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BOARD OF EDUCATION

Report of the Consultative Committee

on

The Education
of the
Adolescent

LONDON :

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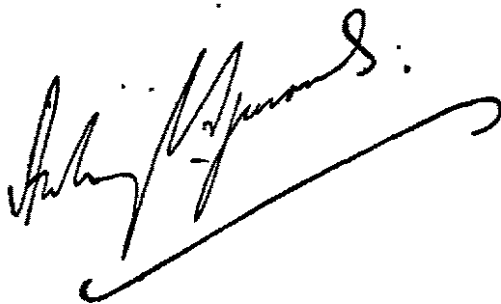
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PREFATORY NOTE.

This Report deals with a reference which has occupied the attention of the Committee since May, 1924. The problem which the Committee were asked to address themselves is one of wide scope which raises issues affecting not only the educational system, but also the general social and industrial organisation of the country, and it will be obvious that, if the Board had postponed the issue of the Report until they had been able to give it the full consideration which its contents require, its presentation to the public would have been considerably delayed. The Board have therefore arranged for its immediate publication.

In doing so they must not, of course, be taken as committing themselves to acceptance of the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee or of the views given by their officers in evidence. At the same time, the Board believe that the Committee's lucid and comprehensive treatment of a difficult subject will be of real value to all who are interested in the public system of education and the practical problems of its organisation and administration, and in commending the Report to the careful consideration of the public they desire to acknowledge their indebtedness to the Committee and to the distinguished professor who, though not a member of the Committee, assisted them in the drafting of the Report.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. J. G. Jones', with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

15th December, 1926.

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Note.

The estimated gross cost of the preparation of the appended Report (including the expenses of the Witnesses and Members of the Committee) is £1,977 4s 2d., of which £456 19s. 8d. represents the gross cost of printing and publishing this Report.

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The late Dr. J. G. Adami, C.B.E., was also a member of the Consultative Committee.

TERMS OF REFERENCE.

(i) To consider and report upon the organisation, objective and curriculum of courses of study suitable for children who will remain in full-time attendance at schools, other than Secondary Schools, up to the age of 15, regard being had on the one hand to the requirements of a good general education and the desirability of providing a reasonable variety of curriculum, so far as is practicable, for children of varying tastes and abilities, and on the other to the probable occupations of the pupils in commerce, industry and agriculture.

(ii) Incidentally thereto, to advise as to the arrangements which should be made (a) for testing the attainments of the pupils at the end of their course; (b) for facilitating in suitable cases the transfer of individual pupils to Secondary Schools at an age above the normal age of admission.

ANALYSIS OF THE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE'S REPORT.

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PREFACE.

The following question was referred to us by the Board of Education on 1 Feb., 1924 :—

(i) To consider and report upon the organisation, objective and curriculum of courses of study suitable for children who will remain in full-time attendance at schools, other than Secondary Schools, up to the age of 15, regard being had on the one hand to the requirements of a good general education and the desirability of providing a reasonable variety of curriculum, so far as is practicable, for children of varying tastes and abilities, and on the other to the probable occupations of the pupils in commerce, industry and agriculture.

(ii) Incidentally thereto, to advise as to the arrangements which should be made (a) for testing the attainments of the pupils at the end of their course ; (b) for facilitating in suitable cases the transfer of individual pupils to Secondary Schools at an age above the normal age of admission.

We began our consideration of this problem in May, 1924, immediately after we had completed our Report on Psychological Tests of Educable Capacity. The full Committee has sat on 46 days between May, 1924, and October, 1926, and has examined 95 witnesses (see Appendix I (A).)

In addition, sub-committees, appointed to consider various aspects of the question, sat on 20 days. In May, 1925, the Committee appointed a Drafting Sub-Committee consisting of eight of its members, with Dr. Ernest Barker as Chairman, and with power, subject to the approval of the President, to co-opt members from outside.¹ In this way, it was fortunate enough to secure the services of Prof. T. Percy Nunn, who placed at its disposal his wide knowledge and sound judgment, and who has rendered invaluable help in the preparation of the Report. The Drafting Sub-Committee met on 17 occasions between May, 1925, and October, 1926

¹ Under clause 5 (iii) of the Order in Council of 22 July, 1920, reconstituting the Consultative Committee.

We take this opportunity of thanking our witnesses for the valuable evidence which they put before us, and also all those other organisations and persons (whose names will be found in Appendix I (B.) who were good enough to furnish us with memoranda, statistics, and other data bearing on our inquiry. In particular, we desire to thank those local education authorities, employers, and head masters and head mistresses of secondary, central and junior technical schools, who were kind enough to send us detailed replies to our questionnaires.

We desire to thank our Secretary, Mr. R. F. Young, who has already borne the brunt of two previous reports, for the unremitting zeal and industry which he has given to the composition of this report. In doing so we desire to draw particular attention to the first Chapter and to some of the Appendices (especially that on Educational Nomenclature) which he has compiled at our request.

We cannot end without recording our sense of the loss which the Committee has sustained by the death of Dr. Adami. He had been a member for the last six years : he had taken a leading part in the preparation of our last Report ; and he was a member of the Sub-Committee in which the present Report was gradually drafted. He had won the affection as well as the respect of his fellow members ; and he contributed generously both to their deliberations and to the shaping of their conclusions.

INTRODUCTION.

We have been profoundly interested by the question propounded in the terms of reference, which we desire to thank the Board for remitting to us, and to which we have devoted a prolonged and anxious consideration. After hearing and weighing a large amount of evidence, and after some study both of the development of the past which is recorded in our first chapter and the tendencies of the present which are examined in our second, we cannot but feel—as we unanimously do—that the times are auspicious, and the signs favourable, for a new advance in the general scope of our national system of education. There has long been a trend towards some higher form of 'elementary education'; the recent growth of central schools is at once the latest and the most arresting expression of that trend; and we believe that the time has now come at which it should move to its consummation.

There is a tide which begins to rise in the veins of youth at the age of eleven or twelve. It is called by the name of adolescence. If that tide can be taken at the flood, and a new voyage begun in the strength and along the flow of its current, we think that it will 'move on to fortune.' We therefore propose that all children should be transferred, at the age of eleven or twelve, from the junior or primary school either to schools of the type now called secondary, or to schools (whether selective or non-selective) of the type which is now called central, or to senior and separate departments of existing elementary schools. Transplanted to new ground, and set in a new environment, which should be adjusted, as far as possible, to the interests and abilities of each range and variety, we believe that they will thrive to a new height and attain a sturdier fibre. But we recognise that much depends on the nature of the new ground and the quality of the new environment. We are not authorised by our reference, nor do we desire, to explore the form of environment which goes by the name of the secondary school. We will only say that we regard the growth of secondary schools, since the Act of 1902, as one of the finest signs of our educational progress; that we recognise that it has encouraged and fostered the development of our Universities; that we believe it has liberated a fund of latent capacity in those who, by winning

scholarships and free places, have profited freely by it ; and that we hope that it will continue at an even greater rate and on an even greater scale. Here, however, we are concerned with the growth—which has begun already, and which we desire greatly to accelerate—of selective and non-selective central schools, and of senior departments in elementary schools. This growth, in our view, will run side by side with, but in no sense counter to, the growth of secondary schools ; and while it will differ in kind, it will not be inferior in its promise or quality. The central schools and senior departments, like the secondary schools, will give a humane and general education. It will be shorter in its duration ; it will terminate at the end of three or four years ; but it will be directed, as long as it lasts, to the general fostering of mental power. Two methods, which will differentiate them to some extent from secondary schools, will generally be followed in central schools and senior departments. One will be the method of practical instruction and manual work, on which we set high hopes, believing that there are many children who think as it were with their hands and will profit greatly by a method of instruction which follows the natural bent of their capacity. Another will be the method of giving a trend and a bias, which for want of a better word we may call by the name ‘realistic,’ to the general course of studies. English and a modern language, history and geography, mathematics and natural science, will all be studied in central schools and senior departments no less than in secondary schools. But the study of these subjects, we hope, will be related more closely to the living texture of industrial or commercial or rural life ; and it will be designed to stimulate interest in boys and girls who are beginning to think of the coming years and a career in life, and are likely to feel the liveliest quickening of the mind when they see the bearing of their studies on that career.

Examinations, it has been said, are not the same thing as the day of judgment ; and they are certainly not the Alpha and the Omega of education. But the most pleasant of parks will none the less have an entrance and an exit ; and we are disposed to believe that we may safely recommend the institution both of an entrance examination, on the lines of the present examination for scholarships and free places in secondary schools, to determine the conditions of entry into selective modern schools, and of a final or leaving examination, *not* on the lines of the

First School Examination in secondary schools, to test and to certify the achievement of pupils both of selective and of non-selective central schools and also of senior departments. We recognise that a final examination may to some extent cramp the free growth of these schools. But we feel that their pupils may be handicapped by the absence of any form of guarantee of their work; and we feel that the schools themselves may become uncertain in their aim and vacillating in their methods, if they have no suggestion of a definite standard to guide their work. And, after all, examinations are like the running of a race; and few of us really dislike races, or can avoid, in the course of our lives, the running of some race which is set before us. There is a wisdom in the saying of Plato, that 'the life without examination is a life that can hardly be lived.'

We have found, in the course of our work, that we were led to believe in the need of some changes of terminology, which are perhaps not gravely contentious or revolutionary. We desire to abolish the word 'elementary,' and to alter and extend the sense of the word 'secondary.' The word 'elementary' has now become misleading; and elementary education, in our present system of nomenclature, which treats central schools as a part of it, is made to include much which is not elementary in any just sense of the word. We propose to substitute the term 'primary,' but to restrict the use of that term to the period of education which ends at the age of eleven or twelve. To the period of education which follows upon it we would give the name secondary; and we would make this name embrace all forms of post-primary education, whether it be given in the schools which are now called 'secondary,' or in central schools, or in senior departments of the schools now termed 'elementary.' If the term secondary is thus given a wider sense, some new term will be needed to denote the schools which have now the monopoly of the name 'secondary'; and we suggest that they should be called by the name of grammar schools. If such schools are thus re-named, we should propose that the term 'central school' (which is neither clear nor particularly apt) should simultaneously disappear, and the term 'modern school' should take its place in the future. On such a scheme there will be two main kinds of education—primary and secondary; and the latter of these two kinds will fall into two main groups—that of the grammar school type, and that of the type of the

modern school. But there is a magic in words, and a substance behind terms of art ; and we recognise that a change of terminology implies, and may ultimately involve, some amount of change in the substance of educational administration. In the last of our chapters we have discussed the extent and the nature of the change which we hope to see made. We admit that we are here walking on difficult ground, and that there are fires burning beneath the thin crust on which we tread. But we felt that we must not shirk the consequences of our argument, and we realised that the educational changes which we advocated, affecting as they did the present elementary system, raised large questions of administration—the question of the relation of authorities ‘for elementary education only’ to authorities of a wider scope, and again the question of the position of ‘voluntary’ or ‘non-provided’ elementary schools. We recognise the gravity of these questions ; we have sought to make some suggestions for their solution ; but we are well aware that their final settlement must depend on the statesmanship of active administrators and the healing touch of time.

More immediately important, in their bearing on the terms of our reference, are the suggestions we make in chapter VIII for the lengthening of school life, and again, in chapter VI for the staffing and equipment of modern schools. We recommend that, as soon as possible, an additional year should be added to the general school life, and the leaving age should be raised to fifteen. Only in that way can the modern schools and senior departments, which will then be able to plan a four years’ course, exercise their full influence on their pupils ; only in that way can children be guided safely through the opportunities, the excitements and the perils of adolescence ; only in that way can the youth of the nation be adequately trained for a full and worthy citizenship. If modern schools thus become the homes of their pupils for a full and consecutive course of four years, they will require, and we hope that they will receive, the services of an ardent, properly trained and adequately qualified teaching staff. In few schools can there be greater opportunities for a teacher of power and of wisdom than there will be in these schools. We earnestly hope that such teachers will be found, and that not only will the trained and experienced teachers of the present elementary schools offer themselves readily for the work, but also University graduates, who have received a fourth year of

professional training, will volunteer, and will be accepted, with no less readiness.

The scheme which we advocate can be simply stated. It is that between the age of eleven and (if possible) that of fifteen, all the children of the country who do not go forward to 'secondary education' in the present and narrow sense of the word, should go forward none the less to what is, in our view, a form of secondary education, in the truer and broader sense of the word, and after spending the first years of their school life in a primary school should spend the last three or four in a well-equipped and well-staffed modern school (or senior department), under the stimulus of practical work and realistic studies, and yet, at the same time, in the free and broad air of a general and humane education, which, if it remembers handwork, does not forget music, and, if it cherishes natural science, fosters also linguistic and literary studies. It is less easy to state the ideal which lies behind our scheme. But there are three great ends of human life and activity which we trust that our scheme will help to promote. One is the forming and strengthening of character—individual and national character—through the placing of youth, in the hour of its growth, "as it were in the fair meadow" of a congenial and inspiring environment. Another is the training of boys and girls to delight in pursuits and rejoice in accomplishments—work in music and art; work in wood and in metals; work in literature and the record of human history—which may become the recreations and the ornaments of hours of leisure in maturer years. And still another is the awakening and guiding of the practical intelligence, for the better and more skilled service of the community in all its multiple business and complex affairs—an end which cannot be dismissed as 'utilitarian' in any country, and least of all in a country like ours, so highly industrialised, and so dependent on the success of its industries, that it needs for its success, and even for its safety, the best and most highly trained skill of its citizens.

The forming and strengthening of character; the training of the tastes which will fill and dignify leisure; the awakening and guiding of the intelligence, especially on its practical side—these are the ends which we have had in view; and it is in their name, and because we think it may serve, in its measure, towards their attainment, that we commend this report to our readers.

Not the least among these ends is the forming and strengthening of character, both individual and national. It is here especially that a national system of education may serve to elevate a nation. Great Britain, like other countries, but perhaps more than most, is passing through an era of industrialism. Industrialism has its grave effects on national life. It demands, only too often, a narrow specialisation of faculty; it produces, only too readily, a patterned uniformity of work and behaviour; and it may, unless it is corrected, infect the minds of men with the genius of its own life. Education can correct industrialism, by giving to the mind the breadth and the fresh vitality of new interests, as it can also make industry more effective; and we believe that the teachers of our country—given their opportunity—can bring the discipline of the school to aid the influence of home in making a new generation which alike in character, in tastes and in trained skill will justify them abundantly of all their labours.

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