

THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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1911-1925.

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PREFACE

THE Board of Education has no august history. It struggled into existence less than thirty years ago, and though its predecessors the Committee of the Privy Council for Education and the Education Department and Science and Art Department spoke as "My Lords" and doubtless appeared awful to the village schoolmistress, the Central Authority does its business in no Olympian manner. It does not speak in "categorical imperatives." It "superintends" matters relating to education which is mainly provided by local authorities who are much more than its agents, and is imparted by an army of teachers which is not its own army. The public service of education is a decentralised Local Government service. Its value depends, more than that of other services, upon the qualities of mind and character which the rank and file of its servants bring to it. It is not possible to tell the story of the Board of Education or give an account of its doings without bringing in a good deal of the history of the service which it superintends, both as regards the machinery of local administration and as regards the teaching profession. The service moreover is an expansive service, its features are constantly changing and the functions of the central authority change with its development. For the understanding of the present and what may come after, it is almost essential to know the process by which the service has arrived where it is.

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Two circumstances make this book rather difficult to write. Everyone has views about education, and no one hesitates to express them. Many people already know a great deal about the service and are interested in it from different points of view as administrators, teachers, or "educationists," and to them much of what must be said for the information of the general public is familiar. Conversely, that which may interest those who already know much may fail to interest those who know less. This book cannot ignore either class of possible readers, and tries to do something for both, though it cannot hope to satisfy either.

The history of the service moreover is so full of controversy, political, financial, social, denominational and pedagogical, and so much publicity is given to its doings, that one who has been long engaged in its central administration and tries to give an account of it from the point of view of central administration, necessarily feels some trepidation. He cannot ignore controversial subjects, though comment upon them may lead to undesirable inferences as to the attitude of the Central Authority and the workings of the official mind. I sincerely hope that anything which is found amiss may be attributed entirely to myself and not to the Department in which I have served.

The arrangement of the book in sections, each including some history, has involved some repetition; different facts suggest the same reflections, and the same facts in a different setting suggest different reflections. Repetition could only be avoided by a great deal of cross reference which

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would probably be more troublesome to the reader.

This book is in no sense a history or general account of education in England. That has been written by many others and is still being written. I owe much to many other books, particularly to Sir Graham Balfour's "Educational Systems" and Mr. Birchenough's "History of Elementary Education." I also owe much to the help and criticism of my old colleagues, whom the practice of the Civil Service does not permit me to name.

There is not room in this book to give adequate accounts of the Royal College of Art, of the Victoria and Albert and Bethnal Green Museums, and the Science Museum, and they have therefore not been attempted. Although their establishments are part of the Board's establishment, and, for certain administrative and financial purposes, their business is done by the Board, they are conducted by a Principal and Directors who have special freedom and responsibility in respect of the actual work of those institutions.

L. A. S.-B.

19th January, 1927.

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

IN this edition the original text is unaltered, but corrections and additions bringing the book up to date are grouped together in appendices, with references back to the pages of the book.

Appendix A contains a list of the administrations and Ministers responsible for the public service of Education since 1870. The service is so sensitive to political "atmospherics," that there is a close relation between stages in its growth and Parliamentary changes. This appendix also contains figures shewing the cost of the Board's administration and summarising public expenditure on Education for 1934-5.

Appendix B contains notes on some occurrences of special significance since 1927, viz. :—(1) The economy measures of 1931-2 and the reports of the "May" and "Ray" Committees. (2) The modification of the "Necessitous Areas" grant. (3) Fees in Secondary Schools and the substitution of "special places" for "free places." (4) The "fixed grant" system of the Local Government Act, 1929. (5) The proposals of 1929-31 to modify the "dual system" of Council and Voluntary schools. (6) The Bills of 1929-31 to raise the school leaving age. (7) The "reorganisation" of public elementary schools.

Appendix C contains a number of miscellaneous corrections and additions. Some of the particular

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matters noted are of minor importance in themselves, but illustrate the trend of development and adjustment.

This book is primarily a study of the organisation and operation of the Central Authority which is responsible for the "Supervision," Administration and Finance (so far as the Exchequer is concerned) of the public service of Education in England and Wales.

Although it is impossible to deal with administration altogether apart from issues and problems arising out of the processes of education and the actual work of the schools, this book has no pretensions to be regarded as a history of Education in England.

The Board of Education has recently issued an "Outline of the Structure of the Educational System in England and Wales" (1933 educational pamphlet no. 94), which summarises the present position.

L. A. S-B.

April, 1934.

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