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THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY'S NATIONAL POLICY
ON COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION, 1944-1971

Thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Education
in the University of Durham by Ronald Richmond
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ABSTRACT

The Conservative Party's national policy on comprehensive education, 1944-1971

One question which is frequently asked about this subject is whether the Conservative Party's policy on comprehensive education was merely a reaction to the Labour Party policy, or had it something positive to say?

Between the years 1945 and 1951 the parties were agreed that secondary education should be selective and tri-partite, but after that their policies differed. From 1951 Labour supported comprehensive education while the Tories, now in power, persevered in their belief in selection. This was partly a reaction against Labour's egalitarian motives and partly based on a belief that selection was right.

During the late 1950's much evidence was produced by sociologists and psychologists casting doubts upon the selective system. Meanwhile Conservative Ministers of Education were allowing limited experiments with comprehensive schools, but with the proviso that the experiments be educationally sound.

It was left to one of the Conservative's best education ministers, Sir Edward Boyle, to lead his party, in 1963, away from selection at 11+, on the grounds, not of equality, but of individual justice for every child to develop his talents to the full. His motives were educational, not political or social. However, he made a notable exception in his policy, namely that good grammar schools of adequate size should be preserved.

For some years the Conservatives worked to try to solve their problem of reconciling the preservation of good grammar schools with the move away from selection at 11+. Co-existence of grammar schools with comprehensives was seen in the I.L.E.A. to be a failure, and after rejecting other possibilities the Conservatives came down in favour of grammar schools seeking a new role as sixth form colleges, or as upper-tiers of two-tier schools.

Throughout this period Boyle had the support of his leader and his cabinet colleagues, but the task of winning over Conservative M.P.'s and party members was long and arduous for him. In 1969 he decided to retire from politics, in favour of an academic post. Political chance then gave the Conservative Party an education leader who emerged with a policy similar to that held before 1963. In practice however circumstances had changed and Mrs. Thatcher found herself obliged to accept the trend towards comprehensive education, a trend initiated and supported by the L.E.A.'s.

It can be said therefore that the Conservatives from 1963 to 1969 had led the way in applying educational criteria to the comprehensive system and had endeavoured to find a new role for the grammar schools in order to try to counter-act the weaknesses that had been found in the comprehensive system - in particular the need to provide for very able pupils, and the problem of neighbourhood schools in deprived areas.

Table of Contents

	Table of contents	(i)
	List of abbreviations	(ii)
	Acknowledgments	(iii)
	Preface	(iv)
Chapter 1	The background	P. 1
Chapter 2	Policy-making in the Conservative Party	P. 9
Chapter 3	The tri-partite system of secondary education under a Labour government, 1945-51	P. 19
Chapter 4	Tory revival, 1945-51	P. 26
Chapter 5	Secondary education: divergent views, 1951-54	P. 32
Chapter 6	1954-57 Educational expansion: limited experiments with comprehensive schools	P. 44
Chapter 7	Boyle concerned about eleven-plus selection	P. 57
Chapter 8	Conservatives seek parity of esteem for the secondary modern schools	P. 70
Chapter 9	The Conservatives allow local decision-making on comprehensive schools	P. 86
Chapter 10	1963: A turning point in Conservative policy	P. 100
Chapter 11	Comprehensive? Yes, but not the grammar schools	P. 125
Chapter 12	Tory dilemma: quality versus equality. A new role for the grammar schools	P. 132
Chapter 13	The Conservatives control I.L.E.A.: an experiment in co-existence	P. 158
Chapter 14	Internal strife: the Tory right-wing attack Heath and Boyle	P. 165
Chapter 15	1969: A swing to the right: Conservatives support parental choice and grammar schools	P. 186
Chapter 16	Conclusion	P. 211
	List of sources	P. 225
	Appendix	P. 232

Abbreviations

N.E.C.	National Executive Committee.
P.L.P.	Parliamentary Labour Party.
C.C.O.	Conservative Central Office.
C.R.D.	Conservative Research Department.
C.P.C.	Conservative Political Centre.
N.C.P.	Notes on Current Politics (published by C.R.D.).
C.A.C.E.	Central Advisory Council for Education (England).
T.E.S.	Times Educational Supplement.
A.E.C.	Association of Education Committees.

For parliamentary written answers the column reference in Hansard is printed in italics; in this thesis the column number is underlined, thus: Col. 175.

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PREFACE

As the title indicates, this thesis is a study of the development of a particular educational policy in a British political party. It is not meant to be a political treatise; rather, it is concerned with the relationship between politics and education, which in Britain are closely interwoven. This is a reality which educationists, educational administrators, and even teachers cannot ignore; it is in their best interest to understand this relationship and the problems that follow from it.

Comprehensive education is an example of a field in education which has been much influenced by politics. It is generally regarded (and with a great deal of justification) to have been the brain-child of the Labour Party. The development of the Labour Party's policy in this field has been thoroughly researched, and the results published. It might well be asked: where does the Conservative Party stand in this matter? Many would hold that the party did no more than react against Labour's policy, throughout.

Nevertheless, since Ministers of Education have access to a great deal of empirical information through the resources of the D.E.S. it seemed that it would be a worthwhile exercise to study the development of Conservative policy in this field. If to this was added what was already known about Labour policy then perhaps a fresh assessment could be made of the merits of comprehensive education and its limitations, in the light of experience gathered at the D.E.S., rather than from theory. The second possibility was that this study might throw light on the political pressures that sometimes influence the formulating of educational policies - comprehensive education being an obvious example. In the event, the research results exceeded expectations.

It is well known that the policy of the Labour government of 1945-51 and that of the Conservative opposition of that period both favoured the selective, tri-partite system of secondary education. But in 1951 the Conservatives came to power and Labour, now in opposition, reviewed their policy and made a complete change in favour of comprehensive education. It should be noted that Labour's new policy was based on political and social reasons, not educational ones: its aim was an egalitarian one, in keeping with the aspirations of socialism.

But the Conservatives made no change in their policy; the tri-partite system, in their view, best suited the needs of the children. The comprehensive system, on the other hand, with its egalitarian undertones was alien to Tory philosophy: Conservatives at that time were encouraging self-help and enterprise. So the policy of the new Conservative government was to strive to develop and make a success of the tri-partite system. Eccles and Hailsham however allowed limited experiments with comprehensive schools but only in accordance with educational criteria.

The educational position of the Conservative Party was substantially changed however in 1963 by Sir Edward Boyle, who led the party away from supporting selection at 11+. But Boyle acted out of a sense of justice towards the individual child - trying to redress the effect of poor environment on a child's development, and striving to give each child a chance to develop his talents to the full.

Meanwhile Labour continued to support comprehensive schools for egalitarian reasons, viewing the problem in terms of a class struggle. They were striving to use education to redress the imbalance between the working class and others. It has also been suggested that Labour, at this time, used only the egalitarian argument in the comprehensive debate because of the party's need for a widely accepted cause to serve as a

rallying point; fighting to win a class struggle was considered to be a powerful driving force: striving for justice for individuals was less so. Even when in 1963 Mr. Wilson revised Labour's motives for encouraging comprehensive education, he referred to the national economic advantage to be gained, but he continued to omit the case of educational justice for the individual.

Consequently, it was left to the Conservatives, led by Boyle, to continue the task of applying educational criteria to comprehensive education. On the one hand, it led them to abandon many of their cherished grammar schools in favour of comprehensives, but on the other hand they came to hold reservations on other points concerning comprehensive education. Some of these proved to be less fundamental and were later set aside, while others continued to cause anxiety.

In many places comprehensives worked well, in others less so. Sometimes there were certain inequalities that time would probably redress; for example a comprehensive developed from a grammar school usually had a better start than one which was formerly a secondary modern. But other weaknesses in the system were more fundamental: it was doubtful whether small comprehensives could really "stretch" a very able child, and neighbourhood comprehensives in a socially deprived area could certainly not do justice to an able child from a poor family.

In 1969 Boyle retired, and a political chance brought about a change in Conservative education policy, leading it back to the position held in 1962. But Boyle's efforts had not been entirely in vain. During the thirteen years that he was associated with the politics of education he did his best to impress upon politicians of all persuasions that individual justice to every child really mattered - from the most able, to the least; and, furthermore, that there were certain weaknesses in the comprehensive form of secondary education that were preventing it from becoming a sound educational system.

Chapter 1

The Background

It was nearly the second anniversary of the outbreak of war and Winston Churchill had been Prime Minister of the wartime coalition government for a little more than twelve months when in the summer of 1941 he summoned R. A. Butler and offered him the post of President of the Board of Education. Churchill began: "You have been in the House fifteen years and it is time you were promoted ... You've been in the government for the best part of that time and I now want you to go to the Board of Education. I think that you can make your mark there. You will be independent. Besides," he continued, with rising fervour, 'you will be in the war. You will move poor children from here to here,' and he lifted up and evacuated imaginary children from one side of his blotting pad to the other; 'this will be very difficult.'"(1)

Despite the remark that he thought Butler would make his mark in Education, Churchill doesn't appear to have expected much more of him than that he be a good administrator. Here was an able young politician who had served successfully in junior government posts for several years and the Prime Minister felt that Butler was now prepared to be in command of a small ministry of his own. The Board of Education seemed eminently suitable for this young intellectual.

But in Churchill's eyes the task facing the new minister was primarily an administrative one. Buildings and equipment were scarce: the army had requisitioned many school buildings and others had

(1) Lord Butler, "The Art of the Possible", Penguin Edition 1973, P. 91.

already been destroyed or damaged by bombing. No building⁽²⁾ had been done to replace or make good the fabric of schools since the outbreak of war, and only a minimum of money was available for equipment. Added to this were the enormous problems created by the evacuation of children from the towns and cities in anticipation of bombing by enemy aircraft. The majority left their homes to seek the safety of the countryside where they had to share the country schools on a rota basis, while the minority, who stayed at home, for a time received no education at all.⁽³⁾ The administrative problems facing the new minister were formidable, but Butler readily accepted the task and set to work.

It is surprising that Churchill, with his sense and knowledge of history, does not seem to have recalled the side-effects that previous wars had had on the nation: how the Boer War and the First World War had each produced a desire among the people for social reform.⁽⁴⁾ War had fostered a sense of national unity: people of different social backgrounds had worked together for a common purpose. There developed a desire to be rid of social inequality and injustices in the future, and after all the misery and hardship there was a wish for "a world fit for heroes to live in". The 1902 and 1918 Education Acts each came into being partly as a result of such wartime sentiments.⁽⁵⁾

Even if Churchill, in the dark days of 1941, was pre-occupied with other thoughts, Butler did not fail to notice that men's minds

(2) Butler, *Op. cit.*, P. 93.

(3) Butler, *Ibid.*

(4) David Wardle, "English Popular Education 1780-1970", P. 34.

(5) Wardle, *Op. cit.*, P. 33 and P. 35.

were working in the same way as in previous wars⁽⁶⁾: people from all walks of life were working side by side for a common cause, and, by comparison, class-divisions appeared less significant. Moreover, people began to learn how the other half lived, and evacuation of the children played an unexpected part in educating the average citizen in the condition of the underprivileged.⁽⁷⁾ There grew a demand that Britain after the war should be rid of such inequalities.

As a result of this popular feeling, a great deal of parliamentary time was spent during the war planning what came to be known as the Welfare State, including a Health Service, National Insurance, and Education. Butler welcomed this mood and he slowly won Churchill over to the idea of educational reform. Then in 1944 after several years of work and consultation the new education act received royal assent.

The 1944 Education Act was undoubtedly a very great act, which made possible "as important and substantial an advance in public education as this country has ever known".⁽⁸⁾ It took a close look at all aspects of elementary, secondary and post-school education; it re-structured the whole service and, in the process, it introduced new ideas. Among other things the central authority was re-organised and given a new mandate; voluntary schools were given a new lease of life; special, nursery and further education were planned; whilst elementary and secondary education now became successive phases under the names of primary and secondary education. This new structure of primary and secondary education is of particular concern to this study.

(6) Wardle, Op. cit., P. 35; Butler, Op. cit., P. 93.

(7) Wardle, Op. cit., P. 35.

(8) H. C. Dent, "The Education Act 1944", P. 1.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century education in England was of two types. One of these, elementary education, provided little more than the three R's, and it was considered appropriate for the majority of children. They received this in the all-age school where they began at the age of five and left at about the age of twelve. Secondary education, on the other hand, aimed to develop a child's talents and educate him, in a broader sense of the word, in order to equip him for a career in one of the professions. Secondary education could be obtained only in the grammar schools and the public schools, and substantial fees were required, with few scholarships available. One effect of this was that a wealthy family could obtain a good education for a child, whether or not he was talented; while only the most gifted child of a poor family had the opportunity of a good education; others, not quite so clever, had to be satisfied with an elementary school.

Balfour's Education Act of 1902 tried to increase the number of secondary school places, and made access to them more easy for the able working-class child. But no more than 25% of the available places were for winners of free scholarships: the remainder went to those who could afford to pay fees. In 1922 the Labour Party declared its policy for education in a document "Secondary Education for All", written by R. H. Tawney.⁽⁹⁾ The Labour Party believed that the elementary school system was quite inadequate to provide an education for any child over the age of eleven years. Instead of a small number of the most able children transferring from elementary to secondary schools at the age of eleven, all children should transfer.

(9) Cf. Michael Parkinson, "The Labour Party and the Organisation of Secondary Education, 1918-65", Pp. 14-17.

The academic children should be given places in grammar schools and the remainder provided for in a new type of secondary school which would offer courses suited to the children's abilities, with buildings, equipment and staff comparable to those of the grammar schools. Only thus could an adequate education be provided for all children.

A similar policy was advocated by the report of the Consultative Committee in 1926 - the Hadow Report - entitled "The Education of the Adolescent".⁽¹⁰⁾ This recommended that for all children there should be a break in education at about eleven years of age. At that age all should proceed to some form or other of secondary school and remain at least until the age of fifteen. Acknowledging (as did Tawney) that a grammar school education was suitable for only a minority, the Hadow Committee recommended different kinds of secondary school. Grammar schools would provide the academic courses, and they coined the name "modern school" for a new type that would provide the more practical courses. This sort of school already existed on a small scale in the selective and non-selective central schools. The report stressed that there should be parity of conditions, of buildings and equipment, and of standards of staffing among the different types of secondary school.

To some extent the Hadow Committee had been influenced by the work of the educational psychologists. Since the beginning of the century these had been experimenting with methods of measuring intelligence - in France Binet worked with sub-normal children, while in the United States the tests were being used to assess army recruits. Very soon the psychologists were regarding these tests

(10) Cf. J. Stuart Maclure, "Educational Documents: England and Wales, 1816-1967", P. 179 et seq.

as suitable for assessing the educational needs of ordinary school-children, and were grouping them accordingly.⁽¹¹⁾ In England Spearman, Thomson and Burt were the leading exponents. By 1934 Cyril Burt was asserting that intelligence is an innate quality, not an acquired one, and that it is general in application, not specific. "Of all our mental qualities" he wrote "it is the most far-reaching; fortunately it can be measured with accuracy and ease."⁽¹²⁾ This theory held that each child was born with a fixed amount of intelligence and that by the age of eleven this intelligence could be accurately measured. Intelligence tests could therefore be used to determine what kind of secondary education should be given to any particular child.

The Hadow Report of 1926 had been dependant to some extent upon the theories of the psychologists; the Spens Report⁽¹³⁾, published in 1938, was completely dominated by them. The Consultative Committee accepted the current consensus of opinion: "We were informed that, with few exceptions, it is possible at a very early age to predict with some degree of accuracy the ultimate level of a child's intellectual powers".⁽¹⁴⁾ Moreover, they expressed the view that children's varying capacities required types of education varying in certain important respects.⁽¹⁵⁾ So much so, that the Committee recommended that a third type of secondary school should be established - the technical school - to fill the gap between the grammar and modern schools. The technical school was "to provide

(11) K. Lovell, "Educational Psychology and Children", Chapter 3. D. Rubinstein and B. Simon, "The Evolution of the Comprehensive School", Pp. 11-14.

(12) Rubinstein and Simon, Op. cit., P. 12.

(13) Cf. J. Stuart Maclure, Op. cit., P. 193 et seq.

(14) Cf. J. Stuart Maclure, Op. cit., P. 195.

(15) Cf. J. Stuart Maclure, Ibid.

a good intellectual discipline", and in addition the training ought "to have a technical value in relation not to one particular occupation but to a group of occupations".⁽¹⁶⁾

The Committee was obviously aware of the social dangers that might follow from segregating children into different schools according to ability. It referred to the multilateral school - the notion of trying to provide under one roof for children of all abilities - but came to the conclusion that the problems posed by this were too large to be overcome. Because of the over-riding need to provide for the varying abilities of the children, the Committee expressed a strong preference for the tri-partite solution, laying great stress on parity of conditions among the three types of secondary school so as to achieve parity of esteem, thereby avoiding the social dangers.

The Norwood Report, of 1943⁽¹⁷⁾, was whole-heartedly tri-partite in its ideas on the structure of secondary education. In considerable detail it described the three types of child, and the three types of school to meet their needs: grammar school for the child who will be interested in learning for its own sake, and who will be able to grasp an abstract argument; technical school to prepare boys and girls for certain crafts and trades, and modern schools for those who can deal with concrete things rather than with ideas.

This report was published while the preparatory work on the 1944 Education Act was in progress. Both the Spens and Norwood Reports were the subject of some criticism for the support they gave to the

(16) Cf. J. Stuart Maclure, Op. cit., P. 196.

(17) Cf. J. Stuart Maclure, Op. cit., P. 200 et seq.

tri-partite idea, and the segregation that it involved.⁽¹⁸⁾ It was no surprise therefore that the 1944 Education Act left open the question as to how secondary education should be structured. Section 7 of that act⁽¹⁹⁾ in effect gave the force of law to the recommendations of the Hadow Report that public education should be organised in progressive stages, secondary following primary at about the age of eleven-plus, and that secondary education be available for every child. But section 8 of the act went on to say that there shall be "such variety of instruction and training as may be desirable in view of their different ages, abilities and aptitudes". How this was to be achieved - under one roof or in different schools - was not determined. The scene was thus set for the great comprehensive school debate. The Labour Party's policies and actions have been studied by Michael Parkinson in "The Labour Party and the Organisation of Secondary Education, 1918-65". The following is an attempt to document and analyse the Conservative Party's policy and actions in this matter.

(18) Rubinstein and Simon, *Op. cit.*, P. 18 and P. 29.

(19) H. C. Dent, *Op. cit.*, Pp. 12-13.

Chapter 2Policy-making in the Conservative Party

Before tracing the development of secondary education after the 1944 Education Act it is important to examine the methods whereby the policies of the Conservative Party are formed. The best study of this is Robert McKenzie's classic: "British Political Parties". McKenzie draws on the Maxwell Fyfe Report of 1949 for an official version of the structure and machinery of the Conservative Party. This was a far-reaching reform of the party, made while it was in opposition after the 1945 election defeat.

McKenzie begins by distinguishing between principles, policy and programme.⁽¹⁾ The principles of the party he says are those laid down by Disraeli in his great Chrystal Palace speech in 1872: to maintain the institutions of the country; to uphold the Empire of England; and the elevation of the condition of the people. No doubt the second of these became irrelevant after the 1950's despite Lord Salisbury's rear-guard action against Macmillan's and Iain Macleod's colonial policies.⁽²⁾ But at the time of the Maxwell Fyfe Report it seemed as immutable as the other two. Indeed, hadn't Enoch Powell gone into politics after the war in order to uphold this very principle?⁽³⁾

The principles of the party, then, are derived from Disraeli. Then there comes policy. This "relates Conservative principles to the national and international problems of the day".⁽⁴⁾ Finally

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- (1) Robert McKenzie, "British Political Parties", 2nd (Revised) Edition, P. 63.
 - (2) Nigel Fisher, "Iain Macleod", Chapters 8-10.
 - (3) Andrew Roth, "Enoch Powell", Chapter 3.
 - (4) McKenzie, Ibid.

there is the programme which is described as "the specific plans for the application of policy".⁽⁵⁾ The final decision in formulating policy and programme rests with the leader of the party. The party machinery provides the means whereby ideas and opinions from the members of the party are brought to the attention of the leader. But in making his decisions on policy and programme the leader of the party is well advised to make sure that what he chooses has the support of the members of the party. He has been appointed leader for an indefinite period because he has the support of the majority of the party. If he ceases to enjoy that support they will choose a new leader. So his choice in policy matters is limited in this way.

This method of policy-making in the Conservative Party is quite different from that laid down by the constitution of the Labour Party for formulating its policy. The constitution directs that nothing shall be included in the party's programme (i.e. the equivalent of Conservative policy) unless it has been approved by at least a two-thirds majority at the annual conference. The National Executive Committee and the Parliamentary Labour Party must then jointly determine which items from the programme shall be included in the party's election manifesto (i.e. the equivalent of Conservative programme).⁽⁶⁾ The reason for the difference is historical.

As Ivor Bulmer-Thomas puts it, there were leaders before parties, and parties before conferences.⁽⁷⁾ Early parliaments consisted of leaders supported by groups of M.P.'s with common views.⁽⁸⁾ The leader

(5) McKenzie, Op. cit., P. 64.

(6) McKenzie, Op. cit., P. 486.

(7) Ivor Bulmer-Thomas, "How Conservative Policy is Formed", Political Quarterly, 1953, Vol. 24, Pp. 190-203.

(8) Ivor Bulmer-Thomas, Ibid. McKenzie, Op. cit., Chapter 1.

often had to make snap decisions, but if possible he consulted the M.P.'s who supported him. Prior to 1832 and the great Reform Bill the leaders had merely to win the support of the wealthy people who controlled the elections. But the Reform Bill began the long process of expanding the electorate from less than half a million people then, to about 35 millions today. Moreover the rich no longer controlled the electors. So the two main parties - Conservative and Liberal - were obliged to establish nationwide organisations in an attempt to win the support of the electors. After the Tory-sponsored Reform Bill of 1867 there was founded the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations, which is the national organisation of the Conservative Party. As the name indicates, it is a grouping of local associations, and their role continues to be the political education of the members, and the winning of votes. After a time an annual conference was established. This in turn served the purpose of being both an act of solidarity and a vote of confidence in the leader. The role of the National Union was, and is, to organise the party throughout the country to support the party in parliament.

In the nineteenth century two attempts were made to win for party members effective control of policy-making: one was Joseph Chamberlain's attempt in 1877 to introduce his Birmingham caucus plan to establish democratic control of the Liberal Party: the other was Lord Randolph Churchill's attempt in 1883 to democratise the machinery of the Conservative Party during the struggle for the succession after the death of Disraeli.⁽⁹⁾ Neither attempt succeeded. In the Conservative Party the National Union's role in policy-making remained no more than an advisory one. To this day the leader's authority in

(9) McKenzie, Op. cit., Pp. 6-8.

policy-making remains supreme.

In contrast, the Labour Party developed at the very end of the nineteenth century out of the mass movements for political and social reform - Chartism, the Anti-Corn Law League, the early trade unions and the Co-operative Societies. In the year 1900 the Labour Party was formed out of a grouping of trade unions and socialist societies. They were seeking parliamentary representation and they intended to control it. However, as early as 1907 the N.E.C. proposed, and the annual conference of the Labour Party was persuaded to support, a motion "that resolutions instructing the Parliamentary Party as to their action in the House of Commons be taken as the opinions of the conference, on the understanding that the time and method of giving effect to these instructions be left to the party in the House, in conjunction with the National Executive".⁽¹⁰⁾ On the strength of this decision, not to mention sheer necessity, the P.L.P. and successive Labour Governments gradually established for themselves a de facto autonomy⁽¹¹⁾, although there was recrimination from the annual conference whenever their respective policies diverged. Due to the fact that most of the time the same group of leaders held the most influential positions in both the P.L.P. and the party organisation in general, the policies of the P.L.P. and of the annual conference diverged only rarely. Thus credence continues to be given to the belief that decisions of the annual conference are absolutely supreme. On the other hand, although the P.L.P. and Labour Governments are in fact autonomous, the power of the leader in policy-making is not stressed to anything like the same degree as in the Conservative Party.

(10) McKenzie, Op. cit., P. 394.

(11) McKenzie, Op. cit., P. 485 and Chapter 7.

The Maxwell Fyfe Committee expressed the traditional view of the role of the leader in Conservative policy-making in the phrase that he remains "the main fountain and interpreter of policy".⁽¹²⁾ He is expected to consult the party members, but the ultimate responsibility is his. It is interesting to explore how real this power is. As has already been said, there is only one absolute curb on the Conservative leader's personal freedom in this matter: he needs to retain the support of the party members who made him leader. Otherwise they will choose a new leader. So a leader with new ideas is faced with the continuous task of re-educating his followers in these ideas and winning their support. In a small way we shall discover examples of this kind of struggling within the party as we make our way through the development of educational policy in the party. But history has given us two examples where Conservative leaders failed to keep the support of the rank and file and paid the penalty for it. In 1911 A. J. Balfour resigned the leadership of the party when he realised that he had lost the confidence of the party over his handling of the Liberal bill to reform the House of Lords.⁽¹³⁾ Again in 1922 the leader resigned. This time it was Austen Chamberlain. He favoured going to election as a coalition government and indeed he envisaged a permanent coalition of the Conservative and Liberal Parties. However, Conservative M.P.'s at a meeting in the Carlton Club voted against continuing the coalition under Lloyd-George, so Chamberlain resigned.

In many cases the leader of the party appears to have delegated his power of policy-making to a minister or spokesman (in opposition) for a particular subject. Obviously the leader cannot be equally

(12) McKenzie, Op. cit., P. 63, quoting Maxwell Fyfe Report.

(13) McKenzie, Op. cit., Pp. 68-83.

interested or informed on every aspect of government. There seems to be evidence that the leader has sometimes left the minister to take the lead in policy-making in his field. Education is one example of this. Lord Butler has described Churchill's interest in education as "slight, intermittent and decidedly idiosyncratic".⁽¹⁴⁾ But clearly Churchill gave Butler plenty of freedom in introducing liberal ideas into the politics of education. Lord Boyle agrees, too, that although Mr. Heath does take a real interest in education he nevertheless gave Lord Boyle considerable freedom in formulating policy and introducing liberal ideas.⁽¹⁵⁾

In this event, where policy has originated from the minister or spokesman, even if the leader has given clear support for it, the attack from dissidents within the party is usually directed against the minister or spokesman rather than the leader, and the dissidents would normally hope that by bringing about the resignation or removal of the minister or spokesman then the offending policy would be dropped. We will see an example of such an attack on Sir Edward Boyle during the late 1960's, and a similar attack was that of Lord Salisbury on Iain Macleod for his colonial policies of 1959-61. Salisbury's "too clever by half" attack was certainly damaging to Macleod but did not lead to Macmillan dropping the policy, which had his entire support.⁽¹⁶⁾

During the period from the end of the war until 1970 there have been two major efforts to revise the policy of the Conservative Party.

(14) Lord Butler, "Art of the Possible", Penguin Edition, 1973, P. 109.

(15) Discussion between the author and Lord Boyle of Handsworth, at Leeds on 21st January, 1974.

(16) Fisher, Op. cit., Chapter 9.

Each came after an election defeat: in 1945 and in 1964. These are the times when the party members are disillusioned and are seeking the cause of the defeat. Policy, naturally, is a major suspect. On each of these occasions the process of revising the policy was made to look as democratic as possible, within the constitution. Discussion documents were circulated throughout the organisation of the National Union, and special committees were established to examine each topic. Only then did the leader study everything and make his decisions.

But policy-making is a continuous process, though the process is not on such a large scale as the two examples just given. To cope with the routine needs of policy-making the party has permanent machinery consisting of groups and committees who have the job of advising the leader. At the parliamentary level there are the Cabinet or Shadow Cabinet, the functional or parliamentary committees of the party, and the Private Members' or 1922 Committee.⁽¹⁷⁾ The Cabinet or the so-called Shadow Cabinet (if in opposition) is made up of the most senior ministers or spokesmen, at the leader's choice, and is probably the committee which is most involved in advising the leader on current issues. The functional committees are open to all back-benchers who are interested in a particular subject. That on education is known as the Conservative Parliamentary Education Committee and it serves as a forum for back-bench opinion on this subject. The third parliamentary channel of communication is the Private Members' or 1922 Committee. This originated from that historic meeting at the Carlton Club which brought about the resignation of Austen Chamberlain. The 1922 Committee has from that time been the official organ of Conservative parliamentary back-bench opinion on all subjects, and is

(17) McKenzie, Op. cit., Pp. 55-68.

a useful guide for the leader as to the mood of his parliamentary members.

Within the National Union there are also a number of committees and groups⁽¹⁸⁾ which can express opinions on policy, though always bearing in mind that this is not their principal role. The National Union has executive committees at various levels and it also has committees for different subjects which express views on policy. The Conservative teachers' association, now known as the Conservative National Advisory Committee on Education, is one of these, though it is not as influential as its title might suggest. The Central Council is the governing body of the National Union. The Central Council meets once a year, and if it does feel strongly on a particular issue it can be influential. However it hasn't been prominent for many years, not since the India debate in 1934 and the Irish question in 1921. The Annual Conference of the National Union, however, attracts by far the most public attention. It is attended by over 3,000 of the most active of the party members. Its views are not necessarily those of the majority of the party, but no matter: the purpose is clear. It is an act of solidarity and of loyalty to the party and its leader. Occasionally a small group takes the opportunity to express its dissatisfaction, and occasionally a motion is defeated, but rarely is policy affected very much by the deliberations of the conference. The only notable example since the war when the conference has exerted a direct influence was at the 1950 conference.⁽¹⁹⁾ Members were talking about the need for an ambitious and bold programme of house-building. One speaker proposed a target of 300,000 new houses a year.

(18) McKenzie, Op. cit., P. 185 et seq.

(19) McKenzie, Op. cit., P. 197; Butler, Op. cit., Pp. 156-7.

200,000 would have been realistic. But delegates enthusiastically called for 300,000. Woolton, the chairman, under pressure, had to accept the figure, and it was written into the following year's manifesto by Churchill. But this was a rare example of the annual conference exerting any real influence.

There remain two groups which are influential in long-term policy-making. One is the Advisory Committee for Policy.⁽²⁰⁾ This draws its members from both the parliamentary party and from the National Union, and it is one of the most important committees in the party. It gives advice directly to the leader, and its chairman and vice-chairman are appointed by him. Butler was chairman from 1946 until 1964, when Heath took over, with Boyle as vice-chairman from 1965. Membership of this committee is much sought after. The other group is the Conservative Research Department.⁽²¹⁾ This is for the party in opposition what the civil service is to the party in power - a body of technical advisors. It was established in its present form immediately after the war. The chairman is always the same as that of the Advisory Committee for Policy in order to ensure close co-operation, and of course he is the personal nominee of the leader. It began by attracting many able men into its ranks, some of whom subsequently became ministers, including Macleod, Maudling and Powell.⁽²²⁾ The C.R.D. continues on the whole to maintain a high professional standard.

(20) McKenzie, *Op. cit.*, P. 211; D. Hennessy, "The Communication of Conservative Policy 1957-59", *Political Quarterly*, 1961, Vol. 32, Pp. 246-8; "Programme of Proceedings", (the programmes of Conservative Annual Conferences).

(21) McKenzie, *Op. cit.*, P. 62, P. 212, P. 284 et seq.

(22) Fisher, *Op. cit.*, Chapter 3.

Finally, in the process of policy-making, a mention must be made of one or two pressure groups⁽²³⁾ within the party which tend to exert some influence. The Bow Group has for many years produced pamphlets written by private members of the party, to express their views and stimulate discussion. It has a liberal, progressive image and is meant to have something of an intellectual appeal. The quality varies.

Another ginger-group which flourished for a time was the One Nation group. It appeared first in 1950 with a publication of that name. The authors were the cream of the very able 1950 class of new Conservative M.P.'s. The nine members included Heath, Maude, Carr, Macleod and Powell. Butler wrote the foreword. They were not a homogeneous group except in the limited field that they were considering, namely, social services. So while their joint influence may be doubted they certainly were a stimulus to the party at a time when the post-war policy revision was beginning to appear very traditional, and when consensus of policy between Labour and the Conservatives was developing into Butskellism. But more of that later.

(23) Julian Critchley, "The Intellectuals", Political Quarterly, 1961, Vol. 32, Pp. 267-74.

Chapter 3The Tri-partite System of Secondary Education
Under a Labour Government, 1945-51

On 26th July 1945 Mr. Clement Attlee accepted the Queen's invitation to form a government.⁽¹⁾ It was the first Labour government in Britain to have an overall majority in the Commons, and it came to power with a decisive programme; its mandate was clear, and it lost no time in beginning its task. The plans had long been laid, perhaps too long. They dated back to the 1920's and 1930's when socialism was identifying its principles and determining a programme to implement them. By the 1950's some of the ideals might be seen to be rather naive, but now was time for action. 1946 saw the nationalisation of the Bank of England, Coal production, and Civil Aviation. The following year it was the turn of Electricity, and Road and Rail Transport together with the Inland Waterways. By 1948 the plans for a Welfare State began to materialise with the passing of the National Health Act which included health, unemployment, retirement and widow's benefits. This was followed by National Assistance (1948) and Legal Aid (1950), and finally Iron and Steel was nationalised in 1951.

The programme for education, however, was not so clear and, before long, government and party were in conflict. Miss Ellen Wilkinson was Attlee's choice in 1945 for Minister of Education. Her general policy in matters of secondary education was to ensure that able working-class children were given a good grammar school education and that other forms of secondary education should be developed to suit the needs of the remainder.

(1) The facts in this paragraph are listed in David Butler and Jennie Freeman, "British Political Facts 1900-1967", 2nd Edition, 1968.

The 1944 Education Act had avoided the issue as to whether secondary education should be by the tri-partite system or multilateral, merely saying that each child should be educated "according to age, aptitude and ability", (Section 8). Although the 1943 White Paper⁽²⁾, which preceded the act, and the act itself did not rule out some experiment with multilateral schools, the weight of educational and political opinion at the time clearly thought in terms of the tri-partite system.⁽³⁾ The 1944 act is often thought of as Butler's act, but it should be remembered that it was the product of a coalition government and that a Labour member, J. Chuter-Ede, was Butler's deputy. Indeed the Labour party's view of the act was that it enshrined the policies to which Labour had committed itself in Tawney's book "Secondary Education for All" in 1922, and that included the tri-partite system. In 1922 and in 1944 Labour regarded the great enemy to be fee-paying and public schools, rather than grammar schools.⁽⁴⁾ They saw the grammar school (provided that it was free) as the stepping stone to success for the clever working-class child. It is true that in the years immediately before the war there had been murmurings within the Labour party in favour of multilateral schools, to avoid the divisiveness of selection⁽⁵⁾, and in August 1944 the Labour-controlled L.C.C. had declared itself in favour of multilateral schools.⁽⁶⁾ But the weight of educational and political opinion was against these murmurings: the grammar schools were seen as an essential part of the educational system of the country.

(2) White Paper, "Educational Reconstruction", Cmd. 6458, July 1943.

(3) This point is discussed by Lord Boyle in his article "The Politics of Secondary Re-organisation" in Leeds University's Journal of Educational Administration and History", June 1972, P. 28.

(4) Boyle, Ibid., P. 29.

(5) Michael Parkinson, "The Labour Party and the Organisation of Secondary Education 1918-65", Pp. 31-32.

(6) David Rubinstein and Brian Simon, "The Evolution of the Comprehensive School 1926-66", P. 32.

Ellen Wilkinson's first move in this matter was to issue Circular 73 in December 1945. This stated that in the light of the existing lay-out of schools, L.E.A.'s should at the outset think in terms of the three types of secondary school⁽⁷⁾, but it adds that it is not contemplated that this separate classification of schools will be irrevocable. It goes on to suggest that 25-30% of secondary school places should be grammar or technical.⁽⁸⁾

The minister also gave clear support to the Ministry of Education's pamphlet No. 1, entitled "The Nation's Schools" which had been published a few months earlier by the Conservative caretaker government. "The Nation's Schools" supported the tri-partite system though it agreed to some experiment with multilateral schools. Miss Wilkinson realised the danger of divisiveness and hoped to overcome it by establishing parity of esteem through equal conditions. This was acceptable enough to many Labour party members but where she did lay herself open to criticism was when she supported "The Nation's Schools" in its reasoning about the number of grammar school places required. It argued that the pre-war number of grammar school places would meet, or more than meet, the requirements after the war (this despite the fact that fees were now abolished in maintained schools and that consequently grammar school places were now open to all able working-class children). The reason given was that many grammar school children before the war were being offered an education beyond their capacity, on the evidence that 25% of them left before the age of sixteen, and 40% of school leavers left without taking the School Certificate.⁽⁹⁾

(7) Rubinstein and Simon, Op. cit., P. 35.

(8) H. C. Dent, "The Education Act 1944", P. 91.

(9) Parkinson, Op. cit., Pp. 38-39.

The minister's support for this pamphlet aroused criticism within the Labour Party and this came to a head at Labour's annual conference in 1946. The attack was two-fold. They attacked the minister because she would not recommend more grammar school places, and they attacked her because she favoured the tri-partite system rather than the multilateral one. In doing so, as Parkinson points out, they revealed a degree of confusion in their ideas, that was to persist in the party, both in and out of parliament, for the remainder of this government. Ellen Wilkinson argued her case before the assembled delegates, but in vain. The resolution went against her; but it made no difference. Within days she was defending her policy in a speech to the Association of Education Committees.⁽¹⁰⁾ She remained convinced to the end that the tri-partite system was the right one, and after her death in 1947 George Tomlinson continued with the same policy.

Shortly after he took office Mr. Tomlinson published a pamphlet, "The New Secondary Education", (Educational Pamphlet No. 9). It was essentially a defence of the tri-partite system, using the theories of the Norwood Committee which stated that three types of school are required corresponding to the three types of child.⁽¹¹⁾ He followed this with a Ministry of Education Circular 144, on 16th June 1947, entitled "Organisation of Secondary Education". This circular made reference to the fact that Pamphlet No. 9 had expressed the minister's views on the purposes and methods of the new secondary education. However, since some authorities in their development plans were choosing a system other than tri-partite the circular was providing some definitions, principles and comments. It defines a multilateral school

(10) Parkinson, Op. cit., Pp. 39-41.

(11) Parkinson, Op. cit., P. 42.
Rubinstein and Simon, Op. cit., P. 36.

as "one which is intended to cater for all the secondary education of all the children in a given area and includes all three elements in clearly defined sides". The definition of a comprehensive school is the same as that, but without an organisation in three sides. If these definitions had been accepted by the protagonists much argument could have been avoided in the coming years. But even the definitions were to be disputed or ignored.

The circular also discussed the size of different types of schools. For both multilateral and comprehensive schools it laid down that the normal minimum size should be 10 or 11 form entry, i.e. 1500 to 1700 pupils. This was calculated by the need for a school to have at least two streams of grammar pupils and two streams of technical ones. In practice the technical pupils were not usually distinct from grammar school ones, so as the years went by it was found that two streams of pupils capable of following an academic course could be found in a six to eight form entry comprehensive school. So the huge numbers were seen to be unnecessary. However, from the time that the circular was issued, the large size that it recommended was used as ammunition in the attack on comprehensive schools.

By 1947 the grammar school teachers led by Eric James, High Master of Manchester Grammar School, were beginning to realise that they were in danger. Parity of esteem for secondary modern schools could only mean loss of prestige for grammar schools⁽¹²⁾, and the more perceptive of the teachers would have seen that the advent of the comprehensive school could mean the end for the grammar school. It was along these lines that Tomlinson argued when he expressed his views in favour of the tri-partite system.

(12) Rubinstein and Simon, Op. cit., Pp. 36-38.

In 1948 and 1949 the minister refused to give approval to several proposals for comprehensive schools, including the Middlesex one. This was appan for a fully comprehensive system. He did, however, give approval to several proposals for individual comprehensive schools.⁽¹³⁾ It seems that in making these decisions the minister was guided by a policy of safeguarding existing grammar schools.

In contrast the annual conferences of the Labour Party continued year by year to condemn their Minister of Education because he continued to support the tri-partite system and discourage multilateral schools, and because he continued to ignore their resolutions. The conflict continued until the Labour government came to an end in 1951.

Parkinson makes three suggestions⁽¹⁴⁾ as to the reasons for the conflict between Labour ministers and the party. First, there appears to have been confusion among party members as to the meaning of the phrase "secondary education for all". After all, the meaning of secondary education had been changed by the 1944 Act, and some probably thought the phrase meant grammar school education for all. Secondly, the ministers were clearly still convinced that the theory of the pre-war educational psychologists was correct, when they claimed that they could un-erringly choose the children suited to a grammar school education. Thirdly, Parkinson suggests that the ministers were very much influenced by administrative considerations: multilaterals and comprehensives would be uncomfortably large; the tri-partite structure was now well established in terms of separate buildings; and going comprehensive would seriously encroach upon building resources which

(13) Rubinstein and Simon, Op. cit., Pp. 39-40.

(14) Parkinson, Op. cit., Pp. 47-53.

were urgently needed for other purposes. In the event, it was only when Labour was freed from administrative responsibilities that it resolved its confusion in the matter of multilateral or comprehensive education.

Chapter 4Tory Revival 1945-51

By the end of the Second World War the state of the Conservative Party was far from sound; so much so that in July 1945 the Labour Party won the General Election with a staggering majority of 146 seats. A future leader of the Conservatives, Harold Macmillan, later commented:⁽¹⁾ "It was clear to an unbiased observer that it was not Churchill who had brought the Conservative Party so low. On the contrary it was the recent history of the party, with its pre-war record of unemployment and its failure to preserve the peace." R. A. Butler, another prominent member of the party, wrote:⁽²⁾ "The overwhelming electoral defeat of 1945 shook the Conservative Party out of its lethargy, and impelled it to re-think its philosophy and re-form its ranks with a thoroughness unmatched for a century." Butler believed that the party had been defeated because of three things: party organisation was totally inadequate due to neglect during the war; policy was not properly worked out or propagated; and Labour had an excellent propaganda machine. Macmillan stresses that the party at that time was in need of a reform of policy and a new image. Speaking of the need to reform their policy he said that there were some, however, who thought it was merely a matter of waiting for the swing of the pendulum. "These views found advocates" he wrote⁽³⁾ "among experienced politicians as well as among more old-fashioned members, strongly represented in the safe seats and still in the full vigour of their incapacity."

(1) Harold Macmillan, "Tides of Fortune", P. 286.

(2) Lord Butler, "The Art of the Possible", Penguin Edition, P. 128

(3) Macmillan, Op. cit., P. 299.

Party organisation was clearly inadequate and Churchill tackled this problem by appointing Lord Woolton to the key post of chairman of the party.⁽⁴⁾ Woolton had shown his great organising abilities as Minister of Food in the war-time government, and he now turned his attention with great effect to re-vitalising the party organisation. He was helped at a later stage by the Maxwell Fyfe Committee and between them they not only put new life into the associations, the National Union and the various committees, but they changed the image of the party and its M.P.'s. To a large extent this was achieved by reforming the process for choosing candidates for parliament and by making new rules for this. Wealth was now no longer an advantage, and a new type of candidate began to appear.

Pressure to reform the policy of the party soon began to mount.⁽⁵⁾ Churchill had in 1945 established an adequate machinery to do this. The Conservative Research Department had been revived and the Post-war Problems Committee had become the Advisory Committee on Policy and Political Education - later merely the Advisory Committee for Policy. Each was to be very influential in Tory policy-making and now Churchill appointed R. A. Butler to be chairman of both the C.R.D. and the Advisory Committee for Policy. He thereby became the architect of the new Conservative policy, and to some extent of the new image.

In 1946 Butler was calling for a positive alternative to socialism. Circumstances were changing and the party must move with the times. He called for "a total re-organisation of the social structure on which our party rested, an acceptance of redistributive taxation to reduce the extremes of poverty and wealth, and repudiation

(4) Macmillan, Op. cit., Pp. 292-297.

(5) A study of the Conservative reform of policy is to be found in J. D. Hoffman "The Conservative Party in Opposition 1945-51".

of 'laissez-faire' economics in favour of a system in which the State acted as a 'trustee for the interests of the community and a balancing force between different interests'.⁽⁶⁾ At the Conservative Annual Conference in October 1946 both the parliamentary party and the party associations pressed Churchill to set the process moving. At first, he eloquently evaded the issue, but eventually accepted the request and soon afterwards he appointed an Industrial Policy Committee, with Butler as chairman. Butler sought ideas and brought about consultation by the concept of the Two-Way Movement of Ideas. Soon after this, committees to study other topics were appointed and each produced a charter to be approved by the party and leader. The results of all of this work appeared in an official general policy statement in 1949 entitled "The Right Road for Britain". It undertook to maintain the social services that had by now been created - and maintain them on the principle of mutual aid to ensure a basic minimum standard of living. Essential economic controls would be retained but there must be ample opportunity for enterprise and initiative. "The Right Road for Britain" became the basis of the 1950 election manifesto and Butler summed up the policy then as "our policy of enterprise without selfishness".⁽⁷⁾ Thus, in five years, with Woolton looking to organisation and Butler to policy the party succeeded in changing its image and, as Nigel Fisher believes⁽⁸⁾, made itself attractive to the younger generation of candidates. He believes that the exceptional "Class of 1950", the host of bright, new Tory M.P.'s who entered parliament that year, were attracted by the new image that the Conservative Party had created for itself.

(6) Butler, Op. cit., Pp. 135-6.

(7) Butler, Op. cit., P. 155.

(8) Nigel Fisher, "Iain Macleod", Pp. 60-1.

Labour won the 1950 election with a majority of only five seats, so everyone knew that there must inevitably be another election fairly soon. The Conservatives felt that with another heave they would be home, and they continued to work with enthusiasm. Now they had acquired a great deal of new talent. In particular a small group of these new Tory M.P.'s set to work to make their own contribution, choosing a field that had been to a large extent neglected by the Conservatives - the social services. The aim of this pressure group was to evolve a Conservative policy for developing and financing social services. Six months after being elected to parliament they published their first and most important document. The name of the group and the title of their publication was One Nation⁽⁹⁾ (a romantic link with Disraeli) and the members were C. J. M. Alport, G. Longden, Robert Carr, Iain Macleod, R. Fort, Angus Maude, Edward Heath, Enoch Powell and J. Rodgers. They were men of varied outlook, as their subsequent careers indicate, but on this topic they were in agreement. They wanted the party to be more class-less in outlook - unlike either the old Tories or the present Socialists - and they felt that there was a lack of concern for people as individuals, and a lack of social purpose. There should be concern for the family rather than concern for classes or categories of people.⁽¹⁰⁾ Furthermore their view was that assistance should be given only to those in need. This would ensure that everyone reached a minimum standard of living, but all who wished to do so would be free to rise above that standard, by their own efforts, thereby creating self-respect through personal responsibility. We cannot afford to dispense assistance indiscriminately, nor can we even afford to fully finance all of the existing social

(9) "One Nation", Ed. by I. Macleod and A. Maude, October 1950

(10) Fisher, Op. cit., P. 78.

services, they said. Housing and education were the two sectors to which they would give priority. They pointed out that of the proposals of the 1944 Education Act the only one so far achieved was the raising of the school leaving age to 15. They listed many other of its important proposals. These were going to be costly, so education would have to cut out the frills, such as subsidies on school milk and meals, free nursery education, and progressive methods of education. The views of the One Nation group have slowly been absorbed into the Conservative policy, though only over a long period of time.

But where did education feature in official Conservative thinking during the years 1945-51? Hoffman states ⁽¹¹⁾ that at the end of the war the Conservatives held progressive views on two issues: Full employment and Education. In supporting Butler with his 1944 Education Act the Conservatives had agreed to secondary education for all; raising the school leaving age to 16; abolishing fees in maintained schools; and making provision for Further Education. All of this was certainly a major step towards giving adequate educational opportunities to the under-privileged. The Conservatives could be forgiven for thinking that there had been enough talking and now was the time to get on with the task of finding the money and making all this a reality. "The Right Road for Britain" (Pp. 43-44) stated the Conservative education policy as it was in 1949. It stressed the need to press on with implementing the provisions of the 1944 Act, both for the good of the individual child and for the good of the nation: the latter would also require more technical schools and colleges (a theme that recurred a few years later). The document promised priority for reducing the size of classes and for establishing secondary schools

(11) Hoffman, Op. cit., P. 33.

for everyone, separate from primary schools. It went on to cast grave doubts on the huge size of the multilateral schools, and concluded by stressing the need to maintain the high standards of the grammar schools.

Indeed, there was little to choose between the two parties at this time. Peter Wann⁽¹²⁾ describes 1944-48 as the Honeymoon Period as far as the educational aims of the two parties was concerned. Then between 1948 and 1950 a few differences arose, though none was of any substance. The real difference began during the parliamentary debate about comprehensive education.

Actually, the Commons on 24th July 1951 was debating the annual report of the Ministry of Education. Miss Florence Horsbrugh (the opposition Spokesman on Education) was the opening speaker⁽¹³⁾ and for the first time the Conservative view on secondary education and selection was officially stated in parliament. She began this part of her address by referring to the 11+ examination, and conceded that there might be a better method of selection. But as for selection itself she urged that the tri-partite system should be given a chance to succeed, and that experiments with comprehensive schools should be few. Speaking of a comprehensive school with 2200 pupils, she described it as "a monster of mass education". Finally Miss Horsbrugh suggests that the Labour Party's motives are not just educational ones but that the party is seeking a means of obtaining social equality. The Conservative attack at this time is clearly aimed, not at the Labour government (George Tomlinson is still defending the tri-partite system), but at elements in the Labour Party who are clearly going to be in the ascendancy in the party in the near future, and whose motives are social rather than educational.

(12) Peter Wann "The Collapse of Parliamentary Bi-partisanship in Education 1945-52" in *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, Vol. 3, No. 2, June 1971, P. 24.

(13) Vol. 491, H. C. Deb, 24/7/51, Cols 225, 227, 230.

Chapter 5Secondary Education: Divergent Views, 1951-54

After six years in the wilderness the Conservative Party found itself, in October 1951, back in power, but possessed of a majority of only 17 seats. Winston Churchill was Prime Minister once more and R. A. Butler, Minister of Education turned policy-maker, now found himself promoted. The new Conservative policies included the use of Keynesian ideas for managing the economy, and Butler was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer where he would have the opportunity to employ these methods. Within a fortnight he had initiated his policies with an increase in the Bank Rate. While in opposition Butler had been pre-occupied with higher things and Churchill had appointed Miss Florence Horsbrugh to be the Opposition Spokesman for Education. Now, with the Conservatives back in power, Churchill retained Miss Horsbrugh as Minister of Education.

The first half of the 1950's was notable for an increasing consensus between the policies of the two major parties. Neither party was completely united within itself. On the contrary, there were divergent views and even conflict. But eventually clear majority views emerged in each party, and these had much in common. In the Labour Party the conflict was between the followers of Aneurin Bevan and those of Attlee, Morrison and Gaitskell.⁽¹⁾ The Bevanites stood for the traditional views of socialism while the others were for adapting policy to meet modern conditions. When Attlee retired from the Commons in 1955 Gaitskell succeeded to the leadership of the party,

(1) David Thomson, "England in the Twentieth Century" (Pelican), P. 245.

beating Bevan by a clear majority. Gaitskell went on to unite the party, with a moderate policy.

In the Conservative Party also there was more than one view on policy. The One Nation group has already been mentioned, with its views on social services. But, in general, Butler was leading the way with his liberal views. Both in foreign affairs and in home policy he had much in common with Gaitskell. The Conservatives were certainly committed to the idea of a Managed Economy and they had clearly accepted a considerable degree of nationalisation and the notion of the Welfare State. Their subsequent expenditure on social services indicates their considerable commitment to them.⁽²⁾

With Butler, the left-wing Tory, and Gaitskell, the right-of-centre socialist, the consensus in policy came to be known as Butskellism. Thomson suggests⁽³⁾ that when the Conservatives returned to power in 1951 they appeared to support policies initiated by Labour, but in reality it was simply a matter of having too small a majority to attempt to repeal legislation initiated by the previous government. Samuel Beer explains the consensus in a rather different way.⁽⁴⁾ These policies were obviously formulated in the Conservative Party some time before the 1951 election with its slender majority for the Conservatives, and Beer suggests that they so desired to return to power that they moulded their policies to conform to the wishes and demands of the electors. Beer is certainly closer to the truth in that Butskellism was not invented merely as a result of the slender majority of the 1951 election but probably had its origin as far back as the Tory defeat in the 1945

(2) S. H. Beer, "The Future of British Politics - An American View" in *Political Quarterly*, 1955, Vol. 26, Pp. 33-43.

(3) Thomson, *Op. cit.*, P. 243.

(4) S. H. Beer, "Modern British Politics", P. 357.

election. But whether Beer does justice to Butler's motives remains a moot point.

This consensus between the liberal, open-minded policies of each party included their views on much of education, though not entirely on secondary education. Moreover, in the latter case the limited consensus did not survive long after the change of government. We have already seen how Ellen Wilkinson and George Tomlinson were both convinced that the tri-partite system was the right one and that comprehensive schools were a threat to the very existence of the grammar schools, with their high academic standards. The Conservative document "The Right Road for Britain", published in 1949, took a similar view, seeking to safeguard the grammar schools and suspicious of the huge size of the comprehensive schools, while the 1951 manifesto "Britain Strong and Free" said the same thing^(P. 28), though with the usual caution of a manifesto.

We have already noted that while Labour was in power between 1945 and 1951 conflict arose in the matter of secondary education between Labour's Annual Conference and the Parliamentary Labour Party. Moreover, because the latter were in power their idealism had to be tempered with practicality. Indeed, this may be the explanation of the conflict. But now they had lost power but were free once more to indulge in idealism without worrying too much about the practical problems involved. The party now experienced a lessening of conflict within the ranks, and took the opportunity to sort out some of the misunderstandings and contradictions that had bedevilled them in this subject during the past few years.

Just before the election a party committee had declared that "the tri-partite system does not provide equality of opportunity and is therefore out of tune with the needs of the day and the aspirations of

socialism".⁽⁵⁾ This was followed soon after the 1951 election by a Labour Party pamphlet "A Policy for Secondary Education".⁽⁶⁾ The pamphlet committed the party to a policy of comprehensive re-organisation. There does not appear to have been any opposition to it from within the party, and at Labour's Annual Conference in 1952 it was whole-heartedly approved. Moreover, Labour-controlled L.E.A.'s were asked to take note and implement the policy.

Miss Horsbrugh took over the post of Minister of Education at a time of financial stringency. Within weeks of becoming Chancellor of the Exchequer R. A. Butler had to begin cuts in public expenditure and, ironically, education was in the forefront of these. In December 1951 a three month moratorium was imposed on school building projects. It was ostensibly to ease the burden on the building industry, but it had economic advantages too. At the same time Miss Horsbrugh asked the L.E.A.'s to cut their current expenditure by 5%.⁽⁷⁾ At this time several other proposals were being suggested to curb educational expenditure, such as lowering the school leaving age and raising the age of admission. It is to her everlasting credit that Miss Horsbrugh, almost alone, fought successfully against the strong forces that favoured economies in education, which could have had disastrous effects on the very heart of the educational system.⁽⁸⁾

In her first twelve months in office Miss Horsbrugh was pre-occupied with fighting these economies, while planning to meet the needs for more school places, improving teachers' salaries and the need for extending facilities for higher technical studies. She said

(5) M. Parkinson, "The Labour Party and the Organisation of Secondary Education 1918-65", P. 47.

(6) Parkinson, Op. cit., P. 71 and P. 133.

(7) "Education in 1951", Ministry of Education Cmd. 8554, P. 2.

(8) "Education" Journal of A.E.C., 12th December, 1969, P. 1536.

little about comprehensive schools until the Conservative Party Conference at Scarborough in October 1952, but then she was quite clear. She wanted to use educational criteria, she said, for judging the merits of comprehensive schools. This was probably meant as a criticism of Labour, that their 1951 policy document used ideological and egalitarian criteria, not educational ones. She emphasised that "as yet, I see no educational advantage in the comprehensive schools that could possibly outweigh the obvious disadvantage in connexion with their enormous size, disadvantage to the children, to the teachers and the whole organisation".⁽⁹⁾ She stated that she was prepared to allow limited experiments by L.E.A.'s who wished to do so. However, not many favoured the comprehensive idea, she said, judging by the plans which had been submitted to the Ministry of Education. Only 11 L.E.A.'s out of 93, whose development plans had been approved before she took office, planned to be part or wholly comprehensive. Miss Horsbrugh recognised that selecting children for different types of school posed problems, but the problems should be tackled not evaded. Selection methods should be improved and more flexibility introduced into the system. There could be additional transfer at 13+ for those found suitable.

The Minister went on to tell her audience that there were already 25 new comprehensive schools which had been given their Section 13 approval by the previous administration and she had no legal power to interfere with these. (Section 13 of the 1944 Education Act lays down the provisions for establishing or discontinuing county or voluntary schools, and among other provisions the consent of the minister is required.) She would examine very carefully each case, she said, and

(9) Verbatim Report of Conservative Party Conference 1952, P. 95.

discuss each development plan with the local authority concerned, but, "I have not, and I shall not, approve any proposal that the secondary school provision of an area should take the form of comprehensive schools and nothing else".⁽¹⁰⁾ There followed a question in the Commons put by the Opposition and asking the Prime Minister whether the Minister of Education's speech at Scarborough represented the government's policy. The government spokesman replied that it did.⁽¹¹⁾

Another twelve months passed by with no more than an occasional reference in the Commons to comprehensive schools. In January 1953, in a written answer, Miss Horsbrugh confirmed her policy for comprehensive plans: she is prepared to sanction limited experiments with comprehensive schools, but would not allow secondary education to be exclusively comprehensive in any area.⁽¹²⁾ Then in July Miss Bacon tried to criticise her policy.⁽¹³⁾ Wasn't Miss Horsbrugh aware, she said, that 11+ selection causes greater dissatisfaction among parents than any other educational problem? The minister retorted that she understood they disliked comprehensive schools still more.

In October 1953 Miss Horsbrugh began her third and final year as Minister of Education. It began auspiciously when she was promoted to cabinet ranks - the first Conservative woman cabinet minister. But perhaps the promotion served to give her added status for the troubles that were obviously approaching, rather than being a measure of success.

Mid-October saw the Conservative Conference 1953 repeating the same arguments. The debate acknowledged the problems of the 11+ examination. "But to solve this problem", said Angus Maude, "it is

(10) Verbatim Report, P. 96.

(11) Vol. 505, H. C. Deb, 30/10/52, Col. 2084.

(12) Vol. 510, H. C. Deb, 22/1/53, Col. 45.

(13) Vol. 518, H. C. Deb, 30/7/53, Col. 1529.

not necessary to destroy the grammar schools, among the finest in the world."⁽¹⁴⁾ Miss Horsbrugh re-iterated her policy: let there be limited and careful experiments with comprehensive schools. But in the meantime we must not neglect to tackle the problems posed by the tri-partite system and the selection process, because this is relevant to 99% of the children.⁽¹⁵⁾ She called for flexibility in transfer of children between different types of schools, and she urged that secondary modern schools be given a chance to prove themselves.

Miss Horsbrugh's reputation for public relations was never high; some of her actions were ill-conceived, some were ill-timed⁽¹⁶⁾, and her next action could best be described as ill-judged. On 26th October 1953 she gave an address at the Caxton Hall to a conference of London Conservative Women. She said that she disapproved of very large schools, such as city comprehensives. She could see a case for comprehensive schools in country areas but the London County Council comprehensive schools were a different matter. She told her audience that there was nothing she could do at this late stage to prevent their being built, but she could intervene in the closing of existing schools, provided that any ten electors lodged objections. It is now up to you, she said.⁽¹⁷⁾

Her speech caused an uproar. "It was as near incitement as possible," wrote one commentator. Questions were asked in the House enquiring whether the speech represented government policy, and the Prime Minister replied⁽¹⁸⁾ somewhat tautologously that it was not an attack on the London School Plan or on comprehensives as such but on the large size proposed for some schools. The Opposition pointed out, however, that

(14) Verbatim Report of the Conservative Party Conference 1953, P. 37.

(15) Conservative Conference, Op. cit., Pp. 41-42.

(16) T.E.S., 22/10/54, P. 993, Editorial on the occasion of the resignation of Miss Horsbrugh.

(17) T.E.S., 30/10/53, P. 922.

(18) Vol. 520, H. C. Deb, 10/11/53, Col. 777-9.

the minister had no right to be inciting local groups to object to parts of a plan which had been approved by the Ministry at an earlier date. Under Section 13 she would be acting in a quasi-judicial role, and should therefore be neutral at all times. Miss Horsbrugh had clearly laid herself open to criticism, with her judgement perhaps obscured by the knowledge that in a few months time she would be called upon to make a decision which would certainly be controversial.

London's answer to the 1944 Education Act's demand for secondary education for all had been to devise a plan for comprehensive schools throughout London. In 1947 the London County Council adopted its London School Plan which was subsequently approved by the Minister of Education in February 1950. The plan envisaged⁽¹⁹⁾ that the L.C.C. would develop its own existing system of schools serving secondary pupils into 67 county comprehensive high schools. A number of voluntary grammar schools would have a 'county complement' school built nearby to form a multilateral unit; but some 500 free places would still be taken up each year by the L.C.C. in independent and direct grant grammar schools. It was obvious that it would be many years before 67 purpose-built comprehensive schools would be completed: a start would have to be made by improvising with existing buildings grouped in twos and threes. Meanwhile, the first purpose-built comprehensives were being planned and erected.

As 1953 drew to a close Miss Horsbrugh knew that the first of these - Kidbrooke, a comprehensive school for 2160 girls - was nearing completion. On her desk lay an application from the L.C.C. requesting her ministerial approval, under Section 13 of the 1944 Education Act,

(19) "Re-planning London Schools" by L.C.C., 1947, P. 25, P. 36, P. 37, P. 39 and P. 40.

for the opening of the new school and the closure of several smaller schools including Eltham Hill Girls' Grammar School. She had no intention of closing a grammar school and it was in her anxiety to be sure that she was given sufficient grounds to oppose the closure that she had given her ill-judged speech at Caxton Hall. Her audience needed no encouragement. In the event, numerous objections were lodged and on 2nd March 1954 the minister announced that she refused to agree to the closure of Eltham Hill School. She was strongly criticised at question time in the House on 13 May⁽²⁰⁾, but she gave an account of her motives. She claimed that she had considered the L.C.C.'s arguments for closure, the objections raised against the L.C.C., the L.C.C.'s observations on the objections, and finally Eltham Hill's reputation and success. "I considered it would not be educationally advantageous to close it", she said. Then the Opposition again accused her of encouraging objectors, and indicating that she would support objections. Miss Alice Bacon concluded the Opposition's attack by pointing out that it was impossible to run a grammar-school and a comprehensive side by side when the grammar-school is creaming off the able children from the comprehensive school. Miss Horsbrugh retorted that the L.C.C.'s London School Plan thought that it could be done. L.C.C. hadn't originally intended to close Eltham Hill, she said, (it was originally going to join in with a different comprehensive school) and when they proposed to do so they offered 80 grammar school places elsewhere to parents who wished to make use of them. But she hadn't answered Miss Bacon's objection, and Labour wasn't satisfied with her explanation of her decision, either.

The matter was raised again by means of an Adjournment Debate in

the House on 4th June.⁽²¹⁾ Referring to her Caxton Hall speech she said that she was entitled to explain to people their right to object under Section 13. Regarding Eltham Hill, she believed that she had made the right decision, and on educational grounds. She will allow L.E.A.'s to experiment with comprehensives but not a plan with comprehensives only. In London, she said, there are at present 17 comprehensive school projects, 10 of which do not include closing a grammar school. Kidbrooke was planned to be in this category, and this decision puts it there. She asserted that it is a fairer experiment to begin with the first form and not include those who have already been in a grammar school, but Miss Horsbrugh seems to have overlooked the fact that if the results were to be comparable the comprehensive would need to have an equal share of able children as the grammar school, that is, a normal, un-creamed, cross-section of ability. The opposition closed their attack on her by accusing her of interfering with the freedom of L.E.A.'s.

A month later, on 6th July, the minister re-opened the issue when she refused to allow the L.C.C. to enlarge the Bec Grammar School at Tooting and turn it into a comprehensive. Later in the month she defended her decision in an education debate in the Commons.⁽²²⁾ She was at pains to show that she was not against reasonable experiment with comprehensives: of 21 comprehensives currently building in England and Wales she had approved and programmed 18 of them, and of 12 building in London she had sanctioned 10. She explained that she had rejected the proposal for the Bec School because it was a good grammar school: "I want to see experiments all the time, but I will

(21) Vol. 528, H. C. Deb, 4/6/54, Col. 1599-1639, especially 1632-39.

(22) Vol. 531, H. C. Deb, 26/7/54, Col. 152-4.

not agree to destroy what has proved to be good."

Meanwhile, in two answers given on 20th May Miss Horsbrugh referred to her continuing preference for the selective system. She promised to encourage L.E.A.'s to provide sufficient grammar school places for the increasing number of children and to develop a variety of courses within schools of different types.⁽²³⁾ In the other answer she spoke of the need to increase facilities for G.C.E. work in secondary modern schools, and of the need to increase opportunities for transfer from one type of secondary school to another if it is in the interest of the child to do this.⁽²⁴⁾ The introduction of General Certificate of Education work into the secondary modern school was a new concept. In 1946 Circular 103 from the Ministry of Education had fixed 17 years as the minimum age for any but a grammar school pupil to take an external examination. This effectively and deliberately excluded secondary modern schools from entering candidates for the School Certificate examination or for the G.C.E., after it was established in 1951. But in 1952 Miss Horsbrugh herself was instrumental in changing this ruling. Her Circular 251, on 25th April 1952, laid down that flexibility would be allowed in determining the minimum age for entering for G.C.E. "O" level. This change very soon began to have, not a large, but a significant effect on the secondary modern schools. But that can be examined at a later stage.

It was in October 1954 that Florence Horsbrugh was succeeded as Minister of Education by David Eccles. She had held the post during a very difficult time of national economy and it is doubtful whether anyone could have grown in political stature in these circumstances. Her poor public relations ensured that she didn't. But at the time of

(23) Vol. 527, H. C. Deb, 20/5/54, Col. 131.

(24) Vol. 527, H. C. Deb, 20/5/54, Col. 2279.

her resignation, and subsequently, political observers noted how bravely and tenaciously she had fought to preserve the education system from the ravages of national economies. W. P. Alexander observed that "she has ensured that no permanent damage has been done to the service."⁽²⁵⁾ In 1969 her obituary⁽²⁶⁾ in "Education" said that "she bravely withstood these pressures and managed to preserve the essential structure of school education. Education thus stood on a firm foundation when Sir David Eccles took over on her resignation from office in 1954." As for her policy on comprehensive schools, she had once accused her opponents⁽²⁷⁾ of saying that if children in different parts of the country can't have equal chances of getting to a grammar school, then give nobody the chance - abolish them. Whether this was fair comment or not is open to question, but she certainly was at pains to avoid such a solution. Grammar schools should be preserved and developed for the able children, she believed, and an equally good, though different type of school should be developed to meet the requirements of the less able child. She was true to her convictions to the very end.

(25) "Education", 22/10/54, P. 609.

(26) "Education", 12/12/69, P. 1536.

(27) Verbatim Report of the Conservative Party Conference 1953, P. 41.

Chapter 61954-57: Educational Expansion: Limited Experiments with
Comprehensive Schools

On 18th October 1954 Churchill appointed Sir David Eccles Minister of Education with the express purpose of expanding education and increasing its importance in the mind of the government.⁽¹⁾ Since 1951 the Conservative Government's first priority had been house-building, in an attempt to reach the unrealistic target of 300,000 houses a year, a figure which had been arrived at by acclamation at the annual conference in 1950. The financial strain of achieving this, added to the already low state of the nation's finances, had led to the educational economies from which Florence Horsbrugh had suffered. Materially, all she had achieved was to build some extra schools and employ the extra teachers required by the increasing number of children: she could do nothing to improve the quality of education. But funds were now available, and Churchill chose Eccles to preside over the long-awaited expansion in the education service.⁽²⁾

When forming his 1951 government Churchill had appointed Eccles to the post of Minister of Works after being impressed by one of Eccles' constituency speeches during the election. It was the latter's good fortune that the Queen's Coronation occurred during his tenure of office and to the Minister of Works fell a major share of the organising of this great event. He used his considerable organising ability, flair and good taste very effectively; the result was an enhanced reputation and a knighthood as a K.C.V.O.

(1) Lord Boyle, interview at Leeds, 21/1/74, P. 2.

(2) Cf., "Education", 23/10/59, P. 639; Pp. 643-5 for details of Eccles' background.

Before entering politics in 1943 Eccles had already made a reputation (and a fortune) as a brilliant young businessman, and his future in politics now seemed secure. His talents also included an interest in rare books and paintings, and with his sense of good taste and his habit of being well-dressed the new Minister of Education presented quite a cultured image.

After the opening of the new session of parliament in November 1954, during the debate on the Queen's Address Sir David spoke about his policy.⁽³⁾ The general policy had been one of strict economy, he said, in which building had been restricted to basic needs, such as schools for new housing areas, and elsewhere to cope with the increasing number of pupils. But this task was in hand and it was now possible to look to improving the service. He then gave a list of his priorities. These included: secondary schools for urban areas; Hadow re-organisation in rural areas; grants for village halls, community centres and school playing fields; and a substantial expansion in technical education. For a start he announced a 5-year plan for rural areas to eliminate all-age schools, and an additional £2 $\frac{1}{2}$ million for technical education for the year 1955-56.

A few weeks later Sir David stated his policy on comprehensive schools⁽⁴⁾, when he told Miss Bacon that he would consider proposals to build comprehensive schools on their merits. And to Mr. Short's question about 11+ selection methods, the Minister said that that was an L.E.A. responsibility, and he would leave the L.E.A.'s to find the best method.⁽⁵⁾ But it seems that Eccles was aware of the problem and its political

(3) Vol. 535, H. C. Deb, 30/11/54, Col. 127 et seq.

(4) Vol. 535, H. C. Deb, 16/12/54, Col. 174.

(5) Vol. 535, H. C. Deb, 16/12/54, Col. 1952.

implications because he was reported to be warning his party's back-benchers at this time that the 11+ was beginning to cause very hard feelings.⁽⁶⁾

December 1954 saw the publication of a report of the Central Advisory Council for Education which was to have considerable significance. The report "Early Leaving"⁽⁷⁾ gave the first official recognition of the influence of social class background on a child's school performance. The committee commissioned its own survey, but the report itself was a faithful reflexion of the work of educational sociologists and psychologists who had been examining this problem for some time. The latter now held the view that given two children who had equal measured ability at a given age but were of different social backgrounds, then the child with the better background stood a much better chance of subsequently improving his performance than did the child from a socially poorer background. This was because of the encouragement that the child would receive from better-class parents and because of the general stimulus that the child would receive from the socially better environment. These discoveries, backed up by this and later official reports, were to have a considerable influence on the educational thinking of the next decade.

During the next few months David Eccles spoke on several occasions about his aspirations in the field of secondary education. At a speech in London to the Associations of Assistant Masters and Mistresses on 30th December he spoke strongly in defence of the grammar schools.⁽⁸⁾ He and his colleagues, he said, would "never agree to the assassination

(6) Lord Boyle, "The Politics of Secondary School Re-organisation" in Leeds University's Journal of Educational Administration and History, P. 30.

(7) J. Stuart Maclure, "Educational Documents 1816-1967", P. 233.

(8) T.E.S., 7/1/55, P. 14.

of the grammar schools". He added that they had made an irreplaceable contribution to the character, reputation and strength of the country, and he wanted this to continue. It was a choice between justice and equality, and the government preferred justice. In the Commons on 24th February 1955 he gave an assurance⁽⁹⁾ to Miss Bacon that he would encourage the L.E.A.'s to make sure that an adequate percentage of secondary school places would be grammar school ones. Nor did he miss the opportunity of chiding her for simultaneously supporting both grammar schools and comprehensives. But it wasn't altogether a fair accusation. She was a supporter of comprehensive schools, but in the case of areas that in fact operated a selective system it was only right that she should press for some sort of a balance between the number of places available in grammar schools and the number available in secondary moderns.

Meanwhile, on 11th February the Minister had addressed⁽¹⁰⁾ the parent-teacher association of Chippenham Secondary Modern School. In a speech given over entirely to secondary education he spoke with great optimism about the development of secondary modern schools. He felt that in time they would offer such a good alternative to the grammar school that 11+ selection would be very much influenced by parental choice.

On 5th April 1955 Sir Winston Churchill, amid disquiet in the party, decided to step down from the premiership, and on the following day Anthony Eden, long regarded as the heir-apparent, took over the leadership of the government. He made the minimum of changes, merely

(9) Vol. 537, H. C. Deb, 24/2/55, Col. 188.

(10) T.E.S., 18/2/55, P. 176.

appointing Harold Macmillan to the vacancy at the Foreign Office.

Eccles continued at the education ministry.

A week later the minister made a speech to the N.U.T. Conference at Scarborough⁽¹¹⁾, which was important in that it developed the ideas he had been speaking about during the preceding months, and laid down some clear guide-lines. He told delegates that the alternative to a grammar school was no longer the "definitely inferior" thing that it used to be. A wide range of secondary schools were being made available so that parents, with the advice of the teachers, would be able to decide which school was likely to suit their child best. He then gave some guide-lines. There should be between 15% and 25% of selective places (i.e. grammar plus technical school places); he would approve the building of new technical schools where there was a good case for it; secondary modern schools would be encouraged to develop extended courses and to strengthen their links with grammar and technical schools and with Further Education; transfers should be used more freely to put right 11+ errors; and finally he said that comprehensive schools would be approved as experiments when all the conditions were favourable, and no damage was done to any existing school.

Sir David stated that where a rural area or a new housing estate needed both a new grammar school and several new secondary modern schools, if local opinion really wanted a comprehensive school, he would agree. But he went on to speak about the problems of comprehensives: purpose-built ones that were too big with 2000 pupils; improvised ones, which were too small, in converted buildings; and finally split-site comprehensives. "From all points of view this is the worst of solutions," he said.

(11) Cf., Notes on Current Politics, 13/2/56, Pp. 16-18. The speech was made on 13/4/55.

A fortnight later, in the Commons, he returned to the theme of secondary education.⁽¹²⁾ He now developed further a new idea that he had introduced at Scarborough. He referred to the link between grammar schools and universities, to the one being a preparatory school for the other. Eccles was afraid of any large scale development of either of them as this, he believed, would change their character and ruin them. But he obviously realised that there needed to be an expansion of opportunity both at secondary and at tertiary level of education so he conceived the idea of secondary modern schools, of high standard and esteem, leading on to expanded opportunities in higher technical education. Parallel with the grammar school/university structure there should be "many strong and various streams leading from the secondary modern schools to the technical colleges, technological institutes, and all other forms of higher education".

Sir David also on this occasion developed his ideas on parental choice. His hope was that in areas of large population there would be several secondary moderns, each specialising in a different area of the curriculum. Parents would have a choice between these schools. In the matter of a choice between secondary moderns and grammar schools he was the supreme optimist. "As the secondary modern develops", he said, "I am convinced, from what I have seen myself already, that some parents will prefer it to any grammar school to which their children might go."

In May 1955 Anthony Eden judged that the time was opportune to call a general election and try to increase his party's majority. Amid the flurry of election speeches, Sir David Eccles wrote about the Conservative Party's education programme.⁽¹³⁾ He made the point that

(12) Vol. 540, H. C. Deb, 26/4/55, Col. 789-792.

(13) T.E.S., No. 2086, 13/5/55, P. 481.

during the past few years educational policy had been concerned with satisfying the basic need of providing new school places, and the parties were in agreement about that. Now that this need was almost fulfilled, however, the parties were going their own more separate ways. Labour, he said, was in favour of comprehensive schools. Then he stated the Conservative principles and programme. The guiding principles were two-fold: first, to develop the technical skills of the nation, and secondly, to preserve and develop the common stock of moral principles. The programme listed such aims as: reducing the size of classes, re-organising all-age schools in urban as well as in rural areas, replacing slum schools, and finally, expanding technical education. He criticised Labour for what he described as the impractical idea of trying to impose a comprehensive school system on an existing system already equipped with rather small buildings. Eccles concluded with an appeal to make all secondary schools matter, and referred again to the link between secondary modern schools and a technical career.

The Conservatives won the general election with an increased overall majority of 58 seats. Once again Eden decided to make no changes in the composition of his government, at least not until the end of the year. So Eccles continued as Minister of Education. He had by then made his position clear in the matter of comprehensive schools and from this time forward he said little further about the subject, merely acting according to his principles, as occasion arose. Sir David had made clear in his Scarborough speech to the N.U.T. in April that he was strongly opposed to comprehensive schools split between two or more buildings, and he had expressed his opposition again during the election campaign. Now he rejects the comprehensive plan for Manchester, Withenshawe. He did this, he said,⁽¹⁴⁾ because it was intended that

(14) Vol. 545, H. C. Deb, 27/10/55, Col. 358-9 and 84-6.

the school would be on split-sites with the two buildings a half a mile apart. The conditions, he felt, would not be suitable for fair experiment.

Since becoming minister Eccles had been considering the need for a substantial extension in technical education. There was little more he could do about secondary education except to wait for the secondary modern schools to grow in stature and esteem, and he now appears to have turned his attention almost exclusively to the problems of technical education, but without neglecting the notion of the link between secondary modern schools and technical education. 14th July saw the establishment of the National Council for awards in Technology, (later to be the C.N.A.A.), awards which were meant to be comparable to university first degrees.⁽¹⁵⁾ In that same month the House of Commons debated the national shortage of scientific and technical manpower.⁽¹⁶⁾ During the remainder of that year preparations were being made for a major development in technical education because it was considered that, even if the universities were expanded, they would be unable to meet the nation's needs in this matter.⁽¹⁷⁾

Early the next year the Prime Minister spoke up to support the ideas of his education minister. Sir Anthony Eden, speaking to Bradford Conservatives on 18th January 1956 said that⁽¹⁸⁾ a white paper was to be published before the end of February in which the Minister of Education would describe the details of a five year plan for developing technical education. Eden took up the theme that Eccles had been developing since his speech at Scarborough in April 1955 - the link between the secondary

(15) "Education in 1955", Cmd. 9785, P. 3.

(16) "Education in 1955", Cmd. 9785, Pp. 44-45.

(17) Ibid.

(18) T.E.S., 20/1/56, P. 68

modern school and technical education. The Prime Minister's way of putting it was that we are aiming "to build a high road that runs from school to the highest positions in industry and commerce; to make it possible for every boy and girl to join that road at the point that suits them best and to travel on it as far as their talents and perseverance would take them". Eccles' policy was clearly the government's policy.

Late in February Eccles produced his white paper⁽¹⁹⁾ in which he described his aim to increase the output of the advanced courses at technical colleges from 9000 students each year to 15000. £70 million were to be spent on this over five years. In June the Ministry of Education's Circular 305 described the future organisation of technical colleges. There were four grades: local, area, regional, and colleges of advanced technology - the latter instituted to do work which the universities should have done, had they been willing.⁽²⁰⁾

During 1956 there were brought out into the open some of the philosophies that lay behind the parties' policies on secondary education. Early in the year Labour published a policy statement called "Towards Equality".⁽²¹⁾ It was a direct attack on the social inequalities that allegedly follow from the tri-partite system. The document claimed that the grammar schools were the gateway to professional positions and that the secondary modern schools led merely to working class jobs. Sir David Eccles, in a debate in the Commons⁽²²⁾, criticised the Opposition for describing secondary moderns as working class schools. He accused them of merely perpetuating class division. He went on to

(19) 29/2/56, White Paper on Technical Education (Cmd. 9703), Referred to in "Education in 1956" (Cmd.223), P. 2.

(20) Cf. Noel Annan, "The Reform of Higher Education" in Political Quarterly, 1967, Vol. 38, Pp. 234-52.

(21) M. Parkinson, "The Labour Party and the Organisation of Secondary Education, 1918-65", P. 78.

(22) Vol. 557, H. C. Deb, 25/7/56, Col. 449.

explain that children's needs vary, and that a grammar school education is suitable for only a proportion of the children. The secondary modern school provides an education suited to the others. Mr. Vosper, the Parliamentary Secretary, looking back to a speech he'd made in June⁽²³⁾, made a plea^(Col. 538) to give secondary moderns a chance. They've done very well in ten years, he said, despite financial crisis and the population explosion. But they need encouragement and positive help if they are to continue to develop. Sir David concluded by pointing out that the Opposition were "more concerned with social policy than with education".^(Col. 453) And indeed they were. At this point there is no evidence that they had considered comprehensive education as anything other than a useful tool to achieve a political or social purpose.

Even Anthony Crosland, who later became a very successful Minister of Education under Harold Wilson, gives this same constricted attention to the objects and aims of the comprehensive school. Crosland in 1956 published "The Future of Socialism"⁽²⁴⁾, a study of socialist philosophy. "The main prop of traditional egalitarianism", he writes⁽²⁵⁾, "has been knocked away by its own success." Extremes of wealth are very rare now, and he doesn't think that any further re-distribution of wealth can make much difference, economically. But further re-distribution would have social advantages. Resentment and discontent arise now not so much out of concern for wages or conditions, but with points of prestige and power - with a desire for an enhanced social status and dignity, a wish to be consulted. Those in certain social classes are conscious of their inferior life-style and of the fact that it arises from an educational handicap.⁽²⁶⁾ This then was how Anthony Crosland assessed the present-day

(23) Vol. 554, H. C. Deb, 12/6/56, Col. 540.

(24) C. A. R. Crosland, "The Future of Socialism", 1956.

(25) Crosland, Op. cit., P. 190.

(26) Crosland, Op. cit., Pp. 196-200.

aims of socialism, and in his chapter "The Influence of Education" he went on to examine the role of education in achieving them. After discussing how he would limit the advantage enjoyed by the public schools (by removing their tax privileges) he goes on to discuss the role of the comprehensive school. He sees it as an instrument of social engineering. "The object of having comprehensive schools is not to abolish all competition and all envy ... but to avoid the extreme social division caused by physical segregation into schools of widely divergent status, and the extreme social resentment caused by failure to win a grammar school place, when this is thought to be the only avenue to a middle-class occupation."⁽²⁷⁾

As if to remind everyone that they, too, had a contribution to make, but that no one was listening much, the educational sociologists came on the scene in 1956 with the publication of a report "Social Class and Educational Opportunity" by Floud, Halsey and Martin.⁽²⁸⁾ It was a report on a survey that had recently been taken in two areas of England to examine the ways in which the current educational system affected the process of social selection. The report also hoped to throw light on the problems of providing equality of opportunity instead of social selection.

In the introduction the authors summarise the development of the present system of secondary education and refer to the work that sociologists and psychologists have already completed. Commenting on the findings of their latest research they wrote: "This picture of the position after a decade of 'secondary education for all' illustrates the cumulative effects not only of the distribution of opportunity at

(27) Crosland, Op. cit., P. 272.

(28) J. E. Floud (Ed.): A. H. Halsey: F. M. Martin, "Social Class and Educational Opportunity", 1956.

the moment of entry to the schools," (which they considered was unbiased) "but of a process of social selection going on within them. Working-class children tend to leave early rather than late, and are under-represented in the upper-forms of the schools."⁽²⁹⁾ The report concludes by identifying the many sectors of this field that still need to be investigated, but the message is clear: Sociologists and Psychologists feel that they now have a great deal of information which is relevant to the comprehensive school debate.

During the first year of Eccles' tenure of office the number of comprehensive schools in England and Wales increased from 16 to 31 and the number of pupils in them rose from 15,891 to 27,315.⁽³⁰⁾ The second year showed a similar increase. Some of these schools no doubt would be improvised, and comprehensive in little more than name, but not all. Furthermore, some in London were grammar schools turned comprehensive.⁽³¹⁾ During his term of office Eccles⁽³²⁾ gave his approval to seven proposals for comprehensive schools and rejected three, so it was clear that he was examining each case on its merits and exercising some flexibility. Lord Boyle asserts⁽³³⁾ that in the Ministry the problems of selection took new importance when Eccles became minister. He also reports⁽³⁴⁾ that just before Eccles left the Ministry he brought in Robin Pedley for a conference with his officials. Pedley was a leading exponent of comprehensive education, and author of a widely-read paper-back on the subject.

(29) Floud, *Op. cit.*, P. 27.

(30) Ministry of Education, "Education in 1955", Cmd. 9785, P. 107, "Education in 1956", Cmd. 223, P. 89.

(31) H. R. King, "The London School Plan", in "Forum for the discussion of new trends in education", Autumn 1958, No. 1, P. 8.

(32) Vol. 563, H. C. Deb, 24/1/57, Col. 363.

(33) Lord Boyle, "The Politics of Secondary School Re-organisation", *Supra*, P. 30.

(34) *Ibid*, also: R. Pedley, "The Comprehensive School", 1970 Edition, P. 52.

With this final act Eccles bowed out. 1956 had seen Egypt seize the Suez Canal, Israel invade Egypt some months later, and Britain and France invade the Canal Zone. A week after this invasion Sir Anthony Eden was forced by international pressures to halt the operation. The humiliation and recriminations that were subsequently heaped upon him, coupled with a break-down in health, led to his retirement on 9th January 1957. With this resignation, Sir David Eccles moved on from Education. The Times Educational Supplement wrote that⁽³⁵⁾ he was a good minister and gave more positive direction from the centre. "Education", it said "is now to the fore in the national struggle to keep afloat."

(35) T.E.S., 18/1/57, P. 45.

Chapter 7Boyle Concerned About Eleven-Plus Selection

On 13 January 1957 Harold Macmillan formed a government and ushered in a new era for Britain. He was to lead the government for six and a half years during which time he quietly but swiftly buried Suez and its aftermath, and carried on to create the image of a comfortably prosperous Britain. This image did not go unchallenged, but whether it was true or not he certainly gave positive and distinctive leadership to the country during years which saw considerable change in the institutions and character of the nation.

In his first government Macmillan appointed Lord Hailsham as Minister of Education and Sir Edward Boyle to be his Parliamentary Secretary. Both were new to the field of education, but were welcomed nonetheless. Lord Hailsham was an eminent barrister with a distinguished academic career and a reputation as a brilliant speaker.⁽¹⁾ Moreover, he could claim a connexion with the world of education through his grandfather, the founder of the Regent Street Polytechnic. While the press had little to say about the new minister, their account⁽²⁾ of his first engagement throws some light on his character. Sir David Eccles had consented to perform the opening ceremony of the Grey Court County Secondary School at Ham. On his appointment as minister Lord Hailsham agreed to fulfill the engagement despite a Cabinet meeting which would necessitate an early departure. After being accorded a warm welcome Lord Hailsham proceeded to make his speech which must have been well above the heads of the more youthful members of his audience. He stood there, a portly figure, with his hands on his hips peering down at the hall over spectacles perched on the end

(1) Education, 23/10/64, P. 688.

(2) T.E.S., 25/1/57, P. 94.

of his nose, and proceeded to give a study of the philosophy of education. He spoke about the Opportunity State which would do away with anything that could be called a proletariat. But opportunity to gain money, influence and power would not be enough, he said. Man needed an opportunity for service to others, and a chance to pursue perfection - perfection in seeking truth, beauty, utility, and love for others. These he believed made life worth living, and were the true ends of education. When Lord Hailsham had finished speaking he was presented with a huge, inscribed silver soup spoon. Beaming like a school boy, he asked for a school holiday and hurried off the platform to his waiting car. Too late, the chairman realised that the minister had forgotten to declare the school open; and a small beech tree stood forlornly in a hole in the garden waiting to be planted. But the minister had gone.

It summed him up quite well. He had thought out his educational principles thoroughly, but when it came to trying to apply the principles to the reality of life he wasn't really very practical. In the short time he stayed in the educational world he never seemed to get to grips with reality. Perhaps this was due to his short sojourn, or to the fact that he belonged to the Lords, not the Commons; or was it that he just wasn't of a practical turn of mind?

With the minister in the Lords it was essential to have a good parliamentary secretary because the entire task of expounding and defending the policies of the Ministry of Education in the Commons would fall to him. Macmillan's and Hailsham's choice was Sir Edward Boyle. Boyle at this time was only 33 years old, yet he had already held junior government posts for six years.⁽³⁾ He had been educated at Eton and was a scholar of Christ Church, Oxford after war-time service in the Foreign

(3) T.E.S., 25/1/57, P. 94, (sic).

Office. In the summer of 1948 he was elected President of the Oxford Union and in the same year unsuccessfully fought a by-election. But this intense pre-occupation with politics and debating played havoc with his studies and in 1949 he went down with only a Third, in Modern History.

His ability could not long be obscured by this lack of academic success, however, and in the following year, at the age of 27, he entered parliament as the Conservative member for the Handsworth division of Birmingham. One year later Churchill made him parliamentary private secretary to the under-secretary for Air, in 1952 P.P.S. to the parliamentary secretary to the Ministry of Defence, and in 1954 he became parliamentary secretary to the Ministry of Supply. In April 1955 he stepped up to the post of Economic Secretary to the Treasury working first under R. A. Butler as Chancellor, then from December 1955 under Harold Macmillan. During this latter period two facets of Boyle's political character made themselves obvious for the first but not the last time. One was his lack of doctrinal inhibitions. "This Macmillan-Boyle team at the Treasury was rather demonstrative about its lack of doctrinal inhibitions on matters like the re-imposition of building licensing, which filled many of the party faithful with almost religious horror. They were even it seems prepared to defy the party's strong feelings on the subject of income tax."⁽⁴⁾ The other facet of his character was Boyle's determination to act in accordance with what he felt to be right, irrespective of party policy or the consequences to himself. Consequently, when British and French troops landed in Egypt on 1st November 1956 Boyle resigned from his post of Economic Secretary and, in a letter to Anthony Eden, he said that as a minister he did not feel that he could honestly defend the government's recent policy over

(4) Andrew Sampson: "Macmillan", P. 113, (Pelican Books Edition), quoting Andrew Shonfield.

Suez. There were moves both within the party and in his constituency party to take him to task for this, but partly because he was not alone in his rebellion⁽⁵⁾, and partly because of his obvious sincerity these efforts came to nothing. Two months later it was clear that Macmillan felt he could over-look the matter as he turned to his former colleague at the Treasury and offered him this important position in Education. For this brilliant and already successful politician, still young in years and in looks, the stage was set for a further political career of almost 13 years. During this time he would spend 10 years in direct contact with the politics of education. Always the keen interest and concern were evident, and never was he without the two principles which we have already seen were part of his political make-up.

In his first speech as Prime Minister⁽⁶⁾ Mr. Macmillan spoke of the Conservative Party's concern for education - schools, universities and technical colleges. He spoke about the party's good record in financing such developments, of the importance of education for the future of the nation, and, in effect, he gave Education pride of place along with Power and Defence. But the Opposition's main concern was to discover the new minister's views on comprehensive education. At Question Time in the Commons on 24th January they launched into Sir Edward Boyle. After offering congratulations to the minister and his parliamentary secretary they expressed the hope that they would be more open and broadminded about comprehensive schools.⁽⁷⁾ Sir Edward assured them that "his noble friend would not approach this issue in a doctrinaire spirit".

(5) Cf. Robert J. Jackson, "Rebels and Whips", P. 147.

(6) Broadcast, 17/1/57, reported in N.C.P., 18/2/57, P. 14.

(7) Vol. 563, H. C. Deb, 24/1/57, Col. 363.

Then came a question about selection. Sir Edward answered this one⁽⁸⁾ by following the usual Conservative line of thought. "Selection at 11 years of age", he said, "is difficult only if it is thought of as finally determining educational opportunities." But he envisaged the use of late transfers, the developing of wide ranges of courses within the various secondary schools, and the strengthening of links between schools and further education. All of these would help to make 11+ selection less final. A few minutes later he was up again answering a question, this time on intelligence tests.⁽⁹⁾ It was suggested that educational psychologists were not in agreement about the value of such tests. An official enquiry was requested. But Boyle declined to set one up because the National Foundation for Educational Research was already engaged in examining the matter.

In February Lord Hailsham took an opportunity to express his views on the subject of comprehensive education and he came down strongly in favour of local freedom. At a Conservative party meeting at Blackheath he had been asked⁽¹⁰⁾ what would he do to free children from the tyranny of comprehensive schools. He replied that the decision lay with the L.E.A. He observed, however, that no comprehensive school was older than four years, whereas we had grammar schools that had stood the test of time. But he would uphold local freedom in this matter.

An interesting article appeared at this time in the T.E.S., shedding light on some of the problems facing the new comprehensive schools. It was entitled "London Comprehensives - Impressions of a parent".⁽¹¹⁾ The author praised the facilities in the large purpose-

(8) Vol. 563, H. C. Deb, 24/1/57, Col. 374-5.

(9) Vol. 563, H. C. Deb, 24/1/57, Col. 376-7.

(10) Times, 12/2/57, 3^c.

(11) T.E.S., 15/2/57, P. 205.

built comprehensive - provision which was generous because of the size - but noted the disadvantages that followed from the size. He remarked on the remoteness of the head-teacher: good deputies helped to compensate but there was still no clear cohesion between the various parts of the school. In the case quoted, the comprehensive school had started from scratch and had inherited no grammar school traditions. The parent described the school as lacking any tradition of application to work, or even regarding homework. The situation was not improved, he said, by the fact that most of the pupils were 11+ failures. Presumably this was due to the continuance of grammar schools alongside so-called comprehensives. The parent went on to discuss the influence of a less promising child on a more able one when the former leaves school early and is soon in possession of leisure and money. As a result the more able child tends to neglect homework and be dissatisfied with school. The article was sympathetic, but identified some formidable problems. Not all of these, however, could fairly be applied to all comprehensives. Some of the problems quoted were peculiar to the situation where grammar schools were creaming off a full quota of pupils from the other secondary schools which nevertheless were called comprehensive, as in London.

Early in March Lord Hailsham expounded his views on technical schools. Speaking at Brighton to the Association of Heads of Secondary Technical Schools, he said⁽¹²⁾ that his idea of technical schools is that they are not for children of second-rate ability, but for first-rate children wanting a different slant of education. In addition to giving a good grounding in technical subjects these schools ought to give a good coverage of the humanities, too, he said. In making this speech was the minister preparing to use technical schools to compensate for the

(12) T.E.S., 15/3/57, P. 333 and P. 352.

shortage of grammar school places in some areas? Or was it purely a coincidence that a month later during the education debate in the House Sir Edward Boyle was adding technical school places to grammar school places and declaring that the combined total should represent 15% to 25% of the total number of children?

But more to the point for us, Sir Edward in this debate⁽¹³⁾ discussed in some detail the problems attached to 11+ selection and frankly expressed concern about them. He began by agreeing with the Opposition that the present methods of selection were causing increasing anxieties in many quarters though, as far as accuracy was concerned, he believed that they were as accurate as could reasonably be expected. (The N.F.E.R. report would soon dispel this confidence.) The Parliamentary Secretary expressed concern at the influence that 11+ selection exercised over the curriculum of the primary schools, and moreover he was concerned about the very principle of selection: "I should be the last to wish to skate over the wider social implications and disadvantages of our present system." But having said that, he then looked at the other side of the question. Children vary in ability and capacity and if each is to be developed to the full it can only be by grouping them and teaching them in groups of similar capacity, he argued. Then he went on to repeat the standard list of problems that would arise from trying to make comprehensive schools out of the existing school buildings. He felt that there was more justification for establishing comprehensive schools in country districts or in areas of new housing, but elsewhere other remedies should be tried. The Opposition said that this part of Boyle's speech had less conviction - as though he were reciting someone else's views. However, the speech was important in as much as it was the first

(13) Vol. 568, H. C. Deb, 5/4/57, Col. 759 et seq.

indication that anyone in the Tory party was seriously considering the short-comings of the selective system. Boyle added that he hoped that the L.E.A.'s would be allowed to make the decisions - not the central authority, acting on doctrinaire grounds - and he assured the House "that my noble friend will consider proposals for comprehensive schools with an open mind and on their merits, though he will naturally wish to know the educational grounds on which the proposal is justified."

At this point, as if in answer to a Tory prayer, Leicestershire L.E.A. announced that it was introducing an experiment which would eliminate 11+ selection, retain intact the essential character and traditions of the grammar schools, and have the advantages of comprehensive education while avoiding large schools. The idea had already been expounded the previous year by Robin Pedley at his meeting with Eccles and his officials⁽¹⁴⁾ but now an L.E.A. with an imaginative chief officer was prepared to try it. Stewart Mason subsequently described the experiment in his book "The Leicestershire Experiment and Plan".⁽¹⁵⁾ The basic idea was that all pupils would transfer from the primary school at 11+ to a former secondary modern school, now to be a junior high school. After three years in this school all were given an opportunity to transfer to the senior high school (formerly the grammar school) provided that they agreed to stay for at least two years. If this undertaking was not given by the parents the child would complete his course at the junior high school. Coming at a time when selection was becoming an increasing problem, this plan raised considerable hopes. Of course it didn't solve the problem but postponed it to 14+. At that age all who wished to could transfer to the grammar school, but for talented children of poor parents there was still the problem - the

(14) R. Pedley, "The Comprehensive School", 1970 Edition, P. 52.

(15) Cf. C. Benn and B. Simon, "Half Way There", 2nd Edition, P. 194.

temptation to leave school early and have freedom, leisure and money.

Sir Edward Boyle was obviously interested and impressed by the idea. In a speech in Birmingham on 15th April 1957 he made reference to it, describing it as "an important new experiment".⁽¹⁶⁾ On many occasions after this he made reference to the Leicestershire plan as one which solved many of the problems of secondary education, while keeping the grammar schools essentially intact.

Besides this significant new development, 1957 saw the publication of two important pieces of the research which shed light on the system of selection for secondary education. "Secondary School Selection", edited by P. E. Vernon, was the work of a group of leading educational psychologists. In this book they traced the history of intelligence testing and reported on recent research into the validity of the methods used. Sir Cyril Burt and Professor Godfrey Thompson⁽¹⁷⁾ had, in the 1920's and 1930's, developed ideas for measuring intelligence and were convinced that a child's future intellectual powers could be accurately predicted at quite an early age. They devised intelligence tests to use with 11 year old children for the purpose of determining what kind of secondary education a child should be given. The 1926 Hadow Committee and the 1938 Spens Committee had been guided by the advice given by these and other psychologists of the time, and the committees recommended that there should be different types of secondary school to meet the different needs of the children. Then, in 1943, the Norwood Report declared that three distinct types of child could be discerned, and this gave further support to the notion of having three types of secondary school. "Secondary School Selection" now went on to show

(16) N.C.P., 3/3/58, P. 20.

(17) P. E. Vernon (Ed.), "Secondary School Selection", 1957, P. 23 et seq.

how the psychologists had come to revise their opinions. The notion of three distinct types of child had been disproved by Burt in 1943.⁽¹⁸⁾ In the decade after the war considerable research was undertaken to determine the influence of environment on the development of intelligence. This work showed that ability was only partly innate. The rest was acquired during childhood under the influence of environment and schooling.⁽¹⁹⁾ Consequently social class is a determining factor too. As for the tests themselves, pioneered by Burt and Thomson and later standardised by Moray House, these were further discredited in 1952 when it was seen to what extent coaching and practice could improve a child's performance in these tests.⁽²⁰⁾

The other important research in this field to be published in 1957 was a report on a large-scale investigation by the National Foundation for Educational Research into the accuracy of 11+ selection tests. The report stated that 12% of children were wrongly allocated as a result of these tests - 6% were sent to grammar schools who were not suitable for this type of education and another 6% of pupils were allocated to secondary modern schools who could have benefitted from a grammar school education.⁽²¹⁾ Far from being contradicted, this finding was supported by other research at that time.⁽²²⁾

After the publication of these reports in 1957 it must have been evident to anyone with an open mind that the original foundation of the tri-partite system was rapidly disintegrating; indeed it no longer existed. It could not now be claimed that a psychologist could accurately

(18) Op. cit., P. 39.

(19) Op. cit., Pp. 101-6.

(20) Op. cit., P. 33.

(21) Cf. D. Rubinstein and B. Simon, "The Evolution of the Comprehensive School, 1926-66", P. 66.

(22) Ibid.

predict a child's future ability because, first of all, that depended on the factor of environment, which could be manipulated, and, secondly, the intelligence tests were now seen to be 12% inaccurate. It was obvious that to implement the 1944 Act's requirement to give children a secondary education suited to their "different ages, abilities, and aptitudes" (Section 8) was not as simple a matter as it had first appeared to be. So, if the original foundation for the selective system was gone, either the system had to be replaced by such as the comprehensive system or a new foundation would have to be found. If the selection process could not predict a child's future performance, its supporters would have to be content to select according to the child's present performance, and any late developer who had been allocated to a secondary modern school would have to be offered courses there which would compare favourably with those offered by a grammar school. Only thus could there be anything approaching justice, or anything more than lip-service be paid to Section 8 of the 1944 Act. For many years yet to come Conservatives were to live in hope that the secondary modern schools would thus provide for the late developers and for those wrongly allocated to them, as well as provide an education properly suited to the needs of the remainder. But at this time there was little room for complacency in the matter.

The secondary modern schools were virtually a new creation after the war and their development had been much delayed due to capital resources being required first for replacing war-damaged schools, then for raising the school leaving age to fifteen, and only after that could secondary modern needs be considered. However many of them were now established and in purpose-built premises. But were they a success? Two speeches by the minister at this time are significant.

At the N.U.T. Annual Conference held at Margate in April 1957 Lord Hailsham said, among other things:⁽²³⁾ "Every child has a moral right to the educational environment which would give him the best chance to make the most of his congenital qualities." He added, "in particular, give me the buildings, the teachers and the equipment which will make the secondary modern schools what they were designed to be and what they must be made, and all the sting will be taken out of selection." The implication was very clear: secondary moderns hadn't yet been given the necessary resources, and as a result they had fallen far short of what they were intended to be.

Six months later, in a speech made to the party conference just after he had resigned from his post in order to become Conservative party chairman, Lord Hailsham⁽²⁴⁾ was even more frank about the failure to date of the secondary moderns. One of the main educational problems, he said, was that the system was bursting at the seams. With regard to secondary education he felt that some sort of selection was inevitable because of children's differing needs and abilities. The problem, he said, arises from the inequality of facilities offered after selection. There were inequalities between areas, but universally there was a need for better facilities in secondary moderns. He went on to speak about the courses available in these schools. Most were lacking in imagination and were still fettered by the limitations of the old elementary system.

In these two speeches Lord Hailsham was frankly confessing that the secondary modern schools had so far failed to match up to expectations, mainly due to lack of resources, but he was determined to make available the resources and thereby solve the selection problem. Sir Edward, however, did not see the problem in such simple terms. He was concerned

(23) T.E.S., 26/4/57, P. 566.

(24) T.E.S., 11/10/57, P. 1320; Times, 10/10/57, 6^c.

about the social problems caused by selection, but felt that the best way to minimise them was by seeking parity of esteem among all types of secondary school. But he subsequently wrote that parity of esteem for the secondary modern schools at this time had proved a delusion.⁽²⁵⁾

On this sombre note Lord Hailsham left education, though not for good. The A.E.C. journal "Education"⁽²⁶⁾ spoke of the great hopes that Hailsham had inspired and also about the decision to reform teacher training. It had seemed that the minister had what it takes to make education matter. It lamented his quick departure to become chairman of the Conservative party organisation.

(25) Lord Boyle, "The Politics of Secondary Re-organisation", article in the Leeds University's "Journal of Educational Administration and History", June 1972, P. 30.

(26) Education, 13/9/57, P. 311.

Chapter 8The Conservatives Seek Parity of Esteem for the
Secondary Modern Schools

To fill the post of Minister of Education Mr. Macmillan now turned to one of his colleagues of long experience: Geoffrey Lloyd. He was of the usual public school, Oxbridge background⁽¹⁾ and had been president of the Cambridge Union Society in 1924. Having entered politics, he rose rapidly and during the 1930's Lloyd held several junior government posts. He held several ministerial posts during the war, then in Churchill's 1951 government he was Minister of Fuel and Power. He was Minister of Education from October 1957 for two years.

Geoffrey Lloyd's only statement during the remaining months of 1957 on the subject of comprehensive education was at the Conservative Annual Conference at Brighton⁽²⁾ in October. "We would be fools", he said "if we did not carry out a certain degree of experiment with comprehensive schools, as long as it is directed to the educational value and to the future lives of the boys and girls affected." This could certainly not be called a concession to comprehensive supporters. On the contrary, it was a measure of what was to follow.

But if the Conservative Party had at this time nothing more than this to say about comprehensive schools the same could not be said about the Labour Party. Parkinson relates⁽³⁾ how there was constant discussion of the matter at a high level in the Labour Party. A significant development occurred in 1957 as a result of a public opinion poll, the

(1) Who's Who 1974.

(2) Times, 14/10/57, 6g.

(3) M. Parkinson, "The Labour Party and the Organisation of Secondary Education 1918-65", Pp. 80-82.

Abrams survey, commissioned by the party. This survey revealed two important facts.⁽⁴⁾ First, it showed that a large proportion of the population appeared to be ignorant as to what comprehensive education was all about, and secondly, only 10% of the poll thought that the selective system of education was socially undesirable. Yet, for ten years and more, the Labour Party had been seeking comprehensive education for egalitarian rather than educational reasons. During the latter part of the 1945-51 Labour government, the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party had criticised their Minister of Education, Mr. Tomlinson, because of his support for tri-partitism. In one of their statements in 1950 they said "the tri-partite system of education does not provide equality of opportunity and is therefore out of tune with the needs of the day and the aspirations of socialism."⁽⁵⁾ Or again in 1956 in their policy document, "Towards Equality", Labour's policy on comprehensive education still viewed tri-partitism from an egalitarian point of view and did not consider educational or economic advantages that might follow from a non-selective system.⁽⁶⁾ Parkinson, in discussing this feature of Labour's policy⁽⁷⁾, observes that the educational disadvantages of the tri-partite system were real enough but were seen in terms of injustices to individuals; the selection process was not able to cope with the task of accurately allocating children to a suitable type of education, and some children thereby suffered injustice. But he points out that political parties need greater motivation than this. So Labour had seized upon the idea of comprehensive education as a means of improving the lot of the working class as a whole. Thus education is seen as a means to an end, the end being a social or political aim.

(4) Op. cit., P. 81.

(5) Op. cit., P. 47.

(6) Op. cit., P. 78.

(7) Op. cit., P. 70.

But now after this public opinion poll in 1957 it becomes clear to Labour's policy-makers that the general public, though not very well informed about the issues, are nevertheless impressed more by the educational considerations than by egalitarian ones, with only 10% expressing the opinion that selection was socially undesirable.

It is clear also that^(8a) many of the L.E.A.'s who were Labour controlled were "strongly and sincerely opposed" to re-organisation. Their reasoning was quite simple, and was based on educational grounds. They recognised that the selective system produced some educational disadvantages and individual injustices, but the over-riding factor was that the grammar schools were providing an excellent education for the able children of the working classes, and comprehensives would be unlikely to maintain this high standard. The working classes could compete more successfully with the middle classes in a grammar school context than in a comprehensive one, from which the middle classes would probably opt out. To many Labour councillors this seemed good socialism.

Against this background of a general population, ignorant about the issues of comprehensive education, and both the general public and local Labour Party members quite satisfied with the tri-partite system, the party advisers came up with a two-fold recommendation.^(8b) First, there must be a sustained and intensive campaign to inform people about comprehensive education, and secondly the arguments used must be educational ones rather than doctrinaire, egalitarian ones. It must have been abundantly clear to these advisers that, as Parkinson points out, people cared about the educational aspects because these affected them and their children in a personal way. Gone were the days (if they

(8a) Op. cit., P. 82.

(8b) Op. cit., P. 81.

ever existed) when working men campaigned for better conditions with a sense of solidarity among the entire working-class. There certainly was no such solidarity now. 1957 was notable for a number of extensive strikes. In March both the Engineers' and the Shipyard Workers' Unions were on national strike. In July it was the turn of the provincial Busmen.⁽⁹⁾ If there was any solidarity to be found it was within individual unions, not between them. The pattern now was for one union to be vying with another for the betterment only of its own members. And this attitude tended to spread to the smallest units until there was a tendency, more than ever before, for each man to be concerned first about his own well-being. It is a common experience that when our present needs and desires are fulfilled we are seldom satisfied. So perhaps the developing prosperity of this era had some influence on people's attitudes. This was the beginning of Macmillan's "you've never had it so good" speeches.⁽¹⁰⁾ And they weren't merely a gimmick. The next two or three years were in fact years of considerable prosperity and affluence. So, whatever the causes, the fact was that people were concerned about the policies that impinged upon their own lives, and those of their children. They cared much less about political ideals. The advice, then, of the Labour Party's policy-makers was that the party should consider comprehensive education with this in mind; consider the educational implications, since these concerned individuals; and then try to persuade the general public, as well as the party members, that on educational grounds the advantage lay not with the tri-partite system, but with comprehensive education. And there was now considerable, solid, evidence to assist them in this task.

(9) D. Butler and J. Freeman, "British Political Facts", 1968.

(10) A. Sampson, "Macmillan", Pp. 159-163.
D. Thomson, "England in the 20th Century", (Pelican), Chap. 10, esp. Pp. 260-2.

Early in 1958 the policy of the new Minister and of his Parliamentary Secretary began to emerge. At Question Time in the House on 13th February⁽¹¹⁾ Sir Edward Boyle made it clear that he believed that "as our system of secondary education becomes better, selection must play a bigger part because children differ in their abilities and aptitudes", and he reminded members about the L.E.A.'s responsibility under Section 8 of the 1944 Act to provide for varying abilities and aptitudes. He had just rejected a request for a study into ways of abolishing selection. He agreed that there should be experiments to seek and evaluate alternatives, but plenty of these already existed.

Geoffrey Lloyd made his first major speech on secondary education on 20th March, in the Commons.⁽¹²⁾ His theme was concerned with developing the tri-partite system. He noted that the grammar schools had experienced a strong swing to scientific subjects and they would need to be adequately equipped to meet these requirements. Moreover, 100 new grammar schools, he said, had been built since the war and 80 more were being planned. He mentioned, also, the fact that children were now tending to stay longer at the grammar schools. Then the minister made a reference to technical schools, describing them as grammar schools in a modern idiom. Finally, he expressed satisfaction at the way secondary modern schools had taken root. There could be no doubt as to where Lloyd's sympathies lay. It certainly wasn't with comprehensives.

On that same day the Parliamentary Secretary⁽¹³⁾ said that it was generally agreed that there must be a substantial element of selection in secondary education but, he said, the government was far from

(11) Vol. 582, H. C. Deb, 13/2/58, Col. 552.

(12) T.E.S., 28/3/58, P. 503.

(13) T.E.S., 28/3/58, P. 504.

complacent about the existing methods. The Ministry was aware that many L.E.A.'s were experimenting with re-organisation plans and it was willing to encourage these experiments provided they were educationally sound, and that caution was exercised in relation to good existing grammar schools.

A week later Boyle was on his feet in the House again, this time answering a request for research into the experience of comprehensive schools.⁽¹⁴⁾ There was no point in setting up a committee for this purpose, he replied, because there wasn't enough experience to analyse. Of 44 existing comprehensive schools only 11 had been in existence for as long as five years. But he added that the Ministry was keen to hear reports of experiments with "selective" and non-selective streams within the same school".

In May of that year Mr. Short appears to have nettled Sir Edward somewhat. The N.F.E.R. survey in 1957 had claimed that 12% of children selected for secondary schools were being wrongly placed. Mr. Short⁽¹⁵⁾ asked Sir Edward that the 78,000 children who had been wrongly placed in 1955 should be re-selected. It was an awkward question to answer, but Sir Edward said that the answer lay in both the grammar schools and the secondary moderns catering adequately for all these borderline cases by providing courses of similar standard. There was little else that Boyle could offer in reply to such a question. But would his solution really work?

A great deal of the summer of 1958 was given over to reactions to a Labour educational policy statement "Learning to Live". The minister

(14) Vol. 585, H. C. Deb, 27/3/58, Col. 586.

(15) Vol. 588, H. C. Deb, 22/5/58, Col. 1493-4.

in a speech to Conservative teachers at Caxton Hall on 14th June,⁽¹⁶⁾ spoke of the rumours that were circulating. It was expected that Labour's plan would be for a nation-wide compulsory system of comprehensive education. Mr. Lloyd agreed that some experiment was necessary, but that there just wasn't enough experience with comprehensives to justify anything more than limited use. He referred to the fact that British education had evolved over the years, and should be allowed to go on adapting itself to the changing times.

"Learning to Live" was the result of three years of intensive work by a study group of Labour policy-makers.⁽¹⁷⁾ They had considered the contents of the Abrams survey: the question of forcing L.E.A.'s to go comprehensive, by legislation; the ideal type of comprehensive (in view of the existing and sometimes unsuitable buildings); the problem of good, existing grammar schools; and the fact that many prominent Labour men - Hugh Gaitskell, Roy Jenkins and Emmanuel Shinwell among them - and many Labour L.E.A.'s sympathised with some or all of the above problems. It was no surprise that "Learning to Live" turned out to be a moderate compromise. It refrained from attacking tri-partitism and compromised on, or ignored other issues, recognising that many of the above mentioned problems seemed insuperable. But, nevertheless, the document concluded by stating that a future Labour government would expect all L.E.A.'s to accept comprehensive education in principle, and draw up development plans.

This document gave the minister material for several speeches during the summer of 1958. On 15th June⁽¹⁸⁾ he traced the usual

(16) Conservative Central Office Press Release (C.C.O.) No. 6450, 14/6/58, P. 1.

(17) M. Parkinson, "The Labour Party and the Organisation of Secondary Education 1918-65", Pp. 82 et seq.

(18) T.E.S., 20/6/58, P. 1039.

arguments in favour of the existing system and the unknown value of comprehensives. "It is quite wrong", he said, "to think in terms of disrupting the whole educational system for political ends." "It is a political plan which is not even based on genuine educational considerations", he concluded. Again, at the A.E.C. Conference at Scarborough⁽¹⁹⁾ he savagely attacked Labour's proposals: they were ill-considered experiments "based on out-of-date ideas about class war" which were "fossilised and irrelevant to any properly conceived social and educational policy". At a Conservative fete in Birmingham⁽²⁰⁾ on 5th July, Mr. Lloyd pressed home his point. British grammar schools were famous throughout the world, while the American experiment with comprehensives was far from satisfactory, he said. Then he accused Labour of equating quality education with social privilege, as in the 19th century - a system which was now gone.

Even the Prime Minister, Mr. Macmillan,⁽²¹⁾ had a word to say on the matter. At University College, London on 23rd October he spoke about good technical education being based on good general education. Hugh Gaitskell had recently used the phrase "grammar school education for all" which in a comprehensive context could only mean a lowering of standards and the death of the traditional grammar school. In the light of this, Harold Macmillan continued, "the Socialists are looking back in anger and planning to destroy the grammar schools. This would be a disaster for British education."

Although in "Learning to Live" the Labour Party did pay a little attention to the recommendations of the Abram's report their stress was

(19) T.E.S., 4/7/58, P. 1112.

(20) C.C.O., 5/7/58, No. 6466; T.E.S., 11/7/58, P. 1146.

(21) C.C.O., 23/10/58, No. 6537; T.E.S., 31/10/58, P. 1593.

still very much political and social rather than educational, hence the vigorous reactions from Geoffrey Lloyd. It was a simple reaction of one against the other. Meanwhile, as the main issue in the debate continued to be obscured by less relevant ones, and a considered evaluation was delayed still further, the educational system had to continue to operate. Schools had to be built and in the absence of a decision to the contrary the majority of new secondary schools continued to be tri-partite. If in the future the comprehensive system was to become the norm then in many places it would be difficult or even impossible to implement the decision. Great expense would be involved, or compromises would be made that would be educationally unsound.

In the autumn of 1958 came news that the Conservative government was preparing to spend money on the secondary modern schools so that they could compete more fairly with the grammar schools. The news was first announced at the Conservative Annual Conference in October 1958. The education debate at the conference was still pre-occupied with reacting to Labour's "Learning to Live", until the minister began to speak. He revealed⁽²²⁾ that for some months he had been working with R. A. Butler and Lord Hailsham, at the request of the Prime Minister, developing a forward policy on education. He spoke about the enormous technological development that had taken place in this country in recent years, and how this was necessary if we were to hold our own in a competitive world. But this development in technology would continue only if it was backed up by adequate education at all levels. The minister and his colleagues were satisfied with the expansion that had taken place in Higher and Further Education, but realised that Secondary Education, as a whole, had not kept pace with these. There were exceptions. The grammar schools

(22) Conservative Party Conference 1958: Verbatim report, Pp. 71-74.

had developed well, as had some of the secondary moderns, but the conditions in many secondary moderns left much to be desired. Adhering to the same policy as several previous Conservative ministers, Mr. Lloyd expressed a determination to remedy this state of affairs, and an expectation that thereby the 11+ would cease to be an issue. He referred to systems other than the tri-partite one, but stressed that he didn't wish any of these alternatives to be imposed uniformly. There were three experimental alternatives: Secondary modern schools grouped together and each with its own specialism; the Leicestershire scheme; and Comprehensive Schools. The aspects of the latter that frightened him most, he said, were their enormous size, and the fact that they were a threat to the grammar schools. He clearly preferred to make a determined effort to make the tri-partite system succeed. A White Paper would be issued soon to show how the government intended to tackle the problem.

The White Paper was issued in December 1958 under the title "Secondary Education for All: A new drive" (Cmd. 604). The situation was realistically assessed: "The fact is that there are, today, too many children of approximately equal ability who are receiving their secondary education in schools that differ widely both in quality, and in the range of courses they are able to provide."⁽²³⁾ It then stated the need for allocating more resources to secondary modern schools. Referring to the organisation of secondary education it stated that the government did not wish that any uniform pattern should be imposed on the whole of England and Wales. (Section 14) The White Paper went on to say that the government would allow experiments with comprehensive schools, but only for genuine educational reasons. The best examples were secondary schools in country areas of sparse population, and large

(23) White Paper: "Secondary Education for All - A new drive", (Cmd. 604), S. 10.

new housing areas where no established schools existed. (Section 15)

Section 16 gave the government's view about closing well-established grammar schools in order to start comprehensives: "It cannot be right that good existing schools should be forcibly brought to an end, or that parents' freedom of choice should be so completely abolished."

Furthermore, the White Paper expressed serious doubts about the very large size of some comprehensive schools. (Section 17) It called for a full development of the tri-partite system, with an overlapping of courses between different types of schools. In effect this would require a far-reaching development of the secondary moderns. So a five year building programme, amounting to £400 million, was announced. The main objective was to produce an up-to-date system of secondary schools, especially secondary moderns. The elimination of all-age schools would be a part of this programme.

The Economist⁽²⁴⁾ gave a sympathetic reaction to the White Paper, as did Sir Ronald Gould (N.U.T. General Secretary) speaking⁽²⁵⁾ at the North of England Education Conference at Scarborough. He said "The great illusion of our time is that the stumbling block to equal opportunity is the 11+ examination. It is not: the stumbling block is an inadequate education system." The Economist had observed that extra teachers would be required if the White Paper's plans for secondary modern schools were to succeed. Sir Ronald went further. He said that not only would more teachers be needed, but even more money than the White Paper had announced would be required.

The House of Commons debated the White Paper on 22nd January 1959.

(24) Economist, 6/12/58, Pp. 865-67.

(25) Education, 2/1/59, P. 1.

Mr. Lloyd spoke optimistically⁽²⁶⁾ about the development of secondary modern schools since 1944, in spite of a succession of obstacles. Now some of them had succeeded in introducing new courses leading to G.C.E. This was encouraging for parents whose children had failed the 11+ examination, and with the additional resources now available everyone could have this benefit. Sir Edward Boyle, in the same debate spoke⁽²⁷⁾ of the border-line group of children. Secondary modern schools ought to be able to adequately provide for any children of this group who failed to obtain a place in a grammar school. He observed that some secondary modern schools had already achieved this.

Some years later Boyle recalls⁽²⁸⁾ how in 1958 the Ministry "thought it was better to keep the percentage of grammar school places down so as to encourage the modern schools to build up their G.C.E. courses." This was in line with the thinking of the White Paper. But, in retrospect, Boyle was to give a very different judgment on the White Paper and its policy. The policy in itself was right, but it came too late. The G.C.E., Boyle wrote,⁽²⁹⁾ should have been introduced into the secondary modern schools from the beginning, as some senior officials at the Ministry had urged, but they had been opposed by Her Majesty's Inspectors. We shall return to this theme later.

In the middle of January 1959 Sir Edward Boyle was touring schools in Dorset⁽³⁰⁾ to study the problem of organising a good range of secondary school courses in sparsely populated country districts. The most widely publicised event during this tour was a speech that he gave

(26) Vol. 598, H. C. Deb, 22/1/59, Cols. 420-30.

(27) Vol. 598, H. C. Deb, 22/1/59, Cols. 529-34.

(28) The Politics of Education, Ed. by M. Kogan, Penguin, 1971, P. 83.

(29) Lord Boyle, "The Politics of Secondary School Re-organisation", article in Journal of Educational Administration and History, Leeds University, June 1972, P. 31.

(30) Education, 9/1/59, P. 48.

at a public meeting at Gillingham, Dorset, on 14th January.⁽³¹⁾ In this speech Sir Edward discussed comprehensive schools in some detail. The Minister of Education had just given his approval to the L.E.A.'s proposal to combine two Dorset schools (Gillingham Grammar and Gillingham Secondary Modern Schools) to form a bilateral or comprehensive school. There had been a considerable amount of opposition to the proposal and the parliamentary secretary was obviously trying to calm it down. His argument was that the L.E.A. had submitted to the minister a proposal which was based on educational grounds and the minister was satisfied that this was so. He related how the local authority expected three advantages to follow from the amalgamation: "first, it would increase the number of teachers; secondly, it would allow the appointment of more teachers qualified in specialist subjects - science, maths, modern languages and technical and commercial subjects, for example; and thirdly, and perhaps most important, it would make possible the provision of a wider variety of courses - for example, commercial and technical courses ..." "I really do not think it can be disputed", he said, "that the Dorset local education authority, in putting forward their proposal ..., really were concerned first and foremost with the interest of the pupils and with the desirability of increasing the range of educational opportunity."

Sir Edward continued, with tact and charm, to explain that the government was opposed to very large comprehensives, and also opposed to the policy of "closing down a medium-sized grammar school in a borough in order to give a bilateral school, which is already a large school, the monopoly of all the abler children in the area". But the Gillingham case was quite different, was his message: and indeed it was. The

(31) Education, 23/1/59, P. 154; T.E.S., 23/1/59, P. 113.

grammar school had 312 pupils (about two forms of entry, based on a five year course) and the secondary modern had about 335 (about two and a half forms of entry, based on a four year course). In a straightforward amalgamation (as proposed and approved) the new combined school would serve children of all abilities from a limited area, as well as grammar school children from a much wider area. Thus, an equal balance between academic and non-academic children would be established, unlike a school which was truly comprehensive, and which in most parts of England could expect the academic children to be a minority. One suspects that Sir Edward had his tongue in his cheek when he told the meeting that the minister had found it a difficult decision to make. There was little to lose and much to gain by implementing this proposal: there would be no lessening of academic efficiency, and the sixth form could be expected to continue unchanged.

This example of comprehensive re-organisation in a sparsely populated rural area, although it was not a true comprehensive, received much publicity at the time. But, as the parliamentary secretary pointed out, Dorset was not alone with its rural problems. In some cases the country grammar schools were smaller than the Gillingham one, and were clearly inefficient. The Conservative policy had for some time been clear about these cases: they were suitable for experimenting with a comprehensive system. In retrospect, Boyle is still whole-heartedly convinced that this policy regarding the country comprehensives was correct. He said recently⁽³²⁾ that he thinks "one of the mistakes made by the party was not having a sort of drive for country comprehensives in the 1950's."

(32) Interview with Lord Boyle at Leeds University, 21/1/74, P. 6.

While Boyle was touring Dorset the Prime Minister, Mr. Macmillan, was in Newcastle upon Tyne, and in a speech to the Northern Conservative Club⁽³³⁾ gave his support to his Minister of Education over the policy of the White Paper. A few months later Sir Edward Boyle was in the North, this time at Sunderland, speaking to the North East Federation of Headteacher Associations on 18th April. His speech was concerned with the role of the secondary modern school. Almost three-quarters of children of this country, he said⁽³⁴⁾, are educated in the secondary modern schools, and they are of a wide range of ability. Some would never be suitable for a traditional academic type of curriculum, whilst others had just failed to win a place in a grammar school. The secondary modern had the difficult task of providing for the very different needs of the two types of children, and all those in between them. Moreover, he expressed an opinion that the children thought to be less-able could in fact achieve more than they imagined, provided they were encouraged to do so. They shouldn't be allowed to do merely the practical subjects, but should be encouraged to tackle the theory, too, and this would equip them for courses later on at technical colleges. Sir Edward felt that the building-programme announced in the White Paper would create new opportunities for the secondary modern schools, and he hoped that they would take advantage of these opportunities and be ambitious about what they could achieve.

During the summer of 1959 there was little said about comprehensives: Mr. Geoffrey Lloyd merely consolidated his position. In July he opened a new school at Chippenham, David Eccles' constituency: it was part of a campus school and he made the most of the opportunity to praise the

(33) C.C.O., 15/1/59, No. 6612; Reported in T.E.S., 23/1/59, P. 120.

(34) T.E.S., 24/4/59, P. 708.

notion of the campus school. All the benefits of the comprehensive school could be obtained, but without any of the disadvantages, he declared.⁽³⁵⁾

In the autumn during the election campaign, Lloyd once more made his position clear. In a speech at Acton⁽³⁶⁾ on 29th September he claimed that the Conservatives would preserve the grammar schools: they had a great record and it would be madness to destroy them. The following day he spoke at Birmingham.⁽³⁷⁾ This time he took as his line of attack that the Socialists would destroy the grammar schools, but that the Conservatives, while safeguarding the grammar schools, would continue to experiment with comprehensives, and he quoted examples of experiments that they had supported.

As far as the Labour Party was concerned there was little being said on the subject. Hugh Gaitskell had caused confusion with his remark that every child should have a grammar school education⁽³⁸⁾, but otherwise nothing was said until the election was declared. Then Labour re-affirmed its position along the lines laid down in its policy document of 1958 "Learning to Live".

The general election in October 1959 signalled the end of a career for Geoffrey Lloyd. "He has not been a popular minister" wrote one commentator⁽³⁹⁾, but what he did achieve was to produce the five year plan for Secondary Education, and to expand the building programme for teacher training colleges. Edward Boyle, too, was on the move, back to the Treasury to become Financial Secretary. The same commentator paid tribute in general terms to his ability, and made special reference to his interest in problems related to the training of teachers.

(35) T.E.S., 17/7/59, P. 72.

(36) T.E.S., 2/10/59, P. 365.

(37) C.C.O., 30/9/59, No. 6983.

(38) Cf. C.C.O., 1/1/59, No. 6607.

(39) Education, 23/10/59, P. 639.

Chapter 9The Conservatives Allow Local Decision-Making
on Comprehensive Schools

Michael Parkinson rightly points out⁽¹⁾ that by 1959 there was deadlock between the two main political parties over the structure of secondary education, and that, for some years after, the debate moved from national to local level. The point at issue was whether there should be selection and segregation for secondary education, and the evidence referred to in the previous chapter indicates how deeply the parties were divided.

Labour had stated their policy in "Learning to Live". They were opposed to selection and saw universal comprehensive education as the alternative. However, Labour continued to make ambiguous statements about a future role for the grammar schools because they realised that there were many Labour Party groups who wished to retain their local grammar schools. The Conservative point of view had been expressed in the White Paper "Secondary Education for All". They felt that selection ought to be retained, in the interests of the children. They pointed out that children's abilities and aptitudes vary, and if education was to be suited to the children then there would need to be varied forms of secondary education. However, Conservatives were ready to agree to a limited amount of experiment with comprehensives, provided that it was controlled under strict conditions. One of these stated that no grammar school was to be closed merely to make way for a comprehensive school.

The parties were in deadlock over this issue and it was to be some three years before either side moved away from these positions. During

(1) M. Parkinson, "The Labour Party and the Organisation of Secondary Education 1918-65", Pp. 87-88.

this period they did not even talk about it to any extent, at national level. Two reasons are suggested for this.

First, the forum for the debate was moving from central to local authorities because the issues had been well examined by both parties at national level, whereas at local government level political groups were, in many cases, only now becoming interested in the debate. When they came to examine the comprehensive idea in the context of their own area, some found that local circumstances left them with little choice; for example, sparse population might point to a comprehensive system being most suitable, or the existing buildings in another area might suggest leaving well alone. In clear cut cases of this kind the minister could reasonably do little but give approval to decisions made at local level. An account of local decision-making is, in general, beyond the scope of this study, but, as we shall see later, the overall results of their deliberations do play a significant part in forming national policy in the Conservative Party.

The second reason why this issue virtually disappeared from the national scene for three years is suggested by Lord Boyle.⁽²⁾ The Minister of Education, he says, was pre-occupied by more urgent problems during this period. He lists three of them: overcoming the shortage of teachers; the promoting of further education; and the need to expand higher education.

The Conservatives had won the October 1959 general election, this time with an overall majority of 100 seats, and Sir David Eccles was the new Minister of Education. It will be remembered that he had been a successful businessman before turning to politics and achieving success

(2) Lord Boyle, Article in Leeds University's Journal of Educational Administration and History, June 1972, P. 32.

there as well: now he was back as Minister of Education, the post he had held from 1954 to 1957. He was best remembered for his achievement in developing technical education, stressing the need for trained manpower to meet the requirements of a developing technology, and pointing to the long-term benefits that technology would bring to the nation. Sir David's undoubted talent had been matched by good fortune in that he came to office on that occasion at a time when economic restrictions were being relaxed. As a result, the money was made available for him to launch his five-year programme for the development of technical education. Now, in October 1959, the educational press recalled his earlier performance and welcomed him back. (3)

Sir David's views on comprehensive schools had not changed since his previous tenure of the office, as was evident when he visited the campus school at Walbottle, near Newcastle-upon-Tyne, in November 1959. (4) The notion of the campus school appealed to him, he said, because it minimised the problems of selection and segregation, but achieved this without destroying well-established schools. The 11+ examination was no longer a burning issue, he claimed, because about half of the local authorities had already modified the "one chance only" aspect of the examination, and others might follow. Presumably this referred to the possibility of transfers at 13+ and 16+. The minister went on to give an assurance that the grammar schools will never be harmed. All of this was said in the context of the need for sound education and technical knowledge. Clearly, Sir David's views were very much in line with the 1958 White Paper. This was explicitly confirmed in a speech he made to the Commons a few days later. (5) The best way to get equality of

(3) Education, 23/10/59, P. 639; Pp. 643-5.

(4) Times, 10/11/59, P. 16g; T.E.S., 13/11/59, P. 581; and Education, 13/11/59, P. 793.

(5) Vol. 613, H. C. Deb, 19/11/59, Col. 1315.

opportunity, he contended, was to make all schools good schools in their various ways.

An important educational event was the publication, in December 1959, of the Crowther Report.⁽⁶⁾ This had been commissioned in 1956 by Sir David Eccles to advise him about the education of boys and girls between the ages of 15 and 18 years. The report was significant not only because of its conclusions, but because of the research that lay behind it. The Council commissioned its own research, as well as drawing on the work of others. The detailed research work was published the following year in a second volume. Anne Corbett writes:⁽⁷⁾ "Two of its three special surveys - the general survey and the National Service survey - have made an important contribution to educational sociology, producing information not previously available on the relationship between ability, school career, and school and family characteristics."

The report had been commissioned at a time when it seemed that the number of school children was on the decline, resources were available, and it appeared to be a good time to implement more of the recommendations of the 1944 Education Act. With this in mind the Council considered such topics as raising the school leaving age to 16, and compulsory part-time day education up to the age of 18. They also examined sixth form and higher education. Maclure⁽⁸⁾ comments: "The Council believed that there was a great waste of talent in a situation in which only 12% stayed to the age of 17, and 6% to 20. They were particularly concerned about the 'second quartile' in the ability range, and the extent to which early leaving was a social rather than an academic phenomenon."

- (6) "15 to 18", Report of Central Advisory Council for Education (England), Vol. 1, H.M.S.O., 1959.
 Cf. (a) J. Stuart Maclure, "Educational Documents", Pp. 245-58,
 (b) Anne Corbett, "Much to do about education", Pp. 4-8.
- (7) Anne Corbett, *Ibid.*, P. 4.
- (8) J. Stuart Maclure, *Ibid.*, P. 246.

The report gave renewed emphasis to this point which had already been made in the Council's earlier report "Early Leaving" (1954). Another startling discovery was that "among the National Service men entering the Army, while nine-tenths of those in the top 10% in ability stayed at school voluntarily for at least one year more than they had to, over four-tenths of them (42%) left by 16 and did not attempt the sixth form course to Advanced level in the G.C.E. for which their ability would have made them strong candidates."⁽⁹⁾

David Eccles had always firmly believed that a sound education at all levels of society was a necessary foundation if Britain was to move successfully into the technological age. This fresh evidence of ability being wasted can have done no other than strengthen his resolve. In a speech on 11th December⁽¹⁰⁾ he described the Crowther Report as an historic document. He quoted it as saying that there was a bigger problem at 15 or 16 than there was over the 11+ examination. When the Commons debated the report on 21st March 1960 Eccles urged that the nation should accept the challenge to provide more education after the statutory leaving age, despite the cost. It is interesting to note that Eccles doesn't urge this merely for the economic benefit of the nation, but because it is a human right to which each child is entitled: "education", he said, "is the response which a free society makes to the claim of each individual child to be cared for, not for what he produces, but for what he is."⁽¹¹⁾ It was a change in attitude for Eccles. In his previous tenure of the office he had been described as stressing the material advantage to the nation of sound technical education, while

(9) "15 to 18", P. 8, (1962 Edition).

(10) At the opening of Melbourn Village College, Cambridgeshire, 11/12/59; T.E.S., 18/12/59, P. 748.

(11) Vol. 620, H. C. Deb, 21/3/60, Col. 55.

perhaps overlooking education as a whole and its role in civilization⁽¹²⁾

The importance of the Crowther Report was that it pointed to this considerable wasting of ability. For both national and individual reasons this situation ought to be remedied, and the evidence showed that the cause of the problem was to a large extent home background and family attitudes.

In general, 1960 was an uneventful year for education. February saw the publication of the Albemarle Report on youth work.⁽¹³⁾ As a result, there was a considerable development by way of building and maintenance grants, and the establishment of a college for the training of youth leaders.

In June 1957 the minister had announced that teacher training would in future be a three-year course.⁽¹⁴⁾ This meant that no newly qualified teachers were available in the summer of 1959 and for the next 12 months the shortage of teachers continued, with the result that the teacher-pupil ratio in secondary schools deteriorated.⁽¹⁵⁾ The situation was made worse by the increasing number of secondary children.

During 1960, the minister was also pre-occupied with the problem of expanding higher education. The University Grants Committee were of the opinion that a large expansion was needed and it recommended that, for a start, new universities should be established at Norwich and York.⁽¹⁶⁾ These were approved, and then in December 1960 the Prime Minister himself

(12) Education, 23/10/59, P. 639.

(13) Albemarle Report: "Youth Service in England and Wales", (Cmnd. 929); Cf. N.C.P., 30/1/61, P. 28.

(14) Circular 325, 17/6/57.

(15) "Education in 1959", (Cmnd. 1088), P. 3.

(16) N.C.P., 30/1/61, P. 16.

set up a committee under the chairmanship of Lord Robbins with a wide-ranging brief to review the pattern of full-time higher education in Britain. This was commissioned by the Prime Minister because of the anomaly that the universities were answerable, through the U.G.C., not to the Minister of Education, but to the Prime Minister in his role as First Lord of the Treasury.

Little had been said during 1960 about comprehensive schools, but the Ministry of Education's annual report for the year noted⁽¹⁷⁾ that there had been a steady increase in comprehensive schools (though some of this was due to re-classification), and the ministry was watching them with special interest. H.M. Inspectorate had waited for comprehensive schools to settle down before inspecting them. But several inspections were planned for 1961-62.

The Crowther Report had unfortunately been published just after an election, instead of perhaps two months before, at which time it might have attracted support for election purposes. In the event, little action followed the publication of the report. However, by the end of 1960 the proposal to raise the school leaving age to 16 (one of Crowther's recommendations) had received a limited approval, and in January 1961 the minister published a White Paper "Better Opportunities in Technical Education".⁽¹⁸⁾ This was the field in education which had always been closest to his heart, and indeed it was related to some of the findings of the Crowther Report. Its aim was to improve the quality of technical education, and, equally important, attract youngsters to these courses: in other words, try to prevent the wastage of talent that the Crowther Report had revealed. The method chosen by the White Paper was to improve

(17) "Education in 1960", (Cmnd. 1439), P. 17.

(18) White Paper, "Better Opportunities in Technical Education", (Cmnd. 1254), 5/1/61.

the quality and variety of courses at technical colleges, while efforts would be made to bridge the gap between school and college. It recognised that too much dependence on evening classes was undesirable because it demanded too much of a young person, following a full day's work. Instead, it urged young people to move straight from school to college. Sandwich courses, block release courses, and day release schemes should be developed. In a speech in London on publication day Sir David made it clear that he intended this to be an alternative route to a successful career, with secondary modern schools leading to advanced work in technical colleges, parallel with grammar schools leading to universities or colleges of advanced technology. (19)

An illuminating exchange took place in the House at Question Time on 20th April. Mr. Swingler, (Labour member, Newcastle-under-Lyme, and a regular inquisitor on matters of comprehensive education), asked the minister how many comprehensive projects he had approved or rejected while in office. (20) Sir David replied that he had approved 29 and rejected four. Swingler was obviously delighted that many more had been approved than rejected, and he alleged that the minister and ministry were abandoning their doctrinaire opposition and that L.E.A.'s, of whatever political complexion, were considering the advantages of comprehensive education. Eccles replied that he was being guided by the policy of the 1958 White Paper. Then he proceeded to destroy Mr. Swingler's satisfaction by stating that during the same period, he (the minister) had approved 460 other types of secondary schools, including 57 grammar schools.

The reply certainly indicated that the minister was not being doctrinaire in making decisions about comprehensive proposals: and that

(19) The White Paper and Sir David's speech are quoted in N.C.P., 30/1/61, Pp. 24-5.

(20) Vol. 638, H. C. Deb, 20/4/61, Col. 1380-1.

was to his credit. But more significantly it showed that the L.E.A.'s were not in any hurry to submit comprehensive schemes. The commentator, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, asserted that from 1959, for some years, the debate moved from the national forum to the local one. This is certainly true: but it is equally true that at local authority level considerable caution was still being exercised, as the minister's figures indicate.

A different set of statistics sheds further light on to the discussion at this point: the annual statistics published by the Ministry of Education, showing the number of children aged 11-19 years, by different types of school. These annual returns are gathered together and illustrated in a chart in the appendix. Children in each type of school are shown as a percentage rather than the actual number. The question under consideration is to what extent were local authorities deciding at this time (1961) to go comprehensive. Eccles had indicated to the House that about 7% of the projects submitted to him during the previous two years were for comprehensives, and 93% for tri-partite. In trying to interpret the chart in the appendix we find it has certain limitations. If an authority decided in 1961 to re-organise on comprehensive lines, it would be perhaps 1963 before it could implement this decision if existing buildings could be adapted, and probably 1965 or 1966 if new buildings were to be used.

Extract from the appendix:

Percentage of children in comprehensive schools

1959	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967
3.92%	4.54	4.85	5.41	6.31	6.97	8.44	11.04	14.35

As this table shows, the percentage of children in comprehensive schools begins to increase significantly only from 1965 onwards. This

indicates decisions made by L.E.A.'s in 1961 or 1963, depending upon whether they are using new or adapted buildings. So the beginning of a trend by L.E.A.'s to introduce comprehensive schools dates from about 1961, but was not yet discernible when Eccles gave his statistics to Swingler in April 1961.

A further observation on the trend towards comprehensive schools was made by Lord Boyle, some years later.⁽²¹⁾ From the late 1950's onward, he wrote, most larger counties (which were mainly Conservative-controlled) were progressing steadily towards comprehensive education. Meanwhile, the county boroughs (which were often Labour-controlled) were frequently anxious to retain the grammar schools because of the opportunities they afforded to able children from poor families. Thus, for practical reasons local political groups were often at variance with the doctrinaire policies of their national party leaders.

In July 1961 it was announced that a locally-based examination, suitable for secondary modern schools was to be introduced:⁽²²⁾ the Certificate of Secondary Education it was to be called. This was clearly intended for the less-able children, and desirable though it was for them, it would not help the secondary modern school to achieve parity with grammar schools. If anything, it would make this more unlikely.

The minister was in trouble that same year over teachers' pay awards.⁽²³⁾ Due to economic trouble a national pay pause was introduced in July, with the result that teachers had to accept a smaller rise than they wanted. Furthermore, it came after three months of quarrelling with the minister about the distribution of the £42 million available; during

(21) Lord Boyle: "Journal of Educational Administration and History", June 1972, P. 32.

(22) N.C.P., 11/9/61, P. 13; "Education in 1961", (Cmnd. 1737), Pp. 16-17.

(23) "Education in 1961", (Cmnd. 1737), P. 2; Pp. 67-8.

that time he threatened legislation to ensure that he could fulfil what he considered to be the minister's responsibilities in the Burnham Committee's deliberations. It was a foretaste of what his successor, Sir Edward Boyle, would have to face in the not-too-distant future.

The Conservative Party Conference of October 1961 gave Sir David an opportunity to re-affirm his belief in selection and segregation. These were necessary to provide for children's differing abilities, he said.⁽²⁴⁾ He concluded with a word about his difficulties with Burnham and the Teachers.

During the closing months of this ministry, Mr. Kenneth Thompson, Sir David's Parliamentary Secretary, gave a speech at the opening of Gateacre Comprehensive School, Liverpool on 23rd March 1962. It was a sympathetic speech in which he described the circumstances in which a comprehensive school was justified, and the conditions needed for its success. The minister's policy was to judge each case on its merits, he explained⁽²⁵⁾, and to do so he considered the following points:- First, would the proposed comprehensive school swallow up a good existing grammar school? Secondly, if an existing school was not absorbed into the comprehensive school, could the latter survive the competition from the former? Thirdly, would the new school have the backing and good will of the neighbourhood it would serve? He also expressed the view that small secondary schools could not cope with the diversity of subjects and knowledge which was now expected of secondary schools, no matter how skilled and dedicated the staffs might be. The situation in this respect, he warned, had changed very much in the past 20 years.

(24) "Conservative Party Conference 1961", Verbatim report, Pp. 107-9.

(25) T.E.S., 30/3/62, P. 631.

In the general affairs of the nation, much had happened since the 1959 election. Macmillan had declared in those days that we had never had it so good. They were indeed years of economic boom and general prosperity.⁽²⁶⁾ In 1959 the prosperity was at its peak: by 1961 it was in decline. In Commonwealth and Foreign affairs, too, much had changed. Through his able Secretary of State for the Colonies, Iain Macleod, Macmillan pursued a policy of granting independence. In January 1960 the British Prime Minister gave his famous "Wind of Change" speech in Cape Town. It was greeted at home as being invigorating: but in Central Africa it caused distrust among the British settlers, and in South Africa it brought about secession from the Commonwealth in 1961.⁽²⁷⁾ But Macmillan continued with his Commonwealth and Colonial policies; by February 1961, however, a revolt of his own backbenchers erupted over his policy for Central Africa.⁽²⁸⁾

Coinciding with these events, and perhaps intended to be complementary to them, came Britain's first attempt to obtain membership of the European Economic Community⁽²⁹⁾, an event which, although it was this time abortive, nevertheless stirred up strong opposition from many parts of the British nation during the long negotiations (August 1961 - January 1963). Because of these reasons and others, Tory popularity was declining. The truth was driven home to the party when it suffered a shock defeat at the hands of the Liberal Party in a by-election in the strongly middle-class constituency of Orpington on 14th March 1962.⁽³⁰⁾ Other election defeats followed, and Macmillan saw an urgent need to create a new image for himself. For once, Macmillan lost his unflappability,

(26) A. Sampson, "Macmillan", Pp. 159-163.
D. Thomson, "England in the Twentieth Century", Pp. 260-262; P. 280 et seq.

(27) Lord Kilmuir, "Political Adventure", Pp. 314-16.

(28) N. Fisher, "Iain Macleod", P. 170.

(29) D. Butler and J. Freeman, "British Political Facts, 1900-1967", 1968 Edition, P. 222.

(30) D. Thomson, Op. cit., P. 262.

and was panicked into a sudden purging of one-third of his Cabinet and government. Commentators were unanimous in their verdict that the purge was ill-judged, ill-timed and ruthless.⁽³¹⁾ The old loyalty, which had been Macmillan's watchword and that of the party, was now considerably weakened, and the unrest that he had intended to dispel was merely increased.

Among the many victims of this so-called "Night of the Long Knives" on 13th July 1962 was Sir David Eccles, Minister of Education since October 1959, and previously from 1954 to 1957. A leading article in T.E.S.⁽³²⁾ described him as having been a "notable minister", and continued: "before last year's brawl over salaries of teachers, his reputation was demonstrably high". A notable success, it said, was in school building. It went on to relate that he made many courageous decisions, sometimes against his own inclinations. Sir Edward Boyle wrote of him:⁽³³⁾ "My predecessor, Lord Eccles, made a very great contribution to the development of further education, and I always felt that his mind and his remarkable executive capacities seemed to be especially well fitted to this part of the educational service ...". He wrote also about Lord Eccles' "knowledge of his brief," and "profound grasp of the subject".

But what of his performance regarding comprehensive schools? He had made his own views clear: he believed in selection, and depended upon improved performances from the secondary modern schools to make good the deficiencies of the system. Moreover, he believed in a genuine sharing of power between the central and local authorities, and stood

(31) G. Hutchinson, "Edward Heath", P. 120.

(32) T.E.S., 20/7/62, P. 89.

(33) Sir Edward Boyle, "Technical Education in Britain" in "Nature", Vol. 198, 27/4/63, Pp. 334-6.

by his promise that he would consider on its educational merits each case submitted to him by a L.E.A. It was perhaps fortunate for his peace of mind that L.E.A.'s at that time were still progressing towards comprehensive education with considerable caution. But very soon now a wind of change would begin to blow through the education world.

Chapter 101963:
A Turning Point in Conservative Policy

Conservative M.P.'s considered⁽¹⁾ that one of the best things to emerge from Macmillan's massacre of his government was the appointment of Sir Edward Boyle as Minister of Education. At 38 he was the youngest ever as either Minister of Education or President of the Board. The boyish looks were now gone, replaced by a rather portly figure which belied his activity, energy and agile mind. Moreover he remained a man of principle, who cared about public responsibility, as had been evident over his actions at the time of the Suez crisis in 1956. So it was with enthusiasm that he was welcomed back into the world of education. "This impressive appointment"⁽²⁾ was how one journal described it.

What were the tasks that needed to be tackled? Richard Hornby, Chairman of the Conservative Parliamentary Education Committee, had written in the previous year an appreciation of the situation.⁽³⁾ During the fifties, he wrote, the government had had to tackle two tasks in education: first, to try to provide an adequate secondary education for all, and secondly, to provide accommodation for a 30% increase in the number of children. In the nineteen-sixties, he said, these tasks had to be completed and others tackled: classes needed to be reduced in size, and the school leaving age ought to be raised. All of these tasks required not only buildings but extra teachers, and he considered that the shortage of teachers would be the biggest problem that would need to be tackled in the early 1960's. Commentators were agreed that

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- (1) A. Roth, "The Return of Sir Edward Boyle" in "Education", 20/7/62, P. 74.
- (2) T.E.S., 20/7/62, P. 89.
- (3) R. Hornby, "Education in the Sixties" in "Swinton College Journal", March 1961, Pp. 46-50.

this would be Boyle's main task.⁽⁴⁾ Boyle himself confirms that this was the way he himself summed up the situation, but other issues that were bound to arise were 11+, secondary re-organisation, and the need for more school building.^(4a)

As his parliamentary secretary Sir Edward appointed a promising young man, Christopher Chataway, who had entered parliament in 1959 and become P.P.S. to the Minister of Power in 1961. "Born in 1931, and educated at Sherborne and Oxford, he made his reputation as an athlete, and as television journalist before becoming a Conservative member of the L.C.C., and Conservative M.P. for North Lewisham in 1959", wrote Andrew Roth.⁽⁵⁾ He was to be a loyal and able colleague to Sir Edward for many years to come, both in office and out.

Sir Edward had been away from the Ministry of Education for almost three years, in a position from which he could consider the evidence as an outsider rather than as a participant, so the press were understandably anxious to hear the new minister's current views on comprehensive education. In September 1962 the Guardian published an interview with him.⁽⁶⁾ Sir Edward stated that there were two ways of avoiding the injustices arising from the 11+ system: one was to abandon selection and change to some form of comprehensive education; the other was to ensure that the consequences of 11+ selection were made less important. He felt that the former solution would suit new housing areas and country districts with sparse population, but he preferred the latter solution elsewhere. It could be achieved, he thought, by overlapping courses in the different types of school. All of this was contained in the 1958

(4) Education, 20/7/62, P. 72; P. 75.

(4a) M. Kogan, "The Politics of Education", Pp. 81-82.

(5) A. Roth, Education, 20/7/62, P. 75.

(6) Guardian, 6/9/62, P. 1 and P. 3, Lord Altrincham interviews Sir Edward Boyle.

White Paper and represented no change in policy. But Sir Edward then said that he had reservations about the White Paper: it needed supplementing in two ways. First, it had recommended that secondary modern schools should have some courses comparable to grammar school courses in order to provide for border-line children and late developers. But now he realised that as long as secondary modern schools were regarded as second-rate schools, justice would not be done to these children. The overlap theory might be workable as an educational plan, but there was obviously a social significance which would have to be examined and remedied, or there would never be parity between secondary modern and grammar schools. His second comment on the 1958 White Paper was that now he thought grammar schools should be extended to take more, not less, children because the evidence indicated that areas with a higher percentage of children in grammar schools also had a higher percentage of children staying on after 17. This was an interesting observation but, as Sir William Alexander pointed out at the time,⁽⁷⁾ it would also have the effect of depriving the secondary modern schools of their best children and make nonsense of the notion of overlapping courses. The minister must have taken note of this observation: he didn't make the suggestion again.

In a speech to Divisional Executives on 20th September 1962 Boyle made it clear⁽⁸⁾ that he intended to keep his Ministry above party politics. All decisions that he would make under Section 13 of the 1944 Act would be made on educational not political grounds: "I will not have the Ministry used in the battle for power between the parties", he told them. Furthermore, it was clear that he was anxious that as much information as possible on comprehensives should be gathered and

(7) Education, 14/9/62, P. 339.

(8) T.E.S., 28/9/62, P. 362.

made available for the benefit of both educationists and politicians. The Ministry would co-operate to the full with regard to this.

On 26th September at Birmingham the minister made another speech⁽⁹⁾ which was important in several respects. First, he revealed that he felt some anxiety for the less-able children. He said he could never be happy about any system which said that if the abler children had a good chance of climbing the ladder it did not matter if a certain number of less-able children lost their foothold. Next he spoke of the partnership that he hoped would exist between the central and local authority. "I think educational progress is partly a matter for a lead from the ministry", he said, "but, above all, a matter for constant co-operation and personal discussion between the ministry and those in local authorities who share the responsibility for educational advance." He also made several other points in this speech: he doubted the wisdom of trying to preserve a separate set of one-form-entry secondary schools; he expressed pride in the grammar schools in general; and he gave a pledge that he would always try to make decisions on educational merit. In deciding to give L.E.A.'s freedom to choose whether to go comprehensive, Boyle was following the practice adopted by Hailsham in 1957, and Eccles between 1959 and 1962. Each of them personally believed in selection and was determined to safeguard good grammar schools. They achieved the latter by examining L.E.A. plans in the light of educational criteria. The proposed destruction of a good grammar school would make the approval of a plan very unlikely.

All things considered, these two speeches together must have given grounds for considerable optimism in the educational world: a Minister of Education of ability and intellectual calibre, with new insights into

(9) T.E.S., 28/9/62, P. 362; Times, 27/9/62, P. 9a.

the problems, a determination not to be shackled by political doctrines; a man who genuinely wished to co-operate with L.E.A.'s and everyone concerned in education rather than be in confrontation with them.

Boyle clearly had the shortage of teachers foremost in his mind at this time. He referred to it in a speech in October at Crook⁽¹⁰⁾, in Co. Durham. This is pioneer country, Tory-wise, but Sir Edward was speaking in support of his friend of Oxford days, Dr. Kenneth Ellis, the new prospective candidate for the constituency. The minister referred to the determined efforts that the Teacher Training Colleges were making to increase their productivity despite the difficulties caused by the new three-year course.

During November the Prime Minister referred to educational matters, in support of his minister, on two different occasions.⁽¹¹⁾ But he did no more than lay claim to a fine Tory school-building record, and praise Britain for her quality of education. This high standard must not be allowed to deteriorate, he said. The 1958 White Paper still expressed his point of view, but he restricted himself to general statements and seemed to be content to leave the details of the problems to Sir Edward.

The general educational scene at the end of 1962 was dominated by a shortage of teachers which was still acute.⁽¹²⁾ At the same time there was increasing pressure for a rapid and massive development of university and higher technical education;⁽¹³⁾ the five-year building programme of the 1958 White Paper was coming to an end⁽¹⁴⁾, and it was

(10) Education, 12/10/62, P. 533.

(11) (a) To N.U.T. at Bromley on 9/11/62, C.C.O. No. 7944, P. 6.
(b) At Redruth on 30/11/62, C.C.O. No. 7975, P. 16 and P. 17.

(12) Ministry of Education Annual Report, "Education in 1962", (Cmnd. 1990), P. 6.

(13) Cf. Conservative Party Conference 1962, Verbatim report, Pp. 114-120.

(14) "Education in 1962", (Cmnd. 1990), P. 2.

intended to launch a new locally-based Certificate of Secondary Education in the summer of 1965.

As far as this study is concerned the new year, 1963, was of great significance, because it was the year in which the Conservative Party's official policy on secondary education began to change quite fundamentally, led by Sir Edward Boyle. But before tracing the development of that shift in policy it would be as well to dispose of a problem that the minister had inherited from his predecessor - the question of teachers' salaries - the outcome of which was to sour his relations with the teachers at a time when he could ill afford it.

On 24th January 1963 the Burnham Committee recommended to the minister⁽¹⁵⁾ a salary increase for teachers worth a total of £21 million, but which tended to favour the lower paid, younger teachers. A month later Boyle announced⁽¹⁶⁾ that he was not accepting the Burnham recommendation, not because of the overall cost, but because of the way the increase was to be apportioned. He said that he wanted the share of the total salary bill which represented additions for longer training, for higher qualifications, and for greater responsibility, to be at least maintained: prospects of advancement are as important as the starting pay. It was clear⁽¹⁷⁾ that not only did Boyle regard the Burnham proposal as a bad incomes policy, because it damaged the career structure, but he was also unhappy with the composition of the Burnham Committee - that he had no voice in their deliberations but was merely expected to rubber-stamp their decisions.

By mid-March⁽¹⁸⁾ Burnham had declined to re-consider their

(15) N.C.P., 18/3/63, P. 7.

(16) N.C.P., 18/3/63, P. 7; "Education in 1963", (Cmd. 2316), P. 4 and P. 92.

(17) Economist, 23/2/63, P. 674.

(18) Economist, 16/3/63, P. 981.

recommendation and Boyle decided to over-rule them. He would initiate legislation to authorise a pay-rise for two years, of a type that would safeguard the career structure, and during that time the Burnham Committee would have to be re-organised, with due representation for the minister. The N.U.T. lobbied M.P.'s and threatened strike action, while Sir William Alexander regretted that Burnham was being tampered with. But a month later the opposition was dying down⁽¹⁹⁾ and Boyle proceeded with his bill. It was passed on 10th July and the increase was back-dated to 1st April.

It was against this background of acrimony that Sir Edward Boyle was trying to evolve a new Conservative approach to the 11+ problems. But what kind of support did he have from officials of the Ministry of Education? He recalls⁽²⁰⁾ that on the issue of the percentage of grammar school places, for example, the ministry's views were similar to those that he had expressed in his interview in the Guardian in September 1962. But how did the officials view the question of selection and comprehensive education? Boyle describes⁽²¹⁾ the situation in the ministry as one in which the officials were reluctant to speak out or submit papers about anything that didn't fit in exactly with known government policy, such as the government's determination to preserve the top grammar schools. This practice of the officials, thinking and working within the framework of declared government policy, still operates, but Boyle regrets that it tended to inhibit objective thought. Furthermore, on that occasion, it led to some officials identifying the problem quite wrongly: "there were those, even high up, who were inclined to say 'How can we do away with the 11+ examination?' without

(19) Economist, 20/4/63, P. 219.

(20) M. Kogan, "The Politics of Education", Pp. 83-4.

(21) M. Kogan, Op. cit., Pp. 115-6; P. 117.

realising it was separate schools at the moment of transfer from primary to secondary which was the point at issue."⁽²²⁾

Boyle also refers to the two schools of thought that existed among the top officials in the ministry during this period: "the social justice tradition⁽²³⁾, wanting to widen opportunity, giving people greater opportunity to acquire intelligence; and the technical college tradition - education for investment, education for efficiency." The former were guided by the teaching of the educational psychologists and sociologists - Vernon, Husén, Halsey, Floud, Martin and others, and by the reports of the Central Advisory Council for Education. The problem of the technical education lobby was simply one of expansion, of bricks and mortar, but the social justice tradition was faced with problems much more complex and subtle. However, since pressure of numbers created a basic need for places in technical colleges, the result was that more often than not the supporters of technical education for investment won the day.⁽²⁴⁾

Lord Boyle also recalls that on his return to the ministry he found that 90 out of 163 L.E.A.'s were working on re-organisation plans for all or part of their areas⁽²⁵⁾, and many of these were not Labour controlled. Boyle was impressed by the extent of the development. Moreover, following up his promise, made soon after assuming office⁽²⁶⁾, that he wished to publicise information about experiments with comprehensive schools, the minister in 1963 authorised⁽²⁷⁾ the ministry to organise an inquiry into the experience gained by L.E.A.'s in the

(22) Ibid., P. 115.

(23) M. Kogan, Op. cit., P. 123.

(24) Ibid., P. 123.

(25) (a) M. Kogan, Op. cit., P. 78.

(b) Lord Boyle, Article in Journal of Educational Administration and History, June 1972, P. 32.

(26) 20/9/62, Speech to Divisional Executives, T.E.S., 28/9/62, P. 362.

(27) M. Kogan, Op. cit., P. 78.

establishing and operating of comprehensive schools.

So it can be said that the officials of the Ministry of Education were on the whole rather neutral at this time on the issue of comprehensive schools, but were willing to be led by Sir Edward in whichever direction he chose to go, though some urged that the expansion of technical education must not be hindered by any other policy.

In his first major speech in 1963, at Kettering Grammar School on 15th February, the minister spoke about the building programme and his hopes for secondary education. The 1964-5 building programme that had just been announced would complete the re-organisation of secondary schools that had been envisaged by the 1958 White Paper.⁽²⁸⁾ He went on to impress upon his audience the purpose of this building programme: it was to improve and equalise conditions in both grammar and secondary modern schools. There is no clear-cut division between children in grammar and in secondary modern schools, he said, so those close to each side of the dividing line needed the same education. Consequently, there needed to be a good deal of overlap, flexibility and transfer.

Sir Edward must have suffered some anxiety at this time because of the fact that this final year of the five-year plan would not be completed for perhaps four years, allowing for design and construction: indeed the second-year programme of the five-year plan would scarcely have been completed at the time he was speaking. Meanwhile evidence of the inadequacies of the secondary modern schools was becoming more abundant.

A few days later Boyle made another important speech, this time to Oxford University Education Society.⁽²⁹⁾ He told them that he was not

(28) T.E.S., 22/2/63, P. 358.

(29) T.E.S., 1/3/63, P. 416.

complacent about the problems of 11+ selection and the anxieties it caused for both parents and children. Two significant points emerged in his speech. He declared that comprehensives were suitable for two types of area: country districts with scattered population; and large cities, where they could exist without denying parents their freedom of choice. This was introducing a new idea as far as Sir Edward was concerned. Previously he had listed country districts and new housing areas as suitable for experiment. Now large cities are mentioned and with a more positive statement that they are suited to comprehensives. But it follows from the reference to parental choice that Sir Edward was thinking in terms of comprehensive schools existing together with grammar schools in the same area - not the ideal circumstances for a comprehensive school but nevertheless a shift of opinion in its favour. On the other hand, he said, if comprehensives were opened in areas of medium sized population this would mean closing grammar schools and limiting parental choice. He did not favour this.

The other significant point he made in his Oxford speech was that one of the most important aspects of the educational system was to compensate for the inequalities of the children's home environment. It was a theme that was foremost in his mind in the months ahead - positive discrimination in favour of under-privileged children. He had this partly in mind when in April he made it known⁽³⁰⁾ that he was about to initiate a high-level sociological survey into the school system. On 17th June he announced⁽³¹⁾ that he was commissioning the C.A.C.E., under the chairmanship of Lady Flowden, to report on "primary education in all its aspects, and the transition to secondary education".

(30) Speech at Plymouth, 29/4/63; T.E.S., 3/5/63, P. 936.

(31) N.C.P., 7/10/63, P. 15.

In May of that year the minister was at pains to stress⁽³²⁾ that it was wrong to regard Labour as pro-comprehensives and Conservatives as being opposed to them. He maintained that there was real scope for comprehensive schools, particularly in large cities (as he had said three months earlier, with co-existence in mind). A week later in another speech⁽³³⁾ he was anxious to correct the impression that he was opposed to comprehensive schools. His main reservation, he said, was that he didn't wish to see good existing schools closed. He was now positively encouraging comprehensive schools for small market towns, he said, as well as country areas and large cities.

The next opportunity for the Conservatives to declare their policy was at a meeting of the 1963 Campaign for Education held in London on 18th June.⁽³⁴⁾ Each party was invited in turn to state its policies on education. The Prime Minister and the Minister of Education spoke for the Conservatives. Mr. Macmillan concentrated on the party's successful record in the field of education, and, referring to the 11+, he cautiously supported Sir Edward's policy, saying "that the government was less wedded to dogma in the matter of secondary school education than sometimes they were supposed to be".⁽³⁵⁾ Boyle said that he thought that good progress could be made towards comprehensive school organisation without sacrificing the really first-class grammar schools of good size. They had a contribution to make to our educational provision in the future, he said.⁽³⁶⁾ Sir Edward believed "that there was a wide range of possibilities of which the comprehensive idea is certainly one, though

(32) T.E.S., 24/5/63, P. 1150, Speech at Slough College, 16/5/63.

(33) Education, 31/5/63, P. 1077, Speech at Chelmsford, "last week".

(34) Times, 19/6/63, P. 6g; Guardian, 19/6/63, P. 5; T.E.S., 21/6/63, P. 1341 and P. 1368; N.C.P., 10/2/64, P. 13 and P. 14.

(35) Guardian, Ibid.

(36) Guardian, Ibid.

not the only one - I am thinking for example of the many experiments which are being carried out on the basis of a sort of campus plan".

"I think it is much too early to argue as yet that any particular pattern of organisation has established itself as the answer to the 11+." (37)

The T.E.S. reported that on this occasion Sir Edward declared that the bi-partite system was not the norm; nor were grammar schools sacrosanct if they were bad schools. (38)

The minister made an even clearer statement of his policy on 5th July at the annual conference of the Association of Education Committees, meeting in Belfast. (39) He referred to the L.C.C.'s recent decision to change from an 11+ examination to selection by assessment, and expressed his approval. Then he proceeded to discuss the whole question of selection at 11+. He spoke first in defence of the secondary modern schools: "To write off the modern schools in general as failures, as some people do, seems to me both unfair and unsupported by the facts." But, he continued, "Let me assure you that neither I nor my colleagues in the government are wedded to any particular pattern of secondary school organisation; none of us believes that children can be sharply differentiated into various types or levels of ability; and I certainly would not wish to advance the view that the bi-partite system, as it is often called, should be regarded as the right and usual way of organising secondary education, compared with which everything else must be stigmatized as experimental." He felt it was too early to judge between the different systems: perhaps in two or three years' time this might be possible. Meanwhile, where the system was a selective one it was

(37) N.C.P., Ibid.

(38) T.E.S., 21/6/63, P. 1368.

(39) Education, 12/7/63, Pp. 101-2, Verbatim account of speech.

important for the schools "to recognise the varying abilities of their pupils - for the modern schools to stretch their brighter children, and for the grammar schools not to concentrate on their high fliers".

These two speeches together constitute a mile-stone in the development of Edward Boyle's policy on the structure of secondary education. Whereas formerly he had considered the selective system as the only acceptable one, with other ideas as merely experimental, now he considered that the bi-partite system (as he preferred to call it) was no longer the norm: there were now several systems in existence, each of which was on trial. For the present, he considered it would be wise to keep all the options open.

It is worth trying to summarise the factors that led him to this change of policy. Writing in 1972⁽⁴⁰⁾, Boyle looks back on this period and discusses the influences that were at work.

One factor that he refers to was the change in the theory behind selection. The pre-war theory of measuring and predicting intelligence by an examination at the age of eleven years had been refuted: it was now known that ability was not purely hereditary but was very much influenced by environment. The work of the educational psychologists and sociologists had been supported by independent research and study made by official reports - "Early Leaving", Crowther, and soon by Newsom. It is clear that Boyle was becoming more and more convinced that "positive discrimination" in favour of underprivileged children was the logical and just action that should follow from this new awareness of the interaction between innate ability and environment. He had already stressed the importance of positive discrimination in

(40) Lord Boyle, Article in "Journal of Educational Administration and History", June 1972, Pp. 32-3.

his speech at Oxford in March of that year: he was about to do so again in the notable support that he gave to the Newsom report - "all children should have an equal opportunity of acquiring intelligence, and of developing their talents and abilities to the full" he wrote in the foreword. He must have had the same theme in mind again when he commissioned the Flowden Committee in August 1963. This new understanding of the relationship between innate ability and environment undoubtedly had a considerable influence in the development of Boyle's policy on secondary education.

A second factor that he refers to in his article, and which we have already noted, concerns the policies and actions of local education authorities. On his return to the Ministry Boyle learned that 90 out of 163 authorities were working on comprehensive re-organisation plans for all or part of their area.⁽⁴¹⁾ Boyle had always kept in close contact with L.E.A.'s - he visited 146 of them during his two and a half years as parliamentary secretary⁽⁴²⁾ - and he respected their views. He also noted that the counties with the most successful secondary modern schools, such as Hampshire, considered that comprehensive education was the next logical step for them.⁽⁴³⁾

But by far the most telling factor to influence Boyle was the changing attitude of the parents towards the secondary modern schools and his own growing realisation that these schools hadn't measured up to expectations. He recalls⁽⁴⁴⁾ that parental pressure groups were now common, and that many of the parents were expressing their views in a very articulate manner. In general, children were staying on longer

(41) M. Kogan, "The Politics of Education", P. 78.

(42) A. Roth, Education, 20/7/62, P. 74.

(43) Lord Boyle, Op. cit., P. 33.

(44) Lord Boyle, Op. cit., Pp. 32-3; 34.

at school and expecting more ambitious courses: but the opportunities were simply not available for them in the secondary modern schools. Sophisticated and ambitious parents were not prepared to accept the secondary modern school for their child, especially if that child had narrowly failed the 11+ examination, or had been allocated to a secondary modern because of a shortage of grammar school places. Furthermore, the secondary modern school was unacceptable to these parents because frequently it was a one-class school - a working-class school - and as far as parity of esteem was concerned, instead of being on a par with others it was often bottom of the league.

The children who just failed the 11+ - the border-liners - obviously caused Boyle a great deal of anxiety. It is worth quoting at some length what he said recently⁽⁴⁵⁾ on this point in the course of a conversation with the present author. "There was considerably greater reason for scepticism about the selection process, but I would actually lay still more stress on what I said now: the difficulty about the 11+ was always the border-liners. I always remember Weaver at the ministry saying to me once: 'Imagine two children, border-liners, one at Number 2 and one at Number 4 from, roughly speaking, identical equal-income households, and suppose the examination shows a few marks difference between the two children, it is still awfully difficult to justify, to say you who are a few marks higher go to a school where roughly three-quarters of the teachers are graduates, and you with a few marks lower go to a school where one-fifth of the teachers will be graduates;' and it will be the more difficult (and this is what I mean by calling it an arbitrary border-line) because percentages of grammar school places differ very much⁽⁴⁶⁾ from one authority to another. In other words, a performance

(45) Interview with Lord Boyle, Leeds, 21/1/74, Pp. 12-13.

(46) A. Yates and D. A. Pidgeon, "Admission to Grammar Schools", N.F.E.R., 1957. Discussing, on page 175, the availability of grammar school places, the authors say that this varied from 10% to 45% in different parts of the country.

that would get you a grammar school place in one authority did not get you a place in another authority. So over and above all the arguments of the educationists and the psychologists' arguments (and I think they were certainly relevant) here we had a serious practical difficulty.

"So many more parents now cared about education. The bi-partite system was alright when only about a quarter of the parents cared about secondary education, but when you had about 60% of parents really minding, it became much harder to justify this differential treatment of the border-liners. There were of course some arguments on the other side", and he proceeded to discuss the reasons why he was anxious to preserve the good grammar schools.

But Boyle summed it up well when he wrote⁽⁴⁷⁾ in 1972: "It was not the failure but, rather, the very achievements of the period 1951-64 - the growth of a 'middle-income' society, the rise in educational standards, and the expansion of the universities - which had made the continuation of a fixed bi-partite system less and less viable, in terms both of politics and of educational good sense."

It must be noted, however, that despite his view that the tri-partite system should no longer be regarded as the norm Sir Edward, in his London speech in June, made one important reservation: progress towards a comprehensive system, he said, could be made without sacrificing first-class grammar schools of good size. He clearly had in mind a substantial number of grammar schools in urban areas, with a view to their continuing to exist side by side with comprehensive schools. In justification of the grammar schools he had spoken about parental choice, (T.E.S., 1/3/63, P. 416) and about the need for good schools for very able children of

(47) Lord Boyle, in "Journal of Educational Administration and History", June 1972, P. 36.

whatever background (Leeds interview: P. 14). Neighbourhood comprehensive schools, he said, would not give justice to an able child of poor background. In time Boyle supported this concept of parental choice less and less, and sought other solutions for the problem of neighbourhood schools (banding, and sixth-form colleges). That left the question of whether or not good comprehensives could "stretch" a very able child.

In his speech to the A.E.C. at Belfast, Boyle had first of all spoken in defence of the secondary modern schools - to write them off as failures, he had said, seemed both unfair and unsupported by the facts.⁽⁴⁸⁾ In the light of the evidence above, the minister must have been speaking about only the better secondary modern schools. We've seen him quote Hampshire⁽⁴⁹⁾ as an area that had achieved notable success with its secondary moderns: and there were others, too, but they were in a minority.

Further evidence as to the state of the secondary modern schools was published in two different reports during the summer of 1963 - an N.U.T. survey: "The State of our Schools", and the Newsom Report: "Half our Future". The first of these, published by the National Union of Teachers, was the result of a survey that the union commissioned. It left no room for complacency, painting a picture of inadequate and often ancient buildings, over-crowding, lack of equipment and, perhaps most important, unsatisfactory staffing. The secondary buildings, admittedly, were better on the whole than the primaries⁽⁵⁰⁾, but nevertheless many were old and squalid: specialist rooms were limited⁽⁵¹⁾, and in general most secondary schools suffered from over-crowding - with

(48) Education, 12/7/63, P. 102.

(49) Lord Boyle, Op. cit., P. 33.

(50) N.U.T., "The State of our Schools", 1963, P. 11.

(51) Op. cit., P. 26.

at least 40 pupils per classroom in 20% of the schools. Some of the staff seemed to be content with the equipment, but objective details of the equipping of the schools indicate that they were not well equipped for the job they had to do, and much of the equipment they did possess was not provided by the L.E.A. (52)

The staffing situation in the secondary modern schools was poor. They were under-staffed: hence the large size of the classes. But more than that: 4% of the teachers were completely unqualified while only 19% were graduates, or graduate-equivalent: moreover there was a shortage of specialist teachers. (53) Added to this was the problem of the rapid turn-over of staff and, the report said, the poor quality of newly qualified teachers. It is not surprising that in such circumstances the secondary modern schools were unable to offer the quality and variety of courses that the grammar schools could offer, or to win the esteem enjoyed by the latter.

The Newsom Report; "Half our Future" (54), was another in the series of reports by the C.A.C.E., this time examining "education between the ages of 13 and 16 of pupils of average or less than average ability". It was based on the research of the Crowther Report, together with Newsom's own 1961 Survey of Secondary Modern and Comprehensive Schools - their pupils, staff and buildings. The N.U.T. buildings survey was also taken into account. Individual verbal evidence was given by Basil Bernstein and Jean Floud among others, while written evidence was considered from many other individuals and groups. The committee confirmed the theories that had been evolved by the educational psychologists

(52) Op. cit., Pp. 16-17, P. 26.

(53) Op. cit., Pp. 12-13, P. 20.

(54) C.A.C.E., Newsom Report: "Half our Future", H.M.S.O., 1963, (Foreword written August: Published in October).

and sociologists, during the previous decade and more, concerning the impact of environment on the development of the child. It showed that many children were not achieving their full potential because of a poor environment at home, and often at school, too. The committee found "that these children received less than their share of the resources employed by the education service and that the turn-over of teachers - on the whole the least well-qualified teachers - was fastest in the schools they attended."⁽⁵⁵⁾ Chapter 24 gave information about the staffing of these schools and expressed concern at the high turn-over of staff; appendix 3 examined some of the causes of the difficulty in recruiting staff to secondary modern schools, especially in poorer areas, and then discussed possible solutions to the problem. The conclusion was that there would be no improvement except by salary differentials - the method which was subsequently adopted for the E.P.A.'s by the Flowden Committee. As for buildings, the Report predicted that by the end of the decade nearly two-thirds of the secondary pupils would be adequately housed.⁽⁵⁶⁾ But at the time of the survey the situation was bad: "the overall picture is that one-fifth of the modern schools are generally up to standard, but two-fifths are seriously deficient in many respects."⁽⁵⁷⁾

Most reports of the C.A.C.E. contain a foreword by the current Minister of Education which is no more than a formal word of acknowledgment and thanks. On this occasion, however, Boyle made it clear in his foreword that he had studied the report and that its findings and recommendations had his full support. He laid emphasis on the point that all children should have an equal opportunity of acquiring intelligence, and of developing their talents and abilities to the full.

(55) J. Stuart Maclure, "Educational Documents 1816-1967", P. 279.

(56) Newsom Report, P. 12.

(57) Newsom Report, P. 259.

The Newsom Report had painted a gloomy picture of the condition of the secondary modern schools, and had declared that they had not been given their fair share of resources. Moreover, increased resources would not be all that would be required: examinations and curriculum needed to be revised. But was that all? Were there not, perhaps, other problems that were impossible to solve? The Newsom Committee remained silent on that: they appeared reluctant to pass judgement on either secondary modern schools or on comprehensives⁽⁵⁸⁾, since neither had been in existence long enough, they said, for their merits or weaknesses to be assessed.

A week after his address to the A.E.C. Conference in Belfast Boyle was answering a question on the subject in the House of Commons. He was asked to encourage the L.E.A.'s to experiment with comprehensive schools. In reply⁽⁵⁹⁾, he quoted from his A.E.C. speech indicating that this represented the government's view. Now it was up to each L.E.A. to initiate its policy in this matter.

Throughout the remainder of the summer of 1963 the Conservative Party was pre-occupied with doubts about its leadership. Macmillan had massacred his government in July 1962 out of a sense of insecurity, but his ruthlessness in doing so destroyed any confidence that he would otherwise have gained by a change in his team. Then there followed a security scandal⁽⁶⁰⁾ caused by the Admiralty spy, Vassall, which culminated in a tribunal of inquiry. In November 1962 the Conservatives fared badly in five by-elections. The new year brought more bad news, with De Gaulle placing his veto on Britain's application to join the E.E.C. These misfortunes were followed, in the spring, by the Profumo

(58) J. Stuart Maclure, Op. cit., P. 279.

(59) Vol. 680, H. C. Deb, 11/7/63, Col. 161-2.

(60) This and subsequent details are listed in either:-
D. Butler and J. Freeman, "British Political Facts, 1900-1967"
or: D. McKie and C. Cook, "Decade of Disillusion".

scandal, by another security fiasco involving Philby, and by the discovery of corruption and immorality associated with Rachman, Stephen Ward and others. The government was well-nigh discredited, and pressure was rising for Macmillan to resign. However he had achieved some diplomatic success first in rejecting the idea of a mixed-manned Nato fleet, and then in negotiations for a Test-ban treaty, and encouraged by these he announced in June that he would remain in office until the General Election. However, as the autumn approached, the Prime Minister's health unexpectedly deteriorated and on 13th October he announced his retirement. There was no obvious successor, and the party was unprepared for the task of finding a new leader. Macmillan from his sick bed conducted the usual sounding of opinion with a view to advising the Queen, but it soon became clear that there were several contenders, not one of whom could muster majority support. The annual conference of the Conservative Party was held during this period, but everyone's mind was distracted by the struggle for the leadership. The principal candidates and their supporters were there, attempting to gain extra support - often with little dignity. Soon it was apparent that there was deadlock and an outsider, Lord Home, was persuaded to stand. At first the main contenders and others (including Boyle) declined to support him, but eventually all except Macleod and Powell agreed to give their support.⁽⁶¹⁾ He renounced his peerage, and as Sir Alec Douglas-Home formed the new government on 18th October. Sir Edward Boyle carried on as Minister of Education.

George Thompson, a Labour Member of Parliament, reviewing the Conservatives' record for the years 1959-63⁽⁶²⁾, is critical on most issues, but education was an exception: "They can for example legitimately

(61) N. Fisher, "Iain Macleod", Pp. 241-2.

(62) G. Thompson, "1959-63: The Conservatives" in Political Quarterly, 1963, Vol. 34, Pp. 249-255.

claim that they have transferred national resources from arms to education."

In January 1963 Mr. Harold Wilson had been elected leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party, and thus Leader of the Opposition, following the sudden death of Hugh Gaitskell. In September 1963 at the annual conference of the Labour Party, Wilson made his famous "Science and Socialism" speech⁽⁶³⁾ in which he discussed the value of education to Britain as a developing technological nation. Following the advice of the 1957 Abrams survey, he used this economic argument to support Labour's views about comprehensive schools, in the belief that this would probably carry more weight with the electorate than would the egalitarian arguments formerly used. Mr. Wilson in this speech also stressed the importance of efficient technical education, but in placing the stress on economic arguments at both secondary and tertiary levels in education he gave his opponents grounds for criticism.

When the Conservative annual conference began at Blackpool in October 1963 most Conservatives were pre-occupied by the leadership question. Boyle was no exception but he nevertheless gave a noteworthy speech in the education debate. He began by chiding Mr. Wilson about his new-found interest in technical education:⁽⁶⁴⁾ Conservatives, he said, had been active in developing technical education throughout the last two parliaments. He went on to say that Mr. Wilson had "rather left out the warm human aspect of the education service".⁽⁶⁵⁾ "But while we all recognise the economic importance of the education service, I hope we shall never lose sight of its social and human importance."

(63) M. Parkinson, "The Labour Party and the Organisation of Secondary Education, 1918-65", P. 88.

(64) "Conservative Party Conference, 1963", Verbatim Report, P. 18.

(65) Op. cit., P. 19.

"We want each individual to achieve a sense of personal fulfilment; ... we want every child to have the same opportunities for acquiring intelligence." He spoke about the effect of an adverse home environment on a potentially gifted child, and how school can to some extent compensate. Sir Edward also made an appeal for a renewed effort to make a success of the secondary modern schools: the new C.S.E. examination, he said should help. (66)

Late in October came the official publication of the Newsom Report with its recommendations for helping the average and less than average child - recommendations for raising the school leaving age, for a fair share of resources for secondary modern schools, for action to relieve the staff crisis in these schools. Following closely on the heels of the Newsom Report came the Robbins Report on Higher Education. (67) It was a vast multi-volume work based on extensive research, associated with people like Claus Moser, D. V. Glass, J. W. B. Douglas, P. Vernon, Jean Floud, and R. K. Kensall. Although it was concerned with higher education it had a relevance for secondary education because it re-affirmed the reality of certain facts. "Our investigations have suggested the existence of large reservoirs of untapped ability in the population", it said. (68) The report recommended a huge programme of university expansion, and it maintained that this could be achieved without lowering academic standards, such was the reserve of ability that was being neglected and wasted. The report re-iterated what earlier reports had said: that social rather than genetic factors were limiting the flow of students. (69)

(66) Ibid.

(67) Robbins Report, "Higher Education", (Cmd. 2154).

(68) Op. cit., P. 268; Pp. 49-54.

(69) Op. cit., Pp. 49-54.

The Robbins report had been commissioned by the Prime Minister and was not the work of the official C.A.C.E. Now, after its publication, it was immediately given the support of the government and, more important, of the Treasury - to the tune of £3,500 million.

In the closing months of 1963 another educational issue was coming to the fore: whether the universities should be brought under the control of an up-graded Ministry of Education. At that time they were financed from the Treasury through the University Grants Committee. It seemed agreed that they should have a minister of their own (instead of a financial minister) but should there be one or two ministers for education? The Robbins Report had considered the question and it favoured a separate minister for Arts and Science, and recommended that universities, colleges of advanced technology, schools of education and any other autonomous body in higher education should be placed under his control, with a re-organised U.G.C. in an intermediary position.

Some people favoured a unified and extended Ministry of Education, embracing everything in the education field, and with Boyle as minister. Others favoured two ministries, with Quintin Hogg as minister for Arts and Science, while Boyle continued as before. (70)

In March 1964 the Prime Minister announced that from 1st April the Ministry of Education would be re-structured⁽⁷¹⁾: all higher education would in future be controlled by the same minister as the rest of the education structure in England. The post would rank as a secretary of state and the Ministry of Education would become the Department of Education and Science. Two ministers would serve under the secretary of state. Quintin Hogg, formerly Lord Hailsham, was to be in the top

(70) Education, 22/11/63, P. 949; Economist, 21/12/63, P. 1267.

(71) T.E.S., 13/3/64, P. 662.

position, with Sir Edward Boyle and Lord Newton as the Ministers - Boyle for Higher Education and Newton for Schools. The apportionment of the responsibilities caused disappointment to those connected with primary and secondary education, because they had never heard of Lord Newton, but in practice the division proved to be quite flexible.

Boyle stepped down from the leadership in education after one year and nine months. Summing up Boyle's progress during this period, Kogan⁽⁷²⁾ pointed to Boyle's preface to the Newsom Report - equal opportunity for all children: then Kogan traced the notion of equality as it was understood in the 1920s and 1930s, and implemented by 11+ selection; he showed how in the 1950s that interpretation of equality was seen to be inadequate, and selection was hindering rather than assisting the "able poor". Then, between the early fifties and the early sixties a great transition took place - beginning with the intelligensia, the sociologists, the educational psychologists and the economists, who created a climate of opinion that later on Boyle, the radical Conservative, was able to confirm as policy.

But Kogan had omitted to mention Boyle's reservation about the good grammar schools. Perhaps he did not think that it placed a significant limitation on the comprehensive policy: or perhaps Kogan believed that a comprehensive school system could function effectively alongside good grammar schools. Experience would show otherwise.

Boyle had accepted the basic message spelled out by the experts: now he needed to take it to its logical conclusion.

(72) M. Kogan, "The Politics of Education", Pp. 92-3.

Chapter 11Comprehensive? Yes, but not the grammar schools

There now followed a short, but not insignificant interlude, during which Quintin Hogg was in charge of policy-making, but with Edward Boyle obviously exerting influence, though in a discreet manner. Hogg had changed little since his last tenure of the education ministry, and at the end of six months we are left wondering just where does he really stand in this debate.

On the first day of the re-organised ministry it was Sir Edward Boyle who set the ball rolling. He was speaking to the N.A.S. Conference at Folkstone⁽¹⁾, discussing the question of education justifying itself by showing that it was giving value for money. He said that he could not imagine a more worthy purpose than giving all young people the chance to develop their capacities to the full. A second point concerned primary schools. Mr. Hogg and he were agreed that primary schools should be accorded a high priority, and he revealed that funds would be available for them in the near future.

Mr. Hogg's first statement was made at Question Time in the House, a few days later.⁽²⁾ He was questioned about recent research by Douglas into the disadvantage suffered by working class children in 11+ selection J. W. B. Douglas: "The Home and the School"⁷. Hogg dismissed the evidence as small, and its significance as unclear. But although he wouldn't be drawn on this question, a month later in a written reply in the House he gave a clear statement⁽³⁾ of his policy for comprehensive

(1) T.E.S., 3/4/64, P. 854.

(2) Vol. 692, H. C. Deb, 9/4/64, Col. 1181-2.

(3) Vol. 694, H. C. Deb, 7/5/64, Col. 173.

schools. He said that he stood by Sir Edward's policy as stated in the Commons on 11th July 1963, when he referred back to his A.E.C. speech in Belfast. "That answer", said Mr. Hogg, "set out in some detail the government's attitude."

A week later Mr. Hogg was once more answering a question about comprehensives. It was a request for an objective report to assess all the experiments that had been made with comprehensive schools; surely, such an enquiry would be invaluable in view of the breakdown of the tri-partite system. Mr. Hogg declined⁽⁴⁾ to set up an enquiry (all the experience gathered by the D.E.S. was available to the L.E.A.'s, he said) but he made the remarkable admission that the tri-partite system had already broken down seven years before, when he was first Minister of Education. He was probably referring to a speech that he made to the N.U.T. in April 1957, when he implied that the secondary modern schools had not come up to expectations, due to lack of money. However he was determined, then, to put this right.

He spoke sympathetically again about comprehensive schools when he addressed the A.E.C. at Harrogate on 26th June.⁽⁵⁾ Following recent Conservative policy, he stressed that he thought it would be disastrous if the D.E.S. were to impose upon the L.E.A.'s a fixed policy for secondary education. Each L.E.A. ought to be free to make its own choice, but he hoped that the decision would be soundly based on educational considerations. He added however that he envisaged denominational and direct grant schools existing side-by-side with comprehensive schools and serving as a safety valve for minorities and for talented children.

During the month of July 1964 the government placed a short education

(4) Vol. 695, H. C. Deb., 14/5/64, Col. 577-8.

(5) Education, 3/7/64, P. 57.

bill before Parliament. Its main aim was "to enable L.E.A.'s in England and Wales, and Voluntary Bodies, to experiment with new schools, but only new schools, in varying the age of transfer, subject to the approval of the Secretary of State".⁽⁶⁾ The purpose of this was to legalise experiments with middle schools. These provided for children from 8 years of age to 12, or from 9 to 13, whereas the existing law stated that transfer from primary to secondary education should take place between the age of 10½ and 12 years. Lord Boyle recalls⁽⁷⁾ that Sir Alec Clegg, Chief Education Officer of the West Riding, had long been pressing for this. "It seemed to me," wrote Boyle "as to my most loyal and able Parliamentary Secretary, Christopher Chataway, that here was a pattern of secondary re-organisation which might well fit the needs, and the existing resources, of a number of L.E.A.'s." By the end of the month the bill was on the statute book and the Conservative Government had made a practical contribution to comprehensive education, encouraging a method which they thought had considerable potential.

It is natural that any public speaker will tend, to some extent, to adjust the stress of his arguments and views to meet with the sympathies of his audience. However at the end of June, when Sir Edward Boyle was speaking at a public meeting at Isleworth Grammar School, he didn't confine his attention to the able child⁽⁸⁾, but firmly reminded his audience that a great many boys and girls are written off at a level below their potential. The Minister of Education has a duty to ensure that all boys and girls are given an equal opportunity to develop their intelligence to the full, he told them.

(6) Education Bill 1964 (H.L.) 2nd reading, Vol. 697, H. C. Deb, 1/7/64, Col. 1413 et seq.

(7) Lord Boyle, Article in "Journal of Educational Administration and History", June 1972, P. 34.

(8) T.E.S., 3/7/64, P. 19.

A fortnight later Mr. Hogg took the opportunity, at the summer fête of the Quintin School, St. Marylebone, to speak about talent and the gifted child.⁽⁹⁾ He was usually good when philosophizing in this manner. We should not be ashamed of talent, he began, nor can democracy afford to neglect it. But brains are a responsibility not a privilege - a responsibility that calls for self-discipline, self-sacrifice and effort. But at this point Mr. Hogg became careless: in London there are good grammar schools, good comprehensive schools and good modern schools, he said. There are schools in each of these categories that are less good. Then he claimed: "But the good of each kind can co-exist with one another. There is no reason why one should oust the other." It was a consoling thought for his audience that day, but was it not rather misleading? He clearly had in mind the prestige comprehensive schools of Inner London - Wandsworth, Highbury Grove and the others. It was true that they could compete with grammar schools of average calibre. What Hogg omitted to say was that the remainder of London's comprehensive schools were little more than secondary moderns. Moreover, these comprehensive schools were "less good" because they had a poor start in life and, even more important, they had no chance of attracting able children. This was the fault of the system. They were "less good" because grammar schools were functioning in competition with a comprehensive system - a contradiction in terms - and the result was clear for all to see. Mr. Hogg's statement was a misleading simplification.

Then, on 30th July, at the very time when the new education bill became law, thereby facilitating comprehensive re-organisation, Mr. Hogg allowed himself to be led by one of his own party into a defence of the grammar schools.⁽¹⁰⁾ The implication was that grammar schools were being

(9) C.C.O., No. 8688, 18/7/64.

(10) Vol. 699, H. C. Deb, 30/7/64, Col. 367.

closed behind his back, and he replied by pointing out that the opening or closing of a school could be lawful only if it had the approval of the Secretary of State for Education, and "I would certainly look carefully at any proposal to destroy an existing school with a successful record which was valued by parents."

A general election had been called for October 1964, and the election manifesto gave another statement of the Conservative policy on comprehensives, but one which must be approached with caution. Election manifestos are written for the purpose of winning votes: they have to make the party's policy look as attractive as possible, and they seldom give a balanced statement of the real policy. This one was no exception. On the issue of comprehensive education the Conservative election manifesto of 1964⁽¹¹⁾ made it appear that the electorate had a choice between the Labour policy of compulsory and universal comprehensive education which would inevitably destroy the grammar schools, or the Conservative policy of encouraging "provision in good schools of every description, of opportunities for all children to go forward to the limit of their capacity". It was left to Boyle, in an article in the T.E.S.,⁽¹²⁾ to elaborate on the manifesto and, in the light of the policies that he had evolved during the previous 15 months, explain what his party was prepared to accept in the field of comprehensive education, and what they would reject.

One final and significant event before the election was the establishing of the Schools Council.⁽¹³⁾ Its purpose was to study and encourage the development of school curricula and examinations. Here was something that Sir Edward felt was of the utmost importance for all

(11) Conservative Party Election Manifesto, 1964, "Prosperity with a purpose".

(12) T.E.S., 25/9/64, P. 457.

(13) Circular 13/64; "Education in 1964" (Cmd. 2612), P. 11 and P. 33.

children, but particularly for the average and less than average child. The project received his full support from the beginning. The Schools Council wasn't making a completely new start in this field; it was taking over some work formerly done by the Secondary School Examinations Council, but now the work was to be extended, and a complete coverage would be given in matters of curricula and examinations. The Schools Council was, moreover, being established in such a way that it fully represented those concerned in the work - the Central and Local Authorities, and above all the teachers themselves. (14)

But the nation was now preparing to go to the polls to pass a verdict on the recent performance of the government. In thirteen years of Tory rule Britain had risen to a state of considerable prosperity under Macmillan, and then public life, under that same leadership, had appeared to become tainted, perhaps by that very prosperity. Even before Macmillan's retirement on account of ill-health there were clear signs that the nation was disenchanted with the government and everything connected with it. During the struggle for the leadership of the party, after Macmillan's resignation, a number of senior members of the Conservative Party expressed the view that Sir Alec Douglas-Home didn't have what was needed to lead the party to victory in a general election. (15) Respected though he was on account of his integrity and his talent in foreign affairs, Sir Alec did not project a personality, that would of itself attract votes. But could anyone have led the party to victory on this occasion? Or did the weakness lie in the state of the party and its members, rather than in the leadership? The inquest would answer that. In October 1959 the Conservatives had won with an overall majority of 100 seats. Five years later, all of that was gone, and now a Labour

(14) Education, 19/6/64, P. 1185.

(15) N. Fisher, "Iain Macleod", Pp. 237-41.

government was returned, though its majority was a mere four seats.

The verdict on Quintin Hogg's ministry was one of disappointment as it had been after his first tenure of the education portfolio. Between his two spells at Curzon Street⁽¹⁶⁾ he had acquired a reputation for erratic outbursts and behaviour. This militated against him in education. But in a farewell to Boyle the same commentator wrote: "By contrast, Sir Edward Boyle, in spite of the damaging errors which led him into a head-on collision with the Burnham Committee, managed to retain to the last the goodwill and respect of all sections of the educational community. His reasoned criticism is going to be invaluable in opposition and his friends will hope that he will continue to keep himself in close touch with what goes on. No one will believe that his connection with the Department of Education and Science ended for good last Thursday."⁽¹⁷⁾

(16) Education, 23/10/64, P. 688.

(17) Ibid.

Chapter 12Tory dilemma: Quality versus Equality.A new role for the grammar schools.

We have now seen how Edward Boyle during the previous 15 months had evolved a new, liberal, Tory education policy - one which he believed was free from political dogmatism and based on the principle of social justice. At the same time he was convinced that a policy of equal opportunity must not be carried out at the expense of educational standards. There had to be a balance between the two. Boyle had by this time persuaded his leader to support him in this policy, and the next task was to win the support of the members of the party. This was not going to be easy, because many of them held traditional right-wing views and were very suspicious of egalitarian ideas. To them, equality was a socialist watchword which suggested bringing some things down and others up to a standard level. Many of these traditionalists feared they would be the victims in this process. A second problem that Boyle would meet, now that the party was in opposition, was that the rank and file members would tend to react against Labour policy in a party-political manner, thus making it particularly difficult to introduce liberal policies to them. So the next five years were for Boyle a struggle against certain factions in his own party on the one hand, and on the other hand a struggle against Tory political reaction to the Labour government's policies.

Immediately after the electoral defeat Sir Alec and other leading Conservatives felt that a swift and thorough examination of the party's policies was necessary.⁽¹⁾ The Advisory Committee on Policy was given

(1) (a) G. Hutchinson, "Edward Heath", P. 133.
(b) D. Butler and M. Pinto-Duschinsky, "The British General Election 1970", Chapter 3, Pp. 66-68.

the task, and Edward Heath was appointed chairman in place of R. A. Butler who had held the post since 1945; Edward Boyle became vice-chairman. Policy groups were established to deal with different topics and these groups were augmented by outside experts, including academics. It was going to be a searching review. Later, when Heath became leader of the party, the work of chairing the meetings frequently fell on Boyle as vice-chairman. There is no evidence that Boyle was particularly enthusiastic about this kind of work, but he was in fact an expert on Conservative philosophy and policy, and his position in this particular exercise is an indication of his influence and of the esteem in which he was held by the leadership of the party.

Michael Stewart was appointed Secretary of State for Education in the new Labour Government, and on 12th November 1964 he informed the Commons that the new government intended to encourage the comprehensive form of secondary education.⁽²⁾ At the same time, he said, they would preserve what was valued in the grammar schools, broaden the curriculum of these schools and make them available to more children. A fortnight later he was on his feet again saying that the government accepted that it could not be done overnight, nor by any one method.⁽³⁾ On this occasion, Mr. Hogg, the Opposition Spokesman for Education, asked some questions about whether the government would force L.E.A.'s to go comprehensive and whether it would restrain over-enthusiastic L.E.A.'s from attempting to implement unsound schemes.⁽⁴⁾ He added that he had "no hostility towards a purpose-built comprehensive system, deliberately chosen by a local community", but he urged that there should be less haste and more consultation.

(2) "Education in 1964", (Cmnd. 2612), P. 11.

(3) Ibid.

(4) Vol. 702, H. C. Deb, 27/11/64, Col. 1795.

The whole question of the comprehensive system and its relation to the grammar schools was debated in the Commons on 21st January 1965. Hogg spoke strongly against Labour's policy, pointing out that the Secretary of State had no power to force L.E.A.'s to follow this policy and it would be quite wrong to use his Section 13 powers to put pressure indirectly on the L.E.A.'s for this purpose. (5) He went on to quote various authorities as being opposed to Labour's proposals - the Crowther and Newsom Reports, the N.U.T., the Joint Four, and the Senior Chief H.M.I. Hogg agreed that the original basis of the tri-partite system - that there are three distinct types of children - had been proved wrong but, he claimed, the system was not a tri-partite one. We basically had two types of school, he said, and they overlap.

Sir Edward Boyle was there, supporting Hogg as far as he could, but stating his case in a more precise manner (Col. 510-16). For example, while he agreed with Mr. Hogg that selection had a role to play he also made it clear that he was against taking a final decision on a child's ability at the age of 11. He pointed to the overlapping of courses between grammar and secondary modern schools as being the method that Conservatives favoured for achieving this aim. He also stressed the need to provide adequately for the very able children, and for the least-able. The latter are usually best provided for in a small school. Finally, he said, the nation could not afford an expensive building programme for comprehensives when there was an urgent need to improve primary schools.

On the following day Michael Stewart moved on from Education to become Foreign Secretary because Patrick Gordon-Walker had failed a second time to win a seat in the Commons. Stewart was succeeded as

(5) Vol. 705, H. C. Deb, 21/1/65, Col. 413 et seq.

Secretary of State for Education and Science by Anthony Crosland who held the post for the next two and a half years and came to be regarded as one of the best education ministers that Labour had had for many years. Crosland was one of the leading intellectuals in the Labour Party at that time. In 1956 he had published "The Future of Socialism"⁽⁶⁾, a stimulating study of the philosophy of Socialism. In particular he had analysed the notion of equality - how it was understood by Socialists in the early part of this century, and whether this was still relevant. He analysed factors, other than mal-distribution of wealth, which offended against the idea of equality. A new elite has arisen - a new class structure - based not on inherited wealth but on acquired wealth, influence and power of many kinds. This eliteness needs to be minimised, he said: public schools and the tri-partite system were major contributors to this new eliteness. Now, on his appointment as Secretary of State for Education and Science, he was in possession of the means to implement his ideas. After surveying the scene, he decided that comprehensive re-organisation would need to be introduced at a moderate pace since the path ahead "was studded with obstacles, the shortage of public buildings, the state of public opinion and the fact of local self-determination".⁽⁷⁾

Labour's stated policy on comprehensive education soon gave cause for alarm. In February 1965, within days of the new minister taking office, Mr. A. B. Clegg, chief education officer of the West Riding, was sounding a warning.⁽⁸⁾ In his presidential address to the Association of Chief Education Officers he said that it was because he believed in comprehensive schools that he was opposed to their being established at all costs. He continued: "I am alarmed at the speed and expediency

(6) C. A. R. Crosland, "The Future of Socialism", London, 1956.

(7) Quoted by M. Parkinson, "The Labour Party and the Organisation of Secondary Education 1918-65", P. 89.

(8) T.E.S., 5/2/65, P. 357; also in New Society, 11/2/65, Pp. 20-22.

with which some authorities are proposing to push through any old re-shuffle that will avoid the examinations at eleven." In particular he condemned schemes whereby children remained for only two years in one school: transit camps, he called them. Nor did he like the establishing of a comprehensive school in widely separated buildings. As for selection at 14 (the Leicestershire scheme) this would have the social effect of putting the clock back 40 years, he said.

On 6th March 1965 Sir Edward Boyle, who had now succeeded Mr. Hogg as Opposition Spokesman for Education, re-stated the Conservative view.⁽⁹⁾ In a speech to the Central Council of the Conservative Party he referred back to the 1958 White Paper, spoke of the suitability of comprehensive schools in rural districts or new housing areas, but expressed opposition to comprehensive schemes in large cities which involved "the loss of integrity of established schools of real excellence". He also spoke about priorities in the use of limited financial resources. He listed four things that should take preference over comprehensive schools: more teachers for primary schools; replacement of old school buildings; post-school education in every field; and finally the content of education at all levels. Later that month Boyle discussed the subject again at the Conservative Local Government Conference.⁽¹⁰⁾ He expressed his support for the stand taken by Mr. Alec Clegg the previous month, and he added that Conservatives and others need to be convinced that the able child would not be held back in 'comprehensive factories'. They wanted children in all schools to get the right kind of education, but were opposed to any levelling down. That was the point at issue between the two main parties. Boyle did not condemn the comprehensive system outright but was convinced

(9) N.C.P., 12/7/65, P. 399 and P. 402.

(10) Times, 20/3/65, P. 8; T.E.S., 26/3/65, P. 942.

that care was needed in its introduction.⁽¹¹⁾

In April of that year the new Secretary of State made an important policy statement concerning higher education. Mr. Crosland in a speech at Woolwich Polytechnic⁽¹²⁾ said that the government had decided to develop a binary system in higher education and, to this end, no more universities would be created during the next 10 years. Since 1956, when Eccles issued a White Paper on technical education, there had been an increasing demand for more places, and for increased quality. Ten important technical colleges had been raised in status to Colleges of Advanced Technology. These, in turn, were now in the process of becoming universities in their own right. But Mr. Crosland was about to put an end to this development. In future, when it was thought necessary to increase the status of a technical college, it would become not a university but a polytechnic, which he later defined as "a comprehensive institution of higher education embracing full-time, part-time and sandwich students".⁽¹³⁾

At first glance this policy appears to be a step to establish a bi-partite or selective system in higher education. Noel Annan takes this interpretation⁽¹⁴⁾, likening the binary system in H.E. to the tri-partite system in secondary education, with the universities in the role of the direct grant schools. But perhaps there is room for another interpretation. Selection had long been practised in tertiary education: the more able students proceeded to university, while the less able were offered courses at their local technical college. Furthermore, while in

(11) Guardian, 20/3/65, P. 3.

(12) T.E.S., 30/4/65, P. 1328.

(13) White Paper, "A plan for Polytechnics and other colleges", (Cmd. 3006), May 1966.

(14) Noel Annan, "The Reform of Higher Education", article in Political Quarterly 1967, Vol. 38, Pp. 234-52.

the latter the courses were vocationally orientated (and these associated with less-able students) the universities perpetuated the image of learning for its own sake, culminating perhaps in research work, and associated this with the very able student. Selection, then, already existed and Mr. Crosland might well have seen polytechnics in the role of comprehensive schools, trying to supplant the university as the comprehensive was trying to supplant the grammar school. It would try to achieve this by raising vocationally orientated technical courses to the academic level of the universities. In his Woolwich speech he gave an indication of his motives, and they are in keeping with this comprehensive interpretation. It was desirable in itself, he said, that a substantial part of the higher education system should be under social control, directly responsive to social needs.

It was common knowledge that the Secretary of State was preparing to issue a circular about comprehensive schools.⁽¹⁵⁾ So, before the government committed itself to a policy, Sir Edward Boyle asked the minister⁽¹⁶⁾ for an assurance that projects purely to implement re-organisation would not be given priority over further projects to replace primary schools. Mr. Crosland gladly gave that assurance. It is interesting to note that no British government from that day to this has ever⁽¹⁷⁾ sanctioned projects purely to implement comprehensive re-organisation. The cost of re-organising the entire country would be vast, and if funds were made available for one project they would have to be given for all.

(15) N.C.P., 12/7/65, P. 401.

(16) Vol. 715, H. C. Deb, 1/7/65, Col. 796.

(17) A small exception to this was allowed when in January 1968 the raising of the school leaving age was deferred. In cases where R.O.S.L.A. money was also achieving comprehensive re-organisation, projects were allowed to continue. [As this thesis was being typed, the government announced that £25 million was to be made available for comprehensive re-organisation.]

The long-awaited circular was published on 12th July 1965 - Circular 10/65. It was an attempt to lay down a national policy on comprehensive re-organisation, which all L.E.A.'s were expected to accept. The circular declared that the government's policy was to put an end to selection at 11+ and eliminate separatism in secondary education. All L.E.A.'s were requested to submit plans to show how they intended to implement this policy and, to assist the authorities in drawing up plans, six different types of organisation were sanctioned, two of which however could be accepted only as interim schemes. The fact that there was no money available was mentioned, and the document stressed that there must be consultation and co-operation with parents and teachers (S40-42). This underlined the general approach that the Secretary of State took towards the entire matter.⁽¹⁸⁾ He realised that there was no money available solely for this purpose, but he considered that, given good will on the part of L.E.A.'s, steady progress could be made by resourcefulness and ingenuity, particularly when resources were available for replacing old buildings. Moreover, he believed that the country was behind Labour in this comprehensive policy and that the aim could be achieved by consultation and persuasion, without having recourse to legislation.

Boyle subsequently summed up the Conservative reaction to the circular under three heads:⁽¹⁹⁾ middle-class parents who were sure that their child would win a grammar school place wanted to keep it that way; there was a fear of "botched-up" schemes, due to lack of resources; and some feared comprehensives lest they became too egalitarian. As a result of this reaction, many Conservatives looked to Boyle to resist with a hard line. But, while he was opposed to a compulsory imposition

(18) Tyrrell Burgess, "Obituary for 10/65", T.E.S., 3/7/70, P. 75.

(19) Lord Boyle in Journal of Educational Administration and History, Leeds University, June 1972, Pp. 34-5.

of comprehensive education, Boyle recognised the need to move away from selection at 11+. The Conservative Party was in a dilemma regarding its policy on secondary education and Boyle said so at the party annual conference in October.

Early in October the Conservative Party published its new policy document "Putting Britain Right Ahead".⁽²⁰⁾ It was the result of the work of the party's Advisory Committee on Policy which had set about this task under its new chairman, Edward Heath, after the election defeat in the previous year. Heath, by now the leader of the party, had done immense work, with Edward Boyle as his chief assistant, to marshal the policy-groups, sub-groups and other consultation machinery throughout the party. The document was the fore-runner of the election manifesto of March 1966 when it was said that Heath's party "had perhaps the most radical programme advanced by any since the war. It represented not just a break with the past, but with the past of the Conservative Party as well."⁽²¹⁾ But in matters of education the Advisory Committee on Policy was faced with a grave problem. It was perhaps best summed up in the following: "We have long recognised that eleven is too early an age at which finally to decide the kind of course of which a boy or girl may be capable. But while acknowledging this, and accepting that a comprehensive pattern is best suited to certain areas, we do not believe that the academic standards set by our grammar schools, which are widely admired outside this country, can be maintained if all these schools are to lose their separate identity."⁽²²⁾ The only solution that could be suggested for the problem was to say that the consequences of selection at eleven should not be final. But was this feasible? Attempts had

(20) "Putting Britain Right Ahead", Conservative Central Office, October 1965.

(21) D. McKie and C. Cook, "Decade of Disillusion", P. 42.

(22) "Putting Britain Right Ahead", P. 17.

been made for some years to minimise the effects of wrong selection at eleven, but with little success.

This document was fresh in the minds of party delegates who attended the annual conference of the party at Brighton in the middle of October 1965. In the education debate the motion first of all deplored the cuts in expenditure that Labour had imposed on education in July, then it went on to condemn ill-conceived schemes which were being submitted by some L.E.A.'s and accepted by the government. There was an acceptance however that comprehensive schools could be of value in certain circumstances. Sir Edward Boyle, the Shadow Spokesman for Education, was well received when he made the concluding speech of the debate. His theme was a development of the policy document of the previous week.⁽²³⁾ He echoed the words of several previous speakers when he admitted that the Conservative Party was in a dilemma in this matter of secondary re-organisation: eleven was too early to segregate children according to ability, yet the comprehensive alternative meant the death of grammar schools and a lowering of academic standards. This, he said, was the reason why Conservatives had not been dogmatic in the policy document, and were not being dogmatic now. He declared that he did not believe that the time had come for rapid and universal imposition of the comprehensive principle. A little later he added that there were reasons for not going too fast; his proposed solution was that there should be a slower process of evolution in this matter. In conclusion, and to lift the debate above the level of party dogmatisms, he reminded the delegates of a principle laid down by an earlier, distinguished Tory education leader - Lord Butler. "I have always believed", said Boyle, "that the Butler Act and all that has followed from it, has been

(23) "Conservative Party Conference 1965", Verbatim report, Pp. 56-7; T.E.S., 22/10/65, P. 829; P. 832.

one of the greatest chapters in the history of our Party. Let us firmly stand by our ideal of secondary education for all and do not let us ever give the impression that we are interested only in the secondary education of one section."

During the early months of 1966 there were signs of dissent within the Labour government. The economic situation was still bad, and this time the axe fell on Defence. But despite a ministerial resignation Harold Wilson felt that the wind was generally blowing in the right direction for his party and he called a general election for March. So these months were important ones for the parties to decide upon, and propagate their election policies. There have been times when the major political parties, or individuals in them, have had a great deal of policy in common. Butskellism in the 1950's represented a consensus of opinion between large sectors of each party over broad areas in policy: and now it was evident that there was a great deal that Crosland and Boyle had in common in educational matters. Many of the party faithful felt (and still do) that elections can be lost if there are too many areas of grey, instead of clear-cut black and white, in matters of policy - too much common ground instead of opposing policies. Critics in the Conservative Party felt that Sir Edward would have to be watched. They didn't have to wait long. The North of England Education Conference met that year at Harrogate and on 6th January 1966 Boyle and Crosland were together on the platform answering questions on their parties' policies. In reply to a question as to what the Conservatives would do about Circular 10/65 if they were to return to power in the spring Sir Edward⁽²⁴⁾ said that he would not immediately withdraw the circular, as he would be interested to learn what ideas the authorities had to offer. Further,

(24) C.C.O., 6/1/66 (Wrongly dated 6/1/65), No. 9834.

he recalled that the Plowden Committee was expected to report in the autumn concerning the age of transfer, so it would seem wise to wait until after that, before finalising plans. A Conservative government of course would not make the same drive in a comprehensive direction, but on the other hand he had no intention of sending out a circular urging secondary organisation on a bi-partite pattern. "I should continue to judge individual proposals of local authorities for re-organisation on their merits as my predecessors and I always did."

Obviously, Sir Edward's first statement - that he would not immediately withdraw Circular 10/65 - would need clarification, because that circular expected all L.E.A.'s to make plans to become comprehensive, but Boyle's second statement implied that the L.E.A.'s would be left to choose for themselves whether or not to do so. Early in February he was reported⁽²⁵⁾ to be in trouble with his political activists over this speech. On 24th February he made his view clear, in the House⁽²⁶⁾, that Circular 10/65 had no force whatsoever in law. Then, at the beginning of March, during the debate on comprehensive schools⁽²⁷⁾ he explained his point of view very fully. The Conservatives, he said, would make teacher supply and primary education their main priorities, not comprehensive schools. In his view, the government should not waste money duplicating secondary schools of a comprehensive type where adequate secondary provision already existed, albeit in a bi-partite form. The shortcomings of selection, which are associated with bi-partite schools, should instead be minimised by the overlapping of courses between the grammar and modern schools. He warned the House that neighbourhood schools in the poorer quarters of large cities would do less than justice

(25) Education, 11/2/66, P. 297.

(26) Vol. 725, H. C. Deb, 24/2/66, Col. 607-8.

(27) Vol. 725, H. C. Deb, 2/3/66, Col. 1385-1438.

to the able children of those areas. Sir Edward conceded to Mr. Prentice, however, that there were evils arising from 11+ selection which could not be overcome merely by overlapping of courses between schools: there was, for example, the problem of the early sense of failure engendered in a child who failed to obtain a grammar school place.

Despite Boyle's assurances that he disagreed with Labour on many points of their comprehensive policy, his critics within the Conservative Party wanted no compromise.⁽²⁸⁾ Possibly their voices would have gone unheard had not Mr. Crosland intervened at this point with another circular about comprehensive schools. Circular 10/65 had simply requested L.E.A.'s to prepare and submit plans for comprehensive schools: this one - Circular 10/66 - was an attempt to use indirect methods to coerce the L.E.A.'s. There was no law that the Secretary of State could use to force L.E.A.'s to submit plans, but Circular 10/66 indicated that he was prepared to use financial sanctions. In future, he said, he would not include on a building programme any secondary school project that was "incompatible with the introduction of a non-selective system of secondary education". But the timing of the circular was crucial - a mere three weeks before the election. The Tories had to react. Within the week Mr. Heath did. At an election press conference he declared⁽²⁹⁾ that if the Conservatives were returned to power they would withdraw both of these circulars - 10/65 and 10/66. Instead L.E.A.'s would be invited to choose for themselves whether to go comprehensive or not. A Conservative government would however reject any "bogus schemes" that were proposed. By this Mr. Heath meant the grouping together of small schools to form a split-site comprehensive school. However, the

(28) T.E.S., 4/3/66, P. 642.

(29) T.E.S., 18/3/66, P. 826.

Conservative election manifesto had already been produced⁽³⁰⁾ and it contained none of these recent reactionary ideas. Indeed it is doubtful whether Mr. Heath's late intervention had much effect: the electorate went to the polls with the impression that there was little to choose between the parties in educational matters. Certainly, education did not emerge as an election issue.⁽³¹⁾

Despite this alleged failure by Crosland to bring about a divergence of educational policies, for election purposes, a slow evolution was nevertheless taking place that would leave the two parties far apart in the matter of secondary education. When Crosland became Secretary of State for Education and Science he needed no persuasion to accept the comprehensive principle: he had advocated it for years. Sir Edward Boyle had gradually come to share this conviction, though he had arrived at this position by a rather different line of reason. Even in the matter of preserving grammar schools there was a certain agreement. Boyle was urging moderation and a slow evolution towards comprehensive education in order to avoid a mass closure of grammar schools. Crosland came to office with a statement calling for a "moderate pace" towards comprehensive re-organisation because of the obstacles that lay ahead (Parkinson, P. 89). One of the obstacles he mentioned was the state of public opinion - presumably a reference to esteem for the grammar schools.

However in 1965 Labour took the plunge. It could be said that the two parties were faced with a choice between equal opportunity for all children or the maintaining of high standards. Not everyone would agree that comprehensive schools mean lower standards. Some see the

(30) "Action not Words", Conservative Party's election manifesto, 1966.

(31) Education, 25/3/66, P. 613.

comprehensive system as one which merely spreads out the high concentration of able pupils and highly qualified staff into smaller, though viable, units. With this line of argument in mind Labour chose to abandon the grammar schools and work all out to achieve equal opportunity for all children through the medium of comprehensive education. Circulars 10/65 and 10/66 were the result of this decision.

On the other hand Boyle, afraid lest comprehensive schools would fail to maintain standards, was in a dilemma over the choice. His initial reaction (at the annual conference 1965) was to urge a retarding of the process of re-organisation. Since that time he had sought to discover schemes whereby grammar schools could be given a role within a comprehensive scheme. Transfer of pupils at ages later than eleven suggested that grammar schools might find a role in comprehensive systems as upper-tier schools or as sixth form colleges. This was to be Boyle's approach to the problem in the years ahead.

The Conservatives fought the 1966 election with a set of policies which had been devised since 1964 under Mr. Heath's leadership. They were radical enough, ⁽³²⁾ but nevertheless failed to capture the imagination of the nation. Moreover, Heath's popularity was not great, while Wilson's had increased due to his recent handling of U.D.I. in Rhodesia. The result was that Labour won the election, increasing their overall majority from 4 seats in 1964 to 96 seats.

With the election over, there was no longer the need to speak with vote-catching in mind. Sir Edward was able to return to his two-fold task of trying to convert the extreme elements of his own party to a more moderate view, while at the same time trying to persuade the

(32) D. McKie and C. Cook, "Decade of Disillusion", P. 42.

government to be less dogmatic, and more practical and realistic in this matter of comprehensive schools. Educational standards must be maintained in the process, he insisted.

Boyle launched into his task without delay, in the Commons debate on Education and Technology in April of that year. His first point⁽³³⁾ was to remind members that educational demands were outstripping resources, and therefore it was essential to determine an order of priority. Conservatives would begin with expansion of teacher supply, and then go on to improve and expand primary education, restore the cuts in higher education while improving further education, increase resources for special schools, and finally spend more on the Newsom sector. He spoke about the need to assist schools, especially primary schools, in the twilight zones of towns and cities - a theme that received much publicity and attention later in the year when the Flowden Committee reported its findings. Boyle had pointedly omitted any reference to comprehensives in his list of educational priorities but now he proceeded to discuss several points connected with them^(Col. 394-8). Conservatives were not committed to selection as a matter of principle. They were prepared to experiment with comprehensives in the search for an alternative to selection, but not if it involved the destruction of good schools. Boyle quietly made other small but telling points. Shortage of money, he asserted, would lead to over-enthusiastic L.E.A.'s proposing make-shift schemes: these must be resisted. Some L.E.A.'s were doing quite well in overcoming the short-comings of the bi-partite system, and they wanted the opportunity to continue experimenting on these lines, and with recently established secondary modern schools. Section 13 of the 1944 Education Act gave the Secretary of State a useful power to examine all proposed developments

(33) Vol. 727, H. C. Deb, 25/4/66, Col. 387-99.

in the educational system, but Circular 10/66 would be a mis-use of this power. Then Sir Edward posed the question whether comprehensives were capable of stretching the capacity of the top 5% of children in the ability range, while at the same time providing for the bottom 10%. He agreed that perhaps there should be more comprehensives but, even in the long term, he could not support unconditional abolition of selection. He concluded with a plea for direct grant schools, which were being threatened by the government. Eventually, if the government's policies were implemented, there would be two extremes: on the one hand a non-selective state school sector, and on the other the independent sector of education. He saw the direct grant schools as a bridge between these two sectors. They were both an educational and social link. Why destroy this bridge which was so useful to the nation, he asked.

In the Debate on the Queen's Speech, early in May,⁽³⁴⁾ Mr. Crosland made a notable change in policy regarding the 3-tier (middle school) system. The Education Act of 1964 and Circular 10/65 had sanctioned this system of comprehensive education, but only in limited circumstances. Now the restriction was to a large extent lifted. It was rather late to be doing this, as authorities had now been working on their plans for 12 months, but it was a decision welcomed in many quarters.

Later that month the Secretary of State issued a White Paper setting out his plans for Polytechnics⁽³⁵⁾ - the ideas that he had discussed in his Woolwich Speech of April 1965. This was followed by an announcement that the government was allocating an additional £33 million each year, for three years, to prepare for raising the school leaving age to 16.⁽³⁶⁾

(34) Education, 6/5/66, P. 945.

(35) Cf. "Education in 1966", (Cmnd. 3226), P. 22.

(36) Op. cit., P. 14.

Sir Edward Boyle had already, at election time, made clear his support for this.⁽³⁷⁾ Again at the Conservative party conference in October the Conservatives showed their approval that priority be given to this policy which aimed at preventing children from opting out of education before their full potential had been reached.⁽³⁸⁾ Sir Edward was given his usual warm reception by the delegates, and while he did not condemn comprehensives as such, he warned⁽³⁹⁾ the government about the damage that could be done to educational standards by the hasty plans that were resulting from the government's pressure. Once more he declared the priorities that he felt should prevail in educational spending. As if in reply to this, the Secretary of State in November made it clear to the House that he would in no circumstances divert financial resources merely to implement comprehensive re-organisation, because that would be at the expense of the slum schools, especially the primary ones.⁽⁴⁰⁾ Sir Edward on that occasion approved Mr. Crosland's firm stand, but added: "is it not clear that comprehensive education should not be rapidly and universally imposed?"

During this period Sir Edward referred on several occasions to the view that eleven was too early an age for the decisive act of selection in secondary education. At the party conference in October he declared that⁽⁴¹⁾ the Tories supported this view which, he said, was upheld by the majority of educational and popular opinion. Again in December, at Bristol University,⁽⁴²⁾ speaking about direct grant schools, he said "Everyone knows that sooner or later there has to be selection; but the

(37) T.E.S., 25/3/66, P. 903.

(38) T.E.S., 14/10/66, P. 875 and P. 863.

(39) "Conservative Party Conference 1966", Verbatim report, Pp. 41-44.

(40) Vol. 735, H. C. Deb, 3/11/66, Col. 641-2.

(41) "Conservative Party Conference 1966", Verbatim report, P. 43.

(42) C.C.O., 2/12/66, No. 10,687, P. 3.

question is: 'How soon?' I think that the majority of opinion has come to feel that eleven is too early an age for the most decisive act of selection to take place, and this indeed is my own view." He suggested that 13, or 15 or 16 might be a more acceptable age, and that direct grant schools might develop a new role in this connection.

A further possible development of this theme was suggested two months later in a Conservative discussion document "Education and the Citizen". It repeated that⁽⁴³⁾ eleven is too early an age for selection but, without committing the party either for or against comprehensive schools, it stated the principle that educational standards must not be allowed to fall during the experimental or transitional stage. Then it expressed "grave doubt whether the 'high fliers' - the top 3 or 4 per cent in ability - could be adequately catered for in a completely non-selective system." Support was given once more to direct grant schools.

Meanwhile in January 1967 an important educational event was the publication of the Plowden Report.⁽⁴⁴⁾ During the previous eight years many aspects of education had been the subject of reports - notably the Crowther, Newsom and Robbins reports. Now it was the Plowden Committee, examining all aspects of primary education. The committee had done its job thoroughly: most educational experts, in one field or another, were given an opportunity to contribute, either as members or in an advisory capacity; extensive research was commissioned, and the committee, after examining the problems, listed its proposed remedies in order of priority, and costed them.

The main theme of the report was a stress on the effect of social disadvantage on educational opportunity. Perhaps understandably, since

(43) C.P.C., Masterbrief series, No. 4, "Education and the Citizen", Pp. 5-6.

(44) C.A.C.E., "Children and their Primary Schools", (Plowden Report).

its terms of reference were for primary education, the Flowden Committee after pointing to the decaying, twilight areas of the big cities as the principle places of social deprivation, declared that the effects of this deprivation on a child's educational opportunity were felt more at primary level than at secondary. The Committee quoted research evidence to show that social deprivation begins to affect educational opportunity at pre-school age.⁽⁴⁵⁾ Consequently these areas should have priority in nursery school programmes. After that there should be positive discrimination⁽⁴⁶⁾ at primary school level to try to redress the balance for these children. Their neighbourhoods should be designated as Educational Priority Areas so that they would receive preferential treatment in both building and staff provision. Moreover, attempts should be made to involve parents, in these areas, more fully in the education of their children.⁽⁴⁷⁾

The report was accepted by parliament in a debate in the Commons on 16th March.⁽⁴⁸⁾ The main differences of opinion concerned the financial aspects: how to arrange financial inducements for staff in the deprived areas, and even the question of fees for nursery education, in the case of those who could afford to pay - a strange point to raise when discussing deprived areas, where the main problem would be to persuade parents to make use of nursery schools. The Conservatives had been advocating for some time that educational resources should be directed first to replacing old primary schools. Now this report added a great deal of strength to their argument: old primary schools suffered not just from age, but they tended to be associated with areas of social deprivation. So it was doubly important that priority should be given

(45) Op. cit., P. 63, and Chapter 9.

(46) Op. cit., Chapter 5, especially Pp. 57-59.

(47) Op. cit., Chapter 4.

(48) Vol. 743, H. C. Deb, 16/3/67, Col. 734-747.

to their replacement. Boyle wound up his speech in this debate with the statement "It is our view that the main Flowden recommendations ... ought to be given a clear priority over resources for comprehensive re-organisation in those areas where there is already sufficient secondary provision available." Sir Edward was trying to ensure that the Secretary of State would not renege on his pledge that there would be no resources made available purely for comprehensive re-organisation. This at least would be one way of ensuring a partial slowing-down of re-organisation, a reduction in momentum which he felt was essential if the high educational standards were not to be destroyed.

In February of that year the 1967 Education Act became law.⁽⁴⁹⁾ Among other things this Act permitted the Secretary of State to increase grants for the building or enlargement of Voluntary Aided and Special Agreement schools from 75% to 80%. The need for this followed from Circular 10/65. "Since this 'comprehensive' plan would eventually entail the provision of great numbers of new and larger schools", wrote one commentator,⁽⁵⁰⁾ "the denominational bodies were naturally concerned, and the Roman Catholic authorities, in particular, made it clear that, although they were not opposed in principle to the new policy, they would expect the state to ensure that they 'were not financially worse off if they decided to fall in with the scheme.' (T.E.S., 8/5/64, P. 1250)."

What was the view of the leading members of the Conservative Party - the Shadow Cabinet - on this matter of selection and comprehensive education? A Conservative minister or opposition spokesman was normally responsible for formulating the policy of his department, under the

(49) G. Taylor and J. B. Saunders, "The New Law of Education", P. 308.

(50) J. Murphy, "Church, State and Schools in Britain, 1800-1970", Pp. 123-4.

watchful eye of his leader, and so long as that policy did not involve another department the minister would not usually submit it to the Cabinet or Shadow Cabinet, unless it became a political issue.⁽⁵¹⁾ Boyle recalls that, since comprehensive education had by this time become a political issue within the party, early in 1967 he submitted a paper on the subject to the Shadow Cabinet. Boyle reminded his colleagues in the Shadow Cabinet⁽⁵²⁾ that when the Conservatives had been in power they had approved a number of comprehensive mergers (involving grammar schools) in country districts, and had legislated to make middle schools a possibility. Moreover, he said, there were many Conservative-controlled L.E.A.'s who wanted to go comprehensive. Boyle's paper was favourably received and discussed. The result was that the Conservative Shadow Cabinet resolved⁽⁵³⁾ that the 11+ examination ought to be abolished, but that L.E.A.'s should be allowed to choose for themselves between the comprehensive or selective systems; more attention should be given to primary education, and the demand for an expansion of further and higher education must be met.

In March 1967 the political parties were preparing themselves for the local government elections. The policy on secondary education publicised by the Conservatives⁽⁵⁴⁾ now stated that selection at 11 or 12 years of age should be abandoned, but they were not opposed to having it at a later age. They seem to have moved away from the defence of the

(51) E. Boyle, A. Crosland, M. Kogan, "The Politics of Education", Pp. 104-5.

(52) Lord Boyle, "The Politics of Secondary Re-organisation" in Leeds University's Journal of Educational Administration and History, June 1972, P. 35.

(53) D. Butler and M. Pinto-Duschinsky, "The British General Election 1970", P. 71.

(54) (i) Conservative Research Department, "Conservative Campaign Guide: Local government elections 1967", March 1967.
(ii) T.E.S., 10/3/67, P. 808.
(iii) T.E.S., 10/3/67, P. 831.

grammar school to a defence of the sixth form. On several occasions during the previous few months (at the annual conference in October, and at Bristol University in December) Boyle had spoken about the need to maintain the high standards of the sixth forms. In January 1967, in a speech at Cambridge⁽⁵⁵⁾, he suggested that there should be more experiments with sixth form colleges.

It is not uncommon for a party in power in Westminster to begin to lose influence in local government after a few years. Some changes were therefore expected in the local government elections of 1967. But no one ever dreamed that Labour would lose control of the Inner London Education Authority - the equivalent of losing control of the old London County Council - a traditional Labour stronghold. Yet that was the outcome of the London elections held that April.⁽⁵⁶⁾ The I.L.E.A. was regarded as the premier L.E.A. in the country. Events there would now be regarded as reflections of Conservative national policy. Indeed, the appointments to the key posts were expected to be influenced by the national leaders. The choice for leader of I.L.E.A. fell on Christopher Chataway, Boyle's one-time parliamentary secretary. Chataway was a liberal-minded educationist of the Boyle type, who had worked well with Boyle, showing both ability and loyalty. The appointment indicated that within the Tory party Boyle's views were clearly in the ascendancy. Moreover the party now had an opportunity, on a minor scale, to put their policies to the test. Now was the time to find out whether they were workable, and acceptable.

The 5th May 1967 saw the remainder of the local government elections. The result was a considerable victory for the Conservative Party. In many

(55) T.E.S., 6/1/67, P. 26.

(56) Education, 21/4/67, Pp. 759-60.

cities and county areas Conservatives found themselves in power and had to address themselves in a responsible manner to the problem of secondary re-organisation. In some places comprehensive plans were being implemented, in others L.E.A.'s were busy formulating plans in response to directions from the Secretary of State. Should Conservatives stop all this? Tory chairmen were looking to their leader for guidance. A few weeks later Mr. Heath gave it to them. In a major speech at the conference of the Conservative Advisory Committee on Education the Leader of the Opposition gave the official party position. (57)

Instead of a speech in defence of the grammar schools, as some had expected, Mr. Heath ranged over the whole field of secondary education, and showed himself to be in full support of the views of Sir Edward Boyle. He began by stating that the Conservative Party accepted the trend of educational opinion against selection at 11-plus. It followed from this that there would have to be some re-organisation of at least the early years of secondary education. The choice of a system must however rest with the L.E.A. Then he paid tribute to the grammar schools, to their great achievements and traditions. They had changed and evolved in the past, and he warned that they would need to adapt again, now and in the future, if they were to survive. They would need to seek a new role. Mr. Heath suggested that in some cases this might be achieved as a sixth form college, and in others it might be as the upper part of a two-tier comprehensive school. He had in mind the Leicestershire scheme with guided parental choice at 13 or 14 years of age. Furthermore in areas where no good grammar school existed he felt he could support an all-through comprehensive school, provided that it was purpose-built.

(57) C.C.O., 17/6/67, No. 488/67, Heath; and 492/67.

Then Mr. Heath proceeded to set out guide-lines upon which, in his view, any sensible scheme of re-organisation should be based. The scheme should above all be in the interest of the children - the present generation as well as future ones - and it must be such as would attract first-class teaching staff. It must avoid using resources which rightly belonged elsewhere, and it must fit existing buildings rather than try to link together widely-separated buildings. (This seemed to restrict all-through comprehensives to developing areas which could both command the resources for a purpose-built school, and be free from the restrictions imposed by an existing grammar school.) Mr. Heath said that a proposed scheme ought to be closely examined for its likely effect on the sixth form, and there must be provision for the brightest children. He also spoke in support of direct grant and independent schools being retained and encouraged, and also parental choice. Those were the criteria that Conservatives should follow in judging or devising re-organisation schemes, said Mr. Heath.

Boyle states⁽⁵⁸⁾ that Mr. Heath's speech, in which he acknowledges the trend away from separate schools at eleven, fairly reflected the discussion that the Shadow Cabinet had had earlier in the year: indeed Mr. Heath seems to have gone further than the Shadow Cabinet did. Clearly, Boyle had won over his leader and his senior colleagues to his liberal point of view in this matter. Therefore, in accordance with the constitution of the party Boyle's views were now official party policy, since they had the approval of the leader. There remained one problem: were they acceptable to the rank-and-file members of the party? It is true that by tradition and constitution the Conservative Party accepts its policy from its leader. But if the members don't like his policy

(58) E. Boyle, A. Crosland, M. Kogan, "The Politics of Education", P. 105.

they are free to revolt against him. In this case there were certain elements within the party who did take exception to this policy on secondary education, and Boyle was to spend the next two years trying to win them over. But before following up that story it is worth examining how Christopher Chataway tackled his problems in the I.L.E.A.

Chapter 13The Conservatives control I.L.E.A.: an experiment in co-existence

The Inner London Education Authority of which the Conservatives won control in April 1967 was the education authority for the twelve inner London boroughs, together with the City of London. The Greater London Council had been established by the London Government Act of 1963⁽¹⁾, and the twenty outer boroughs were considered suitable to be education authorities in their own right. However the twelve inner boroughs of the G.L.C. were thought to be sufficiently homogeneous to warrant being grouped as one education authority, the I.L.E.A. This, in fact, was a special sub-committee of the G.L.C., but virtually autonomous⁽²⁾: its members were drawn from the G.L.C. and from the borough councils, while the financing was done by the boroughs through the G.L.C.

The I.L.E.A. covered an area which was more or less the area of the old London County Council. The latter had been Labour-controlled for 30 years, which explained the Conservative jubilation at their unexpected success. Christopher Chataway, whom they appointed as chairman of the I.L.E.A., had become a member of the L.C.C. in 1958 and member of parliament in 1959.⁽³⁾ Then he had served as Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Education, with Sir Edward Boyle, from 1962 until 1964. So he was well fitted for the challenge that had come the way of the Conservatives in London. Speculation was rife: would the I.L.E.A. enter into a frontal clash with Mr. Crosland and, with other authorities recently won by the Tories, force him to legislate over comprehensive education?⁽⁴⁾ It was reasonable to suppose that Boyle had not worked

(1) Keesing's Contemporary Archives, P. 19902, P. 19904 and P. 19906.

(2) "Municipal Yearbook, 1973", P. 875.

(3) Education, 20/7/62, P. 75.

(4) Education, 21/4/67, Pp. 759-60.

in vain, especially with Chataway. Boyle's confidence was not misplaced. As soon as Chataway was appointed he put an end to the speculation.⁽⁵⁾ He announced that he was not hostile to comprehensive schools, but he thought that there was room for a certain percentage of children to go to grammar schools. He seemed particularly impressed with the educational system of New York where most children go to comprehensive schools, but about seven per cent (not necessarily the most able children) go to selective schools, and he felt that a similar system could work well in London, though seven might not be the right percentage. It was clear that the scheme which had been drawn up earlier in the year by the Labour controlled committee, in response to Mr. Crosland's Circular 10/65, would be withdrawn and amended by the Conservatives under Mr. Chataway. But how radical would the amendment be?

A fortnight after taking office it was reported⁽⁶⁾ that "Mr. Christopher Chataway has wasted no time in dashing the hopes of backwoodsmen among his supporters." He had announced that plans to turn seven I.L.E.A. grammar schools into comprehensives were to proceed. The report went on: "It is Mr. Chataway's first contribution to the concordat which he and Mr. Crosland show every sign of reaching. That it makes sense is also important. The Conservatives recognise that there are no votes in posing as defenders of the eleven plus." However as far as these seven were concerned, Chataway's primary consideration seems to have been that it was too late to change the decision that Labour had made to re-organise these grammar schools. To unscramble the plans at this late stage, he said, would be harmful to the children involved, and would be an irresponsible act.

(5) Education, 28/4/67, P. 811.

(6) Education, 12/5/67, P. 890.

In October the Conservatives' revised plan for secondary education in the I.L.E.A. was published. This first draft proposed that the number of grammar schools be reduced from 68 to 40 over the next eight years.⁽⁷⁾ This would reduce the percentage of children in selective schools from 19% to 10%. It would certainly be a major step in the direction of comprehensive education, though with a clear reservation that some good grammar schools were to be retained. This was the explanation that Chataway gave to his supporters (and it probably was a true account of his intentions), while to the Secretary of State, who was now Mr. Patrick Gordon Walker, he declared that 1975 was as far ahead as anyone could reasonably plan, in view of the uncertainty about resources. I.L.E.A.'s plan, then, was a firm commitment to a limited number of good grammar schools co-existing alongside a comprehensive scheme for 90% of children.

In February 1968 when the plan was in its final stage of being approved, Chataway stated⁽⁸⁾ that he believed this kind of co-existence was both possible and desirable. However, he admitted that many other people felt that secondary education should be 100% comprehensive. For their peace of mind he pointed out that this plan did not pre-judge that issue. It merely implemented as many comprehensive schools as expected resources in the next few years would allow. Indeed, he warned that the recent £100 million cuts in educational spending, especially the postponing of the raising of the school leaving age, might well slow up the implementing of the new I.L.E.A. plan.

Having stated its commitment to co-existence, the new I.L.E.A. now turned its attention to ensuring that all comprehensives received their share of the ability that was available. For some years the grammar

(7) Education, 13/10/67, P. 539. [This should read "68 to 40".]

(8) Education, 2/2/68, P. 160.

schools had offered their places to the most able children and the comprehensives had a limited scope, within a system of banding, to compete for talent. Only a few comprehensives, notably those which had formerly been grammar schools, were strong enough to attract able children who had been offered places in grammar schools. These prestige comprehensive schools had thereby succeeded in obtaining a balanced mixed-ability intake, but the remainder - the majority of I.L.E.A.'s comprehensive schools - were described as "re-named secondary modern schools".⁽⁹⁾ In March 1968, however, the authority made an adjustment to the system of banding, with the result (and probably with the intention) that the prestige comprehensives received a less able entry, to the benefit of the less popular schools, or as the staff of the Wandsworth School put it: "the effect would be to fill the grammar schools and then distribute the remaining academic pupils evenly among all comprehensive schools."⁽¹⁰⁾ The staffs of the prestige comprehensives protested loudly, led by Wandsworth School.⁽¹¹⁾ Woodbury Down and Highbury Grove Schools also issued staff statements.⁽¹²⁾ Such schools saw themselves as carrying the reputation of the comprehensive movement on their shoulders, and they felt that they had achieved a good reputation by having a balanced intake of the whole ability range - no more and no less. Woodbury Down suggested that "the way to help the less privileged comprehensives was in the short term to speedily implement the I.L.E.A. development plan, and to get those grammar schools, scheduled to become comprehensive, to begin to take a balanced intake now: others could be asked to take a reduced intake." The headmaster of Stockwell Manor gave

(9) Education, 21/6/68, P. 820; 5/7/68, P. 8.

(10) Ibid.; also "Forum for the discussion of new trends in education", Autumn 1968, Vol. 11, P. 18.

(11) Education, 21/6/68, P. 820.

(12) Education, 12/7/68, P. 72.

a warning that the new procedure would produce in most schools minute and quite unviable sixth forms by 1973. It would seem that not everyone agreed with Mr. Chataway that "co-existence between different types of schools is both possible and desirable."⁽¹³⁾

In October 1968 the new Secretary of State, Mr. Edward Short, approved⁽¹⁴⁾ I.L.E.A.'s plan in principle. Grammar schools would be reduced in number from 68 to 44, while comprehensives would increase by 47 to reach a total of 128 by 1975. Mr. Short had several reservations, the principal one being a regret that the plan did not look beyond 1975. The authority replied that it would formulate further plans in the early 1970's and in the light of building resources available. Mr. Short also urged the I.L.E.A. to proceed with four projects involving the amalgamation of grammar schools with complementary secondary moderns. In two of these cases Mr. Chataway had decided against amalgamation because of opposition from governors and staff. He continued to exclude all of these schools from the re-organisation plans and the dispute with the minister continued.⁽¹⁵⁾

By December 1968 the future of the sixth forms was under consideration and in that month the authority published a report: "Sixth form opportunities in Inner London".⁽¹⁶⁾ The authority was rightly worried about this potential side-effect of their co-existence policy. They had been warned that the new procedure would produce in most comprehensive schools minute and quite unviable sixth forms by 1973.⁽¹⁷⁾ In June 1969

(13) Education, 2/2/68, P. 160.

(14) Education, 11/10/68, P. 397.

(15) Education, 6/12/68, P. 685 and P. 703.

(16) Discussed by Guy Neave in an article "The sixth form jungle in the London Comprehensives" in "Forum for the discussion of new trends in Education", Vol. 12, Summer 1970, Pp. 97-100.

(17) Education, 12/7/68, P. 72.

Mrs. Lena Townsend, who had been vice-chairman under Chataway, and had succeeded him as chairman of the I.L.E.A. in April, outlined her plan for the future organisation of the sixth forms. Inevitably, the plan involved the weaker schools depending upon their more powerful neighbours for sixth form work. Many would be left with no sixth form courses at all. In his article⁽¹⁸⁾ Guy Neave showed little sympathy with the authority's attempt to improvise: the problem, he said, was of their own making. But here he simplified the issue. It was not merely a matter of preventing the grammar schools from having a monopoly of the able pupils and developing very strong sixth forms: there remained the question that even if there were no grammar schools and all the schools were truly comprehensive, would there be enough sixth form pupils to support an efficient sixth form at each school. The viability of a comprehensive school sixth form depended not only upon a balanced intake but also upon the over-all size of the school, and the proportion of pupils staying on.

In April 1970 Labour regained control of the I.L.E.A.⁽¹⁹⁾ The Conservatives had had three years in which to formulate plans and begin to implement them. As had been expected, Chataway had based his plan on the policies that Boyle had been expounding: it recognised the trend away from selection at eleven and, while accepting the comprehensive principle in general, sought to safeguard educational standards by preserving the best of the grammar schools alongside a comprehensive system. As we have seen in Chapter 12, Boyle's policy was to preserve the best of the grammar schools, although he did not spell it out in terms of co-existence. What he did spell out were his ideas for incorporating the grammar schools, with their academic excellence, into

(18) G. Neave, *Ibid.*

(19) *Education*, 17/4/70, P. 438.

the comprehensive system - to find a new role for them. Nevertheless a considerable degree of co-existence was implicit in Boyle's policy, and as for the I.L.E.A. plan, it had Boyle's full support. He described it as "sound and realistic".⁽²⁰⁾

At the time when Chataway became chairman of the I.L.E.A. there were grammar school places for 19% of the pupils.⁽²¹⁾ The remainder attended so-called comprehensive schools, of which only a few were true comprehensives with a balanced intake. Chataway's plan aimed to reduce the percentage of grammar school places from 19 to 10, but at the same time, by making the banding system more rigid, he was eliminating the only true comprehensives that the I.L.E.A. possessed.

After the criticism levelled at Chataway's plan during the summer of 1968 the message was clear for Boyle to see: co-existence of grammar schools with comprehensives was not possible if the comprehensives were to be something more than merely re-named secondary modern schools. Furthermore, a system of co-existence would suffer from all the disadvantages associated with the selective, tri-partite system. One headmaster aptly described the I.L.E.A.'s plan as "The Comprehensive Myth".⁽²²⁾ It was clear, then, that the Tory interlude in Inner London had demonstrated that co-existence of grammar with comprehensive schools did not make sense for the latter. It just did not work.

(20) Vol. 753, H. C. Deb, 3/11/67, Col. 494-5.

(21) Education, 13/10/67, P. 539.

(22) E. F. McCarthy, "The Comprehensive Myth", article in "Forum for the discussion of new trends in Education", Autumn 1968, Vol. 11, Pp. 25-27.

Chapter 14Internal strife: the Tory-right wing attack Heath and Boyle

While Chataway was actively engaged implementing policy in Inner London, Boyle was continuing his struggle to formulate a sensible and humane policy in secondary education for the Conservative Party, a task with which he was to continue until October 1969.

During this period there was little factual information emerging to influence the debate: there were no major reports from the Central Advisory Council for Education, or from private research. It's true that the National Foundation for Educational Research published material about comprehensive schools, in May 1967⁽¹⁾ and October 1968⁽²⁾. The results, however, were not significant. The most notable feature of these surveys was the formulating of a definition of comprehensive schools, namely,⁽¹⁾ all schools "making a substantial effort to cater for virtually the whole ability range." Out of 331 schools surveyed it was clear that 179 had an intake which academically was little different from a secondary modern school. This was due to the fact that they were operating in areas where grammar schools continued to exist.⁽²⁾

There were new warnings however that sixth form standards would be lowered if L.E.A.'s rushed ahead with ill-considered plans for comprehensive schools. In June 1967 the vice-chancellors of 25 universities in England and Wales wrote a letter to the Times⁽³⁾ expressing their anxiety about the situation. They were worried, they said, about the "inadequate preparation and over-hasty acceptance" of

(1) Education, 2/6/67, P. 1038.

(2) Education, 25/10/68, Pp. 479-80.

(3) Times, 3/6/67, quoted in T.E.S., 9/6/67, P. 1948.

comprehensive plans, particularly because of the effect on the sixth forms. Staffs were being dispersed: indeed, they were already themselves dispersing in advance of re-organisation. Many of them were giving up teaching, because they saw no future in the sixth forms of the comprehensive schools. The vice-chancellors considered that this loss of highly-trained and qualified staff would result in a lowering of standards. They pointed out that British universities were the only ones in the world that could adequately cover a degree course in three years, due to the sound foundation given in the sixth forms. A lowering of standards in the schools would have to be counter-balanced by an additional year on a university course. That, in turn, was economically not possible. Hence their anxieties. It was a warning similar to those given to Chataway and the I.L.E.A. soon afterwards.

Between the summer of 1967 and October 1969 there were two main lines of activity. On Labour's side there was an increasing desire to press ahead with re-organisation, with the result that the Secretary of State threatened legislation to compel local authorities to produce plans. In the Conservative Party Boyle, having won the approval of Mr. Heath and the Shadow Cabinet, now attempted to obtain the support of his backbench M.P.'s and the rank and file of party members.

In June 1967 moderation still prevailed on each side. In the Commons Mr. Crosland was asked to introduce legislation to force L.E.A.'s to complete their plans for re-organisation. The Secretary of State replied⁽⁴⁾ that he did not think that this would be necessary because the great majority had responded positively. Then the Opposition spokesman challenged him: "Is it not the case that a large number of the most workable schemes of re-organisation were started by Conservative-

(4) Vol. 748, H. C. Deb, 15/6/67, Col. 747-8.

controlled counties some time ago, and is it not totally unfair to suggest that Conservative authorities have nowhere been concerned to abolish the 11+?" Crosland agreed with Boyle that that was the case as far as Conservative-controlled authorities were concerned. But he felt that the former Conservative government had not given any national lead in this matter.

The above exchange in the House was the last display of any agreement between the parties on this issue: Anthony Crosland was soon to be replaced as Secretary of State by a very different personality, and elsewhere, the Enfield Schools affair had already begun.⁽⁵⁾

The Enfield Borough Council had drawn up plans in response to Circular 10/65, and was now anxious to implement them. In May 1967 the Secretary of State gave his approval to the plan (under Section 13 of the 1944 Act) and the Council proceeded to advertise and make staff appointments for September 1967. The plan depended essentially upon the grouping of existing buildings: some would become junior comprehensive schools and others senior comprehensives. Despite the fact that there was an intended change in age-range, a change from selective to comprehensive, and a change from single-sex to mixed the L.E.A., in respect of eight of the twenty-seven schools involved, failed to issue the public notice required by Section 13(3) of the 1944 Education Act. A group of ratepayers and parents subsequently took legal action against the Council, seeking an injunction to restrain the Council from proceeding with re-organisation at these eight schools.⁽⁶⁾ On appeal, the injunction was granted on the grounds that a fundamental change in the character of these schools was contemplated and publication of a Section 13 public notice was required.

(5) Cf. G. Taylor and J. B. Saunders, "The New Law of Education", 7th Edition, P. 312.

(6) G. R. Barrell, "Legal Cases for Teachers", P. 39 et seq, "Bradbury and others v. London Borough of Enfield".

After the above injunction had been given by the Court of Appeal on 23rd August, the chief education officer drew up fresh plans for the eight schools. The injunction had been granted because the court had considered that a fundamental change in the character of the schools would be effected by change in age-range, or change from single-sex to mixed, but it didn't consider that a change from selective entry to comprehensive would be fundamental. Seizing upon this, the chief education officer made the proposal that Enfield Grammar School for boys, a 400-year-old foundation, should become a school for boys of the same age-range, but without reference to ability. The scheme was approved by the education committee on 31st August despite objections from a group of parents. On 7th September an injunction was granted restraining the L.E.A. from proceeding with this plan, on the grounds that it was contrary to the articles of government of the school. The case was heard and the injunction upheld on 14th September.⁽⁷⁾ On that same day the governors of the school applied to the Secretary of State to make an order changing the articles of government to permit the school to take a mixed-ability entry.⁽⁸⁾

The Secretary of State for Education was now Mr. Patrick Gordon Walker, and he immediately announced that he proposed to make this order: he would allow until noon on 18th September for any objections to be lodged. Lee and others once more took legal action, this time against the Secretary of State, to establish whether the latter had allowed a reasonable time for interested parties to make representations. The case was heard on 18th September 1967⁽⁹⁾ and the court found that the

(7) G. R. Barrel, Op. cit., P. 46 et seq, "Lee and another v. London Borough of Enfield".

(8) G. R. Barrel, Op. cit., P. 50.

(9) G. R. Barrel, Op. cit., P. 23 et seq, "Lee and others v. Secretary of State for Education and Science".

five days allowed by the Secretary of State did not constitute a reasonable time for objections. Mr. Gordon Walker immediately announced that he would not appeal, but would be guided by the court's ruling. The time for objections to the change in the articles of government of this school was extended to four and a half weeks.

This brought to an end a remarkable series of legal cases in which the courts had made it clear that the Secretary of State and the L.E.A.'s must act within the law in their relations with parents, governors and others.

Parliament had an opportunity to comment on the whole affair on the occasion of the debate on the Queen's Speech.⁽¹⁰⁾ Sir Edward criticised the Secretary of State for his part in the fiasco of the Enfield High Court cases. He quoted the Economist (a pro-comprehensive journal) and a statement on behalf of C.A.S.E. (which is impartial regarding comprehensive schools). Both were of the opinion that the Enfield plan was educationally unsound. Boyle continued: "Since the local elections last spring I have not stumped the country urging resistance to re-organisation. I welcome the compromise reached in the case of Surrey ... I believe that Christopher Chataway's London plan is sound and realistic ... but the Enfield scheme, or at any rate part of it, is thoroughly bad on educational grounds." Before the debate finished Mr. Gordon Walker said that he was considering legislation to sort out the use of Section 13 of the 1944 Education Act in cases like Enfield.

Since both Mr. Crosland and the Enfield L.E.A. had been mistaken in their understanding of Section 13, it was no surprise to anyone when

(10) Vol. 753, H. C. Deb, 3/11/67, Col. 492-6, esp. Col. 494-5.

in December 1967 the government introduced an Education Bill which was intended to clarify and simplify the procedures involved in establishing comprehensive schools. On the occasion of the second Reading of the bill⁽¹¹⁾ the Opposition spokesman quoted the Secretary of State as saying that "we cannot afford money at the moment for any large scale building of comprehensive schools". On behalf of his party Sir Edward expressed relief that in these circumstances the Secretary of State was not attempting to obtain for himself any power to force L.E.A.'s to go comprehensive. The bill, which became the 1968 Education Act in April of 1968, was principally a clarification of Section 13 of the 1944 Education Act, the purpose of which was to ensure that in the important matters of establishing or discontinuing a school there should be proper consultation, and that the final decision was to be taken not by the L.E.A. but by the minister himself.

Mr. Patrick Gordon Walker was now succeeded as Secretary of State for Education by Mr. Edward Short.⁽¹²⁾ A teacher by profession, with wartime service in the Durham Light Infantry, Mr. Short had subsequently entered politics and risen to the post of Government Chief Whip during Mr. Wilson's first administration. By now he had a reputation for firm discipline and soon he turned his attention to the progress of comprehensive re-organisation. Judging by his first progress report⁽¹³⁾ he seemed well satisfied with what had been achieved. The report showed that 111 authorities were either operating comprehensive schools or had plans approved for part or the whole of their area. "In terms of authorities", Mr. Short commented, "this means nearly 70% are well down the road with their plans for re-organisation. In terms of authorities

(11) Vol. 756, H. C. Deb, 12/12/67, Col. 233.

(12) Education, 12/4/68, P. 511.

(13) Education, 7/6/68, P. 762.

that are going ahead in all or most of their areas we are past the halfway mark."

However, four months later, at Labour's annual conference in October 1968, it became clear that Mr. Short was no longer satisfied with the progress being made: seven of the 163 L.E.A.'s had refused even to submit plans, while another 24 were being very dilatory about it.⁽¹⁴⁾ In view of this, the government announced its intention to introduce legislation to compel L.E.A.'s to end 11+ selection. Sir Edward Boyle issued a strongly worded statement in reply to this.⁽¹⁵⁾ In it he said that the Conservatives remained "unalterably opposed" to legislative compulsion in this matter. He pointed out that at a time when the Labour Party was talking about strengthening local democracy, it was in fact weakening it. Conservatives, he said, accepted the educational arguments against selection, that it was too early and too final, but to force the pace when resources were limited would be educationally damaging. Moreover, educational changes, he said, work best when there is maximum consent and thorough preparation.

Two weeks later Mr. Short was questioned about this in the House. He replied⁽¹⁶⁾ that the next major education bill would provide that secondary education would be non-selective, because this, he said, was the trend in educational thought. He expressed the hope that the bill would become law during that parliament. Boyle again raised the point that there was currently a shortage of resources, and if Labour forced the pace in these circumstances the result would be a serious setback to standards. He asked for an assurance that no L.E.A. would be forced

(14) R. Pedley, "The Comprehensive School", (1970), P. 61.

(15) Times, 4/10/68, P. 3d.

(16) Vol. 770, H. C. Deb, 17/10/68, Col. 560-1.

to re-organise unless sufficient money was made available. But Mr. Short declared that there was no shortage of money. This statement, however, needed qualifying. Funds for building comprehensive schools were only indirectly available, and by no means unlimited.

Ever since Labour had introduced the comprehensive policy with the Circular 10/65, in July 1965, it had explicitly declared that no money would be available solely for the purpose of going comprehensive (Section 24). This financial policy had been rigidly adhered to, and L.E.A.'s that wished to go comprehensive had to use resources that had been allocated for other purposes and make them serve a double use, e.g. resources for re-organising all-age schools, for replacing old buildings, for new schools in developing areas, or for raising the school leaving age. The amount used in this way to build comprehensives is not published but the relative insignificance of the sum can be estimated. For primary and secondary schools together, the value of building projects started in 1967 amounted to £103.6 million.⁽¹⁷⁾ Of the proportion allocated to secondary education, L.E.A.'s had to channel what they could into comprehensive projects. The Secretary of State estimated⁽¹⁸⁾ that of the £33 million that had been allocated for R.O.S.L.A., the L.E.A.'s planned to use £7 million for comprehensive purposes. Secondary building in new areas, and replacement of the few remaining all-age schools would in some cases help the comprehensive programme. But the sum would still be only a few tens of millions. This needs to be compared with the estimated cost of completing a full comprehensive system. One estimate in 1962 set the figure at £1,368 million⁽¹⁹⁾, and

(17) "Education and Science, 1967", (Cmnd. 3564), P. 126.

(18) Vol. 758, H. C. Deb, 8/2/68, Col. 633-4.

(19) J. N. Hewitson, "The Grammar School Tradition in the Comprehensive World", P. 36.

in 1969 Sir William Alexander⁽²⁰⁾ thought it would still require between £600 million and £1,000 million. It appears that it was going to be a 30-year task at the very least, unless more money could be provided.

In December 1968 Mr. Short again confirmed in the House⁽²¹⁾ that he intended to put forward, during that session, a major education bill which would include, among other things, provision that secondary education must be non-selective. By April 1969, however, it had become clear that there was insufficient time to prepare a major education bill, embracing all aspects of education⁽²²⁾, and the government was now threatening to introduce a small bill for the sole purpose of outlawing selection for secondary education. The response to Circular 10/65, which had requested L.E.A.'s to submit their plans for comprehensive re-organisation, had been good, but by the summer of 1969 it was clear that a small group of authorities was strongly opposed to the idea: nine L.E.A.'s had submitted unacceptable plans, nine had failed to submit plans, and eight more had refused to do so.⁽²³⁾ Mr. Short was prepared to give them a further limited time in which to conform, failing which he would introduce legislation.⁽²⁴⁾ The Conservative reaction followed quickly. Mr. Heath published a letter which he had written to the secretary of the Liverpool Parents Protest Committee.⁽²⁵⁾ In it he promised that a future Conservative government would rescind any legislation that a Labour government might enact for the purpose of making comprehensive education compulsory. But while he was being quite

(20) Sir William Alexander, "Towards a New Education Act", P. 19.

(21) Vol. 774, H. C. Deb, 5/12/68, Col. 1819-20.

(22) Education, 25/4/69, P. 561.

(23) Economist, 23/8/69, Pp. 25-6.

(24) Education, 20/6/69, P. 800.

(25) T.E.S., 15/8/69, Pp. 16-17; Education, 22/8/69, P. 1046.

definite about this matter, the Leader of the Opposition was very careful to limit his statement to the issue of compelling L.E.A.'s to go comprehensive, because he realised that on many other aspects of comprehensive education his party had much in common with the Labour Party.

While Mr. Crosland and Mr. Gordon Walker had been embroiled in the Enfield affair and Mr. Short had been endeavouring to discipline his recalcitrant L.E.A.'s, Sir Edward Boyle was struggling to win the united support of the Conservative Party for his policies of moving away from selection at eleven, and finding a new role for the grammar schools. As we have seen in Chapter 12, his leader and the Shadow Cabinet had given him their support, but there remained a right wing element among the Tory M.P.'s and in the party throughout the country. Moreover, Boyle's task of winning over the supporters of the tri-partite system was made more difficult by the fact that many members of the party tended to react automatically against any Labour policy; and during this period Labour did much to stimulate this kind of reaction.

The right-wing made clear their views at the Conservative Party Conference, at Brighton, in October 1967. The motion being debated was a condemnation of Labour's "hasty and ill-considered" plans for comprehensive re-organisation, and a demand that the wishes of parents and L.E.A.'s should be respected. One of the speakers was K. G. Warren, the delegate from Enfield. He attacked not only Labour and its policies but also Mr. Heath and Sir Edward Boyle for giving the party an "ill-defined" policy on this issue.⁽²⁶⁾ They should pay more attention to the clearly-expressed views of parents, he said. Gilbert Longden, M.P., also expressed his disapproval of the attitudes of Heath and Boyle.

(26) Conservative Party Conference 1967, Verbatim report, P. 60.

Despite a speech by Christopher Chataway, in which he strongly supported both the motion and his leaders, the mood of the delegates when Sir Edward arose to address them was at best a mood of indifference, at worst one of hostility.⁽²⁷⁾ One commentator wrote:⁽²⁸⁾ "Sir Edward has allowed a dangerous thing to happen. He is interested in education. He has caught the bug. So grave is his illness that there are those who shake their heads for his political future ... He assured the conference that ... the party did have a policy ... a liberal one, respecting local democracy and the right of parents before the will of central government." The conference took the unusual and rare course of calling for a card vote on the motion. It was accepted by 1302 to 816, but the entire proceedings amounted to a success for the opponents of Sir Edward Boyle: the division on this issue within the party had now been brought into the open.

The right-wing achieved another success a few weeks later at the election of officers of the Conservative Parliamentary Education Committee - the Conservative back-benchers' forum on education. The chairman is usually the Spokesman for education and the vice-chairman is elected from the back-benchers. Thereafter the vice-chairman is usually appointed by the leader of the party to support the Spokesman on the front bench. At this year's election the right-wing packed the meeting and elected one of their number, Mr. Ronald Bell, as vice-chairman, ousting Mr. Richard Hornby, a liberal Tory of similar views to Boyle.⁽²⁹⁾ Pinto-Duschinsky described Bell as "a leading Monday Club member, unsympathetic to official party policy on education."⁽³⁰⁾ As for the front bench post, he wrote, "Mr. Heath only grudgingly (and at Sir Edward's request) granted Mr. Bell this

(27) Education, 27/10/67, Pp. 657-8.

(28) T.E.S., 27/10/67, P. 901.

(29) Education, 17/11/67, P. 771; Times, 12/11/68, (8g).

(30) D. Butler and M. Pinto-Duschinsky, "The British General Election of 1970", P. 75.

perquisite." Commenting recently⁽³¹⁾ on this event Lord Boyle tends to attribute much less significance to Bell's election than did commentators at the time. He agrees that it was a symptom of a time when this sort of feeling was at its height, but he feels that the effects of the election caused him little concern. "He was in fact rather useful", was Boyle's comment.

But while Ronald Bell was little more than a figurehead, the same could not be said of Angus Maude, M.P. It's true that one commentator, writing about a new pamphlet by Maude, said:⁽³²⁾ "The trouble with everything Mr. Maude writes on educational topics is that it has a kind of knock-about, chop logic plausibility which seldom gets beyond the level of merry debate." But Boyle knew Maude better than that, due to a long acquaintance with him in the House. Lord Boyle⁽³³⁾ has described Maude at that time as his "problem child". The reasons for this view were, first, that Maude was very able and knew a great deal about education. Secondly, Boyle found it very difficult to decide just how far they differed and to what extent they agreed. Perhaps this was due to the fact that Maude in choosing an area for debate (such as the defence of the grammar schools) might be guided by emotion as much as he was guided by his undoubted intellectual ability. Certainly one feels that in his pamphlet "Education: Quality or Equality",⁽³⁴⁾ published in February 1968, he tends to over-simplify the issue, dividing it clearly into black and white, with no shades of grey. In the pamphlet he discusses the detrimental effects on quality that can follow from striving after equality. But the discussion on comprehensive education that follows this is far from complete. He is certainly a persuasive

(31) Interview at Leeds, 21/1/74, P. 19.

(32) Education, 16/2/68, P. 224.

(33) Interview at Leeds, 21/1/74, P. 19.

(34) Angus Maude, "Education: Quality or Equality", Conservative Political Centre.

writer, but at times he seems to use his logic to conceal rather than reveal the truths that he is not interested in. The message of his pamphlet is that selection is in the interests of children of all levels of ability, and if inequalities exist they can best be attacked at primary school level rather than secondary level. He urged that more attention be given to primary education.

The years 1967 and 1968 were not easy years for Boyle.⁽³⁵⁾ Besides the right-wing opposition from within his party, he had to contend with the reaction to Labour's handling of the Enfield affair and with the emotions aroused by the issues of race relations and immigration. Mr. Heath knew he ought to support Labour's Race Relations Bill in 1968, but in order to try to placate both his right-wing and his moderates he was steering a compromise course.⁽³⁶⁾ Boyle knew that he would be unable to support this compromise and would thereby bring further trouble upon himself. To strengthen his position, therefore, Boyle in the early part of 1968 himself commissioned a public opinion poll "to convince the central party organisation (never unsympathetic, anyway) that I was not so wrong as my critics supposed" about the opinions held by the general public on comprehensive education.^(37a) The detailed result of this poll has not come to light, but the results of two polls conducted by Gallup Polls, Ltd.^(37b) gave the following results: in 1967 50% thought comprehensive education was a good idea, 30% thought it was not, and 20% did not know; by 1969, 55% were in favour, 20% were against it and 25% did not know.

(35) Lord Boyle, "The Politics of Secondary School Re-organisation" in Leeds University's Journal of Educational Administration and History, June 1972, P. 36.

(36) Butler and Pinto-Duschinsky, Op. cit., P. 76.

(37a) Boyle, Ibid.; Interview at Leeds, 21/1/74, Pp. 21-23.

(37b) Gallup Political Index, 1969, No. 115, Table 3, P. 220.

No doubt encouraged by this evidence of the feelings of the people, Boyle prepared for his next encounter with his opponents, which took place at the Conservative Party Conference in October 1968. The opposition was led by Angus Maude who made a hard-hitting speech in defence of the grammar schools.⁽³⁸⁾ The motion, he said, was unexceptional: it must be either rejected or amended because he felt that the Conference had to give a lead to Conservative-controlled L.E.A.'s to encourage them to resist firmly the government's attack on the grammar schools. An amendment to this effect was tabled. When Sir Edward rose to wind up the debate he faced his audience with confidence despite "the sound of baying in the backwoods and barracking from the floor".⁽³⁹⁾ He took his normal view-point, with extremists on each side, and defended it with vigour after first expressing some mild irritation that valuable time was being wasted debating this issue for the fourth consecutive year, when many other important educational issues were being passed over. Having condemned "botched-up" schemes and legislative compulsion he said that he believed that there was "a very wide measure of opinion in this country, including a great deal of Conservative opinion, which is not happy - has not been happy for a long time - over selection into separate schools at the age of eleven, and which believes that a gradual, rational, sensible approach to change is right." He concluded: "I have always believed that what is educationally right will in the long run be politically right also, and that is my last word on this subject."⁽⁴⁰⁾ It was well known that Boyle was prepared to accept the closure of grammar schools in certain circumstances - in country areas and small towns - and seek a new role for many of the others. But the Conference's

(38) Conservative Party Conference 1968, Verbatim report, P. 42.

(39) Education, 18/10/68, Pp. 431-32.

(40) Conservative Party Conference 1968, Verbatim report, P. 45.

amendment sought to encourage opposition to Labour's comprehensive plans and thereby save all grammar schools. Its ready acceptance by the delegates constituted another victory for the right-wing.

In the following month the annual election took place for officers for the Conservative Party's Parliamentary Education Committee. A year earlier, in November 1967, the committee's liberal-minded officials had been replaced by right-wing candidates. This time the reverse took place. In a large poll, Mr. John Hill was elected in place of Mr. Ronald Bell as vice-chairman:⁽⁴¹⁾ Mr. William van Straubenzee was elected secretary. Both were members who shared Boyle's views, and the election result suggests that Boyle now had support from a significant number of back-benchers who cared about education. But a hard-core, both in the party throughout the country, and in parliament, would fight on.

The right-wing element next made its presence felt in March 1969 when it lent its support to the first of the Black Papers: "Fight for Education". This was a publication produced by a group of people who were concerned about the care of very able children, and about academic excellence. One of the contributors was Angus Maude. In their concern about clever children and high standards the contributors drew up a list of factors that they believed were causing a decline in standards.⁽⁴²⁾ The list included many of the recent developments in teaching method. It is possible that the authors did not sufficiently distinguish between this and the principle of comprehensive education: after all, a number of comprehensive schools were known to keep quite rigidly to traditional methods. Moreover, at least one of the Black Paper authors blamed Boyle as well as Labour education ministers for supporting these modern trends.

(41) Times, 12/11/68, 8g.

(42) Times, 5/3/69, 10g.

This first Black Paper commanded ready support in some quarters but its rather indiscriminate condemnation of so many of the widely-accepted recent developments in educational thought and practice soon brought it into disrepute as reactionary and retrograde, in the minds of many.

One consequence of the Black Paper was seen in the debate at the annual conference of Conservative teachers in June 1969. The motion welcomed "the changing emphasis from teaching to individual learning, and the establishment in our schools of an enlightened educational atmosphere in which children may develop their own unique potentials".⁽⁴³⁾ The first speaker opposing the motion spoke of "pandemonium in our primary schools leading to anarchy among students". He was supported by Dr. Rhodes Boyson who declared that "free expression means thirty children gibbering nonsense". In an atmosphere created by the Black Paper and further charged by such emotional, reactionary, speeches the conference surprisingly rejected the motion.

What was to be Sir Edward's final encounter with the right-wing faction took place at the 1969 Conservative Conference. The Times set the scene:⁽⁴⁴⁾ it was likely to be another tough Tory conference for Boyle and the leadership of the Conservative parliamentary education group - Hornby, Hill and Straubenzee. Boyle was expected to deplore compulsion in comprehensive education, and to reject a 5% super-selection. The report continued: "All the indications are that the party leadership still stands solidly behind Sir Edward, who is once again to be the victim of some ill-informed barbs from the second Black Paper, which has been almost malevolently timed for publication today ... The leadership knows

(43) T.E.S., 27/6/69, P. 2081 and P. 2111.

(44) Times, 7/10/69, 8g.

that younger parents and teachers support the introduction of comprehensive schools, when they are planned on educational grounds, and the ending of selection at eleven. Several Tory M.P.'s, moreover, are increasingly noting the enthusiasm with which parents greet the ending of the eleven-plus, which inevitably labels three out of four children as failures, many of them from Conservative homes."

Boyle left the conference in no doubt as to where the Tory leadership stood regarding Labour's proposed bill to enforce comprehensive education. "If the Government are so foolish", he said, "we will oppose it at every stage in the House." "If it becomes an Act, then we will repeal it ... We are resolute in opposing this petty and spiteful socialist proposal."⁽⁴⁵⁾ But contrary to all predictions, "the ambush of Sir Edward never took place."⁽⁴⁶⁾ There were speakers representing both extremes - Alderman Griffin of Birmingham, whose defiance had probably brought about Mr. Short's bill - and Miss Susan Pritchard who caused the audience to audibly gasp when she said that given parental choice, few parents would choose secondary modern schools: the logical conclusion was that comprehensive education should be compulsory for everyone. The report went on⁽⁴⁷⁾: "It seems that a week ago Sir Edward met Conservative committee chairmen (L.E.A. ones) and went over the course with them. It was not a meeting without incidents, but although his lack of pugnacity and his evident sympathy with the comprehensive ideal irritates local politicians caught up in the cut and thrust of city and county politics, Sir Edward seems to have held his own. A lot of belligerent Conservatives would be delighted to see him go but this is just why he remains an asset. He firmly believes that the younger members of the Tory party are impatient with those who just want

(45) Conservative Party Conference, 1969, Verbatim report, P. 41.

(46) T.E.S., 10/10/69, P. 1 and P. 3.

(47) T.E.S., 10/10/69, P. 1.

to retreat into entrenched positions on secondary re-organisation. What makes this annual ritual performance at the Conservative Party Conference impressive is that it is not Sir Edward's reading of the political oracle which explains his attitude but personal conviction - and that is not a quality much in evidence on these occasions."

Twelve months had elapsed since the outspoken criticism had been made about the I.L.E.A.'s experiment with co-existence. Had Boyle shifted his views on the future of the grammar schools, in the light of Chataway's experience? There is no clear answer to this question. Boyle's support for co-existence was never more than implicit and after the I.L.E.A. experience he still never refers explicitly to co-existence, but he did for a time add another to the ideas that he had for alternative roles for the grammar schools. He summed up his thoughts of the previous twelve months in his speech at the 1969 annual conference.⁽⁴⁸⁾ First, there was his opposition to the proposed legislation to enforce comprehensive education, after which he had a word of warning about schemes which fragment sixth forms; then he expressed his support for the idea of selection at 13 instead of 11: this would preserve a role for the grammar schools. Twice during the previous twelve months Boyle had mentioned this idea in the House.⁽⁴⁹⁾ When he did so in December 1968 he said he had in mind the schemes operated by Kent, Doncaster and Middlesbrough. This identified his idea⁽⁵⁰⁾ as either scheme three or four of the six schemes mentioned in Circular 10/65. These were the two schemes which the circular said were acceptable only on an interim basis. That was in 1965. By 1969 Labour was preparing to abandon these schemes because they involved "guided" parental choice, which was not far removed from selection by assessment.

(48) Conservative Party Conference, 1969, Verbatim report, Pp. 41-3.

(49) Vol. 774; H. C. Deb; 5/12/68; Col. 1819-20.
Vol. 787, H. C. Deb, 17/7/69, Col. 866.

(50) C. Benn and B. Simon, "Half Way There", 2nd Ed., 1972, Pp. 61-2.

The organised opposition to Boyle was weakening, but at the very time when the tide was turning in his favour Boyle made an unexpected announcement. He revealed that he had decided to quit politics to become the new Vice-Chancellor of Leeds University with effect from October 1970. Two appreciations of him are worth quoting at length: both were published in the Times. On 16th October the leading article stated: ⁽⁵¹⁾

"There are some men who exert a political influence beyond their personal achievements or capacities. Sir Edward Boyle has served with distinction in a number of offices, most particularly as Minister of Education. But his departure from the Tory front-bench to the Vice-Chancellorship of Leeds University is a loss to his party and to British politics in general, not so much because of his administrative talents, considerable though they are, but because he has become the liberal conscience of the Tory party. There are men on the opposition front-bench of greater political stature, but nobody whose public position on a range of issues is such a faithful reflection of genuinely liberal responses.

"There are three questions on which his independent spirit has been especially valuable ... Suez ... Race Relations ... and finally there have been comprehensive schools. Sometimes Sir Edward may have seemed to support them with too much enthusiasm, slipping in his concern for the preservation of outstanding grammar schools almost as an after-thought. But his knowledge and concern for educational problems have provided the counterpoint in an argument which the Tories might otherwise have settled with crude simplicity.

"This preserving of a balance over a range of issues has been his special contribution to the Tory party particularly during these years in opposition. Humane and compassionate, informed by a knowledge of

(51) Times, 16/10/69, 13a.

what is actually happening in society, he is in what might be termed the Butler tradition of the party. It is a tradition which does not exactly pervade the party at the moment; though Mr. Heath sympathises with it, his central concern has been the equally important problems of national efficiency. Yet the modern Conservative Party has never prospered at elections when it did not have the sympathy and support of the broadly liberal centre of British politics. Without Sir Edward Boyle that sympathy will be much harder to win."

Two days later Brian MacArthur expressed regret⁽⁵²⁾ that Boyle was retiring especially so soon after the Black Paper which was so much at variance with his views. Boyle, he said, had a predilection for being swayed by the evidence rather than the ritual opposition. He continued: "His resignation may seem tragic - and will be if the Conservative Party now turns in a different direction - but it occurs precisely at the moment when the open-minded sections of the Tory party were at last starting to realise that his policies on the abolition of selection at eleven and comprehensive education were more widely supported than they recognised, and among their own voters.

"Some older Conservative M.P.'s representing constituencies with comprehensive schools in one division, and selective schools and eleven-plus in another, have apparently been surprised at the reaction of Tory parents in the areas where the eleven-plus still exists, and who ask why their children should still be forced through an eleven-plus ritual which labels three out of four children failures.

"Sir Edward over the years persistently tutored a substantial section of his party on the realities of the situation against the often vicious jibes of the black pamphleteers and their friends."

(52) Times, 18/10/69, 6g.

One question remains to be answered: why did Boyle leave politics to become an academic? Did he feel that he was losing his battle against the right-wing? This is unlikely: the signs seem to indicate that during the previous twelve months the tide was turning in his favour. Had he lost the support of his leader or were others putting pressure on Mr. Heath to remove him? There is no evidence to support either of these possibilities. A senior member of the staff of the Conservative Central Office, who worked closely with Sir Edward, believes that he left politics because he was tired of the unthinking opposition that he met with within the party. Lord Boyle himself recalls that⁽⁵³⁾ he was attracted to the idea of the academic life. It must be remembered that he had been involved almost continually in the politics of education since January 1957 and during the past six or seven years he had fought to introduce liberal views into his party, often against bitter opposition. In contrast to this the university post must have appeared peaceful and secure, and much more closely related to the real business of education than any amount of experience in the politics of education could ever be.

(53) Interview at Leeds, 21/1/74, P. 32.

Chapter 151969: A swing to the right: Conservatives support
parental choice and grammar schools

Within a week of Boyle announcing that he was to leave politics Mr. Heath named the new Opposition Spokesman for Education - Mrs. Margaret Thatcher. She belonged to a lower middle class background, was educated⁽¹⁾ at Grantham High School where she won a Scholarship to Somerville, Oxford to read chemistry. After working as a research chemist she turned to law, qualifying as a barrister (specialising in taxation) at Lincoln's Inn in 1954. She married in 1951 and two years later had twins who subsequently went to public schools. Then in 1959 she entered parliament as Member for Finchley. From 1961-64 she was Parliamentary Secretary at the Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance and from October 1967 was successively Opposition Spokesman for Transport, Power, Treasury, Housing and Pensions. Her appointment as Chief Spokesman for Education was considered a substantial promotion for this able and ambitious young politician. Her opinions on immigration, birching, hanging and like issues placed her right-of-centre in her political outlook. As Deputy Spokesman Mr. Heath appointed Mr. William van Straubenzee⁽²⁾ who was known and respected especially in higher education: he was an authority in the field of student unrest. The Times commented: "As joint secretary of the backbench education group, he was sympathetic to the approach of Sir Edward Boyle, opposed to selection at eleven, and was a dedicated opponent of the Government's promised bill on comprehensive education."

Mr. Heath wasted no time in re-stating the party's policy on secondary education: "Tories would not only repeal any legislation

(1) Education, 24/10/69, P. 1321.

(2) Times, 31/10/69, 2c; 10e.

making (comprehensive) re-organisation compulsory but would also drop Circulars 10/65 and 10/66",⁽³⁾ he said. But observers were more interested to know what Mrs. Thatcher's views would be, and how they would compare with those of her predecessor. Mrs. Thatcher was given the opportunity to state her views on the occasion of the debate on the Queen's Speech at the opening of the new session of parliament. In reply to the government's declared intention to introduce a bill to enforce comprehensive plans, Mrs. Thatcher stated⁽⁴⁾ that she was completely opposed to this: she spoke in favour of decisions of this kind being made at a local level, not by central government. Moreover, she said, even if a local authority favoured a comprehensive system she would not support the choice if resources were lacking. In the course of her speech she indicated that she took up a rather different position from that of Sir Edward Boyle when she referred to her belief that selection was necessary perhaps even before the age of eleven, though she didn't make it clear what she meant by this statement.

On 6th November, after about two weeks in office, she gave an interview to Brian MacArthur which he published in the Times the following day.⁽⁵⁾ His impression was that her position would not be far removed from that of Sir Edward, except that she was determined to preserve a top tier of really good grammar schools within a national system of comprehensive schools. She talked about the need to care more about children than about systems. MacArthur continued: "Apart from showing that she is no supporter of the Angus Maude wing of the Tory party, the long interview with her yesterday suggested that her other principal pre-occupations would be how to obtain sufficient resources

(3) Education, 24/10/69, P. 1324.

(4) Vol. 790, H. C. Deb, 31/10/69, Col. 599, 596.

(5) Times, 7/11/69, 10a.

for education; man-power and the recruitment of science teachers and graduates; and defining how best central government should carry out its duty to promote education." She was prepared also to come to the defence of the Direct Grant and Public schools. This interview provoked a reaction from Angus Maude and there followed an exchange of letters in the Times between MacArthur and Maude.⁽⁶⁾ The latter denied that there was such a thing as an Angus Maude wing of the Tory party and wasn't happy about the assessment that Mrs. Thatcher was less right-wing than he was. He felt it should be the other way. But MacArthur stuck to his opinion that Mrs. Thatcher basically supported the policies of Boyle, though she may well express her views in different language.

For some time now the Conservatives had been reviewing their policies under the leadership of Mr. Heath and a team of advisers, notably Iain Macleod, Keith Joseph and Robert Carr.⁽⁷⁾ Heath's principal aim was to construct a plan which would produce improved efficiency in government and economies in public spending, while Macleod was interested in a new method of taxation. In general, Heath managed to steer the whole exercise along a moderate middle way, thereby safeguarding the unity of the party and at the same time offering something that would appeal to the electorate. On a week-end towards the end of January 1970 the Shadow Cabinet met in conference at Selsdon Park to examine and co-ordinate the various parts of the policy review.⁽⁸⁾ Problems were discovered and eradicated, and the conference received a considerable amount of press coverage, though the details of some of the policies were not revealed: it was decided, for example, that the "tax package" should not be made known before the election, but that the options be kept open. The Tory

(6) Times, 15/11/69, 7f; 17/11/69, 11f; 25/11/69, 9f.

(7) D. Butler and M. Pinto-Duschinsky, "The British General Election 1970", Pp. 87-91.

(8) Butler and Pinto-Duschinsky, Op. cit., Pp. 129-31.

proposals on industrial relations, and law and order were made public, however, and by their nature were guaranteed popular support from an electorate whose patience had been sorely tried in these fields. Mr. Wilson, however, declared that the industrial relations policy was of a reactionary, pre-war brand, as also some of the law and order proposals. He coined the name "Selsdon Man" to fit this image. But Mr. Heath paid no heed. He merely noted that in future he should avoid playing his cards too early: but he had little doubt that he had a good hand. In education, as in other fields, he stuck to a middle course, avoiding extremes either to right or to left. The election manifesto of May 1970 was the outcome of this policy review.

At last, after threatening to do so for more than a year, the Labour government introduced a bill into the House to ban selection in secondary school education. The bill, introduced early in February 1970, had three clauses. (9) "First, L.E.A.'s were to have regard to the need for securing that secondary education was provided in non-selective schools, that is, without reference to ability or aptitude," (although exceptions were to be made for specialist music and dancing, Special Education, and sixth form colleges.) "Secondly, the Secretary of State was to request L.E.A.'s to submit plans showing how they proposed to achieve this, and thirdly, the bill provided for the revision of plans previously approved by the Secretary of State."

The government was determined to press ahead with the bill and the Tories were equally determined to do everything they could to oppose it, though they knew that, barring accidents, there was nothing they could do to prevent this piece of legislation being on the Statute Book by the end of the session. However the unexpected did occur, and in more ways than one.

(9) Education Bill 1970, Bill 91, 1969-70 session.

The bill received its Second Reading in the Commons on 12th February 1970⁽¹⁰⁾ and was the occasion for a recital of the classical arguments for and against comprehensive education. Mrs. Thatcher devoted most of her speech^(Col. 1473-88) to such an exercise, after a brief reference to the fact that this bill was seeking to limit the scope of local decision-making at a time when the White Paper was seeking to extend that scope. Towards the end of her lengthy speech she listed seven criteria, all of which she would want to see fulfilled before she would approve a proposal to go comprehensive. They were the work of a perfectionist, and quite impossible to implement. It must be accepted, however, that this was not an occasion for Mrs. Thatcher to be giving a balanced account of her policy on comprehensive education; she was leading the attack on what her party considered was an undesirable proposal by the government and she was using every argument that would further her cause.

Sir Edward Boyle also dwelt^(Col. 1527-35) upon the relationship between Central and Local Authority as envisaged by the 1944 Education Act. The balance between these two is sound, he said, and should not be altered. He reminded Members of what he had previously stressed, that comprehensive re-organisation posed problems which could best be resolved by persuasion and time. To force the issue would, among other things, be harmful to educational standards. He concluded by enquiring whether the government intended to exclude "banding". He hoped not, because he felt that in some cases it was necessary in order to achieve a balanced intake. In reply, Miss Bacon^(Col. 1577) said that clause one was intended to prohibit "banding", and furthermore it would mean that L.E.A.'s could no longer take up places in Direct Grant schools. The bill was read the second time and committed to Standing Committee.

(10) Vol. 795, H. C. Deb, 12/2/70, Col. 1463-1588.

Beginning on 10th March, Standing Committee "A" met twice a week on Tuesday and Thursday mornings to debate the clauses in the bill.⁽¹¹⁾ The Conservatives claimed that the entire bill was a sham: there was no money to implement re-organisation and the bill was merely asking for plans. Direct Grant schools were debated; then school buildings and split-sites. On this point it was mentioned that to be successful the latter type of school had to have full facilities on each site: teachers might be mobile, but facilities were not. The discussion moved on to sixth forms. Mr. Short was content to retain selection here because he thought that social factors weighed less on a sixteen-year-old than on a child of eleven. In addition to this it was intended that there should be an exception in the bill for Special Education, and for ballet and music schools. An attempt was now made to extend these exceptions to cover academic subjects, and even to have a five per cent selection irrespective of specialisms. These amendments were defeated.

During the last sitting in March, zoning and banding were discussed. A proposal was moved that an exception should be made to allow zoning according to social groupings of the population, so that there would be a better chance of a balanced intake. Mr. Short replied that the establishing of catchment areas for a school was an informal arrangement and would not be contrary to the intentions of the bill. Such an amendment would be superfluous, he said. Sir Edward's proposal (banding) went further than this. It envisaged that selection be used (based on primary school records) to ensure that a balanced intake was achieved in each comprehensive school.

The committee met for their eighth sitting on 14th April. The vote on Boyle's amendment was the first piece of business. It was

(11) Session 1969-70, Vol. 1, H. C. Standing Committee "A", March 10th, 12th, 17th, 19th, 24th; April 7th, 9th, 14th, 16th, 1970, Col. 1-327.

carried by eight votes to seven. After another short piece of business the chairman announced that he considered that the principle of the clause and matters arising thereupon had been adequately discussed, and he called for a vote on the clause. It is clear⁽¹²⁾ that at this point the parties were equally represented. On the government side one member of the committee was ill, one thought wrongly that he was paired, and another was elsewhere in the House. On the Opposition side, the Chief Whip was missing. However, ten seconds before the door was locked for the vote he returned. The Conservatives couldn't believe their luck. The voting went ahead, and Clause One, which represented the essence of the bill, was voted out by nine votes to eight. A stunned chairman promptly adjourned the meeting. Two days later the committee met again and it was agreed that the chairman report the bill to the House. There the situation was debated at great length on 22nd April.⁽¹³⁾ No precedent existed for the situation and after many points of order the motion was carried that the bill be re-committed to the same Standing Committee with power to insert provisions of a like effect. A new Clause One would be introduced, phrased differently, but with the same meaning as the original.

But once again chance intervened. Mr. Wilson, judging the time to be opportune, dissolved parliament and declared a General Election. The bill ran out of time and was never introduced again.

The Tories had laid great emphasis on the importance of local decision-making in this matter. Was this a matter of principle for them or merely a means to an end? It was probably both. They believed in local decisions because they knew that conditions varied from place to

(12) Vol. 800, H. C. Deb, 22/4/70, Col. 498.

(13) Vol. 800, H. C. Deb, 22/4/70, Col. 424-504.

place and they considered that the variation was sufficiently great to preclude a decision applicable to everyone. Secondly, they held that decisions made with the consent of the people concerned - the parents and the teachers - had a better chance of success than had a decision imposed from above. But in addition to these considerations there remained the fact that local decision-making was better suited to achieving the Tory objective of protecting the grammar schools. While Labour was in power, and decision-making remained a local matter, then areas which cared about their grammar schools could not be forced to disband them, and when the Tories returned to power all grammar schools could be protected by use of Section 13 decisions, while the minister continued to pay lip service to local decision-making. This is not to say that the Tories would always use Section 13 in this way. But it is clear where the advantage lay.

Towards the end of March the Donnison Report on independent day schools and direct-grant schools was published. Its main recommendations were that independent schools should be allowed to continue, but that direct-grant schools should not. They should be free to adopt independent status if they so wished, but preferably they should be encouraged to put themselves at the service of the whole community by becoming maintained comprehensive schools. Mrs. Thatcher however rejected the findings of the commission⁽¹⁴⁾ and stated that the direct-grant schools would certainly not be abandoned by a Conservative government. Indeed she warned that if a Labour L.E.A. were to cease taking up places in a direct-grant school then a Conservative government would be ready to pay the fees directly from the Department of Education and Science.⁽¹⁵⁾

(14) T.E.S., 20/3/70, P. 3.

(15) Education, 17/4/70, P. 438.

But by this time minds were occupied with elections. The county council elections produced a slight swing to the Conservatives, while Labour tended to benefit in the municipal ones. The only change in power occurred in the I.L.E.A.,⁽¹⁶⁾ with a success for Labour. But there were no clear indications to point to the likely outcome of the general election. In May the Conservative manifesto was published.⁽¹⁷⁾ It followed closely the policy review of the Selsdon Park Conference, taking a cautious, middle-of-the-road position on most issues, including education. Tory educational priority, it said, would be given to primary schools. As for selection for secondary education, Tories recognised the shift away from selection at the age of eleven, but maintained that each L.E.A. had the right to make its own choice as to which secondary system it should adopt - selective or comprehensive - in the light of all the local circumstances.

The election was to be held on 18th June and as it approached, speculation was rife as to who would be given the key posts if the Conservatives won. The Times Educational Supplement⁽¹⁸⁾ felt that Margaret Thatcher had done little to fill the gap on the frontbench caused by the departure of Boyle: her statements during the campaign were a model of caution: but it seemed that there was no one else, with even a passing experience of education, who could fill the top post. Peter Newall⁽¹⁹⁾, writing in that same issue, thought he could detect, since Boyle left, a hardening of opinion in favour of retaining selection. He considered that the essence of the difference was that Mrs. Thatcher believed that comprehensives would not alter the social structure of this country at all - indeed, could well do the opposite, by consolidating

(16) Ibid.

(17) Times, 27/5/70, P. 1c, Pp. 8-9.

(18) T.E.S., 5/6/70, P. 10.

(19) T.E.S., 5/6/70, P. 2.

homogeneous areas. Mrs. Thatcher, he asserted, held the view that decisions in this matter should be made locally; that grammar schools and comprehensives could exist side by side; and she would be willing to give more grammar school places to L.E.A.'s if they so desired.

A week later she wrote an article⁽²⁰⁾ giving an account of Tory educational work in the past and the party's hopes for the future. The latter included the reduction of the size of classes; improving primary schools; continued development of higher education, and a review of the training of teachers.

The election put the Conservatives into power once more, and Mr. Heath set about forming his first government. Predictably, Margaret Thatcher was appointed Secretary of State for Education and Science.⁽²¹⁾ The appointment was received in educational circles with goodwill though not without a little apprehension. Would she really give L.E.A.'s freedom in deciding whether or not to go comprehensive, or freedom to cease supporting direct-grant schools?⁽²²⁾ Would she abolish the Open University? What would be her approach to the relationships between the universities, the polytechnics, and the colleges of education?⁽²³⁾ But for those who were apprehensive about the appointment of Mrs. Thatcher after the views that she had expressed during the previous nine months, there was some consolation to be had from one of the appointments Mr. Heath made to the junior posts - he made only two.⁽²⁴⁾ One of these was Mr. William van Straubenzee who had shared Boyle's outlook and been one of his lieutenants for many years. He was appointed Parliamentary

(20) T.E.S., 12/6/70, P. 2.

(21) Times, 22/6/70, P. 2f, P. 10c.

(22) Education, 26/6/70, Pp. 703-4.

(23) T.E.S., 26/6/70, P. 2.

(24) Education, 3/7/70, P. 2; T.E.S., 3/7/70, P. 6; Times, 6/7/70, 8f.

Under-Secretary with responsibility for higher education, while Lord Belstead was given the similar post with responsibility for schools.

For nine months Mrs. Thatcher had merely been able to talk about her policies: now she had the chance to act. Would her actions match her words? She lost no time in issuing her first directive - Circular 10/70. It looked back to the 1944 Education Act, re-affirming that all pupils shall have "full opportunities for secondary education suitable to their needs and abilities". But it declared that this was not to be achieved by a uniform system imposed from above. Circular 10/65 was withdrawn and L.E.A.'s were now to make their own decisions in this matter. Moreover, Mrs. Thatcher made it clear that where a particular pattern worked well and was generally supported she "did not wish to make further change without good reason". Furthermore, authorities, she said, could change their plans now if they so wished, or continue with them. Finally, there should be proper consultation with voluntary bodies and teachers, and parents should be given an opportunity to express their views. There were the inevitable protests⁽²⁵⁾ from the pro-comprehensive lobby who rightly saw this as a weakening of the drive towards universal comprehensive education. Both Mr. Heath and Mrs. Thatcher, however, took the occasion of the debate on the Queen's Speech to reply to their critics. The new Prime Minister said that Mr. Wilson could not get out of his head the idea that giving this freedom to L.E.A.'s meant insistence on eleven-plus.⁽²⁶⁾ "Nothing is further from the truth," he continued. "The great majority of local authorities in England and Wales have abandoned the eleven-plus, and the great majority are Conservative authorities." Mrs. Thatcher, in her speech⁽²⁷⁾ spoke about giving

(25) Education, 3/7/70, P. 6.

(26) Vol. 803, H. C. Deb, 2/7/70, Col. 93.

(27) Vol. 803, H. C. Deb, 8/7/70, Col. 676 et seq.

freedom to local authorities, insisting that authorities who put up plans which were educationally sound would have them approved. She quoted one scheme at Leeds which she had already approved. Moreover, she made it clear, as did the circular, and Mr. Straubenzee during the debate, that she did not seek to undo re-organisation schemes that had already taken place. (28)

In the debate, Mrs. Thatcher re-affirmed her belief that it was possible to operate comprehensive schools side by side with grammar schools, and she quoted London as an example where she believed it was being done successfully. Then she gave a warning. She said that Boyle had considered the minister's powers (under Section 13 of the 1944 Act) as merely reserve powers - enabling him to reject any proposal he thought would be educationally damaging. She took a broader view of this section of the 1944 Act, she continued, and considered all educational factors to see whether a proposal was desirable - for example: the effect on other schools in the area, and the views of parents, teachers and educational bodies. (Col. 682)

A further comment on Mrs. Thatcher's first circular came from Stuart Maclure under the heading "An end to the Consensus?" (29) He made the point that the considerable degree of consensus which had existed between Crosland and Boyle had been deliberately broken by Short, who had tried to provoke the Opposition, said Maclure. He went on to suggest that Mrs. Thatcher's new policy of leaving decisions to L.E.A.'s was a negative one. We have already seen that this was not necessarily true. The Secretary of State had considerable power under Section 13 whereby she could influence the developing pattern of secondary education. While

(28) Education, 17/7/70, Pp. 55-6.

(29) T.E.S., 3/7/70, P. 2.

allowing L.E.A.'s to open comprehensive schools, she could at the same time use her Section 13 powers to implement her policy of preserving the grammar schools. Maclure's next point was that if she was to make a final decision on each proposal then she would need to make known the criteria that she would use. He did not think that she gave enough guidance on this matter in her circular. A leading article in the Times on 3rd August⁽³⁰⁾ expressed a similar opinion. Stuart Maclure's final point was that the initiative now lay with the local authorities. There appeared to be considerable momentum, and with their new-found freedom the L.E.A.'s would soon indicate whether the momentum was voluntary or co-erced. If it was voluntary, they would wish to continue with their plans and, said Maclure, Mrs. Thatcher's reaction would indicate her real policy.

By the time the Conservative Party's Annual Conference took place in October, Mrs. Thatcher had settled into her new job and the party faithful appeared to be satisfied with her performance. Her Circular 10/70, seemed to have satisfied the right-wing element without upsetting the more liberal party members.⁽³¹⁾ For the first time in some years secondary education was not a major issue and as a result delegates were able to devote more time to other important educational issues. In her closing speech, Mrs. Thatcher revealed that she would soon be setting up an inquiry into the training of teachers. The Tory government, she said, would also be pressing ahead with the raising of the school leaving age. In the field of secondary education she believed a mixed system would be in existence for many years to come. But Mrs. Thatcher was challenged by a Young Conservative to explain how she could interfere with the I.L.E.A. in the matter of direct grant schools and still claim

(30) Times, 3/8/70, 7a.

(31) T.E.S., 9/10/70, P. 1; Times, 8/10/70, 6f; Education, 9/10/70, P. 335.

to support local autonomy. She replied that retaining the direct grant school system was in the interest of parental choice.

At the end of the month the Secretary of State announced the establishment, as promised at the conference, of a committee to inquire into the education, training and probation of teachers.⁽³²⁾ Lord James was to be the chairman.

On 28th October Mrs. Thatcher addressed the A.E.C. Conference. Nothing new emerged, but the conference coincided with the publication of a White Paper⁽³³⁾ on government spending. The cuts in educational expenditure were modest and represented a success for Mrs. Thatcher. Fighting successfully in the Cabinet for resources for education was to become one of her merits as a minister.

In higher education her view was⁽³⁴⁾ that a large expansion could be expected during the 1970's but much of this need would be met by the polytechnics. In September, at the designation ceremony of the North-East London Polytechnic, she had declared⁽³⁵⁾ that the polytechnics would remain different from the universities and that while they would develop the full intellectual potential of students, they would also play a major part in preparing them for their working lives. The students objected strongly, calling it a second class education.

Six months after her policy circular 10/70, Mrs. Thatcher was asked in the Commons⁽³⁶⁾ whether she would make additional grants for alterations to school buildings necessitated by re-organisation schemes.

(32) "Education and Science in 1970", P. 10.

(33) Education, 6/11/70, Pp. 451-2.

(34) N.C.P., 25/1/71, P. 27.

(35) Education, 18/9/70, P. 241.

(36) Vol. 808, H. C. Deb, 18/12/70, Col. 464.

In a written reply she said she would not, because the money was needed for primary schools. However L.E.A.'s could, if they wished, use R.O.S.L.A., Minor works or Major basic needs money.

It was still rather early to expect much information from L.E.A.'s about their re-organisation plans, but during the summer and autumn the first reactions were coming in; the pattern remained far from clear. In Bedfordshire⁽³⁷⁾ plans had earlier been agreed, but in the light of Circular 10/70 the education committee reviewed those plans and decided to stand by them. However their decision was over-ruled by the full council. A similar situation arose in Surrey⁽³⁸⁾ where the county council asked the education committee to re-consider all plans, and to take no further action in the meantime. Aberystwith, too,⁽³⁹⁾ decided to review its plan, although in this case those who supported the motion were in two groups - one of which was anti-comprehensive, while the other sought a better comprehensive plan. Richmond was the next one in the news.⁽⁴⁰⁾ This was a Tory-controlled authority which all along had steadfastly refused to submit a plan for re-organisation. Now, after hearing a report on the inefficiency of their existing selective system, both the committee and the full council agree to go comprehensive. Richmond was followed quickly by Barnet,⁽⁴¹⁾ a Tory authority which had had a plan rejected by the minister and had never reached agreement with him. Now the council agreed to put up a genuine plan for comprehensive re-organisation.

(37) Education, 31/7/70, P. 104.

(38) Ibid.

(39) Education, 7/8/70, P. 119.

(40) Education, 18/9/70, P. 242; 2/10/70, P. 310.

(41) Education, 16/10/70, P. 361.

Even by the end of 1970 there was not a great deal of evidence to indicate the views of the L.E.A.'s or Mrs. Thatcher's response. The annual report of the D.E.S. gave what information was available and even indulged in a little speculation.⁽⁴²⁾ Section 17 reported that up to the end of 1970 Mrs. Thatcher had approved four major plans and also five plans for smaller parts of authorities' areas. It went on to say that many authorities were still considering their response to the circular but that it seemed likely that most of them with approved plans would adhere to them. Section 15 gave an idea of how many were involved. At the end of Mr. Wilson's administration 115 L.E.A.'s had had plans approved for the whole or for a greater part of their areas and 17 for a small part. Eight were under consideration and thirteen had been rejected. There had been no response from ten.

In April and May, comprehensive education and kindred subjects were touched upon several times in the House. First Mrs. Thatcher was asked to give details of the different types of comprehensive school and their respective degrees of popularity.⁽⁴³⁾ After she had replied, Mr. Dormand complained that many comprehensive schools were that in name only, because they lacked a full range of ability. In reply Mrs. Thatcher shifted the subject a little to make the point that comprehensive and non-selective education were not the same thing. Often selection is needed, she said, to get an all-ability range in a comprehensive school: "that was rejected by the last government", she said, but "selection is not necessarily rejected by this government." Furthermore, she refused to ban streaming. However, when Mr. Deakins questioned her about selection a month later in the House⁽⁴⁴⁾ she didn't dwell on how selection could be used to make a school genuinely comprehensive. She

(42) "Education and Science in 1970", H.M.S.O., April 1971, Section 17.

(43) Vol. 814, H. C. Deb, 1/4/71, Col. 1661-3.

(44) Vol. 816, H. C. Deb, 6/5/71, Col. 1614.

told him bluntly that L.E.A.'s had the duty to provide schools that met the varying aptitudes and abilities of the children: and if they chose to do this by a selective system she would not interfere.

At this point Mrs. Thatcher made an interesting tactical move. During an education debate in the Commons⁽⁴⁵⁾ she was giving a list of her priorities and, predictably, comprehensive re-organisation was well down the list. But, in passing, she spoke about the practice of submitting re-organisation plans for the minister's approval. She pointed out that this approval had no force in law: the process merely informed the D.E.S. of the L.E.A.'s intentions. Each proposal would subsequently have to be approved by her under Section 13 of the Act. Soon after she made this statement Mrs. Thatcher announced⁽⁴⁶⁾ that she was "discontinuing the practice of giving approvals to non-statutory plans for re-organisation because of the confusion between these and approvals under Section 13 of the 1944 Act, as amended." It is surprising that she did not take this action earlier, because the approvals in question had been introduced by Labour's Circular 10/65 with the express purpose of encouraging L.E.A.'s to press on with re-organisation. It was still serving this purpose. As more and more authorities declared their intention to go comprehensive, and in most cases no good grounds existed whereby she could reject them, Mrs. Thatcher found herself giving approval, even if somewhat reluctantly, to an increasing number of plans. A trend was thus established: she would have to put a stop to it. Her motive, then, for discontinuing the practice was probably this as much as the one that she stated.

(45) Vol. 815, H. C. Deb, 21/4/71, Col. 1203 et seq, especially 1210-11.

(46) "Education and Science in 1971", Pp. 7-8.

Meanwhile the press was reporting on some of the more interesting decisions about comprehensive education. In July 1971 Mrs. Thatcher refused to give Section 13 approval to a proposal to combine a secondary modern school with a grammar school at Barnet:⁽⁴⁷⁾ at half a mile, the sites were too far apart, she stated. In Surrey the authority had now decided to press ahead with part of their plan. But a proposal to convert the Rydens Secondary Modern School, at Walton-on-Thames, into a comprehensive school did not meet with her approval.⁽⁴⁸⁾ She approved the project under Section 13 of the Act, but then produced her trump-card. Invoking Section 68 of the Act she declared that the authority was acting unreasonably in eliminating parental choice. She mentioned the exclusion of single sex and denominational schools. (The former was true but not the latter.) Then she got to the real reason. The authority was unreasonable, she said, because the proposals make "no provision for any exception and have the effect of eliminating all choice of school for those children who might qualify for a grammar school place." If this was going to be her criterion then this decision in Surrey would have enormous significance. Two points here are worthy of comment - parental choice and Section 68.

Section 76 of the 1944 Education Act first established the principle that "so far as is compatible with the provision of efficient instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure, pupils are to be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents." Many appeals were made by parents to the minister under this section, and to clarify the situation somewhat he issued, in August 1950, the Manual of Guidance Schools No. 1. It listed some of the reasons that could be invoked - denominational grounds, desire for single-sex

(47) Education, 9/7/71, P. 1.

(48) Ibid.

education, Welsh language education, convenience of access, special facilities, family association and medical reasons. But the clause "provision of efficient instruction and training" meant that an authority could exclude from a grammar school all children except those considered suitable for such an education. To these children a choice was given between grammar and other type secondary schools, but not to the others. Frequently, during the comprehensive debate the Conservatives had referred to parental choice for these children and fought to preserve it. But to some people there was something a little off-putting about fighting for parental choice for only a small sector of the community. Boyle agreed⁽⁴⁹⁾ that he did refer to parental choice from time to time in his speeches, but as the years went on he used it less and less. "It's been a fighting word that gets used from time to time," he said, "but no one has thought this one out very thoroughly."

The point was developed in a speech⁽⁵⁰⁾ by Mr. George Carter, the new president of the Inner London Teachers Association in February 1970. He was speaking about the possibility of unlimited parental choice within the London school system. He envisaged that, in the context of comprehensive schools side by side with grammar schools, the less favoured comprehensive schools might even be forced to close. His conclusion was that in legislating on the question of parental choice, one consideration should be paramount: it should not be possible for a parent, by making a choice of school for his own child, to frustrate the development of the education system for the benefit of all children.

Mr. Carter was speaking about the possible effects if a free choice of school were offered to all parents. But many educationists were concerned about the effect of a choice of school being accorded to even

(49) Interview at Leeds University, 21/1/74, Pp. 27-28.

(50) Education, 13/2/70, P. 177.

a limited number of parents within the selective system. If free choice were being offered to some at the expense of others, within a system financed from public funds, then they felt that an injustice was being perpetrated. Many did feel that the direct-grant and maintained grammar schools were receiving more than their share of limited resources to the detriment of the secondary modern schools. Successive governments had endeavoured to right this imbalance, but the causes were difficult to determine and had proved impossible to eradicate. But still Mrs. Thatcher upheld this kind of parental choice, acting in such a way as to undermine the future success of a new comprehensive school in order to uphold the free choice of a minority to opt for grammar school education.

In taking exception to the Surrey proposal for their Rydens Secondary School, Mrs. Thatcher made use of Section 68 of the 1944 Act and demanded that the scheme should be modified to allow for the transfer - to schools outside of the Rydens catchment area - of children who were suited to a grammar school education. Section 68 of the Act empowers the minister to intervene if he is satisfied that an L.E.A. is acting unreasonably. Perhaps Mrs. Thatcher thought that by invoking this section of the Act she could positively direct the L.E.A. to an alternative policy, instead of merely rejecting their proposal. But her action provoked criticism. The Surrey parent group, S.T.E.P. (Stop the Eleven-Plus in Surrey), sought the opinions of two Counsel⁽⁵¹⁾, who were in agreement that the Secretary of State's action in using Section 68 for this purpose was "not only unprecedented, but also exceeded the intention of the Section". They expressed the opinion that "the Secretary of State's direction is a nullity and ... the L.E.A. is under no duty to

(51) Education, 17/9/71, P. 201.

comply with her direction". S.T.E.P. then urged Surrey County Council to be guided by these opinions. In turn, the county council took legal advice⁽⁵²⁾ to determine whether they had any chance of successfully challenging the Secretary of State in the courts. Counsel advised that they were unlikely to succeed, so the authority reluctantly decided to abide by her ruling. But Mrs. Thatcher must have realised that she had had a narrow escape, and she didn't use Section 68 for this purpose again.

Meanwhile Surrey, after its initial indecision in July 1970, in October 1971 voted⁽⁵³⁾ in favour of ending selection throughout the county as soon as practicable, though small exceptions were made for exceptionally gifted children. On the other hand Northamptonshire chose⁽⁵⁴⁾ to go comprehensive while retaining four grammar schools. They expressed the hope that the comprehensive schools would be successful, despite the creaming-off of the most able children. To this end "every encouragement would be given by the provision of qualified staff, buildings, and equipment", said the official memorandum. But would it be the secondary modern story once more, but with a fresh name?

The Inner London Education Authority received a mixed reception from Mrs. Thatcher when they submitted a group of proposals for Section 13 approval:⁽⁵⁵⁾ she approved some and rejected others. A spokesman for the authority said he found some of her decisions "particularly difficult" to understand.

Once more it was the season for the annual conferences. The motion at the 1971 Conservative Conference sought to congratulate the Secretary

(52) Education, 17/12/71, P. 536.

(53) Education, 22/12/71, P. 333.

(54) Education, 6/8/71, P. 81.

(55) Education, 27/8/71, P. 136.

of State for re-defining the priorities in education.⁽⁵⁶⁾ For a second year in succession she succeeded in keeping delegates away from the subject of comprehensive re-organisation and instead they had time to range over the whole educational field. Presumably they were satisfied with her treatment of this subject. But there was one dissenting voice. Mr. John Schofield complained bitterly about Conservative L.E.A.'s being ardent comprehensivists. "Almost every county in England is Tory-controlled", he said, "and, in the main, Conservative chairmen do not follow Mrs. Thatcher but their chief education officers." He quoted Lancashire as an authority with a strong Tory majority but a firm policy of pressing on with comprehensive re-organisation. Winding up the debate, Mrs. Thatcher spoke in justification of giving priority to primary schools. But because of the lack of resources nursery schools would have to be limited for the present to deprived areas. Referring to the raising of the school leaving age, she discussed the need for changes in the curriculum. Finally she touched on comprehensive education, urging that thorough consideration should be given to the possibility of establishing smaller ones. She referred to an article by Elizabeth Halsall in the D.E.S.'s journal "Trends in Education", in which Dr. Halsall favoured smaller comprehensive schools. Dr. Halsall had been exploring this idea for some years through her work at Hull University. It was, she asserted, particularly useful in sparsely populated areas and for some of the denominational schools. But "Trends in Education" also published, in July 1971, an article by T. I. Davies,⁽⁵⁷⁾ a member of the Inspectorate, who had specialised in curriculum analysis to determine the relationship between size of staff and variety of curriculum. Mr. Davies' conclusion was that when a comprehensive school falls well below six form entry in size, the pupils

(56) Conservative Party Conference 1971, Verbatim report, Pp. 64-72.

(57) Education, 30/7/71, P. 58.

suffer disadvantages which should not be under-estimated. Why, then, was Mrs. Thatcher showing preference for smaller comprehensive schools? While most would agree that the larger school potentially offered more in terms of large staff and increased number of options in the curriculum, few would dispute that it brought with it problems of organisation, a lack of intimacy, and disciplinary problems. In contrast, small schools avoided these problems. Moreover having smaller schools meant that the problem of split-site schools could be avoided and, above all, existing schools could become comprehensive without losing their integrity. These were the advantages sought by the Secretary of State.

At this point, fifteen months after Mrs. Thatcher had assumed control of the Department of Education and Science what was the general trend among L.E.A.'s regarding comprehensive re-organisation, and what was her reaction to it? No precise figures are available to show how many Section 13 proposals, relating to comprehensive schools, were approved or rejected by Mrs. Thatcher, but other statistics give an indication. The D.E.S.'s annual report states⁽⁵⁸⁾ that in 1971 2,442 Section 13 proposals were approved: 859 of these were for secondary projects. It is not revealed how many of these were connected with comprehensive re-organisation, but 695 of these secondary approvals were for new schools, significant enlargements and changes in character: 164 were closures.

A further indication of the trend can be gleaned from another D.E.S. publication: "Statistics of Education". Successive volumes⁽⁵⁹⁾ indicate the variations in the number of each type of school. The relevant details are as follows:-

(58) "Education and Science in 1971", P. 7.

(59) "Statistics of Education", 1970-73, Volume 1, Table 1.

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS	1970	1971	1972	1973
Secondary Modern	2691	2464	2218	1915
Grammar	1038	970	893	819
Technical	82	67	58	43
Comprehensive	1145	1373	1591	1835

The increase in the number of comprehensive schools was to be expected, but the decline in grammar schools - about 75 being closed each year - suggests that Mrs. Thatcher was unable or unwilling to resist the wishes of the local authorities.

The above statistics, and reports of individual projects, show that during the period under consideration (June 1970 - December 1971) a steady flow of proposals was being directed to the Secretary of State for Section 13 approval. She saw fit to reject a few but the majority were approved.

In as much as Tory policy is, in practice, created by the Secretary of State under the supervision of the leader, it can be said that Tory policy on secondary education took a swing to the right when Mrs. Thatcher succeeded Sir Edward Boyle. She rarely, if ever, referred to the work of the educational psychologists and sociologists. Socially deprived children, positive discrimination and similar concepts seem to have been forgotten. In contrast, she believed in selection; but if comprehensive schools were desired, she contended that they could co-exist with grammar schools. However, in practice her policy expressed itself through the principle of local decision-making. In time she came to recognise and accept the trend towards comprehensive education, although she personally did not show any liking for it. On occasion, however, she used her Section 13 powers to preserve good grammar schools or to retain an

element of parental choice. And whereas Boyle had sought to find a new role for the grammar schools along the lines of their becoming upper schools in 2-tier schemes, or sixth form colleges, Mrs. Thatcher's contribution of this kind was to explore the idea of smaller comprehensive schools, so that good existing secondary schools could become comprehensive without losing their integrity.

Chapter 16Conclusion

We have traced in some detail the Conservative Party's statements and actions during the years 1945-1971 relevant to its policy on comprehensive education, and it seems appropriate now to draw together the various threads of the argument, together with the conclusions that have been reached.

One of the intentions of the 1944 Education Act was to make secondary education a reality for all children. But the Act did not determine which form of secondary education should be adopted. The most familiar form was the selective one, which by that time had evolved into the tri-partite system. But before the war there was a minority who believed that children should not be segregated according to ability. They advocated that children should receive their secondary education in one type of school - the comprehensive school. However after the 1944 Act the overwhelming majority of local authorities chose to adopt the tri-partite system which, at that time, was favoured by the majority of educationists. Although the 1944 Act had given no decision about the structure of secondary education, the Conservative Caretaker Government encouraged⁽¹⁾ L.E.A.'s to adopt the selective system, and throughout the years 1945-51 successive education ministers of the Labour government followed that same policy.⁽²⁾

However this consensus between the two political parties came to an end in 1951 when Labour switched its support to the comprehensive

(1) Ministry of Education, Pamphlet No. 1, "The Nation's Schools".

(2) Supra, Chapter 3.

system, basing its decision on egalitarian considerations.⁽³⁾ But the Conservatives felt that comprehensive schools offered no overall advantage, so they continued to give their support to the selective system. They could agree to no more than a limited amount of experiment with comprehensive schools. Instead, they preferred to develop the secondary modern schools, with the object of their attaining parity of esteem with other secondary schools.

Throughout the 1920's and 1930's the selective system had rested on the assertion that a child's future ability could be predicted and accurately measured. In the early 1940's the educational psychologists had rejected this theory, and they now held that measurable intelligence was partly innate and partly the result of environment: it was not a permanently fixed quantity that they were measuring. As a result of the rejection of the earlier theory⁽⁴⁾, the supporters of selection now had to re-develop their philosophy. They still considered that it was possible to assess, with reasonable accuracy, a child's current ability. However, they acknowledged that mistakes would be made with some children, and that there would be children whose level of intelligence would change due to environmental factors. Consequently, all secondary schools would have to be prepared to provide for such children, in addition to those for whom the school was primarily intended.

During the late 1950's the Conservatives tackled this problem⁽⁵⁾ by urging that full use should be made of transfer at 13 years of age. The problem could also be minimised by the grammar school and secondary modern school courses being allowed to overlap. The Tories also considered that campus schools had considerable merits in that transfer

(3) M. Parkinson, "The Labour Party and the Organisation of Secondary Education, 1918-65", P. 47.

(4) P. E. Vernon, (Ed.), "Secondary School Selection", 1957, P. 39.

(5) Vol. 563, H. C. Deb, 24/1/57, Col. 374-5.

from one department to another was relatively easy.

Up to this point Conservatives had allowed no more than a few experiments with comprehensive schools. In 1955, however, Eccles extended this⁽⁶⁾ to include rural districts and new housing areas, provided that the people really wanted them. He also introduced another idea into the Tory policy on comprehensives. First came a statement that proposals would be judged on their merits.⁽⁷⁾ This implied a certain freedom on the part of L.E.A.'s to initiate schemes. It was left to Lord Hailsham, early in 1957, to make the idea explicit:⁽⁸⁾ the decision whether or not to become comprehensive was for each local authority to make. But at the same time Eccles and his successors made it clear⁽⁹⁾ that they valued the grammar schools, and had no intention of closing any of them. Any development of comprehensive schools would have to contend with the continued presence of the grammar schools - with the possible exception of country districts and areas of new housing.

This completed the basic Tory policy - a policy which remained virtually unchanged until 1962.

As early as 1957 however Boyle was expressing anxiety about certain aspects of selection at 11+: he was unhappy about⁽¹⁰⁾ the influence of selection on the curriculum of the primary schools, and he recognised that selection had social implications and disadvantages. He readily gave his support⁽¹¹⁾, therefore, to the Leicestershire scheme which was announced that year. By a system of parental choice at 14+ it sought to

(6) Eccles' speech of 13/4/55 quoted in N.C.P., 13/2/56, Pp. 17-18.

(7) Vol. 535, H. C. Deb, 16/12/54, Col. 174.

(8) Times, 12/2/57, 3c.

(9) T.E.S., 7/1/55, P. 14.

(10) Vol. 568, H. C. Deb, 5/4/57, Col. 759-60.

(11) N.C.P., 3/3/58, P. 21.

avoid the disadvantages of early selection, while preserving the integrity of the grammar schools.⁽¹²⁾

In the years that followed, there was a steady build-up of information about the theory, the process, and the shortcomings of 11+ selection. Research had already indicated⁽¹³⁾ that intelligence was only partly innate: that its development was greatly influenced by the quality of home and school environment. Next, the accuracy of the selection process was called into question.⁽¹⁴⁾ Then came further research, and confirmation of the earlier findings, by the reports of the C.A.C.E. - Crowther and Newsom.

Meanwhile, the Conservative government continued to make suggestions for minimising the shortcomings of the selective system⁽¹⁵⁾: both grammar and secondary modern schools would have to provide for children on the border-line of selection, with courses of equal standard. But if the social problems of selection were to be avoided - the divisiveness and the sense of failure - it seemed that the secondary moderns would have to be improved⁽¹⁶⁾ out of all recognition in order to give them parity of esteem with grammar schools. To this end the government in 1958 embarked upon a £400 million building programme.⁽¹⁷⁾ But parity of esteem depended upon many, and complex factors - not just upon buildings and equipment. It was something the secondary modern schools were never to attain.

In 1962 Boyle came back from the Treasury to become Minister of Education. Free from the day to day affairs of education he had had the

(12) C. Benn and B. Simon, "Half Way There", 2nd Ed., P. 61.

(13) P. E. Vernon, Op. cit., Pp. 101-6; J. E. Floud (Ed.), "Social Class and Educational Opportunity", 1956.

(14) Cf. D. Rubinstein and B. Simon, "The Evolution of the Comprehensive School, 1926-66", P. 66.

(15) Vol. 588, H. C. Deb, 22/5/58, Col. 1493.

(16) T.E.S., 26/4/57, P. 566.

(17) White Paper, "Secondary Education for All: A new drive", (Cmd. 604), December 1958.

opportunity to consider the evidence. On returning to education one of his first decisions was to extend the scope for comprehensive schools. He would allow them now in large cities⁽¹⁸⁾ (co-existing with grammar schools) and in small market towns⁽¹⁹⁾ (where, presumably, the grammar schools were too small to be efficient). At this time Boyle also began to speak about the need for positive discrimination in favour of the underprivileged.⁽²⁰⁾ Then in the summer of 1963 he made two important speeches which together marked a development in his policy.⁽²¹⁾ He now held the view that the tri-partite system could no longer be regarded as the norm, with other systems regarded as experimental. In future each system was to be judged on its merits: all were on trial, he said. But he had one reservation: he wanted to preserve first-class grammar schools of good size.⁽²²⁾ This was a significant reservation to make because, in its most obvious interpretation, it amounted to co-existence of grammar schools with comprehensive schools, when the latter would be at a considerable disadvantage, despite Sir Edward's assurance to the contrary.

The reasons behind Boyle's shift in policy are worth examining. His move away from the tri-partite system was for three reasons.⁽²³⁾ First, he accepted that the original theory behind selection was no longer tenable; intelligence depended not only on innate ability but was influenced very much by environment, and it followed that positive discrimination should be practised in favour of underprivileged children, rather than privileged treatment for able children (if such was the case).

(18) T.E.S., 1/3/63, P. 416.

(19) Education, 31/5/63, P. 1077.

(20) T.E.S., 1/3/63, P. 416.

(21) T.E.S., 21/6/63, P. 1368; Education, 12/7/63, Pp. 101-2.

(22) Guardian, 19/6/63, P. 5.

(23) Lord Boyle, Article in "Journal of Educational Administration and History", June 1972, Pp. 32-3.

The second influence⁽²⁴⁾ on Boyle was the knowledge that so many L.E.A.'s had now come to accept comprehensive education for their areas. But the third, and probably most important, factor to influence Boyle⁽²⁵⁾ was the attitude of the parents towards the tri-partite system - or rather, towards part of it - the secondary modern schools. Parents considered⁽²⁶⁾ that the courses offered by these schools were not adequate for many of the children in them, (especially border-line cases), and regarding prestige, the secondary moderns were undoubtedly bottom of the league. Two reports issued during 1963 added extra weight to these parental opinions.⁽²⁷⁾

In view of the above considerations why did Boyle insist on preserving the best of the grammar schools, a policy which would almost certainly hinder the development of a truly comprehensive system? The reasons he gave⁽²⁸⁾ included the preservation of parental choice, a fear that Neighbourhood Comprehensive schools could not do justice for an able child, and a doubt as to whether an average comprehensive school could sufficiently "stretch" an able child.

It would seem that Boyle had gone a long way towards accepting the reasoning of the educational experts, but had failed to follow it to its logical conclusion.

During the next two years he dwelt upon this problem, but there seemed to be no solution to it. He was more than ever convinced that Conservatives should move away from selection at eleven, but the

(24) Ibid.; M. Kogan, "The Politics of Education", P. 78.

(25) Lord Boyle, Op. cit., Pp. 32-3.

(26) Lord Boyle, Interview at Leeds, 21/1/74, Pp. 12-13.

(27) N.U.T. Survey, "The State of Our Schools"; The Newsom Report.

(28) Cf. Chapter 10, supra.

comprehensive alternative seemed fraught with danger for high academic standards. By 1965 he declared⁽²⁹⁾ that the party was in a dilemma, and as a solution he advocated a much slower evolution towards comprehensive education.

Meanwhile Labour had returned to power in 1964 and now had the opportunity to implement its policy. It is interesting to note however that a comparison between the policies of the two parties in January 1965, when Crosland became Minister of Education, reveals a certain amount of consensus between his policy and Boyle's position at that time. Crosland had for long advocated a comprehensive system of secondary education because he believed that selection offended against equality: Boyle had, by 1963, moved away from selection, but on the grounds of social justice to the individual. Boyle, as we have seen, was pressing for a slow evolution in order to protect the grammar schools and high academic standards, while Crosland was calling for a moderate pace⁽³⁰⁾ because of the obstacles ahead: one of these was the regard that many Labour Party members had for grammar schools. However even this limited consensus was soon to end.

There were some people who alleged that equal opportunity could be offered only at the expense of academic standards. If such were the case it could be argued that the parties were faced with a choice between equal opportunity for all children, or the maintaining of high standards. Labour however did not subscribe to this view. In 1965 they decided to launch an intensive campaign for comprehensive schools, and Crosland published his first circular on the subject, Circular 10/65. Authorities were expected to make plans to abolish selection. It was meant to be the death of the grammar schools - selection in any form would be acceptable only on an interim basis.

(29) Conservative Annual Conference 1965.

(30) M. Parkinson, Op. cit., P. 89.

Boyle, on the other hand, was not satisfied that comprehensive schools could maintain high academic standards, so he advocated that the first-class grammar schools of good size should be preserved for the sake of very able children. For the remaining four years that he had as Tory education Spokesman this was his basic position, although he was constantly seeking means of integrating the grammar schools into the comprehensive system without losing their excellence. The Leicestershire scheme⁽³¹⁾ had for long offered a possible solution. It deferred selection or parental choice from 11+ to 14+. Then, in 1968 the Conservatives had their experience in the I.L.E.A.⁽³²⁾ to demonstrate that another possible solution - co-existence of grammar with comprehensive schools - simply did not work. Perhaps the most successful idea advocated by Boyle in his search for a new role for the grammar schools was the idea of using them as sixth-form colleges.⁽³³⁾ This offered some hope of keeping their highly qualified staffs together and their traditions alive: it would also make good use of their valuable facilities, whilst postponing selection from 11+ to 16+, an age at which it was acceptable to both parties.⁽³⁴⁾

In 1967 the Conservative Shadow Cabinet⁽³⁵⁾ and their leader, Mr. Heath, gave Boyle unqualified support. A speech by Mr. Heath⁽³⁶⁾, apparently directed to the new Conservative L.E.A.'s, spoke of seeking a new role for grammar schools: he seems to have had in mind their becoming sixth-form colleges, or the upper tier of a two-tier or multi-

(31) N.C.P., 3/3/58, P. 20.

(32) Cf. Chapter 13, supra.

(33) T.E.S., 6/1/67, P. 26.

(34) Cf. Education Bill, 1970, especially Session 1969-70, Vol. 1, House of Commons Standing Committee A, 19/3/70.

(35) D. Butler and M. Pinto-Duschinsky, "The British General Election, 1970", P. 71.

(36) C.C.O., 17/6/67, No. 488/67, and 492/67.

tier system where entry would be at 13+ or 14+ by parental choice, guided by the teachers. Heath also gave his support to the idea of 11-18 comprehensive schools being built in areas where there were no good grammar schools. However he made the proviso that such a comprehensive school must be purpose-built.

With the end of consensus in 1965 the parties went their separate ways, Conservatives persuing quality, and Labour intent on equality. Labour began to try to win over the L.E.A.'s by persuasion in 1965, then by indirect financial sanctions in 1966. After that they began to threaten⁽³⁷⁾ legislation to enforce comprehensive re-organisation. This issue of compulsion absorbed a great deal of energy in each party for the next two years until Labour fell from power in 1970. In the course of this quarrel the Conservatives laid great stress on the desirability of local decision-making. As we have seen in the previous chapter, this was the attitude taken by all Tory education ministers since Eccles first occupied that post: it was partly a matter of principle, but it was also well suited to achieving the Conservative objective of safeguarding the grammar schools.

Although Mr. Heath and the Shadow Cabinet supported Boyle's policy, and it was thereby regarded as official Conservative policy, there remained a need to convince the M.P.'s and the party faithful that this was the right policy. If this was not done, there was always the possibility that they would seek a change in leadership - at least in the education department. But the task facing Heath and Boyle was not an easy one, and it was made more difficult by Labour's determination to enforce comprehensive education. Conservative Party members, both in and out of parliament, expected a clear lead in the fight against Labour.

(37) Legislation was first mentioned at Labour Party's annual conference, October 1968.

Heath and Boyle were totally opposed to compulsion but at the same time they supported the move away from selection at 11+. The result was that they could not give unqualified support for retaining the grammar schools in their present form. Each had declared himself in favour of seeking a new, though selective, role for the best of the grammar schools - selection at 13+ or later.⁽³⁸⁾ The right-wing of the party, however, could not accept this, and they said so on many occasions, especially at the annual party conferences. Slowly, however, Conservative Members of Parliament came to realise that public opinion was changing in favour of comprehensives, and a majority support⁽³⁹⁾ for the official policy emerged. Moreover, among the rank and file members of the party, opposition weakened a little year by year, and by the time of the 1969 annual party conference the opposition could be heard, but with little effect.⁽⁴⁰⁾ Nevertheless, a minority, opposed to the policy, still existed beneath the surface, no doubt hoping that eventually Boyle would go and there would be a new education leader willing to fight for the grammar schools.

Soon after this their hopes were fulfilled: Boyle resigned on his own initiative.⁽⁴¹⁾ Mr. Heath took the opportunity to form a new team in readiness for the next election. In choosing a successor for Boyle, Mr. Heath was not entirely free to appoint one with educational views similar to those that he had supported in Boyle.⁽⁴²⁾ The result was that the Conservative Party soon found itself with a new policy on comprehensive education. Mrs. Thatcher stood for selection, quality, parental choice,

(38) Eg Heath: C.C.O., 17/6/67, No. 488/67, and 492/67.
Boyle: C.C.O., 2/12/66, No. 10,687.

(39) Times, 12/11/68, 8g.

(40) Conservative Party Conference, 1969, Verbatim report.

(41) Cf. Chapter 14, P. 185.

(42) Boyle, Interview at Leeds, 21/1/74, Pp. 30-31.

direct grant and public schools. She had nothing to say on the need for positive discrimination, or the need to find a new role for the grammar schools: safeguarding the status quo seemed to be her objective.⁽⁴³⁾

When the Conservatives came to power in 1970 Mrs. Thatcher, confirmed in the education portfolio, chose to implement her policy by leaving comprehensive school decisions to L.E.A.'s,⁽⁴⁴⁾ with the knowledge that she could protect the grammar schools by using her powers under Section 13. In the event, however, the desire of L.E.A.'s to go comprehensive continued unabated,⁽⁴⁵⁾ and Mrs. Thatcher eventually came to accept the situation, intervening only occasionally, in the interests of the grammar schools or of parental choice. It has been estimated that Mrs. Thatcher used her Section 13 powers to safeguard these schools a little more often than Boyle, Eccles or Hailsham would have done.⁽⁴⁶⁾ This was to be expected, and indeed the immense delays that were often experienced in obtaining these approvals perhaps indicate how reluctant she was to approve the closure of grammar schools.

We have now seen how the two parties were in a position of agreement in 1950 on the question of the structure of secondary education. Then in 1951 Labour had become united in their opposition to selection and support of comprehensive education, while the Tories continued to support selection. Twelve years later Boyle moved the official Tory position over towards the left when he ceased to support selection at 11+, though he had reservations about abandoning the grammar schools. This new degree of consensus was broken in 1965 when Labour chose a policy of trying to compel L.E.A.'s to go comprehensive. The Tories expressed their disapproval, but continued

(43) Cf. Chapter 15, supra., Pp. 209-10.

(44) Circular 10/70.

(45) "Statistics of Education", 1970-73, Vol. 1., Table 1.

(46) Boyle, Interview at Leeds, 21/1/74, P. 10.

to search for a new role for the grammar schools within a comprehensive structure - but preferably a selective role. In 1969 Mrs. Thatcher succeeded Boyle and carried the Conservatives further away from Labour - in fact, back to the position that the Conservatives had abandoned in 1963. It is interesting to note that this alteration in policy came as a result of political chance and was not the intention of the leader.⁽⁴⁷⁾ After she came to power Mrs. Thatcher failed to arrest the trend towards comprehensive education and reached the position where she had to accept the reality of the situation, intervening only occasionally. In 1972 the author asked a senior official of the Conservative Party what was Mrs. Thatcher's policy on comprehensive education. He replied that she did not have a policy on this. That was how the party explained Mrs. Thatcher's policy of local decision-making. But a cynic, knowing Mrs. Thatcher's personal views on selection and local decision-making, and aware of the increase in comprehensive education, might well have used the same description - a non-policy.

Mrs. Thatcher and Sir Edward Boyle were on common ground with each other and with their predecessors in their support for parental choice and their determination to preserve at least the best of the grammar schools. We have already considered⁽⁴⁸⁾ how this use of the term Parental Choice is very different from its use in the 1944 Education Act. In the context of 11+ selection, Parental Choice means giving a choice of school to the parents of the able children but not to the others. If this is done at the expense of the others then the concept is an unjust one. Many held the view that the grammar schools fitted this description.

The Conservative case for preserving the best of the grammar schools depended on these schools being the only ones capable of high academic

(47) Boyle, Interview at Leeds, 21/1/74, Pp. 30-31.

(48) Cf. Chapter 15, supra. Pp. 203-5.

standards, having highly qualified staff, capacity to "stretch" very able pupils, and possessing academic traditions. Individual Conservatives varied in their reasons for supporting selection. Some did so because they felt sure their child would win a place in a grammar school. Others supported selection because they were afraid of change, although they must have realised that a good grammar school usually did convert into a good comprehensive school: the concentration of staff and able pupils would be reduced, but provided that this process wasn't taken too far, the comprehensive school would still be a place that valued academic excellence and was able to "stretch" an able child. As for tradition, valuable traditions don't depend on history, but on a dedicated and enlightened headteacher and staff; a 400-year-old grammar school might have ancient traditions but may have failed to up-date its curriculum, while a ten-year-old comprehensive could be thoroughly up-to-date in its curriculum as well as possessing traditions of discipline and work.

But it would be a mistake to belittle all of the fears expressed by the advocates of the grammar schools. True, there were good comprehensives, capable of everything that a good grammar school should be proud of. But there were poor ones, too. And whereas England had reached the stage where a grammar school place was available for most able children (though there were exceptions), if all secondary schools became comprehensive, each with its own catchment area, then some areas would have a good school and others not so good a school. It was obvious that a former secondary modern school in a socially poor district could have little chance of being possessed of a good academic tradition, a gifted headteacher, a dedicated and competent staff and a balanced cross-section of ability in the children. Yet if these conditions were not fulfilled, the able children in that neighbourhood would certainly be at a disadvantage.

It was clear that the comprehensive lobby still had some problems to solve before they could reasonably hope to allay the justifiable fears of the advocates of selection.

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Oral Evidence

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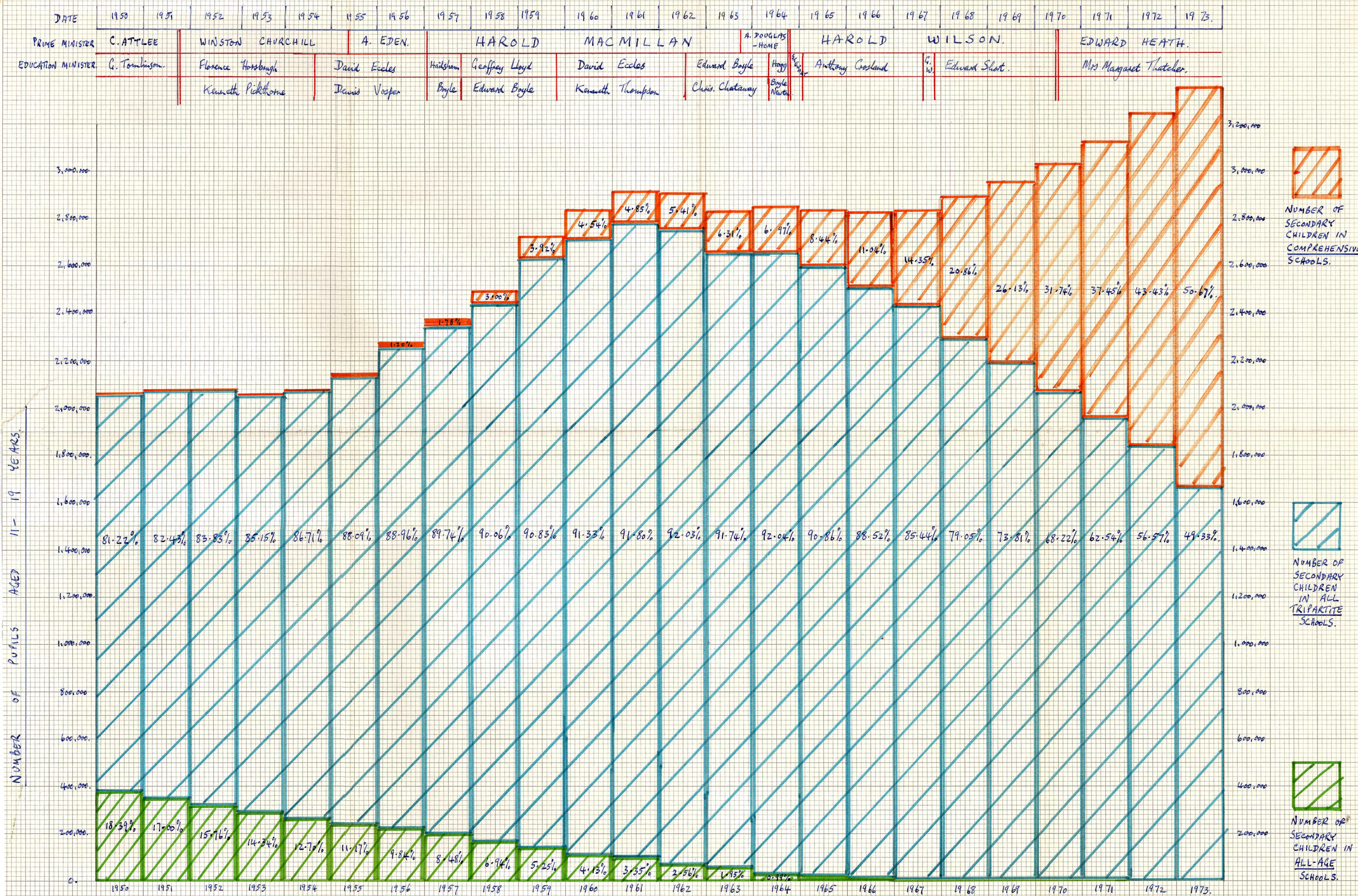
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Appendix

Illustrating the decline of all-age schools and of
the tri-partite system, and the development
of comprehensive education.

APPENDIX: ILLUSTRATING THE DECLINE OF ALL-AGE SCHOOLS AND OF THE TRIPARTITE SYSTEM, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION, 1950-1973 (ENGLAND AND WALES) (MAINTAINED SCHOOLS)

Pupils aged 11-19 years, by type of school.



NOTE ①: SOURCES: Annual Reports of Ministry of Education, H.M.S.O. Annual Statistics of Education, H.M.S.O.

NOTE ②: Percentages indicate the number of children in that type of school as a proportion of the whole yeargroup.