the possibilities of exemption and that maintenance allowances would not be provided as they were for children of the same age in grammar schools.

The Committee was, however, quite clear about the line of future developments. "Parity among schools in the secondary stage, so that they will differ only in the kind of education they provide to meet the differing abilities and interests of the pupils, implies

¹ Report of the Consultative Committee on Secondary Education (Spens), 1938, p. 311.

the raising of the minimum leaving age to the same general level in all schools."¹ A more complete provision of modern and technical schools would be a powerful incentive towards the lengthening of school life, and this would cause the secondary stage of education to be made continuous for most children from the age of eleven to the age of sixteen. There were then these words: "The advance in the school leaving age will, however, in our judgement, receive even greater impetus from the general recognition of the parity of secondary schools. The adoption of a minimum leaving age of sixteen years may not be immediately attainable, but in our judgement must even now be envisaged as inevitable."²

The Norwood Report of 1943 (concerned with the curriculum and examinations in secondary schools), though it did not specify a definite school leaving age, also emphasized the importance of parity of conditions in all types of secondary schools.³

When the recommendation of the Spens Report is seen in the light of the terms of reference given to the

¹ Report of the Consultative Committee on Secondary Education (Spens), 1938, p. 311.

² Ibid., p. 311.

³ Report of the Committee of the Secondary Schools Examinations Council on Curriculum and Examinations in Secondary Schools (Norwood), 1943, p. 24.

Committee in 1933, its significance becomes more apparent. The terms of reference were, "To consider and report upon the organisation and interrelation of schools, other than those administered under the Elementary Code, which provide education for pupils beyond the age of eleven; regard being had in particular to the framework and content of the education of pupils who do not remain at school beyond the age of sixteen."¹ A report which had been mainly concerned with the non-elementary sector of education was in effect providing a recommendation which in the long run would end the division of education into elementary and secondary sectors and provide a secondary education for all - based on a common minimum leaving age of sixteen.

In the development of secondary education the minimum school leaving age of sixteen had been suggested in the regulations of the Board of Education. Between 1900 and 1944 the average age of leaving rose but local authorities were not able to keep all children in these schools until they were sixteen. Early leaving had persisted and girls had been more likely to be withdrawn

¹ Report of the Consultative Committee on Secondary Education (Spens), 1938, p. iv.

early than boys. Parental influence on school leaving was much greater than in elementary schools. It was significant that those who intended to enter the teaching profession were encouraged to stay on until eighteen. This showed what the demands of a future employer or professional body could do to raise the school leaving age.

CHAPTER 13

THE 1944 EDUCATION ACT

As the previous chapter has shown, the Spens Report had come to the conclusion that the minimum school leaving age should be sixteen, and that this development would be inevitable when all children - in a reorganised educational system - received some form of secondary education. This report, issued in 1938, doubtless influenced the framing of the 1944 Education Act.

As in the First World War, the thought of reconstruction intensified in the middle years of the war, and in 1943 a White Paper on Educational Reconstruction was produced for consideration. This White Paper formed the basis for new legislation on education. It reflected the thinking which had been going on during the previous three years and indicated a complete change in outlook on the part of Parliament. A key to its ideas is found in the declaratory clause " that the statutory system of public education shall cease to be severally administered for the purposes of elementary and higher education respectively and be organised in three progressive stages."¹

¹ "Educational Reconstruction" (White Paper), 1943, p. 7.

Before considering the impact of the White Paper and the 1944 Education Act on the school leaving age, it is well to remember that the House of Commons which dealt with this matter was the same House (except for by-election changes) which had produced as one of its first pieces of legislation the Education Act of 1936. But the new spirit and attitude, created in part by the war, were to be seen in the debates which related to the raising of the school leaving age.

In the debate on the White Paper R.A. Butler, President of the Board of Education, stated that it was intended to frame the law to raise the school leaving age first to fifteen and then to sixteen - and in both cases by Order in Council.¹ The raising to sixteen would depend on the virtual completion of the reorganisation of the schools. There was general support for the raising of the age, and there was no suggestion that there should be a built-in system of exemptions. There was, however, concern whether the need for expansion of buildings and for a larger teaching force and the consequent expenditure could and would be met in the post-war years. William Cove, M.P. for Aberavon,

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Commons, vol. 391, ^{1943,}/p. 1840.

quoted an interview Mr. Butler had with the "Sunday Times".¹ Butler had said, "It only remains to say that those who study the plan should pay special attention to the warning given that the reforms involve a steady increase of expenditure, and that the various portions of the scheme will be introduced as and when the necessary equipment and financial resources are available, having regard to our existing commitments and to any new claims or orders of priority that may be laid down." Cove added, "That had the effect of a torpedo as far as I was concerned." He reminded the House that after the First World War there had been committees set up to make economies, and that, as a result, educational development provided for in the 1918 Education Act had not come to fruition.

There was, then, in the minds of some M.P.s the fear that schemes, unless given a date for implementation, would not come into effect. Those who showed the greatest concern about this felt there could be no parity in the secondary sector of education unless the school leaving age was raised - not only to fifteen, but also to sixteen. This was behind A. Creech-Jones'

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Commons, vol. 391, p. 1959.

query when he asked how there could be common secondary school arrangements if different leaving ages were in being.¹ Without the same leaving age it was not possible to achieve a common status. Arthur Greenwood remarked that the debate on the White Paper showed a growing interest in education.² Up to that time education had been "one of the Cinderellas in debates" so long as he had been in the House. He emphasized the importance of putting dates to the raising of the age, and said, "We ought as rapidly as may be to raise the school leaving age to sixteen." It was not just a question of length, however; quality was equally important.

Another speaker who was concerned with quality was J.D. Mack, M.P. for Newcastle-under-Lyme. He wanted a change in the material taught and illustrated this by reference to history text books.³

Emphasis had been placed by the government sponsors of the White Paper on the importance of finance to meet the growth in education resulting from the raising of the school leaving age and the development

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Commons, vol. 391, p. 1850.

² Ibid., vol. 391, p. 1941.

³ Ibid., vol. 391, pp. 1985-1986.

of a new system of secondary education. Viscountess Astor pointed out that it was not just money but the will which was important.¹ She felt not enough people cared about education. She quoted Sir Charles Trevelyan as saying when asked to raise the school leaving age to sixteen, "You know it would be very controversial to raise the school leaving age." She went on to suggest that the Labour Party had made political capital in her constituency out of the fact that she, a Conservative, was advocating the raising of the school leaving age so that working class children could be kept at school longer.

C.W. Key, M.P. for Bow and Bromley, supported Viscountess Astor in her view that will was as important as finance.² He said, "We have not allowed finance to hinder us in directing men and materials to the production of the instruments of destruction in our fight against fascism and despotism. We must not allow finance to hinder us in directing men and materials into the production of the instruments of construction in our fight against ignorance and want." He concluded by saying

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Commons, vol. 391, p. 1963.

² Ibid., vol. 391, p. 2021.

that it was essential to raise the school leaving age to sixteen in order to establish "equality in prestige".

Early in 1944 R.A. Butler said, during the debate on the second reading of the Education Bill, "Education should be the ally and not the dreaded competitor of employment".¹ He continued, "Any educationist would tell you that the arguments for raising the age to sixteen are conclusive, and it is the view of the government that children should remain at school until that age when it is practicable for them to do so under present circumstances." Local Education Authorities were to plan on the basis that the normal school leaving age would be sixteen. Delay in raising it to fifteen was due to the war. The date of April 1st, 1947, was given in the course of this speech as the intended date for the implementation of this section of the Act. The delay in the raising to sixteen was the result of four factors: the completion of reorganisation, the reduction in the size of classes, the need for more teachers, and the need for more buildings.

There were a number of speakers who felt strongly that it would be better to raise the school

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Commons, vol. 396, ^{1944,} p. 215.

leaving age to sixteen without the interim period when it would be fifteen. Arthur Greenwood expressed this view, as did D.L. Lipson and John Parker.¹

R. Morgan, M.P. for Stourbridge, advocated a school leaving age of fifteen without the delay of over two years suggested as necessary by the Minister.²

A different note was provided by L. Silkin, M.P. for Peckham.³ He was concerned that in the debate nobody had considered the kind of education to be given to those who would be affected by the raising of the school leaving age. He asked, "Are we to raise the school leaving age to fifteen merely to continue the kind of education which we have already given? Are we to raise the school leaving age merely to keep children at school for another year after that?" He submitted that it would be essential to revolutionise the character of the education or there might in fact be a great revulsion of feeling against

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Commons, vol. 396, pp. 407; 464; 237.

² Ibid., vol. 396, p. 458.

³ Ibid., vol. 396, p. 468.

the raising of the age.¹

The fears of some M.P.s that there would be delay in raising the school leaving age to sixteen were again voiced by some speakers during the Committee stage of the Bill when considering Clause 33, which dealt with the ages for compulsory school attendance. The fears were centred in the power given to the Minister of Education to decide when to bring in an Order in Council. Thelma Cazalet Keir put forward an amendment to get the school leaving age raised to sixteen at the expiration of twelve months after that part of the Act came into operation, or at some later

¹ In the year of the Spens Report a book was published which showed that there had been some thinking on the organisation of the new senior schools. In "The Extra Year", compiled by a committee of members of the Association of Education Committees and the National Union of Teachers, some ideas had been worked out. In the introduction to the book the Committee said that there were many educationists who were not satisfied with the 1936 Education Act. Some people had suggested that it would be in the best interests of education if the Act proved unworkable. This was not, however, the general view, and so this particular Committee, using the ideas established by the Hadow Committee and current educational psychology, had produced an outline of suggestions ready for the implementing of the law. This was done in spite of dissatisfaction with an Act which, in fact, was never put into operation.

date not exceeding three years by Order in Council. As Moelwyn Hughes put it, "The objective of sixteen is a Mount Everest." The amendment would turn the objective into a Welsh Snowdon.¹

William Cove thought that with improvisation the raising to sixteen could be accomplished quickly.² But other speakers expressed the need for caution. Viscountess Astor, keen on the raising of the age, was nevertheless aware that education was not popular in either the Tory or the Labour Party.³ To give education priority was not a political stunt. Professor Gruffydd, M.P. for the University of Wales, was concerned that the paper giving the school leaving age legal sanction should be backed by adequate provisions.⁴ He doubted whether the provision could be available in a short time. The President of the Board of Education, R.A. Butler, was quite clear about his own priorities, even though as a goal he wished to have a school leaving

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Commons, vol. 398, p. 716.

² Ibid., vol. 398, p. 731.

³ Ibid., vol. 398, p. 727.

⁴ Ibid., vol. 398, p. 718.

age of sixteen.¹ He reminded the House of the need to reorganise schools, and spoke of the special need for this to be done by voluntary schools, only sixteen per cent. of which were at that time reorganised. In addition, the building programme would not only have to take reorganisation into account, but would also need to deal with buildings destroyed during the war. More teachers would be required. If purely educational grounds were being considered, the school leaving age ought to go from fourteen to sixteen immediately, but the President had to consider the practical problems he had just outlined. He indicated that he gave priority to the implementing of the continuation college system which would provide part-time education for young people from fifteen to eighteen.

Mrs. Cazalet Keir's amendment was defeated by 172 votes to 137.² This was a victory for the President's approach - the development of further education on a day release basis before any attempt to raise the leaving age to sixteen. Sir G. Shakespeare, M.P. for Norwich, commented that the real opponents of reform were the

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Commons, vol. 398, p. 746.

² Ibid., vol. 398, p. 756.

idealists who wanted sixteen as the school leaving age.¹ He was sure that this was unpopular, and in his constituency even raising to fifteen was an unpopular measure. Yet Arthur Greenwood saw the danger in the vague approach to what the President of the Board of Education thought was educationally desirable: "Unless clause 33 is tightened up there will be a lot of playing about for many years with sixteen."²

At the third reading in the Commons Mrs. Cazalet Keir used a new argument provided by the McNair Committee, which had examined the question of teacher supply.³ She quoted this report as saying that the raising of the school leaving age from fifteen to sixteen would stimulate recruitment to the profession.⁴ Other speakers reiterated the view that a school leaving age of sixteen should quickly become the law of the land. Butler congratulated Mrs. Cazalet Keir on the force of her argument, but he emphasized his own order of priorities in educational advance and maintained that it was

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Commons, vol. 398, p. 751.

² Ibid., vol. 398, p. 749.

³ Report of the Committee on Supply, Recruitment and Training of Teachers and Youth Leaders (McNair) 1944, p. 2.

⁴ Hansard, 5th series, House of Commons, vol. 399, p. 2147.

important to have the teachers before raising the age.¹ Emphasis on being realistic was the note in two speeches by Sir Percy Harris (the author of the 1933 Bill to raise the school leaving age to fifteen) and Frederick Messer, M.P. for Tottenham South. Sir Percy felt that it was important to be realistic on this matter, and that it was wrong to develop at a rate where children might be in school marking time with incompetent teachers.² Messer said, "There is no other social service in which you are so likely to meet objections by the very people who will benefit." Later he continued, "Raising the school leaving age is not popular among members of the working class. Economic circumstances affect them, and that is a difficulty that has to be met."³

In the House of Lords there was general agreement that the raising of the school leaving age was desirable. Lord Soudbury thought that there was too much optimism in some quarters and complained at the slow progress of

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Commons, vol. 399, p. 2263.

² Ibid., vol. 399, p. 2211.

³ Ibid., vol. 399, p. 2219.

reorganisation between 1936 and 1939 in both urban and rural centres.¹ This slow progress was, as the debate in the Commons had already suggested, largely due to the inability of many voluntary schools to reorganise themselves, although the 1936 Act had given increased financial provision for such reorganisation to be made possible.²

After the Education Bill became law Butler made an Order in Council for the school leaving age to be raised to fifteen on April 1st, 1947. During June, 1945, when a Conservative government was in office following the break-up of the war-time coalition, Richard Law, the new Minister of Education, confirmed the government's intention to raise the school leaving age and said that the raising of the school leaving age "has become the symbol, as it were, of the seriousness of our intention in the field of educational reform."³

After the general election in July, 1945, a Labour government took office, and shortly afterwards, on August 21st, the new Minister of Education, Ellen

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Lords, vol. 132, p. 152.

² See chapter 11, pp. 175.

³ Hansard, 5th series, House of Commons, vol. 411, p. 1303.

Wilkinson, was asked to make an announcement about the school leaving age. This she did on October 11th.¹ She gave the date as already announced by the previous government, April 1st, 1947. She said that in those areas where enough accommodation was already available for an earlier date to be possible it would be unwise to raise the school leaving age earlier, for new legislation would be necessary and youth employment might be affected.

At frequent intervals during the following eighteen months the Minister was questioned on matters connected with the school leaving age. She maintained that the date was fixed. In the debate on the supply to the Ministry of Education on July 1st, 1946, the Minister stated that by September, 1948, there would be four-year secondary school courses for all, but admitted that some children would still be in all-age schools, particularly in rural areas, and some would be in temporary buildings.²

In November, 1946, Sir Waldron Smithers, M.P.

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Commons, vol. 414, p. 436.

² Ibid., vol. 424, p. 1806.

for Orpington, asked whether the date for the raising of the age should be postponed because insufficient schools and teachers were available.¹ Sir E. Graham Little, M.P. for London University, asked a similar question in January, 1947.² The reply was the same in each case: the government was determined to raise the school leaving age to fifteen.

In February, 1947, after Ellen Wilkinson's death a new Minister, George Tomlinson, was appointed. While admitting that there would be considerable use of prefabricated buildings, the Minister assured Members that the school leaving age would be raised on the date planned.³ Even so, Sir G. Jeffreys, M.P. for Petersfield, questioned the Minister further, pointing out the need for recruits to industry and suggesting that concessions should be made so that parents could get their children exempted from attendance at fourteen.⁴

The age was raised to fifteen on the date planned. There were no exemptions. The real impact of the extra year would be seen, as Ellen Wilkinson had stated,

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Commons, vol. 430, written answers, p. 346.

² Ibid., vol. 432, written answers, p. 36.

³ Ibid., vol. 433, pp. 77-78 and 334.

⁴ Ibid., vol. 435, pp. 1381-2, written answers.

in September, 1948, and so after April, 1947, questions were still asked about the provision of teachers, buildings and equipment. In the debate on the Estimates in July, 1947, the Minister pointed out that crash programmes HORSAs and SFORSAs and the emergency training scheme, had provided the means to cope with the increased school population.¹

But there were still questions to ask and comments to make. From the Conservative benches Sir David Maxwell-Fyfe, in the Supply debate in March, 1947, urged that there should be a real benefit from the extra year to be spent at school, especially since there was a shortage of manpower in many industries and in agriculture.² From the Labour benches Leah Manning was asking the Minister in June, 1947, to announce the date when the school leaving age would be raised to sixteen.³ Members of Parliament would be asking this question for many years to come.

¹ Hansard, 5th series, House of Commons, vol. 441, pp. 648-649, HORSAs - Huts Operation for raising the School Leaving age:
SFORSAs - School Furniture Operation for Raising the School Leaving Age.

² Ibid., vol. 435, p. 420.

³ Ibid., vol. 439, p. 673.

CHAPTER 14

CONCLUSION

The raising of the school leaving age between 1870 and 1944 largely concerned elementary education. Eventually the leaving age considered desirable in secondary schools began to influence ideas about elementary education, and the 1944 Education Act removed the elementary and secondary divisions of the educational system. Secondary education ceased to be a privilege for the minority and became a stage for all children.

There could be no school leaving age determined by law until the State had established a compulsory system. Before 1870 parents had been responsible for deciding the age at which their children left school, and their wishes had often been related to the economic circumstances of the home. When Parliament made it obligatory for all parents to send their children to school or provide them with a satisfactory form of education, it legislated with parental views in mind. As the school leaving age was gradually raised from a minimum of ten years to a minimum of fifteen years, the attitude of parents was a major consideration in the minds of Members of Parliament. In this way the law tried to keep abreast of, and certainly avoided being in advance of, public opinion.

Up to 1944 the desirable leaving age in secondary schools was regulated by governing bodies or local education authorities. Parents had to be convinced that it was worthwhile for their children to stay at school until sixteen or older; otherwise their children would leave at the minimum leaving age or standard, which applied to all schools, both elementary and secondary. Some parents, for reasons of finance, or because they thought the education unsuitable, withdrew their children before the age of sixteen.

Girls began in this period to share more fully in educational opportunities; this applied particularly in secondary education. The minimum leaving age applied to both sexes. In secondary schools in the twentieth century there was a tendency in the years before 1944 for proportionately more girls than boys to leave between fourteen and sixteen.

For the first half of the period from 1870 to 1944 parents could withdraw children from school if the children had attained a certain standard of education which qualified them for exemption. This was on condition that the children had reached the minimum leaving age. The idea of exemption from school because of the availability of suitable employment, of a kind which would not be

detrimental to the child's welfare, was still a live issue after 1918 and formed a major point in the 1936 Education Act. This further exemplifies the consideration given to parental responsibility in school leaving matters. The State's protection of the child was as limited as it could be; the onus of responsibility was as far as possible put on the parents.

The parents usually made their decisions in the matter of school leaving for economic and social reasons; it does not seem that educational reasons counted for much or that most parents thought the educational provision helpful as regards their children's future activities. Those parents who saw the value of the education provided (a value usually associated with future employment or status and position in life) kept their children at school to a later age. These were mainly upper-class, middle-class or ambitious working-class people. There was an increasing number of working-class representatives who favoured a later leaving age for the children of the working class; they recognised that a longer period of education could raise their children's social status and economic power. The majority of the working class, however, failed to appreciate the long-term value of a later leaving age. State action, therefore,

savoured somewhat of paternalism when compulsion was introduced and, later, when the school leaving age was raised.

The establishment of a school leaving age and standard began with permissive legislation which gave local authorities power to compel parents to send their children to school. The basis was somewhat experimental and only a gradual approach to a national system. The school leaving age has been raised since that time on something of the same empirical lines. It has been a gradual process; legislation has been enacted with the assurance that there was a substantial degree of parental support. For those with ideals and theories of education it has often appeared too slow a development.

The early debates on the leaving age emphasized health and morals, and these were points of vital importance to those who favoured a later leaving age. By the period 1930 to 1944 the emphasis had become much more directly concerned with education and its quality and content. For this reason the provision of buildings and teachers figured prominently in this later period.

Quite frequently the evidence shows that teachers, school managers, inspectors and local education authorities

helped to improve educational facilities and quality. In the period before the First World War their work was significant in enabling a national minimum school leaving age of fourteen to be established. During the inter-war period emphasis was placed on appropriate courses for those who would stay at school to a later age; it was clearly recognised that buildings would need to be designed so that they could provide suitable courses, and that teachers must be trained to meet the needs. It was increasingly plain that the raising of the school leaving age must be an attractive proposition for parents and children as well as a chapter in the statute book. In this respect the buildings and the teachers were major factors.

Although the need for increased expenditure had been noticeable in the late nineteenth century, especially with regard to maintenance allowances for secondary education, the financial implications of a later school leaving age became stronger after the First World War. This was partly because the needs of the improved educational provisions required greater expenditure, but also because the period between the wars was a time of much economic depression and unemployment. In particular the parents

whose children would be most affected by the raising of the school leaving age were those who could least afford to keep children at school. This raised the question of maintenance allowances being paid to these parents.

The raising of the school leaving age after 1918 was basically a matter of finance. During the First World War there was no difficulty over raising the necessary finance for war-time expenditure, but most post-war governments were unwilling to increase taxation for expenditure on education. Conservative governments appeared less willing to do so than Labour governments. A good deal of the argument in the inter-war years seemed to be much more a matter of scoring debating points than discussion of educational principles and policies.

Up to the First World War there was no analysis of the number of school places which would be needed for the raising of the school leaving age. This was to some extent because the initiative lay with the local authorities who made the by-laws. In the inter-war period the school leaving age became less a local and more a national matter. Statistics of what was involved nationally were available; their use was mainly to show that it was preferable to defer the raising of the leaving age, because a falling birth rate would enable this to be

accomplished without an undue increase in expenditure.

The question of employment and the attitude of employers remained as a major debating point throughout the whole period. Juvenile labour was cheap in Victorian times and much needed by employers. The demands of industry and agriculture affected the school leaving age so that it varied from one locality to another.

The school leaving age that existed in other countries does not appear to have had any direct influence on changes in Britain. If it had any significance it was in the decade after the Berlin Conference of 1890. Throughout the greater part of the nineteenth century Britain enjoyed commercial advantages because its industrial development preceded that of other countries. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, some of these, such as Germany, had become competitors. The attitude of employers to education changed gradually when the effects of this competition were felt, but this change was not, apparently, sufficient to lead to greater stress being placed on technical education. Employers did not noticeably influence the development of secondary education.

Even in the inter-war period debates on the school leaving age stressed the use of juvenile labour, though

the argument had less force because it was well known that large numbers of the adult population were unemployed. In the late nineteenth century the textile and agricultural employers' interests were emphasized. Their views were still aired in the inter-war period. It is paradoxical that in the textile industries, where compulsory education was first introduced (on a half-time basis), there was considerable resistance to raising the leaving age and getting rid of the half-time system. The employers maintained, with some justification, that the working class was opposed to raising the leaving age. Some members of Parliament who represented working class views were very conscious that many of their constituents wished to send their children into employment as soon as possible. The employers did not, until the twentieth century, on the whole wish for educated workmen; and even in the twentieth century the fear of educated workmen, though not publicly stated, remained in the minds of many employers. This is certainly what some Labour M.P.s thought. Only in a limited way did employers up to 1944 appear to set any value on education.

Half-time education, though it declined in importance, was a feature of elementary education up to 1918. The compulsory half-time education of children

who worked in the factories in some industries established a system in elementary education which it was difficult to eradicate in those areas where it had become an established tradition. Day continuation education had a pattern similar to half-time education, though its basis was not exemption from school for employment, but rather exemption from employment for purposes of education. The resistance to the ending of half-time education exemplified the danger of allowing an educational pattern to develop along lines which have an unsatisfactory educational basis. It provokes the question whether it was wise to give priority to the development of part-time day continuation at fifteen rather than to establish a school leaving age of sixteen.

Compulsory education was imposed on an already existing system of voluntary schools, most of which had a religious basis. Local authorities provided education to supplement that which already existed. This, because of the denominational religious issues, was regarded by the radical educational legislators of that period as an unsatisfactory method of establishing a national system of education. When, as a necessary preliminary to the raising of the school leaving age to fifteen, reorganisation of elementary education was required in the inter-war

period, it was the existence of the remnants of the voluntary school system - referred to as non-provided schools - which to some degree hampered the raising of the school leaving age. Thus the religious background of much elementary education and the sectarian controversies of an earlier period influenced educational development in the inter-war years and apparently held back the raising of the school leaving age.

Urban areas often pioneered the provision of compulsory education and the establishment of more facilities for higher grade elementary and secondary education. In the twentieth century reorganisation of elementary education took place more speedily in urban than in rural areas. In some measure this was because the urban areas had less of a heritage in the form of voluntary schools. Another factor was that the radical middle classes and the interested working classes were able through their organisations in urban areas to influence educational development.

The working class views on education in the period when a national system was established were expressed through the organisation of the trade unions. At this stage trade unions were primarily concerned with economic

conditions, though they did not entirely ignore educational provision. At the time when they became more aware of the need for political action they also expressed a positive educational policy, a major point of which was the raising of the school leaving age to sixteen.

The Parliamentary pressure to establish compulsory education and, later, to raise the leaving age came in the main from the left wing or radical elements in the Liberal Party and from the Labour Party.¹ The opposition throughout the period came, almost entirely, from the Conservative members, many of whom had been to a public school and Oxford or Cambridge University. In the twentieth century schoolmasters, lecturers and representatives of trade unions figure prominently in advocating a longer school life. Legislation to raise the school leaving age was often strongly supported by those who had experienced the disadvantages of leaving at an early age. Their grievances were clearly social and economic as well as educational. They saw a longer education as a means of achieving social and economic equality. For this reason the debates on the later

¹ See Appendix III.

legislation to raise the school leaving age often referred to the unsatisfactory nature of an educational system which created social and meritocratic divisions.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were a time when socialist opinions spread, and in Britain the Labour Party became the political vehicle for these ideas. Until that party achieved political power the raising of the leaving age was not a direct political issue. However, once the Labour Party was established as an alternative form of government the raising of the school leaving age, and the social, economic and educational issues linked with it, became politically alive.

The interesting point about this is that at about the time when the question of the school leaving age became more directly political, the minimum age for leaving was fourteen. This is the age which it appears was common for leaving (among those who had a school-based education) in the late eighteenth century, before the economic pressures of industrialisation had caused the lowering of the leaving age for many children. The age of fourteen had primarily been associated with the physical development of children and their readiness for employment. Pre-industrial revolution society accepted

it as a natural point for leaving the schoolroom and beginning employment. There was no state compulsion in this matter. A legally enforceable minimum leaving age and standard of educational attainment appeared necessary to combat the evils created by an industrial society, though it must be noted that it was in the industrial urban areas that there also developed the demand for increased facilities for secondary education. This often led to the establishment of higher grade elementary schools where the leaving age was about fourteen. The legally enforceable minimum leaving age was raised eventually so that fourteen became the general leaving age.

Industrialisation had demanded legal compulsion, but it had also produced a proletariat. The intelligent and politically active members of the working class realised the educational advantages enjoyed by the upper and middle classes. Therefore the working class representatives used their political power - newly acquired - to demand educational facilities and a school leaving age which had formerly been the prerogative of those who were the leaders and influential members of society. Parity of opportunity and provision became the key-note in

education and was applied to the question of the school leaving age.

The 1944 Education Act, which raised the school leaving age to fifteen and laid down its further raising to sixteen, was from this point of view a move in a totally new direction. Hitherto education beyond the age of about fourteen had been limited to a few because of their wealth, parental status and interest, or, in more recent times, because of their academic ability. Now that full-time schooling would be provided for all up to the age of fifteen and eventually sixteen the major question was whether the training and education would be appropriate for life in a highly industrialised and urbanised society.

APPENDIX I

THE LEAVING AGE IN SOME CLASSICAL SCHOOLS IN
THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY

School	Type	Century when founded	Leaving age
Chaddesley Corbett, Worcestershire	Grammar	M 17	15
Feckenham, Worcestershire	Classical	E 17	14 to 17
Evesham, Worcestershire	Grammar	E 17	16
Dudley, Worcestershire	Grammar	16	by 19
Bromsgrove, Worcestershire	Classical	16	14 to 17
Worcester	Classical	16	15
Aldridge, Staffordshire	Semi-classical	E 18	14
Wolstanton, Staffordshire	Semi-classical	E 18	12 or 13
Burton, Staffordshire	Grammar	16	16 to 19
Stafford	Grammar	16	18
Christ's Hospital, London	Semi-classical	16	15 (later for a few)
Charterhouse, London	Classical	E 17	by 19
Merchant Taylors, London	Classical	16	by 19
St. Olaves, London	Semi-classical	16	14 (later for a few)

The ages given in this Appendix are the upper limits of leaving.

These examples are taken from:

- (a) The Free Schools of Worcestershire, by G. Griffith, 1852.
- (b) The Free Schools and Endowments of Staffordshire, by G. Griffith, 1859.
- (c) The Enquiry into the Education of the Lower Orders, 1816-1818.

Abbreviations used: E = early
 M = middle

APPENDIX II

THE LEAVING AGE IN SOME NON-CLASSICAL SCHOOLS
IN THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY

	Non-classical schools	Century when founded	Leaving Age
Worcestershire:	Abberley	E 18	11
	Alvechurch	Not given	12
	Bengeworth	E 18	14
	Blockley	E 18	10
	Broadway	E 18	13
	Cropthorne	E 18	12
	Cutnall Green	E 18	12 to 16
	Ombersley	E 18	15
	Shelsley Beauchamp	L 17	15
	Shipston upon Stour	E 18	13
	Strensham	E 18	10+
	Droitwich	L 17	14
	Dudley	L 18	13
	Evesham	L 17	10
	Old Swinford	L 17	14
	Stourbridge (Wheelers)	E 18	14
	Stourbridge (Waste Bank)	L 18	9
	Worcester	E 18	12

	Non-classical Schools	Century when founded	Leaving age
Staffordshire:	Enville	M 18	17
	Bradley	L 17	16(boys 15(girl
	Bobbington	L 18	15
	Marchington	L 18	14
	Newcastle-under-Lyme	E 18	15
	Tamworth	E 19	13+
	Tipton	L 18	11 to 1
	Leek	E 18	10
Birmingham:	Blue Coat	E 18	14
	Protestant Dissenting	M 18	14+
	Green Coat	L 17	14
	Asylum for Infant Poor	L 18	10
Hampshire:	Boldre	L 18	13 to 1
Somerset	Weston	L 18	12 to 1
Northumberland:	Bamburgh	Not given	14
Westmorland:	Kendal	L 18	14
Kent:	Levisham	L 18	11
Gloucestershire:	Cheltenham	E 19	12 to 1
Cheshire:	Chester	L 18	11 to 1
Norfolk:	Fincham	E 19	14

	Non-classical Schools	Century when founded	Leaving age
London:	St. Giles Irish	E 19	12
	Blue Coat, Westminster	L 17	14
	Grey Coat, Westminster	E 18	14
	St. Giles Parish	E 18	14
	St. Giles Workhouse	Not given	10
	Spitalfields (Christ Church)	E 18	14
	St. Clement Danes Parish	E 18	12
	St. Martins (Hemmingsrow)	L 17	14 to 15
	St. Martins (Library Schools)	L 17	15
	Raines School	E 18	14
	Stratford-le-Bow	E 18	14
	Horseferry Road	E 19	13
	Foundling Hospital	M 18	14 to 15
	Marylebone (Basil Woodd)	L 18	13
	Kingsland	E 19	14
	King Street	E 18	14

The ages given in this Appendix are the upper limits of leaving. The information comes from:

- (a) The Free Schools of Worcestershire, by G. Griffith, 1852.
- (b) The Free Schools and Endowments of Staffordshire, by G. Griffith, 1859.

- (c) The Free Schools, Colleges, Hospitals and Asylums of Birmingham, by G. Griffith, 1861.
- (d) Reports of the Society for Bettering the Conditions of the Poor, by Thomas Bernard, 1809.
- (e) The Enquiry into the Education of the Lower Orders, 1816 to 1818.

Abbreviations used: E = early
 M = middle
 L = late

APPENDIX III

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

This contains the names of the main speakers in the parliamentary debates on compulsory education and the raising of the school leaving age between 1870 and 1944. They are tabulated to show the attitudes taken to compulsion and the raising of the school leaving age. "T.U." indicates a close link with the trade union movement. The information shown in these tables has been obtained from the Dictionary of National Biography, Modern English Biography (F. Boase, 1965), Who Was Who (1897-1950), Labour Who's Who for 1924 and 1927, Dod's Parliamentary Companion, and the Times House of Commons 1929 and 1931.

In some cases no information was given.

1870. Those in favour of a system of direct compulsion:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Politics</u>	<u>Occupation/Profession</u>	<u>Education</u>
A.J. Mundella	Sheffield	Liberal (Radical)	Manufacturer	Elementary until 9
J. Simon	Dewsbury	Liberal (reformer)	Barrister	Early life in Jamaica: University College, London
Jacob Bright	Manchester	Liberal (radical)	Cotton spinning manufacturer	Friends School, York
C.W. Dilke	Chelsea	Liberal (radical)	Barrister	No school information: Cambridge University Durham Massey School
J. Platt	Oldham	Liberal (advanced)	Engineering manufacturer	
J.W. Pease	Durham	Liberal	Coal, iron and woollen manufacturing interests	Friends School, York
T. Bazley	Manchester	Liberal	Cotton manufacturer and merchant	Bolton Grammar School
H. Fawcett	Brighton	Liberal	Professor at Cambridge University	King's College School and Cambridge University
G. Dixon	Birmingham	Liberal	Merchant	Leeds Grammar School

1870. Those against a system of direct compulsion.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Politics</u>	<u>Occupation/Profession</u>	<u>Education</u>
H.G. Liddell	South Northumberland	Liberal-Conservative	Landowner	Eton
Lord R. Montagu	Huntingdon-shire	Conservative	Landowner & author	Privately and Cambridge University
E.A. Leatham	Huddersfield	Reformer	Banker	University College, London
J. Bowther	York	Conservative	Barrister	Westminster and Cambridge University
R. Knightley	Northampton-shire South	Conservative	Magistrate and Landowner	
E. Hermon	Preston	Conservative	Cotton manufacturer	
W.E. Forster	Bradford	Liberal	Worsted Manufacturer	Friends Schools in Bristol & London
G. Hardy	Oxford University	Conservative	Formerly a Barrister	Shrewsbury & Oxford University
S. Cave	Shoreham	Conservative	Company Director	Harrow & Oxford University

1876. Those in favour of a system of direct compulsion.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Politics</u>	<u>Occupation/Profession/</u>	<u>Education</u>
U. Kay-Shuttleworth	Hastings	Liberal		Harrow & University College, London
Lord F. Cavendish	West Riding (North)	Liberal	Landowner	Cambridge University
E. Ashley	Poole	Liberal	Barrister	Harrow and Cambridge University
T.W. Evans	Derbyshire South	Liberal	Army Officer and Magistrate	Cambridge University
L. Playfair	Edinburgh University	Liberal	University Professor	Edinburgh University
T. Knowles	Wigan	Liberal	Chairman of a colliery Company	No information, but a collier at 9
P. Rylands	Warrington	Liberal	Landowner, author and magistrate	Boteler's Grammar School, Warrington
G. Dixon	Birmingham	Liberal	Merchant	Leeds Grammar School
W.E. Forster	Bradford	Liberal	Worsted manufacturer	Friends Schools in Bristol & London
A.J. Mundella	Sheffield	Liberal (Radical)	Manufacturer	Elementary until 9

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1876. Those against a system of direct compulsion.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Politics</u>	<u>Occupation/Profession</u>	<u>Education</u>
C.S. Read	Norfolk South	"progressive" Conservative	Yeoman and tenant farmer	Louth Grammar School & Cambridge University
G. Storer	Nottinghamshire South	Conservative	Army officer	Harrow and Oxford University
M.W. Ridley	Northumberland North	Conservative	Magistrate and army officer	Winchester
H. Birley	Manchester	Conservative	Manufacturer	Eton and Oxford University
Lord F. Hervey	Bury St. Edmunds	Conservative	Civil Service Commissioner	Brighton College and Cambridge University
D.R. Onslow	Guildford	Conservative	Cricketer and private secretary	Privately and Cambridge University
Lord R. Montagu	Huntingdonshire	Conservative	Landowner and author	

1891. Those in favour of raising the age when a child could be first employed under the Factory Acts.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Politics</u>	<u>Occupation/Profession</u>	<u>Education</u>
G.O. Morgan	Denbighshire	Liberal	Barrister	Shrewsbury & Oxford University
J. Leng	Dundee	Liberal	Newspaper publisher and proprietor	Hull Grammar School
S. Buxton	Poplar	Radical	Political activities	Clifton and Cambridge University
J. Wilson	Mid-Durham	Liberal (advanced)	Secretary of Miners Association (T.U.)	Elementary until 10.
H. Broadhurst	Nottingham West	Liberal	Official in trade union (T.U.)	Elementary
T. Burt	Morpeth	Liberal (Radical)	Miner (T.U.)	Elementary (for two years)
S. Smith	Flintshire	Liberal	Cotton broker	Scottish parish school & Edinburgh University
J. Rowlands	Finsbury	Liberal (Labour)	Watchmaker	Working Men's College,
W. Summers	Huddersfield	Liberal	Barrister	Owens College, Manchester and Oxford University
W. Mather	Lancashire S.E.	Liberal	Chairman of manufacturing company in Lancashire	Private school
U.Kay Shuttleworth	Clitheroe	Liberal	Manufacturer	Harrow and University College, London
A.J. Mundella	Sheffield	Liberal (Radical)	Manufacturer	Elementary until 9

1891. Those against raising the age when a child could be first employed under the Factory Acts.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Politics</u>	<u>Occupation/Profession</u>	<u>Education</u>
H. Matthews	Birmingham East	Conservative	Lawyer	No information about School. Paris and London Universities
J.M. MacCkean	Oldham	Conservative	Newspaper proprietor	Christ's Hospital School
H.B. Reed	Bradford East	Conservative	Journalist	Sydenham School
Viscount Cranborne	Darwen	Conservative	Landowner	Eton and Oxford University
F.S. Powell	Wigan	Conservative	Barrister	No information about schools. Cambridge University
E. Lees	Oldham	Conservative	Landowner	Eton and Oxford University
W. Coddington	Blackburn	Conservative	Cotton manufacturer	
W. Sidebottom	Derbyshire (High Peak)	Conservative		Private schools
W.E.M. Tomlinson	Preston	Conservative	Retired army officer	Westminster and Oxford University

1899. Those in favour of raising the school leaving age.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Politics</u>	<u>Occupation/Profession</u>	<u>Education</u>
W. Robson	South Shields	Liberal	Barrister	Privately and Cambridge University
J. Kenyon	Bury	Conservative	Woollen manufacturer	Bury Grammar School
J. Duckworth	Middleton	Radical	Manufacturer	Private
J. H. Yoxhall	Nottingham West	Liberal	General Secretary, National Union of Teachers	Elementary and Teacher Training College
C. E. Schwann	Manchester North	Liberal (Advanced)		Huddersfield College and University College, London.
John Burns	Battersea	Labour	Engineer (T.U.)	Elementary (left school at 10)
J. T. Middlemore	Birmingham North	Liberal Unionist	Manufacturer	Educated to be a surgeon
G. Harwood	Bolton	Liberal	Cotton manufacturer	Charlton High School and Owens College, Manchester
H. Asquith	Fife East	Liberal	Barrister	City of London School and Oxford
A. Wylie	Dumbartonshire	Conservative	Calico printing manufacturer	

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Contd.

1899. Those in favour of raising the school leaving age. (Contd.)

<u>Name</u>	<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Politics</u>	<u>Occupation/Profession</u>	<u>Education</u>
A. Rollit	Islington	Conservative (Progressive)	Solicitor	No information on schools. King's College, London
F. Maddison	Sheffield	Labour	Printer (T.U.)	Elementary
F.S. Powell	Wigan	Conservative	Barrister	No information about schools.
S. Smith	Flintshire	Liberal	Cotton Broker	Cambridge University
J. Wilson	Mid-Durham	Liberal (Advanced)	Secretary of Miners Association (T.U.)	Scottish parish school & Edinburgh University
S. Buxton	Poplar	Radical	Political activities	Elementary until 10. Clifton and Cambridge University

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1892. Those against raising the school leaving age.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Politics</u>	<u>Occupation/Profession</u>	<u>Education</u>
G. Whiteley	Stockport	Conservative		Abroad and Zurich University.
F.C. Rasch	S.E. Essex	Conservative	Army officer	Eton and Cambridge University
A.F. Jeffreys	Hampshire North	Conservative	Landowner	No information about schools. Oxford University
J.G. Lawson	Yorkshire (North Riding)	Conservative		Harrow and Oxford University
H. Seton-Karr	St. Helens	Conservative	Barrister and Overseas traveller	Harrow and Oxford University
J. Rutherford	Darwen	Unionist	Army officer	Royal Grammar School, Lancaster, and Glasgow University
G. Kemp	Heywood	Liberal	Managing Director of flannel manufacturing company	Shrewsbury and Cambridge University
A. Hickman	Wolverhampton West	Conservative	Chairman of iron and steel company	King Edward's School, Birmingham
J.J. Mellor	Radcliffe	Conservative	Director of cotton and railway companies	Private schools and tutors
H. Hobhouse	Somerset East	Unionist	Barrister	Eton and Oxford University
J.H. Johnstone	Sussex (Horsham)	Conservative	Barrister	Repton and Cambridge University

1899. Those against raising the school leaving age. (Contd.)

<u>Name</u>	<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Politics</u>	<u>Occupation/Profession</u>	<u>Education</u>
W.E.M. Tomlinson	Preston	Conservative	Retired army officer	Westminster and Oxford University
E. Lees	Birkenhead	Conservative	Landowner	Eton and Oxford University
Viscount Cranborne	Rochester	Conservative	Landowner	Eton and Oxford University

1918. Those in favour of raising the school leaving age beyond 14.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Politics</u>	<u>Occupation/Profession</u>	<u>Education</u>
W.C. Anderson	Sheffield (Attercliffe)	Labour		
C. Roberts	Lincoln	Liberal	Tutor at Oxford University	Marlborough and Oxford University
J.H. Whitehouse	Mid Lanark- shire	Liberal	Warden of Educational Settlements	Mason College, Birmingham
W.J. Thorne	Plaistow	Social Democrat	General Secretary of Gasworkers and General Labourers union (T.U.)	Self-educated - began work at 6
A. Richardson	Rotherham	Liberal	Wholesale grocer	Magnus Grammar School, Newark
D. Mason	Coventry	Liberal	Merchant and Banker	Kelvinside and Partick Academies and Glasgow University
J. King	Somerset North	Liberal	Barrister	Uppingham and Oxford
T. Wilson	Lancashire S.E.	Labour	Carpenter (T.U.)	

Contd.

1918. Those against raising the school leaving age beyond 14 unless maintenance allowance paid.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Politics</u>	<u>Occupation/Profession</u>	<u>Education</u>
J.C. Wedgwood	Newcastle-under-Lyme	Liberal	Naval architect and engineer	Clifton and R.N. College, Greenwich
A. Smith	Clitheroe	Labour	Secretary of Nelson Overlookers Association (T.U.)	Elementary.
F.H. Booth	Pontefract	Liberal	Chairman of coal, iron and insurance companies	Bolton-le-Moor High School
P.Snowdon	Blackburn	Labour	Civil servant and journalist	Elementary

1918. Those against raising the school leaving age to 14.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Politics</u>	<u>Occupation/Profession</u>	<u>Education</u>
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F. Banbury	City of London	Conservative	Stockbroker	Winchester
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Those against raising the school leaving age to 15 or 16.

W. Runciman	Dewsbury	Liberal	Managing Director of cargo steamship company.	South Shields High School and Cambridge University
J. D. Rees	Nottingham East	Unionist	Director of numerous companies	Cheltenham College
J. H. Lewis	Flintshire	Liberal	Director of a ship-owning company	Denbigh Grammar School and Oxford University
P. Magnus	London University	Unionist	Lecturer at University	No information on schools. University College, London.

1930. Those in favour of raising the school leaving age to 15

<u>Name</u>	<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Politics</u>	<u>Occupation/Profession</u>	<u>Education</u>
C.P. Trevelyan	Newcastle Central	Labour	Private secretary	Harrow & Cambridge University
J.C. Ede	South Shields	Labour	Schoolmaster	Elementary & Cambridge University
R. Forgan	Renfrew West	Labour	Specialist medical officer	
J.A. Lovat-Fraser	Lichfield	Labour	Barrister	No information on schools. Cambridge University
W.G. Cove	Aberavon	Labour	Teacher	Elementary & University College, Exeter
S. Hastings	Reading	Labour	Ear & throat surgeon	Wycliffe & London University.
M. Jones	Caerphilly	Labour	School teacher	Elementary & University College, Reading
J. Arnott	Kingston-upon-Hull S.W.	Labour	Blacksmith	Elementary & Ruskin College, Oxford
Lord Sanderson	Peer	Socialist	Lecturer	Privately & at Oxford University
Lord Gorell	Peer	Labour	Author & publisher	Winchester, Harrow & Oxford University
Archbishop of York	Peer		Clergyman	Rugby & Oxford University
Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede	Peer	Socialist	Diplomatic service & politics	Eton & Oxford University

1930. Those in favour of raising the school leaving age to 15 (Contd.)

<u>Name</u>	<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Politics</u>	<u>Occupation/Profession</u>	<u>Education</u>
Lord Noel E. Buxton	Peer	Socialist	Army officer and author	Harrow & Cambridge University
Bishop of London	Peer		Clergyman	Marlborough & Oxford University
Lord Passfield	Peer	Socialist	Lecturer	Privately
Bishop of Southwark	Peer		Clergyman	No information about schools. Oxford University

1933. Those in favour of raising the school leaving age to 15

P. Harris	Bethnal Green	Liberal	Barrister	Harrow & Cambridge
Viscountess Astor	Plymouth (Sutton)	Conservative	Wife of property owner	Education in America
Lord E. Percy	Hastings	Conservative	Diplomatic service	Eton & Oxford University

1930. Those against raising the school leaving age to 15

<u>Name</u>	<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Politics</u>	<u>Occupation/Profession</u>	<u>Education</u>
C. Cobb	West Fulham	Conservative	Barrister	Newton Abbott College & Oxford University
J.J. Withers	Cambridge University	Conservative	Solicitor	Eton & Cambridge University
Duchess of Atholl	Perth & Kinross	Conservative	Wife of landowner	Wimbleton High School & RByal College of Music
Lord E. Percy Hastings	Hastings	Conservative	Diplomatic service	Eton & Oxford University
A. Somerville	Berkshire (Windsor)	Conservative		Queen's College, Cork & Cambridge University
H. Young	Kent (Seven-oaks)	Conservative	Barrister	Eton & Cambridge University
A.V. Davies	Lancashire (Royton)	Conservative	Medical officer of health	
R. Horne	Glasgow (Hillhead)	Conservative	Barrister	George Watson's College, Edinburgh & University of Glasgow
J.C.H. Buchan	Scottish Universities	Conservative	Barrister & Author	Hutcheson's Grammar School, Glasgow, Universities of Glasgow & Oxford

1930. Those against raising the school leaving age to 15. (Contd.)

<u>Name</u>	<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Politics</u>	<u>Occupation/Profession</u>	<u>Education</u>
M.W.Beaumont	Buckinghamshire (Aylesbury)	Conservative	Army officer	Eton & Sandhurst
W.J. Womersley	Grimsby	Conservative	Partner in firm of general merchants	Elementary
E.C.G. Cadogan	Finchley	Conservative	Barrister	Eton & Oxford University
Lord Hailsham	Peer	Conservative	Barrister	Eton
Marquis of Londonderry	Peer	Conservative	Landowner	Eton & Sandhurst

1933. Those against raising the school leaving age to 15. (Contd.)

H.Ramsbotham	Lancashire (Lancaster)	Conservative	Barrister	Uppingham, Oxford
H.Williams	Croydon South	Conservative	Engineering specialist	Hooton Grammar School, Cheshire & Liverpool University
R.A.Spencer	St.Helens	Conservative	Schoolmaster	Salford School & University of London

1936. Those in favour of maintenance allowances being paid when the school leaving age was raised

<u>Name</u>	<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Politics</u>	<u>Occupation/Profession</u>	<u>Education</u>
A. Short	Doncaster	Labour	Boilersmith & barrister (T.U.)	
E. Rathbone	Combined English Univ.	Independent	Lecturer & writer	Kensington High School. Liverpool & Oxford Universities
J.W. Banfield	Wednesbury	Labour	Secretary of operative bakers & confectioners union (T.U.)	
G. Mathers	Linlithgow	Labour	Railway clerk	Elementary
J.R. Leslie	Sedgefield	Labour	Secretary of shop assistants union (T.U.)	Anderson Institute, Lerwick
V. Adams	Leeds West	Conservative	Barrister	Haileybury & Cambridge University
M. Jones	Caerphilly	Labour	School teacher	Elementary & University College, Reading

1936. Those in favour of raising the leaving age to 15 without exemptions

<u>Name</u>	<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Politics</u>	<u>Occupation/Profession</u>	<u>Education</u>
G. Owen	Caernarvonshire	Opposition Liberal	Barrister	Ardwyn Grammar School & University College of Wales
H.B. Lees Smith	Keighley	Labour	Lecturer	Aldenharn, Woolwich & Oxford University
J.A. Leckie	Walsall	Liberal National	Leather goods manufacturer	Glasgow & Bella- houston Academies
W. Gallacher	West Fife	Communist	Brassfitter	Elementary
W.R. Duckworth	Manchester (Moss Side)	Conservative	Chartered accountant	Aldenharn & Cambridge University
W.G. Cove	Aberavon	Labour	Teacher	Elementary & University College, Exeter
<u>Those in favour of raising the leaving age to 16</u>				
J.C. Ede	South Shields	Labour	School master	Elementary & Cambridge University
M. Jones	Caerphilly	Labour	School teacher	Elementary & University College, Reading

1936. Those against maintenance allowances being paid when the school leaving age was raised

<u>Name</u>	<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Politics</u>	<u>Occupation/Profession</u>	<u>Education</u>
O. Stanley	Westmorland	Conservative	Barrister & stockbroker	Eton
H.G. Strauss	Norwich	Conservative	Barrister	Rugby & Oxford University
M.Petherick	Cornwall (Penryn & Falmouth)	Nat. Conservative	Company director	Marlborough & Cambridge University
<u>Those in favour of raising the school leaving age to 15 with exemptions</u>				
K. Pickthorn	Cambridge University	Nat. Conservative	University lecturer	Aldenham & Cambridge University
O. Stanley	Westmorland	Conservative	Barrister & stockbroker	Eton
Lord E. Percy	Hastings	Conservative	Diplomatic service	Eton & Oxford University

1944. Those in favour of raising the leaving age to 16 rapidly

<u>Name</u>	<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Politics</u>	<u>Occupation/Profession</u>	<u>Education</u>
A.C. Jones	Shipley	Labour	Secretary of Transport & General Workers Union (T.U.)	Elementary
A.Greenwood	Wakefield	Labour	University lecturer	
C.W. Key	Bow & Bromley	Labour	Schoolmaster	Elementary
D.L.Lipson	Cheltenham	Independent Conservative	Schoolmaster	Sheffield Royal Grammar School & Cambridge University
J. Parker	Romford	Labour	Secretary of Fabian Society research bureau	Marlborough & Oxford University
R.H.Morgan	Stourbridge	National Conservative	Schoolmaster	Higher grade elementary school & teacher training college
Mrs.C.Keir	Islington East	Conservative	Local government activities	
M. Hughes	Carmarthen	Labour	Barrister	Carmarthen County School & Cambridge University
Mrs. J.L. Adamson	Dartford	Labour		
Viscountess Astor	Plymouth (Sutton)	Conservative	Wife of property owner	Education in America
W.G.Cove	Aberavon	Labour	Teacher	Elementary & University College, Exeter

1944. Those who thought the raising of the leaving age was long overdue

<u>Name</u>	<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Politics</u>	<u>Occupation/Profession</u>	<u>Education</u>
R. Sorenson	Leyton West	Labour	W.E.A. lecturer & Free Church minister	Elementary

Those who asked for thought to be given to the kind of education to be provided when the leaving age was raised

J.D. Mack	Newcastle under Lyme	Labour	Lecturer (T.U.)	
L. Silkin	Peckham	Labour	Solicitor	Elementary & London University
W.J. Gruffydd	University of Wales	Liberal	University professor	Caernarvon School & Oxford University
P. Harris	Bethnal Green	Liberal	Barrister	Harrow & Cambridge Universities

1944. Those against raising the leaving age to 16

<u>Name</u>	<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Politics</u>	<u>Occupation/Profession</u>	<u>Education</u>
G. Shakespear	Norwich	Conservative	Journalist & barrister	Highgate & Cambridge University
<u>Those who thought the leaving age was being raised to 15 before it was expedient</u>				
W. Smithers	Orpington	Conservative	Member of London Stock Exchange	Charterhouse
E. Graham-Little	London University	Independent National	Consulting physician	South African College, Cape & London Universities
G. Jeffreys	Petersfield	Conservative	Army officer	Eton & Sandhurst

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