

abstraction in themselves would only have led to perpetual indecision, in this case they led to a creative moral act which rings true because it is the act of a man with an unclouded conscience, committed to seek the will of God even in the complexity of actual warfare, a man who is already a martyr in the sense that he is aware of the need to give meaning to his life, and who is aware also of the need for moral leadership, the need to act as a leaven in the world, and not just to accept its standards. The remainder of his life, utterly dedicated as it was to the cause of international peace, bears witness to the authenticity of his moral decision. To such a man double effect thinking might be helpful, but double think would be impossible. It is perhaps to such men that we should turn for inspiration if we are puzzled by the relationship between the two.

## From Graded to Comprehensive Schools

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Perhaps no other state can exhibit the variety in organization represented by English educational institutions at the secondary school stage. Within the boundaries of a single local authority may often be discovered public and private schools, direct grant grammar schools financed by the Ministry of Education, and their municipal counterparts governed by local councils, in whose care would also be found secondary modern and technical schools. The religious bodies, particularly the Church of England in the countryside and the Catholic Church in the industrial areas, have their own parallel foundations.

Nevertheless, irrespective of the constitution of the Governing Board or the section of the population served, the majority of them will probably echo in their studies and administration the prevailing educational philosophy. According to this theory there exists in the nation

an intellectual élite with inborn mental superiority – although its protagonists differ as to its extent. Professor Cyril Burt estimates five per cent as specially gifted and requiring a separate academic course, while the present Minister of Education considers as many as thirty per cent of the senior pupils ought to be in attendance at grammar schools. All adherents are agreed, however, that one of the chief tasks of the administrator is to discern the élite by an examination at the age of eleven or thirteen years and, thenceforward, to provide them with the best available facilities for an advanced academic course. To such philosophers the examination also reveals those, the hapless majority, with mental ability of a lower order: these they assign to a school where a practical course forms the main staple of the curriculum. At such secondary modern schools there would be a minimum of abstract academic study and no attempt would be made to prepare the scholars for external examinations.

Although it is commonly regarded as part of the English tradition that grammar schools should educate the most intelligent children, it was not always so. The grammar schools of a century ago still admitted children mixed in ability and social class: only in the 1870s and 1880s, after the passing of the Endowed Schools Act (1869), did graded selective secondary schools begin to develop. Under that Act the endowed grammar schools were divided into three categories, the first grade up to the age of eighteen years, the second grade to sixteen years, and the third grade to fourteen years. A varied scale of fees was charged, according to the grade of school, ranging from two guineas to thirty guineas a year. Yet a further distinction lay in the curricula, the first grade being based almost exclusively on the Classics, the second on Mathematics and the third seeking to provide elementary instruction, chiefly in English and Commercial Arithmetic.

The schools which were affected by the 1869 Education Act had, as Charity Schools, previously admitted pupils free of charge and the Commission (1869–1874), which administered the Act, attempted to maintain something of their character by insisting on the provision of a percentage of free places in all reformed grammar schools. The free places soon came to be awarded on the results of a written examination at the age of eleven, although originally other factors such as character, degree of progress and attainment were taken into consideration. We can thus date from 1869 the practice of determining a child's future place in the community from his performance in an examination at eleven years, since the grades of schools, at which scholarships could be ob-

tained, were designed to prepare for employments and professions which were linked to social classes in the Victorian caste system. The scholarship schemes in the reformed grammar schools played, however, for many years, only a minor part in the recruitment of secondary school pupils, whose entry to the graded schools depended on their ability to meet the scale of fee demanded.

Although the grading of secondary schools chiefly on money considerations may now seem to have been unfair to the children of poor parents, the grammar school changes in the late Victorian era were of an inevitable character. The funds which were derived from the payment of fees were necessary for the staffing, equipment and rebuilding of grammar schools; the state at that time being unwilling to subsidise 'middle-class' education. Nevertheless, by the introduction of fees, children of the labouring classes were excluded and such schools became, in effect, completely middle class foundations. It was however true that many poorer children, who had previously attended these schools never finished their courses, owing to lack of parental means, and that the curriculum of the public elementary schools would be more to their advantage than the classical studies of the old grammar schools.

When the local education authorities were given charge of secondary education, under the Balfour Act of 1902, they also demanded fees of their pupils at the new municipal grammar schools but they provided free places on a more generous scale. In time the number of free places in grammar schools increased, reaching between twenty-five and fifty per cent of available vacancies in 1939. The 1944 Act completed this process in the council secondary schools by the abolition of fees; while in other grammar schools assisted by state financial grants the Ministry of Education made such aid dependent on increasing the number of local scholarships.

To many the 1944 Education Act seemed to represent, at the time, a most democratic measure which would provide 'secondary education for all'. It was not then assumed that in application the Act would bring about many injustices and that the public would be antagonistic to segregating children at eleven into grammar, secondary modern and technical schools. Parity of esteem between the three main types of secondary school was never realised and they quickly assumed the status of graded schools, the grammar – first grade, the technical – second grade, while the secondary modern school composed of those rejected for grammar or technical education came a very poor third. In some

areas the provision of grammar school places was extremely generous, as in parts of North Wales which catered for the majority of secondary pupils. In other counties less than ten per cent of the eleven-plus candidates went to grammar schools. Geographical inequalities apart, it would have been very surprising if some opposition to graded secondary schools had not appeared in post-war England. The population of Victorian England might endure or even support a segregated school system – it is becoming increasingly clear that contemporary society will not. Parents of all social classes can maintain their children at school until the end of a five or seven year course and regard exclusion from advanced academic education, because of a poor result at the eleven-plus examination, as unjust. Many parents are coming to appreciate the truth that appointments in industry, commerce and the professions require academic qualifications from which their children may be virtually barred if they enter some secondary modern schools.

Opposition to graded secondary schools also stemmed from those in the universities and schools who refused to acknowledge the basic premise of secondary school allocation of pupils – that academic studies could only be undertaken by an intellectual élite, determined by a selection process at the age of eleven. In many secondary modern schools in the early 1950s teachers began to enter pupils for external examinations despite the prevailing orthodoxy. They were roundly rebuked in Ministry circulars and forbidden to prepare ‘non-academic’ children for public examinations. Recently however the Ministry has relented and now permits boys and girls in all schools to sit for the General Certificate of Education and the examinations organised by the Royal Society of Arts.

The doubts of many teachers on the wisdom of the selection process could only have been reinforced still further by a careful reading of the findings of the Crowther Commission, appointed in 1958 to examine educational provision for young people between fifteen and eighteen years. Particularly damning for the upholders of selection was the Commission’s discovery that no correlation existed between success at the eleven-plus and the G.C.E. nor between the most successful outstanding sixth formers, the state scholarship holders and their results in final degree examinations.

The most effective counter-measure to the graded secondary school system and the intellectual theory inspiring it has probably been the establishment of comprehensive schools by the London Education

Authority from 1947 onwards as part of a scheme to provide all children of secondary school age with a full range of educational opportunity within the same school. Such comprehensive schools have attracted a great deal of interest, and controversy has raged around a plan which avoids graded secondary schools for children of varied ability. The London County Council's survey of sixteen schools in 1961 has done much to still the opposition to comprehensive schools and the Ministry statistics for 1961-1962 indicate that the growth of this type of school has been most marked in that period. Furthermore, popular feeling against the eleven-plus examination and selective schools seems to have grown. Two of the three major political parties, the Labour and Liberal parties, have now pledged themselves to abolish the examination if returned to power at a future general election, while the Conservatives appear to be prepared to leave the establishment of comprehensive school systems to local preference.

In this survey it has been argued that a transition is taking place from graded to comprehensive schools and that the idea of an intellectual élite, discernable by examination at the junior school stage, is no longer upheld by many sections of public opinion. Such a change would be of importance to all administrators, but especially to those responsible for the building of Catholic schools, who might at some future date be confronted with impossible financial burdens if the state decided to abandon the graded schools system. In a succeeding article attention will be given to the administrative implications for the church authorities of the comprehensive school, together with some assessment of the possible contribution of this new type of school to the principles of Catholic education.