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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

CHURCH, STATE AND THE CONTROL OF
SCHOOLING IN IRELAND, 1900-1944

by



E. Brian Titley

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
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ABSTRACT

The systems of primary and secondary education that developed in nineteenth century Ireland were the products of ecclesiastical enterprise and limited state assistance. One consequence of this was that schools were essentially sectarian institutions. This was an arrangement that was eminently satisfactory to the Roman Catholic church, the organization that owned and operated the majority of schools.

In many ways the emergence of popular schooling in Britain followed similar precedents. But the role of the churches was considerably weakened by the Education Act of 1870 which established the practice of non-sectarian, locally controlled and supported public schooling. A further Act in 1902, though it provided public support for church schools, brought them to some degree under local government.

In the first two decades of the twentieth century the British government attempted to reform Irish education along the same lines. But moves in this direction meant greater lay involvement in the administration of education and a concomitant weakening of the authority of the clergy in Catholic schools. Consequently, such reforms were adamantly opposed by the Catholic church, and its relations with the government were severely strained.

However, the achievement of political independence removed this threat to clerical power in the schools. The men who led the new Irish state were themselves products of the Catholic school

system and they could not conceive of education apart from ecclesiastical supervision. Therefore, no fundamental restructuring of education took place. Not only, then, was the church confirmed in its dominant educational role, but in many ways its authority in the schools was augmented. The failure of the secularist ideology to make any headway in education is perhaps the most convincing evidence that the Irish revolution was, in reality, a conservative reaction which insulated the country from modernizing influences.

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INTRODUCTION

The Purpose and Scope of the Thesis

Who determines curriculum content? Who decides which individuals are suitable for membership in the teaching force? Who determines to what extent formal schooling shall be made available to the general population? These questions address themselves to one central issue — who controls school systems and to what end? It is a question which has increasingly engaged the attention of educationists in recent years, in particular as schools have come to be seen as agencies for the perpetuation of the status quo.

The historian who examines this question perceives that there have been two principal institutions in the experience of western civilization which have claimed the prerogative of controlling the mechanisms of formal education: the Christian church and the state. Throughout the Middle Ages, the issue was an uncomplicated one as the church's supremacy in this regard went unquestioned. But the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution all contributed to the disruption of this arrangement. The premier role of organized religion in social and political life was challenged by the secular and acquisitive ideologies of the emerging nation states. The education provided by the church for the old, landed elites no longer met the requirements of the new bourgeois order. New school systems were needed and were created -- universal, secular and publicly supported. This threat to their previously-held monopoly was generally resisted by the churches -- both Catholic and

Protestant. Consequently, church/state relations on the question of the control of schooling were often strained and sometimes openly antagonistic. It is a fair generalization to say that the churches rarely fared well in this struggle. In certain countries, France, the U.S. and the socialist countries of eastern Europe, for instance, they lost outright. But there were also compromise solutions. The English Education Acts of 1870 and 1902 gave tacit recognition to the role of religion in education but the churches were assigned a permanently inferior position vis a vis the state in the control of schooling.

In this pattern of declining religious influence in education, Ireland proved to be an important exception. Ecclesiastical supervision of the instruction of the young remained intact and to a large extent still does so today. The purpose of this thesis is to examine the ways in which church control was exercised, the means by which it was perpetuated, and the consequences of this particular arrangement for education and society in general. The focus of the study, then, is on the control of schooling and on the activities of the Roman Catholic church in this regard. The Catholic church is selected as it is to this church that the majority of the Irish population accords allegiance and it is this church also which has always placed so much importance on its role in education.

The period under investigation, 1900-1944, has been selected to encompass approximately the final two decades of British administration in Ireland and the first two decades of native government. In one sense this poses a problem of definition. The Ireland of the first two decades consisted of the entire island which

was one administrative unit of the United Kingdom. But the events of 1920-1922 brought about a division into the independent Free State and Northern Ireland, which remained part of the U.K. As the Free State represented the political aspirations of the Irish nation and incorporated most of the population and land area of the island, it is here that the focus of attention is directed in the post-1922 period. However, to be overly concerned with administrative units is to miss the point. An identifiable Irish nation existed in Ireland while it was part of the United Kingdom. It was characterized by its adherence to Catholicism and an awareness of a common historical experience with roots in the Gaelic past. The southern Unionist and Ulster Protestant could never share in this identity. A political and religious chasm made them a separate people. While the Irish nation generally deplored the political division of the island, the Free State area, unencumbered by the complexities of cultural and religious pluralism, could be turned into the type of society that was really desired.

It is to the Free State then, not Northern Ireland, that we must look in the aftermath of 1922 to examine the educational arrangements which the Irish nation deemed most appropriate to its needs. It must be stressed that the central focus of the thesis is the question of 'control of schooling.' And the principal question that is asked is: "In what ways did the achievement of independence affect the position of the Catholic church in the power structure of education?" The schools in question are those at the primary and secondary levels for it was at these levels that ecclesiastical control was most pronounced and most jealously guarded.

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It is argued that in the period of Imperial administration Irish Catholic educational ideals found themselves in conflict with those of the British state. In 1870 Britain had created for herself a system of locally controlled and supported public primary schools. Designed initially to compensate for the inadequacies of the existing voluntary denominational system and owing its inspiration to the Nonconformist educational tradition, the board system, as it became known, soon became the most important component in the educational structure. Though slightly modified in 1902, it formed the basis of the modern British school system. Schools were to be non-denominational, locally controlled and above all, efficient.

Irish schools, on the other hand, whether primary or secondary, were virtual exemplars of the opposite characteristics. When attempts were made to modify the Irish system in conformity to the British model in the first two decades of the twentieth century, the Imperial administration found itself opposed by a hostile Catholic church determined to resist any weakening of its role in education. It is suggested that the achievement of independence brought this conflict between church and state to an end. In the congenial atmosphere of the new Irish state both the secular and ecclesiastical authorities espoused the same educational philosophy and were in complete agreement on the question of the role of religion in the schools. Consequently, not only was the church's position in the power structure no longer threatened, but its authority was in fact augmented and extended in both secondary and primary education. The possibility of reform in the direction of the non-denominational-democratic model was therefore nullified.

What purpose does this study serve? Helen F. Mulvey, Professor of History at Connecticut College, New London, Connecticut, in writing on twentieth century Irish historiography in 1971, said: "Good studies of education below the university level which would relate the nineteenth to the twentieth century experience are needed."¹ In posing specific questions for future historical research, she asked: "Why, after 1921, did so much remain the same, the educational system, for example?"² It is suggested that this study should go some way to filling this need in Irish historical writing.

To date, most books on Irish educational history, with the exception of those by Donald H. Akenson, have been superficial in treatment and uncritical in interpretation.³ Akenson's Irish Educational Experiment: The National System of Education in the Nineteenth Century is an exhaustive and in-depth study of primary education up to 1900. His Education and Enmity: The Control of Schooling in Northern Ireland, 1920-1950 deals with the controversies surrounding the shaping of the school system in Northern Ireland. And his most recent work, A Mirror to Kathleen's Face: Education in Independent Ireland, treats of educational developments in the rest of Ireland since the achievement of independence. It will be seen that the period between 1900 and independence has yet to receive much attention and while A Mirror to Kathleen's Face may be said to cover some similar ground to the thesis, it does so in a more general way.

The need for this study, then, is apparent — the absence of detailed works on the subject and the necessity of explaining why the Irish experience difference so profoundly from what prevailed elsewhere is its justification.

Related Literature and Source Materials

Rather than provide a detailed description of all the sources employed, what is intended here is a division of the sources into major categories with brief annotation where required.

The best basic reference book for an outline of the major developments in the period under consideration is F.S.L. Lyons, Ireland Since the Famine, and this has been consulted throughout. Other books which deal with Irish society in a general way are: E. Rumpf and A.C. Hepburn, Nationalism and Socialism in Twentieth Century Ireland, Francis MacManus (ed.), The Years of the Great Test, 1926-39, Desmond Williams, The Irish Struggle and Dorothy Macardle, The Irish Republic.

Writings on Irish education have been subjected to extensive analysis in my "Irish Educational Historiography: A Review Essay," The Journal of Educational Thought, Vol. XIII, No. 1 (April 1979) and repetition here would be superfluous. It suffices to note that the most important works in this category are those by Donald H. Akenson -- The Irish Education Experiment: the National System of Education in the Nineteenth Century and A Mirror to Kathleen's Face: Education in Independent Ireland, 1922-1960.

Of peripheral importance, but nonetheless requiring consultation are several monographs on the history of individual schools and religious orders. Included here are T.J. Walsh, Nano Nagle and the Presentation Sisters and P. Birch, St. Kieran's College, Kilkenny.

Of the studies which examine the Catholic church in Irish society, the best by far is David W. Miller, Church, State and Nation in Ireland, 1898-1921. This provides a scholarly and in-depth analysis of the political activities of the church in the pre-independence period. J.W. Whyte, Church and State in Modern Ireland, 1923-1970 is also important, especially on such questions as censorship and the controversial health scheme of 1951. Jean Blanchard, The Church in Contemporary Ireland contains some relevant information on the organization of the church in Ireland. P.J. Corish (ed.), A History of Irish Catholicism is an essential source, but the individual volumes, including the one devoted to education, are somewhat superficial and descriptive in their treatment.

Books by Irish ecclesiastics are of obvious significance, especially when they address themselves to the social and political issues of the day. In this category are Rev. E. Cahill, S.J., The Framework of a Christian State and Rev. M. O'Riordan, Catholicity and Progress in Ireland.

The works of anti-clerical writers are of equal importance and they are of particular relevance in dealing with the pre-independence period. Among these are: F. Hugh O'Donnell, The Ruin of Education in Ireland, W.P. Ryan, The Pope's Green Island and the numerous diatribes of Michael J.F. McCarthy.

Biographies of those individuals who shaped the course of events during the four decades under consideration constitute another valuable source. Denis Gwynn, The Life of John Redmond, offers a sympathetic portrayal of the leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party. P.J. Walsh, Archbishop W.J. Walsh of Dublin, is eulogistic in tone

and unfortunately pays little attention to developments after 1900. Leon O Brain, The Chief Secretary: Augustine Birrell in Ireland, though not strictly a biography, portrays Birrell the man as well as analyzing his Irish sojourn. F.X. Martin and F.J. Byrne, The Scholar Revolutionary: Eoin MacNeill, 1867-1945, and the Making of the New Ireland is an interesting collection of essays on the first Free State Minister for Education but contains no analysis of the educational policies he sponsored. Lord Longford and T.P. O'Neill, De Valera is the officially approved biography, but it contains information not available elsewhere. Terence de Vere White, Kevin O'Higgins is frankly apologist in tone but is occasionally useful. Garret Fitzgerald (ed.), The Memoirs of Desmond Fitzgerald, 1913-1916 is limited because of the time frame focussed on but provides an odd insight. H. Boylan, A Dictionary of Irish Biography contains brief sketches of both major and minor characters on the stage during the period under investigation.

The publication of inexpensive pamphlets was a method of disseminating propaganda and information often employed in Ireland in the early decades of this century. Those which dealt with educational issues are as follows: Association of Intermediate and University Teachers, Secondary Education in Ireland: a Plea for Reform; J.H.D. Miller, Clericalised Education in Ireland: A Plea for Popular Control; Patrick H. Pearse, The Murder Machine; W.J.M. Starkie, Recent Reforms in Irish Education, Primary and Secondary with a view to their co-ordination.

Contemporary journals are particularly useful as the number of these published under the aegis of the Catholic church was

considerable. One of the most important is the Irish Ecclesiastical Record which appeared monthly from 1864 until 1968. Published at Maynooth with the approval of the bishops, it can be regarded as the official organ of the hierarchy. The Society of Jesus was conspicuously active in the field of periodical publication. In 1873 a Jesuit father founded the Irish Monthly "as a memorial of Ireland's consecration to the Sacred Heart" and it continued to be an important platform for ecclesiastical opinion until the 1940s, especially in the prolific writings of the Rev. Timothy Corcoran, S.J., Professor of Education at University College, Dublin. Professor Corcoran was also instrumental in founding Studies in 1912, a Jesuit review of letters, philosophy and science which is still in existence. In addition he was a regular contributor to the Catholic Bulletin, a monthly review with a strong Catholic/nationalist flavour which ended publication in 1939.

The Irish Educational Review, which commenced publication in 1907, was a further mouthpiece for the church. It was privately produced by the Rev. Andrew Murphy of Limerick, but as he was the secretary of the Catholic Headmasters' Association, it can be regarded as the official organ of that body. Unfortunately, it ceased to appear after Father Murphy's death in 1914. It is a particularly useful source for the controversy over the Birrell grant.

Between 1910 and 1917 the Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland produced the Irish Journal of Education which folded due to financial difficulties. Throughout the period under investigation the Irish National Teachers' Organization brought out its own

publication, the Irish School Weekly. These two journals are the principal source of teacher opinion during these times.

An Claidheamh Soluis, the organ of the Gaelic League, has some relevance as it was edited for a time by Eoin MacNeill, the first Free State Minister for Education. There are also occasional articles on education in such journals as the Irish Statesman.

Articles which have some bearing on the topic are unfortunately rare in present-day academic journals. The following, however, are noted: D.H. Aken'son and J.F. Fallin, "The Irish Civil War and the Drafting of the Free State Constitution," Eire-Ireland, Vol. V, No. 1 (Spring 1970); Tom Garvin, "The Destiny of the Soldiers: Tradition and Modernity in the Politics of de Valera's Ireland," Political Studies, Vol. XXVI, No. 3 (September 1978); John Newsinger, "'I Bring Not Peace But a Sword': the Religious Motif in the Irish War of Independence," Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. XIII, No. 3 (July 1978); Seamas O Buachalla, "Education as an Issue in the First and Second Dail," Administration, Vol. XXV, No. 1 (Spring 1977).

The only unpublished thesis which proved of any value was P.J.N. Riordan, "The Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland, 1909-1968: Some Aspects of its Growth and Development" (M.Ed. thesis, N.U.I., 1975); Written by a former president of the association, it contains some important material on the teachers' agitation for job security in the post-independence period.

The relevance of official reports is self-evident. In this category are such items as Irish and British parliamentary debates, reports of commissions, annual reports of government departments and boards, statutes and so forth.

In a certain sense the Irish Catholic Directory can be construed as the annual report of the Catholic church in Ireland. In publication regularly since 1836, its main value lies in its summary of ecclesiastical events for each year, including major speeches and statements by the bishops and excerpts from their Lenten pastorals. It also contains statistical information on the clergy, schools, etc.

Newspapers provide not just a guide to daily events, but also an impression of public opinion. The Irish Times has long been Ireland's most reliable newspaper and is examined where relevant. Attention is also drawn to a collection of newspaper clippings on education which was maintained by the Irish Education Office between 1854 and 1923. This is currently housed in the Public Record Office at the Four Courts, Dublin.

The collections of private papers available in the National Library of Ireland which have some bearing on this topic are rather limited. The Redmond papers, which consist mainly of letters to John Redmond from prominent individuals in public life and drafts of Redmond's replies, are occasionally relevant. The Thomas Johnson papers contain some important materials relating to the education policies of the Irish Labour Party. The National Library also houses a few reports of Aireacht na Gaedhilge, the First Dail's short-lived Department of Irish.

The records of the Chief Secretary's Office (1818-1924), now kept in the State Paper Office, Dublin Castle, sheds some light on the pre-independence period.

The collection of cabinet papers (1922-1944) released for public examination by the Irish government in February 1976 and housed

in the State Paper Office, Dublin Castle, is a further primary source. Included in this collection are some documents relating to the otherwise secretive deliberations of the Dail Commission on Secondary Education (1921-1922). Unfortunately, the remainder of these papers are somewhat barren in their revelations. It appears that all discussion which took place at Irish cabinet meetings was recorded but destroyed after a time. All that has been allowed to survive is the record of the decisions arrived at -- a lean bone on which to chew. It would appear that the siege-like mentality which was understandable enough for the first illegal Dail, has been inherited by its legal successors. This veil of secrecy with which Irish governments have shrouded their deliberations has also been noted by D.H. Akenson.⁴

Ecclesiastical primary sources are even more problematic. In the experience of this writer, they are simply not made available to laymen. And they proved equally elusive to Dr. Akenson when he was conducting his investigations.⁵ As C.J. Woods observed in a review of David W. Miller's Church, State and Nation in Ireland, 1898-1921:

while bishops are happy to make the papers of their remoter predecessors available to historians, papers from the early twentieth century are considered too recent for the confidences they contain to be revealed.⁶

When one considers the preponderant role of the Catholic church in Irish education, this situation of suspicion and secrecy is hardly an encouraging one for the historian of education.

Footnotes

¹Helen F. Mulvey, "Twentieth Century Ireland, 1914-1970," in T.W. Moody (ed.), Irish Historiography, 1936-1970 (Dublin: Dublin University Press, 1971), p. 132.

²Ibid., p. 136.

³Brian Titley, "Irish Educational Historiography: A Review Essay," Journal of Educational Thought, Vol. XIII, No. 1 (April 1979).

⁴Donald H. Akenson, A Mirror to Kathleen's Face: Education in Independent Ireland, 1922-1960 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1975), p. 207.

⁵Letter from D.H. Akenson, 13 October 1977.

⁶C.J. Woods, Review of David W. Miller, Church, State and Nation in Ireland, 1898-1921, in Irish Historical Studies, Vol. XX, No. 78 (September 1976).

THE 'CONSPIRACY' UNFOLDS

In the early years of the twentieth century rumours began to circulate that the British government planned to reform Irish education to bring it more into conformity with the system prevailing in England. These rumours owed their origin to statements made by certain government figures, to investigations carried out by English school inspectors, and to agitation by anti-clerical propagandists whose opinions were seemingly heeded in high places.

The specifics of the planned reorganization were never quite clear, but it was believed that they would include the co-ordination of primary, secondary and technical instruction and the introduction of some form of local control and taxation. While such reforms could be justified on the grounds of efficiency and democracy, they posed a threat to the control exercised by the clergy over Catholic primary and secondary schools. Consequently, any indications that there was indeed a 'conspiracy' afoot by the government to bring about structural changes in Irish education prompted a hostile response by the church as it prepared to defend its interests. Before considering these developments, it is necessary to examine the historical background to the situation, in particular with regard to the role of the Catholic church in the emergence of the Irish school system.

Historical Background

As the eighteenth century drew to a close the Catholic church in Ireland was characterized by a siege mentality arising from its experiences in the previous hundred years when its ministers had been outlawed and exiled. In fact, it had not enjoyed a privileged position in the country since the Henrician Reformation. But with the destruction of the native nobility, her priests had assumed a leadership role among the peasantry which they never lost. This situation contrasted sharply with what prevailed elsewhere — in France and Italy, for example, where the church had been an important supportive agent for the old feudal order and consequently ran afoul of the forces of liberalism and nationalism.

The Catholic church, then, emerged from the era of persecution with the allegiance of the majority of the people still unquestioned, but its organization and finances were in disarray. Nor did the demise of official harassment usher in a golden age devoid of problems. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Evangelical Revival had spilled over into Ireland and Catholicism was subjected to direct assault by the proselytizing Protestant school societies. In addition, there was the disturbing spectre of revolutionary nationalism influenced as it was by the secularism and rationalism of the French Revolution. Defensive and unsure of itself, the church was willing to use its influence on the side of loyalty and submission. By its nature a conservative institution, it now hoped to gain some official favour by an open demonstration of loyalty. It was led by cautious men who were ready to co-operate with the

government in return for a free hand in the exercise of their spiritual activities and in rebuilding ecclesiastical organization.

It was not long, however, before a new confidence characterized the church leadership as prelates who had never known the Penal Laws came to the fore. Under such men as Bishop Boyle of Kildare and Leighlin and Archbishop McHale of Tuam the church gained in belligerence and became a decidedly political body, demanding civil rights and an equitable share in the bounty of the state.

The strong bond that united priests and people and the new episcopal leadership were effectively used by Daniel O'Connell in his campaign for Catholic emancipation in the 1820s. Under O'Connell's direction, agitation became a way of life for the clergy and even after 1829 they continued to play an active role in the social and political questions of the day.¹ In fact, as the century progressed, in the issues affecting Catholic interests in Ireland, the church's cause was championed directly by the bishops and priests, not by the laity. This was conspicuously so with regard to the question of education. The British government appears to have accepted priestly leadership on these issues as the frequent consultation between government officials and prelates suggests. E.R. Norman explains it this way:

The lay element was absent in Ireland -- partly due to the nature of Roman Catholicism itself, which is in essence sacerdotally-directed, both in concept and in actuality, and partly to the almost entire absence of an educated Irish middle class.²

The development of Irish school systems in the nineteenth century was profoundly influenced by the presence of a politically powerful Catholic priesthood. This was particularly so because of the traditional importance attached to its educational functions by

the church. The Thomist view of man forms the basis of this traditional importance. Thomism conceives of man as a composite entity, made up of body and soul. The immaterial and immortal soul, made in the image and likeness of God, is incomparably the most important element. The ultimate happiness of man lies in the salvation of his soul, made possible through Christ's redemption. If education is to be in any way meaningful, it must constantly bear in mind this final destiny of man. As the Catholic church claims to be the body founded by Christ to bring the means of salvation to man, it follows that it must be accorded a special place in the education of youth.³

In practice, the church has long claimed the sole right to direct the education of Catholic children, including the supervision of all secular teaching to ensure the exclusion of ideas contrary to the faith. This position is arrived at by a curious twist of logic which accords to parents the first rights as educators. However, conscientious Catholic parents, mindful that the road to salvation is best negotiated through the teaching of the church, will hand over their children to that body for their education.⁴

But a Catholic school in the Irish context has never meant one involving joint responsibility between laity and clergy. The only format ever acceptable to the bishops was one in which direct control was exercised by either the secular clergy or by members of religious orders or congregations. The state was acknowledged to have a limited function in education -- the provision of financial support for the church in her efforts.⁵ How these claims affected the school

systems which emerged in nineteenth century Ireland shall now be briefly examined.

The National system of primary schools established by the government in 1831 proposed to provide joint secular and separate religious instruction to children of all persuasions. It was administered by an appointed National Board of Education in Dublin which made building and salary grants to local schools established and managed by prominent individuals in the community, usually clergymen.⁶

This was an arrangement less than satisfactory to the Catholic bishops, but the circumstances demanded compromise. The rapidly growing population was placing onerous demands on the church's resources. In fact church finances were in poor shape as the Catholic merchant class, the main source of support, was badly hit by the economic depression which followed the Napoleonic Wars.⁷ Unable to provide an adequate network of primary schools of its own, and faced with the aggressive competition of the Protestant proselytizing schools, its leaders, with some exceptions, opted to enter the national system.

But, along with the Anglicans and Presbyterians, they worked from the beginning to destroy the 'mixed' principle of the schools. In face of this activity the National Board was soon compromising its ideals. For instance, the requirement that religious instruction be given either at the beginning or end of the school day, or alternatively, on a day set aside, was relaxed and by the late 1830s religion could be taught at any time, given advance warning.⁸ Presbyterian demands led to the establishment of a separate category of schools, which, in lieu of accepting reduced grants, were allowed

to exclude clergymen of denominations other than their own from the classroom.⁹ Even the principle of non-sectarian teacher training was abandoned. In 1883 the National Board agreed to support programs in two Catholic colleges set up in Dublin.¹⁰

By the end of the century the system had become de facto denominational. The leadership of the Catholic church was generally satisfied with arrangements as they stood.¹¹ Most Catholic children attended schools under the management of their local clergymen. This ensured the religious orthodoxy of the teachers who instructed them. Nevertheless, religious images were banned in the schools except during the times set aside for religion, and this hindered the creation of the desired 'atmosphere.' On these grounds, the system fell short of the Catholic ideal.

The more advanced type of education which we now label 'secondary' was provided in Ireland for Protestants only in the aftermath of the Reformation and the destruction of the old Irish nobility. Government patronage and private benefaction made possible an adequate number of grammar schools on the English model.¹²

But Catholics were less fortunate. Teachers of this persuasion were forbidden to practice (although many did so illegally) and Catholic schools could not be endowed throughout most of the eighteenth century. Consequently, those seeking an advanced education (especially those preparing for the priesthood) were obliged to pursue their studies in Irish colleges on the continent. The decline of the Jacobite threat to the English throne ultimately led to a relaxation of the Penal Laws and an Act of the Dublin Parliament

in 1782 repealed the proscription of Catholic teachers.¹³ One immediate result of this legislation was the establishment of St. Kieran's College in Kilkenny by Bishop Troy of Ossory.¹⁴ This was a diocesan boarding school whose principal purpose was to train secular priests. However, it also offered a classical education to those sons of the wealthier classes who did not intend to pursue a priestly career.

St. Kieran's was the first of many, a prototype, one might almost say. The increasingly hospitable atmosphere in Ireland combined with the uncertain future of the Irish endowments on a continent slipping into revolutionary chaos, meant that it soon had many imitators. St. Patrick's College, Carlow (1793); St. Jarlath's, Tuam (1800); St. Finian's, Navan (1802); St. John's, Waterford (1807); St. Peter's, Wexford (1819)¹⁵ were all based on the Kilkenny model. They were all diocesan boarding schools founded by the bishops for the education and recruitment of future members of the clergy.

Religious orders were soon also building schools of this type. The prestige Jesuit institution, Clongowes Wood College, for instance, was founded in 1814.¹⁶ Such was the pace of progress that by 1867 there were 47 Catholic 'colleges' for men in the country -- all controlled by the clergy.¹⁷

And female religious were also active. As early as 1771 a group of Irish Ursuline nuns, who had received their training in France, arrived in Cork to provide educational services to Catholic middle class girls.¹⁸ Ultimately of greater importance was the foundation of two Irish congregations of female religious -- the

Presentation Sisters and the Sisters of Mercy.¹⁹ Since their inception both congregations devoted their principal efforts to education at both primary and secondary levels.

What all of this meant was that as the nineteenth century progressed there was a great flourishing of advanced level educational institutions controlled and operated by Catholic religious. The system thus created was entirely the product of private enterprise and it established a tradition of ecclesiastical control which subsequently proved extremely resistant to change. In fact, when the Commissioners of Endowed Schools proposed a system of mixed intermediate education in 1858, such was the opposition of the Catholic bishops that the idea was shelved.²⁰

Despite the satisfaction of the ecclesiastical authorities with the control structure and denominational character of the schools they were creating, they remained dissatisfied with their lack of endowment and complained bitterly that the endowed Protestant schools were the beneficiaries of land confiscation in centuries past. Their argument for some degree of state support was taken up by the effective Irish grouping which emerged in Parliament in the 1870s. The neglected state of Irish intermediate education was also publicized by Lord Randolph Churchill who was brought to Dublin by his father, the Duke of Marlborough, in 1877. Churchill apparently took up the cause as an exercise in political agitation and he drew attention to the fact that Protestant endowments in Ireland had declined in value to a disturbing extent. State aid to Irish intermediate education without

making demands on the English Treasury became a possibility because of the availability of the surplus revenues of the disestablished Church of Ireland and a scheme acceptable to all interested parties was worked out.²¹

The Intermediate Education (Ireland) Bill of 1878, which passed through Parliament with little contention, allowed for the creation of a seven-member unpaid board whose purpose was to promote intermediate education in the country. It was permitted to do this through the distribution of the funds at its disposal (initially the interest on £1,000,000 of the church surplus fund) on the basis of the results of competitive examinations.²² Written examinations of this sort were perceived to be a valid selector of merit and they were used in those days for entry to the public service and some other occupations.

The consequences of such a system were predictable. The curriculum was of a particularly narrow classical mould and the pressure of examinations resulted in considerable cramming, memorization and unhealthy rivalry between schools.²³ But the grants that could be earned were badly needed by most schools and, while there were complaints, few could afford to opt out.

The Catholic authorities grumbled that the intermediate system still left their schools disadvantaged in terms of endowments vis a vis the schools of the Protestant ascendancy²⁴ and the concern was also expressed that in the scramble for examination results fees religious instruction was being neglected.²⁵ Nevertheless, there was general acceptance with the system as it represented denominational

control of the schools and in no way encouraged 'mixed' education.²⁶ In addition, the examination structure was eminently fair and was administered with absolute impartiality.²⁷ This is important as subsequent attempts to replace examinations with inspection as a means of determining school grants were vigorously resisted by the Catholic bishops. The enthusiasm of the episcopate for the intermediate system of payment by results is understandable when one considers its suspicion (perhaps justified) of the government and the fact that Catholic schools were the greatest beneficiaries of the system. As a consequence of the funding thus made available the number of Catholics receiving intermediate education increased from 12,064 in 1881 to 31,742 in 1911. During the same period there was an overall decline in the number of non-Catholics receiving this type of instruction from 12,629 to 11,395.²⁸

It meant that as the twentieth century opened the structure of intermediate education that existed was perfectly satisfactory to the Catholic church and attempts to tamper with it would be viewed with suspicion. The vast majority of Catholic intermediate or secondary schools were owned and operated by the clergy and there were no restrictions placed on the creation of a religious atmosphere within their walls. State funding was available through a mechanism which made no inroads on the jealously-guarded independence of the schools.

In order to complete our picture of the educational structure at the pre-university level, some mention must be made of vocational or technical training. The Irish Local Government Act of 1898 created a complete system of local government for the country and the

provision of vocational training was built on this structure. In the following year the Agricultural and Technical Instruction Act empowered local authorities to establish committees to plan programs of technical and/or agricultural instruction in their areas of jurisdiction. The Act also created the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction in Dublin which was to assist the local committees with their programs. Under the able direction of Horace Plunkett the new Department greatly advanced this type of education in the country. Among its activities was the provision of grants to intermediate schools that offered instruction in science and art.²⁹

This was the one component of Irish education which operated free of ecclesiastical supervision. Nor was technical instruction an area in which the clergy wished to become involved in any meaningful way. The difficulty with the system as far as the church was concerned was that it provided a model of lay-directed, locally controlled education similar to that prevailing in England. There was always the danger that the primary and intermediate systems, with their eminently satisfactory control structure, might be remodelled in the shape of the technical system in the name of local responsibility and efficiency.

But who spoke for the church and how is it possible to determine its official policy on such questions? The hierarchy of the Irish Catholic church is comprised of twenty-seven bishops. Four of these prelates (Armagh, Dublin, Cashel and Tuam) hold the title of 'archbishop' with the title 'Primate of All Ireland' accruing to the Archbishop of Armagh. Individual bishops have usually operated with

considerable freedom and power within their own dioceses and leadership in the church has been as much an outcome of personality factors as of formal titles. During the period under investigation it was customary for the bishops to meet as a body twice a year at which times pronouncements on issues of concern were often issued.

Otherwise, administrative matters and questions of policy were handled by a Standing Committee, comprised of the four archbishops and five or six other prelates.³⁰ The Standing Committee was also active in issuing pronouncements, resolutions and statements when it was felt that episcopal guidance on some question was advisable.

Pronouncements of this sort, either from the hierarchy as a whole or from its Standing Committee, are a reliable guide to official church policy. Obviously, such pronouncements suggest a unanimity of opinion that might not always have accorded with reality. Certainly there were disagreements between bishops on such questions as Home Rule and the agitation for land reform. But when it came to education evidence of dissent is missing. Statements by individual bishops on the question of educational policy were invariably in harmony with the official pronouncements. The Irish hierarchy, it seems, was in firm agreement on the type of schooling the young should receive -- it should always be under direct ecclesiastical control.

There were two other bodies that might be said to represent official ecclesiastical thinking, especially in the area of education -- the Catholic Headmasters' Association and the Catholic Clerical Managers' Association. Both organizations were comprised of those clergymen directly involved in the administration of Catholic schools.

The CHA was made up mainly of the headmasters of diocesan colleges. These were diocesan clergy and were under the direct control of the local bishop. The CCMA was composed of parish priests who held managerial control over primary schools. They too were directly responsible to their bishops. In other words, both of these organizations were under the supervision of the hierarchy. It is not surprising, therefore, that pronouncements from the CHA and the CCMA inevitably echoed the sentiments of the bishops on the same issues.

There were also some religious orders and congregations of brothers and nuns, in charge of schools, but independent of episcopal jurisdiction. Nonetheless, they were equally as concerned with preserving the purely Catholic nature of their institutions as were the bishops and they supported the stance taken by the hierarchy on the question of state versus church control.

This unanimity greatly simplifies our problem. It is possible to talk of church spokesmen in a somewhat ambiguous way. Whether in pastoral letters, journal articles, or in speeches given on a wide variety of occasions, clerical representatives were of one mind on the necessity of maintaining direct ecclesiastical supervision of Catholic schools.

Priests in Politics

The years following the fall of Parnell were marked by an apparent rise of clerical influence in many aspects of Irish life. Never an insignificant figure, the Catholic priest's power was augmented by the traditional pattern of land ownership as he inherited many of the

social prerogatives of the departing gentry.³¹ But his increasing eminence did not go unnoticed and several writers at the turn of the century commented rather uncharitably on his dominant role in Irish life. Not all observers of this phenomenon were necessarily hostile of course. L. Paul-Dubois, a French writer generally sympathetic to Irish Catholicism, noted that in no country was the moral ascendancy of the clergy so great:

In religion and in morals their authority is indisputable and undisputed. In the matter of education they are sometimes criticised, but always obeyed.³²

It was in rural society that clerical power was at its greatest and here priestly vigilance even dictated patterns of social interaction.³³ Few were willing to risk community disapproval by challenging or ignoring this divinely appointed authority.

The sphere of influence of the Catholic clergy also extended into Irish political life. Clergymen had become involved in electioneering in the days of O'Connell's agitation and acquired a taste for politics which they never lost.³⁴ In a backward and poverty-stricken countryside where their word was law on spiritual and social matters it was natural that they should also be accepted as political mentors. Priests did not actually run for office themselves but played a crucial role in deciding who would do so. In other words, clerical approval was a prerequisite of success in Irish nationalist politics.³⁵ This situation remained true both in Parnell's day and in the years of confusion and quarrelling which followed his fall. When the Irish Parliamentary Party was re-united

level was in no way diminished. At the leadership level there were connections that were equally important. Early in the election campaign of 1900, for instance, that astute observer of the political scene, Archbishop Walsh of Dublin, contributed the sum of £50 to the party coffers.³⁶ Gestures of this nature by members of the hierarchy were not unusual at election times, in particular if issues of great concern to the church were at stake. Walsh was of course a nationalist of long standing and corresponded frequently with Redmond on matters before parliament.³⁷ An even more important contact for the hierarchy was Bishop O'Donnell of Raphoe who was a trustee of the Parliamentary Fund and remained a close ally of the party leadership.³⁸ It is well to remember that John Redmond himself remained a loyal Catholic throughout his life and was not one to question the inordinate influence of his church in politics.³⁹

But layman and cleric were in politics for essentially different reasons. Redmond and his followers had as their aim some measure of self government for Ireland. While priests and bishops were often sympathetic to this ideal their political activities were directly aimed at defending the church's vital interests, especially in education. These aims, however, were not contradictory and a mutually profitable alliance prevailed. Consequently, when the church was faced with the prospect of educational reforms which she deemed undesirable, she had two great weapons at her disposal: the alliance with the Parliamentary Party and the influence of the public at the national level.

The Anti-Clericals

How the Catholic church built for herself an imposing educational edifice at the primary and secondary levels during the nineteenth century has already been described. That edifice, though imposing, was not unassailable and as the new century opened church leaders became aware that forces were gathering for such an assault. Secularism and democracy in education were the ideological enemies and they were championed by both major British political parties. The Liberal party had long been associated with the nondenominational educational ideal, and even the Conservatives, while supporting denominationalism in England, were unwilling to extend the principle to Ireland. The threat was seen to emanate, then, from the British government, regardless of the party in power, and from its loyal handmaiden, the Dublin administration. What changes would be attempted church leaders did not know but any reform which undermined clerical power in the schools would be opposed.

One indication that a serious challenge to clericalism was in the air was the appearance in the early years of the new century of a series of publications highly critical of the educational status quo and, in particular, of the influence of clerical teachers on the young. These books and pamphlets were generally intemperate in tone and polemical in intent and must be approached with great caution. They are important not because of the light they throw on Catholic education at the time but rather in the way they illustrate the passions which the educational question could arouse. Unfortunately, even in the

most exaggerated accusations there was a certain glimmer of truth and sensitive clerical nerves were touched.

F. Hugh O'Donnell in his The Ruin of Education in Ireland (1903), for instance, suggested, not without justification, that the clerical monopoly largely excluded lay people from the secondary teaching profession and that the few places offered them were "subordinate, poorly paid, and most precarious."⁴⁰ The general low standards of teaching as he perceived them also came in for criticism but his fiercest broadside of all was reserved for the convent schools:

Goddy-goodyness, and superficiality, and helplessness, trumpery accomplishments, and total unfitness for home and wifehood, these appear to be the darling objects of the saintly and incompetent sisterhoods; who, having foresworn the knowledge and use of the world, devote themselves, for a modest remuneration, to the misinformation and depreparation of the future wives and mothers of the country.⁴¹

O'Donnell was a Catholic layman and a former Parnellite M.P. who opposed clerical pretensions, especially in education. By this time he was alienated from the Parliamentary Party and his bitter tirades against clericalism and what he described as Redmond's "unmeasured servility to the Ecclesiastics"⁴² had become a bit of a bore and he was no longer taken too seriously.

Equally unrestrained in his comments was Michael J.F. McCarthy, another Catholic layman and the most prolific anti-clerical writer of the decade. Between 1901 and 1912 he produced no less than six books all on the same theme -- that Ireland was a priest-ridden country.⁴³ McCarthy was particularly opposed to a universal system of education and a model of the Irish education system.

discouraging the growth of a lay Catholic leadership by forbidding Catholics to attend the Queen's Colleges.⁴⁴ Meanwhile, they themselves were "aggrandising their own order; in building, equipping, and endowing colleges for the education of priests all over the land; in begging, borrowing, yea one might say, stealing money for the enrichment of those factories for the manufacture of home and foreign priests." Like O'Donnell, his most intemperate harangues were aimed at the nuns, of whose unfitness for teaching he was in no doubt:⁴⁵

School life for the ordinary girl in the ordinary convent is a life in which spiritual terror, by which the young mind is depressed, alternates with babyish merriment and diversion. . . . The girls are taught to regard their bodies as food for worms, rather than as temples of the Holy Ghost. . . . they grow so frightened that they are afraid to leave . . . and they become nuns themselves.⁴⁶

If helplessness and fear of the world were the consequences of an Irish Catholic education as seen by these two writers, they paled in comparison to the dire predictions of J.H.D. Miller in his pamphlet Clericalised Education in Ireland: A Plea for Popular Control (1907):

A few decades more of the prevailing system and the laity will be reduced to the most abject condition of mental incompetence. As it is, every year furnishes an alarming increase of insanity. The faculties of the people are becoming either atrophied or demented because of disuse, unwholesome dogma, inoculation, and want of proper training. Healthy mental exercise and independent thinking are denied them. The seed sown in the springtime of childhood is bearing an abundant harvest of adult lunacy. Our asylums and poorhouses are scarcely adequate for the growing demand, notwithstanding the continuous stream of emigration from our shores.⁴⁷

Camouflaged under the inflammatory language of these critics was the valid observation that the Irish Catholic laity were virtually incapable of any effective role in their educational system. This

writers of a more objective bent felt obliged to comment unfavourably on this situation. Horace Plunkett questioned the supposedly superior credentials of clergy as teachers⁴⁸ while L. Paul-Dubois wrote that the clerical monopoly in both primary and secondary education was undesirable and contributed to the system being "backward and inefficient."⁴⁹ These criticisms were repudiated in what McCarthy called the 'sacradotal press' and the Rev. M. O'Riordan's Catholicity and Progress in Ireland (1906) was written as a deliberate rebuttal of the charges made.⁵⁰ The war of words seems to have accomplished little, however, except perhaps in warning the church that her enemies were at the gate.

Modest Proposals

If the fantasies of bigoted anti-clericals could be safely ignored by church leaders, the same did not apply to proposed educational legislation or investigations of the system which might result in change. Accordingly, bishops and priests were on their guard when a Commission on Intermediate Education was set up in 1898. The Commission arose out of a unanimous resolution presented by the Intermediate Board to the Lord Lieutenant in its Report of January, 1898, stating that there were many grave defects in the system with the more serious of which it was powerless to deal.⁵¹ The Act of 1878 confined the Board's power to granting prizes and certificates to students and providing fees to schools based on public examination results. After twenty years the Commissioners were satisfied that

they could not effectively promote intermediate education while their powers were fettered by such narrow limitations. Therefore, in their Report, they were asking the legislature for an expansion of these powers to provide for greater flexibility. What they specifically wanted was the power to inspect schools as a supplement to examination for payment purposes. It was hoped that inspection would overcome two of the most generally acknowledged problems with the existing system -- the neglect of the less talented students and the cramming of the brighter ones. In an unusual touch the government appointed the members of the Intermediate Board themselves as the Commission of investigation.

Cardinal Logue, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, cautiously welcomed the Commission but was careful to emphasize his general satisfaction with the existing arrangements:

With regard to Intermediate Education, very little fault can be found with it as a general system. I think that is one instance in which they try to give us what we want.⁵²

Many of the clerical representatives, in their evidence before the Commission, echoed the Cardinal's suspicion of change. Monsignor Molloy, Rector of the Catholic University, and the Rev. N.J. Brennan, President of Rockwell College and an official representative of the Catholic Headmasters' Association, both stressed the eminent fairness of the results system.⁵³ The Rev. L. Healy, President of Blackrock College, rejected the idea of inspection as it opened the possibility of partiality and foul play. To find men sufficiently fair to carry out inspection would be impossible and inspection would inevitably inflict on the schools "vexatious meddling in their internal

administration."⁵⁴ But not all Catholic educators categorically opposed the concept of inspection. Some were willing to see it introduced as a supplement to examination, but not as a replacement. The Rev. Brother E.J. Connolly, Principal of Presentation College, Cork, for instance, favoured this limited role for inspection and was even prepared to allow inspectors to observe modes of teaching.⁵⁵ Churchmen were not united on this issue, then, and a modest measure of inspection, while not really welcomed, would not be vigorously opposed.

The other sensitive issue raised before the Commission was the question of teachers' qualifications. The idea that the state should have any say in who was hired to teach in Catholic secondary schools was anathema to the clergy. The Rev. Healy of Blackrock College made this clear in his evidence. When asked his attitude to the suggestion that all teachers be required to take an examination and obtain a certificate, he replied that "it would be a great and unnecessary interference with the liberty we now enjoy."⁵⁶ The main argument put forward by the clergy in objecting to a qualified teaching profession was that no recognized Catholic university existed in the country.⁵⁷ The argument was less than honest. Even after the settlement of the university question to the satisfaction of the bishops in 1908, further excuses were found to oppose a rule on teacher qualifications.

There were two issues of contention here. The church objected to the idea that clerical teachers should have specific qualifications as it might mean that priests, nuns and brothers would have to attend

either the Godless Queen's Colleges or, worse still, Trinity. And even a Catholic university might have proven unsatisfactory in the case of those religious bound by special rules of enclosure. It was evidently believed that the adoption of the clerical garb alone was a sufficient credential to instruct the young.

The question of the lay teachers was also involved. The position of lay teachers in Catholic secondary schools will be dealt with in greater detail in a later chapter. At this stage it is sufficient to point out that they were poorly paid and were subject to dismissal at a moment's notice. The question of qualifications in their case, while also complicated by the ban on the Queen's Colleges and Trinity, revolved around the growth of a lay teaching profession with a register of qualified personnel, security of tenure and adequate salaries. Such a development would interfere greatly with the existing absolute freedom of school principals in hiring and firing their lay employees and therefore had to be discouraged.

There was no cause for alarm. In their Report the Commissioners stated that while the important question of registration for intermediate teachers was brought to their attention, they deemed the subject to be outside the scope of their mandate.⁵⁸ This was hardly encouraging to the lay teachers. The Association of Intermediate and University Teachers of Ireland, in which they were organized at the time, felt compelled to distribute a circular to all Irish and to many British M.P.s complaining that the Commission, by leaving the question of a professional register, prevented a "real

The recommendations of the Commissioners on the inspection question were far from revolutionary. They urged that the annual examination be retained as the basis of the calculation of the school grant. Inspection should be used only to satisfy the Board "as to the sufficiency of the teaching staff, the sanitary condition of the school, and the reasonableness of the arrangements as to school hours."⁶⁰

Some changes in the examination system were also proposed but what the Commissioners really wanted was freedom of action for the Intermediate Board to create its own rules for the distribution of the monies at its disposal. When this proposal was incorporated into the Intermediate Education Bill of 1900 which followed, it caused a brief controversy. The difficulty here was the attitude of the Catholic bishops and headmasters to the Intermediate Board. Though Catholics were strongly represented on it,⁶¹ the Board was not trusted. It was feared that the freedom of action offered by the Bill might one day permit the adoption of rules inimical to the Catholic interest. The Board was, after all, an appointed body and the level of Catholic representation on it was a question of tradition rather than law and might therefore easily change. A Board restricted to the seemingly fair rules of 1878 was far more to the church's liking.⁶²

John Redmond was quick to sense the problem. Speaking at the foundation of a new Christian Brothers Novitiate at Marino, Dublin on June 10th, 1900, he expressed the same distrust of the Intermediate

of the Commissioners might result in changes which would drive the Brothers from the system.⁶³ And when the Bill was discussed in the Commons on July 19th, Redmond again, with the support of his party, objected to this 'blank cheque.' He felt it would enable the unrepresentative Board to interfere with the method of education in schools and this was unacceptable. He successfully proposed an amendment requiring that all rule changes be approved by both houses of Parliament and with this modification the Bill passed into law.⁶⁴ The Intermediate Education Act of 1900 not only gave the Board greater freedom of action with regard to the disposal of its funds (at least in theory), but enabled it to hire a team of school inspectors on a temporary experimental basis.

When the Catholic headmasters met in Dublin in September, 1901 they agreed to sign the forms permitting inspection of their schools by the temporary inspectors but insisted "that we do not thereby indicate, in any way, our acceptance of a future permanent system of inspection." They also reiterated their objection to any demand that Catholic intermediate schools be required to employ only teachers with specific qualifications "unless proper provision is made for the higher education of Catholics."⁶⁵

Though it seemed to have stemmed the tide of change, the church had certainly lost some ground. The Intermediate Education Commission and the Act which followed it, opened a Pandora's box which would prove impossible to close. The principle of inspection had established the first head-on of state interference in the

increase in time. The discussions which surrounded these events also raised the question of teacher qualifications and indirectly the position of lay teachers in the schools, and even though the issue was not pursued, it was unlikely to remain dormant for very long. In the following years the questions of inspection and teacher qualifications were to represent a sort of gradual erosion of the foundations of what J.H.D. Miller called "clerical absolutism" in the schools. But they were to be accompanied by a further and more sinister threat. Attempts were afoot to sweep away the entire ramshackle administration of Irish education by replacing the National and Intermediate Boards by one united Department of Education and also to introduce an element of local responsibility by setting up elective education authorities or school boards with the power of striking rates for school support. Any such scheme would radically alter the denominational character of the existing system and would weaken if not destroy the power of the clergy. Clerical acquiescence in a revolution of this nature was naturally unthinkable and the advocates of reform were to find in this issue a particularly intractable problem.

"A Deep Laid Plot"

The first hint of this direct assault on the clerical monolith came from no less a personage than W.J.M. Starkie, Resident Commissioner of National Education and also a member of the Intermediate Board. This senior education official at the time

administration was a distinguished academic and a former president of Queen's College, Galway but he belonged to that tiny minority of "independent Catholic laymen" who opposed clerical power in education and hence was distrusted if not despised by church leaders. In fact in the summer of 1901 Archbishop Walsh had resigned from the National Board apparently over some dispute with Starkie and relations between the Resident Commissioner and the hierarchy visibly deteriorated in the aftermath.⁶⁶ The remarks which caused the new outbreak of alarm were made by Starkie in an address to the British Association on September 11th, 1902 in the inauspicious setting of Belfast. Many of the criticisms he had to offer of the school system were already only too familiar to his audience, being the well-tested jibes of sundry anti-clerical propagandists. His two major complaints were the financial and administrative incompetence of the national school managers and the deplorable situation of lay teachers in Catholic intermediate schools. On this latter issue he expressed his regret that the Act of 1900 did not sweep away the grants system based on examination results and replace it with a system of worthwhile teachers' salaries to encourage "able and energetic laymen" to enter the teaching profession.⁶⁷ But the remark which attracted most attention from church authorities was his proposal that primary and secondary education be co-ordinated and provided with reliable finances through rate aid and local control.⁶⁸ Such a reform had been advocated before but, coming from one in so prominent a position and perhaps with an ear to government intentions, it was

The predictable defences of the educational status quo soon made their appearance in the popular press.⁶⁹ But the situation seemed to warrant more specific precautionary measures. A particular cause of episcopal concern was that at this time the Irish M.P.s had generally absented themselves from the Commons to avoid embarrassment over the government's Education Bill. Archbishop Walsh appealed to Redmond to return to the House to protect Catholic interests⁷⁰ and when the Bill returned from the Lords in December with amendments favourable to the denominationalist cause, the Irish were there in force providing a victory for the government on a few divisions where Balfour did not demand Unionist unity.⁷¹

But the presence of the Irish members in the House, though reassuring, was insufficient in itself to allay episcopal fears. Government intentions remained unclear and speculation on the matter continued in the following months. When the bishops met in October 1903 they expressed their alarm at the rumours then going round that primary and secondary education were to be re-organized by replacing the existing boards with a unified department and some form of local control and rate aid. They wished to make their opposition to such a scheme clear at the "earliest opportunity."⁷² Starkie's speech had obviously contributed to these rumours but there were other reasons. Earlier in the year part of the annual exchequer grant for primary education had been re-appropriated for the purposes of Wyndham's Land Bill and this gave rise to the suspicion that education was being financially 'squeezed' in order to make room for the land bill.

Speculation was also encouraged by the fact that during 1903 Mr. Frank Dale, an English school inspector, was travelling throughout the country conducting an inquiry into primary education. Mr. Dale's mandate was to investigate to what extent the Irish system compared with its English counterpart. And when his report was presented to the Commons in March 1904, the worst ecclesiastical fears were realized. He had found that Irish schools were markedly inferior to those in England with regard to sanitation and facilities for teaching and he recommended the establishment of an education department and local education bodies with the power of striking rates to remedy these defects.⁷⁴

This was only a recommendation but it was widely believed to be one on which the government would act. Clerical denunciations were therefore quick to follow. On April 16th (1904) the Catholic Clerical Managers of the Diocese of Elphin adopted a resolution condemning Mr. Dale's suggestion that the repairs, upkeep, sanitation, and building of Irish primary schools should be supported on local taxation "by the impoverished ratepayers of Ireland." The managers expressed their determination "to offer immediate and uncompromising resistance" to any attempt to "secularise the primary education of the country."⁷⁵ The argument of local poverty and overtaxation was to become familiar as a major weapon in the clerical arsenal in the struggles that ensued.

The Parliamentary Party also opposed Mr. Dale's recommendation with different arguments. When the question was debated in the

inspector's findings with regard to school facilities as evidence of government misrule. But Mr. Dale's recommendations were another matter. Redmond, while admitting that the system was 'rotten' and in urgent need of change, rejected the idea of an education department to replace the boards. It would be a 'Castle' department and not responsible to the Irish people. Remedies of this kind would be easy under Home Rule, but without it there could be no satisfactory settlement.⁷⁶ Redmond was putting his party on record as opposed to any change in the educational status quo before the implementation of self government. There was a touch of irony in this. He was denouncing as 'rotten' a system of education beloved by his church and was attempting to use it as an example of bad government and therefore a lever to Home Rule.

But it was Chief Secretary Wyndham's speech on the same occasion which aroused the greatest interest. He readily acknowledged the opposition of the Irish party to reform of primary education and was prepared to concede that Ireland was too poor to support her schools to any great degree from local rates. Reform might, however, be attempted with technical and intermediate education. They might be co-ordinated and local control and rate aid introduced -- with an extension of this system to the primary level at a later date. The Chief Secretary realized that there would be opposition to these proposals but an attempt to implement them should nevertheless be made. With the English Act of 1902 and the Scottish Education Bill of that year and in view of the educational progress in other

behind. No action was intended that session as it was Scotland's turn, but in the following session an attempt at Irish educational reform would be forthcoming.⁷⁷

That cat was at last out of the proverbial bag. Mr. Wyndham's speech was the first official statement of government intent on the question of Irish educational reform. Anticipated by Mr. Starkie's Belfast address, by the financial stringency measures and by Mr. Dale's investigation, it was no less of a shock when it came. For what the government proposed to do was to begin its reforming measures by altering the power structure of those most sensitive institutions -- the secondary or intermediate schools. And the seriousness of the government's plans was underlined by the fact that Mr. Dale was once more dispatched to Ireland, this time accompanied by Mr. T.A. Stephens, to investigate the intermediate system.

The occasion seemed to warrant the maximum use of the ecclesiastical public relations machine and before long it was oiled and ready to go. Cardinal Logue was first to join the fray. Addressing the students at Maynooth on 21 June (1904) he expressed alarm that secondary education might be in for a major shake-up. In an unveiled reference to Messrs. Dale and Stephens, he spoke of men going about the country taking notes "who seem to think that everything is going wrong here in Ireland. They are preparing for us -- a thing we are always likely to get -- suits of the cast-iron clothes of the learned men and scholars of England. When a certain

And when the bishops met at Maynooth on 22 June, they issued a statement in which they questioned the real zeal of the government for educational reform. Reform, they believed, was but a guise for an attack on clerical power in the schools. As for democratic structures and parental involvement, they pointed out that parents show little desire to interfere in schools "from the conviction, which we regard as, on the whole, sensible on their part, that these things are somewhat outside of their competence. . . ." -- a rather curious statement from a church which insists that parents are the primary educators of their children. But there were circumstances apparently under which educational reform might be acceptable:

The first condition of a radical reform of Irish education is the establishment of a University system that the vast majority of the Irish people will accept. Until that is done we shall regard all this talk about co-ordination and local control and educational progress as insincere, and as aimed at lessening clerical -- that is, Catholic -- influence in the schools, rather than at promoting their educational efficiency.⁷⁹

As on the question of teacher qualifications this statement was less than sincere for, as we shall see, the bishops remained as intransigently opposed to reform after the National University was established as they had been before. The equation of clerical with Catholic influence is also interesting as it seemed to preclude a system of Catholic schools in which power could be shared with the laity.

In the following weeks individual bishops continued to attend to their own affairs, and at meetings throughout the country. The bishops of the various dioceses continued to meet in their own dioceses, and the bishops of the various provinces continued to meet in their own provinces.

pretext or another to divorce our system of education from the spirit of religion."⁸⁰ Bishop Browne of Cloyne accused persons "high in authority" of aiming to alter the system in such a way as "to make it again a source of danger to the faith and best interests of our Catholic people."⁸¹ The lower clergy were also actively involved.

In what the Freeman's Journal described as an 'important speech,' the Rev. E. O'Reilly, addressing a gathering of clergy and teachers at Kilcormac, warned that any tampering with ecclesiastical supervision of the schools might necessitate a return to the hedge school:

Can the Government take our schools? Can the Government as it did of old with our churches, take now our schools and add another item to the roll of plunder?⁸²

This analogy with the Penal Laws was both unfair and unnecessary under the circumstances but it illustrates once more the kind of passions aroused by the educational issue and the uncompromising resistance to change which characterized the church's attitude.

When the bishops met at Maynooth on October 11th, they reaffirmed the statement issued the previous June on the education question and urged that it be read at the principal Mass in each church on the first Sunday in November.⁸³ The pulpit was a most effective medium for episcopal politicking.

And the bishops found several allies in their struggle. Local government bodies and local teachers' associations were encouraged by the hierarchy to pass resolutions condemning attempts at secularization and many did so.⁸⁴ The Freeman's Journal, the official newspaper of the parliamentary party, also proved an invaluable

publicity to the bishops' pronouncements, but it took the initiative itself commenting caustically on the proposed reforms. On 22 June, for instance, the Freeman defended the independence of the schools in a bitter attack on the government:

Catholic Ireland has produced its Intermediate Schools: it is not going to surrender them to the domination of either Orange Toryism or Nonconformist Liberalism or Mugwump Agnosticism organised by any Government Department. ⁸⁵

And in a 13 July article entitled 'A Private and Underhand Inquiry,' it described the Dale/Stephens investigation as another example of British contempt for Irish opinion and Irish capacity for self government. The two English inspectors, with no experience of Irish education, were called in as part of a conspiracy to abolish the Intermediate Board and replace it with a Castle department. ⁸⁶

The party leaders themselves were enlisted in the campaign and several spoke out against the government plans. John Dillon, who was establishing himself as a sort of party spokesman on education, was particularly active. Speaking at a large public meeting presided over by the Bishop of Achonry at Ballaghaderreen in October, he referred to the "deep laid plot to revolutionise the whole system of education in Ireland" which had been going on behind the scenes for some years. The government's long secret intentions had only recently been revealed by Mr. Wyndham:

It is an open and avowed policy to take the schools from all control of the Catholic priests of the country, and to turn them into a Department of the British Government in this country.

Dillon suggested that popular control was really government control in disguise and he accused Wyndham of planning to place all of Irish

education, primary, secondary and university under Horace Plunkett and his department, a man whose materialism and anti-Catholicism were well known. He urged the bishops and priests of the country to stand firmly behind the Irish party as the most effective way in dealing with the government.⁸⁷ Such an alliance was obviously to the hierarchy's liking and a statement by the bishops in January 1905 urged that "the whole country should rally round our Parliamentary representatives and give them the whole strength of the nation's support in their endeavour to secure ordinary civil rights for Irish Catholics in educational, and all other matters."⁸⁸ A subsequent appeal by the party leadership to the bishops to make contributions to the annual Parliamentary Fund drive received an unprecedented response with even prelates hitherto labelled 'Castle bishops' contributing.⁸⁹

The "English Tourists"

But no government move was expected until Messrs. Dale and Stephens had completed their investigations. These two gentlemen, though disparagingly referred to in the Irish press as 'English tourists',⁹⁰ were eminently qualified for the task presented them. Mr. Dale was a former fellow of Merton College and had investigated education in Germany for the Department of Special Enquiries and Reports under the English Board of Education. He was an examiner for the Diploma in Education granted to teachers by the Universities of Oxford and Durham and was one of H.M. Inspectors of Schools. Mr. Stephens had studied at universities both in France and Germany and

had spent some years as assistant master at Manchester Grammar School. He was also one of H.M. Inspectors of Schools.⁹¹ In their investigation of Irish intermediate education, the two inspectors were asked to give special attention to the following:

1. The co-ordination of intermediate education with primary, technical and university education.
2. Staffing, equipment, sanitary conditions, etc., in schools receiving grants from the Intermediate Board.
3. The use of inspection to supplement or replace examinations for grant purposes.
4. The possibility of establishing an intermediate teaching profession with proper training, salaries, and registration.⁹²

By the end of 1904 the inspectors had visited eighty of an estimated 475 intermediate schools in the country and their report was submitted to the Board on 15 February 1905.

It turned out to be a concise and cogently argued document offering irrefutable evidence of the need for reform. The inspectors pointed out that many problems of inefficiency and non-utilization of existing resources resulted from the complete lack of co-ordination between the systems operated by both the Intermediate and National Boards. IN some areas there was a proliferation of small uneconomic schools while other areas were very poorly served. The latter problem was particularly acute in Connacht where of a total population of 646,932 only 728 pupils attended intermediate schools. Some form of rationalization of facilities was obviously in order and the

inspectors proposed the establishment of some central co-ordinating authority with responsibility for the entire field of primary and secondary education with even the power to set up schools where none existed.⁹³

On the question of actual conditions within the schools, there were some disturbing revelations. Most of the large boarding schools, such as Clongowes Wood, and those of the Christian Brothers were generally pronounced satisfactory in this respect.⁹⁴ But there was a number of small schools -- usually with an enrollment of less than fifty -- which were found to have serious problems in overcrowding and inadequate sanitation, ventilation, lighting and equipment. Dale and Stephens 'condemned the fact that under the prevailing system these schools -- mere 'cramming establishments' -- were eligible for grants from public funds. In fact the results system was keeping some of these institutions alive. It appears that the system of temporary inspection set up as a result of the 1900 Act -- and since then broken down -- had little effect on the schools. The temporary inspectors were empowered to examine the facilities made available in schools for health, recreation, sanitation, and physical exercise. No schools refused to submit to inspection and several were found wanting -- but nothing was done about it. One of the difficulties seems to have been the powers conferred on the Intermediate Board. Despite the provisions of the 1900 Act, Board members were uncertain whether they could withhold grants from schools which did not meet acceptable physical standards but whose students passed the examination. It is likely that the system was not intended to be

controversy by making such a move.⁹⁵ Nor were they encouraged by the government's ambiguous attitude towards inspection. For reasons which we will examine later Wyndham continued to resist the Board's appeals to establish a permanent inspectorate.

The Report enumerated many of the educational problems arising from the results system -- cramming and so forth -- and proposed instead a block capitation grant to recognized schools. These would be institutions which during the last three years of the old system obtained a certain minimum percentage of passes at the examinations. Exams would continue based on a suggested syllabus but would be administered by school staffs. Regular inspection would ensure that standards were maintained and no monetary rewards would be attached to the exams. Some externally set exams should remain to give leaving certificates to students but they would not affect school grants. The system of inspection envisaged by Dale and Stephens was quite elaborate in conception. The inspectors would evaluate the entire work of the school as far as secular instruction was concerned. As well as instruction, they would concern themselves with the physical conditions of the school, time-tabling, systems of promotion, scholarships and so on. Some of the areas marked out for inspection were potentially controversial -- the conditions under which teachers worked, the salaries for lay teachers, the arrangements for boarders -- all areas viewed with particular sensitivity by the Catholic authorities.⁹⁶

In the question of teachers' qualifications Dale and Stephens proposed that 90 per cent of male teachers should be

university graduates while the figure was 8 per cent for Catholic women. Of the 145 Christian Brothers then teaching in intermediate schools, it was unlikely if any had more than the two years training provided at their own college in Dublin. However, the proportion of graduate teachers in the Catholic diocesan colleges was probably quite high -- many of them coming from Maynooth. Protestant schools, on the other hand, were well staffed with graduates (men - 55.8 per cent; women - 30 per cent).⁹⁷ It was found that many lay people engaged in teaching did not consider it their life long career and hoped to switch to some other occupation should an opportunity arise. This was attributed to the miserly salaries and absence of security of tenure and pensions.

The English inspectors were nonetheless cautious in their recommendations regarding teacher qualification, recognising it as a sensitive issue with the Catholic church. Diplomas in teaching were offered by Trinity College and the Royal University but prevailing circumstances made it impossible to insist on such qualifications. Large numbers of secondary teachers were Catholic religious and any proposed training program could not conflict with the rules and discipline required of these by the church. Any training requirement, then, should not be rigidly defined. Dale and Stephens had no intention of riding roughshod over the church's sensibilities. Pensions, some form of registration as in England and training were all necessary to create a teaching profession at the intermediate level. Decent salaries were also needed but the inspectors were not

that perhaps a bonus could be paid to schools for employing registered teachers⁹⁸ -- an idea taken up by a later government with contentious results.

It has been necessary to insist on this somewhat detailed analysis of the Dale/Stephens inquiry as it represents one of the few relatively objective statements on Irish education from around this time. The English inspectors were moderate men and were cognisant of the political difficulties of instituting any drastic changes, even had they desired them. They pointed to genuine problems in the operation of the intermediate system -- poorly paid and qualified teachers, inadequate provision of schools in some areas, lack of co-ordination between the different branches of education and the problems associated with cramming for external examinations. Their proposals to remedy these faults showed a willingness to compromise and find a modus vivendi between the claims of clerical power and those of popular control.

This general fairness and moderation of the Dale/Stephens Report meant that it was not greeted with the harangues and denunciations that might otherwise have been expected. There were of course some predictable grumblings. It was argued, for instance, that the inquiry had been unnecessary as it merely covered ground already covered by the Vice-Regal Commission on Intermediate Education of 1898-99.⁹⁹ The Report was probably not taken too seriously in the first place by the government which had instituted the inquiry in the first place, and was now inclined to ignore its recommendations. By 1905 the in-

the Conservative administration were numbered and Wyndham, already frustrated in his efforts to solve the university question, was evidently in no mood for further difficulties in Irish education.

Bryce at the Helm

The imminent demise of the government, however, was no cause for clerical celebration. The Conservatives, while never friendly to the Catholic cause in Ireland, at least championed denominational education in England. The Liberals, on the other hand, were known for their ideological commitment to non-denominationalism. With the advent of Campbell-Bannerman's administration the Episcopal Standing Committee was not slow in communicating its concerns and its expectations to the Irish party. A formal letter to Redmond on 25th January, 1906 showed that while the Bishops' most pressing demand was a Catholic university, they were also concerned that "in any changes made in our educational systems Irish ideas and Irish wishes, and not English fads, will be followed."¹⁰⁰ This was a barely disguised attack on the concepts of rate aid and local control. The letter also showed a limited concern for the survival of denominational education in England under the new government but this was apparently a marginal consideration. Redmond passed on a copy of the letter to the new Chief Secretary, Bryce and in a reply to the bishops assured them of party support for their educational position.¹⁰¹

The policy of the new regime was nevertheless awaited with

indication of what might be in store on a brief visit to Dublin.

He spoke of simplifying the educational system and introducing "greater economy and efficiency" in the hope of more favourable Treasury

grants.¹⁰² And a month later, in the Commons debate on the King's speech, he again affirmed the government's intention of cheapening and improving the Irish administration. He spoke of the urgent need for the reform of education in the country but acknowledged that

nothing could be achieved without giving the Irish people a direct role in the reforms.¹⁰³

This was welcomed by Mr. Dillon who was satisfied that they now had a Chief Secretary who was "profoundly impressed with the ruinous condition of Irish education."¹⁰⁴ Dillon nevertheless interpreted the government's reforming zeal as an indicator of its support for a measure of Home Rule.

The bishops had no such illusions about the new government. Bishop O'Dwyer of Limerick, who often embarrassed his fellow-prelates by his undiplomatic outbursts, had denounced the Liberal alliance in January provoking a controversy in the press with Michael Davitt.¹⁰⁵ He now devoted his entire Lenten Pastoral to the education question and the threat to the church's interest. He depicted the church engaged in a desperate struggle with "the World" for the control of schools while talk of improvement and reform in education were merely ruses and stratagems to put people off their guard.¹⁰⁶ Other pastorals were no less pessimistic and the Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin predicted, for instance, that the secularization of Irish education through "secular control" would be a disaster.

But Bryce had so far been vague and non-committal on the government's intentions and when the debate on Irish education opened in the Commons in March his speech was awaited with interest. The Chief Secretary emphasized that one of his priorities was the amalgamation of the primary and secondary education bodies into one department for Ireland. He was aware of objections to the creation of another Castle department but he felt an acceptable alternative might be an elective and responsible body -- an idea greeted by Irish Nationalist cheers. He suggested that Irish public opinion was probably not ready for the reforms really needed and it seemed pointless imposing them by the strength of parliament if they were unacceptable to the people.¹⁰⁸ Bryce's speech was reasonable and conciliatory but he seemed to be generally expressing his helplessness in dealing with a situation over which Irish and British opinion was so sharply divided.

Such magnanimity did not easily win over the bishops and Cardinal Logue soon made it known that he saw little reason to share the optimism of those who held out high hopes for this government. His view now was that Ireland could only get the educational reforms she wanted from a native government.¹⁰⁹ This statement represented an important breakthrough in his thinking. The Cardinal, like many of his bishops, had long supported the Parliamentary Party as a staunch ally of the Catholic cause but he had never shown any real enthusiasm for the actual advent of Home Rule. Government actions in the previous few years had obviously changed his mind. If successful

status quo in Ireland, safety could only be guaranteed by the transfer of educational responsibility to a Dublin parliament.

Bryce's conciliatory gestures did not lead the bishops to ignore what was then taking place in England. Birrell's Education Bill, which was introduced in April, was an attempt to erode the position of the denominational schools as established in the settlement of 1902. Both English and Irish Catholic hierarchies denounced the measure and Redmond found himself in an awkward position reluctant as he was to abandon his Liberal allies. The Irish did not hold the balance of power and the party's policy was to support amendments favourable to the Catholic cause while generally voting with the government or abstaining on minor points introduced by the Conservatives. The drastic amendments to the Bill in the Upper House went far beyond basic Catholic demands and Redmond could offer the support of his party to the government in return for less sweeping concessions than those demanded by the Lords.¹¹⁰ It is a real tribute to the leadership qualities of Redmond that he survived these delicate manoeuvrings retaining the confidence of both government and bishops and with party discipline intact.¹¹¹

While Redmond was walking this political tightrope the Irish clergy continued their agitation lest the danger be not realized. Rev. T.A. Finlay S.J. wrote in the New Ireland Review that the state had no natural right in education¹¹² while Bishop O'Dwyer spoke of the great secret that the government was planning an education department to 'seize' the schools.¹¹³ And the Bishop of Exeter was

annual conference of the Catholic Truth Society in Dublin in October, he warned that "the horoscope of events unmistakably foreshadowed that the thundercloud, charged with destruction, which sat brooding over England today, might shift its magnetic centre, and settle on Ireland tomorrow." He was only partly reassured when John Dillon, in moving a vote of thanks, described the Parliamentary Party as the staunchest champion of the cause of religion in education both in England and Ireland.¹¹⁴

The Irish Council

The end of the year brought a further political development which hardly boded well for the clerical interest. Bryce had never been too comfortable in his Irish appointment and in December Campbell-Bannerman offered to make him ambassador to the United States, a country, unlike Ireland, about which he could claim special knowledge.¹¹⁵ His acceptance led to the appointment of Augustine Birrell as Chief Secretary in January, 1907. Birrell, an ambitious man with a possible eye on the premiership, only reluctantly accepted this posting which so often had proven the graveyard of political reputations. The son of a Baptist minister he was somewhat unusual among English Protestant statesmen of his day in having considerable sympathy with the Catholic church.¹¹⁶ His first cabinet position had been as president of the Board of Education where he sponsored the well-known Liberal Education Bill

his Bill by the Lords precipitated his departure from the Board of Education and probably his move to Ireland. Despite his personal sympathy for Catholicism his English education measure made him an object of suspicion for the champions of denominational education, in particular, the Irish Catholic hierarchy. Yet Redmond and the Irish party welcomed Birrell's appointment. They had a certain admiration for the man who had survived the controversy of the Education Bill and at any rate they had tired of Bryce's incapacity and vacillation.¹¹⁷

On appointment, Birrell's knowledge of Ireland was not extensive by his own admission, but he had always held a fascination for the Irish members in the Commons, especially in Parnell's heady days. For many years he had seen the wisdom of Home Rule as the only solution to the country's manifest problems and in his first Commons appearance after his appointment to Dublin, he made this clear.¹¹⁸ Those who hoped for active policies from the new Chief Secretary were not disappointed. Birrell's Under-Secretary was Sir Antony MacDonnell, a Catholic Irishman and experienced civil servant who, under the previous administration, had come to the view that 'devolution' -- the co-ordination of the various Irish boards under a central partly-elective authority -- would satisfy Irish national aspirations and be more readily agreed to in Britain than a Home Rule parliament.¹¹⁹ Birrell modified this proposal to make it more acceptable to Redmond and Dillon and it became the basis of the Irish

Bill which he introduced in the Commons on 7 May, 1891.

affairs consisting of around one hundred members, of whom about three-quarters would be elected on the limited local government franchise and the remainder nominated. It would have control over the Local Government Board, the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, Public Works, primary and secondary education, and the Congested Districts Board.¹²⁰

Redmond's response to the Bill was cautious but optimistic. One of his greatest concerns was the structure of the proposed education department to replace the National and Intermediate Boards. No minister would be placed over the department as in the parliamentary model but instead a committee of the Council with a salaried chairman appointed by the Crown would be in charge. This was a little suspect and Redmond rightly wondered what principle would govern the selection of the chairman. The makeup of the committee was another cause of apprehension as it was to include outsiders appointed by the Lord Lieutenant. As the Irish leader put it:

I want to ask some questions as to the creation of this Department. Who is to create it? When is it to be created? Is it to be created by the Lord Lieutenant? If so, is it to be without consultation with the Council?¹²¹

The question of a department of education was a "thorny and difficult one." The Irish party, while always critical of the 'irresponsible' Boards, opposed their replacement by a centralized department responsible to the British government. Redmond was withholding comment on this question until the government's intentions were

measure of Home Rule, however, especially if the Lords' veto were abolished. But no scheme would have his support unless first agreed to by a Nationalist convention in Ireland and such a convention was quickly organized.

Meanwhile, the response from the Catholic hierarchy was not encouraging. Archbishop Walsh, though guarded in his comments, was evidently suspicious of the proposed education department. Was this the long anticipated reform of Irish education which the Starkie speech of 1902 and the Report of Dale and Stephens had foreshadowed? Was it being smuggled in cloaked in the guise of a self-government measure? Continued government influence over the new department was Walsh's greatest fear:

Let us hope that the power of the Castle in this respect is not going to be extended and that the new Council of Education may not be in a worse position than the old Boards. Mr. Birrell's speech is not reassuring.¹²²

Logue was equally suspicious, describing some of the Bill's provisions as "mischievous."¹²³ But the most vigorous condemnation, predictably enough, came from Bishop O'Dwyer who was unwilling even to entertain the idea of a department replacing the existing Boards. He was prepared to place the Boards under the Council but a department would mean

. . . . the hopeless relegation of all effectual control into the hands of officials; the utter enslavement and possible starvation of the teachers; and the destruction of the absolute freedom which our secondary schools now enjoy; the confusion of two distinct and different types of education, and the inevitable transfer ultimately of all management to the local authorities.

and the Bill for the Education of the People, 1902, p. 10.

hard pressed to find qualified men to man the Council in addition to the seats in parliament and in local government.¹²⁴ The bishop's greatest objection centered round the Lord Lieutenant's power to appoint members to the education committee and, as the Rev. D. Humphries put it, he could "appoint the carrion crows, and it is birds of that feather that he would appoint."¹²⁵

These were certainly gross, almost ludicrous, overstatements of the case, but the clerical authorities had a point. The Crown's right to appoint the chairman and some members of the proposed education committee betrayed a continuing British distrust of Irish Catholics and represented an attempt to restrict their freedom of action especially in educational matters. But many of the traditional clerical arguments against educational re-organization were inoperative in this instance. The education department, despite its appointment procedure, would be responsible to the Irish Council, not to Westminster. Popular control, though not local control, was therefore offered in a certain sense. Nor could the old objection to it -- that it would result in increased local taxes -- be raised. The Council's revenue was to come from an Imperial grant not from local taxation. The Catholic authorities naturally grumbled that the allotted sum was insufficient but this also was an old anti-government ploy.

The validity of the arguments was not important. The bishops were convinced that the Bill would prove the thin end of the wedge of secularism and with the lower clergy joining in their general condemnation popular reaction to the measure soon set in. The extent

of public opposition apparently surprised Redmond on his return from London to Dublin for the Nationalist Convention which met in the Mansion House in May. Disheartened at what he felt was a
 • hopeless situation, he moved the rejection of the Council Bill to the Convention and his motion ~~was~~ adopted unanimously.¹²⁶

To what extent clerical opposition had spelled the downfall of the Bill is not clear but the bishops certainly took the lead in arousing public hostility to it. It should be remembered that the church had developed an effective means of propaganda to defend its interests and was constantly vigilant when the question of educational reform was mooted. To contemporary observers and to some historians it seemed as if the party leadership had capitulated to clerical dictation. E. Strauss has described the rejection of the Bill as "perhaps the most spectacular political event brought about by the direct political intervention of the clergy . . ." and suggested that it exposed Redmond's "impotence as a leader" when faced with the hostility of the church.¹²⁷ Birrell himself blamed clerical opposition to the education provisions for the loss of the Bill and predicted that should such vacillating leadership continue the Sinn Fein extremists would inherit the national cause.¹²⁸

Augustine Birrell did not emerge unscathed. In fact it was his second major defeat in less than two years. In 1906 his English Education Bill had run afoul of the Lords and now his devolution measure had been rejected by its very beneficiaries. It was not an auspicious beginning to his term of office. But he was learning in

and he soon grasped the complexities of Irish educational politics.

His future efforts to reform the system would be more realistic,

more subtle and perhaps a little more devious.

Footnotes

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³W.J. McGucken, "The Philosophy of Catholic Education," Philosophies of Education, 41st Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education (Chicago, 1942), pp. 252-253.

⁴The Irish Bishops, "The Right to Educate: To Whom does it Belong?," Irish Ecclesiastical Record, Vol. III (March 1867), pp. 281-294.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Norman Atkinson, Irish Education: A History of Educational Institutions (Dublin: Figgis, 1969), pp. 93-94.

⁷Emmett Larkin, "Church and State in Ireland in the Nineteenth Century," Church History, September 1962, p. 302.

⁸D.H. Akenson, A Mirror to Kathleen's Face: Education in Independent Ireland, 1922-1960 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1975), p. 2.

⁹D.H. Akenson, The Irish Education Experiment: The National System of Education in the Nineteenth Century (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), pp. 185-187.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 355-357.

¹¹Ibid., p. 360.

¹²N. Atkinson, Irish Education, pp. 29-34.

¹³Ibid., p. 58.

¹⁴Rev. P. Birch, St. Kieran's College, Kilkenny (Dublin: Gill and Son, 1951), p. 27.

¹⁵S.V. O Suilleabhain, "Secondary Education" in Catholic Education, Volume V of P.J. Corish (gen. ed.), A History of Irish Catholicism (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1971), p. 54.

¹⁶P.J. Dowling, A History of Irish Education: A Study of the Nineteenth Century (London: Longmans, 1965), p. 104.

- 17 F.S.L. Lyons, Famine, p. 90.
- 18 Roland Burke-Savage, A Valiant Dublin Woman (Dublin: Gill and Son, 1940), p. 77.
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- 22 S.V. O Suilleabhain, "Secondary Education," pp. 71-72.
- 23 Ibid., p. 73.
- 24 Archbishop W.J. Walsh, Statement of the Chief Grievances of Irish Catholics in the Matter of Education, Primary, Intermediate and University (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1890), p. 218.
- 25 William Hutch, "Religious Instruction in Intermediate Schools," Irish Ecclesiastical Record, 3 Series, Vol. IV (November 1883), p. 691 and J. Wenham, "Religious Instruction in Colleges and Convent Schools," Irish Ecclesiastical Record, 3 Series, Vol. V (November 1884), p. 693.
- 26 Walsh, W.J., Chief Grievances, p. 219.
- 27 Ibid., p. 223.
- 28 Rev. P. Byrne, "The Irish Intermediate Act, 1878, Before and After," Irish Ecclesiastical Record, 4 Series, Vol. XXVIII (February 1915), p. 135.
- 29 D.H. Akenson, Mirror, pp. 14-17.
- 30 David W. Miller, Church, State and Nation in Ireland 1898-1921 (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1973), p. 14.
- 31 John A. Murphy, "Priests and People in Modern Irish History," Christus Rex, Vol. XXIII, No. 4 (October, 1969), p. 255.
- 32 L. Paul-Dubois, Contemporary Ireland (Dublin: Maunsell and Co., 1908), p. 490.

33 For instance, newspaper editor W.P. Ryan described how the priest waged war on cross-roads dances and in some cases "whip in hand, entered private homes and threatened and punished the inmates." Ryan, The Irish People, 1890, p. 100.

Horace Plunkett related how in some parishes "the Sunday cyclist will observe the strange phenomenon of a normally light-hearted peasantry marshalled in male and female groups along the road, eyeing one another in dull wonderment across the forbidden space through the long summer day." (Plunkett, Horace, Ireland in the New Century. New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1908. p. 116).

³⁴ F.S.L. Lyons, Ireland Since the Famine (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971. Fontana/Collins paperback edition, 4th imp. 1976), p. 119.

³⁵ F.S.L. Lyons, The Irish Parliamentary Party 1890-1910 (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), pp. 141-2.

³⁶ David W. Miller, Church, State and Nation in Ireland 1898-1921 (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1973), p. 59.

³⁷ Patrick J. Walsh, William J. Walsh, Archbishop of Dublin (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1928), pp. 180-1.

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³⁹ Ibid., pp. 41 and 393-4.

⁴⁰ F. Hugh O'Donnell, The Ruin of Education in Ireland (London: David Nutt, 1903), p. 25.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 152.

⁴² Letter to Redmond, May 20th, 1904. Redmond Papers, National Library of Ireland, Ms. 15216(3).

⁴³ Five Years in Ireland 1895-1900 (Dublin: Hodges Figgis, 1901). Priests and People in Ireland (Dublin: Hodges Figgis, 1903). Rome in Ireland (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1904). Catholic Ireland and Protestant Scotland: A Contrast, 1905. Irish Land and Irish Liberty (London: Robert Scott, 1911). The Irish Revolution (London: W. Blackwood and Sons, 1912).

⁴⁴ Michael J.F. McCarthy, Rome in Ireland, p. 43.

⁴⁵ See Five Years in Ireland, p. 289 and Priests and People in Ireland, p. 429.

⁴⁶ Michael J.F. McCarthy, Irish Land and Irish Liberty, pp. 213-4.

⁴⁷ J.H.D. Miller, Clericalised Education in Ireland: A Plea (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1907), p. 1.

- ⁴⁸Plunkett, New Century, pp. 108-9.
- ⁴⁹Paul-Dubois, Contemporary Ireland, p. 502.
- ⁵⁰Rev. M. O'Riordan, Catholicity and Progress in Ireland (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1906).
- ⁵¹Freeman's Journal, 15 August 1899.
- ⁵²Ibid., 26 November 1898.
- ⁵³Daily Express, 12 and 21 January 1899.
- ⁵⁴Freeman's Journal, 28 January 1899.
- ⁵⁵Irish Times, 22 February 1899.
- ⁵⁶Freeman's Journal, 28 January 1899.
- ⁵⁷See correspondence in the Daily Nation, 16 February 1899.
- ⁵⁸A section dealing with this Commission appears in the Molony Report of 1919 (Cmd. 66). See p. 7.
- ⁵⁹Irish Times, 22 May 1900.
- ⁶⁰Molony Report, p. 7.
- ⁶¹The Intermediate Board was expanded from 7 to 12 members in 1900, of whom 6 were Catholics. See S.V. O Suilleabhain, Secondary Education, p. 72, Vol. V of P.J. Corish, ed., A History of Irish Catholicism (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1971).
- ⁶²See, for instance, the letter from 'A Headmaster' to the Irish Catholic, 2 June 1900.
- ⁶³Independent, 11 June 1900.
- ⁶⁴Ibid., 20 July 1900.
- ⁶⁵Ibid., 18 September 1901.
- ⁶⁶David W. Miller, Church, State, p. 81.
- ⁶⁷Starkie's address was later printed in pamphlet form as Recent Reforms in Irish Education, Primary and Secondary with a view to their co-ordination. (Dublin: Blackie and Son, 1902). See p. 30.
- ⁶⁸Ibid., p. 38.
- ⁶⁹A series of articles on this theme in the Leader by the Rev. M. O'Riordan was reprinted as a booklet entitled A Reply to Mr.

Starkie's Attack on the Managers of National Schools. (Dublin: M.H. Giff and Son, 1903.) Starkie had complained of the system as a whole but O'Riordan evidently felt that the administrators of Catholic schools had been the object of particular abuse. In attempting to refute the Resident Commissioner's allegations, he strongly endorsed the denominational principle with disparaging references to what he perceived as the failure of state-sponsored secular schools in England and France.

⁷⁰ Freeman's Journal, 25 and 28 November 1902.

⁷¹ Irish Catholic, 20 December 1902.

⁷² Freeman's Journal, 16 October 1903.

⁷³ An undated letter, around March 1903, from Mr. Terence Clark of the Irish National Teachers' Organization to John Redmond expressed the teachers' anger at the reappropriation. Redmond Papers, Ms. 15, 177.

⁷⁴ Freeman's Journal, 8 March 1904.

⁷⁵ Freeman's Journal, 18 April 1904.

⁷⁶ Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. 133, col. 420 (18 April 1904).

⁷⁷ Ibid., pp. 429-39.

⁷⁸ Freeman's Journal, 22 June 1904.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 23 June 1904.

⁸⁰ Independent, 21 July 1904.

⁸¹ Freeman's Journal, 30 August 1904.

⁸² Ibid., 12 July 1904.

⁸³ Irish Ecclesiastical Record, November 1904.

⁸⁴ Independent, 3 October 1904 and the Freeman's Journal, 24 and 31 October 1904.

⁸⁵ Freeman's Journal, 22 June 1904.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 13 July 1904.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 10 October 1904.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 18 October 1904.

⁸⁹ The Tablet, 11 February 1905 and the Irish News, 14 February 1905.

⁹⁰ Freeman's Journal, 26 June 1905.

⁹¹ Dispatch from the Assistant Under-Secretary to the Chief Secretary, July 11th, 1904. Chief Secretary's Papers 13139 (State Paper Office, Dublin Castle).

⁹² Report of Messrs. F.H. Dale and T.A. Stephens, His Majesty's Inspectors of Schools, Board of Education, on Intermediate Education in Ireland. (Cd. 2546) xxviii. 1904, iv.

⁹³ Ibid., pp. 19-20.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 39.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 49.

⁹⁶ Ibid., pp. 65-73.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 42.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 77.

⁹⁹ Freeman's Journal, 26 June 1905.

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in full by David W. Miller, Church, State, and Nation, pp. 146-8.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 148.

¹⁰² Irish Times, 31 January 1906.

¹⁰³ Hansard, 4th Series, Vol. 152, cols. 417-422 (21 February 1906).

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., col. 437.

¹⁰⁵ Freeman's Journal, 22 January 1906.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 26 February 1906.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 5 March 1906.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 20 March 1906.

- 110 David W. Miller, Church, State, and Nation, pp. 155-9.
- 111 Redmond was at great pains to avoid controversy between the Church and his party over educational matters and even asked newspaper editors not to print letters from M.P.s replying to episcopal criticism. See the letter from T. O'Donnell to Redmond, December 20th, 1906, Redmond Papers, Ms. 15219(1).
- 112 Rev. T.A. Finlay, "The State and Education," New Ireland Review (May 1906).
- 113 Freeman's Journal, 25 June 1906.
- 114 Irish Times, 11 October 1906.
- 115 Denis Gwynn, Redmond, p. 141.
- 116 Leon O'Broin, The Chief Secretary: Augustine Birrell in Ireland (London: Chatto and Windus, 1969), p. 3.
- 117 Denis Gwynn, Redmond, p. 141.
- 118 Hansard, 4th Series, Vol. 169, col. 203 (13 February 1907).
- 119 Leon O Broin, The Chief Secretary, pp. 11-13.
- 120 Denis Gwynn, Redmond, pp. 142-3.
- 121 Hansard, 4th Series, Vol. 174, cols. 119-120 (7 May 1907).
- 122 Irish Catholic, 11 May 1907.
- 123 Ibid., 18 May 1907.
- 124 Freeman's Journal, 13 May 1907.
- 125 Ibid., 22 May 1907.
- 126 Denis Gwynn, Redmond, p. 149.
- 127 E. Strauss, Irish Nationalism and Education (London: Methuen, 1951), pp. 214-5.
- 128 Leon O Broin, The Chief Secretary.

"AN INVIDIOUS DISTINCTION"

Augustine Birrell was no doctrinaire anti-clerical. In fact, his tolerance of Roman Catholicism was quite remarkable for a man of his background and position. Nevertheless, he was prepared to confront the church, if necessary, in order to bring about educational reforms which he deemed essential. One of the most drawn out controversies arising from these efforts was that surrounding his attempts to improve the lot of lay teachers in Catholic secondary schools. These efforts required that an official distinction be made between lay and clerical teachers, a concept unacceptable to the church under the circumstances.

The Question of Inspection

The establishment of the National University of Ireland in 1908 largely satisfied the demands of the hierarchy for a university acceptable to Catholic opinion.¹ Thus, a perennial difficulty between church and state was removed from the political arena. Birrell was the central figure in bringing about this compromise solution and it could be said that it was the premier achievement of his term of office. His concern for educational improvement also extended to the primary and secondary sectors. However, the defeat of the Irish Council Bill dictated caution in these areas. He had to tackle specific problems in the school system rather than the broad issues of national education. The Irish Council Bill had dictated caution in these areas. He had to tackle specific problems in the school system rather than the broad issues of national education. The Irish Council Bill had dictated caution in these areas. He had to tackle specific problems in the school system rather than the broad issues of national education.

of taking office he made the important symbolic gesture of being the first minister of the Crown to attend the annual convention of the Irish National Teachers' Organization (INTO). His promise to do his best for the primary teachers was evidently sincere as he soon secured an additional grant of £114,000 from the Treasury for their salaries.² This was more significant than it first appears for it meant that the Chief Secretary was effectively abandoning the policy introduced by Wyndham of squeezing Irish education financially to make rate aid seem unavoidable.³

The most persistent difficulties in Irish education resided in the secondary sector where the problems associated with examination vs. inspection and the status and remuneration of lay teachers continued to create tensions. As the Dale-Stephens inquiry indicated, the temporary inspectorate established by the Intermediate Board in 1901 had made little impression on the abuses of the payment by results system. Inspection had enabled the Commissioners to offer bonus grants of ten per cent and twenty per cent respectively to schools which were found to be 'satisfactory' or 'highly satisfactory'.⁴ But there had been no question of reducing the results fees payable to schools not in those categories. Nevertheless, the Commissioners favoured making the inspection system permanent and ultimately extending its function to replace that of examination results fees.

Wyndham, however, was unwilling to sanction a permanent inspectorate as it might strengthen the board system of educational

believed that continuing dissatisfaction in some public sectors with the system of results fees would tarnish the Intermediate Board's reputation and hasten the radical overhaul of Irish education which he was planning. The official excuse for not proceeding was that the relative roles of inspection and examination in the distribution of the school grant were not fully worked out by the Board and it was also argued that a permanent inspectorate would reduce considerably the limited funds available for school grants.⁶

Faced with this intransigence from Dublin Castle and with the difficulties of securing suitable temporary inspectors, the Board abandoned inspection altogether in 1904 but continued to appeal for the establishment of a permanent system.⁷ Birrell, whose approach to educational reform differed substantially from that of Wyndham, was more sympathetic to these appeals and in June 1908 he decided to give his consent to a permanent inspectorate.⁸

The permanent inspectors were to function initially in a similar way to their temporary predecessors. Bonus grants would be made to schools declared to be 'satisfactory' or 'highly satisfactory' in their reports. But there were some important differences. In addition to such items as sanitation, sufficiency of staff, and "reasonableness" of school hours, the new rules authorized the inspectors to investigate such matters as boarding arrangements and the qualifications of teachers employed.⁹ This attempt to expand the scope of inspection in line with the recommendations of Fulle and Stephens was unlikely to be welcomed by

church authorities to the very idea of inspection in 1901 had been decidedly unenthusiastic and now that this "vexatious meddling" was to extend to school dormitories and teachers' credentials, clerical ire was bound to be raised.

The Catholic Headmasters' Association, meeting on 15 September 1909, adopted a resolution unequivocally condemning the proposed scheme of inspection.¹⁰ The Association was particularly critical of the suggestion that boarding arrangements be examined and that evidence of degrees and diplomas be required of Catholic teachers. The bishops quickly endorsed this resolution.¹¹ The protest was not in vain and the Intermediate Board soon yielded on the question of inspection of the residential and domestic parts of boarding schools, leaving it to the discretion of the individual headmaster. But it proposed to publish a list of all schools that agreed to such inspection and received good reports. There was no compromise with regard to teachers' qualifications. The Irish Educational Review, the unofficial organ of the Catholic Headmasters' Association, informed the Board that no Catholic school would submit to either kind of inspection.¹²

The attitude of the ecclesiastical authorities to inspection was clear. The payment by results system guaranteed impartiality in the distribution of public funds to all schools -- inspection did not. In addition, inspectors were viewed as agents of the state and the greater access they had to the schools the greater the degree

through strict limitations on the powers of inspection. While the Intermediate Board as constituted was an acceptable body, it was not completely trusted, and the Irish Council Bill had shown that it could easily be replaced. With a government so hostile to religion in power it was essential to retain every vestige of school independence as was possible.

The Intermediate Board, for its part, was determined to press ahead with its plans to replace at least some of its annual examinations with inspection. A permanent inspectorate and a sympathetic Chief Secretary now made this possible. Legislation however, was necessary to bring about such a change but it was not possible to move on the question while the Home Rule Bill pre-occupied the administration. The vigorous protests of the Catholic headmasters were on this occasion of no avail.¹³ The Intermediate Education (Ireland) Bill received its second and third reading in the Commons in July 1913 without opposition.¹⁴ It abolished the preparatory level of examination under the Intermediate Board (for those between 8 and 14 years) and permitted the Board to devote one-sixth of its revenue to that level of schooling based on inspection only. The Report of the Molony Vice-Regal Committee of March 1919 suggested that this change reduced cramming and pressure in the schools as had been anticipated.¹⁵

If inspection thus eliminated some of the problems inherent in the intermediate system it failed to tackle what was perhaps its most glaring abuse -- the conditions of employment of lay teachers. The suggestion in 1909 that the inspectors examine this question was

vehemently repudiated by the Catholic headmasters and their determination to resist could not be doubted. Mr. Birrell was to approach this problem with considerable subtlety.

A Degraded Position

The Intermediate Education Act of 1878, which set up the examination results fees structure for Irish secondary education, made no mention of the role or position of teachers under the system. Teachers' qualifications, conditions of employment and other hallmarks of professional status were ignored. Anyone, in fact, was allowed to teach but it served the financial interests of school managers to engage those who could, at least, prepare students sufficiently for the public examinations to win results fees for their school. Such funds, however, did not directly benefit the teacher as in the system of payment by results which operated in the national schools between 1872 and 1900.¹⁶ They were paid directly to the managers of the privately-owned schools and the secondary teacher's salary depended on what arrangements he could make with his employer. It was rarely generous or even adequate.¹⁷ In comparison with his colleagues in the national schools he was disadvantaged on several counts: the national teacher was the product of a recognized training program and benefited from a classification status, a contract of employment, a salary scale and a pension scheme; the secondary teacher had none of the above.¹⁸ It was not without good reason that W.G. Hubbard described teaching under the Irish intermediate system as

"about the worst mode of obtaining a livelihood open to a man of intelligence and education."¹⁹

If conditions were generally bad, they were certainly worse comparatively for those lay teachers employed in Catholic schools. The Protestant lay teacher at least had some prospect of promotion and many Protestant schools were well endowed and they catered to a generally more prosperous segment of society.²⁰ Catholic secondary schools were virtually all in the hands of religious orders of priests, nuns and brothers and the lay teachers whom they employed could never aspire to principalships.²¹ Nor were they remunerated generously for their efforts and, while this may have been due to a shortage of funds, one gets the distinct impression that the ecclesiastical authorities were far from anxious to make secondary teaching an attractive career for the educated Catholic layman.²² Security of tenure, for instance, or at least some promise of continuity in employment, could have been offered to the layman without affecting the clerical purse, but it was a concept which the church authorities continued to resist. Small wonder, then, that Professor W.K. Sullivan, President of Quenn's College, Cork, in writing to his friend, Lord Emly, some time in the 1870s, could describe the situation as follows:

No words could give you an idea of the degraded position a lay teacher holds in an Irish Catholic school. A London West-end footman is so far above him in relative social standing that he wouldn't for a moment brook the treatment I have known one to receive.²³

Nor did time prove the great ameliator. The Commission which reported on Intermediate Education in 1899 judged the position of

teachers a topic outside the scope of its investigation and the findings of the Dale/Stephens inquiry of a few years later suggested that little improvement had taken place since the 1870s. Dale and Stephens estimated that the average salary for male assistants was £80 and for females £40. The inadequacy of this remuneration was compounded by a complete lack of pensions, recognized training program, contracts of employment and register of qualified personnel.²⁴ The result was a continuous large turnover of lay staff. Many assistant teachers, especially in the Catholic schools, were young and unqualified and had no intention of adopting the profession on a permanent basis.²⁵

If this was a grim picture, an even bleaker one was painted by Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington in 1912 when some moves for reform were already underway. She was particularly concerned with the position of female graduates employed in convent schools and questioned the validity of the £40 average salary which the Dale/Stephens inquiry suggested they received. There were apparently two systems under which convent schools employed their lay teachers. The most widespread of these was the intern system which required the teacher to keep convent hours as if she were a nun herself and devote most of her waking hours to the supervision of her pupils. In return for this graduates received sums ranging from £16 to £40 per annum and presumably there were non-graduates who received less. Employment was usually on a yearly basis but might be terminated at any time. Nor was the lay teacher in a position to request a higher salary --

such a suggestion could result in instant dismissal and replacement by a cheaper employee. The other method of engagement was payment by the hour. Fees could range from 1s-6d to 4s and by this arrangement the lay teacher might earn between £50 and £60 per annum. However, she was always at the mercy of various holidays, feast days and the like which made her income erratic and undependable. As a consequence of these dismal conditions Mrs. Sheehy-Skeffington had found herself helping large numbers of Catholic female graduates find teaching positions in many parts of the English-speaking world.²⁶

Could the teachers fight back against this treatment? Their first problem was simply one of numbers. At no time did lay teachers in Catholic secondary schools constitute more than fifty per cent of the total teaching force.²⁷ Numerical weakness meant that the question of industrial action in any form was virtually ruled out. Organizational weakness compounded these difficulties. The secondary teachers had been part of an ineffective grouping known as the Association of Intermediate and University Teachers in Ireland since 1879. It seems to have accomplished little apart from the publication of a pamphlet entitled Secondary Education in Ireland: A Plea for Reform in 1904.²⁸ It argued for a register of properly qualified teachers, security of tenure, pensions and adequate salaries as basic prerequisites to making teaching a real and attractive profession. The Association was heard of once more in January, 1908 when its Leinster branch wrote to Mr. Birrell with a list of similar demands.²⁹ The Chief Secretary promised to consider their grievances but he saw little immediate prospect of dealing with intermediate

education, preoccupied as he was with the university issue -- he was to introduce his successful University Bill in the Commons on 1 March. The lay teachers reorganized in the following year as the Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland (ASTI) establishing a strong central executive and a journal -- The Irish Journal of Education -- an effective vehicle for their discontents.³⁰ They were undoubtedly influenced in this decision by the example of the national school teachers, whose Irish National Teachers' Organization (INTO) had been in existence since 1868 and which had played such a vital role in their struggle for professional status. In fact, Dale and Stephens had attributed the difference between the positions of the two teaching bodies to the existence of the national teachers' organization.³¹

Agitation

As the first decade of the new century drew to a close the co-incidence of several factors seemed to suggest that some readjustment of the intermediate educational status quo was expedient if not inevitable. A professor of Education had been appointed in Trinity College in 1905 and in the colleges of the National University after its establishment in 1908, creating programs in the theory and practice of education and thereby offering legitimate professional qualifications to aspiring secondary teachers.³² The establishment of the National University also removed a recurring problem from the Irish political scene and left the Chief Secretary's hands free to

grapple with the thorny issue of intermediate education reform. That Mr. Birrell would act on the question was widely believed and his determination in establishing the permanent inspectorate was a cause for optimism among the advocates of reform. Some action was urgently needed as the declining income of the Intermediate Board, combined with increasing enrolments, had created a financial crisis for the schools. The Board's income was derived from two sources: the interest accruing from the million pounds of the Irish Church Surplus Fund which it received in 1878 and the monies derived under Section 3 of the Local Taxation (Customs and Excise) Act, 1890 -- the so-called 'whiskey money.'³³ This whiskey money had, in fact, become the Board's principal source of revenue but it began to decline from a high of £71,400 in 1900 to £49,000 in 1909 owing to a decrease in whiskey consumption in the country. During the same period the number of students enrolled in Irish intermediate schools had risen from 5,332 to 6,972 -- an increase of about 30 per cent.³⁴ What it meant was that less funds were at the disposal of the Board for distribution as results fees, causing retrenchment in the schools and a more precarious existence for their lay employees.

The cause of Irish education was championed in the House of Commons by the Irish members, both Unionist and Nationalist. These two groupings, so uncompromisingly opposed to each other on the question of Home Rule, could nevertheless join forces in complaining year after year that Irish education did not receive its fair share of Imperial funds. The Unionist members were more than willing to support fully the claims of the secondary teachers not only to

adequate remuneration but also to security of tenure and the other trappings of professional status. That such a development would tend to erode the power of the Catholic clergy in the system undoubtedly encouraged them in this campaign.³⁵ The Nationalist members were generally more ambivalent on the question of teachers' rights with the great exception of Mr. Thomas O'Donnell (Kerry West) who spoke out consistently on their behalf and was largely responsible for keeping the issue before the public eye. John Dillon occasionally harnessed his eloquence to the cause but Redmond generally remained silent on the question, in keeping with his policy of avoiding public controversy with the church.

An improvement in the position of Irish secondary education could have been affected by a simple Imperial grant to the Intermediate Board increasing the funds at its disposal as results fees and prizes. This would have benefited the schools and perhaps, indirectly, the teachers but it would have left their status unchanged and their security of employment as elusive as ever. Yet this was the type of measure evidently envisaged by church leaders as they added their voices to those calling for reform of the intermediate system in the summer of 1910. The Joint Committee representing the headmasters of secondary schools of all denominations demanded an extra grant of up to £100,000 per annum for the expressed purpose of improving the lot of lay teachers who were "entitled to suitable salaries and pensions."³⁶ Similar sentiments were expressed in a resolution of the Catholic hierarchy when it met at Maynooth on June 21st. The bishops were of the opinion that were the prevailing

inequality in Treasury grants readjusted in Ireland's favour, the Intermediate Board would have at its disposal sufficient funds to meet "the reasonable demands of the lay teachers in the Secondary Schools of Ireland."³⁷ And a resolution of the Catholic Headmasters' Association dated 5 October was decidedly supportive of the teachers' position:

We are strongly in sympathy with the desire of the Secondary Teachers to raise their status, and to improve and secure, as far as may be, their financial position in the matter of salaries and pensions, but in the present state of intermediate finance, it is impossible for us to do more than express our sympathy in these general terms.³⁸

This sudden concern for their welfare took the teachers somewhat by surprise but it did improve their relations with the management body and some friendly meetings between both sides took place. On closer examination, however, the clerical statements displayed a desire to improve the teachers' lot in purely monetary terms. The ecclesiastical authorities were quite willing to provide pensions and better salaries with the Treasury footing the bill but there was no indication in these statements of sympathy with the teachers' demands for a professional register and security of tenure. In fact, a further statement by the Joint Committee of the headmasters in March 1911 made it perfectly clear that conditions attached to any grant limiting the independence of the schools would not be acceptable.³⁹

As far as the Irish members in the Commons were concerned, the principal thrust of their argument was that while Irish secondary education received no direct grants from the Imperial Treasury,

English schools were benefiting from an annual grant of £630,000 -- a sum which was rapidly increasing. An equivalent sum for Ireland would have been in the region of £75,000. Ireland's claims were further strengthened by the fact that her schools were poorly endowed while those in England were comparatively well off. England's advantages were most apparent in the case of teachers' salaries. While teachers in London and Liverpool started at £150 per year increasing by a £10 increment, their Irish counterparts subsisted on £80 per annum for men and £40 for women.⁴⁰ The comparison, however, was not entirely valid as Irish ratepayers contributed nothing to education and at least on one occasion the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, Mr. Hobhouse, suggested that therein lay the solution to Irish education's financial problems.⁴¹ Nevertheless, the Irish members maintained a steady barrage of complaints against what they perceived as discriminatory treatment. Mr. O'Donnell, who had waged this campaign almost single-handedly from the Nationalist benches in 1910, found ready support from his countrymen in the early months of 1911.⁴² The Irish members were particularly annoyed at the government's decision to convert the Intermediate Board's revenue from the Local Taxation Act of 1890 into a fixed annual grant. The sum decided on was £49,000, an equivalent to the whiskey money earned by the Board in 1908-09. While the government's move prevented any further fall in this revenue the Irish complained that it was still considerably less than the £71,400 which had accrued to the Board from this source in 1900.⁴³ They were also anxious that Ireland's claim to equal education should be from the

Imperial Exchequer should be settled before the financial clauses of the forthcoming Home Rule Bill were finalized.⁴⁴ The Irish members were nevertheless optimistic that Mr. Birrell's influence with the obstinate Treasury would soon yield results. It was simply a question of time.

If church leaders shared this optimism, there is no evidence for it. The clerical authorities had little faith in the good intentions of the Liberal government and when a series of letters from lay teachers was published in the press demanding registration and some form of job security as part of a general reform they felt obliged to clarify their position on these questions. The Rev. Andrew Murphy, secretary of the Catholic Headmasters' Association, writing in his Irish Educational Review in April 1911, referred to the difficulties which registration might involve. While agreeing with the principle of registration he was concerned about the criteria which might be applied -- after all, not all those describing themselves as secondary teachers had equal qualifications as such. The question of tenure for teachers presented an even greater difficulty -- what could a headmaster do in cases where he was less than satisfied with a teacher's performance -- the education of the school must be his first concern.

It was a timely warning to Mr. Birrell. But the Church's

desire to avoid contention on the issue and to find a *modus vivendi* between the rival claims of teachers and headmasters if at all possible. His first move, then, was vague and exploratory. In the Commons on 23 May 1911, he agreed that Irish education was financially disadvantaged and identified the position of the lay secondary teachers as the outstanding abuse. The first priority, in his opinion, was the establishment of some registration procedure for those engaged in secondary teaching. He suggested that perhaps a university degree and some teaching experience might be suitable prerequisites. He announced that the Treasury was prepared to make an unspecified sum available for secondary education to be used for purposes which the Intermediate Board, in co-operation with other interested bodies, would determine. Scholarships to secondary schools was one suggested purpose.⁴⁶

Redmond welcomed this announcement on behalf of the Irish Nationalists and expressed the hope that the sum would approximate the full £80,000 to which Ireland was entitled.⁴⁷ Father Murphy of the CHA was also positive in his response to Birrell's statement but the mention of registration by the Chief Secretary was a cause of concern.⁴⁸ In September he felt obliged to warn of the "great difficulties" registration would involve⁴⁹ and in February 1912 he condescendingly referred to the naivete of the teachers "who appear to be obsessed with the idea that a register is the only thing necessary to complete their happiness."⁵⁰

Over a year was to pass between Birrell's announcement and the implementation of the actual details of the registration scheme.

In the interim the Chief Secretary held meetings with both teachers and headmasters in Dublin to see if they could resolve their differences and more importantly, with the Treasury officials in London.⁵¹ The Treasury was apparently adamant in its insistence that any money it provided be used for the advantage of the lay teachers only and conditions which would ensure this end while not interfering unduly with the independence of the schools were difficult to construct. The delay was not acceptable to some of the Irish Nationalist members, in particular Mr. O'Donnell, and they persistently raised the question in the Commons in the first half of 1912 but to little avail.⁵² The Unionist members were equally anxious to secure the grant but showed their traditional anxiety that it would mean more public money in the hands of the Catholic clergy.⁵³ Their organ, the Irish Times, also made it clear that they wished the grant to benefit the lay teacher who often had to support a family on meagre means and who could not fall back on the vast resources of a religious order in hard times as his clerical counterpart could.⁵⁴

On 31 July 1912, the amount of the grant and the conditions attached were finally revealed by Mr. Birrell in the Commons. The sum made available was £40,000 and it was to be distributed to schools in proportion to their success in the Intermediate Board's examinations. But schools would only be eligible for this extra money by employing a certain ratio of lay assistant teachers under specified conditions. In the case of boys' schools one lay teacher

for every forty pupils enrolled; a similar ratio applied to girls' schools but the minimum salary required was £80. In addition, these lay teachers, both male and female, should be entitled to either six months notice or six months salary in the event of dismissal. A professional register for secondary teachers would also be established.⁵⁵

These were conditions unlikely to be readily acceded to by the Catholic authorities and protest was not slow in coming. Father Murphy of the CHA, with characteristic lack of restraint, attacked the Chief Secretary's right to place conditions on money to which Irish education was entitled. As to the conditions themselves, he argued that the ratio of one lay teacher to every forty students already prevailed in Catholic schools in aggregate, but he rejected the state's right to fix such a ratio. It was a "false Principle" to distinguish between laity and religious and was akin to the policies of M. Combes in France and Senhor Costa in Portugal. He accused Birrell of trying to force religious orders to dismiss their clerical teachers in order to hire laymen. If the principle of a state-fixed ratio were accepted, could this ratio not be changed in future leading ultimately to the complete laicization of schools? Furthermore, was the plan not an additional endowment of Protestant schools which were mainly staffed by lay teachers?⁵⁶

A statement released by the Catholic headmaster and representatives of the convent schools responded that Father Murphy's statement was

In plain words, this demand logically involves the claim to seize the schools built and maintained by the Bishops and Religious Orders for the Catholic people of Ireland, and turn them into Government schools. We are unable to see that such a claim differs from the claim of the governments of France and Portugal to the right of forcible confiscation.⁵⁷

When the Catholic bishops met at Maynooth on October 8th, they also issued a statement protesting the discrimination between lay and clerical teachers in the proposed distribution of Birrell's grant. The idea of a register was also the cause of some apprehension to their Lordships but they were prepared to accept it if they were satisfied as to the persons responsible for it and if due allowance were made "for the special circumstances of our nuns and other religious teachers."⁵⁸

There can be little dispute that church spokesmen over-reacted to the Chief Secretary's announcement. As the Irish Times pointed out, the conditions attached to the grant could in no way be construed as the thin end of the wedge of confiscation. No one was denying the church's right to employ teachers of its own choosing, but the state, in making extra money available from the public coffers, surely had the right to insist on certain conditions. Any school refusing its terms would be in exactly the same position as before. But a real danger existed that this money might be withdrawn if the church did not abandon its opposition.⁵⁹

The lay teachers were undoubtedly disappointed at their employers' reaction to Birrell's proposal, in particular after the hopes raised in 1910. They came to look upon the Chief Secretary as their champion and vigorously repudiated any comparisons between him

and "the spoliators of religious property on the continent."⁶⁰

In a letter to Birrell, Mr. W. Johnston, President of the ASTI, assured him that the majority of members fully supported his scheme in spite of the "impossible attitude" of the Catholic bishops.⁶¹ The teachers were moderate men and, perhaps conscious of their own vulnerability, in another letter to Birrell they announced their willingness to accept three months notice of dismissal provided those three months were included in the school session. While Father Murphy of the CHA noted this flexibility with satisfaction he nonetheless declared that three months notice given no later than 1 June was sufficient.⁶² If the teachers were flexible and anxious for an agreement on the issue they were still unable to accept as sufficient security the declarations of goodwill of the headmasters. One teacher, writing in the Irish Journal of Education of his own dismissal from a religious school, recalled the words of the headmaster on the occasion:

I have learned that I shall probably be able to get one of our members (of the religious order) to do your work. I regret, therefore, that I shall not have a vacancy for you next year. I am sorry for this, because your example both in and out of the College was calculated to produce the best possible effect.⁶³

Such incidents were not uncommon according to the teachers and many were said to dread June and the summer months anticipating pending dismissal. Birrell's scheme was not ideal, but it offered an improvement which they were willing to grasp.

The debate on the Birrell grant, as it became known, was overshadowed in the final months of 1912 by the larger question of the

Government of Ireland Bill, then going through its committee stage. It was the major preoccupation of the Irish members and of the Chief Secretary at this time but it also drew the attention of the hierarchy. Clause 3 of the Bill, which aimed at preventing religious discrimination by the proposed Irish parliament, seemed to suggest that the strict denominationalism of Irish secondary schooling might be unconstitutional under Home Rule. The bishops hired an attorney, James Murnaghan, to advise them on the question and he drew up an amendment which guaranteed the principle of denominational education. It was forwarded to Redmond on 7 December but by that time committee debate was in effect finished. The Bill went through the Commons without Murnaghan's amendment early in 1913 and its ultimate fate is too well known to require repeating here.⁶⁴

Search for a Compromise

The more pressing issue of Irish Home Rule did not, however, allow the Chief Secretary to neglect his campaign to help the lay teachers. On 18 December 1912, he met with representatives of the Catholic Headmasters' Association to determine if some compromise was possible with regard to the conditions of the grant. By this time the headmasters had accepted the principle of a ratio of lay teachers but rejected the one in forty ratio as applied to each school. Birrell invited them to come up with an alternative proposal which would be acceptable to the Treasury and thus was initiated a private correspondence between the Chief Secretary and the Rev. Andrew Murphy

for the headmasters.⁶⁵ That these negotiations were taking place and were delaying the distribution of the money became common knowledge in the early months of 1913. Mr. Birrell, while prepared to admit that he was attempting to overcome objections to the conditions of the grant, nevertheless refused to divulge the identity of the objectors.⁶⁶

The delay and the secrecy surrounding the fate of the grant was a source of irritation to Mr. O'Donnell and the Irish Unionist members in the Commons but their questions only brought non-committal replies.⁶⁷ By April, the pretense was beginning to break down. Early in the month the CHA held a general meeting in Dublin at which the negotiations with the Chief Secretary were discussed but no details were released to the public.⁶⁸ And on the following day Birrell admitted that he was in daily communication with "the representatives of a very important body of headmasters on the subject" and that he hoped soon to reach an agreement.⁶⁹ In commenting on the CHA general meeting, the Unionist Irish Times noted that the Birrell grant was lost to Irish education for the financial year just ended and blamed the intransigence of the Catholic clergy. It condemned the secretiveness surrounding the entire proceedings and the disregard for the public's right to be informed. It was particularly dismayed that the money was also being lost to Protestant schools even though the Protestant headmasters had accepted the conditions of the scheme.⁷⁰

Meanwhile, individual secondary teachers, many protecting their identities under noms de plume, maintained a steady stream of

letters to the newspapers demanding the distribution of the money.⁷¹ At the beginning of May, George A. Watson, Chairman of the ASTI, appealed to the headmasters to state under what conditions they would accept the grant so that the public would be able to assign responsibility should the money be lost.⁷² The teachers were anxious that in the protracted secret negotiations the modest advantages offered to them in the scheme might be whittled away and in the same month the Dublin and Derry branches of their association passed resolutions rejecting beforehand any compromise to Birrell's plan which would deny them some measure of security of tenure.⁷³

By June Mr. Birrell's patience was evidently wearing thin. For months he had responded to the questions of the Irish Unionists and Mr. O'Donnell in the Commons in an evasive, non-committal way. While refusing to disclose the identity of those with whom he was negotiating, he had nevertheless been optimistic that agreement could be reached on the details of his scheme. On 12 June he was prepared to concede that the House should eventually be informed of what had transpired in the secret negotiations.⁷⁴ And on 17 June, when pressed once more by Mr. O'Donnell on the question of the grant, the Chief Secretary finally admitted that for the previous six months he had been in consultation with the Catholic Headmasters' Association but to date no agreement had been reached re the distribution of the £40,000. He proposed to publish in full the correspondence that had transpired between himself and the secretary of the CHA but could not promise that the matter would be fully discussed before the House.⁷⁵

The correspondence between Birrell and the Rev. Andrew Murphy for the CHA showed a certain willingness to compromise on both sides and in the early months of 1913 some form of agreement seemed likely. The headmasters were prepared to accept the register and the basic salaries of £120 for male and £80 for female registered teachers. However, they wished the six months notice of dismissal reduced to three months or three months salary effective at any time of the calendar year. The fixed ratio of one lay teacher for every forty students was unacceptable.⁷⁶ Birrell expressed satisfaction that the questions of the register and basic salaries were no longer in dispute and for his part, he was willing to accept the three months notice of dismissal. He saw, however, a "formidable difference of opinion" on the question of the ratio. The prevailing ratio of lay teachers to pupils in the aggregate of Irish Catholic schools was one in thirty-five and the Chief Secretary hoped for some guarantee that this proportion would not be reduced. He stressed that unless he could show the Treasury that the grant would be used directly to improve the position of the lay teachers, it might be withdrawn. He still held out for a fixed ratio of lay teachers in each school.⁷⁷ Father Murphy's response was not very encouraging. Any demand for a fixed ratio of lay teachers would interfere with the "necessary freedom of the schools" and while the bishops and headmasters had no desire to see the proportion of laymen declining, they could give no guarantees on the question.⁷⁸ Birrell's next offer, a ratio of one lay teacher to 35 students applied to the aggregate of Catholic schools, was slightly more palatable to the

headmasters but proved ultimately unacceptable.⁷⁹ The negotiations broke down, then, on the question of the ratio of lay teachers. The headmasters were willing to accept the principle of a fixed ratio in the final analysis but they suggested a figure of one in sixty based on the aggregate rolls of Catholic schools.⁸⁰ But the ratio of one lay teacher to 60 students entitled to the benefits of the grant (security and salary) was not good enough for Birrell. Under these conditions not all of the money would actually go on teachers' salaries and the lot of many teachers would remain unchanged.⁸¹

The correspondence showed that while Mr. Birrell did not insist on the letter of the original conditions of the grant, he did insist on their spirit. The sole objective of the scheme was to raise the status of the lay secondary teachers. The Chief Secretary had made that point perfectly clear in his original statement in the Commons, and repeated it again and again throughout his correspondence with the Catholic headmasters. ~~It~~ It should be remembered that the promise of this money by Lloyd George on behalf of the Treasury was a conditional promise. The £40,000 would only be made available if Birrell could satisfy the Treasury that its sole object — the raising of the status of the lay teachers — was definitely secured and guaranteed. Otherwise he could not have obtained it at all. The correspondence was abortive because the Catholic headmasters consistently refused, though they expressed their refusal in a variety of ways, direct and implied, to recognize this absolutely essential point. There was throughout, in Mr.

Birrell's words, "a formidable difference of opinion." The headmasters expressed their desire to employ at least as many lay teachers properly qualified as before but "as a matter of principle" they refused a formal guarantee. As nothing short of a formal guarantee would satisfy the Treasury, the negotiations came to an end.

Impasse

The breakdown of the negotiations brought the controversy over the Birrell grant to its height. The bishops and headmasters appeared the villains of the piece and they felt obliged to defend vigorously the stand they had taken. June was the final month of the school year in Ireland and it was customary for bishops to distribute prizes at major secondary schools in their dioceses at that time. The occasion was also regarded as an opportune one in which to speak out on educational issues. In June 1913, the Birrell grant was uppermost in the minds of all. Bishop Coyne of Elphin, speaking at Summerhill College, Sligo, denounced the "invidious distinction between lay and clerical teachers" in the conditions attached to the grant. The suitability of clerical teachers was evident from the fact that Catholic schools in which they were in a majority had consistently shown superiority in open competition with schools in which the lay teacher held sway.⁸² Bishop O'Dwyer of Limerick was equally alarmed at the special position given to laymen in the proposed scheme. Could not the state insist on lay

principalships in future? He preferred to lose the government's "paltry bribe of £40,000 a year" than submit to conditions which would bring about "the ruin of our fine Catholic schools."⁸³ And in a speech which offered a fascinating glimpse at the purposes of the school system from the clerical viewpoint, Bishop Hoare of Ardagh also seemed prepared to do without the money, if necessary:

Is there not at least a danger that our secondary schools, built by priests and people to teach religion as well as to give a polite education, will become State schools? I, for one, am afraid that this is a Grecian gift, and I very much prefer to decline it -- given in this way.⁸⁴

Episcopal rhetoric suggested that state interference with the schools would not be tolerated even at the cost of further impoverishment. But another theme ran through these pronouncements. The church authorities evidently believed that the clergy were eminently more suited to the teaching profession than the laity. This point was made rather bluntly by the Rev. Peter Byrne of Drumcondra who, in letters to the press at the height of the controversy, described the lay teachers as "birds of passage" and "the failures of other professions" who were decidedly inferior to the clergy in their ability to teach.⁸⁵ Adherents to opinions of this nature were unlikely to acquiesce readily in the conditions of the Birrell grant.

George Watson of the ASTI added a touch of moderation to the debate by pointing out in a letter to the press that the grant in no way forced schools to hire laymen in place of clerics. It merely offered extra funds to those schools which maintained a certain proportion of laymen on staff -- but no school was forced to take

part in the scheme. He urged the headmasters to at least allow those institutions already employing laymen to avail of the benefits of the scheme.⁸⁶ This course of action as a solution to the impasse also began to appeal to Mr. Birrell.⁸⁷ Persistent questioning in the Commons by M.P.s O'Donnell and Horner throughout July finally brought an admission from the Chief Secretary that he would put the grant on a Supplementary Estimate early in the following session even if no agreement were reached with the Catholic authorities.⁸⁸ He seemed determined to make the money available for the coming year for the schools willing to avail of it. He nevertheless still hoped for some agreement which would enable the greatest number of schools to benefit and at his suggestion eight representatives of the teachers met with a like number of CHA representatives in July.⁸⁹ A series of regular conferences was agreed to and these dragged on through the autumn but to little effect. The teachers were even prepared to reject the Chief Secretary's scheme if the headmasters would come up with an acceptable alternative. But the clerical managers could only suggest that they "trust to the honour of the headmasters" -- an idea contemptuously dismissed by the teachers.⁹⁰

The breakdown of these negotiations seemed to be the signal for another round of public acrimony. When Bishop O'Dwyer of Limerick disparagingly referred to Mr. Birrell as a "member of a Government that has set itself to ruin denominational education in the schools of England,"⁹¹ he elicited an angry response in the press from Tom O'Donnell M.P., who accused the bishop of playing into the hands of the enemies of Home Rule and of denying Irish education any

prospect of improvement.⁹² His remarks also provoked hostile comment from a representative of the ASTI who indicated his intention of providing the bishop with a formidable list of dismissals without just cause of lay teachers from Catholic schools in Munster during the previous three years.⁹³ Throughout January and February 1914 the campaign of vilification and abuse between supporters and opponents of the clerical position continued in the press. It merely served to polarize the situation and in the case of at least one newspaper, the Independent, so violent and intemperate were the opinions expressed that the editor terminated correspondence on the issue of 17 February.⁹⁴

Implementation

Meanwhile Mr. Birrell went ahead with the introduction of his scheme. He announced on 19 February that a Bill was in preparation which would regulate the application of the £40,000 grant which he hoped would be placed on the July Supplementary Estimates.⁹⁵ The text of the proposed scheme was first issued as a White Paper on 22 April. It contained some modifications on the original conditions as stipulated by the Chief Secretary in 1912 reflecting compromises which arose out of the negotiations with the headmasters. The money was to be distributed to the schools in proportion to the amount of results fees payable to them. The original plan required that the ratio of one lay teacher to forty students be maintained in each individual school, but this was changed to the general body of teachers and students in the entire country. As the question of lay vs. clerical

teachers hardly arose in Protestant schools; for the purposes of the grant schools in the country were divided into two groups:

(a) those under Catholic management, and

(b) those under non-Catholic management.

The six months notice of dismissal proposed in the original scheme was reduced to three, but the basic salary payable to teachers recognized for grant purposes remained the same at £120 for men and £80 for women. A register of intermediate teachers was also provided for. After one year of its operation all teachers in full-time employment for not less than three years would be registered.⁹⁶

The conditions of the grant as outlined in the White Paper were the basis of the Intermediate Education (Ireland) Bill which received its second reading on 12 June 1914. Messrs. Dillon and O'Donnell for the Irish Nationalists and Mr. Mitchell-Thomson for the Unionists were effusive in their praise for the measure.⁹⁷ The

Bill, along with a money resolution allowing distribution of the grant, were passed into law on 5 August.⁹⁸ It should be remembered

that the White Paper was not part of the Bill but was published with it for the information of members. The Bill itself was consequently ambiguously phrased and open to interpretation for reasons which the Chief Secretary explained at the second reading:

It is impossible to include in the Bill itself the rules which are necessary for the division and appropriation of this grant. In educational matters that is never done, either here or elsewhere. In regard to the laymen, people may say that we ought to have inserted in the Bill all the details with respect to teachers which are found in the White Paper. I say that is perfectly impossible. First of all, it would make the Bill irksome and cumbersome, and prevent the

alterations which may be necessary from time to time in working out the proposal. The rules will be subject to the ordinary power of Parliament. They will lie on the table, and may be subject to discussion, and this House may refuse to consent to them in the ordinary way.⁹⁹

The ambiguity in the Intermediate Education Act and the power given to the Lord Lieutenant in drawing up rules for the distribution of the grant opened the door for further compromise, negotiation and delay. The £40,000 was lodged to the account of the Intermediate Board in a Dublin bank, but the Lord Lieutenant, or more accurately, the Irish administration, in drawing up regulations for its distribution, ran into difficulties. By January 1915 the teachers had still not received their money despite clamourings in the press to know the nature of the new problems. After the publication of the White Paper the Irish administration had evidently bowed to pressure from the bishops and headmasters and changed the one in forty ratio to one in sixty. This change prompted the Treasury to reject the first draft of the distribution rules.¹⁰⁰ The next clerical gambit was a one in fifty ratio. This was made clear in a resolution of the Standing Committee of the Irish Bishops adopted on 19 January 1915. The bishops indicated that Catholic schools as a group would avail of their share of the grant to provide the minimum salaries promised to qualified lay teachers under the terms of the scheme. However, as a ratio of one lay teacher to forty students in each separate school was equal to only one in sixty in the aggregate of schools, they were willing to accept instead the condition of one in fifty in the aggregate, a proposal which had recently been submitted to the Treasury. They were ready to make this compromise "in the interest

of a temporary settlement" but they hoped that in future it would be possible to end the discrimination against clerical teachers which the scheme embodied.¹⁰¹

But the Treasury was not willing to entertain this eleventh hour proposal and when the Teachers' Salaries Grant Rules were published early in February, the ratio of one lay teacher in forty students for the aggregates of Catholic and non-Catholic schools was upheld. The other conditions as outlined in the White Paper of April 1914 were also unchanged and it was made clear that school managers refusing information to the Intermediate Board would have their schools excluded from the benefits of the grant.¹⁰² The Catholic clergy's attempt, first to change the ratio to one in sixty and later to one in fifty in secret negotiations with the Dublin administration, were in the end repudiated. Mr. Birrell, with the support of the Treasury and the Intermediate Board stood firm in face of these demands.

And what was the reaction of the church authorities to this development? Predictably enough, when the Standing Committee of the Irish bishops met on 13 April the new rules were condemned, but in language less inflammatory than in the past. The bishops were particularly critical of the insistence on the one in forty ratio which they had tried so hard to change. However, there was a certain resignation to the inevitable in their statement and rather than risk further public criticism and continued bad feeling with the teachers they acknowledged that they were prepared to co-operate with the Catholic headmasters "in making every reasonable effort" to

work the scheme.¹⁰³

The money was first distributed to the schools in March 1915, almost four years after the initial announcement by Mr. Birrell that funds would be made available for the improvement of Irish secondary education. How were the teachers affected? No lay teacher could count for the purposes of the grant unless his name had been enrolled in the new professional register, unless his school gave him a guarantee of three months notice of dismissal, and unless he was receiving a minimum salary of £120 a year in the case of men and £80 in the case of women. Hitherto the lay secondary teacher had enjoyed no professional status. He had been liable to dismissal at a moment's notice. The average salaries before the grant had been estimated at £82 and £48 respectively per annum for male and female teachers. The new rules meant that the teachers' profession would now acquire a recognized status, that some, at least, of its members would be assured of a living wage and that they would be safe from unceremonious dismissal which in the past had left to so many of them the alternatives of the workhouse and the streets.

Yet the Irish Times estimated that only £23,000 of the grant would find its way into the hands of the lay teachers.¹⁰⁴ Under the group system of calculating the ratio of teachers to pupils the large Catholic schools, in hiring a greater proportion of laymen, allowed the smaller schools to also benefit from the grant while not paying their lay teachers the minimum salary. In fact, by June 1917 there were 49 Catholic schools receiving money under the scheme while employing no laymen.¹⁰⁵ However, it was an improvement on what had

been, and, as the Irish Times also pointed out, had the ratio been fixed at one in sixty, the headmasters could have pocketed the entire grant. Figures contained in the Molony Report of a few years later showed that in fact the number of lay teachers employed under the conditions of the Birrell scheme increased rapidly, especially in Catholic schools:¹⁰⁶

Year	Teachers benefiting from conditions of grant				Teachers not benefiting from conditions of grant			
	1915	1916	1917	1918	1915	1916	1917	1918
Catholic Lay Teachers	46	125	164	264	414	329	288	238
Non-Catholic Lay Teachers	238	273	295	370	416	415	420	401
Total	283	398	459	632	830	744	708	639

It was not a total loss for the church. As already has been indicated, a substantial portion of the Birrell grant which accrued to the schools was in excess of the figure they were obliged to pay out in teachers' salaries. Nor were the dire prophecies of a state takeover which had followed the initial announcement of the scheme fulfilled. The three months notice of dismissal which the teachers had grudgingly wrestled from the headmasters offered little in the way of real job security. The hiring of teachers in Catholic schools remained as firmly in clerical hands as before and if getting rid of laymen and laywomen was slightly more cumbersome, it was far from difficult. The vital aspect of clerical control in education -- the power of arbitrating who and who should not instruct the Catholic young -- remained essentially undisturbed.

If it was a victory for the state, it was by no means a major one. The overall chaotic structure of Irish education was stubbornly intact. The British establishment was still convinced of the necessity of drastic surgery. Such a plan of action would soon appear, made palatable, it was hoped, by the promise of extra funding.

Footnotes

¹Norman Atkinson, Irish Education: A History of Educational Institutions (Dublin: Allen Figgis, 1969), pp. 138-143.

²Leon O Broin, The Chief Secretary: Augustine Birrell in Ireland (London: Chatto and Windus, 1969), p. 30.

³T.J. O'Connell, A History of the Irish National Teachers' Organization (Dublin: privately printed circa 1968), p. 161.

⁴State Paper Office, Chief Secretary's Papers, (CSORP, 1914, 1839), Starkie to Hanson (private secretary to Wyndham), 17 July 1902.

⁵Ibid., Wyndham to Intermediate Board, 4 December 1902.

⁶Ibid., Sir A. McDonnell to Intermediate Board, 10 February 1904.

⁷Report of the Intermediate Education Board for Ireland for the Year 1904 (Cd. 2580), H.C. 1905, xxviii.

⁸S.P.O., Chief Secretary's Papers, (CSORP, 1904, 1839), Birrell to Sir A. McDonnell, 13 June 1908.

⁹Report of the Intermediate Education Board for Ireland for the Year 1909 (Cd. 5173), H.C. 1910, xxv.

¹⁰Irish Educational Review, Vol. III, No. 1, (October 1909).

¹¹Irish Educational Review, Vol. III, No. 2, (November 1909).

¹²Irish Educational Review, Vol. III, No. 3, (December 1909).

¹³Irish Educational Review, Vol. VI, No. 8, (May 1913).

¹⁴Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. LV, cols. 1668-1669 (18 July 1913) and col. 2012 (22 July 1913).

¹⁵Report of the Vice-Regal Committee on the Conditions of Service and Remuneration of Teachers in Intermediate Schools and the Distribution of Grants from Public Funds for Intermediate Education in Ireland (Cmd. 66), H.C. 1919, xxi, pp. 23-24.

¹⁶T.J. O'Connell, History of the Irish National Teachers' Organization, pp. 149-151.

¹⁷ Association of Intermediate and University Teachers, Secondary Education in Ireland: A Plea for Reform (Dublin: Allen, 1904), p. 6.

¹⁸ J. Coolahan, "The Position of the Lay Teachers Under the Education Act, 1878," The Secondary Teacher, Vol. VI, Nos. 1 and 2 (Autumn/Winter 1978), p. 11.

¹⁹ W.G. Hubbard, "Intermediate Education in Ireland," Fraser's Magazine, 97 (March 1878), pp. 378-9.

²⁰ Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington, "Irish Secondary Teachers," The Irish Review, Vol. II, No. 20 (October 1912), p. 395.

²¹ Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. XLI, col. 2940 (6 August 1912). In response to a question by Mr. Charles Craig, Mr. Birrell gave the following figures for Catholic intermediate schools having clergy and laymen at their head (for 1911): nuns-72; brothers and monks-75; priests-51; laymen-8; laywomen-2.

²² See, for instance, the comments of Bishop O'Dea of Clonfert quoted in Horace Plunkett, Ireland in the New Century (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1904), p. 109.

²³ National Library of Ireland: Maunsel Ms. 8317.

²⁴ Report of Messrs. F.H. Dale and T.A. Stephens, His Majesty's Inspectors of Schools, Board of Education, on Intermediate Education in Ireland. (Cd. 2546) xxviii. 1905. p. 77.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 43.

²⁶ H. Sheehy-Skeffington, "Secondary Teachers," pp. 395-7.

²⁷ No accurate records were kept of this at the time but in the House of Commons on June 30, 1913, Mr. Birrell gave these approximate figures for laity and clergy as assistant teachers in Irish Catholic intermediate schools, 1909-1910 (Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. 54, cols. 1505-06):

Lay women	nuns	lay men	male religious	total clergy	total laity
75	435	293	371	806	368

These figures do not include school principals which accounted for about 203 clergy and 8 laity, or part-time teachers which accounted for 40 clergy and 209 laity.

²⁸ Association of Intermediate and University Teachers, Secondary Education in Ireland: A Plea for Reform.

²⁹ Freeman's Journal, 29 January 1908.

- ³⁰ J. Coolahan, "Lay Teachers," p. 11.
- ³¹ Report of Dale and Stephens, p. 75.
- ³² J. Coolahan, "Lay Teachers," p. 11.
- ³³ Hansard, 4th Series, Vol. CLXXIII, col. 889 (1 May 1907).
- ³⁴ Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. XXI, cols. 1647-49 (20 February 1911).
- ³⁵ Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. VIII, col. 1139 (27 July 1909).
- ³⁶ Irish Educational Review, Vol. III, No. 10 (July 1910), p. 637.
- ³⁷ Irish Catholic Directory, 1911, p. 504.
- ³⁸ Irish Educational Review, Vol. IV, No. 2 (November 1910), p. 120.
- ³⁹ Freeman's Journal, 28 March 1911.
- ⁴⁰ Speech by Mr. Dillon in the Commons, 20 February, 1911 (Hansard, 4th Series, Vol. XXI, cols. 1647-49). A similar point was made by Mr. Healy on 24 February (cols. 2249-51).
- ⁴¹ Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. XXIII, col. 808 (24 March 1911).
- ⁴² To appreciate the persistent nature of this campaign see Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. XXII, cols. 528, 691, 979, 1135; Vol. XXIII, cols. 799, 1505, 2190; Vol. XXV, col. 2047; Vol. XXVI, cols. 154-174, 195.
- ⁴³ Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. XXI, cols. 1647-1649 (20 February 1911).
- ⁴⁴ "Educational Notes," Irish Educational Review, Vol. IV, No. 7 (April 1911), p. 430.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 432-4.
- ⁴⁶ Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. XXVI, cols. 210-212 (23 May 1911).
- ⁴⁷ Ibid., col. 218.
- ⁴⁸ "Educational Notes," Irish Educational Review, Vol. IV, No. 9 (June 1911), p. 561.
- ⁴⁹ "Educational Notes," Irish Educational Review, Vol. IV, No. 12 (September 1911), pp. 762-5.

⁵⁰"Educational Notes," Irish Educational Review, Vol. V, No. 5 (February, 1912), p. 315.

⁵¹Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. XXXIV, cols. 1527-8 (29 February 1912); and Vol. XL, cols. 468-9 (27 June 1912) — statements by Mr. Birrell.

⁵²Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. XXXIV, col. 1324 (27 February 1912); Vol. XXXIV, col. 1527 (29 February); Vol. XXXVIII, col. 1421 (16 May); Vol. XL, col. 468 (27 June).

⁵³Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. XLI, cols. 2150-1 (31 July 1912).

⁵⁴Irish Times, 5 March 1912.

⁵⁵Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. XLI, cols. 2175-6 (31 July 1912).

⁵⁶"Educational Notes," Irish Educational Review, Vol. V, No. 12 (September 1912), p. 750.

⁵⁷Irish Times, 11 September 1912.

⁵⁸Irish Catholic Directory, 1913, p. 553.

⁵⁹Irish Times, 9 October 1912.

⁶⁰Irish Journal of Education, Vol. III, No. 6 (October 1912), p. 85.

⁶¹Irish Times, 8 November 1912.

⁶²"Educational Notes," Irish Educational Review, Vol. VI, No. 1 (October 1912), p. 34.

⁶³Irish Journal of Education, Vol. III, No. 6 (October 1912), p. 97.

⁶⁴This episode is described in detail by David W. Miller in Church, State and Nation in Ireland, 1898-1921 (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1973), pp. 286-291.

⁶⁵"Educational Notes," Irish Educational Review, Vol. VI, No. 12 (September 1913), p. 742.

⁶⁶Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. XLVIII, col. 727 (11 February 1913).

⁶⁷Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. I, cols. 1815-16 (27 March 1913).

⁶⁸Irish Times, 11 April 1913.

- ⁶⁹Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. LI, cols. 527-9 (3 April 1913).
- ⁷⁰Irish Times, 11 April 1913.
- ⁷¹Independent, 17 February 1913; Irish Times, 24 February 1913; 6 March 1913, for example.
- ⁷²Freeman's Journal, 2 May 1913.
- ⁷³Irish Times, 5 May 1913.
- ⁷⁴Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. LIII, cols. 1761-2 (12 June 1913).
- ⁷⁵Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. LIV, col. 207 (17 June 1913).
- ⁷⁶Irish Educational Review, Vol. VI, No. 10 (July 1913), published the correspondence in full. See Murphy to Birrell, 29 December 1912.
- ⁷⁷Birrell to Murphy, 4 January 1913.
- ⁷⁸Murphy to Birrell, 9 January 1913.
- ⁷⁹Birrell to Murphy, 30 January 1913. See also Murphy to Birrell, 3 March 1913; Murphy to Birrell, 10 April 1913; Birrell to Murphy, 24 April 1913; Murphy to Birrell, 22 May 1913.
- ⁸⁰Murphy to Birrell, 13 June 1913.
- ⁸¹Birrell to Murphy, 19 June 1913.
- ⁸²Speech of 14 June, 1913 quoted in the Irish Catholic Directory, 1914, p. 515.
- ⁸³Independent, 19 June 1913.
- ⁸⁴Freeman's Journal, 25 June 1913.
- ⁸⁵Independent, 18 July 1913.
- ⁸⁶Ibid., 19 June 1913.
- ⁸⁷Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. LV, col. 229 (8 July 1913).
- ⁸⁸Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. LVI, col. 710 (31 July 1913).
- ⁸⁹Irish Times, 14 January 1914.
- ⁹⁰Irish Journal of Education, Vol. IV, No. 1, p. 77.

⁹¹Irish Catholic Directory, 1915, p. 495. (Speech at Luarel Hill Convent, 18 December 1913).

⁹²Freeman's Journal, 22 December 1913.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Independent, 17 February 1914.

⁹⁵Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. LVIII, col. 1106 (19 February 1914).

⁹⁶Irish Times, 24 April 1914 and Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. LXI, col. 896 (22 April 1914).

⁹⁷Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. LXIII, cols. 699-711 (12 June 1914).

⁹⁸Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. LXV, col. 2016 (5 August 1914).

⁹⁹Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. LXIII, cols. 700-701 (12 June 1914).

¹⁰⁰This information was divulged in a letter to the Irish Times on 4 January, 1915 from Thomas Fleming who attributed it to a "reliable source." Fleming was evidently a teacher and he gave figures to show that the one in sixty compromise would result in the entire Birrell grant going into the pockets of the headmasters.

¹⁰¹Irish Times, 20 January 1915.

¹⁰²Freeman's Journal, 5 February 1915.

¹⁰³Irish Times, 14 April 1915.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 6 February 1915.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 9 June 1917.

¹⁰⁶Report of the Vice-Regal Committee on the Conditions and Services of Teachers in Intermediate Schools. (Parliamentary Papers, 1919, xxi Cmd. 66); p. 15.

"IN FOREIGN FETTERS"

The British government's policy of restructuring Irish education, though confined during Birrell's term of office to piecemeal measures, was never really abandoned. The recall of the Chief Secretary in the aftermath of the 1916 Rebellion¹ placed the Irish administration in the hands of less conciliatory men. It opened the door for reforms of a more drastic nature. Predictably enough, the Catholic church was unlikely to acquiesce in changes which threatened her interests. Appeals to national sentiment became increasingly the principal focus of its strategy. British-sponsored reforms would place Irish education "in foreign fetters." On this occasion the government's efforts would be frustrated not only by ecclesiastical obstructionism, but by the rapidly deteriorating security situation.

Familiar Demands

By the early months of 1917 it was widely believed that radical reforms of Irish education would follow the war.² In the first place, England was dissatisfied with her own situation and was determined to ensure a regular supply of competent teachers by "a substantial improvement in the emoluments and prospects of the teaching profession" -- as Mr. H.A.L. Fisher had put it in the Commons. The war would also probably affect Ireland, but, apart from

that, discontent among Irish teachers was rife. Both secondary and primary teachers were still gravely concerned about status and salary and they continued to be paid less than their British counterparts.

Sweeping improvements in English education were announced by Mr. Fisher in the Commons on 19 April 1917.³ The substantial grant of six million pounds made at that time promised to place Irish education at an even greater disadvantage and led to demands for extra Irish funds.⁴ The administrative aspects of the English reform also indicated, to some extent, the direction which Irish reforms (if any) might take. Every type and grade of school was to be co-ordinated, and county authorities were to make complete and progressive local schemes for elementary, technical, commercial, and secondary education. In response to questions from Mr. Ginnell and Sir John Lonsdale, Chief Secretary Duke confided:

I am communicating with the various educational authorities in Ireland in order to formulate proposals for securing in connection with Irish education advantages equivalent to any which may be granted to England.⁵

Implied here and in other statements that he made was that some form of administrative innovation which allowed for greater efficiency and wider popular involvement in the educational system would be required as a condition of additional financial support.

The teachers, the Catholic Clerical Managers' Association and the Catholic Headmasters Association joined in the general agitation for equal treatment of Irish education. The latter two, however, conspicuously avoided the question of administrative reform and concentrated their demands on financial matters alone.

managers, in a resolution adopted on 1 May, urged that teachers' salaries receive first priority in any financial readjustment.⁶ The headmasters, in a letter to Mr. Duke on 20 June, claimed that Irish secondary education was due an additional annual sum of £15,587 in view of the recent increases in Britain.⁷

The announcement of an extra grant of £500,000 for Scottish education on 24 April only intensified the complaints of the Irish MPs, both Nationalist and Unionist, of their country's mistreatment.⁸ Mr. Duke remained evasive on the question, but by mid-June something seemed to be planned.⁹ On 20 July, in the Chief Secretary's speech on the Irish education estimates, an additional sum of £384,000 was made available for the national system, most of it to go on teachers' salaries.¹⁰ This would result in an increase of over twenty per cent for those teachers in Grade III of the salary scale¹¹ and smaller percentage increases for those in the higher categories. Teachers were assigned to these grades on the basis of inspectors' reports on their teaching "efficiency" and the grading system remained a continuing source of irritation to the teachers' organization which argued that it hindered promotion. It was also one of the main reasons why the teachers believed that an investigation of Irish education in toto was long overdue.¹² Nor were they completely satisfied with the Duke salary scheme which, while it offered some improvement, still left them worse off than English and Scottish teachers.¹³

It is probable, however, that the government regarded this as a temporary measure and still a long way from a permanent solution.

formulated. Growing teacher involvement with the Sinn Fein movement seems to have been a concern of the authorities at the time and the salary grant may have been designed to allay the discontent from which this political tendency arose.¹⁴ Certainly Mr. Duke spoke ominously on 20 July of changing the system of management of Irish education and received the support of Unionist members in this regard. William Coote (South Tyrone), for instance, while praising the extra grant, urged the total reform of the primary system. He claimed that clerical management had served its purpose and it was now time to democratize the schools by introducing boards of management representative of the parents and some form of rate aid. He called on Nationalists and Unionists to unite on this question and to end the denominational fragmentation of Irish education.¹⁵ This was a forlorn hope, however, and Mr. Boland for the Nationalists quickly rejected any tampering with the managerial system as likely to cause unnecessary trouble:

The great majority of my fellow Catholics in Ireland desire to see a continuation of that system by which our Catholic children receive dogmatic religious instruction in our schools. We are not going to follow English methods in this connection.¹⁶

Nevertheless, Mr. Dillon favoured a committee of enquiry to investigate the position of teachers and to suggest ways of alleviating their grievances.¹⁷ In this he was merely echoing the demands, then being made, by the national teachers' organization which was becoming increasingly militant regarding its grievances, especially with respect to pay. In fact in the early months of 1918 strike action was contemplated by the INTO but at a meeting in March

its executive promised to forego such tactics should the government appoint a committee on the lines of the Craik Committee in Scotland to examine the whole issue.¹⁸

The secondary teachers were no less discontented and branches of the ASTI all over the country were clamouring for an examination of their position in the intermediate system. They believed the Birrell grant to have been badly administered in that the minimum salaries it prescribed for registered lay teachers had, in fact, become the absolute maximum payable in every case.²⁰ The voting of a supplementary grant of £50,000 for Irish intermediate education on 26 February 1918 did not stifle the unrest. It was to be distributed in two ways: (1) as a capitation grant to recognized schools, and (2) to increase the basic salaries of those teachers recognized under the terms of the Birrell grant by £20 per annum -- but it was still regarded as a half-measure.²¹ When the grant was discussed in the Commons on 4 March, both Nationalist and Unionist members joined forces in pressing the teachers' demand for a committee of inquiry.²²

Two Investigations

Such a course of action was, in fact, already contemplated by the government and in the 4 March debate the Solicitor-General for Ireland confirmed that the Chief Secretary planned investigations of both the primary and secondary systems.²³ But on 4 May Mr. E. Shortt replaced Mr. Duke as Chief Secretary and this change in the Irish administration delayed the establishment of the investigative

bodies.²⁴ By the beginning of August these arrangements were finalized and Mr. Shortt was able to announce the personnel and the terms of reference of the two Vice-Regal Committees appointed.²⁵

Primary education was to come under the scrutiny of a committee chaired by the Catholic peer, Lord Killanin, and representatives of all the major interests involved in the system -- the Catholic church (Bishop O'Donnell of Raphoe agreed to serve), the INTO, the universities and the National Board. Three clerical managers were later co-opted. The Committee was asked to examine the position of primary teachers and to determine how their status might be improved and to consider any other general improvements in primary education that might be effected.²⁶ A similar mandate was given to the committee of inquiry into the intermediate system which met under the chairmanship of the Right Hon. T.F. Molony, Lord Chief Justice of Ireland. The major representative of the Catholic church on this committee was the Reverend Timothy Corcoran, Professor of Education at University College, Dublin.²⁷

Both committees wasted little time in attending to their assigned tasks and reports were issued in the early months of 1919. The Killanin Report, which appeared on 1 March, noted the many defects in Irish primary education -- lack of public interest, poor attendance, inadequate arrangements for heating and cleaning schools, bad sanitation and inferior instructional equipment and supplies. In what was probably the Report's most controversial recommendation, it proposed the establishment of local school committees to deal with these problems. Not only should the

committees be responsible for general maintenance, heating, cleaning and equipping the schools, but they should also have the option of providing school books in necessitous cases and medical and dental treatment of the children. They should have the power of striking a local rate to meet the expenses thus incurred.²⁸

An elaborate salary scale for teachers was proposed with increments and promotion opportunities to encourage professional development. A much larger contribution from the Imperial coffers would be required to bring these proposals to fruition and the committee members noted that since the turn of the century Ireland had not been receiving her fair share of Treasury grants.²⁹

The Report also recommended the amalgamation of small, inefficient schools whenever possible to avoid wastage. This could be done with boys' and girls' schools of close proximity where the average annual attendance was less than thirty-five pupils in each.³⁰

While all seventeen members of the committee signed the Report, there were reservations on the part of some, including two Protestant school managers who felt that the question of the managerial system should not have been left unconsidered. Bishop O'Donnell, it will be noted, did sign the Report, but his reservations were of a different sort. He provided a statement in which he documented the over-taxation of Ireland in order to argue that rate aid would prove an unwarranted burden on a country already contributing more than its share in revenue. He also argued that as the Government of Ireland Act was on the statute book providing for Irish control of education, radical change in the financing of primary education was

untimely and inappropriate.³¹ A statement forwarded to the committee by the Catholic Clerical Managers' Association concurred with the bishop's views. The managers protested against any proposed extra taxation of Ireland and condemned the Goshen ratio, attendance ratios, and population ratios which had been used in the past to deprive Irish education of proper funding. They also condemned any attempt to amalgamate schools.³²

The real fear of rate aid on the part of the ecclesiastical authorities of course was not so much over-taxation but the prospect of lay involvement in school administration which they equated with 'secularization' and 'godless education.' This was evident in Cardinal Logue's reaction to the Killanin Report. In his Lenten Pastoral issued a few days after the Report was presented, he denounced the proposed rate aid as a plot to secularize the schools. He was particularly alarmed that the plot might succeed on that occasion as "we have been left almost completely unrepresented in Parliament." This was a reference to the fact that the Irish Parliamentary Party, the long-time champions of the church's position in education, had been largely repudiated by the Irish electorate in the general election of November 1918. The Sinn Fein candidates, who had swept to victory in that campaign, had absented themselves from Westminster to establish their own illegal assembly, Dail Eireann, in Dublin. Logue was evidently disturbed by this turn of events and felt obliged to warn with characteristic hyperbole of the grave consequences of godless education for Irish children which he believed was a real possibility:

Instead of having their tender minds moulded to habits of piety, innocence and morality, they shall be saturated with the impiety, corruption and materialism of the age. We shall no longer see them, as we do now, thank God, crowding the Communion rails Sunday after Sunday, but rather thronging the courts for juvenile delinquents.³³

Ecclesiastical doubts did not, however, influence the national teachers in their attitude to the Killanin Report. The salaries proposed were a tangible benefit which they could not overlook and their organization's executive quickly expressed its approval of the recommendations.³⁴ And a resolution calling on the Chief Secretary to implement them without delay was adopted unanimously at the INTO annual congress on 22 April.³⁵

The Vice-Regal Committee investigating the intermediate system presented its report on 7 March 1919. It dealt with two major areas of concern: the position of the teachers and the general administration of the system.

There were three questions of paramount importance to the teachers: tenure, salaries and pensions. The Act of 1914 had given lay teachers three months notice of dismissal but they were still liable to lose their positions through no fault of their own, and had no redress. The Committee members felt that absolute fixity of tenure was impossible but that, as a rule, there should be no dismissals during efficiency and good conduct. They recommended that a dismissed teacher should have the right to appeal to some independent tribunal within a month of notice and, in the event of a favourable verdict, should be reinstated. If reinstatement were impossible in such a case, the school should reimburse the teacher

with up to one year's salary.³⁶

The Report noted that salaries remained insufficient to attract quality people to the profession. The biggest problem was lack of increments. Two Departmental Committees, one in Scotland and one in England, had recently recommended the adoption of a salary scale for secondary teachers and a similar recommendation was made for Ireland. The basic salary should be £180 per annum rising by £10 annual increments to £240 and afterwards by £15 increments to £450 with no salary differences between men and women. Basic salaries should be paid by the schools with increments coming from the Central Authority, lest managers be tempted to dispose of more experienced and expensive teachers. Pensions were also recommended on the same lines as those provided for secondary teachers in England and Wales by the School Teachers (Superannuation) Act of 1918.³⁷

On the question of administrative reform, the Report was no less emphatic. The Committee members viewed the Intermediate Board as an inept and obsolete body which had outlived its usefulness. Already the £40,000 made available in 1914 and the £50,000 granted in 1918 were distributed in accordance with rules made by the Lord Lieutenant with the approval of the Treasury while only about £51,000 were distributed under rules made by the Board. Not only was the Board's position anomalous, but its very existence, along with that of the National Board and the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, prevented the co-ordination of educational programs in the country. The Report favoured a single "Central Authority" like the English Board of Education to replace them all.³⁸

Many of the problems associated with the payment by results system were enumerated in the Report — cramming, selection of subjects because of their financial value to the school, fluctuations in grants to individual schools making planning difficult, etc. It noted that the abolition of the results system at the Preparatory level had eliminated much of the undue pressure and it would probably have the same result at other levels. The Report recommended that all existing funds for intermediate education be distributed on a capitation basis independent of examination results. Inspection should become the principal test of efficiency of schools.

Examinations should remain, but in line with the recommendations of the Intermediate Board in its report for 1916, they should be held at two levels only: the Intermediate Certificate for 15-16 year olds, and the Leaving Certificate for 17-18 year olds. Their purpose would be to give some paper qualification to students on leaving school.³⁹

The Committee felt that no real improvement could be made in intermediate education without a major increase in the funds available. Ireland had long been poorly treated with regard to educational finance. If the basis of equivalent grants between England/Wales and Ireland were taken as 80 to 9, Irish intermediate education should receive from voted monies about £190,000 per annum, and the cost of administration, as in Britain, should be borne by the Treasury. Rate aid was also recommended as a means of supplementing Treasury grants. Such a system existed in Britain and it meant that secondary schooling was much better than there

and was available to a greater proportion of people. The Committee did not feel, however, that local control as exercised in Britain would be possible in Ireland as in many places the population was so sparse as to make the returns from a rate negligible; schools serving particular localities were often situated outside them; and central control in a small country like Ireland would probably be more efficient. A flat rate should be levied throughout the country by the Central Authority which would distribute it impartially according to the needs of each area.⁴⁰

Fourteen of the seventeen Committee members signed the majority report although adding certain reservations. Three of them, including Chief Justice Molony, for instance, felt that men teachers should receive higher salaries than women. The Rev. P.J. Marshall of St. Brendan's Seminary, Killarney, who represented the Catholic headmasters, signed the report while objecting to some of its important recommendations. He was particularly opposed to the proposals on tenure for teachers as interfering unnecessarily with the freedom of the headmasters. He also felt that the suggested salaries were unrealistically high and that rate aid was impracticable -- arguments with a familiar ring.⁴¹ Professor Timothy Corcoran, who also signed the majority report, had serious reservations regarding the nature of the appeal tribunal for dismissed teachers. Such a tribunal would only be acceptable to the church if in its composition it was strictly consonant with Catholic principles. The state should have nothing to do with it.

The imposition on Catholic Schools of a State tribunal of appeal would be a denial of their essential principle, and would produce evils incomparably worse than the defects which may call for a remedy.⁴²

And what was this "essential Principle"?

The most essential issue in the Catholic nature of Catholic Schools is full Catholic control of the choice of teachers, and removal of teachers.⁴³

The minority report of R.M. Henry, W.J. Williams and Annie McHugh was prompted by a variety of considerations. While agreeing with most of the majority recommendations, they felt that the lack of real security of tenure for teachers was still a problem and one which was not dealt with adequately. The appellate tribunal would be useless unless it was an independent body and this was not made clear. They were also concerned that the clause attached to the Birrell grant -- i.e. that the aggregate of Catholic schools should employ one lay teacher for every forty pupils, was passed over in silence. Without this, schools might be tempted to replace their laymen with clerics.⁴⁴

The Report of the Molony Vice-Regal Committee raised several issues which the Catholic church authorities would have wished to keep dormant. Their official stand on the question of security of tenure for teachers is best reflected in the comments which Professor Corcoran and the Rev. Marshall added to the Report. Ecclesiastical approval of the proposals on administrative co-ordination and rate aid was equally unlikely to be forthcoming. On 29 April the Standing Committee of the Irish bishops issued a statement in which

a department would make Irish education responsible to British public opinion. This was a clever and timely appeal to the sentiments of Irish nationalism and one that would be made again. The bishops also trotted out the old argument that rate aid would mean an unwarranted tax burden on an already impoverished country.⁴⁵

The secondary teachers were less than satisfied with the Molony Report, as the dissenting minority report of their representatives would suggest. Their continuing concern for security of tenure, did not, however, blind them to the advantages which the Report offered, particularly with regard to salaries and pensions. They began to urge the government to implement the recommendations on these issues without delay -- recommendations which would not require special legislation.⁴⁶

Macpherson's Bill

But the government was determined to tie any salary increases to administrative reform -- a bribe, so to speak, to win teacher support for potentially controversial legislation. Ireland was given a new Chief Secretary in January 1919 -- James Macpherson, a Scottish Presbyterian obviously proud of his country's educational traditions. One of Scottish education's greatest achievements, in his opinion, was that it had "overcome the pitfall of religion" so that no denomination held grievances and he wished to see Irish education on the same footing. He felt that the Irish dwelt too much on the past, in that they had not yet reached the point where

changes would be necessary. In the Commons on 3 April 1919 he announced that legislation would be forthcoming and that the reports of the vice-regal committees would be his guideline. He declared his support for the idea of one central education authority for the country and the idea of local education rates -- although a national one might do. He was careful to point out, however, that he did not favour "Godless education" and that the control of schools would remain with the denominations.⁴⁷

A committee of five experts spent the summer months translating the recommendations of the vice-regal committees into legislation conforming to the Chief-Secretary's design and on 24 November the Macpherson Education Bill received its first reading.⁴⁸

The Bill envisaged the most drastic reform ever attempted of Irish education. It proposed to amalgamate the National and Intermediate Boards and the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction into a single Department of Education for the country. The Chief Secretary would be president of this new body. Its vice-president would be the vice-president of the Department of Agriculture. A third permanent member, to be appointed by the Lord Lieutenant, would presumably be an expert on education. This triumvirate would be assisted by an Advisory Board, of which sixteen members would be nominated by the new Department, and thirty-two appointed by county and borough councils and by managers and teachers' associations.⁴⁹

Authorities for local administrative purposes would be created for every county and county borough. These educational

and an equal number appointed by the Department. The Department would regulate its nominations to ensure that at least one half of the committee members would be managers of primary schools and headmasters of secondary and technical schools.⁵⁰ The committees would be empowered to strike a local rate in support of education. They were to take over the complete operation of the technical schools, but would not interfere with the managerial system in primary or in secondary schools, nor have any role in teacher appointments in them.⁵¹ It should also be noted that Clause 3 of the Bill specifically guaranteed the continuation of denominational teaching in schools.)

One attractive feature of the Bill as far as the secondary teachers were concerned was the proviso that rates for secondary and primary education would be separate. While the primary rate would go for the upkeep of schools, the secondary rate would be for the purposes of teachers' salaries only. In other words, it was making provision for the direct payment of secondary teachers out of public funds for the first time. It will be recalled that the Birrell grant, while ostensibly for teacher salary purposes, was paid directly to the schools and many lay teachers received no benefits whatsoever.

The financial clauses of the Bill allowed for a great improvement on what had hitherto prevailed. Prior to this, any portion of the parliamentary grant to the Irish education boards unexpended at the close of the financial year had to be returned to the Treasury. The Bill proposed a special Irish fund based on the

control.⁵² It meant that Ireland would automatically benefit from any grant increase accruing to Scotland or England. This was particularly attractive in view of the substantial investment in British education which the Fisher Education Act of 1918 had brought about.⁵³

Mr. Macpherson's Bill recognized that education is a single process and proposed to break down some of the artificial barriers which had long plagued the system. It did not attempt to disrupt the denominational character of the schools and yet introduced the thin end of the wedge of popular control. It required the Irish taxpayer to find money for education. That duty involved the privilege of a voice in the control of the system in which his children were educated. Accordingly, the lay ratepayer was to get one third of the elected representatives on the new Department's Advisory Board and would, of course, be represented in the one-third nominated by the Department. He would also elect fifty percent of the members of the committees which would play an important role in the administration of education at the local level. It would be a major step in the democratization of the Irish educational system.

The Bill, of course, faced formidable opposition. In Parliament its progress might be smooth enough as the Irish Nationalists had been reduced to but seven representatives while the Unionists would undoubtedly support it. A greater problem would lie with the Catholic church which would not surrender its autocratic position in the education system without a struggle. Further

in addition to this, the government of Ireland at the time

statute books but the cabinet at that time was already contemplating a Bill to divide Ireland permanently into two parts. Either part, when left to its own devices, might, or might not, adopt Mr. Macpherson's plan of education. Its only hope of success was enactment before either Home Rule or Partition could be brought into effect.

Irish Response

Representatives of the INTO, the ASTI and the Council of Technical Teachers quickly came together to discuss the Bill and gave it cautious approval. No actual salaries for teachers were included in the proposed legislation, but a White Paper was promised before the second reading outlining the government's intentions on the question. The teachers believed that the financial provisions would allow for substantial increases in their remuneration in line with the recommendations of the vice-regal committees. They agreed to send a joint deputation to London to further their claims with the Chief Secretary.⁵⁴

Unionist opinion generally favoured the Bill.⁵⁵ This was expected as the Irish Unionist members had been agitating for educational reform on these lines for years. But Nationalist opinion was clearly unfavourable. The Freeman's Journal was quick to denounce the measure as an "impudent proposal" which would place Irish education under the control of "English bigots at Westminster" and a department which Protestants and agnostics would always dominate.⁵⁶ The colourful hyperbole which tended to characterise

Irish educational controversies once more made its appearance. For one correspondent to the press the Bill was "reeking with pestilential heresies."⁵⁷

Individual bishops refrained from commenting on Macpherson's plan until they could meet as a body to discuss its provisions. A meeting of the episcopal Standing Committee was held on 9 December with Cardinal Logue presiding.⁵⁸ A statement was issued condemning the Bill to the surprise of no one. The bishops made the same appeal to national sentiment which had defeated the Irish Council Bill of 1907. They stated that educational systems must be native growths, not foreign imports. They pointed to the long struggle of the Irish people to establish systems satisfactory to themselves in spite of English opposition:

But now, in defiance of Irish opinion, these semi-independent Irish Boards are to be swept away and replaced by a British Department at the instigation of an intolerant minority in one angle of the country, who demand that others should be taxed with them to do what they, like their poorer neighbours, should long ago have done voluntarily for themselves.

The new department might be manned without either an Irishman or Catholic on it!

The penal days were supposed to have passed. But this is the Department that is to control the books and curriculum of the schools, to regulate the positions and salaries of the teachers, and have its way, perhaps, on the managerial question. It means Irish education in foreign fetters; and at a time when the overtaxation of Ireland has risen higher than ever before, the Irish rate-payer is asked to come to the relief of the Treasury while the British Government is making this experiment on the Irish people.

We, therefore, deem it our imperative duty to condemn in the strongest manner the proposal which purports to set up a Department of Education for Ireland, consisting of the Chief Secretary as President, the Vice-President of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction as Vice-President and a

permanent member, whose name the authors of the Bill have not seen fit to disclose.

The only Department which the vast majority of the Irish people will tolerate is one which shall be set up by its own Parliament, and over which shall preside as Minister of Education a man who shall be acknowledged as the highest educational authority in the land. Until that day comes and that man appears the people of this country will set their faces against the appointment of any Minister or combination of Ministers, who, as foreigners, are absolutely unfit to guide the intellectual destinies of Ireland.⁵⁹

The episcopal statement was unfair on many counts and conveniently ignored the numerous positive features of the Bill and the guarantees for continued religious involvement in education. The condemnation of the proposed department, which might be set up without either an Irishman or Catholic upon it, was particularly unjustified. That the Chief Secretary would be president of the three-man department was hardly contentious as he was often head of the many boards and departments which made up the ramshackle Irish administration. Mr. Barrie, vice-president of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, was named as vice-president -- surely a non-controversial appointment. The difficulty seemed to lie in the question of the permanent member who was not to be named until the Bill became law. This was not an unusual practice at the time and it was generally believed that the permanent administrator would be A.N. Bonaparte Wyse, a member of an old Irish Catholic family and secretary of the National Board.⁶⁰ Despite the open secret that Wyse would be the choice, the bishops made maximum use of this ambiguity in the measure.

In attacking other aspects of the Bill, the hierarchy chose to overlook the guarantees for denominational religious instruction under Clause 3; the continued vesting of school buildings in managers who provided sites; the retention by religious managers of the right to select teachers for employment; and the provisions for appointing managers to the local education committees and to the advisory board. The extra taxation was also a myth. The Bill merely outlined a more efficient means of raising money locally for the maintenance of schools. The bishops also ignored the fact that under the financial provisions, Ireland would receive an extra £350,000 for that current year from Imperial funds. Such considerations, however, were of no consequence to the bishops. They were sufficiently perceptive to see that Macpherson's plan would mean greater lay involvement in the educational process with a concomitant reduction of clerical power. They were unwilling to acquiesce in such a turn of events and all arguments which served their needs, however distorted, were to be employed. The recurrent appeals to national sentiment in their statements is interesting as it showed that the church increasingly viewed the independence movement as its best hope of maintaining its educational privileges.

The deputation of Irish teachers, primary, secondary and technical, which went to London was received by the Chief Secretary on 10 December. He promised substantial increases in their salaries but only on condition that the Education Bill was passed. The new salary scales -- in line with those recommended by the Killanin and Molony committees -- would come into effect on 1 April 1921.

satisfactory Progress of the Bill.⁶¹ The teachers welcomed these financial provisions and had no objections in principle to the administrative innovations which the government hoped to introduce. They certainly could see no justification for the vigorous condemnations of the measure then making their appearance.

Macpherson's tactic of 'no Bill, no money' was a clever and successful move to win the support of the teachers for reform but it was denounced in the nationalist press as "educational blackmail."⁶²

The second reading of the Bill was scheduled for 15 December but the pressure of parliamentary business prevented it from taking place.⁶³ However, Bonar Law promised that a similar measure would be introduced early in the next session.⁶⁴

This meant that the controversy was to continue and open disagreement between the teachers and the ecclesiastical authorities over the question soon came to the fore. Archbishop Gilmartin of Tuam advocated a "fight to the death" against the Bill which threatened to anglicize and secularize the schools⁶⁶ and the Bishop of Limerick denounced it as a bribe to the teachers and urged them as a body to "refuse to touch this unholy thing."⁶⁷ The teachers were not easily intimidated and discouraged, however. Shortly before Christmas the Cork branch of the ASTI issued a statement supporting the concept of the co-ordination of primary, secondary and technical education as provided for in the Bill. The teachers had some reservations about the triumvirate department proposed and would have preferred a Minister of Education responsible to Irish public opinion,

being suggested in some quarters.⁶⁸ Resolutions passed by other branches of the association⁶⁹ and letters to the press from individual members suggested widespread support among the secondary teachers for the Bill. The central executive of the association persisted in defending the measure throughout these months of controversy, though in a fairly low-key manner.⁷⁰

The primary teachers' organization had less doubts about Mr. Macpherson's plan and it played a much more active role in championing the proposed reform than its secondary counterpart. When the bishops took the lead in opposing change a series of letters, mainly from anonymous contributors, appeared in the Irish newspapers supporting the episcopal position but avoiding any detailed analysis of the Bill's provisions. Consequently, Mr. T.J. O'Connell, Secretary of the INTO, was instructed by his executive to respond to these attacks and letters appeared from him in the Independent on 7, 8, and 9 January 1920 in which he was careful to stress the guarantees on religious instruction and on the managerial question which the Chief Secretary had given.⁷¹ These letters merely served to embitter the controversy and a campaign of abuse and vilification against the teachers was waged in press and pulpit by the opponents of the Bill. Members of the INTO executive were accused of treachery to their country⁷² and it was even suggested that Mr. O'Connell and Mr. T.J. Nunan, president of the organization, had been offered positions in the proposed department in return for their support of the Bill.⁷³ Nevertheless, the INTO refused to

press on 12 January, the executive repudiated the accusations of national apostasy, pointing out that the idea of a department was no more British than the system of appointed boards which then prevailed.⁷⁴

It was an emotional issue which precluded rational debate and the ecclesiastical condemnations continued unabated, largely ignoring the arguments put forward by the teachers. Bishop Brownrigg of Ossory, for instance, in a statement which he ordered read in the churches of his diocese, warned that children were not the property of teachers and that they should not be made "the chattels for earning a bribe."⁷⁵

The ecclesiastical attempts to either persuade or intimidate the teachers from their support for the Education Bill ultimately failed. But the church authorities had other tactics to fall back on. The proposed reforms would be unworkable if parents refused to send their children to the schools under the new system or if local authorities failed to establish school committees as was required by the scheme. Consequently, the bishops embarked upon a major political campaign to demonstrate to the government the extent of public hostility to its reforms. If successful, it might discourage the re-introduction of the Macpherson plan or at least result in major modifications of the original blueprint.

Irish local authorities were notoriously conservative and the bishops were justifiably optimistic of winning their support. At the beginning of January Bishop Foley of Kildare and Leighlin, a member of the National Board and chairman of the County Carlow

Committee of Technical Instruction, persuaded the latter body to adopt a resolution condemning the "British Bill" which proposed "to bind in foreign fetters the mind and soul of the Irish nation." The resolution appealed to all public bodies in the country to oppose "this brazen-faced attempt of an alien Parliament to suppress the insuppressible spirit of the Irish race."⁷⁶

The response was not disappointing and very soon local authorities began to register their disapproval of Macpherson's plan.⁷⁷ These voices of protest soon became a deafening roar, especially after an important resolution of the Irish hierarchy on the Education Bill towards the end of January. As February drew to a close most local bodies in what later became the Free State had passed resolutions of condemnation.⁷⁸

The bishops' statement of 27 January was also part of their campaign to win support for their position, especially among the populace at large. Meeting at Maynooth, they endorsed the statement of their standing committee of 9 December 1919 and another statement issued the previous Easter rejecting in anticipation the principle of the Bill. Both statements were to be read in the churches along with the statement issued at that time. The pulpit, with its virtually captive audience, was the most effective political platform of the day. This latest episcopal pronouncement condemned the Education Bill as an attempt by the British government "to grip the minds of the people of Ireland and form it according to its own wishes." The bishops were absolutely determined to resist the bill until the Intermediate and National boards until such time as

Ireland was ruled by her own parliament:

We are convinced that the enactment of the measure would deprive the Bishops and clergy of such control of the schools as is necessary for that religious training of the young which Leo XIII declared to be a chief part in the care of souls.

In any case, should the Government force this Bill on Ireland and set up an educational department controlled by British Ministers, no matter what their religion may be, it will be our duty to issue instructions to Catholic parents in reference to the education of the children in such a deplorable crisis.

Sympathy was expressed in the statement for the plight of the poorly-paid teachers, but the bishops felt that making their just remuneration dependent on passing such a Bill would be "a gross and intolerable abuse of public power."⁷⁹

A Final Attempt

If the bishops hoped that their well publicized opposition to educational reform under British auspices would weaken the government's resolution, they were soon to be disappointed. The king's speech at the opening of Parliament in February put Ireland to the forefront of the government's program for the session. A Home Rule Bill, based on the principle of partition was to be introduced at an early date and with it an Irish Education Bill which would be "compatible" with Home Rule.⁸⁰ The reasoning behind the Education Bill at this late stage was not clear. If the Irish legislature would have control of education, why was such a measure necessary? Assuming it would take the shape of Macpherson's Bill of 1919, would the Irish legislature have to pass it?

church? The government's thinking seemed to be confused.

The announcement in the king's speech that another Education Bill was on the way (presumably with similar provisions as the Bill of 1919) brought further condemnations from the bishops in their Lenten pastorals. Cardinal Logue spoke of another century of struggle "for the preservation in our youth of their religious faith and national spirit."⁸¹ Bishop Browne of Cloyne described the authors of the Bill as "mean, cruel and unjust."⁸² Bishop Mulhern of Dromore spoke of it as sapping the faith and national spirit of present and future generations of children.⁸³ Bishop Hackett of Waterford and Lismore saw it as a plot to secularize the schools.⁸⁴ The most uncharitable accusations of all came from Bishop Fogarty of Killaloe who suggested that it was the soul of Ireland that Mr. Macpherson was after, to seize and strangle it. Since it was not possible to deport the children of a whole nation for moral transformation in a foreign atmosphere, this ingenious statesman coolly proposed to bring the British school to Ireland and force Irish children into it at the point of a bayonet. To deepen the insult, the Irish people would have to finance this moral perversion of their children with their own money.⁸⁵

The bishops evidently believed that the government's plans for educational reform had not been subject to any major revision since December and the Chief Secretary had said nothing in the meantime to persuade them otherwise. When the new Irish Education Bill was introduced by Mr. Macpherson on 24 February, there

suspicions were confirmed. It was virtually identical to the Bill of 1919. Mr. Devlin labelled it "objectionable" but his not unreasonable claim that educational reform should be left to the Irish parliament was rejected by Bonar Law.⁸⁶ There was obvious disappointment and even annoyance in many sectors of Irish society that no important amendments had been made to the Bill since its withdrawal the previous December. The teachers, while supporting the original measure, had sought some changes and the feeling now was that Irish opinion had been completely disregarded. Local government bodies again joined in passing condemnatory resolutions and pledging their support for the bishops' stand.⁸⁷

Effective parliamentary opposition to the Bill was now hopeless⁸⁸ and with the government apparently determined to proceed in spite of public opinion, the hierarchy turned to another weapon in its arsenal. In a letter circulated to the bishops on 27 February, Cardinal Logue announced that divine intervention should now be invoked to avert the "threatened calamity." The Cardinal felt that St. Patrick and other Irish saints would be more than ready to assist and a special Novena in their honour should be proclaimed in all churches. A direct appeal to God himself was also considered necessary and Passion Sunday, "the anniversary of the Consecration of Ireland to the Sacred Heart," was suggested as the most appropriate date. This appeal would take the following form:

In the churches of each parish, wherein facilities exist, there should be Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament for an hour after the last Mass, during which the litany of the saints should be recited, and the following prayer should be said:

On a more earthly level, on the same Passion Sunday, the fathers of families in each parish should be invited to assemble at the church after the devotions to protest against the Bill. Representative bodies throughout the country were also urged to take any measures they deemed necessary to oppose it.⁹⁰

The response to Cardinal Logue's Passion Sunday protest call was considerable. Meetings were held outside churches all over the country and thousands signed petitions against the Bill.⁹¹ The teachers stood by their original support for the measure while cautiously urging amendments, but public opinion in the country, apart from the north-east corner, was firmly behind the bishops in their demand for its withdrawal.

The sudden resignation of Mr. Macpherson at the beginning of March gave new hope to the Bill's opponents.⁹² It has been suggested that he was the victim of a nervous breakdown precipitated by the deteriorating security situation.⁹³ He had come to office determined to effect reform in Irish education and improve teachers' salaries. The Education Bills associated with his name were the result of this determination. But his resignation made the future of his 1920 Bill uncertain. Would the government press on against the odds or avail of this excuse to drop it? The original plan of reforming education before the implementation of Home Rule did appear to have been modified somewhat for the Government of Ireland Bill, which had been introduced in February, received its second reading on 31 March 1921.

A major consideration was the attitude of the Chief Secretary, Sir Hamar Greenwood. Much to episcopal relief, he seemed to have little enthusiasm for the Bill.⁹⁵ And government responses in the Commons to questions regarding its fate were vague and noncommittal at this stage.⁹⁶ The implementation of partition and the maintenance of law and order by now greatly overshadowed educational reform on the government's program for Ireland and the Bill was rapidly becoming an anomaly. Towards the end of May the bishops scotched rumours of some compromise between their position on the Bill and that of the government, eliminating the prospect of progress in this way.⁹⁷ By June it was generally believed that the measure was dead and this opinion was further reinforced when the Treasury offered the primary teachers an 'interim grant' of £350,000, effective 1 July 1920.⁹⁸ It showed that the principle of 'no Bill, no money' was no longer operative. The abandonment of the Bill was also indicated by an extra grant of £50,000 voted for secondary education in August⁹⁹ and the extension of the Burnham salary scale to Irish primary teachers in November.¹⁰⁰ At that stage, of course, British administration had completely broken down in Ireland and in December, a few days before the Government of Ireland Act received royal assent, the Education Bill was quietly dropped without even a second reading.¹⁰¹

The Macpherson Education Bill represented the final, and indeed the most drastic, attempt by the British government to return

non-denominational-democratic model. It was the culmination of a number of efforts in the first two decades of the twentieth century to weaken the power of the Catholic clergy in education. The Irish Council Bill of 1907 and Birrell's plan to give status to the lay secondary teachers were part of this overall policy, but neither envisaged changes so thorough as those incorporated into Macpherson's Bill. That this measure should come from a coalition government is of no great surprise as both Conservatives and Liberals shared a distrust of the Irish Catholic church and both had contemplated educational change of this sort when they had formed majority governments. British political opinion was united on this question. The model of education forged in England in 1870 and refined and modified in 1902 was to be transferred to Ireland if possible.

But Macpherson was too late. His Bill was lost in the confusion which surrounded the Irish struggle for independence and was overshadowed by this larger issue. It is extremely improbable that it would have succeeded anyway, even in more settled times. The determination of the Catholic bishops to resist any dilution of their control of education was a seemingly insurmountable obstacle. Deprived of effective parliamentary support for their position in the aftermath of the 1918 election, they were prepared to resort to petitions, mass rallies, and even an appeal to God in order to oppose any change in the status quo. In the final analysis they were prepared to demand the withdrawal of children from schools in which parents would not have co-operated. In view of this

resistance, the legislation, even had it been enacted, would have been impossible to implement.

The abandonment of the Bill meant that the church could enter into the era of independence with school systems at both primary and secondary levels largely under its control and with a certain confidence that changes would only take place with its consent.

Footnotes

¹R.B. McDowell, The Irish Convention (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), pp. 46-47.

²Irish Times, 17 February 1917.

³Independent, 20 April 1917.

⁴Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. XCII, cols. 1119, 1803, 2067.

⁵Independent, 20 April 1917.

⁶Irish Catholic Directory, 1918, p. 516.

⁷Ibid., p. 525.

⁸Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. XCII, col. 2589; Vol. XCIII, cols. 57, 477, 1328.

⁹Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. XCIV, col. 1973 (21 June 1917).

¹⁰Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. XCVI, cols. 790-794 (20 July 1917).

¹¹This was the lowest grade and the one in which the vast majority of primary teachers found themselves. Number of teachers at maximum salary in each grade on 31 March 1915;

Grade I(1) - 280

Grade I(2) - 650

II - 1,500

III - 3,100

Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. XCVIII, col. 2002 (6 November 1917).

¹²See the comments of Mr. Boland, Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. IC, col. 585 (15 November 1917).

¹³T.J. O'Connell, A History of the Irish National Teachers' Organization, 1868-1968 (Dublin: privately printed circa 1968), p. 288.

¹⁴See the remarks of Mr. Devlin, Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. XCVI, col. 826 (20 July 1917).

¹⁵Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. XCVI, cols. 812-816 (20 July 1917).

¹⁶Ibid., col. 818.

- 17 Ibid., col. 845.
- 18 Freeman's Journal, 4 March 1918.
- 19 Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. CIII, col. 1759 (4 March 1918).
- 20 Freeman's Journal, 5 March 1918.
- 21 Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. CIII, cols. 1781-1782 (4 March 1918).
- 22 Ibid., cols. 1754-1767.
- 23 Freeman's Journal, 5 March 1918.
- 24 Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. CVI, col. 1416.
- 25 Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. CIX, cols. 595 and 1103.
- 26 Report of the Vice-Regal Committee of Inquiry into Primary Education (Ireland), 1918 (Cmd. 60), H.C. 1919, xxi, p. 1. (Noted subsequently as the Killanin Report).
- 27 Freeman's Journal, 7 August 1918.
- 28 Killanin Report, p. 6.
- 29 Ibid., p. 22.
- 30 Ibid., p. 22.
- 31 Ibid., p. 58.
- 32 Ibid., p. 67.
- 33 Freeman's Journal, 3 March 1919.
- 34 Independent, 7 March 1919.
- 35 O'Connell, T.J., INTO, p. 291.
- 36 Report of the Vice-Regal Committee on the Conditions of Service and Remuneration of Teachers in Intermediate Schools and the Distribution of Grants from Public Funds for Intermediate Education in Ireland (Cmd. 66), H.C. 1919, xxi, p. 17. (Subsequently noted as the Molony Report.)
- 37 Ibid., pp. 18-20.
- 38 Ibid., pp. 21-22.

- ³⁹ Ibid., pp. 23-27.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 30-31.
- ⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 36-37.
- ⁴² Ibid., p. 42.
- ⁴³ Ibid., p. 41.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 43-45. McHugh and Williams were secondary teachers while Henry was a college lecturer.
- ⁴⁵ Freeman's Journal, 30 April 1919.
- ⁴⁶ P.J.N. Riordan, "The Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland, 1908-1968: Some Aspects of Its Growth and Development" (M.Ed. Thesis, National University of Ireland, 1975), p. 58.
- ⁴⁷ Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. CXIV, cols. 1534-1535 (3 April 1919).
- ⁴⁸ Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. CXXI, col. 1451.
- ⁴⁹ More specifically, it would have the following composition: 3 government education officials; 16 representatives of county and county borough councils; 9 representatives of the national schools; 5 of the intermediate schools; 2 of the technical schools; and 16 appointees of the Lord Lieutenant -- an inevitable lay majority. D.H. Akenson, A Mirror to Kathleen's Face: Education in Independent Ireland, 1922-1960 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1975), p. 9.
- ⁵⁰ T.J. O'Connell, INTO, p. 295.
- ⁵¹ D.H. Akenson, Mirror, p. 19.
- ⁵² The ratio was calculated by Mr. Goshen, a Chancellor of the Exchequer in the 1880s, at 80, 11, and 9 for England, Scotland and Ireland respectively.
- ⁵³ A Bill to Make Further Provision with respect to Education in Ireland and for purposes connected therewith, H.C. 1919 (214), i.
- ⁵⁴ Freeman's Journal, 1 December 1919.
- ⁵⁵ Irish Times and Northern Whig, 1 December 1919.
- ⁵⁶ Freeman's Journal, 27 November 1919.
- ⁵⁷ Irish Times, 1 December 1919.

- 58 Freeman's Journal, 10 December 1919.
- 59 Irish Ecclesiastical Record, 5th Series, Vol. XIV,
No. 12, pp. 504-507.
- 60 T.J. O'Connell, INTO, p. 293.
- 61 Freeman's Journal, 11 December 1919.
- 62 Ibid.
- 63 Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. CXXIII, col. 411 (17 December
1919).
- 64 Ibid., col. 1016.
- 65 Ibid., col. 1234.
- 66 Evening Telegraph, 24 December 1919.
- 67 Irish Times, 22 December 1919.
- 68 Irish Times, 24 December 1919.
- 69 Evening Telegraph, 5 January 1920.
- 70 Irish School Weekly, LXVIII, 26 (7 February 1920), p. 618.
- 71 T.J. O'Connell, INTO, p. 303.
- 72 Independent, 10 January 1920.
- 73 T.J. O'Connell, INTO, pp. 313-314.
- 74 Ibid., pp. 307-309.
- 75 Evening Telegraph, 13 January 1920.
- 76 Evening Telegraph, 2 January 1920.
- 77 Evening Telegraph, 8 January 1920.
- 78 T.J. O'Connell, INTO, p. 307. See also Independent, 7,
18, 19, 21 February 1920 and Freeman's Journal, 10 and 19 February
1920.
- 79 Irish Catholic Directory, 1921, p. 534.
- 80 Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. CXXV, col. 7 (1 February 1920).

- 81 Irish Catholic Directory, 1921, p. 507.
- 82 Ibid.
- 83 Ibid.
- 84 Ibid.
- 85 Independent, 16 February 1920.
- 86 Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. CXXV, cols. 1504-1505, 1508 (24 February 1920).
- 87 Independent, 1 March 1920.
- 88 See Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. CXXVI, cols. 1504-1505 (11 March 1920), for instance. Devlin's warning that Ireland was opposed to the Bill went unheeded by Macpherson.
- 89 Irish Catholic Directory, 1921, p., 507.
- 90 Ibid.
- 91 Independent, 24 March 1920.
- 92 Freeman's Journal, 6 March 1920.
- 93 D.H. Akenson, Mirror, p. 21..
- 94 Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. CXXVII, col. 1339 (31 March 1920).
- 95 Independent, 1 June 1920.
- 96 Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. CXXX, col. 575 (10 June 1920), for instance.
- 97 Independent, 29 May 1920.
- 98 Freeman's Journal, 21 June 1920.
- 99 Freeman's Journal, 6 August 1920.
- 100 Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. CXXXV, cols. 2393-2394 (9 December 1920).
- 101 Hansard, 5th Series, Vol. CXXXVI, col. 213 (13 December 1920).

TRANSITION

The period between 1918 and 1922 is an exceedingly complex one in Irish history. It was in these years that the aspirations of the Irish nation were translated into the concrete achievement of an independent state. While the British establishment had acknowledged Ireland's right to self government when it passed the Home Rule Act of 1914, the actual powers which were to accrue to the Irish parliament and the extent of its territorial jurisdiction were still subject to modification. In these years, of transition, such details were finally worked out. Obviously, educational developments were overshadowed by these larger considerations. Nevertheless, the new constitutional arrangements demanded that some agreements would also have to be worked out with regard to the future of the educational system. During this time of turmoil and transition such agreements were indeed arrived at.

Sinn Fein Ascendant

The rebellion of Easter week 1916 introduced a new and imponderable element into Irish politics. The work of impatient romantic nationalists who had tired of British procrastination on the question of Home Rule, it had as its seemingly hopeless aim total separation from Britain and the establishment of an independent Republic. The rebellion won little public sympathy initially and was generally, though not universally, condemned by the British people.

But the evident bravery of the rebels against impossible odds and the subsequent execution of their leaders soon swung public opinion in their favour. When those imprisoned for their part in the escapade were released in 1917 they had acquired the status of national heroes. Organized under the banner of Sinn Fein, and led by the enigmatic Eamonn de Valera, they soon became a force of consequence in Irish politics.

It was Sinn Fein which led the campaign against military conscription in the early months of 1918 much to the government's displeasure. During this campaign an effective organization was developed throughout the country making the movement a political party in every sense of the word. But on 18 May the entire Sinn Fein leadership, with the exception of Michael Collins and Cathal Brugha, was arrested on grounds of treasonable conspiracy with the Germans.¹ Such government actions only served to intensify popular support for the movement and its program -- withdrawal from Westminster, the establishment of an Irish assembly in Dublin and an appeal to the post-war peace conference for recognition. It proved irresistible to the electorate in the general election of November 1918. The once invincible Parliamentary Party, led by John Dillon since Redmond's death in March, was reduced from 68 seats to 6. Sinn Fein went from 7 seats (won in by-elections in 1917-18) to a total of 73. There were also 26 Unionists returned from the Irish constituencies. Thirty-four of the new Sinn Fein M.P.s were in jail.² True to their electoral promise the Sinn Fein representatives withdrew from

Westminster and met in Dublin on 21 January 1919 to establish an Irish assembly -- Dail Eireann (the First Dail).

Who were these men who had captured the imagination of the Irish populace, shattered the moderate Home Rule movement, and were now attempting to lead the country on the path of total separation from Britain? What type of society did they envisage when this was accomplished and what role would the church play in education in the new order of things?

Sinn Fein had as its ideological antecedent the Fenian movement of the nineteenth century. Fenianism looked for inspiration to the European romantic nationalism of Mazzini and others which sought to redraw the boundaries of Europe in harmony with the concept of ethnic identity. It drew its support from the dispossessed and the disinherited -- the victims of an oppressive landlordism which was readily identified with British rule. But its principal source of leadership was the Catholic lower middle classes of the towns whose political and social ambitions were frustrated by Ireland's colonial status. It was a movement, then, which transcended class boundaries, in which the working and lower middle classes combined with the simple aim of ending British rule. Militant nationalism was emphasized above all, although it harboured a certain element of social radicalism as exemplified in the role of James Connolly and the Irish Citizen Army in the 1916 Rebellion. But the execution of Connolly and the departure of James Larkin for the U.S. left the radical element without effective leadership and, under the influence

militant national movement was emphasized while social aims were forgotten.³ It is, however, worth noting that Wyndham's Land Act of 1903 effectively ended landlordism, removing perhaps the most glaring cause of social discontent. Not only, then, was social reform deemed less urgent, but a particularly conservative class of peasant proprietors was created with a strong interest in the maintenance of the status quo.

If the militant nationalism which was identified with the name Sinn Fein after 1916 was socially conservative in outlook, it was also peculiarly Catholic. Apart from the Protestant character of the Elizabethan conquest and the subsequent identification of Catholicism with nationalism in the Irish mind,⁴ the men who led the Easter Rebellion and who later inherited the mantle of national leadership were devoutly Catholic in their personal lives. Official episcopal censure of secret societies in no way affected this.⁵ It meant that Dail Eireann was a preponderantly Catholic assembly. There were only two Protestants in the First Dail -- Barton and Blythe -- and a third, Erskine Childers, was elected to the Second Dail.⁶

What was the position of Sinn Fein, at once intensely Catholic and socially conservative, on the question of educational reform? The organization's constitution, adopted at the October 1917 Ard-Fleis (convention), contained a clause promising such reform with the advent of an Irish assembly.⁷ But what shape would this reform take? The extreme nationalist movement had produced one major writer

of national literature -- James Joyce, who was exiled for life.

It is difficult to see how it could be assumed that the

ideas of this martyr for the cause would figure prominently in the educational deliberations of his political and ideological successors.

Undoubtedly the best guide to Pearse's educational philosophy is his penny dreadful, The Murder Machine, which at once attacked the inadequacies of the prevailing school system as he saw them and outlined changes which would be necessary following the achievement of independence. A ~~map~~ of somewhat intemperate opinions and language, his description of the system as "the most grotesque and horrible of the English inventions for the debasement of Ireland" and which had turned the population into slaves and eunuchs, was hardly fair but was certainly consistent with the propaganda campaign of the extreme nationalist movement to which he belonged.⁸

But what exactly was amiss in Irish education and what reforms did Pearse actually envisage? He identified two basic educational ingredients which were lacking in the system: freedom and inspiration. The compulsory programs of the National and Intermediate Boards, and in particular the public examinations of the latter, robbed schools of their freedom and imposed a stultifying conformity on all in complete disregard of the cultural and community backgrounds of students. There was no room for teachers to discover and cultivate the special talents of students. He wanted freedom for each school to shape its own program, freedom for each teacher to bring some of his own personality to his work and freedom for each student "to grow in his own natural way, that is, in God's way."

This concept of personal growth seemed to be the inspiration for

the educational reforms which Pearse proposed in his last will and testament.

play an integral part in all education placed definite constraints on the untrammelled freedom he appeared to advocate.

Religion, in fact, was an important source of the inspiration he felt to be essential in education -- inspiration which would encourage maximum performance from students. But the source of inspiration most lacking in Irish education was that derived from historic tales of heroic self-sacrifice and he was in no doubt as to their educational worth: "A heroic tale is more essentially a factor in education than a proposition of Euclid."¹⁰ What Ireland needed above all was, in his opinion, a revival of the heroic spirit. This he evidently identified with the spirit of Gaelic nationalism and romantic distortions of Irish history in the classroom were legitimate educational practices to this end. History, for Pearse, was not an objective inquiry into the past but a reservoir of propaganda for his own brand of nationalism.

Was there a model of educational practice to which independent Ireland could turn for guidance in drawing up its own system? There was, but for Pearse it was not the 'modern' or 'progressive' model, which he associated with excessive state control.

It should be obvious that the more 'modern' an education is the less 'sound,' for in education 'modernism' is as much a heresy as in religion. In both medievalism were a truer standard.¹¹

Education in the Middle Ages, then, was Pearse's ideal. In a romantic manner he imagined those times to have been filled with inspired teachers and eager students avidly pursuing knowledge of

And education in early Christian Ireland was idealized above all:

It is not merely that the old Irish had a good education system; they had the best and noblest that has ever been known among men.¹²

These idyllic learning environments of long ago contrasted starkly with the modern state system with civil servants for teachers and which led inevitably to "irreligion and anarchy."

Pearse was a strong advocate of the dignity of teaching and deplored the low status and pay which this "so priest-like an office" attracted to itself. He hoped that following the achievement of self-government, teaching, at both primary and secondary levels, would become a national service with adequate remuneration, security of tenure and promotion.¹³ How he envisaged this would be implemented is not clear as he evidently had no wish to turn teachers into servants of the state.

On the question of the re-organization of the power structure of education in the new society, he was less ambivalent. Referring to a statement by Bishop O'Dwyer of Limerick who had warned that the school system would not need recasting by an Irish parliament, he found himself in agreement with the bishop on the question of structural change:

Dr. O'Dwyer was probably concerned for the maintenance of portion of the machinery, valued by him as a Catholic bishop, and not without reason; and I for one was (and am) willing to leave that particular portion untouched, or practically so.¹⁴

As he explained, he would not transfer the managerial powers of the

primary schools to local councils. The one structural

change he deemed essential was the transfer of the

education and the co-ordination of all educational services under a Minister of Education.

Central to Pearse's plan for a new Ireland was the revival of the Gaelic or Irish language and he believed the schools would have a vital role to play in this process. However, in line with his concept of curricular freedom, individual schools should have the option of participating or not.¹⁵

This, then, was the educational will and testament of perhaps the most admired of the national martyrs of the Irish-Ireland/Sinn Fein movement which had seized the helm of the independence crusade in 1918. That it would have a profound influence on the educational decision-making of those who shaped the new Ireland was certainly to be expected.

Was there anything in Pearse's writing to cause alarm in ecclesiastical circles? His concern for teachers' security of tenure and remuneration was perhaps a little disquieting but it was phrased with reassuring ambiguity. Not a single other item presaged even a ripple of contention. His emphasis on the central role of religion in education, his abhorrence of state control, his guarantee on the survival of the managerial system, and his unfettered admiration for the Middle Ages all underlined the harmony of his thought with that of the church. Even his suggestion that a ministry of education replace the National and Intermediate Boards was not a source of difficulty. Church spokesmen had repeatedly made it clear that they opposed such

theorist. For several years before his death he had conducted his own school for Catholic boys in Dublin. In this operation he accepted two of the basic principles of Catholic education: that schools should be sectarian and segregated by sex.

It is evident that there was nothing in the social or educational philosophies espoused by the Sinn Fein movement which would bring it into conflict with the church. One difficulty lay in its advocacy of violence and the membership of many of its leaders in the secret, oath-bound Irish Republican Brotherhood. However, as Sinn Fein's efforts in 1917 and 1918 were directed mainly at winning elections and, as virtually no politically motivated violence occurred in the country during those years, the image of the movement grew increasingly respectable and its acceptability to the church grew accordingly.¹⁶ Sinn Fein had even some advantages over the Parliamentary Party in the church's eyes. The young men associated with it had never had intimate dealings with English non-conformists and were therefore less likely to be infected with their anti-clericalism.¹⁷ Of course Catholic clergymen were no more immune than other Irishmen to the wave of enthusiasm for the Sinn Fein cause which swept the country in the years following the rebellion. But what really won the clergy to the extreme nationalist position was the Sinn Fein leadership of the anti-conscription campaign in the early months of 1918. This was a real and immediate issue in which the new party and the church found common cause.¹⁸ By the general election of that year the majority of the clergy, including many bishops, were

overwhelming victory.¹⁹ This sudden conversion of the clergy is not really surprising in retrospect. Ultrnationalism had a certain appeal to the church in that it encouraged people to look inwards and backwards and thereby away from the increasingly secular/humanist outside world.

The First Dail

It was with the undoubted good will of the majority of the Catholic population, both laity and clergy, that the twenty-seven Sinn Fein M.P.s met in Dublin on 21 January 1919 to establish Dail Eireann. A short provisional constitution was adopted which provided for a Prime Minister and Ministers in charge of Finance, Home Affairs, Foreign Affairs and Defence.²⁰ Ireland's historic claims to sovereignty were stated in ringing rhetoric and the independence of the Republic was proclaimed. But perhaps the most significant act of the assembly was its adoption of the Democratic Program -- an ambitious declaration of social policy. This document was largely the work of Thomas Johnson, a former English trade unionist and now leader of the fledgling Irish Labour Party. The Labour Party did not contest the general election of 1918 in the belief that the national issue was of overriding importance, and that the intrusion of other questions might lead to vote splitting.²¹ It was therefore not represented in the Dail but its leaders, in recognition of their role in the national struggle, were closely consulted on social questions. Johnson's initial draft of the Democratic Program proved far too radical to the Sinn Fein palate and

the document was considerably modified by Sean T. O Ceallaigh before its presentation to the Dail.²² Not all of the socialist content was thus eliminated but some of the more extreme statements on the limitations of the right to private property were expurgated.

The adopted document waxed eloquently on the question of children's rights:

It shall be the first duty of the Government of the Republic to make provision for the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of the children, to ensure that no child shall suffer hunger or cold from lack of food, clothing or shelter, that all shall be provided with the means and facilities requisite for their proper education and training as citizens of a free and Gaelic Ireland.²³

This seemed to delegate to the state substantial responsibilities in the areas of family life and education and was a potential cause of ecclesiastical suspicion. But on this very question the following sentence was deleted by O Ceallaigh from the Johnson draft:

A condition precedent to such education is to encourage by every reasonable means the most capable and sympathetic men to devote their talents to the education of the young.²⁴

This seemed to imply that perhaps "the most capable and sympathetic men" were not engaged in teaching and that the state should play a more active role in training and even employing them. The omission of this sentence was a better indication of the true feelings of Sinn Fein on the question of education than the inclusion of the one which preceded it. The Democratic Program appears to have been adopted by the Dail without too much discussion or critical examination. The entire proceedings lasted less than two hours²⁵ and in the heady atmosphere of the historic occasion excitement prevailed over balanced judgement. It seems probable that had the more

reactionary Sinn Fein leaders such as Griffith or de Valera been present (they were in jail at the time) the resolutions of the First Dail would have been considerably more conservative and moderate in tone.²⁶

With the release of the 'German plot' prisoners in March 1919, Dail Eireann became a far more representative gathering. Fifty-two members were present for the second session of the First Dail on 1 April. De Valera was elected President of the Dail and he chose a cabinet with the following portfolios: Home Affairs, Finance, Defence, Foreign Affairs, Labour, Local Government, Industries and Agriculture.²⁷ In this expanded cabinet no Education portfolio was provided for. But many Dail members were soon on the run from the British authorities and the assembly was driven underground. De Valera left for the U.S. in June to seek financial and political support for the Republic and did not return until December 1920. Meanwhile meetings of the Dail became less frequent as a result of official harassment. There were six sessions in 1919 but only three in 1920 and three in 1921.²⁸ Normal parliamentary work was impossible as these men attempted to establish an alternative administration to that of Dublin Castle. Without regular government offices and with the necessity of meeting in private, it is astonishing that anything was accomplished. What was achieved depended basically on the initiative, imagination and luck of individual members.

The failure by de Valera to appoint a Minister for Education to his cabinet in April 1919 did not mean that the Dail disregarded

education completely. It seems to suggest that educational reform was not prominent on the list of Sinn Fein priorities or that, perhaps, it was regarded as potentially too controversial and best postponed until a more propitious moment. Caution on the question was certainly evident when it was discussed in a meeting of the Dail on 27 October 1919. On that occasion a resolution from the Gaelic League requesting the appointment of a Minister for the Irish language was under consideration. One member suggested that a Minister for Education be appointed instead and it seems that there was some support for this idea. But at Cathal Brugha's instigation a decision on the matter was deferred until de Valera's return from the U.S. He stated that the President of the Dail had had some specific reason for not appointing an Education Minister to his cabinet in April but the nature of this reason remains a mystery. A Ministry for Irish seemed to pose no problem and at Brugha's suggestion Mr. J.J. O'Kelly, the member for Louth and President of the Gaelic League, was appointed as Minister for Irish.²⁹ O'Kelly worked in Messrs. M.H. Gill, Publishers, Dublin where, with the Rev. Timothy Corcoran, he edited the Catholic Bulletin.

It is certainly conceivable that the Dail's hesitancy on the education question was prompted by a desire to avoid involvement in controversies surrounding the British government's intended reform of Irish education. When the Macpherson Education Bill was introduced in November 1919 the bishops would undoubtedly have welcomed some indication from the Sinn Fein ranks of their attitude to such reform. After all, the men in Dail Eireann would one day, in all probability,

constitute the legitimate government of Ireland. The grass-roots of the militant nationalist movement was forthcoming enough on the question. The local government elections of January 1920 brought sweeping victories for Sinn Fein³⁰ and the numerous resolutions of county and borough councils condemning the terms of Macpherson's Bill in February and March represented rank and file Sinn Fein thinking on the question. But what of the national executive? A cabinet meeting of 4 March 1920 decided that the Dail would support the bishops in their opposition to the Chief Secretary's plan.³¹ This position, however, was not made public at the time and whether it was communicated to the bishops or not is unclear. It is worth remembering that during 1920 and 1921 the Sinn Fein cabinet was seeking recognition from the Vatican and from the Irish bishops for the Dail as the legal government of the country. In fact in 1921 W.T. Cosgrave was even prepared to propose that a guarantee be given the Pope that the Dail would not legislate contrary to Catholic teaching in return for recognition and he suggested the establishment of a 'Theological Board' -- a sort of upper house to the Dail which would evaluate legislation in this light.³² De Valera rejected these proposals.

Another educational controversy concerning the church in which the Dail doubtlessly preferred to avoid involvement occurred in 1920. In May of that year, with the Macpherson Bill known to be lost, discontent among lay secondary teachers over salary reached a climax. A strike was called for in the Catholic schools of the Cork area.³³ It was directed at the Catholic headmaster and the

Christian Brothers who insisted that they could not pay their lay employees more. However, there was widespread sympathy for the teachers in the country and the INTO and the Trades Union Congress were particularly supportive. The threat of a general strike ultimately forced the CHA to capitulate and a raise of £75 per annum for registered teachers was agreed to.³⁴ The Christian Brothers resisted for longer but when pickets were placed on their schools and attendance dropped they settled with the teachers on the same terms as the CHA.³⁵ It was a decidedly unpleasant controversy and reflected no great credit on the clerical school authorities. One might have expected that Dail Eireann, which claimed to be the legitimate government of the country, would have exercised some conciliatory role in the crisis, but it remained remarkably silent throughout. The absence of a Dail Ministry for Education enabled it to wash its hands of the problem. By the time such a ministry was established in the latter part of 1921 such divisive issues as the teachers' strike and the Macpherson Bill had long been resolved.

Yet it would be wrong to view the First Dail as an inept or ineffective body. Considering the conditions under which it operated, it accomplished much. A viable alternative system of courts of law was established and local government was taken largely under its rein.³⁶ Though no Education portfolio existed, and though the Dail seemed remarkably reticent in grappling with the educational issues of the day, there were some achievements in this area too. Education, in fact, was regarded as the province of the Department of Irish, or Aireacht na Gaedhilge as it was called. The

Aireacht perceived its function to be the promotion of Irish in the schools and it was particularly concerned that the language be used in those areas of the country where it was still the vernacular in the home. It sent out organizers to seek the co-operation of the bishops in implementing this policy. The bishops were generally agreeable. In three western dioceses containing Irish-speaking areas it was promised that no teachers would be appointed in future without a knowledge of the language. One teacher in Kerry was even dismissed for insufficient fluency in Irish and this indicated to the Aireacht that there was considerable support among the clergy for its language policy. Unlike some Dail departments, the Aireacht did not aim to replace existing institutions but to work within them. It would have been financially impossible to replace the national school system anyway. There were plans, however, to supplement the system. It was intended to found an Irish-speaking primary school in Dublin and eventually others throughout the country. "Trees of Irish planted thus would flourish and spread their foliage until a great wood covered the land."³⁷ This seemed to raise the tantalizing prospect of state enterprise in education. Would these schools be directly under government control? Such a development, it seems, was not considered. A report of the Aireacht dated January 1921 indicated that the Bishop of Waterford had offered to act as patron of any such school in his diocese and this offer was welcomed. The managerial system was not to be interfered with even in the cause of Irish.³⁸

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An Irish Curriculum

While Aireacht na Gaedhilge was thus engaged other educational developments were also afoot, but a look at the changing political scene is first required if we are to view them in their proper context. In May 1921 a general election was held to choose parliaments for Northern and Southern Ireland under the Government of Ireland Act, 1920, which partitioned the country. The occasion was used by Sinn Féin to elect a new Dail -- the Second Dail. It was considerably larger than its predecessor, having 128 seats as allowed for in the Act. The 33 seats which Southern Ireland was given in the Imperial Parliament were irrelevant as they were ignored. With the exception of the four seats assigned to Dublin University, Sinn Féin made a clean sweep of the seats in the southern legislature. Organized labour had decided, as in 1918, not to contest the election in order to give a clear mandate to the independence movement, but thereby denying any opposition in the Dail.³⁹ In July a truce was declared in the guerrilla war against the Imperial armed forces and when the Second Dail met for the first time in August, it did so in settled conditions. De Valera's cabinet on this occasion contained a Minister for Education -- J.J. O'Kelly, whose Aireacht na Gaedhilge disappeared, presumably subsumed under the new portfolio.⁴⁰ The Dail itself had little time for the discussion of educational issues, preoccupied as it was with the negotiations with Britain on the question of Ireland's status. But educational change was being planned elsewhere. The year 1921 saw the establishment of

two major conferences representative of a diversity of interests which aimed to modify the curriculum of both primary and secondary schools, consonant with the ideological and cultural prescriptions of the coming new order.

The neglect of Irish and the overloading of the curriculum with too many obligatory subjects were the main causes of dissatisfaction with the primary syllabus in nationalist opinion. At the INTO Annual Congress of Easter 1920, it was decided to call a conference to frame a program "in accordance with Irish ideals and conditions." The invitation was accepted by Aireacht na Gaedhilge, the General Council of County Councils, the Gaelic League, the National Labour Executive, and the ASTI. The National Program Conference on Primary Instruction, which met for the first time on 6 January 1921, was thus formed. The Reverend Timothy Corcoran, S.J., Professor of Education at University College, Dublin, agreed to act as advisor to the conference.⁴¹

The report of the conference recommended that the existing syllabus be modified in three important ways: that the Irish language be elevated to a pre-eminent position; that the curriculum be pruned of several subjects to allow for the increased attention to Irish; and that a distinctly Irish flavour be given to certain subjects. Irish was not to be taught as just another subject. Whenever possible, it was to be used as a medium of instruction, and particularly so in the infant grades and in the teaching of singing.⁴² This last point was, however, tempered by the proposal that should the majority of parents in a particular school object to the

Irish or English being taught as a compulsory subject, their wishes should be acceded to.⁴³ It is perhaps worth noting that this latter proviso was never accepted by any Irish government following the achievement of independence.

That teachers would have sufficient time to devote to Irish it was proposed to either eliminate entirely or drastically reduce the attention to the following subjects: drawing, elementary science, cookery and laundry, needlework, hygiene and nature study.⁴⁴

A narrow chauvinism was called for in the interpretation of history:

One of the chief aims of the teaching of history should be to develop the best traits of the national character and to inculcate national pride and self-respect. This will not be attained by the cramming of dates and details but rather by showing that the Irish race has fulfilled a great mission in the advancement of civilization and that, on the whole, the Irish nation has amply justified its existence.⁴⁵

While Irish achievements were to be thus elevated, those of the English were to be minimized. Though it was recognized, for instance, that the English language would inevitably be taught in all schools, it was hoped to modify the British influence that would thus arise by providing the higher standards with translations from European authors. "English authors, as such, should have just the limited place due to English literature among all the European literatures."⁴⁶ This was a favourite notion of Professor Corcoran and he was likely instrumental in having this proposal adopted.

The Conference expressed well-warranted alarm at prevailing school attendance figures. The latest of these showed that at 1901,

students enrolled in national schools, the average daily attendance was only 488,031 or 68.9 per cent. To make matters worse, it was well known that about 100,000 children of school age were not even on the rolls. This meant that almost half the number of Irish children of school age were absent from school every day. Attendance in Scotland, by comparison, was over 90 per cent in many places. It was recommended that legislation be introduced at the first opportunity requiring compulsory school attendance for all those between 5 and 14 years.⁴⁷ The report of the Conference was presented to the provisional government in January 1922.⁴⁸

The Dail Commission on Secondary Education was established on the initiative of J.J. O'Kelly, the Minister for Education in the Second Dail. It sat from 24 September 1921 to 7 December 1922 when it presented its recommendations to the Free State Minister for Education, Eoin MacNeill. It was composed of a broader spectrum of interest groups than the conference which considered the primary curriculum. In addition to representatives of the Local Authorities, Labour Executive, Gaelic League, INTO and ASTI who served on that body, there were delegates from the universities, the CHA and the Christian Brothers as well as eighteen individuals of "widespread experience in education."⁴⁹ The Reverend Timothy Corcoran again agreed to serve as advisor. The actual report of the Commission has not apparently survive,⁵⁰ but its activities can be pieced together from papers in the State Paper Office, Dublin Castle, and from

The terms of reference of the Commission were outlined by Mr. Frank Fahy who, on behalf of the Minister for Education, welcomed the members at their first sitting. He informed them that the purpose of their inquiry was to determine how best education could be structured in order to revive the ancient life of Ireland as a Gaelic state, Gaelic in language, and Gaelic and Christian in its ideals. The Commission was to draw up school syllabi in various subject areas with this aim in mind and was also to consider how the whole system of education might be co-ordinated.⁵¹

Some decisions were arrived at during the very first session which seemed to suggest the influence of Pearse's concept of curricular freedom. It was decided, for instance, that teachers and schools be given the greatest possible control over course content; that uniform texts should not be prescribed; that grants should not be tied to examination results; and that in the case of schools in which the majority of parents object to the teaching of either Irish or English as a compulsory subject, their wishes should be complied with.⁵² It was also decided that for the guidance of teachers and schools the Commission should draw up recommended programs of study in each subject. Subcommittees were therefore assigned to prepare syllabi in the following areas: (1) Irish, English and other modern languages; (2) Mathematics, Science, Manual Training and Agriculture; (3) Classics; (4) History and Geography, Economics and Sociology; (5) Art; (6) Music. It was stressed, however, that each school would be free to choose its own program subject to the approval of the Department of Education. The report of the

were lip-service to the more liberal ideas of Patrick Pearse as it was also recommended that state examinations be held annually for those aged 15-16 years -- the age at which the majority left secondary school, and for 18 year olds intending to proceed to university.⁵³ How these examinations could be reconciled with the concept of curricular freedom so loudly proclaimed was not explained.

It was generally agreed that a vocational bias should not prevail in Irish secondary education. The prejudices of the clergy, the teachers and the other minor professions of which the Commission was largely composed ensured that a classical/liberal emphasis would emerge. Joseph O'Connor, a representative of one of the teaching bodies, writing many years later in the Capuchin Annual, recalled how the Reverend Timothy Corcoran had dominated the proceedings through his forceful personality.⁵⁴ Corcoran was responsible, apparently, for imposing a classical/literary stamp on the language sections of the report. In fact, the Reverend Professor's unmistakable prose and dogmatic opinions came out clearly in the recommendations relating to Latin. The claim of Latin to be a principal subject in secondary education was said to be "not open to question" as it was "widely recognized as the best basis of general culture in Western, Central, and Southern Europe, and in all organised secondary curricula," and it had, "when properly taught, the methods once prevalent in Gaelic Ireland -- an unrivalled intrinsic mental value."⁵⁵

But what of Frank Fahy's directive to the Commission that it

This task was apparently assigned to a co-ordinating committee of seven members presided over by Professor Corcoran.⁵⁶ However, it perceived its mandate as the co-ordination of programs and left the question of structural re-organization untouched.⁵⁷

Like the National Program Conference on Primary Instruction, the Commission on Secondary Education confined itself to curricular considerations only. Both bodies saw as their essential function the remoulding of school programs in such a way as to foster the concept of national identity espoused by the Sinn Fein movement. It was important that Irish boys and girls be brought up seeing themselves as part of a unique nation, separate from England and possessed of its own distinctive cultural inheritance. While a particular brand of history would facilitate the growth of this identity, the Irish or Gaelic language was seen as the real key. It was vital that this ancient tongue, which had so rapidly declined in the course of the previous century,⁵⁸ be revived and made once more the vernacular of the country. And it was believed that this revival could only take place through the schools. The search for a unique national identity partly explains the pre-occupation with curricular change.

It seems almost incredible, on the other hand, that official circles were conspicuously silent at this juncture on the question of change in the educational power structure. It is certainly possible that the vehement ecclesiastical opposition to the Macpherson Bill effectively deterred the Dail and its functionaries from moving in this direction, even had they so desired. And, should fall in line with the official policy of the Government, that it was not to be a

secularism was more acceptable to the church than the British-sponsored version, a timely warning was issued by the Central Association of Catholic Clerical Managers on 20 October 1921 when both the Secondary Commission and Primary Conference were conducting their deliberations:

We are confident that an Irish government established by the people for the people, while safeguarding the material interests of the new State, will always recognise and respect the principles which must regulate and govern Catholic education. And in view of the impending changes in Irish education we wish to reassert the great fundamental principle that the only satisfactory system of education for Catholics is one wherein Catholic children are taught in Catholic schools by Catholic teachers under Catholic control.⁵⁹

This was an emphatic reiteration of clerical claims on educational power and was put forward as the thinly-disguised price of support for the coming order.

The New Constitution

The new order would need all the support it could get, for the Irish state, conceived in violence, was to be born in an atmosphere of fraternal strife. The difficulty arose out of the Treaty signed by a Dail delegation with the British government on 6 December 1921. The terms of the document, which provided for an Irish Free State excluding the six counties of Northern Ireland, and required an oath of allegiance to the English monarch by members of the Irish legislature, proved unacceptable to the doctrinaire republicans in the Dail. De Valera, who was by no means the most intransigent, led this opposition to the agreement but when he found

that he lacked majority support he resigned on 7 January 1922 and withdrew from the assembly with his supporters, among whom was J.J. O'Kelly.⁶⁰ A provisional government was then established under Michael Collins charged with the task of transferring power from the British authorities. Most services, including education, were transferred in April.

But the provisional government was not recognized by de Valera, constituted as it was under the terms of the Treaty, and so it was felt necessary to maintain in existence a pro-Treaty Dail Eireann ministry under Griffith in the hope of reconciliation.⁶¹ Thus, the country found itself with two governments and two Ministers for Education -- Fionan Lynch for the provisional government and Michael Hayes for that of the Dail.⁶² How responsibilities were divided among them is not clear but, in any case, prevailing circumstances did not permit any real educational initiatives. Between January and June of 1922 Collins was busy drafting a constitution for the Free State which would be acceptable to the British government and yet satisfy the moderate anti-Treatyites such as de Valera and thus, hopefully, avert civil war.⁶³ Such a magic formula proved ultimately elusive. Yet another general election in June returned a pro-Treaty Sinn Fein majority and at the end of the month civil war between those who opposed and accepted the Treaty broke out.⁶⁴ The charade of the two administrations was brought to an end. And destiny soon dispatched those who had led them. Early in August Griffith died and ten days later Collins was killed in an ambush.⁶⁵ When the provisional government elected in June met for the first time in September the

colourless W.T. Cosgrave was at the helm and his Minister for Education was the well-known Gaelic scholar Eoin MacNeill. The immediate task of the new assembly was to discuss and amend if necessary the draft of the Free State constitution drawn up by Collins and his committee of legal experts earlier in the year. These deliberations were completed within a few months and on 6 December the Irish Free State came into being.⁶⁶

The debate on the Free State constitution provided an interesting guide to the educational intentions and attitudes of Cosgrave's administration. This was particularly so in Eoin MacNeill's responses to Labour Party amendments which proposed to commit the state to an active and dynamic role in education. The general election of June 1922 was the first contested by Irish Labour and the party succeeded in returning 17 members who formed the nucleus of an opposition.⁶⁷ Among those elected were the party leader, Thomas Johnson, who had been responsible for the initial draft of the Democratic Program, and T.J. O'Connell, general secretary of the INTO.⁶⁸ The latter had been an active champion of teachers' rights for some time and had won a special notoreity in his support for Macpherson's Education Bill. The INTO and the ASTI had for several years been affiliated with the Irish Labour movement and it was not surprising that O'Connell entered the Dail on the Labour ticket. The alliance with the teachers and the commitment to educational reform was underlined at the Trades Congress in August 1922, even before the Dail met. The agenda contained a resolution from the Limerick Trades Council advocating compulsory education for

all children up to the age of sixteen years, and full secondary education for all. The INTO added an addendum to this urging the provision by the state of better school buildings and equipment, and proper provision for the cleaning, lighting and heating of all schools.⁶⁹ This resolution, which was passed unanimously, suggested that both the teachers and the Labour movement envisaged a much more active state role in education than had hitherto prevailed. The ideas underlying the resolution formed the basis of the amendments to the constitution proposed by the Labour members and of their agitation for educational reform in the decades that followed.

The draft of the Free State constitution contained few references to education. Article 10 stated: "All children of the Irish Free State/Saorstát Éireann have the right to free elementary education."⁷⁰ When the document was debated in the Dáil in September 1922, T.J. O'Connell attempted to amplify this statement with an amendment which would have obliged the state to guarantee certain rights to children -- the right to food, clothing, shelter and education. Schooling should be free and compulsory at the primary level and the state should provide that "secondary and higher educational institutions shall be readily accessible in the case of persons with small means." Even more dangerously radical was: "All schools and educational establishments, public and private, shall be controlled by the State, within limits to be determined by law." These proposals were rejected by the government on the grounds that a constitution should only deal with fundamental rights which should be simply stated.⁷¹ The amendment did not go unnoticed in

ecclesiastical circles and the Irish Catholic quickly denounced it as contrary to the teachings of the Church:

--- to us it is inconceivable that the present or any future Irish Parliament should be found ready to acquiesce in principles of education which are essentially repugnant to the Christian doctrine.⁷²

Further attempts by the Labour members to expand the educational provisions of the constitution proved equally futile and as the debate continued the reluctance of the government to commit itself to an active role in such matters became increasingly evident. The key figure here was the Education Minister, Eoin MacNeill whose limited concept of the state almost bordered on the anarchistic. MacNeill opposed any reference to compulsory education in the constitution as the right to educate belonged to parents, not to the state. He was prepared to allow parents to educate their children at home if they so wished. Nor would he accept restrictions on the right of individuals to open schools. It was better to allow people to go wrong sometimes than to compel them always to be right.⁷³

In the final analysis the constitution merely asserted the right of all citizens to a free elementary schooling. It also protected the right of children to attend any school in receipt of public funds without the necessity of attending the religious instruction provided.⁷⁴ These were simple pronouncements and in keeping with the general tone of the document as a whole. While they certainly did not preclude an active and dynamic role for the state in education, neither did they require it. Judging by the statements of Eoin MacNeill, such a role was not contemplated.

It was the moderate wing of Sinn Fein, then, which found itself in control of the independent Irish state which emerged in 1922.⁷⁵ How did the Catholic church respond to the momentous events of that year and how did it view the new regime? The church has generally tended towards the more moderate side in politics and has been a perceptive observer of swings in public opinion. Its reluctance to support lost political causes and its ability to adjust to new circumstances probably explains to some extent its unprecedented longevity as an institution. The bishops and the Catholic press came out in support of the Treaty with Britain even before the Dail approved the agreement and in doing so, once more accurately gauged the political pulse of the country.⁷⁶ In April 1922 the hierarchy criticized the anti-Treaty officers for setting up their own command, and in October, when the civil war had deteriorated into a messy affair of guerrilla raids, the bishops denounced the Republicans as murderers.⁷⁷ At the same time the Catholic press was pronouncing its satisfaction with the provisional government and urging the public to give it every support.⁷⁸ This is not to suggest that there was anything anti-Catholic or even anti-clerical about the opponents of the treaty. De Valera and his supporters were no less loyal to the church than those who accepted the treaty and they were doubtlessly disappointed at the partisan stance of the bishops.⁷⁹ It was by placing themselves outside of the law that they had attracted ecclesiastical disapproval, not because of any fundamental ideological differences. When the Irish Free State was officially established in December 1922 it received the immediate support of the

hierarchy.⁸⁰

1918-1922 was a period of trauma and upheaval in Irish political history. It witnessed the collapse of the Home Rule movement which sought a modest measure of self-government for Ireland within the British imperial fold. It also saw the rise to political pre-eminence of Sinn Fein — an extreme nationalist grouping whose aim was total separation from Britain and the establishment of an independent republic. The Irish Free State, which came into being in December 1922, represented the crowning achievement of the Sinn Fein revolution. While it fell short of the republic, it nevertheless constituted a significant advance in terms of autonomy on Home Rule. No Home Rule Bill had allowed for Irish control of defence or of customs and excise and yet the Free State was given jurisdiction in these areas. Perhaps the greatest flaw in the treaty which established the new state, from the Irish point of view, was that the Protestant-dominated six counties of Northern Ireland were excluded from its terms. It represented, in fact, a compromise between Irish claims to complete self-determination and the face-saving necessitated by British imperial pride.

Times of revolutionary turmoil are often times of radical social transformation. Old institutions, representing the conventions and protocols of the previous order, are frequently swept away. But no such housecleaning appears to have accompanied the Sinn Fein revolution, if indeed the term 'revolution' is even appropriate.⁸¹ This absence of change was conspicuously evident in the area of education. Nothing which had occurred in those years of upheaval

suggested that the power of the Catholic church in the school system would be diminished by an Irish government. The simple ideology of the Sinn Fein movement was the principal reason for this. Sinn Fein had two basic aims: the termination of British rule in Ireland and the creation of a unique Irish identity through the revival of the Irish language. Social aims, to the extent that they were considered at all, paled in comparison to these twin objectives. It was an ideology which the church could readily accommodate itself to. Clerical support for Sinn Fein in the general election of 1918 showed a timely conversion to the political philosophy of the movement, and the co-operation of bishops and school managers with Aireacht na Gaedhilge in 1920 and 1921 was an excellent omen of good will on the cultural question. A mutually profitable alliance thus developed. Representatives of Sinn Fein and of the church found no difficulty in working together on the commissions which rewrote the primary and secondary school curricula in 1921 and 1922. The clergy were satisfied in that changes in the power structure were not under consideration and willingly supported the curricular emphasis on the Irish language and things Irish which the Sinn Fein philosophy prescribed.

If the church backed the winning horse in the general election of 1918, she did so once more in the controversy over the treaty with Britain. It was perhaps less of a gamble than it might appear at first for, when the bishops spoke out on the side of the agreement in January 1922, the tide of public opinion was already running in its favour. At any rate, it forged an alliance between the church and the

moderate wing of Sinn Fein which was only too willing to accept such support as the country sank into civil war. Under the circumstances, it was unlikely that those who framed the Free State constitution would place anything in that document which appeared to undermine the role which the church allocated to herself in education. As the new state emerged clerical power in the school system seemed as secure as ever. In fact, it appeared that the achievement of independence had shielded it from the dangers of the secularist/democratic educational tradition as personified in the Macpherson Bill.

Footnotes

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⁴John A. Murphy, "Identity Change in the Republic of Ireland," Etudes Irlandaises, No. 1, Nouvelle Serie (December 1976), p. 145.

⁵John Newsinger, "'I Bring Not Peace But a Sword': The Religious Motif in the Irish War of Independence," Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. XIII, No. 3 (July 1978), p. 609.

⁶J.L. McCracken, Representative Government in Ireland: A Study of Dail Eireann, 1919-1948 (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 31.

⁷Dorothy Macardle, The Irish Republic (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1965), p. 915.

⁸Patrick H. Pearse, The Murder Machine (Dublin: Whelan and Son, 1916), p. 3.

⁹Ibid., p. 12.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 16.

¹¹Ibid., p. 8.

¹²Ibid., p. 10.

¹³Ibid., p. 19.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 19.

¹⁶David W. Miller, Church, State and Nation in Ireland, 1898-1921 (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1973), p. 357.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 348.

¹⁸E. Rumpf, and A.C. Hepburn, Nationalism and Socialism in Twentieth Century Ireland (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1970), p. 11.

- ¹⁹David W. Miller, Church, State, p. 424.
- ²⁰F.S.L. Lyons, Famine, p. 400.
- ²¹Patrick Lynch, "Social Revolution," p. 49.
- ²²Ibid., p. 46.
- ²³Ibid., p. 46.
- ²⁴David W. Miller, Church, State, p. 427.
- ²⁵Patrick Lynch, "Social Revolution," p. 48.
- ²⁶F.S.L. Lyons, Famine, p. 403.
- ²⁷Ibid., p. 405.
- ²⁸Ibid., p. 406.
- ²⁹Dail Eireann. Minutes of Proceedings of the First Parliament of the Republic of Ireland, 1919-1921. Official Report, 27 October 1919, pp. 162-3.
- ³⁰F.S.L. Lyons, Famine, p. 406.
- ³¹Seamus O Buachalla, "Education as an Issue in the First and Second Dail," Administration, Vol. XXV, No. 1 (Spring 1977), p. 71.
- ³²Ibid., p. 72.
- ³³Cork Examiner, 3, 6, 10 May 1920.
- ³⁴Irish School Weekly, LXVIII, 41 (22 May 1920), p. 980.
- ³⁵Irish School Weekly, LXVIII, 43 (5 June 1920), p. 1030.
- ³⁶F.S.L. Lyons, Famine, pp. 407-8.
- ³⁷National Library of Ireland, Ms. 15440, Report of Aireacht na Gaedhilge, January 1921.
- ³⁸Ibid.
- ³⁹F.S.L. Lyons, Famine, p. 425.
- ⁴⁰Donald H. Akenson, A Mirror to Kathleen's Face: Education in Independent Ireland, 1922-1945 (Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1977), p. 17.

⁴¹Trinity College Library, Dublin, Official Publications Reserve Collection, No. 827, National Programme of Primary Instruction issued by the National Programme Conference (Dublin: Educational Company of Ireland, 1922), p. 3.

⁴²Ibid., p. 15.

⁴³Ibid., p. 4.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 4.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 13.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 5.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 24.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 32.

⁴⁹Freeman's Journal, 26 September 1921.

⁵⁰This emerged from my own research in various libraries and was later confirmed by Dr. Seamas O Buachalla of the Education Department, Trinity College, Dublin.

⁵¹Freeman's Journal, 26 September 1921.

⁵²State Paper Office, Dublin Castle, Papers of the First and Second Dail, items relating to the Dail Eireann Commission on Secondary Education, DE 2/473.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Joseph O'Connor, "The Teaching of Irish," The Capuchin Annual, 1949, p. 209.

⁵⁵S.P.O., items re Dail Eireann Commission on Secondary Education DE 2/473.

⁵⁶Freeman's Journal, 8 October 1921.

⁵⁷Freeman's Journal, 2 January 1922.

⁵⁸By 1911 about 17 per cent of the population of the area which became the Free State claimed a knowledge of Irish. Figures showing the decline of the language are given in Akenson, A Million in Kathleen's Face, p. 36.

⁵⁹Irish Catholic Directory, 1921, pp. 100-101.

⁶⁰Donald B. Akenson, Merry, p. 100.

- 61 F.S.L. Lyons, Famine, p. 451.
- 62 Donald H. Akenson, Mirror, p. 27.
- 63 Donald H. Akenson, and J.F. Fallin, "The Irish Civil War and the Drafting of the Free State Constitution," Eire-Ireland, Vol. V, No. 1 (Spring 1970), p. 10.
- 64 F.S.L. Lyons, Famine, p. 457.
- 65 Ibid., p. 466.
- 66 Donald H. Akenson, Mirror, p. 31.
- 67 In the assembly of 128 seats there were also 7 independents, 7 farmers, 4 representatives of Dublin University, 58 pro-treaty Sinn Fein (the government) and 35 anti-treaty Sinn Fein. The anti-treatyites refused to take their seats (F.S.L. Lyons, Ireland Since The Famine, p. 457).
- 68 Freeman's Journal, 10 July 1922.
- 69 Freeman's Journal, 14 August 1922.
- 70 The text of the Free State constitution can be found in Dorothy Macardle, The Irish Republic, pp. 923-24 and in the Free State Parliamentary Companion for 1932.
- 71 Independent, 26 September 1922.
- 72 Irish Catholic, 30 September 1922.
- 73 Independent, 19 October 1922.
- 74 Constitution of Saorstát Éireann, Article 8. See the Free State Parliamentary Companion for 1932 (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1932), p. 219.
- 75 The civil war, destructive and divisive, came to an end in May 1923 with the surrender of the anti-treaty forces.
- 76 Irish Catholic, 7 January 1922.
- 77 F.S.L. Lyons, Famine, p. 465.
- 78 Irish Catholic, 7 October 1922.
- 79 Éil Éireann, Correspondence of Mr. Éamonn de Valera and Others, 1922. Letter from Liam Mellows to de Valera, 16 August 1922 (Trinity College Library, Dublin).

⁸⁰Irish Catholic Directory, 1924, pp. 542-43.

⁸¹Akenson has suggested that a "change in management" merely took place. A Mirror to Kathleen's Face, p. 25.

THE NEW ORDER

Early in 1923 the men who led the Free State government abandoned the almost mystical designation 'Sinn Fein' and formed for themselves a new party entitled 'Cumann na n Gaedheal'.¹ It was under this banner that W.T. Cosgrave led the country until his electoral defeat in 1932. His title under the constitution was 'President of the Executive Council' and his original cabinet was comprised of the following: Kevin O'Higgins — Home Affairs and Vice-President; Ernest Blythe — Finance; Joseph McGrath — Industry and Commerce; Eoin MacNeill — Education; Desmond Fitzgerald — External Affairs; Richard Mulcahy — Defence; Patrick Hogan — Agriculture; Finian Lynch — initially without portfolio.² They had much in common.

With the exception of Ernest Blythe the cabinet members were entirely Roman Catholic. There was nothing particularly remarkable in this as the population of the Free State was 95 per cent Catholic in affiliation. However, the Catholic members of the cabinet were notably devout in their religion and this was especially true in the case of Cosgrave. The Cumann na n Gaedheal government was comprised of former revolutionaries — of men who had played some role in the 1916 rebellion. They generally favoured the revival of Irish and enthusiasm for the language was particularly pronounced in MacNeill, Blythe, Mulcahy and Hogan. In fact, apart from the Irish revival, it seems that no other major change in society was envisaged by these men. There is certainly no evidence of anti-clericalism in their

written or spoken words and it appears that they did not question the traditional importance of religious values in Irish life. That many of them were products of the intensely religious education provided in Catholic secondary schools undoubtedly contributed to this disposition. Kevin O'Higgins was close to the truth when he said, "I think that we were probably the most conservatively-minded revolutionaries that ever put through a successful revolution."³

Eoin MacNeill, though he held the Education portfolio but for a few short years, is a pivotal figure from our point of view. His term of office encompassed that crucial period in which the direction of the new Irish educational system was determined. A profile of this man and his ideas is, therefore, vital to our understanding of the policies pursued.

Eoin MacNeill

Eoin MacNeill was an outstanding Gaelic scholar whose work on the manuscript sources of early Irish history is still accorded significance. A native of Ulster, he felt himself reluctantly dragged into politics when the activities of the Ulster Volunteers threatened either to destroy Home Rule, or exclude his province from its provisions. By his own admission, he had never craved the spotlights of public life and had only entered it out of a sense of duty.⁴ A man of moderate political opinions, he became the figurehead leader of the Irish Volunteers⁵ and attempted to stop the Easter rebellion of 1916 when he was informed of the plans shortly beforehand. His reputation thus tarnished in the extreme nationalist camp, it was

only with difficulty that he was politically rehabilitated in the Sinn Féin movement. De Valera was instrumental in his comeback for, as he said to Robert Brennan, "Don't forget that the clergy are with MacNeill and they are a powerful force."⁶

MacNeill's close connections with the clergy and his intense loyalty to his church and its teachings were factors which dominated his life both publicly and privately. David W. Miller has attributed the good relations between the Gaelic League and the Catholic bishops in the pre-independence period to the skillful diplomacy of MacNeill "who had achieved an extraordinary rapport with a number of ecclesiastics."⁷ And R. Dudley Edwards suggests that MacNeill's "devotion to the Catholic Church" impaired his judgement as an historian.⁸ One of his admirers, John Ryan S.J., in a panegyric written after his death, had this to say of the religious element in his life:

John MacNeill, throughout all his life, was a sincere and devout Catholic. The Church and her interests stood very near — nearer even than his country — to his heart. Week by week, in the pages of the Catholic press, he studied events as they affected her prospects — cheered when the news was good, sad when the news was otherwise. . . . He loved his country's Catholic past and thought it a privilege to travel, in the footsteps of so many generations, to St. Patrick's Purgatory at Lough Derg, there to fast and pray and do penance in the spirit of the Celtic saints.⁹

Such a loyal Catholic, who had received his own secondary education at St. Malachy's College, the diocesan seminary in Belfast,¹⁰ was unlikely to oppose the role which the clergy claimed for itself in the schools. In fact as early as 1903, when it was rumoured that the government planned to 'revolutionize' the school system by co-ordinating the entire structure under a department of

education, MacNeill, then editor of the Gaelic League newspaper, An Claidheamh Soluis, made his position, and that of the League, clear on the question. He said that any move against the clerical managers, "who are deeply interested in the welfare of the people," would be unwelcome:

... the League will never adopt an attitude of confidence in State officialism, no matter what melting mood may for a time come over people in high places; and the League will never side with any move in the direction of secularized education — never will admit that the business of the schools is to stamp the image and superscription of Caesar on the minds of the children of Ireland.¹¹

A few years later, in a paper entitled "The Unity of Education" read to the Catholic Graduates and Undergraduates Association, he declared his support for the concept of education espoused by his church. In the course of the address he asked if any honest Christian could seriously entertain the notion of the separation of religious and secular education. To do so, in his opinion, was to confuse education with the bare mental training necessary to produce an efficient piece of machinery in human form. The state had no moral right to stand between the parent and the discharge of his duty. Its business was to assist the parent, not to thwart him. The unity of education implied for every Christian the interweaving of religion in youthful training and discipline, since religion was due to be interwoven in the lives of men and women.¹²

MacNeill's insistence on the central role of religion in education was reinforced by his antipathy to state-controlled school systems. Excessive state involvement created what he described as "the servile school":

The State, at the instance of modern industrialism, has devised a system of popular education which is hardly to be distinguished from servile education, namely, efficiency for employment.¹³

He deplored the growing influence of central governments on the lives of people in general and the modern cult of state workshop which he identified with liberalism and socialism. He hoped that the new Ireland would not follow this tendency. The simple, self-sufficient life of country folk was his ideal and he believed that local decision making provided a real alternative to reliance on the state. The ancient Gaelic civilization of Ireland was the model of laissez-faire excellence which should be emulated.¹⁴ It was MacNeill's hostility to state responsibility in the area which accounted for the minimal references to education in the Free State constitution and his opposition to the idea of compulsory attendance was most conspicuous in the constitutional debate.¹⁵

Nevertheless, education was the one aspect of public life in which MacNeill was intensely interested. Yet his concept of education was an extremely narrow one. He seems to have regarded it merely as an instrument for the creation of a unique national identity through the revival of the Irish language. As he wrote in 1925 before his departure from the Education Ministry:

The chief function of Irish educational policy is to conserve and develop Irish nationality, that is, the form and kind of civilization distinctive of the Irish people.¹⁶

He also adhered to the widely accepted illusion that economic prosperity would automatically follow this "national regeneration,"¹⁷

Whatever the virtues of MacNeill's educational ideas, they were certainly in harmony with those of his revolutionary comrades

and had much in common with what Pearse had proclaimed in The Murder Machine. He shared with Pearse a concern for the central role of religion in education; an unwillingness to disturb the managerial system; an antipathy to state controlled schools; an idealization of ancient Irish civilization; and a desire to revive the Irish language through the schools.

There is, however, a certain ambiguity about MacNeill's role in the Irish revolution. It has been suggested, for instance, that he was manipulated by others for often unworthy purposes.¹⁸ His political naivete allowed him to be used as a respectable front and ~~as~~ sacrificial lamb by men of a more opportunist and unscrupulous nature. His figurehead leadership of the Irish Volunteers is one example. De Valera's apparent use of him to win clerical support for Sinn Fein is another. That he was selected for the thankless task of speaker for the Dail treaty debates supports the same contention. Perhaps the most obvious instance, however, was his appointment as Irish delegate to the Boundary Commission of 1924-25, an almost certain political graveyard. It is not inconceivable that the Ministry of Education was similarly viewed as a political minefield upon which only the most ill-informed would tread.

Even if sinister motives were not involved, it seems that MacNeill was a poor choice for the post. Akenson has described him as a poor administrator¹⁹ but he evidently lacked even those qualities of leadership which might have compensated for this deficiency. Mrs. E.J.R. Green, who as treasurer of the Irish Volunteers had occasion to work closely with MacNeill, described him to John Redmond around

October 1914 in the following unflattering terms:

I have seldom seen a man more unfitted for action, less fit to lead others in a difficult crisis, and less wise in his judgement of men. . . . Eoin MacNeill is meant for a scholar's life, and that alone.²⁰

In many ways MacNeill's ideas on the relative roles of church and state in education neatly encapsulated those of his colleagues in government. It was recognised that the state did have a role in education, but a very limited one. That the school system would be strictly denominational was never questioned. With such an arrangement the Catholic church, which claimed the allegiance of 95 per cent of the Free State population, inevitably became the major partner in the enterprise. The school system which emerged in the new state, then, was the product of two sets of interacting ideas — those of the Sinn Fein revolutionaries and those of the Catholic church. At this time the church found for itself a most prolific spokesman on such questions in the person of the Reverend Timothy Corcoran, S.J., who was to dominate the Irish educational scene in the two decades following independence. This man, and his ideas, are therefore deserving of careful consideration.

Timothy Corcoran

Timothy Corcoran (1872-1943) was educated by the Jesuits and entered the novitiate of that order in 1890. He taught classics and history at Clongowes Wood College from 1894 until 1901 when he left for further studies at Louvain and later at Milltown Park. With the establishment of the National University of Ireland, he was

appointed Professor of the Theory and Practice of Education in University College, Dublin, a post he held until the summer of 1942, shortly before his death.²¹

He became an influential figure in Irish educational historiography through the collections of documents he compiled, his numerous articles in periodicals, and the work of his students, especially P.J. Dowling.²² But it is not with Corcoran the historian

we are here concerned. He held views on all aspects of education and these were expressed in a prodigious volume of output and in an unmistakable prose style which even his admirers have termed "unfortunate."²³

In his numerous articles Corcoran championed an extremely conservative Catholic view of education. That religion should permeate all areas of instruction was, of course, consistently advocated in his writings,²⁴ but he emphasized above all the corrupt nature of the child and the consequent necessity for strict authoritarian teaching. He was particularly alarmed at the prevalence in Europe and America of "false philosophies of education, capable of deforming, denaturing, perverting the whole professional mentality and action of teachers."²⁵ Such schools of thought included those of Kant, Fichte, Herbart, Froebel, Comte, Spencer, James, Natorp, Dewey and Durkheim and their popularity was attributed to the dominance of rationalism and materialism in philosophy. The falsity of these doctrines lay in their disregard of the "truth" that "there remains in human nature the effects of original sin, and chiefly the resultant weaknesses of will and disordered inclinations."²⁶ Corcoran supported

this contention with the aphorism which affirmed that "folly is bound up in the heart of a child, and the rod of correction shall drive it away."²⁷ Any other approach to children, in his opinion, would not allow for "their inexperience and their natural craving for liberty, at once illusionary and false." The teacher, then, must abandon all "naturalistic concepts," and aim through "authoritative direction" ~~that the child's mind may be "enlightened" and his will "strengthened"~~ by supernatural truths and by the means of grace."²⁸

The Reverend Timothy Corcoran did not pull punches. What he admired he praised lavishly and what he opposed he denounced with an equal vigour, employing such favourite adjectives as 'pernicious,' 'degenerate,' and 'miserable.' In the latter category was anything that was not thoroughly Catholic but the naturalistic or child-centred tradition in education was singled out for special treatment. Throughout much of the 1920s the pages of the Irish Monthly reverberated with his uncompromising attacks on the major theorists in this tradition. It was, in effect, a treatise on educational history as interpreted by Corcoran.

There were two great tragic episodes in the history of European education, according to Professor Corcoran. One was the Reformation which brought about the destruction of the old monastic schools in Protestant countries. He believed that these schools had been free and open to all classes of society and that prince and pauper met within their walls. All this changed with the Reformation and institutions such as Oxford and Eton in England, founded for all, became the preserves of the new nobility.

The other major catastrophe was the Enlightenment and the revolutionary upheavals which followed it. These events destroyed much of the Catholic educational edifice (the suppression of the Jesuits, for instance) and led to state involvement in education and the theorizing and meddling of philosophers such as Rousseau. The medieval Catholic tradition, "democratic and highly efficient," was effectively banished in many places.²⁹

Individual educational innovators in the child-centred tradition were treated with particular contempt by Corcoran. Pestalozzi's school at Yverden was a "wretched experiment" and the popularity of his "absurd programme and more absurd methods" was due to the appallingly low levels of culture and education in the Protestant cantons of Switzerland.³⁰

Corcoran also ridiculed the educational ideas of Froebel whose "mystic doctrines" and "utter hallucination" turned the kindergarten into "a debased material and mechanical thing." He insisted that the worthwhile ideas in this system -- the use of play, playthings, objects, etc. -- all existed in the "true Children's Garden" -- the Catholic song school of the "Ages of Faith."³¹

Maria Montessori received no better treatment. Corcoran could not accept that methods originally devised for "deficient" children could have any application in the case of normal ones.³² He was particularly critical of Montessori's emphasis on liberty for the child, her scorn for prizes and punishments and the changed role of the teacher.³³ Her statements on religious education were, in his opinion, unjustifiably vague.³⁴ But he spared his choicest epitaph

for her suggestion that the doctrines of Lombroso (upon which her theory of education rested) had their origins in Greek Philosophy and Christ. This claim was nothing less than an "astonishing specimen of braggard blasphemy."³⁵

In the early decades of the twentieth century a variety of alternatives to traditional classroom instructional methods emerged in the United States. Inspired by the ideas of John Dewey and William Kilpatrick, and identified with the label 'progressive education,' they were usually named after the town in which they were first developed. The Pueblo Plan, the Batavia Plan, the Dalton Plan, the Winnetka Plan and so forth all had one common characteristic: they attempted to individualize instruction by placing greater emphasis on personal initiative and progress with a consequent modification in the role of the teacher. In a series of articles in the Irish Monthly³⁶ Corcoran poured scorn on these innovations and predicted that "these belated attempts to carry into popular education the anti-social and selfish tenets of Rousseau and of his followers give little expectations of good results."³⁷

One of the principal faults of the "soft pedagogy" in Corcoran's opinion was that it made little provision for thorough repetition without which no real learning could take place. As he explained:

Interesting teaching is very liable to minimize the essential methods of thorough repetition. Work done from day to day, from week to week, without the hardening influence of revision and of definite testing, is liable to become vague, blurred, and unreliable. . . . Large masses of facts must be known, for the positive side of Christian knowledge is very

considerable. Further, they must at certain times be so worked over that they are known all at one time, and are expedite, ready for production and testing.³⁸

As is evident here, Corcoran was a great champion of competitive examinations and was contemptuous of contemporary efforts in England at finding alternative methods of evaluation.

He blamed English influence in the previous century for the decline in Ireland of oral examinations or disputations -- one of the core elements in the great Catholic educational tradition of the Middle Ages.³⁹ He made this clear in a passage which amply illustrates the forcefulness with which he stated his opinions:

The great Catholic and democratic secondary schools of Europe, which flourished down to the French Revolution, made the fullest use of open, honourable, and generous rivalry. It was then the spur to industry, the whetstone of talent. It is as valid morally now as it was then, for all the acrid attacks made on it by such a freak combination of faddists as Kant and Rousseau, and their motley crew of followers in England and elsewhere.⁴⁰

While Corcoran was thus openly hostile to the 'modern' in education, he vigorously promoted the virtues of certain school systems which had been developed in Italy and France during the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. Among these were those of St. John Bosco, St. John Baptiste de la Salle, St. Pierre Fournier and Abbe Charles Demia.⁴¹ The most outstanding feature of these schools was that they were "avowedly and thoroughly Catholic." Equally worthy, in his view, and for the same reason, were the schools of the Irish Christian Brothers.⁴²

Corcoran, though his academic preparation was largely confined to the classics and history, never hesitated to pronounce

on any aspect of education which suited his purpose. All areas of the curriculum became ready grist for his mill even where he lacked obvious competence. The Irish language is a case in point. The Reverend Professor was one of the most persistent and vociferous advocates of the Irish revival in his day but for reasons which he never made clear. He was in no doubt, however, as to how this task could be accomplished. He believed that the national schools had

been largely responsible for the decay of the language between 1830 and 1850 and what they had once banished they could again restore "even without positive aid from the home."⁴³ The ideal age, in his opinion, for children to acquire fluency in a second language was between three and seven years. For this age group he envisaged a system of infant schools manned entirely by native Irish speakers teaching the spoken language. There would be very little reading, no writing and much emphasis on songs. English would be forbidden. These institutions would operate on normal school hours, four days a week. With such a system Corcoran confidently predicted that Irish would become a "permanent possession" of these children within a year and within three years, "a second nature."⁴⁴ These were harsh, draconian proposals from one without experience in primary education and whose knowledge of Irish, if it existed at all, was rudimentary at best. Nor did he at any stage of his life make an effort to acquire a semblance of that fluency which he was so quick to prescribe for others.

All major components of the traditional secondary curriculum received the benefit of Corcoran's attention in the early, formative

years of the new state's school system. His zeal for the Irish revival was one factor which coloured his attitude to what should be taught, especially where languages were concerned. He only grudgingly conceded a place to English language and literature in the new educational scheme of things. But no such privilege was accorded to Anglo-Irish literature — works written in English by Irish authors.

Of great, dignified, national prose -- writing, Anglo-Irish literature has none to show. In poetry, the best is an odd patch of fair second-grade quality. The cult of such material in Irish educational work would be a real national and linguistic misfortune. Poor and trivial as it often is in form and content, it would certainly, if so used and thought upon, prove a formidable obstacle to the restoration of Irish to full literary use and study.⁴⁵

The excellent, international reputation of many authors in the Anglo-Irish literary tradition was apparently of no consequence to Professor Corcoran.

Modern continental languages were also disparaged. Corcoran could see little educational value in the study of French, German or Italian in secondary schools. But the kernel of his argument here was that they would adversely affect the attention given to Irish.⁴⁶

Strangely enough, this difficulty did not arise with the classics. But then, this was Corcoran's own area of expertise. He viewed the achievement of independence as an excellent opportunity to promote a classical revival in education. He emphasized the importance of Latin above all and was particularly concerned at its neglect in girls' schools. The works of Christian writers, he believed, should be studied along with those of pagans. The reasoning behind the proposed classical revival was not made clear but Corcoran assured his readers that it would be of "distinct practical .

taught -- views arising from the suspicion of free inquiry harboured by his church. He was adamantly opposed to the discovery method with its reliance on personal investigation in the laboratory. Such an approach undermined the all-important authority of the teacher. The purpose of a scientific education was to familiarize the young with the body of scientific knowledge which had accumulated over the centuries. The textbook and the teacher were the sure guides to this knowledge -- personal investigation was not an adequate substitute.⁵³

The laboratory had a function -- it could verify for the young the body of knowledge already discovered.⁵⁴ There was also the possibility of inspiration through the study of the pioneering work of such men as Lord Kelvin and Louis Pasteur, who acknowledged the essential unity of science and religion. However, such exponents of "blatant materialism" as Tyndall and Huxley, by contrast, should be condemned to "that permanent insignificance which is (their) proper position."⁵⁵

Corcoran's views on pedagogy were strictly traditional, with an emphasis on the mastery of a given body of unquestioned knowledge. The textbook and teacher were the fount of all wisdom while competitive examinations screened the wheat from the chaff. There was to be no allowance for individual differences or personal investigation. Memorization and repetition were the keys to knowledge, not inquiry. As to curriculum content, that too was rigidly prescribed. What Corcoran advocated here was, in fact, the classical/intellectual type of curriculum, especially at the secondary level. It was an elitist concept of education, designed to select that privileged minority destined for the traditional

professions. In many ways, apart from its peculiar Catholic and Irish elements, it was not unlike that advocated in more recent times by A.M. Hutchins, Arthur Bestor and others.

This detailed analysis of Corcoran's ideas has been necessary for the simple reason that he was probably the most influential figure in shaping the educational system which emerged in the new Irish state. His position as Professor of Education at University College, Dublin undoubtedly lent an air of authority to his word and he advanced his views in a number of important ways. He was a member of the Molony Vice-Regal Committee that considered the reform of the intermediate system in 1918-19 and his remarks in the report of that body viz. the essential nature of Catholic control of education have already been noted. He served as advisor to the two National Program Conferences on Primary Instruction (1920-21 and 1925-26) and to the Dail Commission on Secondary Education (1921-22). Many of the recommendations emerging from these deliberations bore the unmistakable stamp of Timothy Corcoran.

The written word proved another important vehicle for the dissemination of his opinions and the volume of his published articles on education in popular journals is quite remarkable. In 1912 he was instrumental in founding Studies, a 'quarterly review of letters, philosophy and science' which still survives.⁵⁶ From that year until 1941 no less than thirty-seven articles on education appeared in that journal under his name. He was also a major figure behind the Catholic Bulletin, a monthly review with a strong Catholic/nationalist flavour, and he was a regular, if pseudonymous, contributor to its pages from

1923 to its extinction in 1939.⁵⁷ The Irish Monthly was a similar publication and provided him with his greatest platform. Throughout 1923, while the new programs for secondary schools were yet undecided, his articles on the curriculum in the Monthly gave the Department of Education's policy makers a clear guide to the thinking of at least one major Catholic educator on such issues. From that year until 1933 he published one hundred and eleven articles on many aspects of education in the pages of that journal.

In addition to this prodigious output he also wrote the feature entitled "Notes on Current Educational Topics" which appeared in the Irish Monthly between 1923 and 1929. In these "Notes" Corcoran established himself as the watchdog of the church on educational developments. An eagle eye was kept on the activities of the Free State Education Department and the Reverend Professor's comments became the principal indicator of ecclesiastical approval or disapproval.

He also maintained personal contacts with the Department in the person of his secretary, Joseph O'Neill, who recalled Corcoran's visits to his office, "looking like a great oak-tree," where he made his opinions known in no uncertain terms. O'Neill, who was evidently in awe of the man, was in no doubt as to his influence and importance:

In the reconstruction of the Irish State he was from the beginning the master-builder in Education.⁵⁸

The ideas of men such as MacNeill and Corcoran were most influential in determining the shape of Irish education after the achievement of independence. There were many issues to be resolved: the status of lay teachers; the future of the Department of Agriculture

and Technical Instruction and of the Intermediate and National Boards; curriculum reform; and the issue upon which all of these revolved — the role which the state would accord to itself in education. Solutions would have to be found which conformed to the particular ideological preconceptions of the new elite. The search for these solutions is our next concern.

Footnotes

¹Peter Pyne, "The New Irish State and the Decline of the Republican Sinn Féin Party," Eire-Ireland, Vol. XI, No. 3, (Autumn 1976), p. 35.

²W.T. Cosgrave was a dutiful product of a Christian Brothers' education (W. Moss, Political Parties in the Irish Free State. New York: Columbia University Press, 1933, p. 223) and it was he who had proposed in 1921 that the Dail give a guarantee to the Pope not to legislate contrary to Catholic principles in return for diplomatic recognition (Thomas O'Donnell, "Education as an Issue in the First and Second Dail," Administration, Vol. XXV, No. 1 (Spring 1977), p. 72). His loyalty to the church was given official recognition in 1925 when he was made a Knight of the Grand Cross of the Order of Pius IX (M. Boylan, A Dictionary of Irish Biography. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1978, pp. 69-70).

Kevin O'Higgins, Vice-President of the Executive Council, was regarded as the strong man of the cabinet and substituted for the President in his absence. Like Cosgrave, he was educated by the Christian Brothers, but he also studied under the Jesuits at Clongowes Wood College (Terence de Vere White, Kevin O'Higgins. London: Methuen, 1948, p. 2). At the age of fifteen he declared his intention of studying for the priesthood and subsequently spent some years in the cloisters of Maynooth and Carlow College. Though he abandoned the priestly vocation, he remained unswerving in his faith. He found, for instance, the oath-bound secrecy of the Irish Republican Brotherhood repugnant on religious grounds and his membership of that organization was consequently short-lived. (*Ibid.*, p. 32) Nor was he prepared to make a distinction between the religious and secular in politics. He believed that it was not sufficient for governments to concentrate on the amelioration of living conditions alone, but that the "proper application of Catholic social doctrine" was also required (*Ibid.*, p. 181).

Desmond Fitzgerald, the Minister for External Affairs, was an exception in the cabinet in that he had been born and educated in England, though of Irish parents. He only moved to Ireland in 1913 when he was twenty-five years old. This move was inspired by a previous visit in which he had noted the decay of the Irish language in west Kerry. Upon settling in the country he went straight to the Dingle peninsula to learn the ancestral tongue. The writings of Arthur Griffith and the encouragement of his Irish wife led him to join the national movement and he participated in the 1916 rebellion. Despite his unusual background, he shared with most of his cabinet colleagues a strong allegiance to the Catholic church and he became a close friend of the chief philosopher of neo-Thomism, Jacques Maritain (See editor's introduction in Fitzgerald, Garrett (ed.), The Memoirs of Desmond Fitzgerald 1913-1916. London: Routledge and Kegan

Paul, 1968). One journalist has said of the religious element in his life: "Desmond Fitzgerald was deeply conservative philosophically, holding rigid, traditional Catholic attitudes on issues such as Church-State relations." (Vincent Browne, "Garrett Fitzgerald and the New Fine Gael," Sunday Independent, 12 November 1978).

Richard Mulcahy, who held the Defence portfolio, had received his education at the hands of those dispensers of a unique blend of nationalism and religion, the Irish Christian Brothers. Imbued with such ideals, he had joined the Gaelic League and was among the insurgents of Easter Week, 1916. A lifelong enthusiast for the Irish language, he was later to serve as an undistinguished Minister for Education in the inter-party governments of 1948-51 and 1954-57.

(Profile in The Capuchin Annual 1968, p. 451) In that capacity he was to stress the central importance of religion in education and the determination of the state to place no restrictions on the role of the church in the schools. (Council of Education, Terms of Reference and General Regulations, Names of Members of the Council, Addresses delivered by the Minister for Education and the Chairman at the Inaugural Meeting of the Council. Dublin: Stationary Office, 1950, pp. 18-19)

The Minister for Agriculture, Patrick Hogan, shared Mulcahy's enthusiasm for Irish and had likewise taken up arms in 1916. He had been educated at St. Joseph's College, Ballinasloe, the seminary of the diocese of Clonfert. (W.J. Flynn, (ed.), The Oireachtas Companion and Saorstát Guide for 1928. Dublin: Hely, 1928, p. 69)

Finian Lynch, who had been Minister for Education in the Provisional Government of 1922, was initially included in Cosgrave's cabinet, but without portfolio. However, he was later given responsibility for Fisheries. Lynch had been educated by the Holy Ghost Fathers at their Rockwell and Blackrock Colleges. (Flynn, Oireachtas Companion 1928, p. 73)

Joseph McGrath briefly held the Industry and Commerce portfolio until April 1924 when he resigned in a dispute over government policy. A man of limited educational background, he later had a successful career in business and became one of the country's best known racehorse owners and breeders. (H. Boylan, Dictionary, p. 202)

Ernest Blythe was an Ulster Protestant who had come to the nationalist cause through the Irish language and, while Minister for Finance in the government until 1932, he was the most active promoter of the language in the cabinet. A strong believer in compulsion, he was behind many of the draconian measures adopted to revive Irish through the schools. Blythe was an economic conservative who is best remembered for reducing old age pensions in the late 1920s, a decision which undoubtedly contributed to the demise of the administration. (Nollaig Ó Gádra, "Earnán de Blaghd, 1880-1975," Eire-Ireland, Vol. XI, No. 3 (Autumn, 1976), pp. 98-99)

- ³ Terence de Vere White, Kevin O'Higgins, p. 142.
- ⁴ John Ryan, S.J., "Eoin MacNeill, 1867-1945," Studies, Vol. 24 (June 1945), p. 445.
- ⁵ Brian Farrell, "MacNeill in Politics," in F.X. Martin, and E.J. Byrne, (eds.), The Scholar Revolutionary: Eoin MacNeill, 1867-1945, and the Making of the New Ireland (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1973), p. 190.
- ⁶ Ibid., p. 193.
- ⁷ David W. Miller, Church, State and Nation in Ireland, 1898-1921 (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1973), p. 135.
- ⁸ R. Dudley Edwards, "Professor MacNeill" in Martin and Byrne (eds.), The Scholar Revolutionary, p. 286.
- ⁹ J. Ryan, "Eoin MacNeill," p. 448.
- ¹⁰ Ibid., p. 434.
- ¹¹ Eoin MacNeill, "The Control of Irish Education," An Claidheamh Soluis, Vol. V, No. 11 (23 May 1903).
- ¹² Freeman's Journal, 23 March 1906.
- ¹³ Eoin MacNeill, "The Servile School," New Ireland, Vol. V (23 March 1918), p. 322.
- ¹⁴ Eoin MacNeill, "Education: The Idea of the State," The Irish Review, Vol. I, No. 3 (25 November 1922), and "The Irish State: A History and a Prophecy," The Irish Statesman, Vol. IV (18 April 1925).
- ¹⁵ Independent, 19 October 1922.
- ¹⁶ Eoin MacNeill, "Irish Educational Policy, II," The Irish Statesman (24 October 1925), p. 200.
- ¹⁷ Eoin MacNeill, "Irish Educational Policy, I," The Irish Statesman (17 October 1925), p. 168.
- ¹⁸ Brian Farrell, "MacNeill in Politics," p. 194.
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27. Ibid., p. 206.
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35. T. Corcoran, "Is the Montessori Method to be Introduced into our Schools?," Irish Monthly, Vol. LII, No. 609 (March 1924), p. 124.

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³⁸T. Corcoran, "Class Examinations," Irish Monthly, Vol. LIII, No. 624 (June 1925), pp. 285-287.

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⁴¹See his articles in the Irish Monthly of March, April, May and June 1928 and June, July and August 1929.

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⁴³T. Corcoran, "The Irish Language in the Schools," Studies (September 1925), pp. 386-387.

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⁴⁶T. Corcoran, "The Common Programme in Modern Languages," Irish Monthly, Vol. LI, No. 605 (November 1923), p. 553.

⁴⁷T. Corcoran, "The Proper Teaching of Latin in Primary and Secondary Schools," Irish Monthly, Vol. LI, No. 596 (February 1923), p. 85.

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⁴⁹T. Corcoran, "An Epoch in Irish Education," Irish Monthly, Vol. LX, No. 714 (December 1932), pp. 749-750.

⁵⁰T. Corcoran, "The Teaching of Modern Irish History," Irish Monthly, Vol. LI, No. 604 (October 1923), p. 495.

⁵¹T. Corcoran, "The New Secondary Programmes in Ireland: The Teaching of History," Studies (June 1923), p. 258.

⁵² T. Corcoran, "A Highway for Catholic Education," Irish Monthly, Vol. LVII, No. 677 (November 1929), p. 570. He outlined similar ideas in his "Advanced School Work in History," Irish Monthly, Vol. LVII, No. 679 (December 1929).

⁵³ T. Corcoran, "The Place of Sciences in General Education," Studies (September 1923), p. 408.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 414.

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 416-417.

⁵⁶ Dermot F. Gleeson, Joseph O'Neill, and Maureen Baumont, "Father T. Corcoran, S.J.," Studies (June 1943).

⁵⁷ Obituary of T. Corcoran, Irish Historical Studies, Vol. III, No. 11 (March 1943), pp. 404-405.

⁵⁸ Joseph O'Neill, "The Educationist," in the tribute to Father T. Corcoran, Studies (June 1943), p. 158.

NO GROUND FOR COMPLAINT

If the advent of the Free State government caused any ripples of apprehension in ecclesiastical circles regarding educational change, they were soon dissipated by the congenial attitude of the Education Minister, Eoin MacNeill. Among his first acts of office was an announcement which can only have caused profound satisfaction to the church. In the Dail session of 26 September 1922 he confirmed the rumour that Marlborough Street Teacher Training College was to be closed and its students transferred to the denominational colleges.¹ Marlborough Street was a non-denominational institution established under the patronage of the National Board as part of its much-maligned plan for the promotion of 'mixed' education. But it had never been a great success as its graduates were invariably ostracized by the Catholic clerical managers of primary schools. While the closure of the college was probably justified on purely economic grounds, its timing was singularly auspicious. It proclaimed in no uncertain way that the policy of the new regime was to be one of strict denominationalism in education.²

Administrative Change

More fundamental changes were, of course, regarded as essential. It was inconceivable that a Minister for Education would not have a government department under his direction. But what powers would this ministry accrue to itself?

Between 1922 and 1924 the nucleus of an education department

formed around the Minister for Education. Prior to the establishment of the Provisional Government there had been five main educational bodies in the country: the Commissioners of National Education; the Commissioners of Intermediate Education; the Commissioners of Education for Endowed Schools in Ireland; the Department of Reformatory and Industrial Schools; and the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction. With the formation of the Provisional Government, the Minister for Education took over responsibility for the first three of these bodies. Reformatory and Industrial Schools were placed under the Minister for Local Government and Technical Education became the province of the Minister for Agriculture.³ Early in 1922 the Commissioners of National Education had their powers superceded by an officer of the Education Department. A similar fate befell the Intermediate Commissioners in June 1923 when, in fact, both bodies were dismissed by the Minister.⁴

The abolition of the National and Intermediate Boards and their replacement by an education department was policy which had been vigorously resisted by the church under the British regime. But ecclesiastical spokesmen had never objected in principle to such a development in the event of self-government. In fact, they had even regarded it as inevitable. And now that it was a reality there were no complaints.

Clerical acquiescence in a change of this magnitude is better understood when we realise the limited function carved out for itself by the fledgling Irish Department of Education. The Department was careful to emphasize that it perceived its primary function to be

curricular co-ordination and that it had no desire to interfere with the control structures of the different systems as, even if it were desirable, "it would, in view of the variety of interests involved, (present) the gravest of difficulties."⁵ It recognized the essential distinction between the tradition of primary education which was "semi-state" and secondary education which was "largely a private one."⁶ This distinction was underlined in the systems of inspection which were instituted for both levels of schooling. Primary school inspection was to continue as in the pre-independence period. The inspector's principal function was to rank teachers' performances on the following scale: 'Highly Efficient,' 'Efficient,' or 'Non-Efficient.' This represented an important level of control by the state in the operation of primary schools, but no different from that which prevailed before 1922. On the other hand, inspection of secondary schools largely confined itself to evaluating the suitability of curricular offerings -- a recognition of the essentially private nature of those institutions.⁷

The overall ecclesiastical response to these administrative changes, especially with regard to the curricular regulations instituted by the Department, was positive. The Rev. Timothy Corcoran, who was establishing himself as the watchdog of clerical interests in the pages of the Irish Monthly, is probably the best guide to church reaction. His "Notes on Current Educational Topics" in the July 23 edition of the journal acclaimed as an "excellent choice" the appointment of Joseph O'Neill as Secretary of the Department of Education.⁸ O'Neill was to hold this senior post until 1944 and was

to remain an influential figure in shaping policy during this time. It is not difficult to see why Corcoran would have approved the appointment. O'Neill shared the Reverend Professor's zeal for the revival of Irish. In fact, in March 1922, before his elevation to permanent head of staff at the Ministry, he had issued a memorandum critical of the programs drawn up by the ~~Dail Commission on Secondary Education as inadequate to ensure the revival of the~~ language.⁹ He wanted a minimum of ten hours of instruction in Irish per week at the secondary level. O'Neill, who was known to Corcoran personally, held limited views on the role of the state in education which evidently endeared him to the church. An article by him in Studies showed his views to be orthodoxly Catholic on this question. He was unequivocal in his condemnation of the Soviet and French governments which had pushed the church out of education — "an education system which has not religious conviction at the heart of it is still-born."¹⁰ When Corcoran died in 1943 Joseph O'Neill was among those who paid tribute to his memory, acknowledging the great influence of the Jesuit father upon himself and his department.¹¹ A department of education led by such a man as O'Neill could not be construed as threatening to the power of the church in the school system.

The rules and regulations outlined by the Department in its formative years also won the approval of Professor Corcoran. In July 1923 Joseph O'Neill revealed plans for the reorganization of secondary education. Pearse's ideals were acknowledged in that each school was promised freedom to draw up its own program. This freedom was but an

illusion as the distinct national purpose which underlay Irish educational policy constrained it on all sides. School programs were to require Departmental approval and would have to conform to the principles laid down by the Dail Commission on Secondary Education. Further bureaucratic controls were effected by the introduction of two annual state examinations, for 16 and 18 year olds. One change from the previous regime was that secondary schools were to receive capitation grants independent of examination results. Corcoran, a great champion of competitive examinations, welcomed these policy developments in the pages of the Irish Monthly.¹² When the syllabus for the state examinations was released in the following year, it also drew words of praise from the Reverend Professor, who was particularly pleased with its Irish emphasis.¹³

Church and state also found themselves in harmony on the question of change in the primary system. One potential area of difficulty was the issue of compulsory attendance. The Compulsory Attendance Act of 1892 had been rendered largely inoperative by episcopal refusal to co-operate with its provisions during the British regime. The Catholic bishops evidently opposed compulsion as contrary to parental rights¹⁴ and attendance figures consequently remained low by comparison to the rest of the United Kingdom -- a fact noted with concern by the National Program Conference on Primary Instruction in 1921.¹⁵ But in the halcyon atmosphere of the new Irish state ecclesiastical objections to compulsory education were apparently withdrawn. A meeting of the Catholic Clerical Managers' Association in June 1923 agreed that the time was opportune for

legislation on compulsory school attendance.¹⁶ In the following year an announcement that the government planned a "drastic measure" to improve school attendance was applauded by Timothy Corcoran.¹⁷ These plans resulted in the School Attendance Act of 1926 which won the general approval of the country, with the exception of some farming interests, and which raised attendance percentages from 73.5 in 1924 to 82.7 in 1928.¹⁸

The school attendance question and the replacement of the National and Intermediate Boards by a unified department of education were two problems which the British regime had failed to solve during the latter years of its mandate in Ireland -- largely due to the atmosphere of mutual suspicion which had characterized church-state relations. Within a few years of its existence the Irish government had successfully tackled both issues without a murmur of contention. There are few better illustrations of the change which had taken place to the church's position at the time of independence. It no longer felt under siege but was accepted as a full partner, and the dominant one at that, in the enterprise of education.

There can be little doubt that the Education Minister, Eoin MacNeill, played a crucial role in the growth of ecclesiastical confidence in the new regime. He readily conceded that the attitude of the clergy was an ever-present major consideration in the formulation of educational policy. Shortly before his retirement he told of how in his early days in office, he had been approached by a group of clergymen who objected to the moral content of certain school textbooks. His response to them was as follows:

Your objection to this is to me all-sufficient -- I do not place myself in the position of a judge as to whether your objection is well-based or not. When it is based on the grounds that you state, I accept it.¹⁹

He was equally deferential to clerical wishes on the question of the amalgamation of small schools. A word of objection on moral grounds from the managerial authorities led to immediate cancellation of such plans.²⁰

But MacNeill's term of office was short lived. Between November 1924 and November 1925 he functioned as the Free State's representative in the ill-fated boundary commission which Collins had been assured would transfer substantial portions of Northern Ireland to Dublin's control.²¹ His absence on commission business for that twelve month period led several opposition deputies to question the government's declared interest in educational matters.²² However valid these accusations, MacNeill resigned from the cabinet before the end of 1925 and Cosgrave was faced with the task of choosing a successor.

The man selected, John Marcus O'Sullivan, was remarkably similar to his predecessor in professional background and in the religious and political views he espoused. O'Sullivan was educated by the Jesuits at Clongowes Wood College. He also received his higher education from that religious order at the successor to Newman's Catholic University. A brilliant scholar, he won the studentship in philosophy and went to study in Germany where he earned a doctorate. His return to Ireland in 1908 coincided with the establishment of the National University and he was appointed to the chair of modern history at University College, Dublin, a post he held until his death.

in 1948. O'Sullivan was a devout Catholic and in his student days he had been active in the university chapters of the Sodality, the Vincent de Paul and the Total Abstinence Society. Professor Mary Macken has said of the religious element in his life:

This intellectual giant had the faith of a child as well, and he nurtured it. The Psalms, the Missal, the New Testament were of his daily food.²³

He had entered politics somewhat reluctantly. It was the events of 1922-23 which decided him to enter the arena on the side of Cosgrave, the Treaty and law and order.²⁴

O'Sullivan's views on the crucial question of the relative roles of church and state in education were virtually identical to those of his predecessor in office. He was of the opinion that the systems of state aided privately operated primary and secondary schools which the state had inherited were essentially satisfactory in their structure. They answered "some of the vital needs of the people" in a way which a unified system under state control could not.²⁵ He was prepared to accept uncritically the Catholic church's claim "that it has the duty and the right to educate" and was unwilling to encroach in any way on the prerogatives it so jealously guarded.²⁶ He took this position not only out of genuine religious conviction, but for the practical reason of avoiding the church/state conflicts which bedevilled educational politics in other countries:

Anyone who has ever lived outside this country knows the extraordinary amount of damage that is done not merely to religion but to education by the extraordinary sterile debates, the bitter warfare I may almost call it, that is caused by the school question in other countries. I am convinced that anything in the nature of establishing a State system here, apart altogether from the higher point of

view of religion and morality, and even from the purely secular point of view, would mean that we would lose a great deal. . . . We are lucky in this country that we have a system that satisfies the legitimate demands of the Church and the State in this matter, an exceedingly difficult thing to do. . . . Anything that would tend even to shake a system of that kind I would consider disastrous in the extreme.²⁷

When opposition deputies suggested that the Department of Education consider the amalgamation of small, adjacent boys' and girls' schools to effect greater efficiency and economy, O'Sullivan's response echoed the sentiments of MacNeill on the same question some years earlier:

. . . there is a very strong objection, on the part of those who are entrusted with the moral welfare of the great bulk of the population of this country, to having boys and girls taught in the same school. The objection is undoubtedly there. It is very strong.²⁸

Even in cases where the necessity for reform was admitted, O'Sullivan was unwilling to make any move which might be interpreted as an extension of state power. Such a case arose in 1931 when opposition deputies attacked the curriculum offered at the church-controlled teacher-training colleges and demanded some form of inquiry. The Minister was prepared to concede that there was something amiss but the major obstacle to reform was the private nature of the colleges. He was reluctant to use the 'power of the purse' to force change, however desirable, as it would mean taking the perilous path of state control. An inquiry into the colleges might be necessary, but this would only be carried out with their co-operation.²⁹ An inquiry of this nature in fact never took place. Under such men as Eoin MacNeill and John M. O'Sullivan the Irish state willingly accepted its role as minor partner in the enterprise of education.

A Labour Proposal

Until the entry of de Valera's Fianna Fail party into the Dail in 1927 the only consistent and constructive opposition to Cosgrave's administration was provided by the Irish Labour party. Though led with conspicuous ability by Thomas Johnson, the fifteen or so Labour members were too few in number to make any significant impact on government policy. They were, however, moderate men with little of the radicalism of Connolly or Larkin.³⁰ It is well to bear in mind that the Irish working classes — perhaps an exception in the European experience — were never alienated from the church. Even trade unions remained devoutly Catholic and Marxist ideas made little headway.³¹ Nonetheless, the Labour party was significantly in advance of other parties in its advocacy of state involvement in economic development, the creation of comprehensive social services, and equality of educational opportunity.³²

The party's role in agitating for a substantial state commitment to education during the debate on the Free State constitution in the dying months of 1922 will be readily recalled. Though rebuffed on the issue, the Labour members were not discouraged and, as 1923 opened, they were again to the fore in their advocacy of educational change. Mr. T.J. O'Connell noted with regret that the Governor General's speech contained no proposals for the reform of the school system.³³ In a speech which praised the concept of local involvement and deplored the exclusion of laymen from effective decision making, he urged the establishment of a commission to advise the Minister on the question of educational reform.³⁴ Mr. Neill,

predictably enough, was less than enthusiastic about this proposal and, citing his personal "horror of State-made education," rejected the notion of governmental responsibility for education. He nevertheless assured the opposition that some form of legislation regarding a department of education was under consideration -- a revelation which temporarily appeased the Labour benches.³⁵

This was but the first of many such exchanges in the Dail on the issue. In fact the Labour party was shortly to develop a clear statement of its education policy in pamphlet form -- a statement which would form the basis of its parliamentary agitation in the following years. No such document was produced by the other parties. The pamphlet, Labour's Policy on Education, was in fact a report of a special committee set up in May 1924 to advise the party and Trade Union Congress on the reorganization of the educational system.³⁶

The principal aim of education, according to this policy statement, was citizenship.³⁷ It was moderate on the question of the Irish language -- the outcome should be a bi-lingual people.³⁸ It advocated a university-based similar course of training for teachers, both primary and secondary, and urged that all teachers should have civil-service type pensions, and all should have security of tenure.³⁹

A system of educational authorities for each county and county borough was also proposed. Half of the members of such authorities would be drawn from local government while the remainder would represent the "educational interests" in the area. Each authority would be responsible for school maintenance, equipment, transport and

scholarships and would co-ordinate all educational services in its jurisdiction. To this end it would be empowered to raise a local contribution through the rates. This ominous echo of the Macpherson Bill was not, however, as dangerously radical as it might first appear. On the sensitive issue of teacher appointment the pamphlet had this to say:

No change is recommended in the present system of appointment and dismissal of teachers. From the information at our disposal we are satisfied that the system now in operation has worked as satisfactorily in practice as any that could be substituted for it.⁴⁰

Nor was the class structure of second-level schooling -- the division into technical and academic institutions -- questioned. Even the private ownership of the academic secondary schools was not subject to criticism although some concern was expressed at the undue stress on professional careers which the system fostered.⁴¹

But the most permanent difficulty arose from the policy statement's proposal for the establishment of an advisory council of education. Such a body would be entitled to propose legislative and administrative changes to the Minister and he, as its ex officio president, would be bound to consult it on all important educational questions. The council would also control the qualifications of those entering the teaching profession.⁴²

This proposal, which conceivably might disrupt the comfortable distribution of educational authority between church and state, was greeted with suspicion by the Rev. Timothy Corcoran in the pages of the Irish Monthly. He warned that an advisory council would do more harm than good unless it was fully representative of existing school

authorities and teaching figures "all in fair proportion." And should this "fair proportion" be in any way ambiguously interpreted, he reminded his readers that Catholic schools and teachers outnumbered all others by a ratio of at least nine to one.

In particular, education is so serious and so direct a Catholic interest that Catholic authorities would never countenance any scheme in which there were not solid guarantees against its being subjected to hostile or even indifferentist forces.⁴³

He need not have worried. When the question of the advisory council was raised in the Dail a few months later, Professor O'Sullivan dismissed the concept as worthless. He assured the assembly that such an institution could serve no useful function as his department was always open to advice and suggestions.⁴⁴

But neither ecclesiastical hostility nor governmental impassivity deterred both major teachers' organizations from coming out in favour of a council of education. The ASTI distributed a circular to some members of the Dail in 1928 indicating its support for the idea, but to no avail.⁴⁵ And at the annual congress of the INTO in April of that year a resolution proposed by T.J. O'Connell was adopted calling on the government to introduce a measure which would provide for:

- (a) a Council of Education to assist and advise the Minister in all educational matters;
- (b) an Education Authority in each county and county borough whose main function shall be to make provision for adequate and suitable accommodation and the heating, cleaning and general upkeep and maintenance.⁴⁶

These proposals drew the ire of the everwatchful Professor Moran. The system of local education authorities was singled out for special condemnation, constituting in his eyes "a first move

against the managerial system" -- despite ~~the~~ protests to the contrary. In the Reverend Professor's opinion, all necessary improvements to educational facilities could be carried out within existing structures. And he again dismissed the concept of a council of education as without useful function.⁴⁷ This was but one of several attacks on the idea from his vitriolic pen. In the following year he was to deal in greater depth with the problems inherent in such a council. The major difficulty was its composition and Corcoran was particularly concerned that certain bodies, "neutral in their constitution," might secure representation on the council by individuals influenced by English ideas and who might "challenge the principle of religious education, a principle which the Church is ever, and must ever be, on the alert to defend." But there was some room for compromise. He had no real objection to a council made up solely of those representing the various teaching interests of the country such as the CHA, the ASTI, the Christian Brothers Education Council, and so forth.⁴⁸ Presumably, a clerical majority was envisaged. Only a council dedicated to the preservation of the status quo was deemed acceptable.

At any rate, Cosgrave's government was as intransigently opposed as ever to the idea of a council of education. However, democratic regimes are often short-lived and as the 1920's drew to a close the days of the first Free State government appeared to be numbered. In 1926, tired of political oblivion, de Valera had largely abandoned his doctrinaire stance on the constitution and founded his own party, Fianna Fail. In the following year he entered

the Dail with fifty-six of his followers, immediately donning the mantle of the main opposition.⁴⁹ It seemed but a matter of time before this romantic visionary of the Irish revolution would form a government.

How did this new opposition party view the issue of a council of education? In the debate on the education estimates in 1931, Mr. Frank Fahy, the Fianna Fail spokesman on this question, expressed the opinion that the money spent on education was not always used to maximum advantage. He suggested that there was a certain "lack of co-ordination" in the school system and proposed that an educational council be set up to advise the government in its policy making.⁵⁰ De Valera also lent his authority to this proposal. He said that the voluntary nature of the educational system (a concept he supported) placed a great obligation on the Minister to keep in touch with what was happening in the schools and that the most effective means of so doing was through an advisory council with whom he could confer.⁵¹

Professor O'Sullivan was no more receptive to a Fianna Fail sponsored council than to one championed by the Labour party. He reiterated his objection that too many bodies would seek representation making the whole idea impractical. And anyway, he was already in receipt of enough advice on education from various concerned groups.⁵² The Minister was an inflexible bureaucrat who tended to respond to questions by quoting the regulations of his department. Only rarely was he willing to concede that anything could go wrong in his ideal educational system.⁵³

But the council of education was not completely a lost cause. In the general election of 1932 the Fianna Fail party came to power and, as we have seen, de Valera apparently supported the idea. There was a distinct possibility that the council would prove a source of contention between the new regime and the church.

The Position of the Lay Teacher

The issue of the status of the lay secondary teachers, which had so plagued church-state relations in the pre-independence period, was to return to haunt the independent regime. The teachers, frustrated by the loss of the promised benefits of Macpherson's Bill, were only partly mollified by the salary gains of their strike in 1920. The question of job security continued to be a major concern and, believing that the Irish government might be more sympathetic to their position, they drew up proposals regarding an appeal procedure against dismissal in April 1922. Two boards of appeal were suggested, one for Catholic and one for non-Catholic schools, each to consist of three representatives of the headmaster, three of the teachers, and an agreed chairman. These demands were submitted to Professor MacNeill in October and in the following months a circular outlining the teachers' position on tenure, salaries and pensions was distributed to members of Dail Eireann in anticipation of a debate on education in December.⁵⁴

In the debate on education estimates on 1 December a sympathetic Dail listened to the grievances of the secondary teachers as they were aired by numerous opposition deputies. Their rate of

remuneration compared to that of primary teachers and their lack of pension rights and security of tenure evoked general condemnation. It was pointed out that many capable secondary teachers were leaving the country for more lucrative positions in Britain and in America. MacNeill, in replying to these charges, acknowledged that the situation was unsatisfactory. However, he envisaged grave difficulties in trying to remedy matters because of the private ownership of most schools by religious orders.⁵⁵ This was an arrangement with which he was evidently unwilling to tamper.

Official reticence notwithstanding, a meeting between ASTI representatives and MacNeill in February 1923 produced a promise from the Minister that he would approach the bishops on the question of an appeals tribunal. But the teachers were soon informed that his efforts on their behalf were fruitless.⁵⁶ The bishops, it seems, were as determined as ever to prevent interference with their schools. A direct approach by the ASTI to the CHA in the summer months of 1923 was equally sterile of results, producing nothing but evasiveness and intransigence on the question of tenure.⁵⁷

Meanwhile, MacNeill was equally evasive in the Dail when confronted with the same issue.⁵⁸ But he did hint that additional state funding might be made available for secondary teachers' salaries.⁵⁹ This news was welcomed cautiously by the Rev. Timothy Corcoran who felt obliged to warn that the distinction that had hitherto existed between lay and clerical teachers as a result of the Birrell grant should be abandoned:

That a teacher belongs to one religious denomination or to another, but he adopts one or another among the methods of life which are compatible with his status as a citizen, are all circumstances which do not affect his claim to receive State money.⁶⁰

These arguments had a disturbingly familiar ring to them. Only ten years previously the controversy over Mr. Birrell's scheme had been at its height but it had long since been settled -- or so it was believed. But the old wound was about to be opened again, this time under a regime which the church believed would more favourably respond to her point of view.

There was, nevertheless, some ecclesiastical apprehension that the government's plans to improve the lot of the lay secondary teachers might in some way interfere with the autonomy of the schools. In the February 1924 edition of the Irish Monthly Corcoran threatened recourse to the courts should the state attempt to accrue to itself the power over education prevailing in England and being sought in Northern Ireland.⁶¹ And the point was driven home even more emphatically by another contributor to the same journal. In an article entitled "Catholic Secondary Teachers' Security of Tenure," a certain 'S.J.' completely rejected the idea that a 'secular tribunal' should have any say in the appointment or dismissal of teachers. This was because Catholic secondary schools were thoroughly private institutions established "at the cost of great sacrifices and often in spite of sufferings and dangers . . . long before the State dreamt of assisting secondary education . . ." Consequently, lay teachers could not claim similar remuneration and security of tenure as civil servants -- they were not servants of the state. And any change in

the status quo would be resisted:

Moreover, these Catholic schools can never regard themselves as State schools. They do not owe their origin to the State; only a small part of their expenses is defrayed, even at present, by the State. Their owners will not give up the liberty of managing them in accordance with their duty to God and with the confidence reposed in them by their pupils' parents.⁶²

A state takeover, of course, was not planned. But the government did come forward with a scheme to improve the lot of the lay secondary teachers, at least as far as salary was concerned. The Intermediate Education (amendment) Act of 1924 repealed those sections of previous Acts which required that the payment of grants to secondary schools be based on examination results. A capitation grant to recognized schools was substituted. In introducing this measure, Professor MacNeill promised that a salary scale for secondary teachers would be instituted as a condition of state recognition.⁶³ The details of the scheme were released in February 1925. To qualify for the capitation grants' schools would be required to employ a certain minimum number of recognized teachers, lay or clerical.⁶⁴ In the case of lay teachers included in that number, the following basic salaries would have to be paid: £200 to men and £180 to women if non-resident, or £150 to men and £140 to women if resident in the school. In addition to these sums of money to be paid by school managers, all recognized teachers were now to receive incremental salaries paid by the government. In the case of men these were to amount to ten annual increments of £12, followed by six increments of £15. Women were to receive twelve increments of £10.⁶⁵

Superficially, at least, this might appear to have been a radical move. It was certainly the first instance of direct payment of secondary teachers by the state and the decision to force schools to pay certain basic salaries might have been construed as an imposition. Yet it is hard to agree with Denis Gwynn's suggestion that this was a "revolutionary departure" which was "virtually a challenge to the previous monopoly of the religious teaching Orders." The basic salary scale in a certain sense guaranteed the independence of the schools by underlining the fact that teachers were employed by the school, not the state. And the Department of Education Report for 1924-25 was careful to emphasize that despite the provision of government incremental salaries for teachers, "the State has assumed no responsibility for the appointment of head-masters or teachers, and the Secondary system remains as hitherto one of purely private management."⁶⁷ Government spokesmen were no less ambiguous on the question. In response to opposition disappointment at the parsimony of the salary scales, Mr. Blythe, the Minister for Finance, who was answering for Professor MacNeill in the Dail, was careful to point out that the state had no real responsibility for secondary teachers as they were not its employees. Consequently, its provision of increments was generosity indeed. In a remarkable passage which illustrates more than anything else the laissez-faire attitude of the Irish state to education, Blythe said of the teachers:

We are not really bound to consider their case more than we are bound to consider the case of an employee of the Tramway Co. or of the Railway Co.⁶⁸

While the financial position of the secondary teachers was thus improved, job security continued to be a problem. In fact there was a real possibility that the very provisions of the Intermediate Education (Amendment) Act of 1924 would render their already shaky tenure even more precarious. It will be recalled that the annual £40,000 'Birrell grant' was distributed to schools in proportion to their success in public examinations.⁶⁹ With the abolition of payment by results the separate existence of this grant was threatened. What concerned the teachers was that the clauses protecting the tenure of lay teachers under the terms of the grant might be lost in the shuffle. This was what T.J. O'Connell had in mind when he proposed an amendment to the Bill to allow the grant to remain as a separate and identifiable portion of the annual capitation payment to schools. MacNeill accepted the amendment adding that he could not allow rules to lapse "which had an important bearing on the status of a large body of teachers."⁷⁰

The Intermediate Education (Ireland) Act, 1914, which had made the money available in the first place, had not specified a ratio of one lay teacher to forty students as a condition of receiving the grant. This rule had been drawn up by the Lord Lieutenant at the time, and it was now the option of the Irish government to retain or abolish it.⁷¹ In December 1925 the ASTI was informed by the Department of Education that the rule in fact was being withdrawn on the advice of the Attorney General, who claimed that it constituted "a discrimination between lay and clerical teachers in favour of the former" and, in his opinion, contravened

Article 8 of the Constitution which prohibited the imposition of disabilities on account of religious status.⁷¹ The arguments of the CHA against the Birrell grant rules, rejected by the British regime, were upheld by its Irish successor. Those minimal gains on behalf of the teachers, which Mr. Birrell had so painfully wrested from the headmasters, were now cast aside. The position of lay teachers in Catholic secondary schools was as precarious as ever.

This development prompted the ASTI to open negotiations with the CHA on the tenure question in May 1925.⁷² The headmasters were prepared to consider a procedure which involved an appeal in the case of dismissal to the bishop of the diocese, or to the superior of the religious order in the case of orders not under episcopal jurisdiction, but rejected the teachers' demand that the ASTI be allowed to act on behalf of its members at such an appeal. This was unacceptable to the teachers and an appeal to Professor MacNeill to intervene was characteristically rejected. The Minister desired a solution to the difficulty but believed it should be arrived at without his involvement.⁷³

MacNeill's successor, Professor O'Sullivan, was equally reluctant to play the role of mediator in the tenure dispute. When pressed on the question in the Dail he argued that it was "not a matter which a Minister could settle, even with the best will in the world."⁷⁴ This astonishing admission of political impotence was defended with the familiar excuse that the school system was essentially private in nature. O'Sullivan was evidently of the opinion that the appeal procedure offered by the CHA -- similar to

that already in operation for the primary teachers -- should be acceptable to the secondary teachers.⁷⁵

What the Minister was referring to was the system of appeal against dismissal which was agreed to by the INTO and the Catholic hierarchy in what was known as the Maynooth Resolution of 1894.⁷⁶

This required that before a primary teacher could be served three months notice of dismissal by his clerical manager, the latter should first receive the assent of the bishop. In the event of the notice being served, the teacher would have the right to be heard in his own defence. This measure of security the headmasters were prepared to offer the secondary teachers, but they would not consent to ASTI participation in the appeal procedure.

The ecclesiastical authorities did go ahead and institute the appeal procedure they advocated. The National Synod of Maynooth in 1927 extended the provisions of the Maynooth Resolution to the secondary sector.⁷⁷ Despite misgivings, the teachers decided to test the sincerity of their employers, especially in cases in which lay teachers were dismissed to make way for religious. Such a case arose in 1931 when a female teacher lost her position in a Co. Tipperary convent school. An appeal was made to the Archbishop of Cashel but he refused to overrule the convent's decision.⁷⁸

This tended to confirm the teachers in their belief that no appeal procedure would be effective without the active involvement of their association. What was particularly infuriating was the continuing refusal of the government to concern itself with the issue. Even in cases of glaring abuse, it was unwilling to act. It

was not unusual for convent schools at this time to dismiss lay teachers when they qualified for registration and replace them with cheaper, unregistered ones. An ASTI appeal to the Department of Education in 1931 to curb this practice brought no positive response.⁷⁹ But if the Cumann na nGaedheal government proved hopelessly weak-kneed and weak-willed on this question, there was always the possibility that its successor would act otherwise. Political intervention, then, was not ruled out completely as a solution. The issue of tenure for secondary teachers, like that of the council of education, would continue as a potential irritant in the relations between church and state, as the Fianna Fail government assumed the reins of power.

Certain developments under the first Free State government also weakened the position of the lay primary teachers. During the British regime the rules of the National Board forbidding the display of religious emblems except in periods allotted to religious instruction, and the strict distinction required between religious and secular teaching, proved unacceptable to the Irish Christian Brothers and they had kept their primary schools out of the National system rather than submit to such rules.⁸⁰ With an Irish government in control the Brothers evidently believed that regulations designed to encourage mixed education would not be strictly adhered to, and that they would be allowed to avail of public funding on their own terms. Accordingly, it appears that they entered into negotiations with the First Dail as early as the summer of 1920.⁸¹ Their perception of the new order of things was undoubtedly accurate. When the question was discussed in the Dail in July 1924 there was unanimity of opinion

among the members that the Brothers' schools were deserving of public support — an arrangement which was soon made.⁸²

While the allocation of state funding to the Brothers' schools was not problematic in itself, the method of allocation was somewhat contentious. At their own insistence the Christian Brothers were placed under what was known as the 'capitation grant' system.⁸³

This was an arrangement which had developed in the days of the National Board apparently to meet the needs of religious whose vow of poverty prevented them from accepting salary cheques.⁸⁴ Instead of individual salaries, then, the community operating the school received a lump sum from the state based on the average attendance. The difficulty was that lay teachers employed in such schools received no pensions and their salaries depended on the generosity of their religious employers. A further problem was that a religious community owning a 'capitation grant' school could employ as teachers its own members regardless of their qualifications to teach.⁸⁵ Since 1920 lay teachers working in this system received their salaries directly from the government,⁸⁶ but the other abuses, the lack of pensions for laymen and the employment of unqualified religious as teachers, were never corrected.

In the Dail, T.J. O'Connell complained bitterly about the expansion of the capitation system as a result of the Christian Brothers' initiative, but to no avail.⁸⁷ Professor O'Sullivan admitted that lay teachers employed in these schools would not receive pensions and, characteristically, he seemed unwilling to remedy this. He explained rather lamely that the capitation system

was a transitional arrangement (this was untrue, as it turned out) and that in accepting it, he was bowing to the wishes of the Brothers.⁸⁸

The entry of the Christian Brothers into the system and the increased state funds which they were thus able to acquire, meant that during the 1920s and 1930s, as quote T. J. O'Connell, "the number of large primary schools coming under the control of religious communities showed a steady and noticeable increase."⁸⁹ This was a cause of concern to the INTO as it meant that opportunities for employment and promotion for laymen were accordingly restricted.⁹⁰

Two developments, then, since the advent of independence tended to weaken the overall recognition given to lay teachers in the educational structure and concomitantly to strengthen the power of the clergy in the schools. With the admission of the Christian Brothers' primary schools to state support under the capitation system there was official departmental approval of the notion that membership of a religious community was in itself sufficient as a teaching credential. Of course lay teachers employed in these schools were required to have graduated from a teacher training college, but there was no attempt by the state to end this 'invidious distinction' between lay and cleric. The other instance where such a distinction existed — between lay and clerical secondary teachers for the purposes of the Birrell grant -- worked to the disadvantage of the clergy. As we have seen, the new Irish state moved quickly to abolish this distinction, much to the annoyance of the secondary teachers' organization.

Linguistic Revival

The one major educational change attempted by the Irish government was in the area of curriculum. The Romantic-nationalist ideology of the revolution dictated that Irish cultural distinctiveness should be fostered by the revival of the Irish or Gaelic language. That the schools were assigned the central role in this ritual of linguistic necromancy has already been shown. The commissions which had deliberated on the future of the curriculum during the lifetime of the First and Second Dail's hoped to see Irish, not just taught as a subject, but used as a medium of instruction wherever possible. A curricular revolution of this nature, could only be brought about with the active co-operation of the Catholic clergy who controlled the vast majority of schools.

It is not inconceivable that this might have proved a source of difficulty between church and state, in particular if the former failed to meet the expectations of the latter in the implementation of this educational policy. But there was considerable evidence of good will on the part of ecclesiastical authorities towards the language revival, even before independence was achieved. Of course individual prelates and priests are likely to be entranced by the passions and fashions of an age along with their lay fellow countrymen. This was certainly true of the Irish language revival, which found some of its greatest champions among men of the cloth in the two decades prior to independence. Bishop O'Dea of Galway, himself an Irish speaker, was particularly conspicuous in this respect.⁹¹

Other teaching congregations were also noted for their zeal in

promoting the language. The Brothers of St. Patrick, who operated mainly in Connacht, made a special effort to recruit native Irish speakers to their ranks.⁹² And of course the name of the Irish Christian Brothers, the most successful male teaching congregation of all, was virtually synonymous with the Gaelic Ireland ideal.

There was, in addition, official ecclesiastical support for the language revival in the pre-independence period. A meeting of the Catholic bishops as early as 19 June 1900, urged that Irish be taught in all primary schools where there was no parental objection.⁹³

Demands for Irish as a subject appear to have been growing at the time but the principal difficulties in its advance were the lack of qualified teachers and rules of the National Board which discouraged its use. In 1910 the Central Council of Catholic Clerical Managers protested against the rule which did not provide for the payment of Irish instruction in the junior standards. The managers also objected to the rule that allowed that fees payable for the teaching of Irish could be reduced or withheld at the discretion of the Commissioners.⁹⁴ And in 1914 representatives of the managers joined with the INTO and the Gaelic League in urging John Redmond to support the position of the language in the National schools.⁹⁵

This supportive attitude on the part of the church towards Irish carried on in those years of turmoil that preceded the establishment of the Free State. We have already noted how the bishops and clerical managers co-operated with officials of the First Dail's Aireacht na Gaedhille in promoting Irish in the schools. The pivotal role of the Reverend Timothy Corcoran in shaping educational

policy around this time has also been alluded to. Corcoran, it will be recalled, was a great champion of the language, and his influence on the National Program Conference on Primary Instruction and on the Dail Commission on Secondary Education amply illustrates the harmony of ideas between church and state that prevailed in the language issue. It was he who gave the stamp of academic approval to the draconian measure of teaching infants entirely through Irish, regardless of their mother tongue. The curricular recommendations of the Dail commission which considered secondary education bore the strong stamp of Corcoran, especially in view of the curriculum articles he wrote in the Irish Monthly in 1923. And when the Department of Education produced its syllabus for secondary schools in 1924, the Reverend Professor gave it his unqualified approval:

The framers of the new Intermediate Programme are to be congratulated on the resolute way in which they have followed the principles laid down by the Dail Commission of a few years ago, and have given a distinctly Irish orientation to their whole plan of studies.⁹⁶

He was particularly pleased with the position of the Irish language in the program and the Irish emphasis in history and geography. In the following month he made a spirited defence of the Irish language requirement against criticism from some Protestant headmasters. The new program envisaged that from 1930 on, Irish, another language (probably English), mathematics, history and geography (one subject) and science would be obligatory for the Intermediate Certificate -- the departmental examination for 15-16 year olds. Irish was not made compulsory for the Leaving Certificate (taken by 17-18 year olds) but the high marks assigned to it for scholarship purposes and the ten per cent bonus for answering other subjects through Irish were

important incentives.⁹⁷

The Protestant opposition to which Corcoran referred has been dealt with in some detail by D.H. Akenson in A Mirror to Kathleen's Face.⁹⁸ What is more important from our point of view is that the Catholic headmasters in no way opposed the new programs. In fact Catholic secondary schools were eager to take advantage of the financial inducements offered by the Department of Education to teach other subjects through the medium of Irish.

But the main thrust of the language revival lay at the primary levels where the power of departmental inspectors to rate the efficiency of individual teachers became both a carrot and stick to encourage the adoption of instruction through Irish.⁹⁹ A second National Program Conference on Primary Instruction reporting in 1926, expressed disappointment at the progress made to date, but basically reaffirmed the policies in effect. Corcoran was again the principal source of authority and on his advice the practice of teaching infants entirely through Irish was retained.¹⁰⁰

The principal difficulty in implementing this program lay in finding or training a body of teachers sufficiently fluent in Irish to man the infant and junior classes. This problem was to be overcome through a unique educational experiment. In February 1926 the Department of Education announced plans for the establishment of a series of 'preparatory colleges.'¹⁰¹ These were to be second-level boarding schools in which all instruction would be imparted through Irish. Those who completed their secondary education in these institutions were to be virtually guaranteed places in the teacher

training colleges. A considerable proportion of the places in the preparatory colleges would be reserved for students from Irish-speaking areas of the country.

The idea of recruiting primary teachers from the Gaeltacht areas had been advocated prior to this by the Rev. Timothy Corcoran¹⁰² and he now welcomed the preparatory college plan, but under one condition:

. . . that these Colleges be under quite definitely religious administration, that is, Catholic as far as Catholic pupils go. . . . The day for forcing any inter-religious or secularist system on intending teachers is over for long past, and the day when such a system would be submitted to by the fathers and mothers of the nation is as yet far off -- and we hope will be always far off.¹⁰³

The colleges certainly represented state enterprise in education and were established and financed completely by the Department of Education. But Corcoran's fears of secularism were unfounded. There were to be six colleges in all: one for Protestants and five for Catholics. Not only did they conform to the Irish custom of religious apartheid, but the Catholic colleges were to be segregated by sex and were to be under the direct management of the bishop of the diocese in which they were located.¹⁰⁴ This arrangement was noted with eminent satisfaction by Corcoran.¹⁰⁵

This episode again underlines the fact that the church willingly co-operated with the state in the one great educational innovation it wished to adopt: the promotion of the Irish language in the schools. It also suggests that government officials were incapable of conceiving of the educational process free from ecclesiastical supervision. It might be argued that clerical

co-operation in implementing this curricular revolution was an act of cynical realpolitik, adopted to obviate state encroachments on the independence of the schools. This is certainly not inconceivable, but there does appear to be ample evidence of church support for Irish language before independence. Could there have been something about the Irish language itself which had a special appeal to the clerical mind? In their lenten pastorals the Catholic bishops inveighed annually against what they perceived to be a tendency to pleasure in the country. Immodest dress, dances, films and literature -- all imported -- were identified as the root of the problem. In February 1925 Archbishop O'Donnell of Armagh announced that the Irish language was free of such vulgarities and its advancement among the people would act as a moral safeguard.¹⁰⁶ Whether there was much truth to O'Donnell's assertion is beyond speculation, but that this idea was believed at the time appears to be true. Irish was to be the bulwark of the people, protecting their minds from the evil vulgarities of the outside world.

Technical Instruction

There was one further educational innovation by the first Free State government which contained the seeds of potential church-state conflict. The question was that of the reform of the technical education system. This system had been in existence since 1899 when the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland was established. Under the auspices of this department, local government bodies were encouraged to form 'technical instruction

committees' which would in turn sponsor 'technical schools' for instruction in trades and agriculture. Financed by local rates and grants from the department, it was the only component of the educational system under lay control.¹⁰⁷ Soon after the Free State Department of Education took over responsibility for technical instruction, the need for a thorough investigation of the whole area was identified. Accordingly, a commission was appointed by the Minister for Education "to inquire into and advise upon the system of Technical Education in Saorstát Éireann in relation to the requirements of Trade and Industry." The commission, which commenced its labours on 5 October 1926, included representatives of employers, labour, teachers, and of the Departments of Education, Industry and Commerce, Agriculture and Finance. The expert advice of Dr. A. Rohn, President of the Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich, and of Mr. V. Frederickson, a member of the Swedish Board of Education, was availed of.¹⁰⁸ The establishment of the commission was welcomed by Father Corcoran, who felt that there was a great need for technical training, especially in electricity and agriculture.¹⁰⁹

The recommendations of the commission were accepted by the government and incorporated into the Vocational Education Bill which Professor O'Sullivan introduced in the Dail in April 1930. The Bill envisaged the establishment of 14-member 'Vocational Education Committees' by county and urban councils. These committees would have the power of striking rates for the support of 'vocational schools.' State grants to match those raised locally would also be forthcoming.¹¹⁰

The scheme aimed to provide some practical training to that large majority of children that left school at fourteen years in order to work in agriculture and industry. There was a reluctance to impose any compulsory element in view of the opposition there had been in rural areas to the Compulsory School Attendance Act of 1926.

180 hours of attendance per annum was proposed for those between the ages of fourteen and sixteen years. O'Sullivan suggested that boys attend these classes in the winter months and girls in the summer in order to ensure no disruption of agricultural work.¹¹¹

It was an extremely moderate measure and Professor O'Sullivan was at pains to point out that it was far from revolutionary:

This Bill has met with a certain amount of criticism because it is not revolutionary enough. Personally, I do not consider that an objection. . . . We claim that we have not introduced anything new in the nature of control in educational matters in this country.¹¹²

He was, of course, correct. The new system differed only from that which had preceded it in that it required local authorities to do what they had previously been permitted to do.¹¹³ A network of vocational training facilities would now blanket the entire state.

How did the church view these schools, unaffiliated as they were with any religious body? Catholic dogma was quite unequivocal on the question of the attendance of Catholic children at non-Catholic schools. Canon 1374 of the Code of Canon Law promulgated in 1918 is most often quoted in this regard:

Catholic children may not attend non-Catholic, neutral, or mixed schools, that is, those which are open also to non-Catholics. It pertains exclusively to the local bishop to decide, in accordance with instructions of the Holy See, under what circumstances and with what precautions against the danger of perversion, attendance at such schools may be tolerated.¹¹⁴

And the papal encyclical Divini Illius Magistri of 1929 was no less emphatic on the issue:

... we endorse and confirm . . . the prescription of Canon Law which forbids Catholic children on any pretext whatsoever to attend neutral or 'mixed' schools, that is to say schools open indiscriminately to Catholics and non-Catholics alike; allowing attendance in the case of these only at the discretion of the Ordinary under certain circumstances, and with special safeguards. 115

Likewise, the decrees of the Synod of Maynooth (1929) made it clear that Catholics, under pain of sin, could not attend non-Catholic primary or secondary schools or Trinity College. But the Reverend John C. Joy S.J., writing in the Irish Monthly of November 1930, banished apprehension by declaring the new vocational system to be a different case. Though neutral or non-denominational in structure, the specialized nature of instruction offered excluded it from the general condemnation. As the Maynooth decrees put it:

Where as the knowledge of crafts and agriculture is, in our opinion, useful and even necessary for our people, we judge it permissible that Catholic pupils in company with non-Catholics should attend where such knowledge only, but not general education, is provided. 116

In fact the vocational system was not to be as secular and neutral as the legislation establishing it seemed to suggest. Under a special agreement with the Catholic episcopate denominational religious instruction was to be offered in the schools -- an arrangement noted with satisfaction by several ecclesiastical spokesmen at the time. 117

The system allowed for clerical influence in other ways too. John Whyte has shown that priests were regularly co-opted onto local education committees and were often elected chairmen. Thom's

Directory of Ireland, 1928 showed that of 59 technical instruction committees in the country, 27 had Catholic clergymen as chairmen.

The Act of 1930 abolished many small urban technical instruction committees which tended to elect lay chairmen. The overall percentage of clerical chairmen thereby increased. Thom's Directory, 1938 showed that 22 out of 27 vocational education committee chairmen were in holy orders.¹¹⁸

But there was another, perhaps more fundamental, reason why the ecclesiastical authorities so readily acquiesced in an expansion of the one component of the school system which was not officially under their control. Whyte, in the course of his investigations, was assured by an anonymous informer that the then Minister for Education, Professor O'Sullivan, gave the bishops a written guarantee that the vocational schools would not encroach upon the exclusive prerogatives of the clerically controlled secondary schools.¹¹⁹ With a guarantee that the education of the social and political elite would remain firmly in their hands, the clergy had no reason to fear the expansion of the technical sector. Once again the clear-cut prerogatives which the church accrued to itself in education were fully recognized and respected by the state as it instigated minor changes in the school system.

An "Enlightened Government"

The authorities of the Catholic church had generally welcomed the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922. This was not just for reasons of patriotism, which were natural enough,

but in the belief that the men who led the new state would view more favorably the dominant role of the church in education than the regime which had preceded it. There was nevertheless a lingering fear, an apprehension, that somehow the Irish government might follow the example of other European states and create a secular system of schooling. Consequently, throughout the first decade of independence, lest such ideas made any headway, ecclesiastical spokesmen felt obliged periodically to define clearly the precise roles of church and state in education. One theme came out consistently in these pronouncements: that the authority of the church was supreme in such matters, while the state had an extremely limited function.

The Reverend E. Cahill, S.J., writing in 1925, assured his readers that in the event of a clash of interests between church and state, the latter was bound to give way:

And as the Church is the authentic and divinely appointed teacher and judge of moral obligation and duty, with power to decide such questions with infallible authority, it is clear that the rulers of the State in such a conflict must, in the ultimate resort, abide by the decision of the Church. In this sense and to this extent, the civil power may be said to be subject to the Church, even in matters that do not appertain directly or solely to the sphere of religion or morals. Examples of this kind would be education; the appointing of public holidays; laws relating to marriage. . . .120

The supremacy which the church claimed for herself in educational matters was interpreted to mean the maximum autonomy possible for her schools. Writing in 1927, the Rev. Lambert McKenna, S.J., who had chaired the second National Program Conference on Primary Education, defined the state's educational role as that of assisting privately-owned schools.¹²¹ Financial aid from the state

was acceptable, even necessary, but it should be given without strings attached:

The conferring of money by the state brings with it no right to settle, independently of parents, the nature of the education given . . . 122

Nor was there any necessity for state inspection of schools. There

~~was no reason to imagine that "a child of ordinary middle-class~~

folk, attending a first-class private school, is being imperfectly educated. . . . 123 McKenna was obviously referring here to the academic secondary schools whose independence was most jealously guarded by the church.

An even more intransigent upholder of the tradition of private schooling was a certain N. Umis, an occasional contributor to the Jesuit-sponsored journal, the Irish Monthly. Umis was of the opinion that state examinations interfered excessively with the freedom of secondary schools. He argued that 'official education authorities' were not competent to judge the educational work of a school. The teaching orders of the church, on the other hand, had worked out their own methods over the centuries in various countries and circumstances and were surely the best judges of these things. 124 He saw the state's role in education as an extremely insignificant one, limited, it seems, to the "forbidding of immoral or anti-social doctrines and the like." 125 Nor was he happy with the educational provision outlined in Article 10 of the Free State Constitution -- "All citizens of the Irish Free State have the right to free elementary education." This modest measure drew the following reaction:

The whole Article smells a little of State omnipotence: it seems to be based on the idea that education is primarily a matter for the State, and that if the State gives free education it has a right to give whatever sort of education it likes -- a pernicious idea, utterly at variance with right reason.¹²⁶

He did, however, exonerate the Irish government of deliberate malicious intent. He could see little evidence of a policy of state supremacy and dictation in education.

Unis was, perhaps, an extreme case. Not all advocates of clerical power in the schools necessarily shared his opinions. Professor Corcoran, for instance, though a staunch defender of the independent school tradition, had no objection to state examinations. But it would be misleading to exaggerate these differences. Champions of the church's position were all agreed on one basic principle: that state interference in the operations of Catholic schools, especially at the secondary level, should be kept to an absolute minimum.

While such spokesmen felt obliged on occasion to clarify what they perceived to be an acceptable role for the state in education, and while there were instances of grumbling at excessive departmental regulations,¹²⁷ on the whole there was eminent satisfaction in ecclesiastical circles with the educational policies adopted by the first Free State government. The remarks of Bishop Fogarty of Killaloe amply illustrate this. Speaking at St. Flannan's College, Ennis in December 1924, he said that the change which had recently taken place in Irish education was a "blessed and a splendid one." He had noticed a certain drift away from Catholic ideals -- girls were actually smoking in public, for example -- but he hoped that

under the new system of education "the Irish ship would be brought back and safely moored again in the harbour of the Irish faith."128

His optimism was evidently vindicated for, two years later at the same venue, he had this to say:

... I heartily believe myself that our present system of secondary education is second to none in Europe or anywhere else, and is an infinite credit to our enlightened Government that formulated it. It has done away with the steeplechase methods of the old Intermediate system, which, in my opinion, did a world of harm in its day to the national psychology, and has given us in its stead a system which, while guaranteeing stern efficiency in the schools, leaves a place for the development of character as well as intelligence, for culture as well as science, and for the spiritual ideals without which education often does more harm than good.129

Fogarty was not alone in perceiving that things had improved since the advent of independence. His fellow prelates shared this opinion. A pastoral letter issued by the National Synod of Irish Bishops when it met at Maynooth in 1927 put it this way:

The education for a Christian people is education permeated by religion. In Ireland, however, we have had to make the most of systems that in theory fall far short of that ideal. Education on an undenominational basis involves certain restrictions on religion teaching. But for years past, in practice, the character of our primary, as of our secondary schools, from a religious point of view, depends mainly upon ourselves, and there is no ground for complaint in the greater part of Ireland.130

The bishops were referring to the de jure non-denominational character of the primary schools as they had existed under the National Board. What this meant was that restrictions were placed on the teaching of denominational religion and on the creation of a particular religious atmosphere in the schools -- a neutrality designed to encourage 'mixed' education. But, as D.H. Akenson has pointed out, all major denominations worked successfully to maintain this principle in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

the schools became denominational in all but name.¹³¹ And, as we have seen, this denominationalism was further advanced by the extension of state support to the primary schools of the Christian Brothers which were anything but neutral in atmosphere. This same decision also expanded the capitation grant system which worked to the advantage of the clergy.

Actions of this sort meant that ecclesiastical satisfaction with the Free State government's educational policies continued to grow. As the first decade of independence progressed, it became clear that there would be no attempt to reduce the church's role in education. If anything, the power of the clergy in the schools was augmented. It was certainly legitimized. What was probably most reassuring to the church authorities was the fact that the question of educational reform soon became a political dead issue. While it is true that the Labour Party continued to argue for greater state involvement and a greater diffusion of power in the system, it was largely politically impotent. That it made little headway in the policies it advocated is probably best illustrated in the defeat in the general election of 1932 of its great educational spokesman, and by the leader of the party, Mr. T.J. O'Connell.¹³² The two major parties, Cumann na n Gaedheal and Fianna Fail, were evidently in agreement that change in the educational status quo was either undesirable or at least politically inexpedient. The issues in the general elections of 1927 and 1932 were constitutional and economic.¹³³ Education was not an issue of contention.¹³⁴ It did appear that Fianna Fail favoured the idea of a council of education,

but this was not an election issue. As we shall see, de Valera's commitment to educational change was no greater than that of his predecessor in office.

Footnotes

¹Independent, 27 September 1922.

²An editorial in the Catholic Bulletin (Vol. XIII, No. 1, January 1923) welcomed the closing of the college which it described as "un-Irish." It also warned that there should be no interference with the Catholic training colleges — the "keystone of Catholic Education in Ireland."

³Report of the Department of Education, 1924-25 (Dublin: Stationary Office, 1926), p. 5.

⁴Ibid., p. 6.

⁵Ibid., p. 8.

⁶Ibid., p. 7.

⁷Report of the Department of Education, 1925-26-27 (Dublin: Stationary Office, 1928), p. 9.

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⁹National Library of Ireland, Ms. 15,440, documents of Aireacht na Gaedhilge.

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⁸⁰ Donald H. Akenson, The Irish Education Experiment: The National System of Education in the Nineteenth Century (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), p. 204.

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⁸⁴ A. Dale Tussing, Irish Educational Expenditures -- Past, Present and Future (Dublin: Economic and Social Research Institute, Paper No. 92, May 1978), p. 27.

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⁸⁶ T.J. O'Connell, History of the INTO, p. 95.

⁸⁷ Dail Eireann Debates, Vol. XIV, col. 1012 (24 February 1926).

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⁸⁹ T.J. O'Connell, History of the INTO, p. 97.

⁹⁰ At the INTO congress in Waterford in April 1929, a resolution critical of this tendency was adopted. It was denounced by Professor Corcoran who vigorously championed religiously controlled schools. See "Notes on Current Educational Topics," Irish Monthly, Vol. LVII, No. 671 (May 1929), p. 226.

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⁹³ Irish Catholic Directory, 1902, p. 441.

⁹⁴ Irish Catholic Directory, 1911, p. 502.

⁹⁵ Irish Catholic Directory, 1915, p. 499.

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Library of Ireland. Cosgrave did mention the educational
achievements of his government in the campaign of 1927. The most
striking reform, in his opinion, was in the promotion of Irish.
This was a policy with which Fianna Fail totally agreed.

HAND IN HAND

Eamon de Valera, who led his Fianna Fail party to victory in the general election of 1932, was to dominate Irish political life for many decades. ~~As one of the few surviving leaders of the 1916~~ rebellion, he was held in a special awe by the populace. This, combined with the almost dictatorial power he wielded over his party,¹ meant that his ideas would greatly influence the direction Irish society would take during his years of hegemony. However, he was not one to question the role of the church in education and, consequently, church and state would be able to work "hand in hand" in the administration of schooling.

A Catholic Nation

De Valera received his early education from the Christian Brothers and later attended Blackrock College, an exclusive secondary school run by the Holy Ghost Fathers.² A loyal product of such an education, he remained throughout his life a devout Catholic and a daily attender at Mass.³ His Catholicism was in fact of the peculiarly Irish variety -- strict and puritanical.

Tied to this religious outlook was de Valera's political philosophy which was essentially conservative. On coming to power his aims were idealistic and constitutional -- he hoped to revive the Irish language, end partition, and rewrite the constitution leading

ultimately to the total break with Britain? He did not favour industrialization, and economic prosperity was never one of his objectives. His ideal was a nation of frugal, virtuous peasants. There would be room for some social evolution, but nothing that would disrupt the status quo.⁴

~~In fact in his first decade of power de Valera did make some~~
 modest improvements in social services. House building was given considerable impetus, unemployment insurance was extended, some working conditions were regulated and provision was made for the support of the aged, blind, widows and orphans.⁵ Ironically, this type of legislation merely followed British leads and never with the same generosity or comprehensiveness. Irish socialists had argued before independence that separation from England was a prerequisite to social justice. However, had Ireland remained in the United Kingdom she would have benefitted far sooner from government social services. De Valera's social legislation must not be construed as a commitment to the concept of the welfare state. Much of what was done was an attempt to steal the thunder of the Labour party's program and to prevent unfavourable comparisons with the services provided in Northern Ireland. The role of the state would be strictly limited in de Valera's ideal society of self-sufficient peasants. His words on St. Patrick's Day 1935 reflect this view:

. . . . Ireland remained a Catholic nation, and as such set the eternal destiny of man high above the 'isms' and idols of the day. Her people would accept no system that decried or imperilled that destiny. So long as that was their attitude none of the forms of state-worship now prevalent could flourish in their land; the state would be confined to its proper

functions as guardian of the rights of the individual and the family, co-ordinator of the activities of its citizens.⁶

This was a statement that could easily have been made by his Cumann na nGaedheal predecessors in office or by any of the ecclesiastical spokesmen who wrote on the functions of the state around this time.

~~But there was something else in the statement that was perhaps~~ more significant. De Valera seemed to be saying that the Irish nation was a peculiarly Catholic entity. And there is some evidence to suggest that Fianna Fail regarded itself as the most Catholic of the political parties — despite the fact that its leadership was derived from the losing side in the civil war and had been condemned by the hierarchy for its activities at that time. As Sean T. O'Kelly, one of de Valera's lieutenants, put it in 1929:

We of the Fianna Fail Party believe that we speak for the big body of Catholic opinion. I think I could say, without qualification of any kind, that we represent the big element in Catholicity.⁷

It is certainly true that once in power Fianna Fail displayed an almost deferential attitude towards the church. While this had been evident also under the previous regime, de Valera and his colleagues appeared less willing to make concessions to the sensibilities of non-Catholics. Speaking at a reception for the Papal Legate during the Thirty-First International Eucharistic Congress which was held in Dublin in 1932, the Fianna Fail leader implied that the Irish nation identified itself with Catholicism:

Repeatedly, over more than three hundred years, our people, ever firm in their allegiance to our ancestral Faith, and unswerving even to death in their devotion to the See of Peter, endured in full measure unmerited trials by war, by devastation, and by confiscation.⁸

There was, perhaps, some historical justification for the identification of nation with faith, but statements of this sort can hardly have been reassuring to non-Catholics. Even more disturbing, in all probability, were the Irish government's declarations of homage to the Holy See. In May 1937, on the occasion of the Pope's eightieth birthday, de Valera sent the following message to Cardinal Pacelli, the Papal Secretary of State:

I have the honour to request Your Eminence to present to the Holy Father the devoted homage of the members of the Government and of the people of Saorstát Eireann. . . .

And when Cardinal Pacelli was elected Pope as Pius XII, the Irish leader responded in a similar vein:

I beg your Holiness to accept the profound homage and congratulations of the Irish Government and people on your accession to the Throne of St. Peter. . . .

That de Valera's was to be a Catholic government for a Catholic people was even further underlined in the new constitution which he successfully put before the country in 1937. The Free State constitution of 1922 was secular/liberal in tone, provided for a governor-general and required an oath of allegiance to the reigning monarch of members of the Irish assembly. The document of 1937 not only weakened the imperial link by abolishing the oath and the office of governor-general, but it also gave the new state -- to be called Eire -- a distinctly Catholic flavour. It recognized "the special position of the Holy Catholic Apostolic and Roman church as the guardian of the faith professed by the great majority of the citizens" and in its social provisions it followed closely the contours of Catholic dogma. Laws allowing for the dissolution of

marriage, for instance, were prohibited.¹¹ Small wonder that Cardinal MacRory, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, should describe the new constitution as "a great Christian document, full of faith in God as the Creator, Supreme Lawgiver and Ruler, and full also of wise and carefully thought out provision for the upbuilding and guidance of a Christian State."¹²

Throughout de Valera's first term of office, which ran until 1948, his Minister for Education was Thomas Derrig, with the exception of one brief period between September 1939 and June 1940 when the portfolio was held first by Sean T. O'Reilly and later by de Valera himself.¹³ Derrig had once been headmaster of Ballina Technical School but had lost his position for refusing to recognize the Free State.¹⁴ During Fianna Fail's opposition days he had been shadow Minister for Lands and had shown some ability in this area.¹⁵

According to T.J. O'Connell, whose judgement was undoubtedly partisan, Derrig was never completely at home in directing educational policy.¹⁶ In all likelihood, he was given this particular assignment in recognition of his unquestioned zeal for the promotion of the Irish language. The appointment seemed to imply that de Valera's education program would differ little from that of his predecessors.

The Council of Education

One unresolved issue from Cosgrave's days in power was the question of an advisory council of education. It will be recalled

that in May 1931 de Valera had spoken in favour of such a body in the Dail. However, on the same occasion he was careful to emphasize his support for the voluntary principle in education, adding that Ireland was "fortunate in having . . . a system that is not completely a State controlled system."¹⁷ At any rate, that Fianna Fail evidently favoured the establishment of an advisory council prompted the ASTI to approach Mr. Derrig in 1932 to seek clarification of his attitude. The Minister was far from encouraging and suggested that only the teachers favoured the idea.¹⁸

This rebuff led to a meeting in 1933 of all the major bodies involved in education to consider the necessity of a council. The adoption of a unified stand on the question proved elusive, however, because of the unflinching opposition of the Catholic Headmaster's Association. The headmasters argued that were the council a representative body, it would hold such divergent views on educational problems that its advice to the minister would be worthless.¹⁹

And Mr. Derrig concurred with this opinion. He told the Dail that he could not see what useful function a council of education would serve.²⁰ In the following year he again rejected the idea, adding that the composition of such a body would prove problematic (an argument voiced often in ecclesiastical quarters) and that the Dail itself provided a satisfactory forum for the discussion of educational issues.²¹

The CHA, which always acted in close co-operation with the bishops, was in all probability voicing the position of the hierarchy on the matter. Church and state appeared to be closing ranks to

prevent the establishment of a third force in the educational power structure. There were to be but two powers in education -- the state, with its control of the curriculum, and the church with its control over teachers and the interpretation of the curriculum.

As D.H. Akenson has pointed out, ecclesiastical opposition to the idea of the council gradually declined as the vocationalist or distributist concept of social relations advocated in some papal encyclicals found acceptance.²² The council came to be seen in the same light as the guilds of employers and workers which were supposed to solve labour problems amicably and without confrontation. A consequence of this change of heart and of the continued agitation by the teachers for the establishment of such a body was that the interparty government which came to power in 1948 established the Council of Education in 1950. By this time the decision was by no means a controversial one. And the Council itself, in its composition alone, was not one that was likely to disturb the status quo. Of its thirty-two members, eight, or twenty-five per cent, were Catholic religious, including the chairman Canon O'Keefe.²³

The Minister for Education at the time, General Richard Mulcahy, stressed that the Council of Education was not established out of any differences of opinion between church and state vis-a-vis educational policy. In an address to the inaugural meeting of the Council he was careful to point out that the state fully accepted that "the foundation and crown of youth's entire training is religion" and that no restrictions would be placed on the role of the church in the schools. Canon O'Keefe, in reply, said that the great advantage

of the Irish school system lay in the universal agreement which prevailed on the question of the legitimate functions of both church and state.²⁴

Predictably enough, the Council of Education proved to be anything but a radical body. There was no question of it assuming the role of a 'third power' in the education structure. The fact that its function was purely advisory was guarantee enough against this. But even in the advice it did tender there was nothing except total support of the established order.²⁵ What had begun in the 1920s as an attempt to give parents, teachers and the layman in general a greater voice in educational decision-making, ended in the appointment of an unimaginative mouthpiece for the status quo.

The Lay Teacher in Limbo

A further educational difficulty inherited by the Fianna Fail government centered on the position of lay teachers in the school system. For those who worked in the Catholic secondary schools the major problem continued to be that of security of tenure. At the ASTI annual convention of 1933 it was agreed that an acceptable procedure would be one in which teachers served with notice of dismissal had the option of appealing to the Minister for Education. This right was enjoyed by teachers in Northern Ireland. But Mr. Derrig refused to entertain such a proposal and was adamant in his refusal to become involved in the dispute.²⁶ Like his predecessors in office, the Minister knew that the church would vehemently oppose any effort by the state to interfere with the sensitive question of teacher

dismissal and appointment.

It became clear to the teachers that government intervention on their behalf was out of the question and that only through direct negotiations with the headmasters could they hope to improve their situation. One difficulty lay in the fact that no one body represented the headmasters. The Christian Brothers operated independently of the diocesan authorities as did some orders of nuns and priests. The Catholic Headmasters' Association represented the diocesan colleges and the schools of those orders and congregations subject to diocesan jurisdiction. It was the largest and most important body on the management side and agreement with it would probably lead to agreement elsewhere -- as had happened during the strike of 1920.

A serious round of negotiations between the ASTI and the CHA on the question of tenure began in March 1935. At a meeting with Dr. John Charles McQuaid, chairman of the CHA at the time and later to be made Archbishop of Dublin, the teachers proposed that, (a) a quota of lay teachers be employed in Catholic schools over a specified period of time (reminiscent of Birrell's scheme), (b) in the case of a lay teacher being made redundant, a position be found for him in a school under similar management, and (c) that an appeal board be established composed of three teachers, three representatives of the school management body, and an independent chairman.²⁷

These proposals were rejected, but McQuaid promised that the principles of Christian justice and charity would be applied to the teachers. He also allowed, however, that the ASTI could become

involved in an appeal against dismissal made to a bishop or superior of a religious order. This concession led to an agreement with the CHA in 1936. It was less than the teachers had hoped for, but the headmasters had shown an uncharacteristic willingness to bend on the question of ASTI involvement in the appeal procedure.²⁸ The agreement required that a headmaster should first inform his bishop or religious superior of his intention to serve notice on a lay teacher. The teacher was also to be informed of this intent, of the reasons for the dismissal, and of his right of appeal to the bishop or superior of the order. The teacher could conduct his own appeal or involve his association in the process. Notice of dismissal could be served no less than three months prior to the completion of the school year.²⁹

In the course of the following year the superiors of teaching congregations and orders not represented by the CHA acceded to a similar agreement with the ASTI.³⁰ The negotiations surrounding the appeal procedure also led to written contracts of employment for secondary teachers for the first time.³¹ The role of Dr. McQuaid was particularly crucial in all of these discussions and he used his considerable influence to persuade his more intransigent fellow-clerics of the need for agreement.

How did it work? The records of the ASTI show that in the period 1937-1950 about half of the dismissal cases handled under the terms of the agreement were successfully appealed.³² This represented a substantial improvement but did not allay discontent. Writing in 1949, 'A Lay Teacher' complained bitterly about the low salaries which had not changed since 1924, lack of job security, and

lack of promotion opportunities. He (or she) was particularly critical of the continuing tendency of many schools to dismiss lay teachers to make way for religious. That some schools employed unqualified religious as teachers was also attacked.³³ This particular abuse was again assailed a few years later by another secondary teacher, T.J. McKilgott. He accused the Department of Education of subservience to the church in not insisting that all teachers have the same qualifications.³⁴ It mattered little. At no stage did the Irish government consider interfering with the internal mechanisms of the secondary schools. There was a tacit understanding between church and state of their mutual roles in such matters. Teachers were unambiguously the employees of privately-owned schools. In most cases it meant that they were employed by agencies of the Catholic church. Nor did this change in time, even when the major portion of their salaries came from the public coffers.

The lay primary teachers, though possessing more bargaining power because of their organizational and numerical superiority, were nevertheless often the hapless victims of the church/state accord in education. Shortly after de Valera had come to power the Department of Education perceived what it regarded as a surplus of trained primary teachers. It was planned to solve this problem in two ways: impose compulsory retirement on some of those already in employment; and place limits on the numbers to be admitted to the profession.

Prospective teachers were admitted to the training colleges from one of four categories: the preparatory colleges; the pupil-teacher scheme -- a type of apprenticeship program;³⁵ open competition

Among school leavers; and university graduates, untrained assistants, and religious. Some of these avenues of recruitment were now to be closed. The first retrenchment measure consisted of reducing by ten per cent the number admitted to Catholic men's training colleges in 1934.³⁶ Further reductions, affecting both men and women were implemented in the following year. In fact, were it not for the commitments made to those in the preparatory colleges and in the pupil-teacher scheme, greater cutbacks would have been possible. At the same time it was decided that from then on men trained as primary teachers in the United Kingdom would not be recognized as qualified by the Department.³⁷ A year later women trained in Britain or Northern Ireland were also excluded from recognition.³⁸ The last group of students were admitted to the pupil-teacher scheme in 1936. When they would complete their apprenticeship in 1938 this program would be at an end.³⁹ In 1938 the open competition examination for school leavers wishing to enter the training colleges was suspended. In 1939 a similar fate befell the examination for admission to the Catholic preparatory colleges.⁴⁰ At that stage virtually all avenues of recruitment to primary teaching had been closed to the laity.

And opportunities for lay women to teach were reduced even further. In 1934 it was decided that women who were appointed to a teaching position after July 1st of that year would be obliged to retire at marriage.⁴¹ In addition, a regulation introduced in 1938 forced women teachers to retire upon reaching the age of sixty or upon completion of thirty-five years of pensionable service, whichever was later.⁴² But vive la difference! Mr. Derrig admitted that while

this rule of compulsory retirement would apply to female religious employed with fixed salaries in classification schools, it would not apply to those religious working under the capitation system. As the overwhelming majority of convent schools operated under the capitation system, female religious would hardly be affected by the retirement rule at all. In 1939-40, for instance, there were 322 capitation convent schools, while only 36 opted for the classification or personal salary system.⁴³

Nor did the virtual close down of teacher training facilities restrict the religious in any way. In fact as the doors of these institutions slammed shut on the laity it became possible to train even greater numbers of religious as teachers. In 1934, the very year that cuts were first made in the numbers admitted to the training colleges, the Report of the Department of Education announced that the "provision of increased facilities for the training of nuns" was under consideration.⁴⁴ In the following year, which saw further restrictions on the entry of the laity to teaching, the Report of the Department announced with "pleasure" that the hostel for nuns at Carysfort Training College would be extended to accommodate double the present number of students.⁴⁵ A year later the Department's Report was unreservedly enthusiastic about what had been achieved to date in this respect:

Remarkable progress has been made with the extension of the hostel for Nuns at Our Lady of Mercy Training College, Carysfort Park, Blackrock, and it is hoped that the new building will be completed in time for the opening of the 1937 academic year. It will be possible to accommodate 100 Nuns annually instead of 40, as at present, but, in order that the numbers in each year

of training subsequently may be proportionate, not more than 70 will, in all probability, be admitted in the first year.⁴⁶

What this meant was that while opportunities for laymen and women to enter teaching were being restricted, those for religious were expanding. In 1943, for instance, there were 76 nuns and 15 lay women in the teacher training program at Carysfort. St. Patrick's College, which trained Catholic men, was closed that year. Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, had 30 students, presumably lay women.⁴⁷ The Christian Brothers and the de la Salle Brothers operated their own training colleges which were recognized by the Department of Education and received a state grant.⁴⁸ These institutions were not affected by the cutbacks elsewhere.

It might be expected that government policy over these years would have resulted in a decrease in the overall number of lay people engaged in primary teaching and an increase in religious teachers. This is in fact what happened. The Reports of the Department of Education classified primary teachers in four ways:

1. Principal and assistant teachers -- these were employed in classification schools and received personal salaries. They were overwhelmingly lay but included in this category also were religious teachers who received personal salaries.
2. Junior assistant mistresses -- partly trained, poorly paid and without pensions, these lay women were the most exploited class in the teaching profession.
3. Monks and nuns as the minimum recognized staff of capitation schools -- this category represented a minimum number and of

course many more religious were often employed in capitation schools than the figures given would suggest.

4. Lay assistant teachers in capitation religious schools -- this is self-explanatory.

In looking at the figures for the number of teachers in each of these categories employed in the years 1932-33 and 1944-45 which roughly encompass the period when these policies were in effect, we see the following:⁴⁹

Category	Teachers Employed	Teachers Employed
	1932-33	1944-45
1	9,996	8,685
2	1,767	1,386
3	1,852	2,024
4	721	749

The total number of laity employed (categories 1, 2 and 4) declined from 12,480 to 10,820, a percentage loss of 13.3. In the same period, clerical primary teachers increased in number from 1,852 to 2,024, a percentage gain of 9.3. On a more specific basis, nuns in the teaching profession increased from 1,573 to 1,656 in the period under consideration -- a gain of 5.4 per cent. 'Monks,' or more accurately, brothers, increased from 279 to 368, a percentage gain of 31.8. The modest increase in the number of teaching nuns is most likely due to the fact that many who entered the training program when facilities for them expanded at Carysfort were already employed as teachers in capitation schools, though without qualification to do so. The exclusion of the laity, then, allowed many untrained nuns to

receive training but also allowed for an overall increase in their number. Clerical teachers, as a proportion of the total primary teaching force, increased from 12.9 per cent to 15.7 per cent as a consequence of government policy at this time. And these figures are conservative. It should be borne in mind that an indeterminable number of religious were included in category 1 and that category 3 did not represent the total number of religious working in capitulation schools.

The policy of discouraging the laity while encouraging the clergy to enter teaching was perfectly consistent with a widely-held belief at the time: that those in the religious life were most eminently suited for the instruction of the young. Some lay teachers questioned this premise, but in this they were largely alone. The conventional wisdom of the time dictated otherwise. The moral dimension of education was deemed its first and most essential component and who better suited to the inculcation of morality than the Catholic clergy itself? It should be noted that opportunities for the laity to enter primary teaching again appeared in the 1940s. Some students were admitted to the preparatory colleges in 1942 and St. Patrick's Training College was to open once more in 1946.⁵⁰ These gestures were a response to a growing need for teachers, not a recognition of equal opportunity for the layman. When educational economies were required, it was the dispensible layman who suffered.

Gaelic Ireland

Perhaps the most distinguishing feature of the Fianna Fail education policy was the singular zeal with which the Irish language was promoted in the schools. The ideal of a Gaelic Ireland was an intrinsic component of that uncompromising form of nationalism with which de Valera and his followers have been associated. With the arrival of the Fianna Fail deputies into the Dail in 1927 an immediate increase in the number of speeches made in Irish is noticeable. In fact very few were made prior to that date. This is not to suggest that the Cumann na nGaedheal regime neglected the ancestral tongue. It was, after all, the first Free State government that inaugurated the revival program. But it never approached the task with the same blind dedication as its successors.

It seems probable that the selection of Thomas Derrig as Minister for Education was a direct result of his noted enthusiasm for the linguistic revival. One readily observed departure from established custom which he immediately inaugurated was his habit of presenting the annual education estimates speech entirely in Irish. And these speeches were generally devoted in large part to the revival campaign. The estimates speech, usually given in March or April, was an important occasion as it indicated proposed government spending and priorities for the coming year. Opposition deputies naturally complained when no English translations of these statements were provided. It was argued that only about ten per cent of the assembly understood what was being said.⁵¹ The fear was expressed

that too much haste was being used in promoting Irish and that aggressive policies were being pushed through under a camouflage of unintelligible speeches. But the advancement of the Irish language itself was only part of a new national consciousness which Derrig was hoping to create. He often referred to the use of Irish history to inculcate patriotism and the ideal combination of all, in his opinion, was the teaching of Irish history through the medium of Irish -- a process which would undoubtedly lead to an edifying level of national pride.⁵²

It should be noted that from 1934 onwards Derrig did supply an English translation of his estimates speech to members of the assembly. The rules did not oblige him to do so but he may have been stung by the criticisms his Irish-only approach had received. Or perhaps two years in office had given him the confidence to face the Dail unprotected by the armour of incomprehension.⁵³

But what were these policies which Derrig appeared reluctant, at least initially, to divulge to the country? In fact they were no different from those operative under Cumann na nGaedheal. Though slightly more draconian and prescriptive, they were essentially the same both in means and ends. The pruning of the primary curriculum to allow more time for Irish instruction was a tactic adopted by the Cosgrave administration on occasion. Derrig found such a policy also to his liking. In the autumn of 1934 rural science was made optional in all primary schools and the time devoted to mathematics was reduced. English became optional in the first class (grade) and the English program was lightened in all classes. The teaching of Irish

was thus expanded considerably.⁵⁴ Derrig readily admitted that standards in English could not be expected to be as high as in former years as a consequence of these policies.⁵⁵

Increased attention to Irish was also demanded of the academic secondary schools. They were informed by the Department of Education in June 1932 that Irish would be a required subject for the Leaving Certificate as of 1934.⁵⁶ In other words, students unable to achieve a pass in Irish in the examination would not receive a certificate. At the same time schools were threatened with proportionate reductions in the capitation grants they earned unless all students followed an approved course in Irish.⁵⁷ Nor were teachers at this level to be immune from the pressures of the revival campaign. A new regulation of the Registration Council of Secondary School teachers required future applicants to show evidence of a competent knowledge of Irish, effective the beginning of February 1942.⁵⁸ Log~~e~~ does not supply us with a ready explanation of why this qualification was demanded of those who wished to teach physics, music, etc. Perhaps it had something to do with the notion that if schools were to be effective agents of cultural transformation, they should be staffed only with teachers dedicated to the ideals of the desired change.

The intensification of the efforts to promote Irish in the schools which characterized de Valera's years of power did not escape criticism. The Cumann na nGaedheal party had, of course, promoted the revival while in office and could now hardly oppose what was essentially a continuation of that policy. But its leaders in the Dail urged

moderation generally -- a very necessary counterfoil to the zeal exhibited on the Fianna Fail benches.⁵⁹ The most consistent criticism came from independent members of the Dail, in particular Mr. James Dillon, son of John Dillon, the Parliamentary leader.

Dillon, though favorably disposed to the revival, opposed the use of Irish as a medium of instruction for children whose mother tongue was English.⁶⁰ His attacks on government policy became almost an annual ritual following the education estimates speech. He spoke of Irish becoming "something closely approximating to a scourge and a symbol of tyranny" and a "detestable imposition" alienating many who had previously supported the language.⁶¹

Dillon's principal argument centred on what he perceived to be widespread parental dissatisfaction with the use of Irish as a teaching medium and advocated an investigation to determine the exact extent of such feelings. But Derrig refused to be moved by these appeals. He saw in the proposals of the National Programme Conference of 1926 a mandate which could not be overturned. If parental or public attitudes had changed in the interim, it was of no consequence. There would be no survey of parental attitudes:

I cannot see that parents as a body can decide this matter. I am, I think, in possession of greater knowledge and greater experience of the matter since I have occupied the position of Minister for Education than any group. Parents are always free to make representations in this matter. I think the Deputy will recognize that parents may be misled by the propaganda that has been going on, not only now but for many years past, against the national policy in regard to Irish.

The appeal to the authority of the National Programme Conference was particularly unsatisfactory as Derrig consistently refused to release

for public scrutiny the evidence upon which the Conference Report was based.⁶³ 'Parental rights in education' was as much a slogan of convenience for the state as it was for the church.

There was also criticism of the government's policy from those who had no political axe to grind. Most disturbing, perhaps, was the evidence of Cormac Breathnach, president of the INTO in 1936 and a Fianna Fail member of the Dail. Speaking in Irish, he told the assembly of his experiences teaching through the medium of the ancestral tongue. At the time he was teaching a sixth class group of boys whom he had taught every year since they had been in third class. Of these fifty boys, only about ten had been able to benefit from instruction through Irish. They were Dublin working class children whose parents would have them out working by the time they reached the age of fourteen. Realizing that teaching through Irish had impaired their general knowledge, Breathnach had switched to English in the previous year so that they would bring at least some information with them when they entered the world of work.⁶⁴

This indictment from the president of the INTO reflected a growing disillusionment on the part of the primary teachers with the practice of teaching through the medium of Irish. As early as 1924 the original program had been the subject of some scepticism and the Second National Programme Conference was subsequently called at the instigation of the teachers. No fundamental changes, however, arose from these deliberations. In 1930 the INTO adopted a resolution calling for "an educational assessment of the use of Irish as a

teaching medium in schools in English-speaking districts."⁶⁵ This appeal was ignored with characteristic governmental intransigence.

In 1934, at a meeting with leading Department of Education officials, INTO representatives made the following statement:

The continuous teaching of a new language throughout the school day imposes an undue strain on children of tender years. They tend to become weary and listless during the latter portion of the day and the teacher's energy is largely wasted.⁶⁶

Lack of response on this occasion prompted the teachers to take matters into their own hands. At its annual congress of 1936 the INTO decided to conduct its own study -- a survey of the attitudes of those primary teachers experienced in teaching through the medium of Irish. The results were presented to the Minister for Education in the summer of 1941.⁶⁷ The vast majority of teachers who responded to the questionnaire (345 out of 390, to be precise) believed that the educational growth of English-speaking children taught in Irish was inhibited.⁶⁸ The report, then, indicated widespread dissatisfaction with existing policy among those very individuals upon whom the principal burden of reviving Irish had fallen. In addition, the teachers reported that parents generally were concerned at what they perceived to be inadequate educational standards achieved by their children. It was apparently "a common practice for parents to ask that infant children be provided with English primers so that they may be given in the home the instruction in English reading denied to them in the school"⁶⁹ -- surely an exemplary instance of parental responsibility in education.

When these findings were pressed on Mr. Derrig in the fall, he reacted with characteristic defensiveness. He questioned the

accuracy of some of the INTO conclusions, in particular the suggestion that infants suffered strain as a consequence of being taught through the medium of Irish. But he did confess that the inquiry was "a challenge clearly to the present policy of teaching infants in Irish or teaching other subjects through Irish in the schools."⁷⁰ Did this presage a change of heart? Not likely.

He added:

I do not think it would be to the advantage of the cause of Irish, or of education for that matter, to have a public controversy on this matter.⁷¹

The question of Irish, it seems, was not open to debate. And the futility of the entire exercise was surely increasingly apparent. Derrig himself some years previously had admitted that there was still no evidence that students were speaking Irish in playgrounds or on their way to and from school — even in schools where all teaching was conducted in that language.⁷²

That the advancement of the Irish language was the principal educational objective of the Fianna Fail government can hardly be questioned. But one curious anomaly remained. As an ironic legacy of the British era some teachers employed in the Gaeltacht or Irish-speaking areas were insufficiently fluent to conduct their teaching through Irish. These teachers had been appointed by the clerical school managers prior to the achievement of independence when Irish was not a prerequisite to employment. Even though this was the one setting in which instruction through Irish made sense, the government was unwilling to tamper with the managerial power of appointment and dismissal in order to secure Irish speaking teachers for the schools!⁷³

Irish was to be promoted by all means possible, but the managerial system was absolutely sacrosanct. In other words, all educational policies were subject to one qualification: they could not interfere with those prerogatives of power which the church accrued to itself in the school system.

A Bastion of the Faith

Education under de Valera was anything but an exciting enterprise. As an issue for discussion in the nation's parliament it was removed from cold storage once a year for the purposes of the estimates speech. Few contentious issues raised their heads on such occasions apart from that of teaching through the medium of Irish. And Dail deputies who questioned the wisdom of this policy invariably prefaced their criticisms with declarations of support for the language. Goodwill towards Irish appears to have been universal in the assembly. Or perhaps it would have been politically inexpedient to be openly otherwise. One might reasonably expect that if this goodwill had been genuine that the proportion of speeches in Irish would have increased in time as individual deputies acquired the fluency they were so anxious to see throughout the country. Yet there is no evidence that this happened. Irish was to be something imposed on the younger generations and, apart from teachers, few adults were required to learn it, and consequently few did.

There were other educational issues, of course. Opposition deputies annually deplored the appalling physical conditions of many primary schools, but the government could conveniently blame the

managers upon whom the responsibility for maintenance devolved.⁷⁴
 At no stage did anyone suggest that the managerial system itself be replaced. The idea of radical change was never mooted.

Dedication to the perpetuation of the existing social relations was a fundamental tenet of de Valera's political philosophy and his concept of education reflected this concern. In his ideal society of free virtuous peasants a minimum level of education would suffice for most. He readily conceded that nine tenths of the population would have to be satisfied with primary-level instruction only.⁷⁵ Secondary education, on the other hand, would be available to the favoured few who would form the future leadership of the country.⁷⁶

Educational opportunity was not only limited by these strict elitist assumptions, but what was offered in the schools was narrow indeed. De Valera believed that primary education should concentrate on the bare essentials — the three Rs with, of course, Irish. There should be no room for anything else:

I am for cutting off every frill possible so as to make certain that the essentials are properly done.⁷⁷

He was very much concerned that the state should get value for the money it invested in education. Teacher accountability was to be the order of the day:

I am less interested in the teacher's method of teaching than I am in the results he achieves, and the test I would apply would be the test of an examination. . . .⁷⁸

These views bore a striking resemblance to those espoused by Timothy Corcoran. And they proved a portent of things to come. For in 1943, two years after de Valera had aired these thoughts on education, the

Primary Certificate Examination was made compulsory for all students in sixth class.⁷⁹ This examination had been in existence for some years but as a purely voluntary ordeal. The majority of schools had, in fact, ignored it. And he would have burdened secondary students with a third externally-set examination but for the expense it would have entailed.⁸⁰

~~In his conception of the secondary curriculum de Valera was~~
also much in common with Timothy Corcoran. The emphasis was to be classical/academic with Latin given special recognition. De Valera was particularly proud that over eighty per cent of boys took that subject, a figure which surpassed that of Britain and the United States.⁸¹ And the reasons he gave for elevating Latin to this pre-eminent position had the same compelling logic as those advanced by the Reverend Professor:

... it is the language of the Church, and we like to know it from the point of view of being able to understand the language of the Church. Then again, it is traditional here, for one reason or another -- traditional in our education and, besides, it is a very good language.⁸²

The decision to devote such attention to Latin was, of course, in the hands of the individual schools, but it is necessary to point out that on the question of curricular emphasis, church and state were once more in accord.

De Valera's regime as a whole unquestionably won the support of the church. As early as 1933 Archbishop Harty of Cashel expressed his approval of the fact that during the recent election all political parties had spoken out in opposition to "Communistic and Materialistic ideals." The faith of the political leadership, in his opinion, was

secure.⁸³ Throughout these years ecclesiastical spokesmen perceived two principal dangers to the church: pleasure-seeking paganism and athiestic communism. Both were subjected to blistering attacks in Lenten pastorals and on such occasions as the opening of new schools and churches. Ireland, however, was seen to be a solid bastion of the faith in a world in which the church -- and even God himself -- were constantly under attack.⁸⁴ And the Irish school system was acclaimed as the very bedrock of that faith. Bishop Kimrane of Waterford, speaking at the opening of the annual convention of the ASTI in March 1937, articulated the satisfaction of the church in the following way:

We are fortunate here in Ireland that our educational system approaches so nearly the Christian ideal. We are fortunate in the harmonious relations existing between church and state, and in the position accorded to religious and moral education in our curricula. . . . This happy state in our educational system is a matter for special congratulation at the present time when there are so many agencies at work to poison and corrupt our youth. I look to the schools, and to the secondary schools particularly, to act as a corrective and antidote to these demoralising influences.⁸⁵

The government evidently concurred with these opinions. When opposition leaders suggested in the Dail that some re-organization might be desirable in the post-war period in view of what was being planned in England and elsewhere, Mr. Derrig made it clear that no fundamental changes would be considered. Church/state harmony on educational questions existed and this accord should not be threatened:

We have the happy position that we have Church and State working hand in hand, as I have just mentioned, and in regard to any development which may be considered necessary in the way of re-construction in the post-emergency period we shall have the satisfaction of knowing that we shall not have these very critical questions confronting us which divide nations so sharply, even in neighbouring countries. We shall not have these fundamental issues to face here. Thank God, we are all united on these fundamental matters in this country.⁸⁶

Footnotes

- ¹ T. Desmond Williams, "De Valera in Power" in F. MacManus (ed.), The Years of the Great Test, 1926-39 (Cork: Mercier, 1967), p. 37.
- ² J.H. Whyte, Church and State in Modern Ireland 1923-1970 (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1971), p. 76.
- ³ E. Rumpf and A.C. Hepburn, Nationalism and Socialism in Twentieth Century Ireland (Liverpool University Press, 1977), p. 99.
- ⁴ T.D. Williams, "De Valera in Power," pp. 40-41.
- ⁵ E. Rumpf, Nationalism and Socialism, p. 126.
- ⁶ "Mr. De Valera's Dilemmas," Round Table, Vol. XXV (1934-35), p. 551.
- ⁷ Dail Eireann Debates, Vol. XXX, co. 821 (5 June 1929).
- ⁸ Irish Catholic Directory, 1933, p. 607.
- ⁹ Irish Catholic Directory, 1938, p. 601.
- ¹⁰ Irish Catholic Directory, 1940, p. 634.
- ¹¹ D.H. Akenson's comments on de Valera's constitution, though brief, are by far the most instructive. See A Mirror to Kathleen's Face: Education in Independent Ireland 1922-1960 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press), p. 95.
- ¹² Irish Catholic Directory, 1939, p. 614.
- ¹³ See State Paper Office, Dublin Castle, Cabinet Papers S. 10711. Also T.J. O'Connell, History of the Irish National Teachers' Organization, 1868-1968 (Dublin: privately printed circa 1968), pp. 205-208.
- ¹⁴ D.R. O'Connor Lysaght, The Republic of Ireland (Cork: Mercier, 1970), p. 133.
- ¹⁵ T.J. O'Connell, History of the INTO, p. 209.
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ Dail Eireann Debates, Vol. XXXVIII, col. 1746 (21 May 1931).
- ¹⁸ P.J.N. Riordan, "The Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland, 1909-1968: Some Aspects of Its Growth and Development" (M.Ed. Thesis, National University of Ireland, 1975), p. 189.

- ¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 191-2.
- ²⁰ Dail Eireann Debates, Vol. XLVII, col. 95 (26 April 1933).
- ²¹ Dail Eireann Debates, Vol. LI, cols. 1608-09 (11 April 1934).
- ²² D.B. Akenson, A Mirror to Kathleen's Face, pp. 106-7.
- ²³ Council of Education, Terms of Reference and General Regulations, Names of Members of the Council, Addresses delivered by the Minister for Education and the Chairman at the Inaugural Meeting of the Council (Dublin: Stationary Office, 1950).
- ²⁴ Ibid., pp. 18-19.
- ²⁵ Reports of the Council of Education, 1954 and 1960 (Dublin: Stationary Office).
- ²⁶ P.J.N. Riordan; "ASTI," p. 95.
- ²⁷ Ibid., p. 98.
- ²⁸ Ibid., pp. 99-100.
- ²⁹ Ibid., p. 100.
- ³⁰ Ibid., pp. 101-104.
- ³¹ Ibid., p. 113.
- ³² Ibid., p. 111.
- ³³ 'A Lay Teacher,' "The Stop Gap Profession," Cork University Record, Easter 1949, pp. 22-23.
- ³⁴ T.J. McElliot, "Anybody May Teach Anything (and Probably Does)," Irish Times, 20 August 1953.
- ³⁵ Pupil teachers were selected from those who had obtained honours in Irish in the Intermediate Certificate examination. They were expected to study for the Leaving Certificate through the medium of Irish -- preferably in schools where all instruction was offered in Irish. In the first year of their program they also did some teaching under supervision in either the junior grades of the secondary school or in a primary school, if convenient. This was to give them some indication of their suitability for teaching.
- ³⁶ Report of the Department of Education, 1933-34, pp. 7-8.

- 37 Report of the Department of Education, 1934-35, pp. 9-10.
- 38 Report of the Department of Education, 1935-36, p. 8.
- 39 Report of the Department of Education, 1935-36, pp. 8-10.
- 40 Report of the Department of Education, 1937-38, p. 8.
- 41 Report of the Department of Education, 1933-34, pp. 7-8.
- 42 Report of the Department of Education, 1943-44, p. 12.
- 43 Report of the Department of Education, 1939-40.
- 44 Report of the Department of Education, 1933-34, pp. 7-8.
- 45 Report of the Department of Education, 1934-35, p. 9.
- 46 Report of the Department of Education, 1935-36, p. 10.
- 47 Report of the Department of Education, 1942-43.
- 48 Report of the Department of Education, 1942-43, p. 108.
- 49 Reports of the Department of Education, appropriate years.
- 50 Dail Eireann Debates, Vol. XCIV, col. 254 (13 June 1944).
- 51 Dail Eireann Debates, Vol. XLIV. See speeches by Messrs. Anthony and Byrne, cols. 799 and 809 (2 November 1932).
- 52 Dail Eireann Debates, Vol. XLIV, col. 691 (27 October 1932).
- 53 Dail Eireann Debates, Vol. LV, col. 1855 (3 April 1935).
- 54 Dail Eireann Debates, Vol. LV, col. 1924 (4 April 1935).
- 55 Dail Eireann Debates, Vol. LXI, col. 91 (24 March 1936).
- 56 Report of the Department of Education, 1932-33, p. 60.
- 57 Report of the Department of Education, 1931-32, p. 39.
- 58 Report of the Department of Education, 1941-42, p. 23.

59 This zeal is perhaps best illustrated by the statements of Donncha O Briain. This Fianna Fail member advocated the elimination of English from all primary schools as quickly as possible. See Dail Eireann Debates, Vol. XLVI, col. 2320 (5 April 1933).

60 For example, Dail Eireann Debates, Vol. XLVI, cols. 2121-2
6 April 1933.

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⁶¹ Dail Eireann Debates, Vol. LXI, cols. 113 and 117 (24 March 1936).

⁶² Dail Eireann Debates, Vol. LIX, col. 2197 (10 December 1935).

⁶³ Dail Eireann Debates, Vol. LXIII, cols. 1456-7 (21 July 1936).

⁶⁴ Dail Eireann Debates, Vol. LXI, cols. 134-5 (24 March 1936).

⁶⁵ This information was divulged in the Dail by Mr. McGilligan. Dail Eireann Debates, Vol. LXXVII, col. 770 (1 June 1942).

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., col. 657.

⁶⁸ Ibid., col. 778.

⁶⁹ Ibid., col. 780.

⁷⁰ Ibid., cols. 733-4.

⁷¹ Ibid., col. 735.

⁷² Dail Eireann Debates, Vol. LXI, col. 90 (24 March 1936).

⁷³ Dail Eireann Debates, Vol. LV, cols. 1988-2007 (4 April 1935).

⁷⁴ Dail Eireann Debates, Vol. LXVI, col. 123 (3 March 1937), for example.

⁷⁵ Dail Eireann Debates, Vol. LXXX, col. 1566 (6 June 1940).

⁷⁶ Ibid., col. 1573.

⁷⁷ Dail Eireann Debates, Vol. LXXXIII, col. 1097 (27 May 1941).

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Dail Eireann Debates, Vol. LXXXIX, col. 2358 (5 May 1943).

⁸⁰ Dail Eireann Debates, Vol. LXXXIII, col. 1119 (27 May 1941).

⁸¹ Dail Eireann Debates, Vol. LXXX, col. 1571 (6 June 1940).

- 1941).
- ⁸² Dail Eireann Debates, Vol. LXXXIII, col. 1318 (27 May 1941).
- ⁸³ Irish Catholic Directory, 1934, p. 578.
- ⁸⁴ See, for instance, Irish Catholic Directory, 1935, pp. 633 and 637 — comments of Archbishops of Dublin and Cashel respectively.
- ⁸⁵ Irish Catholic Directory, 1938, p. 594.
- ⁸⁶ Dail Eireann Debates, Vol. XCIV, col. 394 (13 June 1944).

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

The Concept of Control

The Roman Catholic church is an institution composed of both laity and clergy but which concentrates decision making in the hands of the latter. The relationship between these two groupings is by definition a paternalistic one as the clergy purport to teach a body of divinely revealed truths and dispense spiritual favours to a laity which otherwise would be deprived of such essentials. In the hierarchical power structure of the church the laity constitute a kind of disfranchised mass. Theological suppositions are not the product of consensus opinion, but of revelation which comes down through the clerical hierarchy. In a world of unquestionable eternal verities there is little room for individual inquiry or democratic debate.

The deliberate exclusion of the laity from any real involvement in ecclesiastical decisions has led to a concept of the church comprised of clergy only. This is not an unfair definition and is particularly appropriate in the Irish context. Not only were the Irish laity excluded from any administrative or authoritative role in their church, but they were often looked on with suspicion and distrust by the clergy -- a phenomenon noted by John Henry Newman during his stay in the country.¹ The continued refusal of the bishops in the nineteenth century to approve higher education for Catholics unless it was directly under their supervision is a further indication

of this distrust..

And on the question of Catholic schooling at other levels, there was no suggestion of partnership between laity and clergy. The bishops equated Catholic control with clerical control.² But how was 'control' defined? Professor T. Corcoran, in an addendum to the ~~Galaxy~~ ~~Vice-Royal~~ ~~Committee~~ ~~Report~~ of 1919, probably put it best:

The most essential issue in the Catholic nature of Catholic Schools is full Catholic control of the choice of teachers, and removal of teachers.³

In other words, as long as the clergy could guarantee the orthodoxy of those who instructed the young by controlling the hiring and firing of teachers, the Catholicity of the schools would remain intact. The managerial system in the national schools and the private nature of the secondary schools allowed for such control.

To what end was this control exercised? Ecclesiastical spokesmen referred to the essentially spiritual purpose of church involvement in education. The Rev. Michael Maher, S.J., explained the motive of the religious in this way:

It is not the diffusion of general knowledge, nor the advancement of secular learning. . . . It is the salvation of souls.⁴

Archbishop Byrne of Dublin, speaking of the Catholic ideal in education some years later, echoed this view: "The Church has only one ideal -- to save the immortal soul of the child."⁵

While this may have been a noble motive, and was undoubtedly sincerely held by many, there were other reasons why church leaders insisted on and vigorously defended the type of clerical control which prevailed in both primary and secondary education. The reasons had

to do with the continuing existence of the church as an institution and the perpetuation of its influence in society. It is suggested that Catholic schools -- and this is particularly true of those at the secondary level -- were the principal agencies for the recruitment of clergy and for the creation and maintenance of a middle class laity which was unquestioningly loyal to the church. The necessity for new blood in the clerical ranks is self-evident in terms of the survival of the church, but a loyal middle class was also vital. From this segment of society would come the political and professional leadership of the country and its attitude towards the role of the church in society would have an important effect on the fortunes of that institution. For the church requires not only that it be tolerated, but that its counsel be heeded in determining the social and political questions of the day.

Recruitment of Clergy

In the twin objectives of producing aspirants to the religious life and a loyal middle class, secondary schools were perceived to have a far more crucial role than those at the primary level. Consequently, the degree of clerical supervision in secondary education was far greater. Not only were the schools owned and operated by functionaries of the church, but the majority of teachers who worked within their walls were usually in the religious life. And of the two objectives outlined, the recruitment and training of clergy was by far the most important. In fact Canon Law dictates

that each diocese "should possess its seminary or college where a certain number of young persons should be trained for the clerical state."⁶ It was with this aim in mind that the church embarked on the establishment of a network of diocesan colleges throughout the country as soon as the relaxation of the Penal Laws permitted. The cultivation of potential candidates for the priesthood was and has remained their principal purpose.⁷ The overwhelming majority of other Catholic secondary schools, such as those operated by religious orders, functioned in a similar way.

The clerical recruitment function of Catholic schools was often commented on uncharitably by unsympathetic observers.

Professor W.K. Sullivan, President of Queen's College, Cork, in writing to his friend, Lord Emly, some time in the 1870s had this to say of the schools:

They are intended to form nuns and priests for missions or as Diocesan Schools, at home. The secular education of the boys is a very secondary consideration.⁸

In the early years of this century, F. Hugh O'Donnell, whose anti-clerical credentials were impeccable, made the following observations regarding the education offered to Irish girls in convent schools:

The poor things are driven wholesale into the vows of religious sisterhood, and exported for works of mercy to every race and clime of civilization and barbarism, where their helpless heroism and gentle incompetence achieve a great deal more harm to themselves than good to humanity. . . . Often, of course, they become nuns in the convents which gave them their own non-education, and help in turn to non-educate other generations of poor Irish girls.⁹

Michael J.F. McCarthy, who was no more enamoured of Catholic

schools than O'Donnell, made similar observations around the same time:

The only knowledge of the world available to nuns is derived from reading bishops' pastorals, which describe the 'immoral literature,' the 'dens of seductive vice,' the 'irreligious treatment of the dead at wakes,' the 'drunkenness and delirium tremers,' and all the other horrors of life in the outside world. The result of a convent education is that many of the more emotional and sensitive of our Catholic girls become nuns themselves from sheer fright, as the easiest way of solving the horrible problem of life thus presented to them.¹⁰

McCarthy also spoke of Catholic boys' schools as "factories for the manufacture of home and foreign priests."¹¹

In more recent times, other writers have also drawn attention to clerical recruitment through education. Donal McCarthy has suggested that the secondary schools "turned out ready-made seminarians"¹² while Donald H. Akenson has pointed out the remarkable success of the clergy in reproducing their own kind in the schools.¹³

Not that ecclesiastical leaders ever denied that they sought increases in the clerical ranks or that education played a crucial role in the process. Speaking at the dedication of a new church in February 1928, Archbishop Gilmartin of Tuam urged the boys and girls present to create a society which would give "many a good son to the priesthood, and many a fair flower to the gardens of the cloister."¹⁴ This was not to suggest that Ireland was in any way inadequate in that respect. In an address to the Railways and Auxiliary Services Branch of St. Joseph's Young Priests Society in Dublin in January 1937, the Rev. A. Gwynn, S.J., boasted that there was "an amazing harvest of vocations in Ireland. Young boys, almost in every parish, are

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clamouring for an opportunity to become priests . . ."¹⁵ Likewise, speaking at the annual congress of the INTO at Killarney in 1940, Bishop O'Brien of Kerry gave thanks to God that there was a lack of vocations in his diocese and he attributed that happy state of affairs to the "God-fearing men and women teachers" in the schools.¹⁶

This was a tacit acknowledgement that even lay teachers in primary schools were perceived to have a role in swelling the ranks of the seminaries.

But it was generally believed in ecclesiastical circles that religious teachers were far more effective in this work. In 1956, when the Bishop of Killala decided to introduce the Marist Brothers to take over a formerly all-lay primary schools in Ballina, Co. Mayo, he gave as his reason the insufficiency of religious vocations in the diocese which he hoped the Brothers would change.¹⁷

It is certainly true that another congregation, the Irish Christian Brothers, were eminently successful in recruiting candidates for the religious life. In fact when the Christian Brothers first ventured into the area of intermediate education in the mid-nineteenth century (they were founded ostensibly to offer primary instruction to poor boys), they did so with the encouragement of Archbishop Murray of Dublin who realized that "if the Brothers had schools for boys whose parents were able to pay a moderate fee, the Congregation would get many suitable postulants among them."¹⁸ The rapid expansion of the congregation and its schools suggests that this prediction was indeed realized. But the Brothers not only recruited the young to their own ranks. The priesthood also benefitted from

their efforts. For instance, when Archbishop Marty of Cashel spoke at the Christian Brothers' secondary school at Thurles in February 1933, he praised the school for its religious spirit. A true indicator of that zeal, in his opinion, was that no fewer than eight boys left the school in the previous year to prepare for the priesthood in various seminaries.¹⁹

Nor was this an exception, it seems. When Brother J.P. Noonan, Superior General of the Christian Brothers, visited Rome in 1934, he found that there were over 170 past pupils of the Brothers' schools studying for the priesthood in ecclesiastical colleges. It was arranged that all of these students would gather together for an audience with the Pope. His Holiness, who was apparently deeply moved on the occasion, said that no more pleasing illustration of the work of the order could be presented to him than this 'rich harvest' of vocations.²⁰

But let us examine the success of these efforts in more concrete terms. E.R. Norman claims that the size of the Catholic priesthood increased rapidly in the first half of the nineteenth century.²¹ This should not be a matter of any great surprise as the Irish Catholic population was also experiencing great growth during this time. But even after the devastation of the famine the numbers entering the religious life continued to increase. Michael J.F. McCarthy gives the following figures:²²

	<u>Catholic population</u>	<u>Priests, monks, nuns</u>
1861	4,505,265	5,955
1901	3,308,661	14,145
	decrease of 27%	increase of 137%

These figures are corroborated by Emmet Larkin.²³ In the twentieth century a similar pattern prevailed:²⁴

	<u>Catholic population</u>	<u>Priests</u>	<u>Brothers</u>	<u>Nuns</u>
1901	3,308,661	3,438	1,159	8,031
1951	3,222,729	5,135	1,625*	13,360
	decrease 2.6%	increase 40%	increase 40%	increase 66%

*This figure is for the Republic area only.

A Spiritual Empire

But these figures belie the true situation. For Irish schools and colleges not only supplied clergy to the home parishes, they also sent a steady stream of them abroad. The Irish diaspora which followed the famine of the 1840s presented the church with a great challenge. Religious had to be found to minister to the needs of the emigrants in their new homes and the Irish schools dutifully produced them. The United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and England, where Irish Catholics had settled in substantial numbers, were the destinations of most religious who left Ireland during the nineteenth century.²⁵ In fact, by the early years of the twentieth century roughly 20-40 percent of the secular priests ordained annually in Ireland were destined for work abroad.²⁶ It seems that by that time the Irish Catholic church, both at home and abroad, had completed its work of consolidation. In the English-speaking world a solid network of parishes and dioceses had been established and the Catholic emigrant was assured of continued spiritual guidance at the

hands of familiar pastors though in strange places. The Irish Catholic school system was the very bedrock of this world-wide spiritual empire and church leaders were understandably hostile when the British government attempted to tamper with it in the early decades of the twentieth century.

The achievement of independence and the advent of a friendly native government only increased the confidence of the Irish church in her endeavours. The giant educational machine which annually pumped new blood into the clerical ranks continued to operate at high efficiency. To dismantle the machine was unthinkable. But a new market was needed for its products. Missions to what we now call the Third World proved the perfect answer.

In fact, this work got underway as early as 1916 with the foundation of the Maynooth Mission to China.²⁷ The priests who volunteered for this work — the seemingly impossible task of converting the Chinese to Catholicism — were later known as the Columban Fathers. By 1967 there were 560 of them working in various parts of Asia.

But the real surge in such activity took place in the 1920s and 1930s, those early confident decades of the Irish state. Here we find many new religious foundations geared specifically to the foreign missions. Some examples will suffice to illustrate the growth of this work. In 1922 the Missionary Sisters of St. Columban were founded to assist the Columban Fathers in Asia. By 1967 there were 116 of the Sisters active in the field.²⁸ The Holy Rosary Sisters of Killeshandra were established in 1924 for the African

missions. By 1967 more than 216 of them were involved in this work.²⁹ In 1932 St. Patrick's Foreign Missionary Society, whose members are usually known as the Kiltegan Fathers, was established and by 1967 there were over 190 of them working in Africa.³⁰ 1937 saw the foundation of the Medical Missionaries of Mary whose membership on the African front numbered 108 by 1967.³¹

All of this activity by the new societies was also accompanied by a great resurgence in the work of the older missionary bodies. For instance, the Irish province of the Holy Ghost Fathers grew from 143 members in 1920 to 620 in 1959, while the Society of African Missions grew from 40 to 400 members during the same period.³²

It is perhaps significant that in 1923 the number of secular priests ordained in Ireland for foreign assignments (including both the English-speaking world and Africa, Asia and South America) first surpassed the number ordained for the home market.³³ The following figures show the trend in this direction:

Secular priests ordained in Ireland³⁴

	Irish dioceses	Foreign dioceses
1923	79	85
1926	75	102
1929	86	76
1932	115	84
1935	78	118
1938	107	108
1941	96	106
1944	87	115
1947	87	11
1950	86	117

In fact, from 1941 onwards,³⁵ the number of secular priests ordained for work abroad always surpassed the number ordained for Irish dioceses and by an increasingly large ratio. Accurate figures of this sort are not available for regular priests, brothers and nuns but from some of the information presented above it is safe to assume that they, too, were going abroad every year in substantial numbers.

The great missionary impetus to Asia, Africa and South America was made possible by a superfluity of religious personnel. Irish schools and seminaries were producing more clerics than the country and the Irish Catholic centres of population abroad required. The surplus went to the foreign missions.

The Process of Recruitment

Of course Catholic schools could not accomplish this great feat of clerical recruitment unaided. They needed the assistance of other forces in society -- especially the families from which the recruits were garnered.

During both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, secular priests generally came from rural stock. They were mainly the sons of small farmers, but also of shopkeepers, policemen, teachers and other petty officials.³⁶ It appears that the Irish rural classes regarded having a priest in the family as a mark of social distinction -- a visible sign of upward mobility.³⁷ And with large families the norm, potential candidates were not hard to find. As W.F. Ryan pointed out:

Numerous Irish boys are marked out for the priesthood by their parents from childhood, by way of giving a certain dignity to the family, and without any thought to their capacity or fitness for the calling.³⁸

Apart from the consideration of family pressure, it is certain that the priesthood itself offered certain attractions. In a land of limited opportunity, where the numerous offspring of the rural classes often had little choice but to emigrate, the priesthood offered both social prestige and economic security. Michael J.P. McCarthy was probably not exaggerating when he said, "It is certain that these boys (sons of farmers and minor officials) get a better living from the priesthood than they could from any other career open to them."³⁹ With a social and psychological environment so positively disposed to the idea of the religious life, the task of the schools was made considerably easier. Nevertheless, it was in the schools themselves, especially in the secondary schools, that favourable dispositions were turned into firm commitments.

A major study of the Irish priesthood conducted by the Rev. Jeremiah Newman identified certain critical aspects of the mechanisms of recruitment.⁴⁰ Though his study was limited to the years 1956-1960, much of what Newman discovered would undoubtedly hold true also for the earlier part of the century.

In evaluating the effectiveness of the various types of secondary schools in recruiting candidates for the priesthood, Newman came up with the following figures:⁴¹

Number of vocations (1956-1960) as a percentage of the number of pupils in final year classes in different types of colleges --

Juniorates	Diocesan Colleges	Colleges of Religious Orders	Schools of Religious Brotherhoods	Lay Schools
65.1	24.8	14.1	7.5	5.9

Juniorates were usually boarding schools operated by religious orders which admitted only those expressing an interest in the religious life. Students entered such institutions around the ages of 12-14 years and the sheltered environment, along with the original profession of interest which was carefully nurtured, combined to bring about the high success rate.

Diocesan colleges were also boarding institutions and those wishing to join the diocesan clergy usually sought their secondary education within their walls.⁴² They also admitted boys who did not aspire to the religious life but many of these were apparently converted to the idea in the process. As Newman explained, "The positive fostering of vocations is among the primary functions of these colleges."⁴³

Newman suggested that the relative low recruitment rate in colleges run by religious orders was probably due to the fact that they were attended mainly by "the professional and upper classes, particularly urban" whose inclination to the religious life was not so pronounced.⁴⁴

The recruitment figures in the schools of religious brotherhoods were regarded as satisfactory as these schools also supplied fresh blood to the brotherhoods themselves.⁴⁵

Newman also regarded the figures for lay Catholic schools as satisfactory when all things were considered. He noted in the

regard that boys' schools produced more vocations than co-educational schools. Of 446 final-year pupils in fourteen lay boys' schools during the years surveyed, 34 went for the priesthood — a percentage of 7.6. On the other hand, of 491 boy final-year pupils in twenty-five mixed schools during the same time, 20 opted for the religious life — a percentage of 4.⁴⁶

In other words the conditions least conducive to the recruitment of clergy existed in co-educational day schools run by the laity. Conversely, the premium conditions were to be found in clergy-run boarding schools confined to boys only, especially where the boys had been convinced to make some commitment to the religious life prior to entering. Newman was convinced that the personal influence of clerical teachers was vitally important in securing religious vocations among the boys under their charge. For the priests actually engaged in teaching in the different types of colleges, he gave the following numbers of vocations annually secured for the period 1956-1960: juniorates - 1.0; diocesan colleges - 0.93; colleges of religious orders - 0.35.⁴⁷ In other words, every priest engaged in secondary teaching produced .76 vocations per annum. Or, to put it more logically, the influence of four priestly teachers was sufficient to secure three religious vocations per annum.

Seen in this light, the determination of the Irish bishops to retain exclusive clerical control of secondary schooling and to limit lay involvement in the process, made sense. The domination of this system by ecclesiastical teachers ensured that the schools more than fulfilled their primary function — the recruitment of new blood to

the clerical ranks. But the primary schools also had a role in this scheme of things. After all, the juniorates, those most successful of clerical recruitment institutions, were fed directly from the primary schools with boys already convinced of their religious calling. It can be seen, then, that the orthodoxy of the predominantly lay primary teaching force was vital for this process to continue. This orthodoxy was guaranteed by the system of clerical management.

But the mere good example of clerical and lay teachers was hardly sufficient in itself to maintain the flow to the seminaries. Ecclesiastical control of the schools meant that the captive audiences within could be subjected to continuous and intensive propaganda in favour of the religious life. And some church spokesmen were unapologetic about this aspect of Catholic education. The Rev. John Blowick, one of the founders of the Maynooth Mission to China, in his book, Priestly Vocation (1932), advocated such recruitment tactics, regardless of parental objections.

Blowick, whose words were probably intended for his fellow clerics, emphasized the church teaching that it was the duty of all priests to protect "from the contagion of the world" boys who showed an inclination towards the priesthood, and to foster that inclination. He deplored the tendency of some parents of "testing" the vocation of their sons by exposing them to "frivolous gatherings," dances and so forth and by forcing them to associate with "young worldlings." A priest should not co-operate with such parents but should use every opportunity to persuade the boy "to select the priesthood as his fate in life." He dismissed objections to such recruitment tactics

on the grounds that the church actually commanded "recruiting in the sense we have explained."⁴⁸

In Blowick's opinion the diocesan boarding school was the "nursery of priests." Though parents often sent their boys to those schools for a secular education only, every opportunity should be taken to recruit such boys for the priesthood. Parental rights would thus be in no way violated as church law exempted minors from parental control when the question of selecting the religious life was involved! The only circumstance which might prevent a willing youth from entering the priesthood was the grave necessity of his family.

Against what is the boy to be protected in the alleged interests of parents? Against his own higher good? Against the interests of the Church, which is in grave need of priests? If parents advance any objection against their son's becoming a priest except the difficulty of their own grave need, they are acting frivolously and unreasonably, and should not be supported.⁴⁹

Blowick believed that other Catholic schools also had an important role in recruiting for the priesthood and he urged the use of similar tactics: regular and systematic instruction in the importance of the religious life.⁵⁰ The church could not merely rely on volunteers to come forward; the policy was one of active recruitment, especially in the schools.⁵¹

Father Blowick was, of course, anxious to enlist young priests for his missionary ventures in Asia and the morally suspect strategies which he advocated can be understood, if not condoned, in these circumstances. In fact, the foreign missions became one of the great lures of the clerical recruitment campaign in the decades after independence. Desmond Fennell, himself sympathetic to the

church's cause, has given this description of the techniques employed:

Zealous propagandists, equipped with films, slides and brochures, criss-crossed Ireland again and again. With the moving eloquence of witnesses to the dire needs of Africa and Asia and to the high spiritual adventure of the missionary's life, they spoke to school classes, church congregations and audiences in parish halls. A vast missionary press developed. In its contents and distribution (largely by promoters in schools, factories and big commercial and public offices) it was tailored to the hard-sell of the same two requirements: recruits and money. Money was given generously, thousands answered the call for personal commitment, and in the seminaries and novitiates of the missionary societies the young men and women, fired by their returned older colleagues, could not wait to be gone.⁵²

In such a fashion the Catholic schools, controlled strictly as they were by the clergy, played a vital role not only in maintaining the church in Ireland, but in enabling it to expand to many parts of the world.

An Unquestioning Laity

The Irish Catholic school system, then, was more than successful in fulfilling its principal function -- that of recruitment for the clergy. But it had another purpose -- the creation of a loyal Catholic laity, especially as far as the middle class was concerned. It is worth noting that the church always accepted the class divisions in Irish society. She operated schools both for the very rich and the very poor with equanimity. Nonetheless, it was always recognized that secondary education would be the exclusive preserve of the wealthier classes while the masses would have to be content with less. The Rev. Andrew Murphy, Secretary of the Catholic

Headmasters' Association, was quite emphatic about this when he wrote, "... the majority must be engaged in unskilled work, for which, whatever doctrinaires may say, over-much education totally unfits them, if only by making them discontented."⁵³

Not only did the church tacitly accept the class distinctions in society but she concentrated her educational efforts at the secondary level -- the level of schooling available only to the privileged classes. It was in the secondary schools that the greatest deployment of religious personnel was found and the greatest degree of control exercised. The reasons for this are not difficult to find. Ecclesiastical spokesmen were keenly aware of the social and political importance of the middle class. The Rev. E. Cahill, S.J., Rector of Mungret College, Limerick, had this to say on the question in 1915:

From them (the Irish middle class) are usually appointed the County Councillors and, to a large extent, the District and Urban Councillors, who administer a considerable portion of the public funds. It is they, therefore, who appoint the professional men and others to the numerous public offices that are the peoples' gift. They for the most part form the personnel of the numerous boards and committees by which many of the details of the public services are administered. It is their voice that determines the decisions of the national conventions. It is they that will very largely shape the character of the future Irish Parliament.⁵⁴

That members of such an influential group should receive an education carefully grounded in Catholic orthodoxy was absolutely imperative. As the Rev. Cahill put it:

We need not delay to point out of what immense importance it is for the spiritual and temporal good of the nation that this class should receive a thorough and sound education, and that a very considerable number of them should have the advantage of a

training in higher schools adapted to their circumstances, and suited to their needs. A suitable and thorough education for this body manifestly lies at the very bedrock of Ireland's moral, intellectual and material well-being. If they are sound, the country is safe. If their moral standards become lowered, or their intellectual ideals get awry, it will mean that the Irish nation has degenerated. . . .⁵⁵

The Rev. Cahill was not alone in this observation. In 1920-21 a national program of religious instruction for secondary schools with annual written examinations was prescribed by the Irish bishops. In a prefatory note to the program the prelates stressed the importance of moral and religious training for students at that level:

. . . special zeal and efficiency are required for the training of these pupils, as they are likely to hold a more important place in the life of the community . . . [and] are also, by reason of their wider reading, more exposed to the subversive influences of the age.⁵⁶

The secondary schools system, then, was seen as the key to the religious status quo. In its bosom the minds of the middle class laity would be moulded in the desired manner. When individuals from this societal group acceded to political influence or power they would, in turn, heed the counsels of the church on the social and moral questions of the day and ultimately support the institution in the prerogatives and privileges she claimed for herself. There can be little doubt that the church's hopes in this respect were realized. In the period prior to independence, when her very role in education was threatened by the reforming zeal of the British government, the Catholic cause found its greatest champion in John Redmond's Parliamentary Party -- the membership of which was drawn largely from

the Catholic middle class.⁵⁷ Likewise, with the achievement of independence, the Cumann na n Gaedheal and Fianna Fail politicians, who were also of Catholic middle class background, not only confirmed and strengthened the church in her educational privileges, but shaped the new society in conformity to the contours of Catholic social doctrine.

But the secondary schools not only educated the middle class laity and aspirants to the religious life -- they educated them in the same classrooms. The Rev. Jeremiah Newman was aware of the advantages of this arrangement. Though he limited his remarks to the diocesan colleges and the rural middle classes, what he said was equally applicable to other clerically controlled schools and to urban situations:

It (the system of diocesan colleges) has the additional merit of being the breeding ground of a close understanding between the diocesan clergy and the rural middle classes. The advantages of this type of 'co-education' are later reaped in co-operation in parish life. Parish clergy, farmers, rural businessmen and white-collar workers speak the same language, as it were, or, to put it differently, are on the same wave-length. The pastoral advantages of this situation are immeasurable.⁵⁸

What it meant was that both clergy and middle class laity were inculcated with the same conservative value and belief systems.⁵⁹ One consequence of this was that no real tradition of anti-clericalism developed among the Catholic laity. Men such as F. Hugh O'Donnell, Michael J.F. McCarthy and W.J.M. Starkie were the exception and opinions such as theirs were rarely heard after the achievement of independence. It is certainly true that some of the Sinn Fein revolutionaries railed against the church when the bishops

excommunicated members of secret societies and men of violence. But such feelings were never translated into doctrinaire anti-clericalism. J.H. Whyte has explained this by suggesting that Irish Catholics were able to "compartmentalize their loyalties" by accepting the dictates of the church on some matters, while rejecting them on others.⁶⁰ Education was undoubtedly the most conspicuous matter on which church dictates were never questioned.

Some Characteristics of the System

The continued domination of Irish education by the church gave the system certain characteristics that should be noted. During the Free State period it was apparently widely believed that clerical entrepreneurship in education, especially at the secondary level, obviated large scale investment and planning on the part of the state and resulted in substantial savings to the public coffers.⁶¹ There was undoubtedly some truth in that opinion.⁶² But it is also worth remembering that such savings were probably counterbalanced by the enormous wastage that occurred. The necessity of segregating children by religion, sex and class meant that most primary and secondary schools were small and were either obliged to duplicate facilities they might otherwise have shared or to offer extremely limited programs of instruction. Lack of state planning and investment also meant that many areas were poorly served by post-primary institutions.⁶³

The tradition of private enterprise in education, which the Free State did nothing to disturb, worked greatly to the advantage of

the church. The unavailability of state grants for the construction of secondary schools in either the British or Irish eras meant that only very wealthy individuals or organizations could afford to open and operate schools of any note. Michael Viney has described an incident which must have been duplicated on countless occasions over the years. In the spring of 1967 the northern provincial of the Christian Brothers requested a loan of £1,250,000 from the Bank of Ireland for the construction of six new schools in Dublin. The Brothers' property at Artane, estimated to be worth over £2,000,000, was put up as collateral. The loan was forthcoming.⁶⁴ It can be seen that the vast wealth and resources of the church enabled it to carve out a virtual monopoly situation for itself in education in the climate of free enterprise. The layman could not compete on such terms.

The system of clerical management and ownership also meant that the least qualified and competent clerical teachers were always assured of employment. This was not true for lay teachers who had to compete with each other for the available positions. In times of retrenchment and recession it was the lay teachers who became dispensable.⁶⁵

Ecclesiastical control of Irish schools meant that the education offered within their walls was essentially moral and literary in emphasis. The literary dimension was particularly evident at the secondary level. The curriculum of the old Intermediate Board had been of the classical-liberal type and it established a pattern which proved highly resistant to change. Under that system boys

were obliged to take one of Latin, Greek, English or Mathematics in their examinations and this ensured that at least Latin, English and Mathematics received considerable attention.⁶⁶ With the achievement of independence, this changed very little except that Irish joined the ranks of the most favoured subjects. The following figures for subjects attempted in the Leaving Certificate in 1925-26 illustrate the pattern:⁶⁷

Total examined 1925-26	Boys 441	Girls 231
<u>Subject</u>		
Irish	396	187
English	441	230
Latin	315	37
French	82	194
History	326	223
Mathematics	427	128
Chemistry	138	13
*Physics	71	3
German, Italian, Spanish	-	11

The neglect of science and of modern European languages (except in the case of French in girls' schools) is evident here. And this pattern remained substantially unchanged. A glance at the figures for 1944-45 shows this.⁶⁸

Total examined 1944-45	Boys 1840	Girls 1862
<u>Subject</u>		
Irish	1830	1861
English	1821	1859
Latin	1689	841
French	121	1100
History	1487	1657
Mathematics	1790	1641
Chemistry	332	13
Physics	83	-
German, Italian, Spanish	16	25

This literary type of education provided the banks, insurance companies and the civil service with an army of competent clerks and gave a basic intellectual training to that minority proceeding to the traditional professions. The attention given to Latin in boys' schools is not surprising as it was considered an essential skill for future members of the clergy.⁶⁹ When we consider the clerical recruitment function of the schools, the emphasis makes sense.

A further consequence of clerical supremacy in Irish education was that boys and girls were usually segregated into separate schools. This was an absolute rule in religious secondary schools but it also prevailed in the larger primary schools found in towns and cities. However, it appears that an indeterminate number of small rural primary schools were co-educational through sheer necessity -- low enrolment made segregation impracticable.⁷⁰ Accurate figures on the numbers of segregated as against mixed schools at the secondary level

are actually available:⁷¹

	<u>1924-25</u>	<u>1944-45</u>
Segregated schools	242	340
Mixed schools	26	39

As is evident here, the number of mixed (co-educational) schools was never significant. Ecclesiastical opposition to co-education derived from the grave moral danger which was perceived in such an arrangement, as the bishops made clear on several occasions.⁷² And, of course, co-education was denounced by Pope Pius XI in Divini Illius Magistri (1929) as the "promiscuous herding together of male and female."⁷³

The segregation of the sexes in church controlled secondary schools was directly related to their principal function -- the recruitment of clergy. It was only by deliberately limiting opportunities for the development of relationships between the sexes that the constant flow to cloister, monastery and seminary could be maintained. The Rev. Jeremiah Newman had noted, it will be recalled, that the Catholic schools producing the least number of religious vocations were those that were lay controlled and co-educational. This had been well known before Newman had documented it empirically and the determination of church authorities to keep the schools segregated by sex and supervised by clergy is therefore understandable.

Schools and Society in Harmony

The Irish Catholic school system, having survived the attempts to transform it in the final decades of the British era, thrived and flourished in the halcyon atmosphere of the independent

Irish state. The seriousness with which most citizens regarded their religion had obviously much to do with this. But it should be emphasized that there was no official recognition for the church in the state. The Free State constitution specifically guaranteed freedom of religion and while de Valera's constitution of 1937 elevated the Catholic Church to a 'special position' this still fell far short of established status. There was no concordat, no state payment for the clergy, and the hierarchy forbade its priests to run for public office.⁷⁴

Nevertheless, there was something peculiarly Catholic about the Irish state. The fact that only about five percent of the population at its inception was non-Catholic is surely significant. And this five percent experienced a gradual decline due to emigration and intermarriage. This situation was compounded by a gradual withdrawal of non-Catholics from public life. For instance, the number of non-Catholics in the Dail dropped from a high of 14 members (9%) in 1923 to a low of 4 (3%) in 1944.⁷⁵ It appears that they recognized their inability to influence public opinion and reluctantly accepted the inevitable obscurity.

In this situation Catholic theories of social organization carried the day. The most significant of these was 'distributism' -- a concept advocated in Leo XIII's Rerum Novarum and Pius XI's Quadragesimo Anno. It suggested a fairly equitable distribution of property and the control of monopolies. It was something like a Catholic version of Jacobinism -- the creed of small property owners.⁷⁶ The Irish Dail party in particular found this doctrine attractive.

Not only did Catholic ideas influence political thought, but they began to permeate every sphere of human activity. Writing in 1928, the Rev. John Kelleher warned that the achievement of independence may have inclined some clergy to rest on their laurels. There was a constant need for priests to remain involved in secular activities as "the natural and supernatural in man cannot be shut up in watertight compartments true religion must penetrate into all our conduct and relationships." He urged priests to organize the social life of their parishes on Christian principles, for, in the absence of this, people find their own substitutes "with the result that betting, immodest dances, dangerous company-keeping, disorderly clubs, and sexual immorality threaten to corrupt the youthful life of the country."⁷⁷ Of course clerical supervision of social activities had long been a feature of Irish life, especially in rural areas, but it appears that the process intensified after independence. There were Catholic boy scouts, Catholic libraries, Catholic drama festivals, and so forth.⁷⁸ According to John Whyte, the process of making Irish society more totally Catholic culminated in the late 1940s.⁷⁹

It meant a society that was inward-looking and resistant to change. Nor were matters helped by the domination of political life by farmers and shopkeepers, groupings noted for their conservative outlook.⁸⁰ And the constant flow of emigration, which mainly affected the young, meant that the population was increasingly aging, making the acceptance of new ideas less likely.⁸¹

In such a society, with its myopic pessimism about man's condition on earth, the Irish Catholic school system fitted perfectly. With a curriculum and pedagogy evocative of the sixteenth century, it ensured that each generation viewed the world through ecclesiastical spectacles. It successfully maintained the flow of ~~new recruits to the ranks of the clergy, and in the case of those who~~ did not select the religious life, it at least inculcated a deferential attitude towards the church and the role it accorded to itself in the world. The school system was, in fact, the very key to the church's inordinate influence in Irish society.

Conclusion

The Education Act of 1902 streamlined English education in the directions of efficiency and economy. The old school boards were replaced by Local Education Authorities -- large administrative units which became responsible for both primary and secondary education within their jurisdictions. Voluntary schools now became eligible for rate aid but paid a price in coming to some extent under the control of the LEAs.

The previously unsatisfactory situation of the voluntary schools was not the only cause for this major administrative overhaul. It had been recognized for some time that Britain was being out-distanced by such competitors as the United States and Germany in industry and international trade. There was a growing realization that a more efficient system of public education would be required

for the country to retain its position. In other words, education was seen as an integral part of the economic structure and such a vital component could not be left to voluntary effort alone.

Consequently, schooling was brought firmly under the umbrella of local government to ensure that it was provided on an adequate and regular basis. It was the culmination of a tendency evident in the latter half of the nineteenth century of Public authorities gradually replacing ecclesiastical bodies as the principal benefactors of education.

But no such tendency was apparent in Irish education. In fact, the very opposite prevailed. The national school system, which was originally designed to promote inter-denominational co-operation, became fragmented along sectarian lines as a result of the actions of all major churches. By the end of the nineteenth century nearly all Irish primary schools were operating as denominational institutions. And when public funds were first made available for secondary education in 1878, they were given under conditions which in no way interfered with the sectarian nature of most existing secondary schools. Consequently, by the beginning of the twentieth century, virtually all Irish schools, both primary and secondary, functioned as sectarian institutions. In addition, the great majority of them were operated or managed by Roman Catholic religious.

When one considers the educational thinking of British officialdom at the time, the Irish situation can hardly have been deemed satisfactory. Of particular concern was the fact that Irish taxpayers contributed nothing towards the support of education.

There was no local responsibility. The reports of the English school inspectors, Dale and Stephens, which showed Irish schools to be decidedly inferior to their English counterparts, convinced government authorities that reform was overdue. It was resolved that Irish education should also receive the benefits of those reforms which had been instituted in England. Some form of rate aid and local responsibility were the basic ideas behind the proposed reforms. In this way Irish education might also become a model of efficiency.

The difficulty with these proposals was that they threatened to undermine the authority of the clergy in Catholic schools. According to church leaders, the essential nature of these schools could only be maintained if there was strict clerical control over those who taught within their walls. While the educational provisions of the Irish Council Bill of 1907, Mr. Birrell's plan to improve the status of lay secondary teachers, and the Macpherson Education Bills of 1919 and 1920 did not directly interfere with the right of the clergy to appoint and dismiss teachers in Catholic schools, they nonetheless allowed for greater lay responsibility and authority in education. As such, they were regarded by the church as the thin end of the wedge of secularism and were, consequently, resisted vigorously. As a result of controversy over these attempted reforms, relations between the British state and the Irish Catholic church were severely strained during the first two decades of the twentieth century.

It was essentially a conflict between two competing educational ideologies. The British model, with its emphasis on local

taxation and democratic control, had among its principal functions the production of responsible citizens and efficient workers. It was a model eminently suited to a great industrial society which was increasingly secular in outlook.

On the other hand, the Irish model was strictly sectarian and functioned largely outside of the sphere of government.

Democratic decision-making was non-existent and, in the case of Catholic schools, lay involvement in the authority structure was virtually unheard of. The Catholic schools emphasized moral indoctrination above all and had as their purpose the recruitment of clergy and the maintenance of loyalty to the church and her teachings among the population at large, and especially among the wealthier and more influential classes. It was the product of an xenophobic, peasant society in which religious values were rarely questioned.

As these positions were mutually incompatible, conflict was unavoidable when the Imperial government attempted to reform Irish education in the direction of the British model. Such actions meant that the church felt her position threatened by the British connection and found herself increasingly allied to the nationalist cause as the best prospect for the preservation of the educational status quo. In this anticipation church leaders were proven correct for the severing of ties with Britain ended attempts to transform the school system on secular/democratic lines. In other words, the achievement of independence eliminated the threat to ecclesiastical control of education.

The political leadership of the new Irish state never questioned the prerogatives which the church claimed for herself in education. The principal reason for this was that these leaders were themselves mainly products of the Catholic schools and were devoutly Catholic in their personal lives. They could not conceive of education apart from ecclesiastical supervision. Consequently, as the church was largely satisfied with the school system as it stood at the achievement of independence, they saw no necessity for fundamental restructuring. The system, then, remained generally the same -- strictly sectarian and much dependent on the initiatives of private enterprise.

For the church, independence secured its control of education. In some ways, its power and influence in the schools was actually enhanced. Freed from the threat of secular/democratic reform, Catholic schools were more successful than ever in the achievement of their goals. A great surplus of priests, brothers and nuns were produced which enabled the church not only to man its home parishes and those in Irish emigrant communities, but to expand its activities in far-flung missionary endeavours to Asia, Africa and South America. In addition, the schools continued to produce a loyal Catholic laity which readily accorded to the church a dominant role in many aspects of the nation's social and political life.

Independence, in effect, insulated Irish education from the ideas and practices associated with modern industrial nations. It enabled the Catholic church to maintain an influence in the schools which in many countries it had already lost.

Footnotes

¹ Michael Sheehy, Is Ireland Dying? Culture and the Church in Modern Ireland (London: Hollis and Carter, 1968), p. 27.

² See the statement by the Irish bishops in Freeman's Journal, 23 June 1904.

³ Report of the Vice-Regal Committee on the Conditions of Service and Remuneration of Teachers in Intermediate Schools and the Distribution of Grants from Public Funds for Intermediate Education in Ireland (Cmd. 66), H.C. 1919, xxi, p. 41.

⁴ Michael Maher, Religious Destruction in Irish Catholic Intermediate Schools, Studies, Vol. V (March 1916), p. 61.

⁵ Archbishop Byrne was speaking at St. Mary's Convent, Arklow on 7 October 1926. Irish Catholic Directory, 1927, p. 619.

⁶ Jean Blanchard, The Church in Contemporary Ireland (Dublin: Clonmore and Reynolds, 1963), p. 44.

⁷ Patrick S. Duffy, The Lay Teacher: A Study of the Position of the Lay Teacher in an Irish Catholic Environment (Dublin: Fallons, 1968), p. 53.

⁸ National Library of Ireland, Maunsell Ms. 8317.

⁹ F. Hugh O'Donnell, The Ruin of Education in Ireland (London: David Nutt, 1903), p. 153.

¹⁰ Michael J.F. McCarthy, Priests and People in Ireland (Dublin: Hodges Figgis, 1903), p. 439.

¹¹ Michael J.F. McCarthy, Rome in Ireland (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1904), p. 43.

¹² Donal McCarthy, "Education and Language, 1938-1951," in K.B. Nowlan, and T.D. Williams (eds.), Ireland in the War Years and After (Dublin: Gill and McMillan, 1969), p. 90.

¹³ Donald H. Akenson, A Mirror to Kathleen's Face: Education in Independent Ireland, 1922-1960 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1975), p. 99.

¹⁴ Irish Catholic Directory, 1929, p. 564.

¹⁵ Irish Catholic Directory, 1938, p. 580.

¹⁶ Irish Catholic Directory, 1941, p. 647.

- 17 T.J. O'Connell, History of the Irish National Teachers' Organization, 1868-1968 (Dublin: privately printed circa 1968), p. 100.
- 18 Michael Viney, "The Christian Brothers," Irish Times, 13 November 1967. Part II of a six part series which appeared on 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 November, 1967.
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- 21 E.R. Norman, The Catholic Church and Ireland in the Age of Rebellion, 1858-1873 (London: Longmans, 1965), p. 14.
- 22 Michael J.F. McCarthy, Priests and People, appendix.
- 23 Emmett Larkin, "Economic Growth, Capital Investment and the Roman Catholic Church in 19th Century Ireland," American Historical Review, LXXII (April 1967), pp. 864-865.
- 24 "Survey of Catholic Clergy and Religious Personnel, 1971," Social Studies, March 1972.
- 25 Irish Catholic Directory, 1918, p. 504.
- 26 See Irish Catholic Directory, 1900-1906, 'priests ordained.'
- 27 Desmond Fennell, The Changing Face of Catholic Ireland (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1968), p. 136.
- 28 Ibid., p. 136.
- 29 Ibid., p. 137.
- 30 Ibid., p. 137.
- 31 Ibid., p. 137.
- 32 Ibid., p. 138.
- 33 Irish Catholic Directory, 1924.
- 34 Tabulated from figures in the Irish Catholic Directory, appropriate years.
- 35 Until 1959, at least.

³⁶ Alexis de Tocqueville, Journeys to England and Ireland (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), p. 174; E.R. Norman, Catholic Church and Ireland, p. 14; Michael J.F. McCarthy, Priests and People, p. 586; Rev. Jeremiah Newman, "The Priests of Ireland: A Socio-Religious Survey" (Part II - "Pattern of Vocations"), Irish Ecclesiastical Record, 5th Series, Vol. 98 (August 1962), p. 89.

³⁷ John A. Murphy, "Priests and People in Modern Irish History," Christus Rex, Vol. XXIII, No. 4 (October 1969), p. 251.

³⁸ H.P. Ryan, The Pope's Green Island (London: Fisher, 1912), p. 90.

³⁹ Michael J.F. McCarthy, Priests and People, p. 586.

⁴⁰ Rev. Jeremiah Newman, "The Priests of Ireland: A Socio-Religious Survey," Irish Ecclesiastical Record, 5th Series, Vol. XCVIII, Part I - "Numbers and Distribution," July 1962; Part II - "Pattern of Vocations," August 1962.

⁴¹ Ibid., Part II, p. 67.

⁴² Ibid., Part II, p. 72.

⁴³ Ibid., Part II, p. 72.

⁴⁴ Ibid., Part II, p. 73.

⁴⁵ Ibid., Part II, p. 81.

⁴⁶ Ibid., Part II, p. 82.

⁴⁷ Ibid., Part II, p. 67.

⁴⁸ Rev. John Blowick, Priestly Vocation (Dublin: M.H. Gill, 1932), pp. 275-281.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 286.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 287.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 291.

⁵² Desmond Fennell, Changing Face, p. 146.

⁵³ "Educational Notes," Irish Educational Review, Vol. V, No. 10 (July 1912), p. 626.

⁵⁴ Rev. E. Cahill, "Secondary Education for Rural Ireland," Studies, Vol. IV (December 1915), p. 34.

- ⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 549.
- ⁵⁶ J.D. King, Religious Education in Ireland (Dublin: Fallons, 1970), p. 97.
- ⁵⁷ F.S.L. Lyons, The Irish Parliamentary Party, 1890-1910 (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), p. 166.
- ⁵⁸ Rev. Jeremiah Newman, "Priests of Ireland," Part II, p. 73.
- ⁵⁹ It might be noted in this respect that de Valera and Archbishop J.C. McQuaid of Dublin were once classmates at the Holy Ghost Fathers' Blackrock College in Dublin.
- ⁶⁰ J.H. Whyte, Church and State in Modern Ireland, 1923-1970 (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1971), p. 12.
- ⁶¹ In 1923 Eoin MacNeill spoke of the prohibitive cost of turning secondary teachers into civil servants (Dail Eireann Debates, Vol. III, col. 469 (2 May 1923)). In 1924 a clerical writer to the Irish Monthly pointed to the "enormous burdens of taxation" which religious teachers saved the country ['S.J.', "Catholic Secondary Teachers' Security of Tenure," Irish Monthly, Vol. LII, No. 608, (February 1924)].
- ⁶² A. Dale Tussing, Irish Educational Expenditures: Past, Present and Future (Dublin: Economic and Social Research Institute, Paper No. 92, May 1978), p. 61.
- ⁶³ T.J. McElligott, Education in Ireland (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 1966), p. 70.
- ⁶⁴ Michael Viney, "The Christian Brothers," (Part V) Irish Times, 16 November 1967.
- ⁶⁵ A.D. Tussing, Educational Expenditures, p. 31.
- ⁶⁶ S.V. O Suilleabhain, "Secondary Education" in Vol. V, Catholic Education, P.J. Corish (gen. ed.), A History of Irish Catholicism (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1971), p. 75.
- ⁶⁷ Report of the Department of Education, 1925-26.
- ⁶⁸ Report of the Department of Education, 1944-45.
- ⁶⁹ Rev. Jeremiah Newman, "Priests of Ireland," Part II, p. 73.
- ⁷⁰ Akenson also noted absence of figures on this question, Mirror to Kathleen's Face, p. 135.

⁷¹ These figures, taken from Reports of the Department of Education, represent all secondary schools in the Free State area. It should be remembered that the vast majority of these were under Roman Catholic management.

⁷² Letter of Cardinal Logue to Canon McDonald, for instance: Irish Catholic Directory, 1911, p. 476.

⁷³ Pope Pius XI, Divini Illius Magistri (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1929), p. 32.

⁷⁴ J.H. Whyte, Church and State, p. 14.

⁷⁵ J.L. McCracken, Representative Government in Ireland: A Study of Dail Eireann, 1919-1948 (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 92.

⁷⁶ D.R. O'Connor Lysaght, The Republic of Ireland (Cork: Mercier, 1970), p. 99.

⁷⁷ Rev. John Kelleher, "Catholic Rural Action," Studies, Vol. XVII (1928), pp. 428-433.

⁷⁸ See Irish Catholic Directory, 1935, p. 577 and p. 582.

⁷⁹ J.H. Whyte, Church and State, p. 158.

⁸⁰ J.L. McCracken, Representative Government, p. 117.

⁸¹ Gerald Quinn, "The Changing Pattern of Irish Society, 1938-51," in Nowlan and Williams, War Years, pp. 125-126.

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