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Abstract of M.Ed. Thesis. Charles Fox

University of Durham. Department of Education. 1964

Title: Education in Oldham during the School Board  
period, 1870 - 1903.

The study begins by surveying the pre-1870 growth of public elementary schools in a cotton town which grew because of the Industrial Revolution. Out of the Sunday schools developed the day schools, but growth was slow until 1844, when the half-time system brought in by the Factories Act increased the demand for elementary education.

The new schools were provided partly by Anglicans and partly by the strong Dissenting minority. Politically the town was a Radical stronghold; hence the School Boards set up by the 1870 Education Act were controlled by Radicals for nearly twenty years after. Urban and therefore educational expansion was extremely rapid and the magnitude of the Board's work increased proportionately. All this time, however, the supporters of the Voluntary schools made herculean efforts to sustain school provision side by side with the Board's schools. Inevitably friction between them increased, and after 1888 the control of the Board passed to the Conservatives, resulting in a temporary check to Board School expansion. Gradually, however, the Voluntary schools declined.

The School Board's activities extended into secondary and technical education in day and evening schools side by side with other bodies. Unfortunately the Board's right to do so rested on dubious legal foundations, and progress was retarded by its involvement in local politics. As the Board assumed greater control of public

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elementary education, friction increased between the central departments at Whitehall and South Kensington and the locally elected body. This was resolved by the 1902 Education Act, abolishing the School Boards; assisting the Voluntary Schools and setting up the local education authority responsible for elementary and secondary education. The School Board had been highly successful in the former, and handed over to the local education authority an excellent foundation on which to build.

University of Durham.

Department of Education.

Education in Oldham during the School Board  
Period, 1870 - 1903.

Charles Fox.

Thesis presented 1964 for the degree of M.Ed.

Adviser of Studies: Professor E. J. R. Eaglesham.

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Foreword

"I fancy that the historian, when he sits down to consider the work and investigate it, will find that it has been done efficiently, and that the education of the town has not been neglected".

Thomas Henry Smyth,  
retiring Chairman of the 9th School Board for  
Oldham at its final meeting, 1st January 1898.

## Education in Oldham during the School Board Period.

### 1. The Growth of Oldham.

Oldham is a classic example of one of those towns of South Lancashire which were practically brought into being as a result of the Industrial Revolution, though there is much evidence that some kind of a settlement had existed for many centuries before the development of the cotton industry. This village - for it was little more than that - had grown up some seven miles to the north-east of Manchester at a point where main roads cross. The surrounding district was agriculturally of poor quality in comparison with the low plains of West Lancashire and the rolling pastures of Cheshire, and for this reason the small-holders of the Pennine foothills were obliged to augment the meagre income gained from husbandry by the weaving of fustians in their cottages. It is said that this form of domestic industry began about the year 1630, and on it depended, to some extent, the hamlet of Oldham.

The town's industrial future as a great cotton-spinning centre was foreshadowed about the year 1740. At that date, it was the practice of the cloth merchants of Manchester to give out warp and raw cotton to the handloom weavers in the surrounding district. The task of the cottagers was to card, rove, spin and weave the cloth, which was then carried back to the merchants. The making of woollens was also important until late in the eighteenth century, before it was overshadowed by cotton. By this time, Manchester had become a large, important commercial focus, yet its satellite towns, which today

almost completely surround it, were then inconsiderable settlements. The size and organisation of the ecclesiastical parishes is the best guide to this fact.

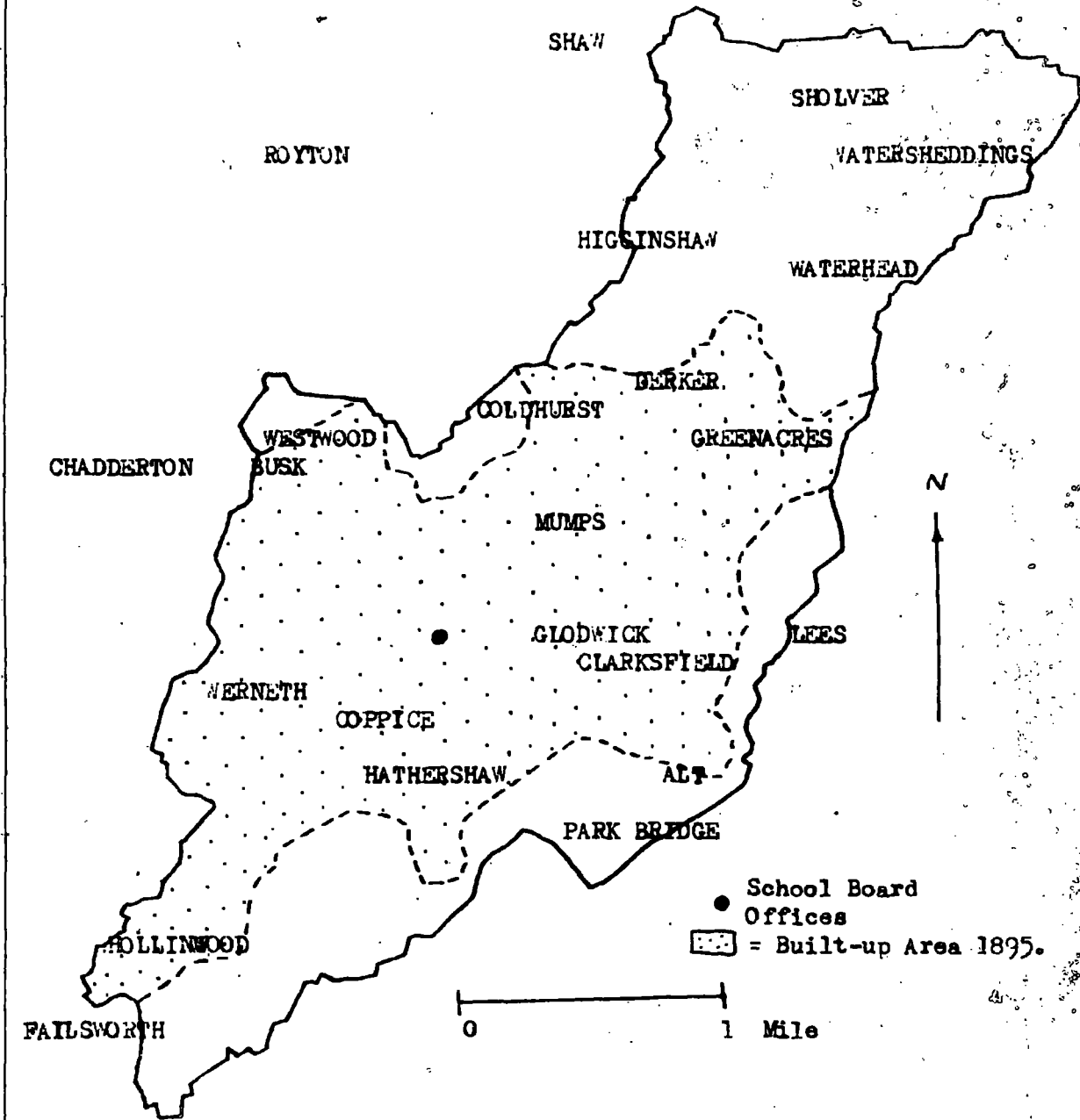
For many centuries the township of Oldham was served as a parish church by a parochial chapel, St. Mary's, which lay in the parish of Prestwich-cum-Oldham and which was in fact a chapel of the parish church of the same name at Prestwich. The parish was large, consisting of a stretch of country north and north-east of Manchester about fifteen miles long and four wide. But the population was small: an estimate made in 1789 gives the total as about 24,000 persons, and by the year of the first Census, 1801, this figure had increased to about 31,000.<sup>1</sup> As the population was increasing more rapidly in the Oldham side of the parish, two small chapels were established in the town. St. Peter's, founded in 1768, and St. Margaret's, Hollinwood, 1769. But the consecration of these two chapels was considered adequate for the probable needs of the growing population, so that there was no further church-building in Oldham for sixty years. By then, the enormously rapid expansion of the cotton-spinning industry was well under way.

In the days when this was largely dependent on power derived from rivers, Oldham was not favourably sited, because the town occupied a ridge of land or spur striking south-westwards from the Pennine hills, but no river of note flowed within its boundaries. With the coming of steam-power, Oldham was found to be more favourably placed than its rivals, Bolton and Rochdale, for coal in great abundance lay not far

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1. Booker, Rev. James. Memorials of Prestwich, 1852.

Place-names of the Ham and District



below the surface. Before 1770 not much was mined, but by 1780 it is recorded that there were several small coal-pits in operation. Canals to carry coal and cotton were constructed in 1792. By 1801 the village days were over - the Census of that year lists 5,906 persons in the township as being employed in trade and manufactures; but only 42 lived solely by agriculture.

With the end of the Napoleonic wars came the great development of steam-power; intense specialisation began within the cotton industry. Credit was easier to obtain, and ancillary industries - hat-making, coal-mining and the construction of textile machinery - prospered side by side with spinning. Soon, the adoption of the Free Trade policy by the Government, the development of new export markets and the provision of cheaper food for the working class caused the town to grow with mushroom-like rapidity. The canals became obsolescent when the railway from Middleton reached Werneth in 1842. Most important of all, perhaps, was the supply of cheap labour - men, women and children - which was maintained by immigration from other areas.

The municipal borough, incorporated in 1849, contained over 50,000 persons in 1851. The Cotton Famine of the early sixties caused by the American Civil War was only a temporary check to expansion. In any case, Oldham was not so severely affected as some towns, for instance, Ashton-under-Lyne, which had no other industries on which they could rely. With the passing of the Limited Liability Act, cotton-spinning experienced its greatest boom. In 1874 there were 32 new cotton-mills in operation within a four-mile radius of Oldham



Town Hall. By 1880 between 60 and 70 cotton-spinning companies had been floated, and though some failed, others made vast fortunes for their stockholders. Ancillary trades prospered withal. - Platt Brothers' Hartford textile machinery works was begun in 1844 near the new railway line, and was said in 1919 to be the biggest works of its type in the world.

What of the appearance of the town itself, throughout this period of industrial growth? As the great brick spinning-mills colonized new land, small terrace-houses to hold the labour-supply were crammed into the intervening spaces, and still more hands crowded into the town. By 1851, the population was 53,000. In ten years it leaped to over 72,000, an increase of 36%. By 1871, almost 83,000 persons were counted. After the cotton-boom (from 1874 on) came another rapid rise of 34% to 1881, with over 111,000 persons enumerated. The last twenty years of the nineteenth century witnessed a slower growth; even so, by 1901 the population was 137,000.

Few other towns, even cotton towns, can show such a phenomenal increase. For example, Preston with 85,000 was a little bigger than Oldham in 1871. But it was surpassed within a decade, and by 1901 could only count a mere 113,000 inhabitants. In the years between the passing of the two great Education Acts of 1870 and 1902, the population of Oldham increased by 65%. This increase was the field in which the great work of the School Board for Oldham was done, with the assistance of those thousands of devoted enthusiasts the supporters of the Voluntary Schools. It must have been an

enormous task - the municipal authorities have inherited a sprawling brick barracks built to house an army of workers, of which today more than 12,000 of the houses require demolition in the near future, and this in a town of 120,000 inhabitants. But a beginning had been made before 1870 on the problem of the education of the working-class children, in spite of the rival demand for child-labour from industry.

## 2. The Education of the Labouring Poor.

### A. Before 1851 - Sunday and Day Schools.

A local historian, James Butterworth, preserves for us in the pages of his "History of Oldham", written in the early nineteenth century, that spirit of optimism and a delight in the outward signs of material progress which imbued his middle-class subscribers. But his descriptions of thriving industry take no account of the nameless thousands of men, women and children, who toiled for more than half the day in the stifling mills and who slept exhausted for the rest in cheap brick cottages close by. Of education, either secular or religious, there could be little in their lives. The town grew in mills, workshops and houses under a vast pall of smoke issuing from a veritable forest of tall chimneys,<sup>1</sup> but not in schools or churches.

As time went on, it was evident that the Established Church was clearly unequal to the task of affording spiritual guidance to its nominal adherents. The gaps left by the Church were therefore filled by the growth of the Dissenting bodies, whose appeal to the poor

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1. At one period there were over two hundred

workers was simple and direct. This had one important effect in Oldham. It resulted in the provision of the earliest facilities for educating poor children - the Sunday schools - in part by the Church and in part by nonconformist sects. Nor did the Church predominate here as it did in some other towns, as for example, Stockport. The growth of the Oldham end of the old parish had been too rapid for the Church to maintain its hold; the Sunday Schools of the several branches of Methodism and those of the Congregationalists were quickly established.

These early Sunday schools had several functions. First, they provided a sound religious education. Secondly, they provided instruction in the three R's. In some towns, controversy raged over this function, but in Oldham there must have been a great desire for some form of secular instruction, since the trustees of the Wesleyan Sunday school went so far as to hire a paid schoolmaster, Abraham Beswick, who was not himself a Wesleyan.<sup>1</sup> Thirdly, in order to supplement class-teaching, most of the Sunday schools maintained a small library. They organised Sick clubs and Burial clubs for their members, and they raised funds to build more schools. For example, the cash raised in 1823 by a Wesleyan concert was the nucleus of a school building fund which financed a new Sunday school in Union Street attached to St. Peter's Church.<sup>2</sup> It would seem that in those days the Wesleyans kept close to the Church but would take the initiative if they thought the occasion warranted it. This Sunday

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1. O'Neil, C. A. Origin of Sunday Schools in Oldham and its Vicinity. p.11. 1848

2. O'Neil Op. cit.

school eventually became a National School for day-pupils, and indeed many of the day-schools came into being in this way. As a consequence they ultimately became structurally unsuitable for the function they had to perform. Unfortunately in 1870 most of the day schools were of this kind. They consisted of a large room, with a raised platform at one end, and two small class-rooms: "a hundred pupils were taught in six classes, each class being allowed the use of one of the small rooms for a short period each day. In the other small room were taught three classes of infants".<sup>1</sup>

The first Sunday school was begun in 1783 by the Rev. Thomas Fawcitt, vicar of St. Peter's and master of the grammar school. Shortly after, in 1785, the first Methodist school opened in Bent Brow Chapel.<sup>2</sup> This was the forerunner of two day schools which produced seven later Mayors, St. Domingo Street and Union Street. Some of these pupils became School Board members, like George Wainwright.

The Oldham Sunday schools certainly flourished before and after the passing of the 1833 Factory Act, but the 1844 Factory Act made good the defects of its predecessor by increasing the powers of the Factory Inspectors to inspect schools and to disqualify masters whom they deemed incompetent. This Act also brought in the "half-time" system for children of eight and above. Parents as well as employers were made responsible for the attendance of their children at a school

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1. Oldham Centenary Education Week Handbook. 1949

2. J. Middleton, Oldham Past and Present, p.140. 1903

on three full days a week, or for three hours daily on six days. The total deductions for school fees were limited to twopence weekly per child.

The importance of the 1844 Factory Act was to demonstrate that however laudable the results of the Sunday schools, the provision of day-schools in the town was grossly inadequate. And since most of the money set aside for building grants by the Committee of Council on Education passed either to the National Society or directly to the Church, the burden of providing day-schools fell heavily onto a body which had patently failed, in this parish, to keep abreast of the times. To be just, some efforts had been made by the Church. In 1829 another new chapel, St. James', Greenacres Moor, had been established to cope with a rapidly growing area. In 1835 the chapel of the parish church became the head of an ecclesiastical district. In 1842, the Rev. Thomas Lowe was presented to the incumbency. Lowe was energetic for the cause of education, but was hampered by the outlook of his Church: he took up his duties in a new building organised on immutable rules:

"The parish church was entirely rebuilt in 1830 and opened in December. Nearly all the pew-space was sold to middle-class worshippers and the Church became in effect a proprietary chapel of the wealthy. When the parish schools were built about 13 years after, the only free accommodation for the scholars was two pews, holding ten people." <sup>1</sup>

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1. Perry-Gore, Rev. G. Story of the Ancient Parochial Chapelry of Oldham.

Very soon after the re-organisation of Peel's Bill of 1843 (for the "better endowment of additional ministers and augmentation of small livings to make better provision for the care of small parishes"), the Church made strenuous efforts to establish new churches all over the town. These were -

1844 Christ Church, Glodwick

1844 St. John's

1847 Holy Trinity, Waterhead

1848 Holy Trinity, Coldhurst

1855 St. Thomas's, Werneth. <sup>1</sup>

After the establishment of the last, no more churches were built until 1872. According to Booker<sup>2</sup> the parish population in 1851 was about 95,000, of whom only 15,000 could be accommodated in churches, and for whom only 6,600 seats were free of pew rent. In view of this state of affairs, we may be sure that the Dissenters seized the opportunity for proselytism among the labouring poor. Almost as soon as he was appointed to St. Mary's, the Rev. Thomas Lowe, fearing their growing power, pressed for more churches and schools in his parish

"in order to equal, if not exceed, the labours of the numerous other Christian congregations of different sects, who are extremely prevalent in this populous district." <sup>3</sup>

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1. Bateson H. Centenary History of Oldham. 1949

2. Booker, J. Op. cit.

3. Butterworth, J. Historical Sketches of Oldham, p.222. 1856.

In 1843, the Rev. Lowe appeared before the committee of the Chester Diocesan Church Building Society<sup>1</sup> and presented his case: his three churches could hold only 6,000 people, yet 39,000 out of a total parish of 63,000 were nominally Anglican. Education, too, was at a low ebb:

"The account of the education of the large proportion capable of receiving it was equally disastrous and appalling. Many were without any education at all, the schools of the Church and Dissenting bodies being lamentably too few in number, and too limited in space."

To what extent were the Sunday schools of Oldham effective before 1851? Table P of the Census Returns for 1851 shows that there were 29 schools scattered through the town which taught Sunday pupils. Almost 9,000 children attended, of whom rather more than half were girls, and the denominations in order were:

		APPROX. % OF TOTAL
1. Church of England	2,326 pupils	26
2. Methodists		
(a) Wesleyan	1,071 "	12
(b) Primitive	823 "	9
(c) Independent	795 "	9
(d) New Connexion	512 "	6
(e) Wesleyan Association	449	5
(Total Methodists)		41%

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1. See its Ninth Report, 1843.

3. Independents (Congregational)	1,777 pupils	20%
4. Undefined Protestants	849 "	9
(plus a few other small bodies)		1

From the table, no fewer than 70% of the Sunday school pupils went to Dissenters' schools. Only a quarter went to Church Sunday schools. Yet on Lowe's own evidence about 4 out of every 6 children were members of the Church. The 1851 Census gives just over 12,000 children in the town aged 5 to 15. It is clear that in spite of its efforts, the Church had failed in its task. Oldham was a stronghold of nonconformity - in religion, in education and in politics. A brief resume of its political history will suffice.

Under the 1832 Reform Bill provisions, Oldham returned two M.P.'s on 13th December. Both were famous Radicals - William Cobbett and John Fielden. From then on, the seats were nearly always held by Radicals, one of the best known of whom was William Johnson Fox, whose work in Education has been described elsewhere. Fox was a Dissenting preacher in London before he became a great political orator. The electors of Oldham never wavered in their choice until the extension of the franchise in the late sixties, but Liberalism was a great force for long afterwards.

What of the day-schools before 1851? The popularity of Sunday education is easy to understand. Nobody lost money because of it - neither the workers nor the employers. With day-school, however, the question was different. The Church's greatest enemy was Mammon. Factories arose first, next came houses and shops, lastly the churches



and schools had to fit in as and where they could. Some of the schools were Factory Schools under regular visits by the Inspectors. But the schools competed with the huge industrial demand for the labour of children and young persons. In 1851 there were 4,343 females under 20 working in Oldham cotton mills, together with 3,540 males. A further 466 boys worked in coal mines. 4,269 boys and 3,972 girls were returned in the Census as being "at school". Many of these were Factory Act half-timers. In order to augment the family income, parents sent their children to work as soon as they could, because the wages offered in the mills were high - higher than could be got in other trades. So much was observed by Leonard Horner, the Factory Inspector:

<u>Wages paid in 1841 for certain jobs.</u> <sup>1</sup>		<u>Weekly</u>
Card tenter	Boys 13 - 16 years	8 - 9 shillings
Can tenter	Girls 13 - 16 "	5 - 7 "
Mule Spinning Scavenger	Both 9 - 13 "	5/6d.

Horner was appalled by the state of education in the town, as shown by his report<sup>2</sup> (written before the efforts of the Rev. T. Lowe to get a school) for 1842:

"The adjoining town of Oldham is quite as destitute of day-schools as the Ashton district was represented to be in my April and October reports of last year. This town, including within a circle of a mile and a half radius from the centre ..... a population of

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1. H.M. Inspector of Factories Report, 1841. p.88

2. H.M. Inspector of Factories Report, 1842.

45,000 ..... is at this moment without one public day-school for the children of the working classes; for the grammar-school and Bluecoat School cannot be considered practically as available to the working population: the former has an endowment of £30 a year, is a building of one storey, 18 yards by 6, without any playground, and teaching 70 scholars, principally the sons of shopkeepers; the latter is an endowed school for boarding, education etc. boys from the parishes of Oldham, Manchester, Eccles, Ashton, Middleton, Rochdale and Saddleworth, and there are at present 100 scholars. There is also an infant school connected with St. Peter's district church, attended usually by about 100. But these three are the only public schools within the township: hitherto there has been neither a National school nor a school of the British and Foreign School Society."<sup>1</sup>

Horner ascribes the great dearth of schools to the general poverty of the population and to the paucity of middle-class philanthropists. He also considered the middle-class to be so divided by political and religious differences that they could not be brought to act together for the common good. To support this opinion, he produced statistics given to him by an Oldham cotton-spinner concerning denominations attending Sunday schools. As with the later Census, about 70% of the pupils were Dissenters, and for this reason,

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1. Horner was, strictly speaking, inaccurate. A British School in Oldham received a grant of £254 in 1834, but by 1841 was in a languishing condition. St. Margaret's, Hollinwood, had also had a small building grant in 1838. On the whole, however, his report is no exaggeration.

Horner urged the establishment of British Schools<sup>1</sup> and more National schools.

The work of the Rev. T. Lowe did not pass unnoticed by the Factory Inspector, who noted that by October 1845<sup>2</sup> there was an improvement in the position;

		<u>OPENED</u>	<u>BOYS</u>	<u>GIRLS</u>
Parish Church	National School	JAN. 1844	80	20
St. Peter's	" "	JAN. 1845	170	80
St. James's	" "	FEB. 1845	130	35
Hollinwood	" "	APR. 1844	90	50
British School		JAN. 1844	125	35

The half-time system was now in full swing - there were over 14,000 half-timers in Horner's district.

The money to match the building grants from the Committee of Council was raised mainly by the mill-owners employing the children. The Penalties fund, accruing from the proceeds of prosecutions under the Factory Acts, was used for grants towards the purchase of books, maps, libraries and teaching aids. Thus, at this period, the work of the Factory Inspector overlapped with that of the H.M.I. About two-thirds of the cotton-mill half-timers were boys - many girls neither attended school nor worked, because they were kept at home as minders of the infants whose mothers went out to the mills on six days a week to start work at 6. a.m.

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1. Favoured by Dissenters because they were undenominational.

2. Report of H.M. Inspector of Factories, 1845.

The early enthusiasm for the half-time system soon declined when its bad effects on schools became apparent. Horner mentions in his Report<sup>1</sup> that 15,240 children had obtained certificates of school attendance, but adds that it would be a mistake to conclude thereby that they were being "educated". Of some teachers in private schools, he said

"Anyone however incompetent may open a school; and while professing to deal in education, he vends a commodity wholly worthless." Another view, that of the Rev. W. J. Kennedy, the H.M.I., is hardly more sanguine. In his Report for 1850 he excuses the appalling state of education in Lancashire on the grounds of the rapid growth in population, school fees being too high,<sup>2</sup> the pre-occupation of employers with making money, the non-attendance of the older children at a school, the neglect of the younger ones and the drunkenness of the working-class. But he does suggest that the parochial schools were being disorganised by half-timers and irregular attenders from print-works. What would be the remedy? Special schools for half-timers, and more evening schools for children above 13.

The new day-schools had mixed fortunes. St. Domingo Street Wesleyan Sunday school had grown into a good day-school by 1849, when the H.M.I.<sup>3</sup> reported:

- 
1. For period ending 30 April, 1847.
  2. i.e. 3 pence or 4 pence per week.
  3. J. D. Morell.

"A school of moderate size in which great activity prevails. The master is quiet but infuses considerable vigour into his instruction. The reading, owing partly to the provincialism of this district, is not very perfect in expression, though sufficiently fluent. Mental Arithmetic good. Grammar moderate. Geography and writing fair, and writing from dictation tolerably good. Candidates very well prepared on the whole,<sup>1</sup> and showing considerable aptitude to teach."

The H.M.I's figures show that this school, like most others at that date, contained mainly young children who attended badly.

Total on books:	159							
In ordinary attendance:	125							
Present for examination:	93							
Ages of children on books:	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	yrs.
Number of pupils:	53	60	25	6	3	5	2	

The new day-schools struggled to establish themselves, employers and workers alike still regarded the Sunday school as being perfectly adequate for imparting knowledge, and many pupils attended dame schools, which were nearly all bad. Morell's report<sup>2</sup> on British Wesleyan and Other Schools includes a table of statistics relating to the Derker Mills Factory School at Oldham which reveals how bad the half-time system was. In one year, 198 factory children were enrolled, ranging from 8 to 13 years. Of these,

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1. A reference to the three boy apprentice-teachers.

2. p. 632, 1852-3.

152 had no arithmetic at all.

2 only could do fractions.

120 could not write.

40 could not read.

In the same report we learn that 170 half-timers were in the Wesleyan School in St. Domingo Street, most of whom were "quite raw and undisciplined".

Having established the parochial schools, the Rev. T. Lowe was now non-resident, leaving his curates to administer the schools as best they might. In the H.M.I's report (by the Rev. W. Birley) for 1852 - 3, we read

"the schools at Oldham, where a very large sum of money has been expended on the buildings, are in a deplorable state of inefficiency."

The Ragged School which began about this time was also in "a low state". It existed for poor people who could not afford the usual twopence or threepence a week school pence, but as it did not qualify for a capitation grant, it was inevitably of a low standard. Moreover, most poor parents avoided paying school pence for their children up to the age of 8 by adopting the simple expedient of not sending them to any school whatsoever.

School-design had not made any progress, though many were pointlessly ornate, perhaps to blend with existing chapels - such a style was that of the R.C. school at Oldham, St. Marie's, censured by the Catholic Schools Inspector for its expensiveness.

In the face of all these difficulties, the day-schools continued to grow in number and efficiency, and the Table in the 1851 Census Report is in strong contrast with the dearth of educational provision which Horner and Lowe had complained of less than ten years previously.

B. 1851 - 1870. - Further Growth of Day Schools.

The age-group including children of school age represented a much bigger proportion of the total population a century ago than it does today. Like most unplanned industrial towns, the death rate in Oldham was high because of the incidence of pneumonia, tuberculosis, scarlet fever, and many other diseases which science has rendered relatively innocuous. In 1848 the first Public Health Act was passed: Oldham Town Council appointed its first Medical Officer of Health in 1873. But in spite of the high mortality, the birth rate was over 40 per thousand, with the result that the town swarmed with children, as a simple comparison between the Census of 1851 and 1951 will show:

In 1851, 36.3% of the population were under 15 years; roughly 20% were of school age (3 - 13 years). Therefore out of a total population of 53,000 inhabitants there were roughly 11,000 children of school age.

In 1951, 21.4% of the population were under 15 and the 3 - 13 age group numbered approximately 7,500 out of a total population of 120,000 persons. Of course, the school age has

changed, but the comparison does show that the burden of providing new schools which fell on the adherents of the Voluntary bodies in 1851 was individually great. Most of the necessary funds were raised by collections and subscriptions, though now and then building plots and money were provided by benefactors. No money from the rates could be devoted to educational purposes (except for the upkeep of the Workhouse school); by modern standards the annual grant for England and Wales made by the Committee of Council was pathetically small, but Table P of the 1851 Census shows how the Voluntary bodies were tackling the problem.

Table P. Number of Day-Schools and Scholars in Oldham.

Population of Municipal Borough:	52,820
Number of Public and Private Day Schools:	46
Pupils attending them: Boys 2,642	
Girls 1,394	
<u>Total:</u>	<u>4,036</u>

A. Public Schools

Number of public schools of all kinds	13
Pupils attending them	1,989

Public Schools and Pupils:-

1. <u>Voluntary Schools.</u>	Enrolled
(a) National (2 schools)	634
(b) Church (2)	425
(c) Wesleyan	177
(d) Moravian	83
(e) Independent	78

(no British or Roman Catholic School listed).



2. Bluecoat School and Hollinwood G.S.	215
3. Parochial Union School	74
4. Old Grammar School	59
5. Factory School	209
6. Day School in Mechanics' Institute	35

B. Private Schools.

Number	33
Pupils in attendance	2,047

Pupils attending each class of school.

	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Total</u>
A. Public	1,403	586	1,989
B. Private	1,239	808	2,047

It appears, therefore, that about half of the Oldham children who went to a school, attended a private school. Nearly all were of poor quality and many of them were ephemeral, so that there were probably far more than 33 schools of this type. These were known by the name of the proprietor, as Dawson's, Binn's, Tait's. A few were middle-class schools which charged considerable fees. Hollinwood Grammar School was founded in 1786 by the Rev. John Darby of Hollinwood Chapel; the building stood until about 1869. The Old Grammar School (which was later visited and described by James Bryce in the sixties) was in a languishing condition. Even if one assumes only 33 schools of this kind, the average enrolment at each was only 60 pupils. Their contribution to the advancement of learning was questionable.

Half of the total pupils were enrolled in the 13 Voluntary schools. There were nearly three times as many boys as girls, because of the demand for baby-minders. These schools varied in size, but catered for about 70% of the pupils in seven schools built by religious bodies, especially the Church and National Society. It is fair to assume that many of the 4,000 day-scholars were included in the 9,000 pupils at Sunday schools. But this means that there were several thousand children in Oldham who were receiving no schooling whatsoever in 1851. The majority were girls, and for the rest, many of the schools were useless. Had the voluntary bodies been able to keep pace with the ever-growing population?

The Census of 1851 gives the proportion of day scholars to the total population of the town as being 1 to 13.08. This was evidence of the gross inadequacy of school provision, since not another English municipal borough had so poor a record. Even in towns like Manchester and Salford, which were notoriously destitute of schools, this proportion was considerably lower, being respectively 1 to 11.6 and 1 to 12.17. The older towns, which had not been much influenced by industrial expansion, often had a respectable provision of places: Ripon, for instance, with 1 to 5.97 persons. Even Liverpool, by this time the second biggest port in the United Kingdom, had a proportion of 1 to 8.56.

The complaints of the vicar of St. Mary's in 1843 had not been made a moment too soon, but in spite of the growth of day schools

between 1844 and 1851 it was plain to all the denominations that the task of getting the children into a school was enormous. And they were mercifully not aware that during the next decade the population of Oldham was to grow by one third, and that the 11,000 children of school age in 1851 would likewise increase to over 15,000.

As we have seen, one result of the provisions of the Factory Acts was to make the education of poor children the responsibility of the parents and the cotton manufacturers. As the cotton industry expanded in Oldham, therefore, so the demand grew for schools, since a substantial proportion of the employed population worked in spinning and was of school age. So in order to comply with the Factory Acts, new schools were built, though in some cases the Sunday school premises were considered adequate; more building grants were obtained from the Education Department; more half-timers entered the schools. A school which was anxious to secure a grant on capitation had first to secure the services of a certificated teacher, but even so, the general standard of schooling was low, as the Inspector reported<sup>1</sup> in 1857:

"I have made some calculations on this subject from the schools which in my district have received the capitation fees, and I find that at present the proportion of children for whom the grant is claimed is, upon an average, rather under one third of the children in ordinary attendance. Thus, out of 120 children, rather less than

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1. Report of the Rev. W. J. Kennedy, 1856-7.

40 may be expected to attend for at least 176 whole days in the year, and for them the capitation fees may be expected if the teacher is certificated."

St. Domingo Street Wesleyan School had received by 1857 over £700 in grant for training pupil-teachers, and was well ahead of any other school in Oldham in this respect, despite the fact that no financial assistance in founding the school had been asked. Under a minute of 1st March 1855 the Committee of Council instituted further grants to voluntary night school teachers, and under a later Minute (of 26th July 1858) capitation grants were given to night schools on the understanding that they obtained certificated teachers. In connection with the East Lancashire Union of Mechanics and Other Institutions, night schools flourished under the aegis of Sir James Kay Shuttleworth of Burnley. For example, the Glodwick Mutual Improvement Society was founded in 1857, at which pupils earned grants on the Science and Art Department (South Kensington) examinations; several other similar institutions functioned in Oldham.

Cotton boomed, the 1861 Revised Code came in. Power was lodged in the hands of the Bounderbys; the tone of the schools became utilitarian and the emphasis was on results. The official reports expressed satisfaction if pupils on an ever-creasing scale were being fed into the schools like grain into the mill. Thus the Rev. W. J. Kennedy in 1861:

"The half-time system continues to work very well in this county, and is on the increase."<sup>1</sup>

Why was the Inspector pleased? His view of the half-time system's effect on the children was that

"thoughtfulness is promoted by the silence they are obliged to observe during their employment in a factory".<sup>2</sup> Likewise, the

"works of art and of science with which they are daily conversant tend to promote thought and intelligence".<sup>3</sup>

The Factory Inspector, Horner, was also given to uttering similar rationalisations on the ennobling effects of the factory system: his satisfaction on witnessing the growth of the cotton industry<sup>4</sup> was that it was

"employment that trains the children to early habits of industry and submission to authority, quickens and develops their intelligence and powers of observation, and at the same time contributes largely to their maintenance and pays for their education".

It is true that these officials were men of their time, but this unfortunate attitude was widely adopted, and persisted in many minds for years after this period. Though the Cotton Famine of 1861-5 was a serious setback to the mill-owners, it threw a great burden on the schools by filling them with unemployed children. They were ill prepared for the influx, but after the American Civil War there were more children than ever in the factories. The

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1. Report of H.M.I. 1861.

2. Quoted by H.M. Factory Inspector in his 1852 Report.

3. and 4. *ibid.*

half-time system was clearly a great handicap to education, and gradually the Inspectors came to realise that they had been over-optimistic in their view of it. Even if the teachers had never been so well trained, they were still struggling against impossible odds, as the official report<sup>1</sup> showed:

Children of school-age employed in the Lancashire Cotton Industry:

1839	:	7,579
1850	:	9,859
1856	:	17,263
1862	:	30,010

We have seen that the wages of the children were much desired by their parents: they had a real purchasing power of several pounds in terms of present values, as a brief comparison of wages and prices in 1861 will demonstrate:

Boy and girl "helpers" in Oldham cotton mills were paid, according to the Factory Inspector, wages of 5/3d. per week. 3 pence was deducted for school fees. How far would the remaining five shillings go? In 1863<sup>2</sup>

1 lb. of beef (not best quality)	cost	5d.
1 lb. of butter	"	10d.
1 lb. of tea	"	2s.6d.
1 lb. of sugar	"	4½d.
8 lb. of rice	"	1s.0d.

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1. Report of Factories Inspector (Robert Baker) for 1862.

2. Report of Factory Inspector 1863.

4 lb. of bread	cost	5d.
A small house to rent	"	2s.8d. to 4s.0d. per week

When, therefore, we consider the purchasing power of even a child's wage, it is not surprising that school was unpopular with pupils and parents alike.

By 1869 official attitude to the half-time system was hardening into opposition, as appears from the Inspector of Catholic Schools' Report for 1868-9. Mr. S. N. Stokes observed that some schools refused to admit half-timers because of their "rude manners and foul clothes", but especially because they upset the time table by necessitating the giving twice daily of the same lessons in religious instruction and the three R's. As for the teacher, double registers were needed for filling up the factory time-books. The Inspector pointed out some of the defects in the law. Thus, though children working in mills were legally required to be "at a school", the law did not require every school to accept them. He considered the system to be educationally unsound as well, because if a mill stopped working, the children stopped going to school; if a child changed its place of employment, it often changed schools. This was a frequent practice.

The Newcastle Commission on the State of Popular Education (1861) had much to say on the subject of half-time, and the Assistant Commissioner (Mr. J. S. Winder) who visited the nearby cotton town of Rochdale described the half time pupils as follows:

"Everywhere, the lower classes are crammed with them, passing the later period of their school time under the lowest

grade of instruction, drudging hopelessly among children many years younger than themselves, and finally leaving school unable to read a simple narrative with understanding, writing a most miserable scrawl, and incompetent to do more than a simple addition or subtraction sum in arithmetic"<sup>1</sup>

Most of these half-timers had had no education before reaching the age of eight, and left before their tenth birthday. So much appears from the Report on the State of Popular Education in Dissenters' Schools (1861). In Lancashire the average age at which a child left a school of this class was only 9.3 years, but in other areas where the Factory System was unimportant, a child could count on at least another year in school. In Middlesex, for instance, the average school leaving age was 11.25 years.

It is evident that some of the older officials did not abandon their earlier views, however. The H.M.I., (the Rev. W. J. Kennedy) reporting in 1870, remarked that

"the system continues to be eminently successful. The half-timers in my district, especially in Oldham and Rochdale and their environs, are increasing in numbers and make good progress in attainments".<sup>2</sup>

He was also satisfied with the amount of school accommodation available, remarking that no important increase was needed at that time; perhaps, as he says, "just a few new schoolrooms here and there." Was this a true picture? Unless matters had improved vastly since

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1. Newcastle Commission. Reports of Assistant Commissioners.

Vol. II (1861) page 230

2. Report of Committee of Council. 1869-70. p.156.



the 1851 Census, it is almost impossible not to come to the conclusion that the worthy cleric was wearing blinkers! Year by year, more pressure was put on existing schools - too many of them (especially girls' schools) were crammed with infants because the impecunious managers would only pay one certificated teacher to deal with both classes of pupil, rather than engage an additional infants teacher at extra cost. Night schools (confined to teaching the three R's) had also greatly expanded, as a result of the grants made available under the 1862 Revised Code.

Such, however, was the thoroughness of the Victorian system that sound assessments of the existing provision of school places were arrived at following the investigations of the Schools Inquiry (Taunton) Commission at this time. The Assistant Commissioner sent out to the Northern Counties became in later life the Chairman of the Commission on Secondary Education - James Bryce. Though his Report<sup>1</sup> dealt mainly with endowed schools, Bryce remarks<sup>2</sup> that

"the chief educational want of Lancashire at present is a system of efficient day schools."

He found also that though Lancashire was getting rich, the wealthy held the vocation of schoolmaster in contempt. The middle class, who in other parts of England had been praised for their munificence in providing churches and schools, were but little represented in Lancashire. All classes of society seemed to be occupied solely in making money. Bryce noticed that

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1. Schools Inquiry Report. Vol X. 1867-8. Northern Counties.  
2. *ibid.* page 782

"Men almost or wholly illiterate have risen to a prodigious wealth, and indulge in a profuse luxury which strongly contrasts with the primitive simplicity of their own manners".<sup>1</sup> Was this an exaggeration? It is only necessary to give two examples of the kind of material success which impressed Bryce so forcibly. The cotton spinning industry in Oldham was then entering its most prosperous era. Colonel Thomas Evans Lees, who served on the first two School Boards as a Churchman and Conservative, inherited his father's cotton-spinning concern and a fortune of just under half a million pounds. He died, aged 49, in 1879.

Another spinner, Hilton Greaves of Derker Mills, served with Lees as a Churchman on the first two School Boards. He lived to the age of 73 - long enough to amass a fortune at his death in February 1895 of £491,425 after duty. Reckoned in terms of modern values, this is, in truth, "prodigious wealth". His youngest hands, the half-timers who attended his factory school, received the sum of 1s.6d. weekly in wages. To do justice, however, to the memory of men like these, it should be stated that they and many others gave generously to the Church and to other Voluntary bodies for the purpose of equipping and establishing day schools. So much becomes apparent if we compare the figures given in Table P of the 1851 Census with those of the returns made in Oldham in accordance with the requirements of the School Board Act. In 1851 there were 13 public schools and some 30 private schools, with about 4,000 children

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1. *ibid.* p.749

enrolled. In 1870, the school population had trebled to about 12,000. There were 27 inspected public elementary schools, and these admitted the bulk of the scholars. 20 schools maintained by nonconformists and 17 small dame schools admitted the remainder.

To summarize the growth of day-schools briefly between 1843 and 1870:

In 1843 the situation was (in Lowe's words), "disastrous and appalling". By 1850, after strenuous efforts, 4,000 (out of a total of 12,000 children) were said to be "at a school". By 1870, 12,000 children were at school, but the total population of school-age (3-13 years) had risen by this time to over 18,000. So in 1870, about 6,000 children were getting no schooling, at least, in a day-school, and this number did not differ greatly from that of 1850. The school attendance in 1870 was so poor, however, that there must have been plenty of vacant places in the desks. The question was, would the existing accommodation be sufficient, if by some miracle the errant 6,000 could be brought into the schoolrooms?

On December 7th 1870, the General Purposes Committee of Oldham Town Council presented a report giving the number of schools, the accommodation provided and the numbers of attendance. This was adopted. There was a formidable public opinion in the borough in favour of publicly provided and popularly controlled education. At the same meeting, it was unanimously decided to apply for powers to form a School Board.

There is no doubt that public opinion in the town had been strongly influenced during the preceding twenty years by the enthusiasm of the Lancashire educationists and the Oldham member, William Johnson Fox. These men helped to prepare the way for the Elementary Education Act of 1870.

### 3. Towards the 1870 Act and the School Boards.

#### A. Pre-1870 Movements in National Education.

Many bills on the question of education came before Parliament; perhaps none was so radical as that of 1850, promoted by William Johnson Fox, M.P. for Oldham. Fox had been elected in 1847 against strong Conservative opposition. Such was the strength of the Radicals in the town that he held the seat (with the exception of a few months) until his retirement in 1862 at the age of 77. Fox was the able mouthpiece of the wishes of famous Radicals like Cobden, who had tired of Governmental apathy towards the education question. Fox's epitaph in Brompton Cemetary states that he was the first man to bring in a Bill for National Secular Education.

The religious question loomed larger as time went on. The Church's hold over the public elementary school system was becoming more powerful, as a result of the conditions for giving building grants laid down by the Minutes of the Committee of Council. The National Society was, by definition, committed to proselytism in its schools, insisting that pupils at National schools should learn the Church catechism and should attend Divine Service on Sunday. In spite of the laudable activity of the nonconformists in raising

funds for schools, (for example, the Congregational Board of Education undertook to find £200,000 for school-provision, and by 1859 had found about £180,000 of it<sup>1</sup>). The Church was backed by massive financial resources.

To oppose the growing power of Anglicanism, the Lancashire Public School Association was formed in 1847 in Manchester. Promoted by a coalition of eminent Churchmen and Dissenters, the Association was pledged to advocate the so-called "combined system" of schooling. Its main aims were, the promotion of free education in schools financed by local rates, managed by locally - elected committees, confining instruction to secular subjects only, and leaving space in the curriculum for religious instruction to be given in accordance with parents' wishes. All voluntary bodies were to be put on the same financial basis, and therefore the aim of the Lancashire Public School Association was to end the monopoly of the Church and the National Society.

Fox's 1850 Bill for National Secular Education was based on these aims. After demonstrating the failure of the Voluntary bodies and the Treasury funds to satisfy the great and growing demand, Fox urged on the House the great need for making the education of the working-class child the responsibility of local bodies; any deficiency in school places was to be ascertained by Inspectors and the locality was to make it good by raising a rate.

In the matter of religious instruction, however, Fox's Bill departed from the "combined system" of the Lancashire Public

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1. Newcastle Commission. Vol. VI. p.273.

School Association. The question was to be left open to the ratepayers to decide. This was the weakness of the Bill. The Church party and Roman Catholics opposed it on the grounds that it was "irreligious" and it was rejected on the second reading by a big majority.

This was a setback to the supporters of the Lancashire Public School Association. In the few years of its existence, the organisation had enlisted support from men of influence and wealth. In Oldham, there were the successful capitalists described by Bryce. Among its subscribers, the Lancashire Public School Association in 1848 counted James Platt<sup>1</sup>, partner in the great textile machinery works; Elkanah Moss, an Alderman; Eli Lees, a wealthy cotton-spinner, and Thomas Emmott, a prosperous Quaker who became a member of the first School Board 23 years later.

On the downfall of Fox's Bill, the Lancashire Public School Association, realising that it would have to widen its appeal to enlist more public sympathy with its aims, changed its name. Meeting in the Manchester Corn Exchange on 31st October 1850, the society assumed the title of National Public Schools Association and boldly re-asserted its aim for free secular instruction in a resolution moved by Dr. Davidson, Professor of Theology in the Lancashire Independent College. This was seconded by the Rev. William F. Walker, rector of St. James's, Greenacres Moor, Oldham. Cobden supported him. Men of all denominations gave their support;

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1. Returned as M.P. for Oldham 1857. Fatally injured in a shooting accident a few months later.

others, like the rector of Christ Church, Glodwick, the Rev. James Bumstead, bitterly opposed the National Public Schools Association because of the religious question.

Members of the Executive Committee of the N.P.S.A.

representing Oldham borough, 1850.

Thomas Emmott	Elkanah Moss
Henry Hayes	James Platt
William Ingham	Henry Tipping
William Knott	Rev. W.F. Walker, M.A.
Eli Lees	

In continued support of the aims of the N.P.S.A., W. J. Fox moved another Bill in the 1851 Parliamentary session but it was lost at the first reading. On the local level the work of the N.P.S.A. aroused a great deal of interest among the ratepayers of Oldham on the question of education. Eventually the N.P.S.A. was dissolved (in November 1862), but it paved the way for the later work of the Manchester Education Aid Society (1864) and of the Birmingham League (1867), both of whose aims were finally embodied in the Elementary Education Bill of 1870.

B. The Election of the first Oldham School Board.

After the Franchise was extended in 1868, Oldham continued to return Liberals to Westminster. The members elected in 1865 were re-elected, though with reduced majorities. They were J. T. Hibbert, whose family was connected commercially with the Platts, and John Platt<sup>1</sup>. Most of the enfranchised nonconformists voted

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1. Brother of James Platt M.P., accidentally shot in 1857.

**Liberal.** The Hibbert and Platt families had liberally contributed to the establishment of nonconformist chapels and schools at a time when the power of the Church was on the wane - no new Churches had been established after St. Thomas's, Werneth, in 1855. All the religious minorities, especially the Catholics, had meanwhile strengthened their education provision. Each sect had a stake in the 1870 Act, and the 1871 Returns in Accordance with the School Board Act enable us to assess the importance of their contribution, although here, as in almost every other borough, the Church and National Society had found it easiest to establish and maintain schools:-

1871. Children in Oldham.

(a) Of School-age	18,095
(b) Attending School	12,150

<u>Schools.</u>	<u>Attended by % of total</u>
1. Church and National	40
2. British and Congregational	10
3. Wesleyan Methodists	8
4. Primitive "	1
5. New Connexion	1
6. Roman Catholic	7
7. Baptists	3
8. Other Schools (e.g. Factory, Ragged, Free Church, Moravian, Swedenborgian etc.)	10
9. Cottage Schools	7
10. Contemplated Schools (to be maintained by various bodies)	13



Hence, four voluntary bodies (excluding the Church) had an important interest in elementary education, and when it became known that an election was to be held for a School Board, each of the voluntary bodies fielded a candidate. For the 13 places fixed by the Education Department, there were 25 nominees.

The Dissenters nominated 16 candidates, following the aims of the N.P.S.A. in favour of secular instruction. This Secularist Coalition Committee met at its headquarters, Oldham Lyceum. In opposition, the 6 nominees of the Church party were led by the Rev. William Walters, Vicar of Oldham and Rural Dean. The Roman Catholics put forward a priest, Fr. Charles Grymonprez of St. Mary's and John Bentley, woollen draper.

All the activities of the factions were minutely described, after the style of Eatanswill, in the rival newspapers. The "Oldham Standard" stood for Church and Conservatives: the "Chronicle" supported the Liberal Nonconformists. Each paper whipped up enthusiasm by attacking its opponent, but as electing officer, the main concern of the Mayor appears to have been the desirability of avoiding a contested election so as to keep down charges to the rates.

As befitted a right-wing journal, the "Standard" sang the praises of the Church party candidates.

"Notwithstanding the desire of the friends of religious education for a compromise, under which all the religious bodies in the borough might have had fair and equitable representation, there is every prospect of a contest in the election of members of the

Oldham School Board. On behalf of the Church of England, only six candidates have been nominated, which is rather under than over the number the adherents of the Church, looking to their numerical strength, the successful efforts they have put forth for the education of the people, and the number and character of their schools, had a right to expect."<sup>1</sup>

In point of fact, however, the figures show that the Church and National schools provided for only about 40% of the borough's scholars, and therefore six would seem to be the greatest number of places to which the Church party could justly lay claim. The "Standard" explained ingenuously that the Church party, acting with commendable modesty in limiting the number of its candidates to six, had done so

"in order to deprive the Secularists and their sympathisers of even the semblance of a reasonable pretext for involving the borough in the turmoil of a contest"<sup>2</sup>

The Standard dismissed the action of the Roman Catholics in nominating two candidates as unwise, because they would not have sufficient electoral power behind them, and added that it would be unfortunate in the interests of religious education to lose both candidates as a result. The editorial comment on the Coalition is an indication of how the new ad hoc bodies were viewed with suspicion<sup>3</sup> by the Conservatives on the religious question:

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1. Oldham Standard. 31 Dec. 1870.

2. -do-

3. -do-

"..... some of the ministers<sup>1</sup> having joined with Secularists, Infidels and Atheists in an attempt to constitute a School Board pledged to degrade the Scriptures, in rate-built and rate-aided schools, below the level of spelling-books. They are willing to allow the Bible to be read but not explained to scholars in schools under the control of the Board. As a matter of favour - of toleration to those calling themselves Christians - the Secularists and Infidels of Christian England in the nineteenth Century, will graciously allow the Bible to be read in public schools provided out of the rates, but it must be read without note or comment!!"

The Coalition Committee soon realised that by nominating 16 candidates their chances of controlling the Board would be weakened, so by ballot the number was reduced to 7. These were:

The Rev. Richard Meredith Davies, Congregational Minister of Hope Chapel.

George Wainwright, Wesleyan, once a pupil at St. Domingo Street Wesleyan School.

Thomas Noton, New Connexion Methodist.

William Wrigley, Unitarian (became Mayor 1872).

Thomas Emmott, Society of Friends, once in the L.P.S.A.

Jonathan Corbitt, Secularist (Trade Unions).

Edward Ingham, Secularist) Co-operative Society).

The Coalition Committee's Secretary, the Rev. A. Peaton, then approached the Church party with a request that the latter should reduce its candidates to five. This request was refused, so the

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1. i.e. Dissenters.

Dissenters and Roman Catholics agreed to reduce their numbers by one each and in consequence Noton and Bentley stood down. The Mayor as returning officer and having the required number of candidates, then declared the Board as constituted without a contest on 9th January, 1871. Its members consisted of the six Church nominees and the seven others:

Rev. William Walters, Vicar of Oldham.

Thomas Evans Lees, J.P., cotton-spinner.

James Booth of Westhill House, cotton-spinner.

John Rowland, J.P., of Thorncliffe, cotton-spinner.

Hilton Greaves of Derker House, cotton-spinner.

Ina Mellor of Market-Place, tea-dealer.

Rev. C. Grymonprez, Catholic priest.

Rev. R. M. Davies, Congregational pastor.

Thomas Emmott, Quaker and cotton-spinner.

George Wainwright, Wesleyan, gentleman.

William Wrigley, Unitarian, estate agent.

Jonathan Corbitt, bricklayer.

Edward Ingham, engineer.

The Church party was not in control as a result of the election, and the "Standard", using some dubious figures, maintained in its next issue<sup>1</sup> that the existing provision of school-places was more than adequate for all children in the borough, and warned the ratepayers that the School Board had unlimited power to demand money for its schemes; moreover,

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1. Oldham Standard, 7th Jan. 1871

"Rate-aided schools will be a very great hindrance ..... because the promoters aim at making the rising generations a curse to the age, and at least semi-infidels."

The "Oldham Chronicle" on the other side contented itself with attacking the Rev. W. Walters and the Oldham Clergy in general, and accused him of having the intention of making the new Education Act "a powerful engine for Church-of England proselytism".<sup>1</sup>

Having thus exchanged final shots, the press fell silent. Meanwhile the work of the first School Board for Oldham had begun - the 30th to be formed in England and Wales. Its first duty was to elect a Chairman and Vice-Chairman: the choice fell respectively on the Rev. R. M. Davies and Fr. C. Grymonprez.

The Rev. Davies began his working life in an office in Manchester, but in 1839 entered the Congregational College at Blackburn. He was ordained pastor at Hope Congregational Chapel, Oldham, on 2nd September 1844<sup>2</sup>, and during the Cotton Famine of 1861 - 3 was Secretary of the Congregational Relief Fund which distributed over £30,000. For many years he was also Secretary of the Congregational Church and School Building Society (which had established several schools in Oldham) and at the time of his election to the chairmanship of the School Board had been almost thirty years a minister in the town.

Fr. Charles Grymonprez was a native of Roulers, and after being ordained at Bruges, came to Manchester to work among the large

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1. Oldham Chronicle, 14th Jan. 1871

2. Nightingale - Lancashire Nonconformity.

number of poor Irish who had gathered there. After some years he was transferred to Oldham, being appointed parish priest in 1869, and thus had far less experience than his non-conformist colleague in educational matters; but the latter soon demonstrated that the choice of Chairman had been well-advised, in spite of the gloomy forebodings of the Editor of the "Standard".

It is clear from the newspaper reports of the time that feelings in Oldham, as elsewhere, ran high on the question of religious education, and of course these were a reflection on a local scale of the compromise nature of the Bill of 1870. Because the Bill had been made law it would be wrong to assume that all the religious denominations took up their new task in a spirit of concord: differences of opinion, however carefully concealed at the outset, had a tendency to emerge later in the shape of stormy debates during the meetings of the School Board, when the task of dealing with current problems sometimes proved too heavy for the emotions of individual members. And even though many of them were men with long experience of committee procedure because they had served on the town council, their supporters did not consider it at all necessary to refrain from making all kinds of accusations in the press - in those days all-powerful as an instrument of propaganda; a fact which we in these days of mass-media may sometimes overlook. The monthly meetings of the School Board were carefully reported in the newspapers - and almost as soon as they had appeared, criticisms followed.

The Town Council as local authority had decided at a meeting held in Oldham Town Hall on 7th December 1870 to apply to the Education Department for leave to form a School Board, in accordance with Section 12 of the 1870 Act. This clause enabled local authorities to elect School Boards before the results of the returns made under Section 67 were made known. Under this section, a local authority was bound to render a return of the accommodation available in elementary schools, together with the number of children in the area under its administration requiring elementary instruction. In this way the School Boards could be created without delay in those areas where the voluntary bodies had been unable to meet the demand. In Oldham it was equally obvious that the first task of the duly elected thirteen members of the School Board would be to enforce attendance by framing bye-laws, since at least 30% of the children aged from 3 to 13 never attended school.

Accordingly the Mayor, Edward Mayall, appointed the Town Clerk, John Ponsonby, as temporary Clerk to the School Board until such time as a permanent official could be engaged, and the school board's first meeting took place in the Town Hall on 19th January 1871. The business of the meeting was to elect a chairman and other officials. Only two members opposed the motion to appoint the Rev. R. M. Davies, pastor of Hope Congregational Church, to fill the Chairman's post. No doubt the members were influenced by his intimate knowledge of the townspeople, among whom he had worked for nearly thirty years. It is noteworthy also that in this way the

sectorian interests of the individual members were nearly balanced, as the six Churchmen were thus conveniently juxtaposed with six members representing other religious bodies and secular interests. In some cases the Rev. R. M. Davies would be called upon to give his vital casting vote as the deciding factor. As also the Churchmen were led by the Rev. W. Walters, the office of Vice-Chairman was voted to the charge of the Catholic priest C. L. Grymonprez, who was closely connected with the management of the Roman Catholic Boys' School. In the Report of the Committee of Council for 1870, the Inspector of Catholic Schools stated that this was among the seven best boys' schools that he had inspected; much credit would seem to be due to the priest as an organiser, as well as to the teachers.

The Conservatives (or Churchmen) were annoyed because they had not won control of the Board; but the appointment of a nonconformist minister as chairman and a Roman Catholic priest as his assistant was regarded with absolute horror. The spirit of religious compromise was far from the Anglicans of mid-Victorian times. Could they not point to the dreadful example of Newman? Public education was a serious matter, but it was also closely associated in men's minds with religion: the two could never be separated and succeed. The newspapers were the only means of spreading opinions in 1870. A deluge of letters flooded the publishing offices on the recent formation of the Board. At that time the "Standard" was published once weekly; this gave the correspondents ample time to turn the



most injurious phrases they could. The style, by modern standards, is otiose. The opinions retain their heat. A good example is to be found in the "Standard" of 11th February, 1871. It is wisely signed "Senex", in view of the defamatory tone.

The anonymous author opens with an attack on Davies, "the 'Shepherd' of Hope Chapel", who, it was alleged, had pledged himself to prohibit all explanation of the Bible in rate-aided schools. Davies is contrasted unfavourably with the Apostle Philip, who interpreted Isaiah for the Ethiopian:

"Understandest thou what thou readeſt?".

"How can I, except ſome man ſhould guide me?"<sup>1</sup>

Davies is accused of having bound himself to refuse children "guidance which might lead them to Jesus". The price of his chairmanship was a "muzzled Bible". He was "the gilded tool of the enemies of the Cross". Since Davies gave his casting vote in favour of the Catholic priest, he had "voted outright for Popery". This was "degrading and monstrous". Davies was the "ally of superstition", "supported by secularist infidelity on one hand and Romish superstition on the other". The author ends on an appropriately gloomy note:

"I am no alarmist, but I cannot help fearing that dark days are coming upon our common Protestantism when Independents, Methodists and Quakers ..... for the sake of personal ambition and party victory, are content to barter away God's Truth - that free, open Bible, which used to be regarded as the Englishman's

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1. Acts. 9. 30. 31.

choicest birthright".

Davies wisely ignored this tirade. He was more concerned with getting on with the enormous task which faced the School Board.

4. The Great Work of the Radical Boards.

1871 - 1888

SECTION

- A. School Fees, Accommodation, Attendance.
- B. Industrial Schools Question; Finance.
- C. Raising the Standard of Efficiency; Half-timers;  
Sandon's Act.
- D. The Guardians and Fees; Legal Confusion.
- E. Board School v. Voluntary School; Fees;  
Teachers' Salaries.
- F. Statistical Review of Period 1875 - 85.
- G. Towards Higher Grade Schooling; Growing Church  
Opposition.

A. School Fees, Accommodation, Attendance.

Having elected its officers, the Board next turned to the question of framing bye-laws, but postponed a decision when one member stated that several other newly-formed School Boards were waiting until the bye-laws of the London Board had been sanctioned by Whitehall and published. So early in School Board history, the smaller Boards looked for guidance to the biggest, and it was not until later that the Education Department issued a form of model bye-laws designed to assist them, and only after the expenditure of a great deal of time and thought in correcting errors made by inexperienced School Board Officials.

But until such time as the Board could publish its bye-laws and proceed to appoint attendance officers, it possessed no legal means of enforcing school attendance within the borough. The Board's first attempt to enforce attendance was concerned with those children who for one reason or another could be brought before two magistrates under the Industrial Schools Act, and thereby sent to school. For the time being, the Board could do nothing about the vast army of ordinary absentee pupils, but looked to sec.28 of the Education Act. This empowered a School Board, if such an establishment did not already exist, to provide and maintain a certified industrial school.<sup>1</sup> Having reached this point, the new Board began to consider. The cost would be too big; there would

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1. " A School Board may with the consent of the Education Department establish build and maintain a certified industrial school within the meaning of the Industrial Schools Act 1866."

not be a big number of children in any event; perhaps if an industrial school were established it might be jointly maintained with the neighbouring boroughs of Rochdale and Ashton-under-Lyne. In fact the issue was of secondary importance, since by far the greatest number of children who should have been at school were not begging, vagrant, destitute or out of control. The Board was not yet familiar with the idea of spending the rate-payers' money freely: the ratepayers themselves had been warned by the "Oldham Standard" of the Board's unlimited power of demanding money. Nor was the task of the borough treasurer (also the first treasurer of the Board) easy: the police reports published by the Watch Committee show that it was quite common for large numbers of people in each year to be charged with not paying the borough rate. For example, in 1871, 2,993 were so charged, and in 1872, 2,963, and these out of a total rate-paying population of just over 14,000.<sup>1</sup>

When therefore the election expenses of the Board were found to be only £15. 19s. 6d., the Chairman maintained that the ratepayers ought to congratulate themselves on the fact, and compared this charge with those of the School Board elections at Derby - £235. 4s. 10d., and at Sheffield - for which the ratepayers paid the sizeable sum (for 1871) of £732. 10s. 0d. Having shelved the question of sending children to industrial schools, the Board turned its attention to poverty - the most important problem. The work of the Manchester Education Aid Society had shown the necessity for

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1. Oldham Police Statistics 1871-2.

paying the school-fees of many children, even though these might only amount to 2d. weekly. It was still too much for many parents to find: in Oldham, as almost everywhere else, the poorest families were frequently Roman Catholics of Irish origin - the 1851 Census showed 2,743 persons out of 87,000 in the Poor Law Union area as being born in Ireland.

Fr. C. L. Grymonprez, therefore, pressed for the use of the permissive powers of the Board under sec.25 of the Act to pay the fees of children in any kind of elementary school. The Board were aware that this question had been lengthily debated by some School Boards, since it clearly implied that some of the rate-money contributed by a supporter of a particular type of voluntary school could be used to further instruction in another school maintained by a religious body, to which for one reason or another he was violently opposed.

Grymonprez was speaking from his experience as a school-manager of St. Mary's R.C. school in Cardinal Street. Accordingly the Board were unanimous in approving of the measure, provided that some means test could be devised: the following July the Board produced a scale of fees similar to that which was already in operation in nearby Manchester and Salford. Under the scale the Board, utilising its powers under sec.25 of the Act, would pay in part or whole the school fees of poor children for a renewable period of six months as follows:

Below 1st. Standard:	2d. weekly
Standards 1 - 3 (or a child over 8)	4d. "
Having passed Standard 4 or over	5d. "

The means test for incomes was obviously designed to exclude all but the extremely indigent: the qualification was

1. Where the family consists of two persons and the weekly income (after deducting rent) is not over 7s.6d.<sup>1</sup>
2. 3 in family, income not over 9s.6d.
3. 4 in family, not over 11s.6d.

and so on at 2s.0d. per week more for each additional member.

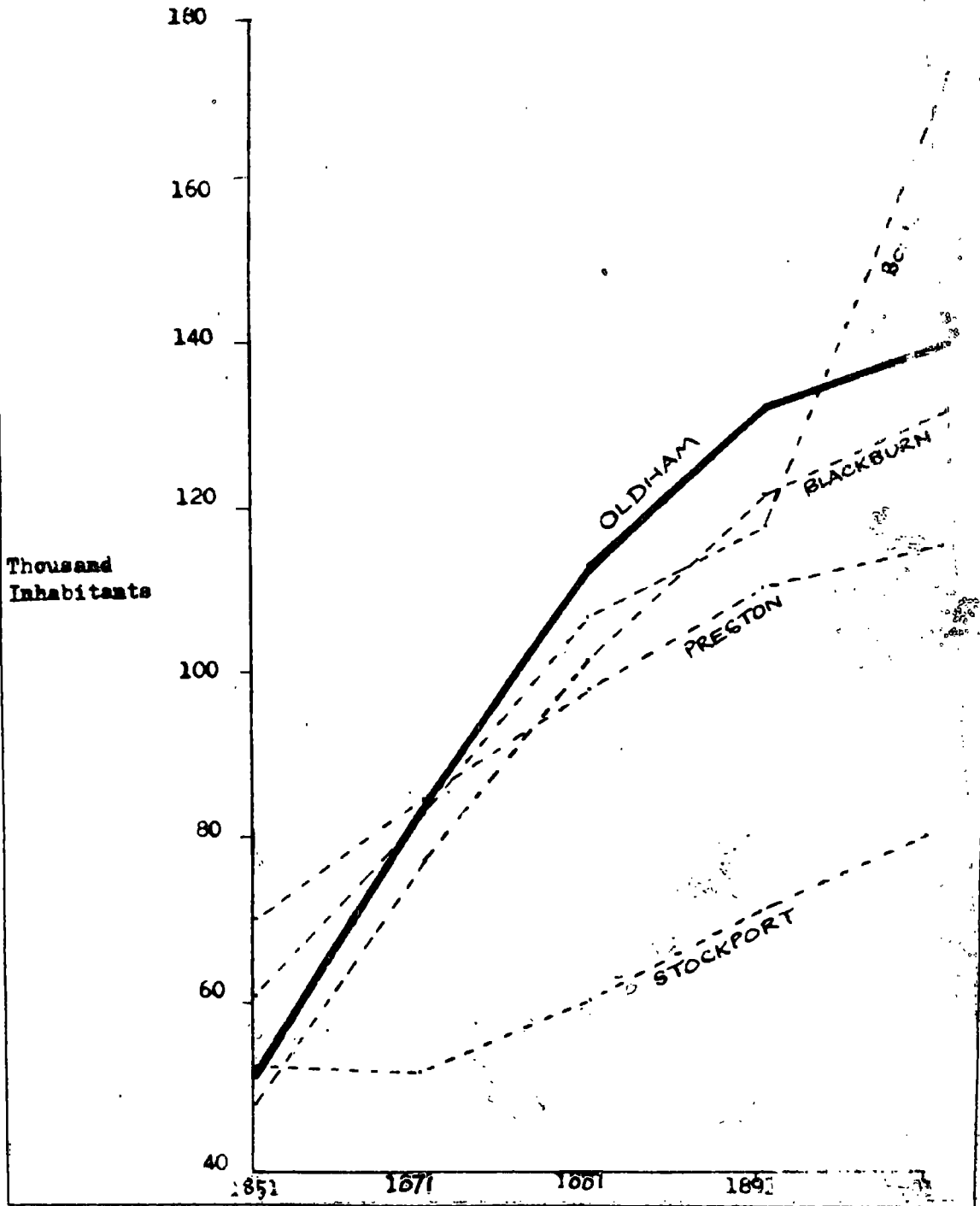
Not surprisingly, the first approach to transfer schools to the control of the School Board came from two schools which by their constitution had never demanded school-pence from the pupils - the two Ragged Schools in Grosvenor Street and Mount Pleasant - and no doubt the members of the deputation which approached the Board had in mind the powers available under sec.25, which if the transfer was acceptable would relieve them of the need to try and keep the schools going by collecting subscriptions and raising funds in various other ways. Of late the two schools had languished, in any case. The Board inspected the schools, found them to be situated in a heavily populated area and therefore accepted the control from the managers as a temporary expedient, until it could build its own schools. This it was determined to do, but the Education Department was by no means as convinced as the School Board of the need for more school places.

Meanwhile the Board invited further offers of school premises from the voluntary bodies, but some were found to be unsuitable structurally, or else they were situated in areas where

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1. cf. wages earned in cotton-spinning.

Growth of the larger Cotton Towns, 1851 - 1901



From 1851 the more rapid growth of Oldham necessitated an active School Board. Stockport had no comparable pressure, its School Board was abolished in 1879 and elementary school provision was left to denominations. Preston was the biggest English Borough of which the public education was always left to a School Attendance Committee.



there were more than enough schools already. Some of the Voluntary schools had not become public elementary schools, and the Board urged that if these schools were recognised as efficient it would make easier the task of the Board in distributing school-places equably. In some districts there was a lack of efficient schools. These facts and many more were set out in the report of the Statistical Sub-Committee, headed by the Rev. W. Walters, and sent to the Education Department on July 9th 1871. The Police collected the information for the School Board.

Summary of Oldham School Board Enquiry, 1871.

(see also Appendix 1.)

- (1) Number of children in the School Board district of the school-ages 3 to 5 and 5 to 13.

4,277	aged 3 to 5
<u>13,818</u>	" 5 " 13
18,095	

From this figure the School Board deducted 1,000 for middle-class children who were being educated at schools charging more than 9d. weekly and a further percentage to allow for illness, and arrived at the figure of 15,386 children for whom efficient instruction would have to be provided (for details, see Appendix 1.)

- (2) Return of children being educated or not.

(a) 12,150 children on the books of any kind of school.

(b) 5,945 absent, for various reasons.

Age	3 - 5	5 - 13	3 - 13
Attending School	1,389	10,761	12,150
Absent: Work	5	1,247	1,252
Poverty	207	551	758
Neglect	2,602	884	3,486
Sick	77	372	449
	2,891	3,054	5,945

From this table it will be seen that of the 3,486 children absent without adequate excuse, 2,602 or about two-thirds were infants under five years old. Most of these were looked after by older girls, and this occupation may have been responsible for the fact that most of the 1,247 absentees in the older age-group were girls. Many children also were listed as being kept from school by the poverty of their homes.

In taking the census of existing school accommodation (including accommodation shortly to be available) the Board first made a return of all kinds of school-places, on the usual basis of 8 sq.ft. per child.

Type of School	Space for
Inspected	10,633 pupils
Contemplated	2,067 "
Uninspected & Private	4,157 "
Cottage	324 "
Total available for 17,181 pupils.	

Hence it would appear that if all schools were taken into account there would actually be an excess of places over children to fill them of 1,795. But the School Board rightly maintained that there was a clear deficiency in the supply of efficient elementary school-places, since many of the uninspected schools lacked trained teachers, space, registers and playground, and established this deficiency as being for about 2,000 children.

The Board's method of making the deficiency good was firstly to cater for the poorest children kept from school by "negligence and culpable poverty", but although the existing accommodation was inadequate the Board felt that until these poor children had acquired "habits of cleanliness" it would be unwise to spend much money on providing "model school-houses and a high standard of education". Until therefore circumstances necessitated the establishment of an Industrial School it was proposed to rent the two former Ragged Schools in Grosvenor Street and Mount Pleasant for £80 a year.

Secondly, the deficiency in infant-schools would require attention. Entire districts such as Waterhead and Westwood Wards were without separate infants' departments, and in the whole town there were only nine public elementary infant schools. At least 5,500 children of seven or under would need places and separate infant teachers, and there was every reason to believe that there would soon be many more, for despite what Oldham's Medical Officer of Health described in his first report (for 1873-4) as the

"fearfully high" infant mortality rate (40 - 50% of deaths in any year were of children below 5), the birth-rate was far higher. In 1873 the death-rate was 26.1 per thousand, but there had been no real improvement for years in sanitary conditions, as is clearly shown by the statistics given in evidence to the Royal Sanitary Commission by John Ponsonby, Town Clerk, in 1869:-

<u>OLDHAM DEATH RATE</u>	
1860	25.4 per thousand
1862	27.8 " "
1864	21.6 " "
1866	29.7 " "
1868	24.9 " "

But in 1873 the birth rate was 41.7 per thousand, and in 1874, though the death-rate rose to 30.3, the birth rate remained steady at 41.3 per thousand. Hence the huge deficiency in infant-school accommodation.

Finally the Board's attention was drawn to certain localities where more schools were required, and it recommended to the Education Department that several schools maintained by non-conformist bodies should be made public elementary schools. The return was accompanied by a detailed analysis of the forms which when completed by householders had been collected by the Police. The return gave the attendance recorded at each school for the week ending 16th June 1871 and also the average attendance, and this would seem to be the more valuable figure. One suspects that in

any case the high attendance for the one week may have been deliberately promoted by certain schools. In a way, it seems just as well that in an average week many of the schools were less than half-full, since the 8 square feet allowed for each pupil seems pathetically inadequate by modern standards. To give an example, Evangelist School, Lord Street, had been refused by the School Board when it was offered on the grounds of lack of playground space: it was also situated inconveniently. It consisted of one big room measuring 54 feet by 42 and a small ante-room 18 by 9 feet. This space, it was thought, could contain 265 pupils! However, the average attendance was stated to be only 59. This shows that in reality the standards required of local bodies by the Education Department were minimal. The return also showed the number of half-timers counted in the week ending 16th June, and the various types of school in the borough. It will be remembered that the Newcastle Commission (1861) was concerned at the poor results of half-timers at school, but ten years after, they were still rapidly increasing in numbers.

Summary.

ATTENDANCE

TYPE OF SCHOOL	AVERAGE	W/E 16.6.71	HALF-TIMERS for 16.6.71
INSPECTED	5,923	7,757	2,310
UNINSPECTED	1,606	1,930	352
COTTAGE	419	324	-
TOTALS	7,948	10,011	2,662

Reduced to simple proportions, the facts were as follows: 80% of the children of school age were on the books of a school, but the average attendance stood at only about 50% of all children between 3 and 13 years. In a good week this percentage could rise to about 66%, but a quarter of the pupils would be half-timers, of whom there were twice as many boys as girls. The number of school places in efficient schools (some of which were not inspected) was inadequate to meet the demand as and when compulsory attendance by bye-laws was enforced. The School Board decided to issue bye-laws, guided by those of the London School Board.

By June 1871 a code of bye-laws had been formulated and agreed upon; the sub-committee responsible for this work then laid them before the entire School Board for debate, and after minor alterations to the wording, they were sent to the Education Department for approval. No doubt the Board assumed that they were comprehensive and satisfactory, because they announced by printed placard that they had been approved, and also despatched from the School Board's office in the Oldham Lyceum a 12-page printed edition of the 15 bye-laws, duly dated July 14th 1871. This small booklet also contained a facsimile of the form of notice to attend school which would be served by the visiting officer on the parents of absent pupils.

In framing the bye-laws, great care was taken to try to please all the religious denominations. Accordingly the 4th bye-law was concerned with religious instruction, and was intended to enable

the denominations who attended Board Schools to be given denominational religious instruction after school-hours, if it were desired. The Churchmen members of the Board were still very uneasy about the "reading of the Bible without note or comment", and initiated a long debate on the legality of using the rates to promote denominational religious instruction in Board Schools. However, the decision had already been made. Bye-law 5 was framed to prevent children being withdrawn from one school and sent to another on numerous occasions. This would henceforth be possible only on certain condition; that, for instance the child concerned had ceased to live within one mile from the school from which it was desired to be withdrawn. Bye-law 6 was important because it set out the standards at which pupils could obtain total or partial exemption from school-attendance.<sup>1</sup> For children aged 10 to 13 a pass at the 6th Standard of the Revised Code (1871) gained total exemption; partial exemption was secured by passing Standard 4. Bye-law 8 provided for the payment of school-fees under section 25 on grounds of poverty. By modern standards, the level of attainment at Standard 4 of the Revised Code was very low indeed - a child had to do no more than read a few lines of poetry or prose, write a sentence down from dictation, and work sums by using compound

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1. Except those employed under the Factory Acts.

rules.<sup>1</sup> Having been exempted, he attended school for fifteen hours and for the rest of the time became a wage-earner.

The Board was faced with the delicate task of enforcing school attendance without pauperising parents, who depended on their children and expected them to contribute to the family income. So Bye-law 13 laid down that the maximum penalty for each offence was to be a fine not exceeding five shillings, including legal costs. The Board granted partial or total exemptions far too readily, under pressure as it was from parents and employers alike.

The experience of formulating bye-laws made the Board realise that they needed the services of a legal adviser; on the question of industrial schools also they were not clear as to their powers and duties; the fact that Salford Town Council had reduced their School Board precept of £7,000 by £4,000 gave them cause to think - even though the council had acted ultra vires. In any case, the services of a solicitor would be needed for the preparation of leases and deeds for school sites. The Town Clerk, John Ponsonby, agreed to undertake this work.

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1. Standards of Examination for Total and Partial Exemption from Instruction, Revised Code of 1871.

Partial  
Standard 4

Total  
Standard 6

Reading

A few lines of poetry or prose. To read with fluency and expression.

Writing

A sentence slowly dictated once, by a few words at a time, from a reading book used in the first class of the school. A short theme or letter, or an easy paraphrase.

Arithmetic

Compound rules (common weights and measures) Proportion and vulgar or decimal fractions.



The Board soon received a reply from Whitehall (signed by Patrick Cumin) tactfully indicating modifications which would have to be made in the Bye-laws as originally framed. Bye-law 4 was easily demolished; and with it Bye-law 5:

"I am to observe that the character of the religious instruction is not one of the purposes for which School Boards are empowered to make Bye-laws, and therefore this Bye-law must be disallowed. Bye-law 5 must not be allowed for similar reasons. The Board have no power under the Act to prevent a parent transferring his child from one school to another". Other minor changes were desired, but although the Board had already printed its Bye-laws in handbill form they were gently reminded by the Education Department that it would have to be done again and advertised in the press. As one member of the Board remarked, "they had got their lesson to do, and would have to do it."<sup>1</sup>

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1. Two Bye-laws as originally framed 14.7.71 which were disallowed by the Education Department, Whitehall.
  4. "In Board Schools no religious observances will be practised, and no religious instruction will be given during school hours; but the Bible may be read without note or comment. Should any parent object to his child participating in Bible reading, such child, during the time the Bible is being read, shall be instructed in reading from some other book; but the parent must signify his objection at the time when his child is admitted into the school.  
Should there be in any Board School any number of children belonging to any one Church or Denomination, the Clergyman, Minister or Officials of any such Church or Denomination, or a competent person recommended by such Clergyman, Minister or Officials, and approved by the Board, may assemble such children in the school house, for religious instruction, immediately after the ordinary school hours, upon such days as may be fixed upon by the Board when application is made to it for permission to import such instruction".
  5. "The parents or guardians having selected and sent to any elementary school within the district of the Board any child between five and thirteen years of age, shall not be allowed to transfer the same to any other elementary school until such child shall have been presented for examination to one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools at the next examination held in the school selected, unless the parent or guardian shall have received the consent of the Board for the transfer of such child, or shall have ceased to reside within the distance of one mile."

Meanwhile, the return furnished to Whitehall as the "School Board Enquiry", was being considered by the Government Inspector appointed under sec.71 of the Act; he was also empowered to examine the schools and to report on their efficiency - he dealt with Oldham before Manchester, because here the return was not yet complete. Without waiting for his opinion, the School Board, convinced that there was a big deficiency of accommodation, considered as possible sites for Board Schools twelve plots of land, fixing on two so located as to draw on areas far apart - Smith Street, Greenacres Moor, and Westwood on the north side of Middleton Road. Respectively the cost was at the rate of 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per square yard and 4d. per square yard. To the modern reader these prices are very low, but the Board weighed the question of cost very carefully, putting it before considerations of other kinds which to-day are considered essential. Having duly written to Whitehall for instructions as to procedure, the Clerk received a reply to the effect that, since the Government Inspector had not yet reported on school accommodation, the Education Department could not yet requisition a supply of school places in the School Board district. If the Board was satisfied under sec.19 that it had the power to secure the sites, the Education Department would not object.

The School Board therefore requested permission from Whitehall to apply for a £6000 loan from the Public Works Commissioners to purchase and build on the two sites. However, the Inspector had by this stage put his own views to Whitehall. By adding to the list

of efficient schools a further list of schools "likely to become efficient", he considerably reduced the deficit of places. He then divided the total half-timers by two to leave a deficit of a mere 82! There is no doubt that the state of public education was appalling; not without reason, therefore, the Board wrote on 23rd December 1871 to Whitehall. Their letter questioned the figures of H.M. Inspector and maintained that the Board still thought it was their duty to provide places for about 2,000 children.

The Board went on to claim (with commendable good sense and foresight) that the proposed sites in Smith Street and Westwood were located in districts of the town where the deficiency of school places had already been officially acknowledged: moreover, since the population of the municipal borough was going up by about a thousand people a year,<sup>1</sup> all vacant building lots were being quickly taken up as prices rose. In conclusion, the Board's letter requested that the Inspector's report as to efficient and inefficient schools in the Borough could be forwarded to them, as the lack of this information was "of much inconvenience".

The Board was determined to render these inefficient schools efficient, since the enforcement of the bye-laws concerning attendance was made difficult because of laxity in keeping registers at these schools. As for its own schools, the Board had appointed a visiting officer (at 25s.0d. a week), had sent a deputation to Stockport to investigate the duties of the visiting officer there and having found them to be well-executed, had adopted a similar system

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1. See Population graph.

for Oldham.<sup>1</sup> Every two weeks the Board met to enforce the bye-laws, pay fees and grant exemptions, as well as to consider the visiting officer's report. Each school which the Government Inspector had indicated as likely to become efficient was circularised to the effect that in order to become efficient, the registers would have to be kept in accordance with Schedule 5 of the New Code and "that the School shall be conducted to the satisfaction of this Board". But before sending out this request, the Board, having perhaps learned to act with more discretion in such matters, first wrote to the H.M.I. (the Rev. W. J. Kennedy) at Manchester and gave as an example a school (Glodwick Baptist) which although it had accommodation for only 204 children had in attendance for the fortnight ending 26th January 1872 395 pupils, with an average of 254, while nearby were public elementary schools to the north and south not half filled. The H.M.I.'s reply makes clear that "efficient instruction" meant keeping proper registers and that if the average attendance was above what sanitary conditions would allow, a School Board was in order in notifying its managers that it would be removed from the list of recognised schools unless matters were corrected. Thus the Board was the means of raising standards all round - in voluntary schools as well as its own. The school in question immediately altered its premises so as to remain efficient.

The distribution of school accommodation was bad as a result of the sprawling haphazard growth of the town. For instance,

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1. See Appendix.

the Primitive Methodist School in Henshaw Street could hold 532 pupils, but there were only 80 in average attendance, with two more public elementary schools close by. Again, St. Peter's Church School had accommodation for 1,011 but only 460 attended on average - the school was in the town centre but the deficiency was at the eastern and western ends of the district. The Board used this argument to justify the need to build Board Schools at Smith Street and Westwood, where inefficient schools existed. The Education Department agreed to sanction loans for the purchase of the sites, but still considered the first named to be of doubtful necessity because a new Church School site nearby had been granted. It had taken almost one year to obtain the sanction for the loans.

By this time, statistics of attendance were showing gratifying increases, mainly as the result of the work of the visiting officer and of the Board. The Chairman was careful, however, in mentioning in his first annual report<sup>1</sup> that the expenditure of more money might not in itself increase attendance. Fees had in some cases been asked for children which had previously been met by the denominations to which they were attached: he warned against taking over such responsibility, and hoped

"that the exercise of individual generosity or of denominational benevolence will not be restrained in order to claim upon public funds." Always, the aim of the Board was to economise;

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1. School Board Minutes 5.2.72.

hence when one member urged<sup>1</sup> that the two new Board Schools should be constructed on one level, he was told by the Chairman of the General Purposes Committee that the decision to accept a design for each to be three-storey buildings was taken to save ground.

Notwithstanding, the estimated cost of the two schools was now put at a total of £7,500, in round figures as follows:

	<u>Westwood</u>	<u>Smith Street</u>
Land:	£1,000	£840
School:	£2,700	£2,400
Other expenses:	£300	£300

By mid-1872, attendances were nearly 40% up on those of June 1871. 13,982 children were now on roll, being an increase of 3,334 since the formation of the Board, which had spent only 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per head during its first year. For the benefit of the ratepayers, the Board could point to the expenditure of other School Boards with satisfaction: with Blackburn, it was the lowest. Manchester spent 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ d., Stockport 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. and Salford 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per capita. The means test for payment of fees was so strict that during 1872-3 the Board paid out only £16.5s.7d. under sec.25, and its net expenses of £578.4s.9d. only amounted to a rate in the £ of 0.4 pence.

The "Oldham Standard" remained the implacable foe of the nonconformist Chairman and members of the School Board, however; and at the end of the Board's first triennial period in office, the Conservative paper tried to belittle their efforts in every way:

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1. School Board Minutes 1.4.72

"The Board Schools which have been called into existence at so heavy a cost to the ratepayers and for which Messrs. R. M. Davies, Edward Ingham, William Wrigley and George Wainwright are to a great extent responsible, are in localities where they were not required and where they must inevitably do great injury to denominational and private enterprise schools. And it cannot be too strongly impressed upon the minds of the ratepayers that, taking the average, the cost of education is three times as much in Board Schools as it is in schools connected with the Church of England."<sup>1</sup>

By the end of 1872 the Board felt that, having promoted attendance in all schools, and with plans for increasing the deficient infant accommodation, it could then return to the question of industrial schools. Replies came from Ashton and Rochdale in answer to queries that cases coming under the Industrial Schools Act were so few that they were not prepared to take joint action in the matter: and the Stockport Board maintained that it was their belief that the proper working of the compulsory powers of the Education Act would do away with Industrial Schools. It was decided that Oldham would make a contribution to a nearby industrial school under sec.27 of the Act as circumstances would require.

The Education Department had received many suggestions for amending the 1870 Act which were embodied in the amending Act of 1873; the Oldham School Board opposed by petition to the House of Commons clause 3, by which the power to pay the school pence of the

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1. O.S. 27th December, 1873.

children of poor parents would be transferred from the Boards to the Poor Law Guardians, and gave as its reasons these points: first, it was feared that it would tend to pauperise those parents who applied to Guardians for the payment of school fees; many poor but respectable parents who had appeared before the Board hitherto would now be compelled to mingle with the ordinary recipients of relief for the sake of a small sum of money. Hence, these people would be discouraged from seeking education for their children, and so the number of prosecutions for non-attendance would increase. Again, it was suggested that if the Guardians paid fees directly to parents instead of the Board directly to school managers, a temptation to dishonesty would thereby be put in the way of the parents.

Meanwhile, the salaries bill grew - more teachers were engaged, and an office boy, James Rennie, started work at 12 shillings weekly; in due time he became Clerk to the School Board. The new schools opened without ceremony on July 21st 1873. The 1873 Education Act enabled the Board under Sec.24(7) to decide that the efficiency of school premises by the requirements of the Code could be achieved by appointing examiners to test the attainments of children not attending a public elementary school whose parents claimed that they were "under efficient instruction", and the examining committee consisted of the Chairman, two other members and the schoolmasters of the new Board Schools, Messrs. Butterworth and Pollard.

The work of the first School Board for Oldham was almost at an end, and the statistics produced in its first triennial report



prove beyond doubt that great progress had been made, in spite of the allegations of the partisan press. In the absence of accurate census figures for 1873, a careful calculation put the population of school age at about 18,700 children, of whom (after making deductions for middle-class children and invalids) about 15,900 ought to have been at efficient public elementary schools. And in fact the attendance during November 1873 had been about 14,200. Only 10% were absent and most of these were children under 5 whose attendance could neither be enforced nor expected unless they had an infant school near to their home. The costs of erection of the Westwood and Smith Street Board Schools were only about £4.5s.0d. per child, and the temporary school at Mount Pleasant had been re-opened as an infant school. The Board had taken over 2 schools: Roundthorn and Providence Street, Waterhead.

On the basis of 8 sq. ft. per child, the available accommodation was now in excess of the demand, since 15,725 children could be placed in public elementary schools, and a further 1,198 in other elementary schools - 16,923 in all. By rigidly enforcing attendance, the Board had increased it by about 41% between 1871 and 1873. By urging on managers of denominational schools the need to improve their premises and to increase accommodation for infants, the supply had almost met demand, yet uneven distribution of infant schools remained a problem.

School Accommodation

<u>Schools</u>	<u>June 1871</u>	<u>November 1873</u>	<u>Increase</u> %
CHURCH	6,011	7,510	25
WESLEYAN	1,881	2,415	30
BRITISH	1,752	2,819	70
R.C.	989	1,208	20
BOARD	-	1,773	
NON-INSPECTED	4,157	1,198	-75

School attendance was, however, far from satisfactory, in spite of the enforcement of the byelaws. It was obvious that the School Board had allowed easy exemption from attendance for longer or shorter periods so that poor parents could send their children to work, and those children between ages 10 and 13 who had attended uninspected schools and therefore could not be examined by the H.M. Inspector, were readily granted exemption by the five examiners appointed by the Board. During the three years 1871-3 the Board had only found it necessary to have 219 summonses issued against parents or guardians, for which 197 convictions were obtained. Each fortnight hundreds of children were returned by the visiting officers as being absent from school "without reasonable excuse",<sup>1</sup> but some members of the Board looked on this part of their work as their most unpleasant duty; one member even urged that it should be made clearer to parents that half-time exemption could be obtained by passing the 4th Standard; even though he feared this might

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1. See attendance Reports in Appendix.

encourage undue applications for exemption it might nevertheless be the means of getting parents to send their children to efficient rather than inefficient schools. As a consequence the half-timers still formed a considerable proportion of school-children, especially in the Church Schools:-

Attendance and Half-timers at the end of 1873.

<u>SCHOOLS</u>	<u>ON ROLL</u>	<u>IN AVERAGE ATT.</u>	<u>HALF-TIMERS</u>
Church	7,139	4,655	2,421
British	3,150	2,024	895
Wesleyan	1,745	1,181	456
Board	1,575	652	155
R.C.	1,628	944	450
Other Elementary	1,258	982	315
	15,871	10,438	4,692

Hence the average attendance in all kinds of school was 65% of those on roll; the low attendance in the Board Schools (41%) was caused by the fact that many of the pupils at this stage were infants under 5. Half-timers accounted for approximately 30% of all pupils enrolled in the school district, and with the great boom in the spinning industry, it seemed likely that this proportion would continue to grow because of the enforcement of the Education and Factory Acts.

It will be remembered that the official view of the H.M. Inspector in 1870 was that the half-time system was successful, but the Factory Inspector.<sup>1</sup> was concerned as to whether children under 13

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1. Mr. Redgrave.

ought to be employed at all. In 1872 he made enquiries in the Oldham area,<sup>1</sup> of surgeons whose duty it was to certify half-timers as being medically fit for work. Dr. R. H. Leach of Shaw near Oldham was optimistic -

"I think children may safely commence at 8 years of age in modernmills."

Robert Baker, another Factory Inspector, concurred in this opinion in his report.<sup>2</sup> of the following year, and supported his view by adding that

"When children have to look to their own labour in the future for their livelihood, the sooner they are introduced to industry, the better for them and the neighbourhood in which they live."

It was irrelevant that children on the Continent did not start work in general until they were older, for, (said Baker)

"They are not as robust as English children are."

Dr. Stansfield of Lees was clearly of another opinion, and stated emphatically that children under 10 should not be employed in cotton factories. He added that in his own district there were 588 half-time children of whom 158 were under 10. The question was settled during the first year of office of the second School Board, since by the 12th and 13th sections of the Factory Act, 1874, the ages of

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1. Report of Factory Inspector, 31st October 1872

2. " " " " 31st October 1873

half-timers were raised from 8 to 10 years and full-timers from 13 to 14 years unless educational exemption was gained.

The Report of H.M. Inspector<sup>1</sup> to the Education Department for 1872-3 devotes itself to the improvements effected by the School Boards of Manchester and Oldham (because they were the only ones in the district) and although both Boards were able to report that between June 1871 and August 1872 their attendance figures had shown marked increases, in Manchester the percentage increase of actual attendance was almost equalled by the increase of average attendance, thus showing that the new pupils had been regular attenders. Unfortunately, in Oldham the increase in average attendance, 2,255, was well below that in actual attendance - 4,228. Irregular attendance was attributed to the great increase in half-timers (51%), to the large number of pupils who were new to school and had not yet been "broken in"<sup>2</sup> to punctual attendance, and finally to the children allowed partial attendance exemption for domestic purposes.

The report also described why the 1870 Act was ineffective against parents who deliberately set out to evade it; such parents had realised that by becoming migratory or by sending children to a school if it lay in a part of the town where the Board was known to be not active, they could evade compulsion. The Oldham School Board had tried to put an end to this by framing a bye-law, but it had no legal powers under the Act to do so. Another defect of the Act was

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1. Rev. W. J. Kennedy  
2. Words of the H.M.I.

that the only way a parent could be legally proved guilty of neglect was by the personal attendance of the teacher with the register before the magistrate, and as a rule this was only possible on a Saturday. In any case, the parent could not be convicted if he could show that his child was attending a school, efficient or otherwise.

The first triennial report of the School Board included a short summary of its work in paying, under sec.25, the fees of poor children. The petition delivered to the House in 1873 by the M.P., Sir J. T. Hibbert, had (along with many others) been in vain, since under the Act of 1873 this duty would after 1875 devolve on the Guardians. The Board's record showed that the total sum paid and remitted during a period of  $2\frac{3}{4}$  years was only £35.17s.  $3\frac{1}{2}$ d., a sum which would hardly lend credence to the claims of the supporters of the Birmingham League and which had caused great disputes in other Boards. For 69 children, some school-managers had not insisted on fees; the total number of children involved was only 232, of whom about half were the children of poor Roman Catholics and a quarter were pupils at the two erstwhile Ragged Schools, Mount Pleasant and Grosvenor Street. Excluding the cost of the two new Board Schools, the total amount paid out of the borough rates was £1,830.9s.  $7\frac{1}{2}$ d. The opponents of the Board usually ignored statistics like this when appeals to the pockets of the ratepayers were made. All things considered, the Board was highly satisfied with its achievements, and its members were agreed as to the efficiency of the chairman, the Rev. R. M. Davies; indeed, Colonel Lees confessed that he, for

one, had not suspected that a clergyman could display such "business ability".<sup>1</sup> The figures showing the amount of Government grant earned for 1873 were entirely convincing, however, when balanced against expenditure:

Grant Earned on Results.

Church Schools	£2,739	EARNED
British "	£1,025	PER CAPITA
Wesleyan "	£589	AT ALL
R.C. "	£577	SCHOOLS :-
Board "	<u>£108</u>	12s. 9 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub> d.
	£5,038	

The opponents of the Board could no longer argue that the Voluntary schools were a better economic proposition than board schools, because many former inefficient schools owed their increase of grant earned to the strenuous efforts of the Board to render all schools in the district efficient.

But the H.M.I. warned against complacency in School Boards in his 1873-4 report - there were inadequate notions held, he stated, on what ought to be taught in public elementary schools. Boards ought not to think they had achieved all, by merely getting the children into school.

Schools conducted by the Board on 31st December 1873

1. Grosvenor Street (former Ragged School)	TO ACCOMMODATE
	378
2. Mount Pleasant ( " " " )	286

(Rented in 1871 at a total annual rent of £80.)

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1. Report in Oldham Standard, 10th January 1874

	TO ACCOMMODATE
3. Smith Street	600
4. Westwood	600
(Constructed as Board Schools at a total cost of £7,500 on sites purchased by the Board; opened July 1873.)	
5. Roundthorn (formerly managed by Methodist New Connexion)	168
6. Providence Street, Waterhead	200
(Rented in 1873 at a total annual rent of £45)	



B. The Industrial Schools Question; Finance

The second School Board election took place in Oldham on December 29th 1873. At this date there were some 15,000 on the borough burgess-roll, each of whom under the cumulative voting system had 13 votes to dispose of. In order to stimulate interest, the Church and the Liberal clubs organised meetings in various parts of the town. The contemporary press accounts lead one to believe, however, that the interest was not very lively.

The tactics of the Conservative press were simply to attack the principles which the first Board had upheld and to belittle the efforts of its non-Church members.<sup>1</sup> The Churchmen candidates for election to the second School Board set out the principles which they hoped would assure them of a place - that the Bible should be read, that parents should not be deprived of the right to control the religious education of their children, and that the best education possible in secular subjects should be secured for every child in the borough. The second part of the Churchmen's programme reveals their antipathy towards the Board Schools. They claimed that the existing denominational schools were doing their work efficiently, and without expense to the ratepayers. Board Schools, they felt, should be provided only when absolutely necessary; nor should attendance at school be enforced without due regard to special circumstances, and to what they called the "necessities and domestic wants of the labouring classes." Behind this attitude can be seen the reluctance of the wealthy cotton-spinners to believe that the industry which

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1. vide. sup. p.62, for example

was making huge fortunes for them could function efficiently without relying to a great extent on the cheap labour of half-timers. They were largely supported in this view by the reports of the Factories Inspectors. There were 7 Church candidates, three of whom hoped for re-election. These were Colonel T. E. Lees, Magistrate and cotton-spinner; Hilton Greaves, cotton-spinner and Ina Mellor, grocer. The new nominees were the Rev. Robert Whittaker, vicar of Leesfield, the Rev. Joseph Harrison, vicar of St. Stephen's; another cotton manufacturer, James Collinge, and a surgeon, Dr. Henry Halkyard.

The Roman Catholics declined to issue a statement of their own policy with regard to Board Schools and put forward one candidate, the priest Malachy J. O'Callaghan.

The remaining seven candidates, one of whom was withdrawn before the polling,<sup>1</sup> stood for liberal principles. Some of these "champions of secularism", as the opposition labelled them, were members of the first School Board, namely the Rev. R. M. Davies, its ex-chairman; Thomas Emmott, cotton-spinner, George Wainwright, Edward Ingham and William Wrigley. Two new candidates stood - Dr. James Yates, physician, and James Newton.

By nominating seven candidates, the Church party clearly hoped to gain a majority in the new Board; had they done so, there seems little doubt that the development of Board-School education would have been greatly retarded. But the Church party was never strong in the borough, and this fact was borne out in the result of

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1. Thomas Emmott.

the poll, which was declared the following day.

1. M. J. O'Callaghan (R.C.	9,345 votes
2. G. Wainwright (Dissenter)	8,702 "
3. G. Yates "	8,697 "
4. E. Ingham "	8,663 "
5. R. M. Davies "	8,478 "
6. W. Wrigley "	7,773 "
7. J. Newton "	7,757 "
8. H. Greaves (Churchman)	7,373 "
9. H. Halkyard "	7,143 "
10. T. E. Lees "	6,993 "
11. J. Collinge "	6,969 "
12. R. Whittaker "	6,783 "
13. J. Mellor "	6,622 "

The Rev. J. Harrison polled 6,558 votes and was therefore not elected. Assuming that out of the 14,826 burgesses, 13,000 were able to vote and that the rest were incapacitated by illness, absence and so on, the percentage poll was about 66%, since 8,815 registered their votes correctly.

The supporters of the Church Schools had been decisively beaten in the election, with all their candidates at the foot of the list and the two clergymen occupying the twelfth and fourteenth places; to their chagrin, they saw a Catholic Priest at the top. Then, the day after the declaration of the results came the final insult. It was discovered that, owing to an oversight, the ballot

papers for St. James's Ward had been mislaid, and when they were later discovered (still sealed in their boxes) a special meeting was convened by the Mayor and Town Clerk to add them on. As it happened, the result was not seriously altered, but the officials concerned offered their humble apologies to the candidates. The Churchmen were annoyed by what they considered to be a badly conducted election, and hinted in the press that it would perhaps have a beneficial effect on the mode of conducting future elections if "the people at the head of the Education Department" were apprised of those officials "who took part in the farce at Oldham".<sup>1</sup>

At the first meeting of the new Board the Churchmen read out a formal protest on the same lines, and as if to reinforce their protest against the returning officials abstained from voting in the election of the chairman and vice-chairman. In this way, the Rev. R. M. Davies was re-elected to the chair for a second term of office, and Fr. O'Callaghan succeeded to the vice-chairman's seat vacated by Fr. Grymonprez. Two committees were then selected to carry out the duties of the second School Board, the General Purposes and Finance Committees.

The first work of the new Board was to clarify its position concerning boys whom it wished to have committed to industrial schools.

In October 1873 the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Mr. Rowland conferred with the Borough Magistrates as to dealing with Industrial School cases: the magistrates present were led by E. A. Wright and

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1. Oldham Standard, 3rd January 1874.

were W. Knott, S. Radcliffe, J. Riley and Major T. E. Lees (also a member of the School Board). First the 14th section of the Industrial Schools Act of 1866 was considered. The Magistrates promised to co-operate with the Board by sending to Industrial Schools such children as came within the scope of section 14. Under section 16, it had been found that some schools refused to admit children committed thereunder because the Government allowance was only half the amount paid out for children committed under other sections; but it was thought that the Board might make special arrangements with the Industrial Schools for the reception of such cases. The Board wrote to the Home Office about the 16th section and the reply was laid before the borough magistrates.

The Chairman and Mr. Wrigley prepared a report on the matter and the Clerk was told to enquire of the Education Department as to the competency of the Board to take the place of the prison authority in making payments to industrial schools. The essence of the report was as follows:-

Under sec.12 of the Industrial Schools Act, a prison authority was empowered to contribute money towards the establishment of or alteration or enlargement or rebuilding of a certified Industrial School or to contribute towards the support of its inmates. Under sec.27 of the Education Act it was provided that when a School Board was elected in a Borough the powers of the prison authority shall be transferred to the Board.<sup>1</sup>

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1. "A School Board shall have the same powers of contributing money in the case of an Industrial School as is given to a prison authority by sec.12 of the Industrial Schools Act 1866, and upon the election of a School Board in a Borough, the council of that Borough shall cease to have power to contribute under that Section."

But the Borough Magistrates of Oldham were not the prison authority.<sup>1</sup> They were hesitant, therefore, as to how the above sections would affect cases sent to industrial schools from Oldham. Macclesfield, it was ascertained, was in the same position as Oldham. Here the Borough Magistrates were not the prison authority, but the County Justices assembled at Knutsford.

The School Board submitted to their legal adviser the question, has this Board power to make supplementary payments of 2s.0d. per week for children under 10 and 1s.0d. per week for those over 10 when committed by a magistrate to a certified industrial school?

The answer given was, that any body not being the prison authority, never possessed the power of making such payments and thus the power cannot pass from one body of men who never had it, to another body of men however willing these might be to use it.

This opinion would seem to be reasonable, for the prison authority, being the rating authority, if the ratepayers of Oldham paid for children sent from the borough to industrial schools, they would also have to pay their part of the tax covering the cost of like cases in other portions of the district, thus making Oldham taxpayers not only contribute the whole supplementary expenses of children sent from this town but also a proportion of the expenses of all similar cases sent to industrial schools by the prison authorities.

It was suggested that the Oldham School Board either consult their solicitor for advice or write to Whitehall so that action could be taken in the matter as soon as possible with legal propriety.

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1. A separate Court of Quarter Sessions was not granted to Oldham until August 1887 and first sat in October of that year.

After a slight delay occasioned by the election of the Second Board at the end of 1873, the question was resolved by John Ponsonby, the Solicitor to the Board, in his reply.

Before submitting it, Ponsonby consulted the relevant Acts: viz. the 1870 Education Act and the amending Act of 1873; the Prisons Act 1865, and the Industrial Schools Acts 1866 and 1872. Ponsonby was of the opinion that the Board was not liable to make the payments required by the managers of Industrial Schools for children sent to such schools by the Borough Magistrates:

- (a) if the School Board had taken no part in procuring an Order for sending a child to industrial school and
- (b) if the child had been sent to school under an Order made at the instance of the School Board, and
- (c) if the Prison Authority had made an agreement with Industrial Schools to pay for children committed by School Boards within its area; this was usual under section 71 of the Industrial Schools Act 1872. The township of Oldham, which contributed to the County Rate, out of which the expenses of Prison Authorities were paid under section 50 of the Industrial Schools Act 1866, was entitled, like every other township in the Salford Hundred which contributed to the County rate, to the benefit of the Industrial Schools Act, at its expense.

Concerning sec.27 of the Education Act 1870, the Town Clerk had at first been inclined to think that as the Council of the Borough was not the prison authority, the School Board was not competent to make any

agreement with the managers of Industrial Schools. After considering sec.27 more lengthily, however, he gave the following opinion.

The first part of sec.27 clearly conferred on a School Board the same powers of contributing money in the case of an Industrial School as was given to a prison authority under sec.12 of the Industrial Schools Act, 1866. The words at the end of sec.27,

"that upon the election of a School Board in a Borough, the Council of that Borough shall cease to have power to contribute under that section"

could not, in his opinion, derogate from the power expressly conferred on every School Board by the first part of the section, but merely restrained the Council from contributing. Where the Council was not the prison authority, the School Board would be able to contribute.

Hence the Board would have no limitations as to the amount of such contribution, but would be controlled by the provisions of the Industrial Schools Act as to the classes of child to be detained in such schools.

As the surest guide to future procedure, Ponsonby referred to the method adopted by the London School Board. It had undertaken

"to pay to the Managers of certain certified Industrial Schools in respect of each child committed at the instance of the Board such a sum as would with the sum of money from time to time contributed by the Commissioners of Her Majesty's Treasury per week in respect of that child make up the total sum of seven shillings per week"<sup>1</sup>

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1. Minutes 9th March, 1874



In its anxiety to act upon its powers in this question, the Oldham School Board became a victim of the divided authority to commit children to Industrial Schools. The categories of child for which these were designed were those

"found begging, or being in any street or public place for the purpose of begging;

found wandering and not having any home, or proper guardianship, or visible means of support, or having a parent undergoing penal servitude or imprisonment;

frequenting the company of reputed thieves, or being in a house frequented by prostitutes, or declared by the parent or guardian to be beyond control"<sup>1</sup>.

The Board's procedure with children under this Act was first to seek out the persons legally responsible for the child and to warn them of their responsibilities and of the consequences of their neglect. If the warning was of no avail the offender was summoned before the School Board Committee for a second warning. If there was no improvement in the child's attendance at school, he was sent to the Liverpool Truant School for three months, then released on licence. Should he again prove refractory his licence was revoked and he was sent back to Liverpool. What the Board described as "less hopeful cases" were sent to Industrial Schools and Training Ships, as, for example, those at Bangor, Hull and North Shields. Many boys learned a trade in these establishments, and some left them to enlist in the Army and Navy.

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1. Industrial Schools Act 1866.

The Clerk to the Oldham Magistrates contended that the legal course was to have a child committed at the instance of the School Board under the provisions of the Education Act. This cost the ratepayers in each case 3s.6d. and sometimes 5s.0d. a week. If, however, the child were committed by the Magistrates under sections 14 and 15 of the Industrial Schools Act, the cost to the ratepayers was only 1s.6d. per week. Over the years the Board tried in vain to change this procedure. The Oldham Board was the only one in the county of Lancashire to use the Education Act, but eventually the number of children being paid for in Industrial Schools grew so big that the Board decided, after years of indecision<sup>1</sup>, to build its own Industrial School.

The question of the Industrial Schools made the Board increasingly aware of its financial responsibilities. The defeat of the Churchmen at the second election was an indication that their opposition to the increase of school places by the establishment of more Board Schools was slowly breaking down. The Radical-controlled second Board saw that public opinion was behind their policy provided they could substantiate their claims, and these were supported accordingly by carefully collected statistics of finance. This was the duty of the Clerk, James Mellor. It was not long before the value of these statistics was demonstrated: some of the Churchmen members of the Board were still not convinced that Board Schools were giving value for money, and in order therefore to clear up any doubts in their minds, a detailed statement was issued. This was by way

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1. At the end of 1888.

of reply to those members of the Board who had questioned the advisability of keeping on the rented schools at Roundthorn and Providence Street, since the receipts in fees and grants had been small at both. It was shown that the School Board's operations had been of benefit to all the public elementary schools in the district, not just to Board Schools.

Statement (issued June 1874) showing increase of income of public elementary schools in Oldham since the passing of the 1870 Education Act.

(School fees were estimated on a basis of 3d. weekly per pupil for 46 weeks a year. The average Government grant was taken as 12s.0d. per pupil per annum.)

	<u>INCREASE IN ATT.</u>	<u>INCREASED FEES</u>
Church Schools	1,790	£1,029. 5s. 6d.
Wesleyan "	641	£368.11s. 6d.
British "	1,376	£791. 4s. 0d.
Roman Catholic "	537	£308.15s. 6d.
Board "	<u>806</u>	<u>£463. 9s. 0d.</u>
TOTALS	7,747	£2,961. 5s. 0d.

	<u>INCREASED AVERAGE ATT.</u>	<u>INCREASE IN GRANT</u>
Church Schools	1,228	£736.16s. 0d.
Wesleyan "	715	£429. 0s. 0d.
British "	1,182	£709. 4s. 0d.
Roman Catholic "	612	£367. 4s. 0d.
Board "	<u>652</u>	<u>£391.16s. 0d.</u>
TOTALS	4,389	£2,634. 0s. 0d.

Hence the total increase of income was estimated at £5,595.5s.0d., of which the Board Schools had earned about 15%.

It appears that the statement did not satisfy one member, Hilton Greaves, who demanded a detailed statement of the cost of education in the Board Schools. To meet his request, it was first shown that the fees were no higher in these than in the Voluntary Schools, and that the majority of pupils paid no more than 3d. per week. Next, an estimate was prepared for the year ending 31st May 1875 in respect of the new Board School at Smith Street.<sup>1</sup>

Smith Street Board School - Financial State..

(a) Income.

1. Average attendance:	68 boys 73 girls <u>186 infants</u> 327
2. Grant for these pupils	£225.15s. 0d.
3. Fees from " "	<u>£191. 0s. 0d.</u>
4. Total income	<u>£417. 0s. 0d.</u>

(b) Expenditure

1. Teachers' Salaries

(a) Boys' Schoolmaster	£120. 0s. 0d.
plus $\frac{1}{3}$ of ann. grant	<u>12.15s. 0d.</u>
	<u>£132.15s. 0d.</u>
(b) Girls' Schoolmistress	£60. 0s. 0d.
plus $\frac{1}{3}$ of ann. grant	<u>£18. 5s. 0d.</u>
	<u>£78. 5s. 0d.</u>

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1. School Board Chronicle 10th August 1874.

(c) Infants' Schoolmistress	£60. 0s. 0d.
plus proportion of grant	<u>£30. 0s. 0d.</u>
	<u>£90. 0s. 0d.</u>

Total for principal Teachers: £301.

(d) Pupil Teachers, 2 boys @ £15:	£30. 0s. 0d.
1 girl and 1 monitor	£24.12s. 0d.
Infant pupil teachers	£57. 0s. 0d.

Total for all pupil-teachers £111. 12s. 0d.

2. Other expenses.

(a) Books, equipment etc.	£30. 0s. 0d.
(b) Cleaning	£52. 0s. 0d.
(c) Fuel and Light	£22. 0s. 0d.
(d) Repairs	£5. 0s. 0d.
(e) Rates	<u>£6. 0s. 0d.</u>
	£115. 0s. 0d.

Total expenditure £527. 12s. 0d.

Excess over income was therefore about £110.

The total expenditure was calculated as being £1. 6s. 5d. per pupil per annum, or about 7d. per child per week, but the only money to be obtained from the rate fund was the £110, which was worked out as about 2d. per pupil per week.

The statement was received with great satisfaction on all sides; it dispelled any fears in the Churchmen that the Board Schools were costly beyond justification and it enabled the Chairman to point out to the public that their children who were being educated at Board Schools were getting a very good bargain indeed, since the round figure of 2d. per week school pence compared

favourably with the fees paid at all the public elementary schools in the School Board district:

PAYING PER WEEK:	FREE	1d.	2d.	3d.	4d.	5d.	6d.	7d.	8d.	9d.
PUPILS:	57	6	1,730	6,535	1,533	323	225	8	-	4

The School Board had to exercise care when spending the public money, but the District Auditor employed by the Local Government Board could exercise his powers if he considered that money had been used without legal authority by disallowing items of expenditure by the Board. The Oldham School Board was surcharged in two items in September 1874 which amount to a considerable sum. The first consisted of expenses paid to the Town Clerk as returning officer for the last School Board election - £269. 13s. 9d. The second item, £81. 13s. 3d., was interest paid on moneys advanced for the erection of school buildings. Roberts, the District Auditor, set out his reasons for disallowing these payments. As to the first amount, not only were there not produced to him any details or separate items of expenditure, but there existed no authority in law (he stated) for payment out of a public rate or fund for legal advice and professional assistance rendered to a mayor of a municipal borough in the discharge of a public duty cast upon him by statute. Moreover in Oldham, as he had ascertained, the Town Clerk was paid a fixed salary for inter alia "aiding the mayor in his public duties." Finally, since no detailed statement of the Town Clerk's services had been rendered in respect of his duties as returning officer, the District Auditor was "unable to judge whether he was paid a reasonable or excessive amount,

in case he was legally entitled to remuneration." The second item was more curtly dismissed: "There is no authority in law for a treasurer to a School Board to charge interest on monies advanced and lent by him to the School Board." It will be remembered that the School Board, annoyed by the delays which were retarding the erection of the two new board schools at Westwood and Smith Street, took it upon itself to secure the sites by advancing part of their cost to the vendors: to do so it borrowed money from its treasurer Mr. Mattinson who was also manager of the Manchester and County Bank.

After further delays the two sums disallowed were remitted.

C. Raising the Standard of Efficiency; Half-timers;  
Sandon's Act of 1876.

The Board's main concern was to enforce its bye-laws.

In November 1874 great dissatisfaction was expressed about the disparity in the numbers of pupils on roll and the average attendance. Despite the thoroughness of the visiting officers, a large number of children were found every month in the streets without reasonable excuse for absence. On the whole, the voluntary schools helped the School Board in its task of compiling absence records. Some schools, however, refused to send in fortnightly returns; others sent in incomplete returns which were of no value. Cases had also occurred of teachers taking it upon themselves to grant half-time or full-time exemption to pupils, but the Board was the sole authority for doing so.

The Board acted; all public elementary school managers were circularised to the effect that henceforth any school which had sent in inadequate returns would be named in the monthly reports laid before the Board. This was one method of exercising indirect compulsion. There were some schools, however, which had opened since the School Board Enquiry of 1871 and which might well have been inefficient. Yet the Board had no legal authority over them and had no power to close them or even send its officers into them, though in fact the managers and teachers of many Voluntary Schools did not refuse admission to the Clerk and visiting officers. The Board's position was further complicated by the existence of several hundred scholars who attended schools situated beyond the borough boundary but who resided within it.



These schools scarcely deigned to reply to the circular.

One or two only sent back returns. One manager stated clearly that they had nothing to do with the School Board. Some schools did not have a map and could not tell whether they were in the municipal borough or not. One member of the Board, the Rev. Robert Whittaker, was himself the correspondent for the Church Schools at Lees, just east of the borough boundary. He suggested that each school should be supplied with a map, and seemed hopeful of the result:

"I think you would find the managers ..... would direct that an account of the residences of children be kept, and that the attendance of pupils from the Oldham School Board district be regularly reported"<sup>1</sup>.

His own school had hitherto furnished no returns.

It was unfortunate for the Board that the attendance returns were so incomplete, especially as a serious epidemic of scarlet fever was then raging in the town. But medical evidence for absence was obviously of great importance, so the Board produced measures for the more effective working of the bye-laws by issuing doctors' certificates in 100-page books to each doctor in the school district. All notices summoning parents before the Board were to be served by post, and a new design of register (on the pattern of those used by the Burnley School Board) was issued to 71 schools in the borough and to a further 11 which lay just outside the boundary.

Though most of the schools co-operated, there was resistance to the Board from some. 40 registers were duly completed by teachers

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1. Oldham Standard, 9th November 1874.

and sent in. A further 24 had been "promised" but were "not ready" after two months had elapsed. 13 schools, 11 of which lay within the borough, refused to fill them in, but seven allowed the Clerk in to copy from their own records. The correspondent of one Church School,<sup>1</sup> the Rev. Joseph Harrison<sup>2</sup>, wrote to the Education Department for enlightenment on the matter. Perhaps the disappointment of not being elected to the School Board had occasioned a certain resentment towards it. Four teachers<sup>3</sup> formed a deputation to meet the School Board and discuss the affair. Their letter is of interest because it refers to the half-time system, to which much of the blame for bad attendance could with justice be attributed. The following items were listed for discussion:-

"1. The new system of registration required by the Board.

(a) The advisability of paying such a fee for this work as would induce the teacher or an assistant to do this work after school hours.

(b) The desirability of extending the same to private schools if possible.

2. The migration of half-time scholars as it affects the schools and the education of the town."

The Board's reply to the deputation was polite but firm - it considered that not only was the new system more effective and less

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1. St. Stephen's.
2. Who failed to be elected in the previous School Board Elections.
3. Messrs. Wade (Cowhill Wesleyan), Herring (St. Thomas's Church), Deakin (Christ Church) and Haslam (Hollinwood Methodist Free Church).

laborious than the old, but it pointed out that as a result of the work of the visiting officers of the Board, the teachers in all schools could receive an "important pecuniary advantage". It also considered that the Education Act did not contemplate payments to teachers for keeping registers and making returns to the Board, because it provided other means of getting the information should the teachers refuse it.<sup>1</sup> The Board could not extend the system to private schools, having no legal authority over them. Concerning the migration of scholars, the Board naturally deplored it but could only indicate new legislation as an effective check. Moreover, in their opinion, any attempt to interfere with the discretion of the employers as to the education of half-timers would be regarded as "officious" and "likely to be resented". It was thought that even if employers could be induced to leave to parents free choice of schools, migration would thereby be increased rather than diminished. The Board's conciliatory attitude to the employers is still evident; nor is this very surprising, since there were several master cotton-spinners on the Board itself.

The question of half-timers was now becoming important, partly because of their steadily growing number - it was stated<sup>2</sup> that although there were in Manchester about four times as many children of school age as in Oldham, the number of half-timers in Oldham was about the same as in Manchester, i.e. just under 5,000 - and partly because the new Factory Act of 1874 provided that after the 1st January 1876, half-timers should attend only such schools as were

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1. Under sec.22 of the Elementary Education Act Amendment 1873.

2. Oldham Standard, 16th October 1875.

recognised as giving "efficient instruction". By sec.12 of the Act it was laid down that after this date, a person of the age of 13 should be deemed a child not a young person unless he or she had obtained a certificate of having attained a certain standard of proficiency in reading, writing and arithmetic.

From the point of view of the employers, there was a fear that the rapidly expanding textile industries would be jeopardised by the shortage of juvenile labour occasioned by the failure of many children to pass the 4th or 5th Standard of the Revised Code of 1875. Such opinions were frequently expressed to the Factory Inspectors in their work.<sup>1</sup> It was urged that until a more efficient elementary school system was in operation, the standard would be too high. Thus the Stockport School Board stated that out of 1330 children presented to the H.M.I. for examination, 82.1% were in Standard 3 or below. And in many districts, as for example those surrounding Oldham, School Boards had not been formed. The Sub-Inspector of Factories for Oldham, Mr. Sale, reported<sup>2</sup> that in Oldham "young persons are in short supply, owing, I believe, to the operation of section 12". He went on to say that there had been five special examinations in Oldham for "labour passes", at which 37 out of 75 presented passed the 4th Standard. "The School Board", he continued "offers every facility to parents in corresponding with the Government Inspector, in arranging for special examinations, so that boys and girls can work full time whenever they are able to obtain educational certificates."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Report of H. M. Factory Inspector 31st October 1875

2. Report of H. M. Factory Inspector 30th April 1876

3. *ibid.* p. 25.

The School Board collected information by visiting private schools; this was to assist Whitehall in deciding whether pupils were "under efficient instruction". To this return the Clerk appended the remark that prior to the Education Act of 1873, the Oldham Justices decided to consider school premises as inefficient if the articles of the Code with respect to sanitary conditions were not complied with. This had been established for them by the Rev. W. J. Kennedy's reply to the Board in 1872; the Magistrates had refused to examine children, leaving it to the Board to test them; but of late, some had ruled that they were now restricted by section 24(7) of the 1873 Act and could not enquire into the condition of school premises and appliances. The Clerk urged that it should therefore be the work of H.M.I. to decide on the efficiency of all schools, whether private adventure or public elementary. Under the provisions of Lord Sandon's Bill of 1876, greater pressure would be put on existing school-provision than ever before.

During 1876 Sandon's Act became law; this was aimed at improving attendance in public elementary schools; about a quarter of the children in Oldham were exempted from the provision concerning the educational standard necessary to obtain exemption because they were half-timers covered by the Factory Acts. Sandon's Act also provided for the establishment of day industrial schools to which vagrant and recalcitrant children could be sent. The Oldham School Board had previously written to Lord Sandon's secretary, H. S. Nugent, urging that the power of committing street arabs to the Industrial

School should be placed in the hands of the School Board. The same act also afforded a measure of relief to denominational schools by granting them increased finances - 17s.6d. per child without qualification and more if they themselves could raise an equal amount.

The Oldham School Board modified its bye-laws to bring them up to date with the new provisions, and listed among reasonable excuses for absence

(a) that a child had obtained a certificate of proficiency under bye-law 4 or

(b) that a child has an order of exemption granted by the Board.

Bye-law 4 re-iterated the full and half-time exemption Standards (6th and 4th Standards) granted by the H.M.I. to children over 10, then dealt with children over 10 employed under the Factory Acts provisions:

"In the case of a child over 10 who has passed the 2nd or 3rd Standards, or who has passed in one or more subjects of the 4th, 5th and 6th Standards, and is employed in accordance with any act for regulating the employment of children, or is otherwise beneficially and of necessity employed, the Board may make an order for a renewable period of up to six months, allowing such exemption from school attendance not exceeding half-time exemption, as they think fit, and such order may at any time be cancelled if the exemption stated thereon is exceeded, or if the child changes school without informing the Clerk of the Board, or fails to be presented for examination by Her Majesty's Inspector at the first opportunity."

The provisions of the 1876 Act concerning day Industrial Schools were highly acceptable to the Oldham School Board, since they were now relieved of the responsibility of taking children away from their parents in sometimes unpleasant circumstances, where a just decision was by no means easy to make; one example was given in the "Standard".

A blind man came before the Board in answer to a summons notice, stating that he sent his son to school, but that he played truant. The father had previously asked to have partial exemption granted so that the boy could accompany him on his rounds as a rag gatherer; the Board had reluctantly allowed partial exemption, but this had been repeatedly exceeded, the father having several times been before the Bench. In such a case the boy could be sent to a day Industrial School without occasioning great hardship to the father.

There were, of course, many simple cases of fraud, commonly by altering the date of birth on a child's birth-certificate, and thereby obtaining a somewhat premature exemption from school. An amusing case of this nature was reported in the Standard.<sup>1</sup> An Irish immigrant called Lawrence Cane was summoned before the Magistrates at the instigation of the School Board. The defence was that the son Joseph was turned 13 years old. The boy had been born in Co. Clare and his birth certificate showed that the year of his birth was 1864. However, it was the Board's opinion that the figure 4 had been altered to 3, and the Clerk produced another copy from the Registrar's office. Mrs. Cane, the mother, stoutly maintained that nothing had been done

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1. 30th December, 1876.

to the figures "beyond trying to rub off a spot of grease". She was then warned not to add lying to her other sins, and informed that the maximum penalty for an offence of this kind was two years in prison.

The Magistrates then fined the father five shillings for neglecting to send his child regularly to school.

Meanwhile, as a result of the boom in the cotton industry, there was a large and rapidly increasing deficiency of school places in the Ashton Road area of the town, where in 1875 it was reported that four new mills were building, and many houses. The two schools which served the district, King Street British and St. Paul's Church, were already seriously overcrowded. Two new Board Schools were planned, similar in design to Westwood and Smith Street but including in their fabric living accommodation for caretakers. One was to be built in Wellington Street to hold about 400 pupils on land to be purchased. The other, to hold 500 to 600 pupils, was to be built on land leased from the Corporation at an annual rent of 6d. per square yard in the Hathershaw district. The plans for the bigger school were quickly approved by Whitehall, but the Managers of the British School at Copster-hill opposed the scheme; their case was not a good one, however, and the Education Department did not oppose the Board's plans.

The Wellington Street School scheme met with more stubborn resistance from the Managers of St. Peter's Church School, who contrived to delay matters for a year. They suggested alternative sites, eventually the Chairman of the Board went to Whitehall to press the



matter, and the resistance was overcome when the H.M.I. (the Rev. W. J. Kennedy) visited the alternative sites suggested, but these for various reasons, mainly financial, he considered unsuitable. The Board now went ahead with its plans; the new schools would cost £9 per child; the first two schools had cost only £6 per head. For the construction of the Wellington Street School £6,000 would be borrowed, for Hathershaw School £5,000 and to cover site costs and additions to Westwood and Smith Street Schools a further £1,500, making in all £12,500. Offices for the use of the School Board were to be incorporated in the design for the Wellington Street School.

D. The Guardians and Fees; Legal Confusion.

The result of the second School Board election was clear proof of the waning power of the Church Party, and the third Board was quietly constituted without the expensive formality of an election. The majority of burgesses seemed perfectly satisfied with the work of the School Board, and claims that it would prove to be ruinously expensive to the rate-payers could be discounted in view of the excellent reports and the financial statements which were being issued. Any fears which once existed in the minds of the Church Party's adherents that the School Board's schools would soon overshadow those of the denominations were allayed by the Board's disinclination to build schools unless these were seen to be an absolute necessity. A modus vivendi was arrived at by preserving the same proportions of School Board places in the hands of the interested parties - hence the third Board once again consisted of six Churchmen, three of whom had previously held office, six "unsectarians", three of whom also were former Board members, and a Roman Catholic priest, who was once again vice-chairman, the Rev. R. M. Davies being voted Chairman for the third time.

Under the provisions of the new (1876) Education Act, the power of the School Board to pay or remit the fees of children whose parents could not afford to pay their school pence passed from it to the Board of Guardians<sup>1</sup>. The Oldham Guardians waited for almost half a year before making arrangements to pay fees, but by August 1877 had received only one application for school fees from a parent. It was

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1. Section 10.

alleged by members of the School Board that parents who hitherto had applied to them for payment of fees now felt degraded in asking the same concession of the Guardians, who were too closely associated in people's minds with pauperism. The Guardians themselves did little to remove this inhibition by the methods they adopted - it was said that poor parents had had to make three or even four separate attempts to obtain 2d. from the Relieving Officer. Since the Guardians were so reluctant to pay school fees in denominational schools, the School Board rightly felt that its efforts to increase school attendance were being undermined; the only thing the Board could do when such fees were not forthcoming was to take the children concerned into its own schools, in which it had power to remit school fees. The effect was as could be foreseen - in 1876, the fees for 144 children were remitted, but three years later the number had increased to 467. It was feared that the efficiency of Board Schools would be affected, since a greater proportion of neglected children was being admitted to Board Schools than to denominational schools.

The dissatisfaction of the Board was eventually communicated to the Education Department by memorial.

The Board continued with its plans for new schools: the population of the town was now growing so rapidly that the Board had little difficulty in proving that a deficiency of school accommodation would soon exist here or there; and such was the demand for land that it was decided to buy three plots of land before the prices rose to an uneconomical level. These were a plot at Higginshaw on Shaw Road,

a plot in Heron Street, Hollinwood, and a larger plot in Derby Street, Werneth. This decision was not carried without the Church members expressing uneasiness, but they were reassured when informed that it would not be long before schools would indeed be necessary.

Great confusion existed in the minds of parents as to the different requirements of the Factory Acts, the Workshop Acts, the 1876 Education Act and the School Board bye-laws with regard to children of school age. If only the confusion had been confined to the parents! The School Board did its best to explain the laws to parents and employers, but soon found itself in legal difficulties; the Board's legal adviser, Mr. Ponsonby, was guided by the decision of the Court of the Queen's Bench in the case of *Bury v. Cherryholm*, which was a dispute between the Clerk to the Barnsley School Board, Reginald Bury, and a parent whose child, it was claimed, was exempt from the provisions of the School Board's byelaws because it was employed under the Workshops Act. The court ruled that the bye-laws of the Board must be obeyed. This decision had been made several years before, so the Oldham School Board was somewhat perplexed when the Magistrates gave a judgment contrary to *Bury v. Cherryholm*. The facts of the Barnsley and Oldham cases were as follows:-

(a) *Bury v. Cherryholm*, 1876<sup>1</sup> (The Barnsley Case)

A boy of 12 years of age (on 11th May 1875), John Cherryholm, failed to attend school. He was employed in a Barnsley boot factory, but attended school regularly pursuant to the Workshop Regulation Act, 1867. Under sec. 14 of this Act, "every child employed in a

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1. see 1 Ex.D. 451 (April 28th 1876).

workshop shall attend school for at least ten hours in every week". By sec.74 of the Elementary Education Act 1870, the School Board for Barnsley made bye-laws. For the Appellant, Reginald Bury, Barnsley School Board Clerk, it was contended that the Board could if they thought fit compel children to attend school full time under bye-law 2, which ran :

"The time when children subject to these bye-laws shall attend school shall be the whole time that the school shall be open for the instruction of children of the same age, sex and class."

The bye-laws also stated that nothing in them should have any effect in so far as it might be contrary to anything contained in any Act for regulating the education of children employed in labour.

It was contended that there was nothing in the Workshops Act of 1867 restraining the compulsory powers conferred on the Board by the Elementary Education Act 1870, and that the latter Act overrode the Workshops Act.

Cherryholm's father did not appear and was not represented by counsel.

The decision of the Court was, that the School Board was able to enforce the bye-laws against a child under 13, and that the Respondent had committed a breach of them.

(b) Mellor v. Denham (1879) (The Oldham Case).

The events leading up to this case were as follows:-

Thomas Denham of Oldham, father of Joseph Denham, aged 10½, was summoned before the bench at the instigation of the Clerk, James

Mellor, because of the irregular attendance of his son. Denham stated that the child had passed as a half-timer under the Factory Act during the previous March (1878), and had started work. The Clerk to the School Board had then informed the father that as his son had not passed a certain educational standard he must go back to school full-time. This, of course, was the 4th Standard, as laid down in the bye-laws of the Board. The boy went back to school, but after the Factory Inspector had informed Denham that the Board had no control over a child who had passed as a half-timer under the Factory Acts, he was ordered by his overlooker "to bring Joseph back to work again". The Oldham magistrates were of the opinion that the powers claimed by the School Board could not be enforced.

The Board was not prepared to abide by this decision, which struck at the heart of its efforts to raise educational standards. Through the years the numbers of half-timers had steadily grown, and now the Board had to come to grips with the problem. As the Chronicle commented: "In its bearings the case most likely affects some two or three thousand children<sup>1</sup> residing in the School Board district". The Board decided to bring its case to a superior Court: three similar cases were adjourned until December. The case aroused great interest in other Boards whose work lay in manufacturing districts, and was dealt with in the court of the Queen's Bench Division on 29th March, 1879.<sup>2</sup>

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1. There were about 5,000 half-timers, in fact.

2. See 4 Q.B.D. 1879, p.241. Mellor v. Denham.

The School Board bye-laws contained an express enactment that "nothing therein should have any force or effect in so far as it might be contrary to anything contained in any Act for regulating the education of children employed in labour", thus following the proviso in the 74th section of the Elementary Education Act which prohibited bye-laws contrary to the Act.

The School Board contended, looking to *Bury v. Cherryholm*, that the Education Acts overrode and controlled the Factory Act provisions, and that children employed in factories, though receiving the education provided for and required by the Factory Acts, were in the same position as other children not so employed, and were like them, compellable to attend school during the whole of the school hours. The argument in support of this contention was that the Factory Acts, commencing at a time when no scheme of general education existed, were merely restrictive; that they did not enact that children should or might be employed for a given number of hours in a factory, and while so employed should receive a certain amount of education. All, in fact, that the Factory Acts demanded was that the children should not be employed for a longer time in the factory and should not during such employment receive less than the given amount of education. It was further contended that the policy of the Elementary Education Act 1870, passed long afterwards, was to secure to all children, however employed, a much larger amount of education than the Factory Acts provided, and that it could not be said to be "contrary to" the provisions of the Factory Acts for the School Board

to require that all children should attend school for a longer period than factory children had been required to attend - although the effect might and would be virtually to put an end to child labour in factories.

In his judgment, Mr. Justice Lush made no reference to the Barnsley case, but stated that the Education Act of 1876 recognised that the Factory Acts were an existing code for regulating the employment and education of children employed in factories; moreover, the Factory Act of 1874, while it gave the Education Department power to recognise or to refuse to recognise a school as a proper school for the education of a factory child, said in terms in another part of the Act, that a child employed in a factory shall attend school in manner directed by the Factory Act of 1844. The judge in fact interpreted the words in sec.74 to mean that the School Board bye-laws should not interfere with the Factory Act provisions, and that the Board was not therefore entitled to enforce the bye-laws in the case of children employed in factories who were attending efficient elementary schools as half-timers.

In giving judgment for Mr. Denham, the judge would seem to have been harsh. The wording of the Education Act sec.74 was that the arrangements of the bye-laws as to the time during which a child should attend school should not be "contrary to anything contained in any" Labour Act. But no Factory Act contained any provision for enabling a child to be employed. They merely limited the right for children to be employed, and provided that the children who availed themselves of the common-law right to be employed should



spend half their working days at school. Thus the Education Act which enacted that the same children should spend all their days at school would not be prescribing anything "contrary to" what the Factory Acts provided, seeing that the Factory Acts did not confer on the children the pre-existing right to be employed.

This was the basis on which *Bury v. Cherryholm* had stood, but the position now was, that since both the *Barnsley* case and the *Oldham* case had been heard in the Queen's Bench Division, School Boards and local magistrates had as much right to act upon the *Barnsley* case in enforcing the bye-laws as upon the *Oldham* case in enforcing the Factory Acts. As soon as the adverse decision was made known, the *Oldham* School Board reported it to the Education Department, and being assured that if the matter was taken further the ratepayers would not have to bear the cost, the Board awaited the higher decision. The following letter<sup>1</sup> was duly received from the Solicitor to the Treasury:

11th July 1879 .

Sir,

The law officers of the Crown having advised that an endeavour to reverse the decision of the Queen's Bench Division in the case of *Mellor v. Denham* should be made, I am instructed by the Lords of the Treasury to take measures in behalf of the Educational Department for having the decision reconsidered by the Court of Appeal. I shall be glad to be informed whether your Board have taken any and what steps to have the decision reviewed, and whether the Board has any objection to direct their solicitors to hand me all the papers in the case with a view to prosecuting the appeal at the public expense."

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1. *Oldham Standard* 14th July 1879.

Although the Oldham School Board was zealous in the matter of enforcing attendance to the point that it had become involved in an important legal dispute, other Boards in the cotton manufacturing district were well aware that they were acting in defiance of the real meaning of their bye-laws in allowing children who had passed no standard, to go to work half-time under the Factory Act provisions. Factory Act half-timers were not called upon to show any educational qualification whatever, nor was their continued employment half-time dependent on their success in school work. Sometimes, as at Preston in November 1879, many children employed contrary to the bye-laws were discharged at the instance of the Factories Inspector. But the Bradford School Board pleaded the judgment in the Oldham case, though this was barely six months old. Other Boards which were clearly in favour of letting the half-time system go on unregulated were Bolton, Blackburn and Ashton-under-Lyne, all of which had then been in existence for nine years and had had bye-laws for about eight. The question was, should children aged between 10 and 13 be allowed to work as half-timers without having reached the standard of half-time exemption provided for in the bye-laws? But by 1879, most if not all, children should have been reaching the 4th Standard by the age of ten or eleven if they had been at school since infancy. It was a sad comment on the work of some Boards that children over ten who had perhaps had no education worth speaking of should be employed half-time.

Finally, the dilemma created by the decisions in the Barnsley and Oldham cases was simply resolved. At the end of 1879, the

Education Department withdrew grants previously paid for half-timers who had passed no standard. One difficulty remained, however; the Chief Inspector of Factories, Mr. Redgrave, complained in his annual report<sup>1</sup> that the standard of proficiency required varied in adjoining School Board districts, since children worked side by side having passed different exemption standards. The Inspector for Oldham, Hoare, stated in his report for the next year<sup>2</sup> that although the success of children in passing the 4th Standard before the age of 13 was increasing in his district, the new Education Act which had prompted most authorities to fix on the 3rd Standard as the qualifying standard for going to work at 10 years of age would undoubtedly stop two out of three if the bye-laws were only enforced. The 2nd Standard (the minimum in Oldham School Board district) would, he thought, prevent about one child in five from going to work in the mill.

"I am sorry to say that the present inequality in the bye-laws of the School Boards and Committees causes a great deal of dissatisfaction. On one side of my district, and probably the more ignorant, the 3rd Standard is required for half-time exemption; on the other side, it is only the 2nd; to explain to poor parents that this is just is impossible".

Finally, nearly two years after Mr. Denham had been first brought before the Oldham Magistrates, the case of Mellor v. Denham reached a hearing in the Court of Appeal.<sup>3</sup>

The appeal was dismissed on the grounds that that Court had no jurisdiction to hear an appeal from a decision of a High Court of

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1. For year ending 31st October 1880.
  2. Factory Inspector's Report 1881. p.27
  3. 5 Q.B.D. 1880 p.467.

Justice as to an information for the contravention of bye-laws under the Elementary Education Act, because the information related to a criminal matter within the meaning of sec.47 of the Supreme Court of Judicature Act, 1873. The Court could only hear cases of a civil nature. The argument for the School Board was that the offence was so small that it did not constitute a crime; but the omission to send Joseph Denham to school was a disobedience of the law, therefore it was a crime, although of the mildest character.

The Education Department had partly resolved the dilemma caused by the Barnsley and Oldham cases by restricting grants. What was needed now was legislation to cleanse the Augean stables, though ideas as to standards of proficiency still varied greatly: this is shown by a letter on the subject to the Editor of the "School Board Chronicle"<sup>1</sup> from the Clerk to the Barnsley School Board, Bury. He pointed out that the case of Bury v. Cherryholm was decided on the construction of section 74 (sub-section 2) of the Education Act, but the reason why the case was brought forward was because the Barnsley School Board thought it a palpable injustice that children should be allowed to work half-time in factories, workshops and mines, while their brothers and sisters were prevented from so working in any other employment. Bury continued :

"What, I think, is needed, is an enactment that "no children under 13 may be employed in factory mine or workshop contrary to the provisions of the bye-laws of the School Board of the district wherein they are situated, such bye-laws having first been approved by the

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1. 10th January 1880

Education Department."

Few Boards, I think, would allow children to work half-time if they had passed so low a standard as the fourth, unless because of the poverty of the parents or other extreme case."

The Clerk to Barnsley School Board thought the 4th Standard to be low. In the cotton district, however, still lower standards obtained. The Oldham School Board's resolution of 12th April 1880 is a case in point:

"That, as a rule, half-time exemption be granted to children who have passed the second Standard."

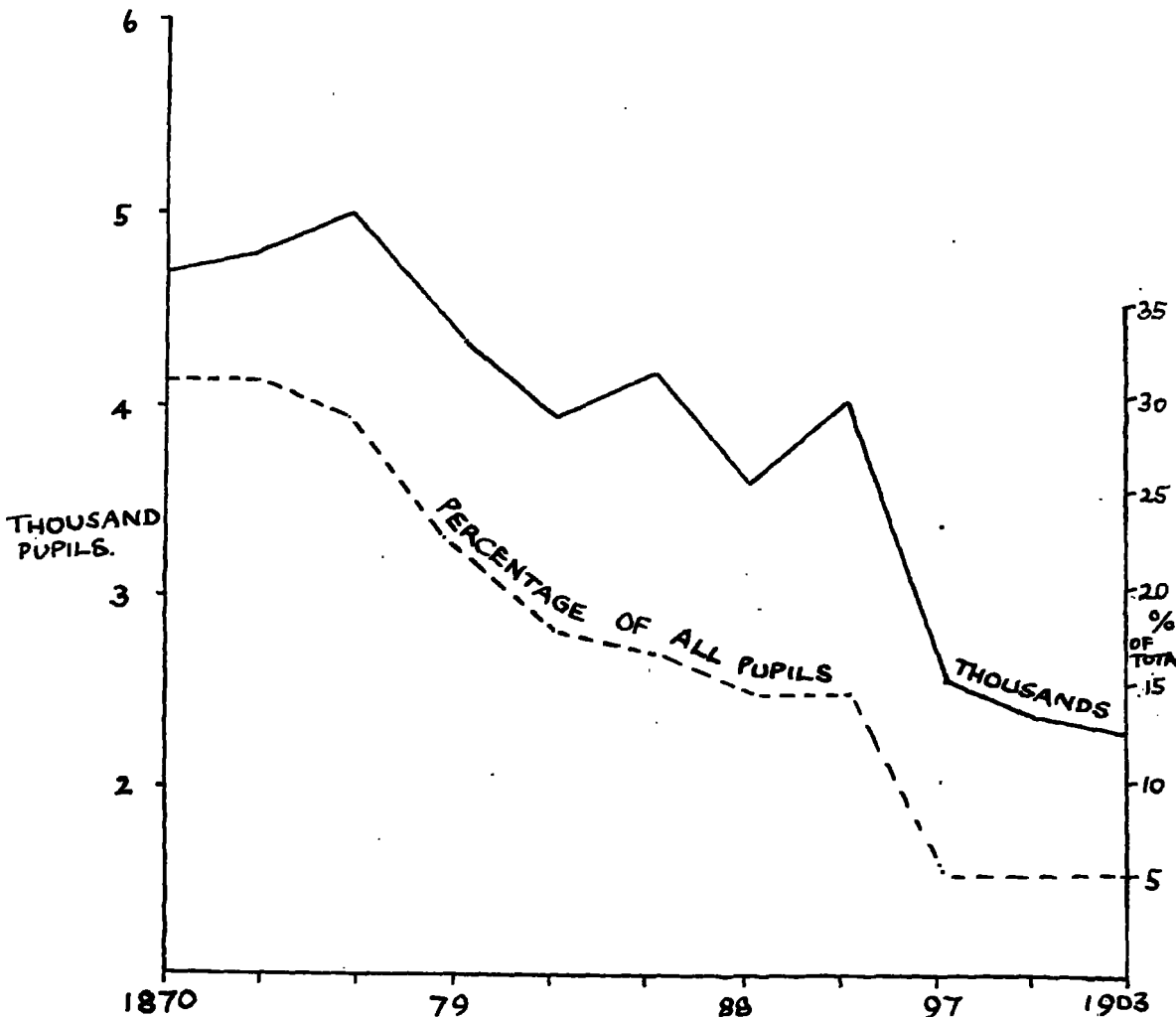
The legal confusion brought out by the Barnsley and Oldham cases was finally removed by the passing of the Elementary Education (Mundella) Act of 1880. Sec.4 enacted that

"every person who takes into his employment a child of the age of ten and under the age of thirteen years resident in a school district, before that child has obtained a certificate of having reached the standard of education fixed by a bye-law in force in the district for the total or partial exemption of children of the like age from the obligation to attend school, shall be deemed to take such child into his employment in contravention of the Elementary Education Act 1876, and shall be liable to a penalty accordingly."

However, it was still left to the discretion of the local authorities to decide for themselves what the exemption standards should be.<sup>1</sup>

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1. vide infra pp. 116



### HALF-TIMERS IN OLDHAM SCHOOLS

1870 - 1903

The half-time system was firmly entrenched in Oldham when the School Board was created in 1871. 32% of those enrolled in the public elementary school were half-timers. These children were a great obstacle to progress. The Oldham Blue Coat School was a good elementary school because it selected its boarders and kept out the half-timers - but the Board Schools could not refuse them admission.

Eventually the Waterloo higher-grade school was established to segregate full-time pupils from half-timers. As the exemption standards were raised the numbers of half-time pupils declined, but this was also due to the growing appreciation of parents of the value of full-time education, first elementary, then in later years, secondary. By 1903 only 5% of pupils enrolled were half-timers, though a few persisted until the 1918 Education Act abolished the system. The peak year, 1876, with 29% of those enrolled, may be compared with the National figure for the same year of about 200,000 out of 3,000,000 pupils - or approximately 7% of enrolled pupils in England and Wales.

E. Board School v. Voluntary School, Fees and Teachers' Salaries.

The fourth School Board for Oldham was elected without a competition on 31st December 1879. By this time the members were less conscious of religious and political differences of opinion than they had been in the early days of the Board. When later a member resigned because of ill-health and had to be replaced, one of the Board who had been a member since 1871 remarked that

"there are no parties in the Board; still, in one sense at the beginning, there were two or three parties, and it is generally assumed that when a vacancy occurs it is a person of the same persuasion who is chosen to fill it"<sup>1</sup>. So great, in fact, was the pressure of population on school provision that all side-issues were now definitely in abeyance.

The Board continued a vigorous policy of expansion with regard to new schools, often acquiring the sites years before building operations were begun on them. In this way a much lower price was obtained; the Rev. R. M. Davies (elected as Chairman for the fourth successive term) was able to report<sup>2</sup> to the press that one plot of land which had cost the Board 3d. per square yard would sell currently at 7d.

A new school to replace the rented premises at Roundthorn was planned; the land was secured for 2½d. per square yard and accommodation for about 300 children was contemplated; a loan of £2,160 was obtained from the Public Works Loan Commissioners and work was begun towards the end of 1880. The opening (on Saturday 27th June 1881) was marked by

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1. Oldham Standard, 9th May 1881.

2. 13th March 1882.

a small ceremony, at which the Chairman of the Board took the opportunity of publicising its achievements:

" ..... the school accommodation now provided by the Board amounts to 2,638 children. It may be asked, 'What are you doing with these premises? They no doubt cost a great deal of money. Are they being used?' The number of names on the books is 2,452. Thus, you see, there is a very small margin between the number provided for and the number attending. This shows that the Board has never inconsiderately invested in School buildings, but only placed them where they were required ..... "

For the benefit of the ratepayers, a brief statement of cost was added:

" ..... the cost to the borough of Oldham for all this work is 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. or 2d. in the pound on the rateable value ..... "1

The new Roundthorn School was described as "a single-storey edifice of Gothic design." It contained six rooms - a mixed school-room 51 feet by 22, two small infants' class-rooms, two class-rooms for older pupils and a teachers' room.

The first schools built by the Board at Smith Street and Westwood had by this time become overcrowded, so these were to be extended, and two more sites were acquired (Watersheddings and Scottfield); in another case, the School Board was requested by the Education Department to provide a new school at Waterhead, and was, moreover, reproved for not having acted more quickly. The existing British School there was not up to the standard required for qualification for



an annual grant, but the Board had hesitated in deciding to build a school near by. The Secretary of the Education Department clarified the position by letter<sup>1</sup>:

" ..... my Lords think it was fairly the duty of your board under section 18 of the Elementary Education Act 1870, to have provided a public elementary school to meet the deficiency which, upon the statement contained in your letter, certainly existed when the matter was brought under the notice of the board in 1880, and my Lords are of the opinion that nothing has happened since that time which ought to relieve the board of that duty, or deprive the neighbourhood of the advantage of a thoroughly efficient board school. My Lords must therefore call on the board to submit plans of a suitable size with a view of providing at once a proper board school in this locality."

The Board wasted no time in buying a site in Brideoake Street, Waterhead, which, with the Board School for 500 children erected on it, cost £4,600. The old British School was carried on on rental temporarily; the Board purchased the furniture and teaching materials from the Managers for £22.<sup>1</sup> How was a small elementary school equipped? It contained four long desks and eight short ones, a blackboard, a large slate, an abacus and two maps. The School Board also paid 3s.6d. for a "roller for moving desks" and 3d. each for two pointers; a framed "Conscience Clause" cost 1s.2d. The books and stationery consisted of eight reading sheets, five packets of "Arithmetical Cards", a log book, a portfolio and an admission-book.

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1. Minutes 10th April 1882.

Early in 1882, the school accommodation for the entire School Board district was investigated, and a report recommending the acquisition of various sites was sent up to Whitehall. One Board member, Fr. Walsh, objected to a site in Rock Street as being too near St. Marie's R.C. School; its manager, Fr. Grymonprez, wrote to Whitehall but without avail. The official view was that the disputed site was in fact the most important and should be the first one to be built on.

In spite of its efforts to improve attendance, the Board was dissatisfied with the results. It was stated<sup>1</sup> that the average attendance was only 76%, but there was undoubtedly some improvement:

"In Oldham are the very aristocracy of the Lancashire operatives, higher wages, better cottages, more waste and luxury, and (it is thought) more skill than elsewhere. Outsiders still keep up the nickname of 'roughs', which once the Oldham people earned by their brutality and drunkenness ..... but I am sure that the general excellence of discipline which prevails in the schools must be one of the leading causes of the gradual but certain improvement which is going on amongst the whole population".<sup>2</sup>

Another official report<sup>3</sup> was less optimistic, and indicated one of the prime causes of bad attendance. The Board also laid the blame on its difficulties with the Board of Buardians over the fees question, and with the general enforcement of the bye-laws:

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1. Minutes 10th April 1882

2. Report of H.M. Inspector (J.H.Wylie) for 1878.

(The H.M.I. appears to be out of touch with local customs here. Properly, the nickname is "roughyeds" i.e. "rough-heads" - said to derive from the early industry of making beaver hats.

3. Report of H.M.I. Rev. W. J. Kennedy 1877, p.462.

"As the schools in and around Oldham are almost without exception half-time schools, the scholars may never be able to reach such high attainments as may be found in some elementary schools." The Board stimulated activity in contiguous School Attendance districts; four had adopted bye-laws. The difficulty lay in the different exemption standards. In Oldham, the standard for total exemption under 13 was 6. In Crompton, Chadderton, Middleton and Ashton<sup>1</sup> it was Standard 5. Children in Royton, however, could leave if they passed the 4th Standard. For half-time exemption (not under the Factory Acts) the position was equally anomalous - in Oldham, the 4th Standard, as in Ashton; but in Crompton and Middleton, Standard 3; and in Chadderton and Royton, only Standard 2.

Since the H.M.I.'s reports of 1877 and 1878, the cotton-spinning trade had entered one of its periodic depressions, with the result that many half-timers were dismissed and the parents of many children had difficulty in finding the school pence, especially if there were several children at school in the family. The visiting officers came across many such cases of necessity. For the month of July 1880<sup>2</sup> the Board issued the following statistics of attendance.

1. On roll	:	19,335	children	
2. Average attendance	:	12,657	"	
3. plus half-timers	:	4,438	"	
4. Full average attendance:		14,876	"	i.e. 77% of those on roll

The visiting officers made enquiries as to non-attendance for 5,618

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1. Under a School Board.

2. Oldham Standard 9th August 1880.

children, of whom 2,007 were absent without reasonable excuse. 1,853 were ill, 231 were said to be "away visiting from home". 351 were half-timers who had changed schools, 179 were over age for compulsion. 73 had no school fees or were short of clothing.

In such cases, the visiting officer usually told the parents to apply to the Guardians for the school fees. The Board was still endeavouring to have the provisions of the 1873 Act concerning the fees of non-pauper children altered in favour of the Board, since the Guardians were obviously basing their decisions on standards quite different from those which the Board had used under sec.25.

"We all know that getting fees from the Guardians is not worth the trouble", stated the Vice-Chairman, Canon Whittaker.<sup>1</sup> The Board felt that it was bearing rather more than its fair share of the burden in remitting the fees of several hundred children in its schools. Because of the state of trade and the inability of people to pay a higher rate, it had discussed<sup>2</sup> and dropped the question of establishing its own industrial and truant school, which Lord Sandon's Act empowered Boards to establish. It was decided therefore to approach the Guardians on the question of fees, and the managers of the denominational schools were circularised by the Clerk suggesting that they receive some children without fees and that some kind of fund could be established to meet them.

In its own schools the Board increased<sup>3</sup> the salaries of its principal teachers by an estimated £10 per annum by raising the share

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1. Oldham Standard. December 1880.

2. Minutes. 14th June 1880.

3. Minutes. 14th March 1881.

of the annual grant earned. At Westwood, Smith Street and Hathershaw the individual share was raised from 12 to 15%; at Wellington Street from 20 to 25%. Mistresses' shares were increased from 12 to 15%. It was pointed out that the remission of fees of poor children had flooded the Board Schools with children "of a lower class" - the Chairman gave the number as 450 at the opening of the new school at Roundthorn in June 1881 - and whereas the teachers at denominational schools could to a large extent select their pupils, those at the Board Schools could not.<sup>1</sup> Efficiency would best be achieved by greater financial inducements. Masters would henceforth also receive all the Drawing grants from South Kensington, not just a share.

Before approaching the Guardians, the School Board made a last effort to oppose the 10th section of Sandon's Act by joining with the Manchester School Board's representatives (and others) in a deputation to the President of the Council (Lord Spencer) and Mr. A. J. Mundella. The Oldham men who took part were the Rev. R. M. Davies, John Taylor and James Newton. The deputation was unsuccessful - Mundella thought that Sandon's Act was workable if the Boards and the Guardians co-operated properly. All the old religious animosities which existed when the 25th section of the Elementary Education Act was operative would be revived, he thought, were the 10th section to be rescinded.

On the return of the delegates, the Board investigated the practical application of sec.10. elsewhere; it was found that in Salford

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1. cf. statement of H.M.I.Stokes in Report 1869-70

the Guardians had the use of a central office which made unnecessary the application of non-pauper parents for funds at the Workhouse. The Guardians agreed to a similar scheme in Oldham, sending their officer to the School Board offices (now in Wellington Street School) on Friday evenings, for a trial period. The Chairman was able to report that the experiment was a great success, since there was a great increase in the numbers applying for fees. Unfortunately for the Board, however, the Guardians went back to the old system of paying fees between 9 and 12 o'clock on Saturday at the Workhouse, stating as their reasons that there was no time<sup>1</sup> for their relieving officer to investigate all cases thoroughly; he had moreover "been threatened with personal injury and insulted"<sup>2</sup> on leaving the Board School.

During the early months of the fourth Board's existence the appeal decision in Mellor v. Denham was made known. The Board decided to fix on the 2nd Standard for exemption for half-timers under the Factory Acts, though the Factory Inspector had stated<sup>3</sup> that most authorities had adopted the 3rd Standard. About 25% of all the schoolchildren in the borough were half-timers, so the lower standard was chosen. However the Education Department was not satisfied with the lower standards chosen, and the Board had to alter its bye-laws in favour of the 3rd Standard at the end of 1881. Early in the next year the Board printed a notice, clearly setting out for employers and parents the legal position concerning half-time exemption.<sup>4</sup>

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1. The Guardians allowed one hour.
  2. Oldham Standard 14th November, 1881.
  3. vide sup.
  4. see appendix.

There was evidence, however, that many half-timers changed school when they changed employers. The excuse given by the latter was that it reduced the number of School Books to be kept. Several hundred such cases were investigated each month, yet the Board was almost powerless to prevent the practice. It went as far as it could to do so - by circularising employers of half-timers, asking them "to favourably consider" the question of allowing the choice of school to rest with the parents of the half-timers. Apart from impairing the efficiency of the schools, this practice was a financial blow to the teachers, who lost pupils, particularly intelligent pupils, and thereby lost the annual grant on the examination results. The Chairman stated<sup>1</sup> that at the last government examination 36% of the half-timers could not be presented, because they had not made the requisite number of attendances under the Code.

Towards the end of its term of office, the Board returned to the consideration of the establishment of a Truant or Day Industrial School, seeking to help the poor children whose parents were disinclined to approach the Guardians for assistance. By this time the cotton trade was recovering from its temporary depression, and the official reports were full of praise for the work of the School Board. At the same time, however, it was stated that the voluntary schools were gradually failing to keep up to the standards set by the Board Schools.

"The increase in population is most apparent in the town and immediate neighbourhood of Oldham, where the energy of the people seems to extort prosperity even from 'bad times'. Under the stimulus of

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1. Minutes 12th September 1881.

co-operation every yard of ground in Oldham seems to be rapidly covering with buildings. The clay is stripped off, the hollows are filled in, vast mills arise, and streets of cottages spread out in ever-increasing monotony, but to the practical mind they tell a tale of enterprise and resource and prosperity of which the townspeople are justly proud. The census of 1881 shows the population of Oldham to be 111,343 compared with 82,629 (in 1871), a rate of increase equal to 35% within 10 years, the second highest rate out of the 20 large towns in England. .... As a consequence of this, two large board schools recently erected have already proved inadequate, and are now in process of enlargement, while the school board have in contemplation the erection of seven more board schools, in order to meet the actual needs of the present or the probable requirements of the near future ..... a like activity prevails also among the supporters of voluntary schools ..... but in view of the increased stringency of the requirements ..... the number of fresh denominational schools on the lists is inconsiderable.<sup>1</sup>

In the same report the Inspector for the Oldham and Rochdale district contrasted the new Board Schools, with good buildings and backed by unlimited funds and consequently with a smaller teacher/pupil ratio, with the denominational schools. The introduction of more subjects into the curriculum would be of little use unless the number of teachers was augmented. Yet the voluntary schools had to keep their premises up to the standards of "efficient instruction" required by Whitehall:

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1. Report of H.M.I. (J.H.Wylie) for 1882, p.482



"However great the increase in the grant, my experience of the managers of voluntary schools is that, as a rule, they will not increase the teaching staff beyond the minimum requirements, and unless pressure is brought to bear by threatened loss of grant, the increased earnings under the more liberal scale of payments will be devoted to paving a yard, or building a wall etc."<sup>1</sup>

How much better were the Board Schools? The H.M.I. compiled a table of schools in Oldham and Rochdale (somewhat smaller than Oldham at that time) examined in class subjects<sup>2</sup> in 1882 and the previous year.

NUMBER OF DEPARTMENTS		KIND OF SCHOOL	NUMBER RECEIVING FULL GRANT (4 SHILLINGS) OR REDUCED GRANT (2s. or 1s.)					
1881	1882		1881			1882		
			4s.	2s.	1s.	4s.	2s.	1s.
12	12	BOARD	11	1	0	10	1	0
139	153	VOLUNTARY	96	24	4	64	53	2

A final column showed the number of departments which had either not attempted class subjects or which had failed to reach the minimum standard for grant of at least 50% passes in the examinations. Of the 12 board departments, only one was so placed in 1882, but there were 34 voluntary departments.

The champions of the voluntary schools did not lose the opportunity of commenting on the growing power of the Board, but at this time could do little to prevent it.

"Now mark the unfairness of the Education Act to voluntary schools as efficient as the one I am speaking of, and the pull the

1. Wylie, J.H. op.cit. p.488

2. i.e. grammar, geography, history or needlework.

Board schools have over them. This (voluntary) school could not show an income proportionate to its educational merits, and a clause in the Act deprives the managers of ten or twelve pounds of the grant honestly and fairly earned. If it had the rates to draw on, of course an income could be shown far in excess of the merits of the school. Money makes the mare to go, and so it is with the Board Schools. It is brains in the one case, and brass in the other."<sup>1</sup>

Not all the methods adopted by the Education Department to increase the length of the child's school career were completely successful. The Honour Certificate system brought in by the 18th section of Lord Sandon's Act was available to pupils who had passed the 4th Standard at 10 years and who could prove an attendance of at least 350 times in each of the previous five years. Parents received 20 to 25 shillings, and fees were paid on continued regular attendance. But it was felt that the grant put a premium on greediness by holding out a cash award to parents for merely doing their duty under the bye-laws. The system was discontinued after April 30th 1883, but it was suggested that a much better system than money could be adopted if the holder of the honour certificate could have the chance of winning an exhibition to be held in some higher grade school in his own locality - if such a school existed.

The H.M.I. for Oldham stated<sup>2</sup> that in spite of the smaller numbers than elsewhere examined in specific subjects, mainly due to the half-time system, there was, as a result of the efficiency of the Board schools in the area, a steadily growing proportion of pupils

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1. Oldham Standard. Editorial 13th June 1885.

2. Report 1882. p.488

passing the elementary standards at eleven or twelve years and whose education was suddenly stopped for want of proper means of expansion. The remedy would be to establish central schools, collecting all those who passed the 5th and 6th Standards in the various public elementary schools, to continue there under specially qualified teachers.

The evening schools, which taught the three R's, were now declining in importance and in numbers because the day schools had taken over much of their work. It was at the other end of the scale - that of higher education - that the great lack was felt. However, the School Board for Oldham was still engaged in its first task of providing efficient elementary education for all. To expedite its work, six separate committees were formed, and their duties carefully designated.

The General Purposes Committee, which was composed of all the members, supervised the work of the attendance officers and the office personnel. The Finance Committee, consisting of six members, supervised loan and interest repayments, salaries and wages, audits and the fees books sent in from the schools. A Schools Committee (five members) concerned itself with raising efficiency in existing schools, with the appointment of teachers and pupil-teachers, and with the holding of examinations. Another important Committee, the Building and Sites, one of whose members was an architect,<sup>1</sup> examined and reported on sites, and approved plans, specifications and tenders. As building got under way the work was supervised; existing buildings were recommended for repairs and modifications. Another duty of this

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1. John Wild Esq., J.P.

committee as to sites was "to make them as profitable as possible until required"<sup>1</sup>. Eight members formed a Summons Committee, and five others the Exemption and Fees Committee.

The Board had no difficulty in proving a deficiency of school accommodation in various districts, and during its existence four Board Schools were built: Waterhead (opened 24th September 1883), Watersheddings (opened 28th June 1884), Scottfield and Beever Street (both opened 6th June 1885). The schools were opened with small ceremonies, at which the Rev. R. M. Davies as Chairman made a brief speech on the achievements of the Board in its schools. Scottfield was the eighth school provided, but it was hardly likely to be the last - there was now accommodation for 3,679 children in Board schools, but there were 3,568 on the books, and in May 1885, 3,729 children came to the schools. More sites were purchased, plans for more schools were approved by Whitehall. The Board sometimes (as in the case of the framing of the bye-laws) exceeded its powers and met with official disapproval, in its eagerness to carry out its duties.

For instance, it was found by 1884 that the first two schools provided by the Board, Smith Street and Westwood, were inconveniently overcrowded. It was proposed to borrow £2,000 with which to finance extensions. As usual, the sanction of the Education Department had to be obtained, but as this was not forthcoming, a deputation consisting of the Chairman, Isaac Bamford and James Newton, visited Mr. A. J. Mundella on 12th March 1885 and discussed the loan with him and Patrick Cumin, who pointed out that they had not had the approval of the Education

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1. Minutes. 22nd January, 1883

Department's architect and that the so-called "proposed alterations" were actually being carried out. The Board was told that the loan would not be sanctioned, because it would be giving sanction to "irregular proceedings, a defiance of the regulations of the Department, and indifference to the carefully formed opinion of their Architect".<sup>1</sup> With expressions of regret on both sides, the deputation withdraw discomfited.

In another matter, they found it easier to act with legal propriety, guided by the decision in the case *School Board for London v. Wright*<sup>2</sup> - that arrears of school fees could not be recovered. The Board had made no attempt to do so in Oldham, with the result that by the end of 1884 there had accumulated arrears in the Board schools of over £300, chiefly owed by the parents of children now over age or who had left the neighbourhood. In consequence of the Court of Appeal decision in the London case, the fees were written off the books: head teachers were given instructions for the future to exclude all children who did not pay their weekly fees in advance. The Board then summoned the parents for neglecting to cause their children to attend school. In cases of extreme poverty, however, the Board empowered its visiting officers to recommend the temporary remission of fees.

The Board continued to improve the salaries of its teachers. The grant regulations issued from the Education Department were altered so that emphasis was placed on school attendance rather than on

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1. Minutes 13th April, 1885.

2. see 12 Q.B.D. 1883-4, p.578

examination results. The practice of paying principal teachers partly by salary and partly by a share in the annual grant was discontinued in 1885. Instead, the Board agreed on fixed scales for headmasters and headmistresses. These were

£130 per annum rising by 7 increments to £200  
and £75 per annum " " 5 " " £110  
respectively, the incremental rises being conditional on a satisfactory report of the school by the H.M.I.

F. Statistical Review of Period 1875 - 1885.

By the end of the fifth School Board's term of office (January 1886) there was a steadily growing record of statistics concerning public elementary schools. These had appeared in the triennial Reports of the Board, and provide a useful comparison between the work of the new Board schools and that of the Voluntary schools.

In respect of the increase in school provision, the Board was, of course, well ahead, having more than trebled the places available in its own schools in the period 1876-1885. The greatest effort among the remainder was the establishment of British schools, mainly by the Congregationalists. As a result, these schools were ultimately less crowded than those of the other voluntary bodies, although their efficiency was lower than the others. The Roman Catholics, representing the poorest section of the community had also made great efforts in school-building and thereby had reduced their overcrowding, which was serious in 1876. Their efforts are the more praiseworthy when it is seen that throughout this period there was always great pressure on school-places, yet their grant-earning capacity improved markedly, finally ranking with that of the Church schools.

The provision of these lagged behind, and the Wesleyans made no new provision of places before 1882. As a result, overcrowding increased from 1876 onwards. The effect was two-fold: the teaching became less efficient, and the Board established more of its own schools.

Towards the end of the period there was a slight decline in the numbers attending both Church and British schools, and by 1885 the Board was the second largest provider of school-places in the borough, though there were still twice as many pupils in the Church schools.

The Board schools were always the least crowded, hence the complaints sometimes made when a new Board school was seen to be half empty, months after being opened. However, the number of children of school age was growing constantly, and the Board schools were able to surpass all the others in grant-earning capacity, by filling their empty desks steadily and by fixing a maximum number of pupils to each teacher. There was never any question, however, of Board schools enticing pupils away from less efficient schools - at least, so the Board declared in its reports. Some pupils had their fees remitted by the Board, but the number was not very big (773 in 1880). The School Board reported at the end of 1882 that out of the Voluntary schools pronounced efficient in 1871, not a single one had been given up or transferred to the Board for lack of support: if their financial difficulties were increasing, they were determined to master them, and indeed were confident they could do so.

As the Code was changed so that grants became more dependant on average attendance, the Voluntary schools were given the opportunity to earn more money because their accommodation was in effect increased by the fixing of different standards of assessment from the Board Schools. The Education Department used the basis of eight square feet for all children in Voluntary schools, but the requirements in Board Schools



were made more stringent - eight square feet for infants, but ten and a half for older children. The result was a general increase in grant earned. The efficiency of the schools also increased because of a gradual decline in the proportion of half-timers throughout the period.

The average attendance improved as the bye-laws were enforced; but in 1885 it was still only 73% of those on the books: the attendance officers reported a great number of cases of children absent without reasonable excuse:-

7,200	in the year	1877
7,600	" " "	1878
6,400	" " "	1879
7,200	" " "	1880
6,270	" " "	1881
6,770	" " "	1882

The number returned as being "not at any school" remained fairly constant at about 1,300 a year, but these figures in fact represent a relative improvement over the years, since the number of children on the books of the public elementary schools almost doubled between 1871 and 1885 (12,150 and 23,640).

By the end of 1885 much of the serious overcrowding was at an end in nearly all the schools, though the statistics do not show the inequality in the distribution of available school places; which was usually the reason why new Board schools were established in a particular locality.

The statistics of grant earned per capita in all schools before 1885 are a true index of their efficiency. Excluding the Board

schools (because of their unmatched financial reserves), the Catholic schools were the best managed, but there was a decline in the standards of the others. This point is made by Alfred P. Graves (father of Robert Graves) in his autobiography.<sup>1</sup> As a young man of 28 he was appointed H.M.I. under the Rev. W. J. Kennedy in May 1875. His work in the Oldham Schools enabled him to assess the efficiency of the various methods of school management: his views, briefly summarised, are

- (1) Church Schools - often in the hands of a parson with a business man acting as treasurer. "Unless he was not only a good educationist but also a good business man, which parsons too often are not, the school was bound to suffer."<sup>2</sup>
- (2) Nonconformist and Factory Schools - largely managed by schoolmasters, who under the results system virtually farmed the school for their own advantage.
- (3) Roman Catholic Schools - undoubtedly the best managed of the Voluntary schools, because the priests divided the duties: one being school-correspondent, one collecting the school-pence and holding the funds, calling also on parents to enforce attendance, while a third helped directly in the teaching.

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1. To Return to All That, 1930.

2. *ibid.* p.198.

Statistics 1871 - 1885

Table 1. Accommodation in Public Elementary Schools in Oldham  
1876 - 1885

(In 1885, calculated on basis of 8 sq.ft. per child in Voluntary schools; in Board schools at 8 sq.ft. per infant and 10½ sq.ft. per older child. Before 1885, all schools calculated on basis of 8 sq.ft. per infant and 10 per older pupil.)

	<u>Type of School</u>				
	<u>Church</u>	<u>British</u>	<u>Wesleyan</u>	<u>Board</u>	<u>R.C.</u>
1876	7,304	2,457	1,975	1,575	1,024
1879	7,745	3,380	1,975	2,506	1,331
1882	8,229	4,155	1,975	3,100	1,539
1885	9,716	5,369	2,592	5,097	1,981
	<u>% Increase in Accommodation 1876-85</u>				
1876	-	-	-	-	-
1879	6.3	37.6	-	59.1	30
1882	12.7	69.1	-	100	50.3
1885	33.2	118.6	31.2	223.6	93.4

Comment on Table 1.

Bearing in mind the change in calculating the accommodation which the Education Department instituted in 1885 we see that the greatest activity in school-building during the period 1876-1885 was shown by the School Board. This was far greater than the efforts of the Catholics and the Congregationalists (British Schools), laudable though these were. In later years these bodies found great difficulty in maintaining these Schools as the cost of education rose. The wealthiest voluntary agency was the Church (or National Society) but this controlled less than half the school-places, and did not provide any more after 1890. Up to 1885 the Church schools grew slowly.

Table 2. Average Attendance 1876 - 1885

	<u>Type of School</u>				
	<u>Church</u>	<u>British</u>	<u>Wesleyan</u>	<u>Board</u>	<u>R.C.</u>
1876	5,534	2,294	1,302	913	945
1879	6,165	2,573	1,590	1,490	1,194
1882	6,918	3,200	1,616	1,977	1,337
1885	6,838	3,175	1,976	3,575	1,745

Total pupils in average attendance for Oldham:-

1876	10,988
1879	13,012
1882	15,048
1885	17,269

% in average attendance at each type of school

1876	50	21	12	8	9
1879	47	20	12	11	10
1882	46	21	11	13	9
1885	40	19	11	20	10

Table 3. Pupils enrolled and in average attendance in public elementary schools of Oldham 1871-85.

	<u>Enrolled</u>	<u>Av. att.</u>	<u>(as %)</u>
1871	12,150	6,765 <sup>1</sup>	56
1873	14,613	9,456	65
1876	16,654	10,988	66
1879	18,990	13,012	68
1882	21,495	15,048	69
1885	23,640	17,269	73

1. in "efficient" schools only.

Table 4.

Half-timers.

% of enrolled pupils.

1873	4,692	32
1876	4,911	29
1879	4,263	22
1882	3,853	18
1885	3,984	17

Table 5. Increases of pupils in average attendance as percentage over preceding triennial period 1873-1885.

ALL SCHOOLS.		CHURCH	BRITISH	WESLEYAN	BOARD	R.C.
15	1876	18	12	10	40	0
18	1879	11	11	22	63	26
15	1882	12	20	2	33	12
15	1885	-1	0	22	79	30

Table 6. Government Grant Earned per pupil, 1879 and 1885.

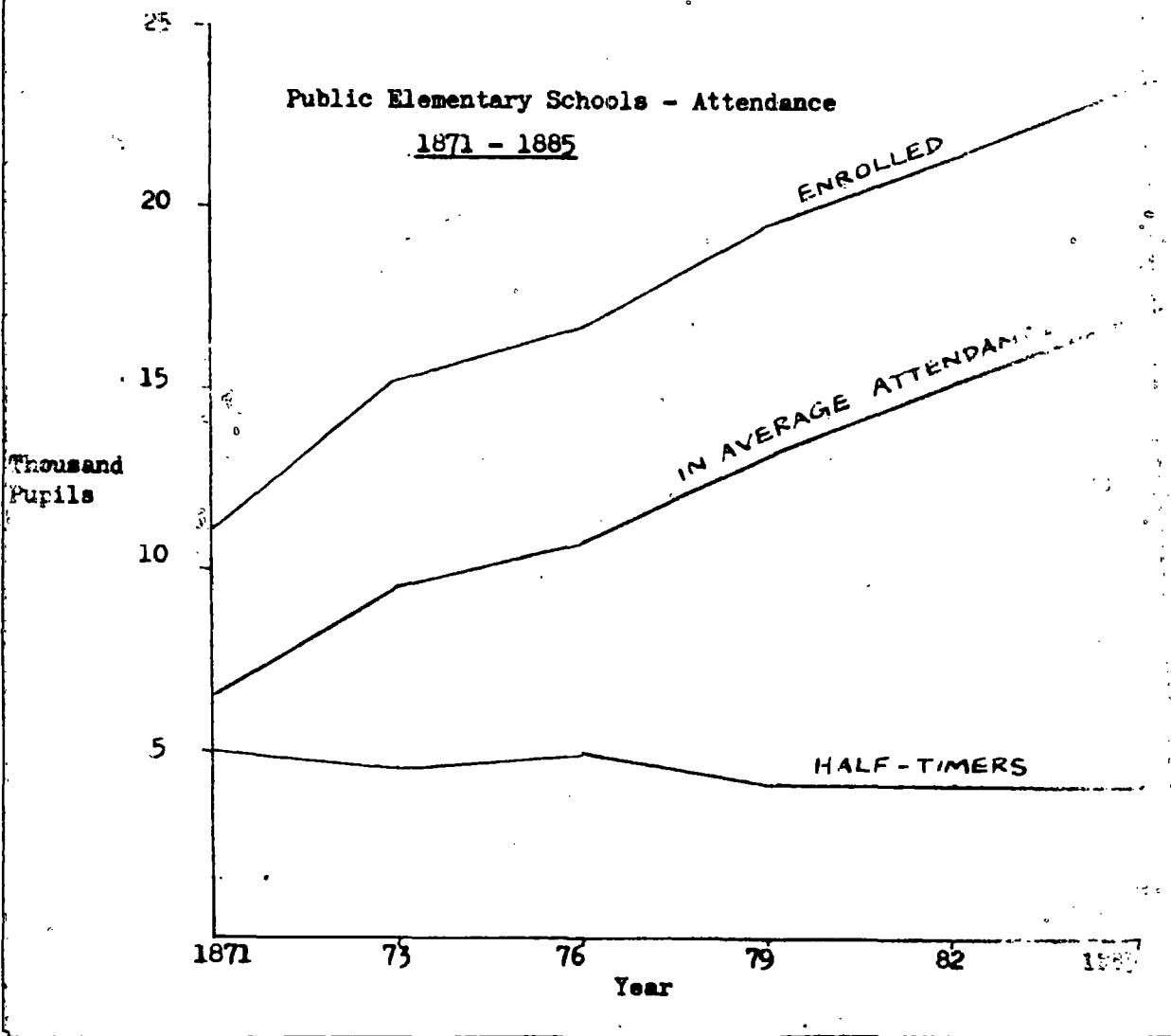
	CHURCH	BRITISH	WESLEYAN	BOARD	R.C.
1879	17s.2½d.	15s.7d.	16s.10d.	16s.2½d.	14s.5½d.
1885	17s.8½d.	16s.7d.	16s.7½d.	18s.5½d.	17s.9d.

Table 7. Annual Net Expenditure out of Rates by Oldham School Board, 1874-1885.

<u>Year ending.</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>Rate in the £ (pence)</u>
1874	2,100	1.39
1875	1,600	1.04
1876	1,900	1.20
1877	1,863	1.14

<u>Year ending</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>Rate in the £ (pence)</u>
1878	2,479	1.48
1879	3,939	2.22
1880	4,380	2.21
1881	3,233	1.60
1882	3,711	1.74
1883	4,461	2.10
1884	5,781	2.73
1885	6,656	2.99

Public Elementary Schools - Attendance  
1871 - 1885



G. Towards Higher-Grade Schooling; Growing Opposition of the Church.

As the numbers of children passing in the upper standards increased the remarks of H.M. Inspector in his report for 1882<sup>1</sup> concerning a "central" school increased their point. The School Board could now look forward to the establishment of secondary education under the provisions of the Hulme's Charity, but it was pointed out that even if a grammar school were supplied, there would be a great gap between the present system of half-time schools and the new institution. Most of the 4,000 half-timers formed a large proportion of the members of the fourth, fifth and sixth Standards. As a result, the children who attended full-time were taught practically as half-timers, being too few in number "to have the classification and instruction correspondent with their greater attendance"<sup>2</sup>. A higher grade school, collecting the full-time pupils in the upper standards was long overdue in Oldham; such schools had been adumbrated twenty years previously by the Schools Inquiry (Taunton) Commission of 1864-7.

They had recommended three grades of secondary school classified on the basis of school-leaving age - 18-19, 16 and 14 years. A third-grade school they considered should exist in every parish, a second-grade school in every town with over 5,000 inhabitants, and a first-grade institution where the population exceeded 20,000. Even before 1870, schools roughly corresponding to the third-grade type had been founded, and after 1870, this movement developed, especially in the big Boards of Sheffield, Birmingham and Manchester, assisted by

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1. vide sup. p.124

2. School Board report, 1880-2



the grants that could be earned by individual pupils from the Science and Art Department, South Kensington.

As the sixth School Board began work, the Cross Commission was producing its reports; they recommended inter alia the importance of giving to all the opportunity to benefit by means of an exhibition in either higher grade or secondary schools, and of giving these institutions a bias determined by their locality. In Oldham, a grade school was needed, it was felt, to feed pupils to the Science and Art School conducted in the Lyceum, or to send pupils on to Owens College<sup>1</sup> or to one of the Universities, or to the Grammar School, if founded, under the Hulme Trust.

In 1880 a committee of the Board had conferred with the Charities committee of the Town Council and the trustees of the extinct grammar school concerning the future administration of the Hulme's Charity; it was the intention of the Charity Commissioners to use it to establish a hall of residence for students at Owens College, to make an annual grant to the College and with the remainder of the surplus at their disposal to establish two grammar schools in or near Manchester; one to hold 300 boys and the other for 200 girls. A joint committee (on which the Board was represented) petitioned the Education Department to alter the proposed sites to Oldham, since Manchester already had such schools, whereas the old grammar school in Oldham, listed in the 1851 Census as having only 59 pupils and described by James Bryce in the Taunton Commission report as moribund, had now ceased to exist.

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1. Now Manchester University.

Bryce's description of the Oldham Grammar School as he saw it in the sixties gives a truly depressing picture of the public attitude to education at that time. The school, he said:

.... "stands in a filthy lane inhabited by the lowest of the Irish settlers, and is enclosed on two sides by a slaughter-yard."<sup>1</sup>

Bryce was informed that there were 37 pupils in average attendance, which he did not believe; 12 boys only were being taught:

"In a gloomy and filthy room in the worst part of this great and growing manufacturing town, I found a teacher who had himself received a very scanty education hearing twelve dirty and unkempt children, none of them over ten years of age, read in an elementary lesson-book. They read very badly, could not write down numbers on a slate, and proved on examination to be unable to do anything in arithmetic. For many years past no one had cared for this school, and thus it had been allowed to sink from the respectable position it had held twenty or thirty years before into a state which would have disgraced a hedge school in the remotest country district. No other grammar school is in a plight comparable to this."<sup>2</sup>

The petition was reinforced by a deputation on the Lord President and Mr. Mundella, composed of the Town Clerk, the members of Parliament for the borough (J. T. Hibbert and E. Lyulph Stanley<sup>3</sup>), James Newton and Dr. Halkyard.

The deputation pleaded its cause successfully, and the Charity Commissioners modified the original scheme. Any income not disposed of to the College was now to be put in a suspense fund;

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1. Schools Enquiry 1867-8. Report of Asst. Commissioner (on Northern

2. *ibid.* p. 759

Counties) Vol. IX. p. 491

3. Member of London School Board

when the sum so accumulated was £5,000 it was to be used to establish a grammar school at Bury and one at Oldham. For each school, the Estates managers of the trust undertook to provide a suitable site, buildings and equipment and contribute between £1,000 and £1,500 in annual maintenance. Tuition fees were fixed at upper and lower limits of £10 and £5 annually. In addition, scholarships were to be established up to a maximum of 10% of the boys in attendance and a further ten scholarships of £15 annually, each to be competed for by boys at public elementary schools who had been attending at least three years; finally, provision was made for exhibitions of £20 to £40 to the gross value of £300 per annum at some place of higher education, tenable for three years, to be awarded to boys who had completed three years in the grammar schools.

The Hulme Grammar School scheme, permitted the Board to nominate two Governors; it received the Royal approval on 28th November 1887, and the Rev. R. M. Davies and George Wainwright were elected. The Board had already built a new school in Hardy Street, Waterloo, at a cost of £6,600 (opened 2nd July 1887) as a higher-grade school for the admission of full-time scholars only. There is earlier evidence that "higher-grade" subjects, such as French and Algebra, were already being taught at Wellington Street School.<sup>1</sup> A scale of higher fees was produced for the new school -

	OTHER SCHOOLS (BOARD)	WATERLOO H.G.S.
INFANTS	2d. per week	3d. per week
STANDARD I	3d. " "	4d. " "
STANDARDS II & III	3d. " "	5d. " "
STANDARDS IV, V, VI	5d. " "	7d. " "
STANDARD VII	-	7d. " "
HALF-TIMERS	3d. per week	-

1. p.5 Triennial Report 1883-5

Another scale of salaries for teachers was laid down, and though at first the headmaster of the higher-grade school was paid the same maximum salary as in other Board Schools i.e. £200 per annum, the Board later increased this to £250 because of greater responsibility, and back-dated the increase to the opening of the school, fourteen months previously.

Salary Scales, 17th March 1887.

	<u>MEN</u>		<u>WOMEN</u>	
	Min.	Max.	Min.	Max.
(1) Head Teachers	130	200	75	110
(2) Assistants				
(a) Certificated	55	70	50	60
(b) Ex-pupil teachers	40	50	35	45
(3) Pupil teachers				
In 1st year	15		13	
" 2nd "	18		15	
" 3rd "	22		19	
" 4th "	26		23	
(4) Candidates or Monitors	10			
(5) Evening Schools Teachers				
Whole of the fees + 75% of the Government Grant.				

The salary scales were published as part of a comprehensive code of Regulations for the Board Schools - there are 78, contained in 20 pages, and a further 17 pages of appendices; every aspect of administration was dealt with - registers, prizes and certificated awards, instructions as to keeping School Account Books, caretaker's duties, training of pupil teachers, holidays, and so on. The following extracts are of interest:

"9. It shall be the duty of the Managers to visit the schools at irregular intervals, without notice, after the hour appointed for closing the Registers; and ascertain that the number of attendances marked tallies exactly with the number of children then present. An entry shall be made in the Registers, also in the Log Book, by the person checking them."

"31. Scheme of Instruction.

The course of instruction shall be as follows :-

Infants Schools:	Reading;	Physical Exercises;
	Writing;	Needlework;
	Arithmetic;	Kindergarten.
	Singing;	

with simple 'Lessons on Objects, and on the Phenomena of Nature and of Common Life'.

Mixed Schools:	Reading;	Drill.
	Writing;	
	Arithmetic;	
	Singing;	

English (Grammar, Composition and Literature).

Geography or Elementary Science.

History; Drawing.

Object lessons, and any of the specific subjects authorised by the Code and approved by the Board. The girls shall also be taught Plain Needlework and cutting out of Clothing or Patterns.

"57. The holidays in Board Schools shall be :-

- (a) Shrove Tuesday afternoon
- (b) Easter (or Whitsun Week, at the Manager's option)
- (c) Three weeks at Oldham Wakes
- (d) Two weeks at Christmas for schools where the school year does not end on 31st December. (One week if it does).
- (e) The Friday following the Government examination.

The Regulations were signed by the Chairman and James Rennie, the new Clerk to the School Board, who had succeeded James Mellor on his death, 23rd May 1886. Rennie, it will be remembered, began his School Board career as the office boy in 1872.

The sixth Board, elected without a contest, continued with the policy of establishing Board schools wherever a deficiency was seen to exist. Thus in addition to the new higher-grade school in Waterloo, another school at Northmoor was sanctioned by Whitehall. By this time however the denominational schools, particularly the British and the Wesleyan schools, were having difficulty in maintaining a standard of instruction comparable with the Board schools. The Cross Commission's Reports (1886-8) on the working of the Education Acts show this clearly. The case of the Voluntary schools was aggravated in Oldham because of the absence of a large middle-class element, which in other towns made considerable financial contributions to the support of these schools. The 42 schools in Oldham, by this time a big town of over 110,000 people, could only report<sup>1</sup> an income in the previous year of £757 subscribed

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1. Cross Commission Statistical Report, p.42.

voluntarily. But the voluntary schools of Huddersfield received £2,107; while those of Bolton got £2,834. The budget of the Oldham Schools was precariously balanced - they earned £10,375 in Government grant and a further £10,959 was derived from school pence and from the sale of books. The managers economised by paying the teachers in denominational schools lower salaries than those paid to teachers in the Board schools.

The answers of Adam Henderson<sup>1</sup> to the Cross Commissioners illustrate the point; he was Headmaster of St. Luke's Church of England School at Chadderton, near Oldham - a school with about 350 children in average attendance. Under him were six assistants. E. Lyulph Stanley (ex-M.P. for Oldham) questioned him.

"In the first place, what are the salaries of your assistants?"  
- "£45".

"Each?" - "The head one has £60, and then there are three at £45, one at £35 and one at £30."

"How much of your salary is fixed?" - "£60."

"What share of the grant do you have?" - "a third of the grant, a third of the pence, and night school income."

Mr. Henderson stated that he had taught in the school fourteen years. In a Board school he would have been receiving by that time a fixed maximum salary of £200, though the chief assistant (if a woman) would have been no better off, with £60 a year.

In the matter of the quality of teaching staff, however, the Board schools were well ahead. The Cross Statistical Report shows<sup>2</sup>

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1. See Cross Commission (Second Report) p.476

2. p. 199

that in 35 voluntary schools (many with separate departments), a teaching force of 300 teachers and pupil-teachers attempted to educate almost 11,000 children in average attendance - a ratio of 1 to 37. In 7 Board schools, 80 teachers and auxiliaries taught about 2,700 pupils - 1 to 34. But the real strength of the latter lay in the fact that all the head teachers of the Board schools were trained, whilst about 40% of voluntary school heads were not. The Board had nearly as many certificated assistants as uncertificated - 18 as against 22; but the voluntary schools employed twice as many uncertificated teachers - 72 - as certificated - 41; and of the latter, only 5 were trained teachers. Both types of school relied on pupil-teachers, candidates and monitors very heavily - in both cases they formed over a third of the teaching staff, so that the proportion of pupils to each assistant teacher was in reality very high - 64 to 1 in the voluntary schools and 60 to 1 teacher in the Board schools.

Inevitably, the voluntary schools fell behind in their power to earn the coveted merit grant. Mr. Henderson laid the blame for this on the half-time system; it was the main reason for his appearing before the Cross Commission. He maintained that the Inspectors made no allowances for half-timers, that the children were physically tired, that as a result teachers concentrated on the 3 R's to the exclusion of religious instruction and that the energies of his teachers were wasted on the laborious paper work of filling in the factory-books of the pupils on Fridays. Schools largely attended



by half-timers had no chance of the merit grant - and his own attendance of 350 included about 150 half-time scholars; who crowded the upper school:

"..... in the fourth Standard they begin with a lot of half-timers, and when you get up to the fifth or sixth, they are nearly all half-timers. In my fifth, sixth and seventh Standards I have only five who are full-timers".<sup>1</sup>

Nor were the Board Schools any better off in this respect, for, said Henderson:

"In Oldham, where they have not so many half-timers in the School Board, having only 966, the day scholars passed 90.9% last year, and the half-timers 78.4% ....."<sup>2</sup>

Comparison of Merit Grant in Voluntary and Board Schools in Oldham.<sup>3</sup>

Percentage passing as :-

	Voluntary Schools	Board Schools.
Fair	33.3	14.3
Good	41.4	64.3
Excellent	24.1	21.4
R.	1.2	-

The summary of the answers of the managers of the Voluntary schools and of the School Boards of Lancashire brings out the strong feeling that the half-time system should be abolished: it was held to be a hindrance to teachers and a hardship to children, who lost "all brightness and vivacity".<sup>4</sup>

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1. Cross Commission 2nd Report p.476.

2. ibid. p.478

3. Statistical Report, p.45

4. " " p.95

From the voluntary schools came the expression of their growing dislike of the Boards: their powers of taxation should be limited, and a check administered to what was described as "their extravagance and lavish expenditure on furniture and all kinds of imaginary improvements by rates and loans, which become a burden on the taxpayers."<sup>1</sup>

By putting in hand the building of a higher-grade school for full-timers only, the School Board for Oldham hoped to minimise the bad effects of half-time<sup>2</sup>. Northmoor and Waterloo schools were built with £12,400 of borrowed money, and the champions of voluntary schools used this as evidence of the Oldham Board's "extravagance" later. Early in 1886 it was stated that Christ Church and Cow Hill Wesleyan Schools were overcrowded, and a petition from householders in that district was presented to the Board, asking for a Board school to be built on a site which the Board had held for some years. The petition was introduced by Thomas Clegg, one of the secularist members of the Board.

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1. *ibid.*

2. The half-time system was also attacked by the Conservative member for Oldham in 1891, Elliott Lees. Asking the Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education (Sir W. Hart-Dyke) for information with regard to the percentage of passes in the standards of half-timers aged 10 to 12 as compared with full-time scholars, he got the following reply;

In the Oldham and Rochdale district in 1890, the general percentage of passes was 90; half-timers was 77.4. In ten Oldham Board schools, the difference was 6.7%.

Bad though this was, the position in some other cotton towns was deplorable. For instance in 1888 the difference between the two categories of pupil in Blackburn was 12% and in Darwen 11.5%

(Hansard (1891). vol.352. p.674).

Alarmed by the growing power of the Board schools, the Churchmen determined to resist the petition. An article headed "Extinction of Denominational Schools" appeared in the "Oldham Standard" of 10th May, 1886, clearly designed to foster this opposition. It was maintained that the opening of the Beaver Street Board School had caused a considerable number of scholars to be withdrawn from the Parish Church schools in Burnley Street, that the average attendance had decreased from 622 in the previous year to 542 in the current one, and that as a result the loss in school pence amounted to £73.3s.11d.

From the pulpit, the incumbent of the Parish Church, the Rev. A. J. J. Cachemaille proclaimed that "Our Bishop ... has already entreated the Church people of this country to maintain their schools as a bulwark against the tide of secularism, infidelity and lawlessness, which he, speaking with wide experience, attributes largely to the secular education which a merely national code supplies. The times are critical, and a responsible and solemn duty devolves on us."

Clegg's petition embodied the following reasons to justify the provision of a Board school in the Freehold district. First, the already overcrowded voluntary schools were now refusing admittance to new pupils. Next, it was too far in bad weather for pupils to go to the next Board school, Westwood. Thirdly, there was no efficient infant school in the area. Fourthly, it was held that the denominational schools charged higher fees, and whereas all books and slates in Board schools were sold at cost price to pupils, those sold in the voluntary schools were more expensive. Many new houses

were building in the district. The petition was supported by another secularist, Joseph Travis. It was unfortunate that the Freehold district was adjacent to a rapidly growing district under a School Attendance Committee, Chadderton.

The opposition seized on the decision of the Education Department, that a School Board had no power to exclude children living in out-districts from Board Schools or even to make them pay higher fees than the children of ratepayers:

"Mr. Joe Travis,<sup>1</sup> who is making the balls for his friend and brother Radical, Mr. Clegg, to fire, appears determined to make this decision a stepping-stone to lining the out-district boundaries of Oldham with Board schools. This is the secret of the plot to build a Board school on the Freehold, and the movers of it appear to have made out a case on paper by conveniently closing their eyes to the existence in solid brick and mortar of the other schools in the neighbourhood. I believe that the real truth of the matter is that the school accommodation in the Freehold is largely in excess of the requirements."<sup>2</sup>

Travis replied to this accusation at the next Board meeting by saying that he was not there to be dictated to by the "unscrupulous editor" of the "Oldham Standard", or anyone else, and added that though Werneth and Westwood wards contained about 65,000 people, who contributed half of the whole education rate, only two Board schools had been built in them - Westwood, to hold 723, and Hathershaw to hold 437 pupils.

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1. Radical School Board member

2. Editorial in Oldham Standard 25th May 1886.

At the same meeting a counter-petition was presented by Isaac Bamford, Churchman member, who was elected vice-chairman on the retirement of Canon Whittaker to the incumbency of Beckingham, Lincolnshire. Another clergyman, the Rev. J. P. Rountree, was elected to the Board. In view of the opposition within the Board to the new Board school, it was decided to hold an enquiry on the question, and the sub-committee appointed to conduct it found that there was no urgent need for a school on the Freehold. From start to finish the whole issue had taken up nine months of the Board's time.

The Hulme Trust Committee, however, was taking much longer over the decision to build grammar schools in Oldham and Bury, though the Board member who sat on it (Joseph Travis) reported in September 1886 that "he hoped that they would have the two schools in eighteen months or two years at the latest."

The next object of attack by the Conservative press was the new higher-grade school in Waterloo, having delayed indefinitely the erection of the school on the Freehold. The Board was accused of opening the school to teach "Latin, Greek and French to the children of the well-to-do." One Church member, Dr. Maxwell Moffatt, said it would provide a middle-class education and preclude the poor by its high fees. In any case, the new grammar school "shortly to be built" would make it unnecessary. But it would still compete with the grammar school, as the Deansgate higher-grade school in Manchester was said to be competing with the grammar school.

However, in spite of opposition, the Board school at Waterloo

was duly opened as a higher-grade (or full-time school, as it was first designated): it was the tenth Board school to be built in sixteen years, with accommodation when the infants department would be completed, for 900 pupils. All half-timers were to be excluded from the school. Soon after the opening a Certificated trained male assistant was engaged, qualified to teach French, Mathematics and Animal Physiology. Latin classes were also begun; these were held on Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings, open to all pupils in public elementary schools.

The Poor Law Guardians were now of the almost unanimous opinion that it had been a great mistake to transfer the power to pay the school fees of non-pauper children to them: they stated that their school fees enquiry officer had been working sixteen hours a day for the last two weeks up to mid-November 1887. A memorial<sup>1</sup> to the Cross Commission on the subject was adopted as a result of a joint consultation between the School Board and the Board of Guardians, and sent up in December. The Board received promises of support for it from the Oldham M.P.'s, Elliott Lees and James Maclean.

The new higher-grade school was soon overcrowded; the Board re-arranged it so that the whole school could be worked as a mixed school by making the original infants department into a junior mixed department (Standards I to III) with an infant class attached, while the senior mixed department consisted of the upper four Standards. A pupil-teacher centre was opened also: hitherto all pupil-teachers had been instructed before morning school in the several schools where

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1. See Appendix.

they were employed: higher standards concerning qualification as a pupil-teacher were laid down - each must have passed in the 6th Standard, and each must be examined quarterly by his head master. All pupil teachers wishing to be employed in Oldham Board Schools when out of their time must either enter a training college or qualify under the Elementary Teacher's Certificate D (3rd Grade), and all at present employed would be required to pass the Queen's Scholarship examination in future. All were compelled to attend the Science and Art drawing class.

The pupil-teacher scheme was intended to supplement the classes given on three days in the different schools as before. The central classes were arranged on two evenings a week and on Saturday mornings. Evening schools were now being considered by many as the best way to supplement day-school, especially since many children left school without passing the upper standards. Under the Education Department, which continued to pay grant only for elementary subjects, night schools declined as day instruction became, within its limits, more efficient:

Night Schools - England and Wales. 1870-80.<sup>1</sup>

Year ending 31st August	1870	1874	1876	1886
No. of Night Schools	2,504	1,432	1,474	841
Scholars at Examination	77,918	36,720	41,133	25,031

In Oldham, the system by 1886 was hardly effective as a means of education. Night schools were held in two Board schools, the Lyceum and four denominational schools. But only 291 pupils

1. Report of Education Department 1886-7. p.  $\bar{V}$  .

were returned as being in average attendance. In Preston, where the standard for total exemption was still only the 4th under the School Attendance Committee, and in Blackburn also, the growth of evening schools was very slow. In his report for 1889-90, the H.M.I. contrasted this with the great growth of night schools in Manchester.<sup>1</sup> But in Oldham there were still only 564 pupils in average attendance in 1890-91.

When the Board began the evening classes in 1886, the intention was to revitalise a moribund system. The opponents of higher-grade education saw things differently:

"It is to be hoped that factory lads and lasses will not be as slow to appreciate the evening classes proposed to be started in the Board schools, as the Board has been to encourage the starting of them. There was not a word said by any member of the Board as regards the necessity and utility of such schools that has not been said over and over again, but some members are too taken up with planting Board schools here and there to see that the working classes of the town reap all the advantages of the schools already existing ..... If some one with an enquiring mind would make out a list of people who have forgotten how to hold a pen, much less use it, the advocates of Higher Grade Schools would have a rude shock given to their feelings."<sup>2</sup>

But the attitude of the Board itself was in some ways no less limited. The question of technical education was raised for the first time at the end of 1887, and discussed in committee. It was

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1. p. 323.

2. Oldham Standard 13th September 1886. p.2.



felt that workshops were the proper technical schools for a spinning town, and that the half-time system "superseded technical education". To build a technical school would be a waste of the ratepayers' money. Besides, a truant school was still lacking. The question of technical education was dropped.

The denominationalists' criticism of the Board's "extravagance" sprang from their growing concern at the success of the Board schools, and during the last year of office of the sixth Board, it became clear that they would make an election probable, as this would enable them to try to gain a majority on the next Board. Only two members of the existing Board - the Rev. R. M. Davies and George Wainwright - had been elected by ballot (in 1873), the other vacancies being filled without contesting them. The only way the ratepayers could comment on the work of the Board was at the ballot-box. So it was decided that there would be an election to constitute the next Board. But the denominationalists began their campaign for votes well in advance of the date fixed for polling - 28th December 1888. The idea which had prevailed with the members of the 4th School Board - "there are no parties in the Board" - had been supplanted by the old rivalries.

5. The Swing of Power: The Conservatives' Attack.

The Conservatives determined to fight for control of the School Board because they feared that the Church schools would eventually be ousted by the new Board schools. So their strongest appeal was also the simplest - to the pockets of the ratepayers of Oldham. The first School Board precept for the financial year 1871-2 was no more than £500. For 1887-8, the Board had demanded and received £10,000.<sup>1</sup> Further expenditure was imminent, the Board having decided to build a day industrial school for about 150 children at a probable cost of £3,000. The Radical Boards had postponed the question again and again on grounds of economy but as soon as the decision was made, the Conservatives seized on it to demonstrate Radical "extravagance". A Radical member of the retiring Board, Thomas Clegg, was agitating for the erection of a school on the unimproved Freehold plot. Clegg based his claim on the fact that there was still no Board school to serve the three rapidly expanding wards of Werneth, Hollinwood and Hartford, with a total population of 34,000 people. Clegg maintained that as a result of the deficiency in accommodation in Oldham on this side of the town, roughly 1,100 children went into Chadderton school district daily to attend school. The Conservative reply was that about 800 Chadderton children went in the opposite direction. But Clegg persisted, and the Conservatives determined to resist the Freehold Board School project.

Much of the credit for the organisation of the election campaign went to two prominent Churchmen - the Rev. James P. Rountree,

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1. See Appendix 9 .

Rector of St. Thomas's, Werneth, and Joshua W. Radcliffe, a wealthy Alderman and woollen manufacturer. The Conservative press played an important role in the campaign, as an extract from the "Standard" will show:

"In self-defence Alderman Radcliffe says: 'Look at the back of your rate-bill, and you will see that if it were not for a School Board item of  $4\frac{3}{4}$ d. in the pound, the 2s.6d. rate would be down to 2s.1d. in the pound, or perhaps to under 2s.0d.' But he takes care to remind us that this grievance is of the nature which must be endured because it cannot be cured. It is for the ratepayers to determine whether the grievance, as far as the School Board is concerned, is to end here, or go on adding to the burden under which they are grumbling and crying out".<sup>1</sup>

The "Standard" singled out the building of the Waterloo higher-grade school as a typical piece of Radical extravagance. This school, it alleged, had been filled by taking pupils away from other schools, and that the majority of these were the children of middle-class parents:

"The children of the poor man are, in fact, crowded out of this school by the rich man's, for the children of factory operatives do not exceed twenty in the infants department."<sup>2</sup>

To authenticate this statement, the press claimed that pupils were being brought to Waterloo school from as far afield as Saddleworth "in broughams".

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1. Editorial, Oldham Standard 7th December 1888

2. *ibid.*

The Conservatives pressed home the attack - why, they demanded, had no details been issued of the occupations of the parents of Waterloo mixed department pupils? How many children lived outside the borough? The Radicals gave the answer - 16 out of the 320 in the upper standards - and in self-defence asked, how many children went out of Oldham daily to school in Manchester?

The Conservatives were not to be silenced, however, and accusations poured into the press - "collegiate craze", "building mania" - these phrases are typical. They did make one telling point - but in 1888 few people appreciated it;

"The policy on which this school (Waterloo) is maintained is one for the endowment of secondary education out of the rates, and there is nothing whatever in the Act of 1870 to justify such a step. If such schools are encouraged, where will the borough rate stop?"<sup>1</sup>

No fact was deemed too insignificant to be seized upon. A Radical Board member, Joseph Travis, lived outside the borough at Firwood Hall, Chadderton.<sup>2</sup> He was attacked for not being a ratepayer of Oldham and labelled "a rabid Radical". Great play was likewise made of educational statistics. Whitehall's figure for the average annual cost of each Board school pupil was published as £2. 4s. 7½d. Oldham's was rather more - £2. 7s. 8½d. - so the Board were dismissed as "good spenders and borrowers of other people's money".<sup>3</sup>

Since 1871 the School Board, it was claimed had borrowed £65,313 and as yet had paid back only £8,366. Another £80,000 had been taken out of the rates. The Standard asked:

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1. Standard, 7th December 1888.

2. Misprinted deliberately as "Firewood Hall" in the "Oldham Standard"

3. Standard 20th December 1888.

"Surely, this is progressive enough for the Hon. Lyulph Stanley,<sup>1</sup> of London, and Mr. Joe Travis, of Chadderton?"<sup>2</sup>

What was the ratepayers' remedy? They had only to compare the £2. 7s. 8½d. spent on a Board school pupil (said the Conservatives) with the £1. 12s. 10d. per annum spent on each child at Northmoor Wesleyan School to realise how ruinously extravagant the School Board was. The "Standard" reminded its readers that rate-money was hard to find - in 1888 over 4,000 summons notices for non-payment of rates had been issued.

The Conservatives published an "Address to the Ratepayers of Oldham" which pointed out that the purpose of Board schools was to supplement and not supplant existing Voluntary schools, and that lavish rate-expenditure on their erection and maintenance would inevitably lead by unfair pressure on them to the closure of Voluntary schools. As for higher-grade schools, the Conservatives felt that they were out of place in the existing system of public elementary education and that they should be incorporated at some future date into a national scheme of co-ordinated schools:

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1. The Hon. E. Lyulph Stanley (later Lord Sheffield) 1839 - 1925. Member of London School Board 1876 - 1884 and 1889 - 1903. Vice-chairman 1897 - 1904. Liberal M.P. for Oldham 1880 - 1885. One of the eight signatories to the minority report of the Cross Commission 1888; this urged the establishment of schools of an undenominational character under public control by ad hoc bodies, and was against rate-aid to Voluntary schools. Stanley wished the London School Board to be responsible for all grades of education. His ideal was said to be

"A school place for every child, and every child in its place, and that a good place". (D.N.B.)

2. *ibid.* 22nd December 1888.

"Till then, these fancy institutions should not absorb the money of the ratepayers".<sup>1</sup>

On the other side, the Secularists or Radicals conducted a relatively quiet campaign. Two members of the Cross Commission visited Oldham and spoke at their meetings - the Rev. W. H. Crosskey, Chairman of the School Management Committee of Birmingham School Board and a prominent Nonconformist and the Hon. E. Lyulph Stanley, M.P. of the London School Board and up to November 1885 M.P. for Oldham.

The Conservatives' work bore fruit, the ratepayers had been thoroughly alarmed, and in the event, the election was a resounding right-wing victory. For the first time in the eighteen year history of the Board the Radicals were now in the minority. The greatest Board School advocates<sup>2</sup> went to the bottom of the poll.

But their aims had, at least, been progressive. The "Oldham Standard" reported their overthrow with unrestrained satisfaction, but revealed the Conservative attitude to the education of the children of the working-class. The building of Waterloo Street higher-grade school was, it claimed, an utter mistake in a town like Oldham.

"Where the vast majority of schoolchildren must necessarily go to the mill or the workshop. What opening is there for them elsewhere?"

The Conservative view of education was the same as its view of society: all, they felt, was well and wisely put; so why change the status quo by spending the ratepayers' money on "fancy institutions?" The prospect for the Board Schools was now uncertain.

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1. See article in "Oldham Standard" 10th December 1888, entitled "Work of the Voluntary Schools in Oldham."
  2. Davies, Clegg and Travis.
  3. Editorial of "Oldham Standard" 31st December 1888.

## 6. School Board Personalities.

The election of 1888 was the turning point in the history of the Oldham School Boards. For nearly twenty years the Radicals had been in control, in a town where the roots of Radicalism were deep. The older members of the School Board were born in the days of Chartism and the Anti-Corn Law League. They had seen the reforms which gave Cobden, Bright, Peel and Fielden a place in history. For the greater part of the century, Oldham, like the other cotton towns, was a Radical stronghold. Alongside the Radical politics, Nonconformity in religion flourished; the leading sects of Dissenters were the Wesleyans and the Congregationalists.

The new chapels were established quickly as the town grew. The Board's first chairman, Richard Meredith Davies, came to Hope Congregational Chapel at Greenacres Moor in June 1843. It was his first post as a minister of religion. Born in Manchester in 1817, Davies's earliest years were spent as a pupil at the Sunday School attached to Mosley Street Chapel. The Peterloo Massacre of 1819 took place nearby; perhaps Davies's strong Radicalism began to develop at this period of his life, or perhaps a little later, when he attended classes in the Young Men's Improvement Society of the same chapel. The Mosley Street Sunday Schools became famous, and did valuable educational work. A later pupil was John Henry Reynolds, first principal of Manchester Technical School, out of which grew the present College of Technology.

The education which Davies gleaned enabled him to obtain

employment in a Manchester cotton warehouse. Soon, however, he entered Blackburn College as a candidate for the Congregational Ministry, in 1839. He was then 22 years old. On leaving the college, Davies went to Oldham to begin his work. He was ordained in Hope Chapel on September 2nd 1844. In this year, it will be remembered, the first public elementary schools opened in Oldham. Davies developed a keen interest in education years before the School Board era. In addition to his pastoral duties at Hope Chapel, he was for many years secretary of the Congregational Church and School Building Society. This body established several British Schools in Oldham. For fifty years he was a vice-president of the Oldham Lyceum, at which he lectured from time to time. When the American Civil War occasioned the Cotton Famine, he became secretary of the Congregational Relief Fund and was responsible for the distribution to the poor of over £30,000. He was also Chairman of the Infirmary Committee for many years.

On the formation of the first Radical Board in 1871, the office of chairman was willingly filled by Davies. By this time, he had had almost thirty years' experience of administration on various bodies. His biographer, Nightingale, himself began his ministry under Davies at Hope Chapel, and remarks on his "wonderful influence" and his ability as "a splendid organiser". One forms the impression from press reports of the School Board's proceedings that Davies brooked little opposition to the policy of the Radicals on the Boards. He held the chair for eighteen years, but after the Conservatives seized control he soon relinquished his seat on the Board. Davies was firmly on the side of the Board School enthusiasts.



He retired from his ministry, after fifty-two years at Hope Chapel, and died at Southport aged 89 on June 3rd 1905. He was buried at Oldham, and left behind instructions that nothing of his should be published and that no biography should be attempted.

Sources:- Manchester Guardian, Obituary.

B. Nightingale: Lancashire Nonconformity 1893.

B. Nightingale: Centenary Volume of Lancashire  
Congregational Union 1806-1906. 1906.

Dr. James Yates J.P., born in Union Street, Oldham, in 1837, was, like Davies, a Congregationalist and a Radical. He was the son of Robert Yates, cotton-spinner of North Street and Bankside Mills. After training as a physician, James Yates returned to practise in his native town. He became a councillor in 1870 and served under R. M. Davies on the second School Board, 1873-75. Yates was also connected with the Lyceum.

He did not seek re-election to the Board in 1876 and did not sit again on it for twenty years. In the interim, however, he devoted his energies to the adoption by the Council of the Libraries Act; in spite of fierce opposition, Yates finally gained the day on 4th August 1880. The Free Library, Art Gallery and Museum building was opened in 1883 by Lord Avebury. Yates became a justice in the same year; in 1896 he was elected a School Board member to succeed Joseph Travis on his death, and remained a member till the Board's supersession in 1903 by the Education Committee, of which he became the first Chairman.

Dr. Yates became a wealthy physician, but will always be

remembered for his tenacity in urging on the Council the need for a library; this was dubbed "Yates's Folly" for some time afterwards. He also spent over £300 on musical instruments for the Derker Board School brass band; this musical tradition still endures in the Oldham schools. In later life he travelled twice round the world, being particularly impressed by the organisation of higher and elementary education in the United States. Like Davies, Yates was a Board School enthusiast, and greatly regretted the passing of the Board in 1903. He died in 1919, aged 82.

Sources:- Hartley Bateson's History of Oldham.

Obituary Book 1894 - 1921.

Joseph Travis, J.P. was a perfect example of self-made man; unlike Davies and Yates, he was not a professional figure in the town; he had little formal education and was born in humble circumstances; though an ardent Radical, he remained loyal to the Church, and although he met his death long before the School Boards passed into history, he was unsurpassed by any of his colleagues in zeal for the Board School cause.

Born in Oldham in 1830, Travis left school for full-time employment in a cotton warehouse at 13 years, and then began as a power-loom weaver, at which he worked for about eight years. In 1853 he entered a mill-office and in 1867 became a partner in a fustian mill at Middleton Junction, Hollinwood. At the time of his death he was described as being the oldest member of the Lyceum except Davies. He became a teacher and member in 1854, and was also in the Franklin Society

which met at Cow Hill.

His interest in local politics soon developed. He became a councillor when still young in 1852 and served until 1877, but it was as Chairman of the Charities Committee that Travis won fame, and the Hulme Grammar School owes much to his work. An extreme Radical, he supported the North in the American Civil War and made his first public speech on this subject: he was described as "a powerful and eloquent speaker, and later became the first president of Oldham Liberal Union. In 1892 he was made a justice and in the same year was Vice-president of Manchester Reform Club, of which he was many years a member.

Travis became a School Board member in 1885 towards the end of the Radical ascendancy, but continued to press for Board Schools and the extension of higher-grade schools when the Conservatives were in power. The same energy and persistence that he showed when on the Charities Committee imbued his work on the Board. He became the chief target for Conservative attacks in the press but his efforts never flagged. His accidental death at the age of 65 in January 1896 was a tragic loss to the cause of popular education, for which he had worked for twelve successive years on the Board.

Source:- Oldham Evening Chronicle 8th January 1896.

Travis's career, both on the Board and earlier in life, closely resembles that of James Middleton, J.P., who was his seconder on many occasions during the Board's work. Like Travis, he was a self-made man. Born at Newton Heath, Manchester in 1853, Middleton left school at 12 to work as a shop-boy, during the Cotton Famine.

Each day he walked the four miles to the shop in Oldham Street and back, and received a weekly wage of 4s.3d. When he was 25, he moved to Oldham and set up in business as a grocer, and although he continued in this trade for most of his life, Middleton became an enthusiastic writer. He attended a Mutual Improvement Society's classes to improve his fragmentary education and became a Radical and Baptist. His special interests were Board Schools, local dialect and temperance, and for many years from 1889, Middleton contributed articles to the "Oldham Chronicle" under the nom de plume "Adrian" on a wide variety of topics.

His School Board career began in 1889 when the Conservatives had just seized control; Middleton and Travis became their most energetic opponents. Later, Middleton became a member of the Council (in 1897) and served on the Technical Instruction Committee and the Governors Body of the Hulme Grammar School. Middleton's son was, with F.J.S.Whitmore (the son of the Blue Coat School's Governor) one of the first Oldham pupils to go to a University directly from the town with purely local scholarships which they were awarded whilst at Hulme Grammar School.<sup>1</sup> Middleton, like Dr. Yates, was later a Mayor of the borough; in 1903 he published a history of the town called "Oldham, Past and Present". Another publication, dated 1895, and issued by the National Reform Union, Manchester, bears the title, "Voluntary Schools and State Aid". This Radical pamphlet was written when the Conservatives were pressing for increased financial aid to the indigent Voluntary schools and gives a clear explanation (if a rather verbose one) of the

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1. Whitmore went to Brasenose College, Oxford, Miss N. Nield went to Lady Margaret Hall, W. L. Middleton went to Trinity (Oxford), in October 1901.

position of these schools in the eyes of an ardent Board School advocate. Middleton first points out that the term "Voluntary" gradually superseded "Denominational" but that such a school was by 1895 "stoutly denominational". Moreover, the voluntary principle had receded with the advent of State aid. The term "Voluntary" was a "transparent sham". After a lengthy argument against the granting of more aid to these schools, Middleton's dislike of the clerical managers creeps in - no doubt he was thinking of certain gentlemen on the School Board as he explains why:

"Voluntary Schools exist for purposes other than what the State requires, and do work of which it takes no cognisance. Hence, they do not occupy the same position that Board Schools do. Moreover, they are managed by self-appointed and irresponsible persons..."<sup>1</sup>

Middleton's career on the Board lasted fourteen years until its dissolution, and like Dr. James Yates, he became a member of the new Education Committee thereafter. He died in Manchester, aged 72, in 1925.

Source:- Obituary Book 1921-31.

The most energetically conducted campaign for the election of the School Board was that of the winter of 1888, when the Voluntary School party succeeded in gaining for the first time a majority over the Secularists. Much of the credit for this went to the Rev. James Peter Rountree, M.A., vicar of St. Thomas's, Werneth, who became a member of the School Board a year after Joseph Travis in 1886.

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1. p.9 "Voluntary Schools and State Aid", James Middleton 1895.  
Pamphlet.

Born in Cork in 1846, Canon Rountree was educated at Trinity College, Dublin and was ordained in the Church at Carlisle in 1870, where he remained four years as a curate. In 1873 he went to Manchester and after serving four years in a wealthy middle-class parish, moved to a new parish in Beswick, a poor district on the east side of the town. Here Rountree gained valuable experience in the organisation of elementary education, in an area very similar to the parish of St. Thomas's, Werneth, where he became vicar in 1879. For some years the pressure on accommodation was great, and at this time the Church Schools had hardly begun to suffer from competition from Board Schools. Later, however, Rountree became opposed to Board schools as run in Oldham because of the very small amount of religious instruction given in them; as soon as possible, therefore, Rountree secured the position of vice-chairman on the School Board under the chairmanship of the wealthy woollen manufacturer Joshua Walmsley Radcliffe. When Radcliffe served as High Sheriff of Lancashire, he nominated Rountree as his chaplain. The vicar was a staunch Conservative and a High Churchman and his appointment to the vice-chairmanship incensed Travis and his fellow Radicals, because hitherto the position had always been filled by someone of the opposite party to the Chairman. Usually it was a Roman Catholic priest, but in practice this meant that the Radical chairman Davies was able to control the voting to his own satisfaction since the Catholics always steered a vague middle course on any important questions arising between Church and other schools.

Rountree opposed the establishment of a Board school in Werneth for as long as he could but was out-manceuvred by the Radicals ultimately. However, the Church party remained in control of the Board at the election of December 1891 and its position was strengthened by the election of another clergyman, the Rev. John Gouldie French, vicar of St. James's, Waterhead. Rountree assumed the chair and French formulated the scheme of religious instruction for introduction into the Board schools. (See Appendix II)

Radcliffe resigned his place on the Board over the religious question after an acrimonious meeting, and Rountree now persisted in delaying the construction of new Board schools in the town. Eventually however the Education Department simply requisitioned their provision and Rountree left the Board at the end of 1894. He was, like Davies, a Governor of the Infirmary and of the Hulme Grammar School, and returned to the Board as its last chairman, 1901-3. Soon after the passing of the Boards he became the rector of Stretford near Manchester and remained in office until his retirement in 1927. In March 1929, he died at Ashton-on-Mersey, aged 83 years.

Sources:- Manchester City News.

Oldham Standard.

The Rev. John Gouldie French M.A. served for nine years on the Board and earned the enmity of the Radicals by his scheme of religious instruction. It would seem that the vicar of Waterhead's dislike of Board schools arose from the building of one in his own parish some years before his election to the Board. French was born

at Liverpool in 1845 and educated at Liverpool College and Manchester Grammar School, which he left in 1865; after studies at Durham University he became second master at Hipperholme Grammar School, Yorkshire in 1869. The following year he took holy orders and became the curate of St. James's Oldham, moving on to Manchester and Bury. He returned to the incumbency of Waterhead in 1878.

At this time the School Board maintained a rented infants' school in Providence Street, near his church, but the building was below the standard required by Whitehall. Anticipating its closure, French raised funds to open a Church infants' school with accommodation for 157 in 1882. Very soon afterwards the Board, having been ordered to do so by Whitehall,<sup>1</sup> erected a school nearby. On the first day it drew 100 pupils away from the Church school and thereafter French's antipathy towards the "godless institutions" of the Board increased. Like Rountree, James Gouldie French was a strong Conservative but he was elected to the School Board when Conservative promises to protect the Church schools and the pockets of the ratepayers were rapidly losing their force; after the Secularists resumed control, French left the Board but continued to serve his parish until 1926, when he retired, dying at Cleveleys near Blackpool soon afterwards at the age of 82.

Source:- Oldham Standard.

Biographical data on leading School Board members compiled from press-files and other sources, including:

Manchester Guardian

Manchester City News

B. Nightingale - Lancashire Nonconformity 1893

B. Nightingale - Centenary Volume of Lancs. Congregational Union  
1806-1906

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1. See p. 113



H. Bateson: Centenary History of Oldham 1949

Oldham Chronicle and Standard: Obituaries.

## 7. Educational Charities - Henshaw's and Hulme's.

During the School Board period two important educational charities functioned in Oldham, although one - the William Hulme Charity - was not used to finance education until late in the Board's history. The other, Thomas Henshaw's, was used for the provision of an education mainly elementary but which differed in some respects from that provided in the public elementary schools. Its history however is older than that of the Board Schools by many years, and during the School Board period there was little evidence that the activities of the Boards and of the Governors of the Henshaw Trust were linked by a common purpose. Several individuals, however, were members of both these bodies, as for example, T. E. Lees, J. W. Radcliffe and John W. Hague.

The Oldham Blue Coat School was one of the best elementary schools in the town.<sup>1</sup> In the quality of its teaching it was equalled only by the best Board Schools. But it was for boarders; it gave to its pupils a sense of pride and tradition which the Board Schools could not match. More important still, its pupils were selected entrants.

The Charity's founder, Thomas Henshaw, was born in 1731 at Prestbury near Macclesfield, the son of a small Cheshire farmer. About the year 1755 he was bound apprentice to an Oldham hatter, John Fletcher. Soon after 1768 he went into partnership with him and some ten years later set up in business jointly as a hatter with his brother Henry. The Henshaws prospered and quickly amassed a fortune. In

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1. Account based mainly on the "History of Henshaw's Blue Coat School, Oldham. 1829 - 1942". T. T. Richards, 1945.

later years, Thomas Henshaw suffered from periodic mental instability. He framed his will several times, of which the final version was dated November 14th 1807. In March 1810 his body was found in a mill-lodge near his factory, and was interred in the parish church at Prestwich. At the inquest, a verdict of "unsound mind" was brought in .

Henshaw's career as a hat-maker witnessed the growth of Oldham from a village into a town of 17,000 inhabitants and the establishment of the cotton-spinning industry. Out of gratitude for his good fortune, Henshaw provided for the establishment of a Blue Coat School at Oldham and a Blind Asylum at Old Trafford, Manchester, under the Management of Trustees. Because of his mental instability, his will was the subject of unfortunate litigation amongst his heirs. Fortunately, however, his wealth was soundly invested, and by July 1833 securities valued at no less than £120,180 were held for the endowment of the school and blind asylum. The construction of the school had been begun in 1829 but it was not open to pupils until December 1834.

From the outset the school was run on National School lines - providing instruction in the 3 R's. and in the Established Religion. A Chaplain was appointed<sup>1</sup> and soon afterwards pupils were apprenticed as pupil-teachers. Boys admitted got free clothing, board and lodging and were disciplined by a rigorous daily routine, rising at 6 a.m. in summer with lessons from 9 to 12 and 2 till 5. On four evenings a week they did drill under an ex-soldier before going to bed at 8 p.m.

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1. Usually the incumbent of an Oldham parish. The Rev. J. W. Orton, Chaplain 1893-1921 was for a time also the examiner of pupil-teachers in Religious Instruction on behalf of the School Board.

(7 in winter), and were given five weeks' annual holidays - three weeks at midsummer and two at Christmas. Their homes were within about ten miles of Oldham, but they were "selected entrants" and had to pass several tests - they had to be in good health, mentally sound, able to read, and the impecunious respectability of their parents was established by the examination of marriage certificates and testimonials. At a time when there was an appalling dearth of elementary schools in the town, the hundred selected pupils of the Bluecoat School underwent a continuous mental, physical, and moral training for a period of three to seven years.<sup>1</sup> At the age of fourteen they left to enter full-time employment in the district;<sup>2</sup> this was in contrast to the great majority of children attending Elementary schools, who left, as the Newcastle Commission showed, before the age of eleven for work.

At the beginning of the School Board period, a thousand boys had passed through the school and had received an education well in advance of that provided at any elementary school in the town. Gradually the curriculum expanded though grants from the National Society had never been accepted. After 1883, Science and Art grants for drawing were earned and the pupils' annual examination was conducted by the College of Preceptors. Bright pupils also entered for the Cambridge Local Preliminary examinations and the Municipal technical school examination: it is evident that the conditions of school life were

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1. Minimum age for admission from 1849 was  $9\frac{1}{2}$  years.

2. Thomas Hudson, who left in 1860, became Town Clerk of Manchester in 1910, retiring in 1922 after 62 years' service with the Corporation.

favourable for the development of sound scholarship from the lists of those who were successful in the technical school scholarship test. The Board Schools and the Blue Coat School usually took all the awards in this examination, which consisted of tests in Arithmetic, Grammar, Geography and History. The "Governor" (headmaster) of the school, James Whitmore, also examined the pupil-teachers of the public elementary schools.

Towards the end of the School Board period, however, the school's curriculum was limited by finances; the trustees had to keep expenditure below £2,300 per annum and although later bequests obviated financial instability, the school never developed into a higher-grade or secondary school.<sup>1</sup> The Report of the Charity Commissioners (1904) showed that there were 85 boys in residence, mostly from Oldham and Manchester, who received an elementary education, together with some French, Shorthand, Manual Instruction and Gymnastics. The disparity between the standards of the Blue Coat School and the public elementary schools no longer existed at this date; indeed as regards accommodation and in opportunities for secondary education, the Board Schools were far superior. In one respect only was the Blue Coat School ahead - children in public elementary schools could still become half-timers at the age of twelve if they passed the 6th Standard. No half-timers were ever admitted to the Blue Coat School.

The second large Charity from which Oldham benefited educationally, Hulme's Charity, had a long and curious history before its effects were felt. Only from 1895 onwards were the funds made

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1. i.e. up to 1944

available and only because of the strenuous and impartial efforts of men like Joseph Travis in furthering the cause of higher education; whether in the Board Schools or outside them.

The Founder,<sup>1</sup> William Hulme, was born in 1631 at Reddish, near Stockport, but lived chiefly at Kearsley, between Salford and Bolton. Hulme acquired land in Manchester, Ashton-under-Lyne, Harwood, Heaton Norris and Denton and derived his income from the rent of these properties. He died in 1691 and was buried in the Collegiate Church (now Manchester Cathedral). He made his will hastily only five days before his death; unfortunately the document was vague as to intention. In an effort to establish his exact wishes, depositions were taken from his intimate friends; Hulme left the reversion of his estates to maintain four poor Bachelors of Arts at Brasenose College<sup>2</sup> as exhibitioners, these were to be nominated by the Warden of the Collegiate Church and the Rectors of Prestwich and Bury. The general assumption was that Hulme wished his own part of South-East Lancashire to benefit.

The first four exhibitioners were nominated in 1692, and each got £10 per year. The annual income from rents was £30 to £40. But much of the land lay in townships which were developing because of the expansion of the cotton industry. Its value, therefore, increased rapidly. In 1700 Parliament passed the first of a number of Acts which extended the influence of the bequests as the income grew. By 1827 it approached £5,000 per annum, with savings and accumulations of £42,203. For the purpose of building parsonages and increasing livings

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1. This account is based mainly on an article in The Times, 21st August 1879.

2. Hulme's Old College.

in many counties, the trustees were persuaded to purchase 28 advowsons and other ecclesiastical benefits. Not surprisingly, the conduct of the trustees gave rise to much criticism, since they were applying the funds to schemes not within the spirit of Hulme's wishes. The affair became a mid-Victorian scandal, and Parliament was accused of "conniving at their vagaries."

A movement began in Manchester, Salford, Oldham and Bury to work for the securing of a share in the trust funds to be applied to education in this area.<sup>1</sup> At Oldham, the Charities Committee of the council was led by Joseph Travis (not yet a School Board member) and included two councillors who were Board members - William Wrigley and George Wainwright. The case for Oldham sharing in the funds rested on the rather tenuous claim that since at the date of Hulme's bequest the rector of Prestwich-cum-Oldham had been one of those appointed to nominate the poor scholars, the application of funds to education in Oldham was within the meaning of the gift.

The Clerk to the Oldham bench, Hesketh Booth, and Travis pressed the claim persistently on the Charity Commissioners. They prepared a draft scheme at Manchester 1878. The claim was accepted, the foundation was re-settled and a scheme providing for grammar schools at Manchester, Oldham and Bury, received Royal approval on 26th August 1881. Travis became a governor for the administration of the funds - the net annual income was now about £8000. Manchester's Hulme Grammar

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1. One of the leaders in this agitation was Thomas Ashton of Ford Bank, Didsbury. High Sheriff of Lancashire in 1883, he was a wealthy Liberal cotton spinner at Hyde, where for many years he maintained a good factory school for 1,000 children. In 1889 his daughter Elizabeth married James Bryce.

School opened in 1887. The final Oldham scheme was not made under the Endowed Schools Acts until 28th November 1887.

Consent for the purchase of the land for the Hulme Grammar School, Oldham, was not given until 1891. Joseph Travis laid the foundation stone on 13th September 1893; the original design was to accommodate 250 boys and 150 girls (at the time of the Bryce Commission it was still being built, vide sup. p. ) and it was opened by Earl Spencer on 30th May 1895.<sup>1</sup> Assuming that it would take three or four years before it was functioning completely as a grammar school, it is clear that almost all the burden of providing "education other than elementary" rested on the School Board and the Technical Instruction Committee until the very end of the School Board era in the town, though the Board of Education Report for 1900-1 shows that already the new School of Science at the Grammar School was doing excellent work. Regrettably only a few months after the school was opened, one of its most enthusiastic promoters lost his life; Oldham can never repay its debt to Travis, but the school is his memorial.

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1. J. Middleton: Oldham, Past and Present.



## 8. Expansion and Decline of Evening Schools.

The Cross Commission made important recommendations as to evening elementary classes; these were put in operation by the Education Department's code of 1890. Prior to this year, the Board's evening schools in Oldham were ineffective. There were several reasons for this. First, the curriculum was restricted to the preparation of pupils for examination in the three R's. Second, pupils over 21 did not qualify for grant. Thirdly, with the great improvement in the educational quality of the day-schools between 1870 and 1890, the demand rose annually for the kind of evening tuition which would continue rather than reiterate the work of the day school; yet the better pupils were discouraged and bored with the standard of attainment expected of them. The teachers also felt that much of the good work which they had done with day pupils went to waste when they left. There were other defects, too. There was a lack of subjects of an attractive nature. One must remember, however, that since the evening schools were conducted at the ratepayers' expense, the idea of support for non-vocational subjects did not meet with general approval among Victorians.

One may also recall the social conditions obtaining in the cotton towns. There could be little incentive to attend evening classes among young people who had already spent twelve hours in a humid spinning-room heated to 90 degrees Fahrenheit or more, or perhaps longer in the foul, dusty air of a mine. The streets of the town were often badly in need of repair; dimly lit by gas, many were still under

construction. Police patrolled them in pairs; they were the resort of drunkards, prostitutes, beggars and thugs. Brutality was common, as the newspapers and police reports of the time will show. The prospect of walking home from classes was unattractive, especially for females. In the home, unfortunately, the idea of "book-learning" was despised through ignorance<sup>1</sup> and many young people who aspired to it came in for rough treatment.

Taking all these factors into account, it is not difficult to understand why the night-school system before 1890 was moribund, as the national figures showed:-

Evening Schools in England and Wales, 1870-86.<sup>2</sup>

(Year ending 31st Aug.)	1870	1874	1876	1886
Departments:	2,504	1,432	1,474	841
Scholars examined:	77,918	36,720	41,133	25,031

On the local scale, the statistics tell the same sad story: By 1886, the average attendance at the School Board Evening Schools in Oldham was down to 96 (59 at Waterhead and 37 at Watersheddings) and the total for the schools of the town was only 291.<sup>3</sup>

The Code of 1890 enabled pupils to be excused examination in the three R's if they could present a certificate of having passed the 5th Standard.<sup>4</sup> By 1891, the number in average attendance at Oldham evening classes had risen to 564. H.M.I. the Rev. W. Scott Coward stated<sup>5</sup> that in the North-West, the night-schools (with the

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1. "To appreciate education is itself a consequence of education" - Lecky.

2. Education Department Report 1886-7. page V̄.

3. See Report of Education Department 1886-7.

4. Article 106 b.(v.)

5. Education Department Report 1891-2.

exception of Manchester's) were making slow progress. Oldham School Board continued to offer prizes and certificates to encourage growth; the Education Department was memorialized about (inter alia) the article 106 b (v.) provision. It was urged that more encouragement was needed, and that the 4th, not the 5th Standard, should be adopted.

The School Board did what it could. It added to the subjects offered and organised classes on a four-fold basis:

(a) Elementary - held in all Board Schools. Included cookery.

(b) Commercial: held at Wellington Street School<sup>1</sup>.

e.g. Shorthand, bookkeeping.

(c) Science: Chemistry, Physiology, Physiography.

(d) Pupil-teachers' Centre classes: held for all public elementary school teachers in Oldham: in 1891, attended by 66 Board teachers and 39 Voluntary school teachers.

Although the Board had freed its day schools it still charged 3d. per week to pupils in the elementary Standards at night-school. There is evidence that these classes were not very successful - after a month's trial, three closed down because of lack of supporters. The Commercial classes, however, were well attended.<sup>2</sup>

The overhaul of the system after 1890 was a blessing because with the introduction of non-vocational subjects young people could have access to tuition which would broaden the interests without specific connection with their everyday occupations - which in any case were only too often mechanical and mentally unsatisfying. In the narrower sense, it enabled employees to develop their proficiency in the skills and so "better themselves".

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1. Classes began September 23rd 1890.

2. see Triennial Report of the Board 1889-91.

The most important step came with a Minute of the Education Department of 18th May 1893. Under it was issued the Evening Continuation Schools Code. This gave the Boards the encouragement they had lacked. They soon saw that they could earn far more grant. There was a great expansion, in numbers and in the scope of the work. For the session 1894-95 there were 2,474 pupils in average attendance at the Board's evening schools and in rented Voluntary Schools.<sup>1</sup> These pupils earned grant from Whitehall and from South Kensington (e.g. for Human Physiology at Waterloo H.G.S.). In four years the numbers enrolled had quadrupled - an improvement noted by the H.M.I. "Mr. Campbell<sup>2</sup> considers that compared with London and Gloucestershire, the evening schools in his district are very flourishing. In Oldham, the Board maintains them after the Manchester Plan, which works well. The proportion of students under eighteen, including day school scholars, is far larger than in London."<sup>3</sup>

The teachers welcomed this influx of young persons, hoping thereby to preserve the links which they had established; unfortunately, early leaving was still (apart from the half time system) far too prevalent. But the Evening Continuation school enabled pupils to try to extend their education without parents being deprived of their wages.

A comprehensive Prospectus was issued for the session 1894-5 which shows how the system had expanded since 1891. The original four types of school had become six:

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1. This total includes some classes not under the School Board viz: Lyceum 99, Glodwick M.I.S. 36, Werneth Mechanics Institute 45. See Report of Education Department 1894-5. Appendix part IV p.1098
  2. Succeeded J. H. Wylie in Oldham area.
  3. Report of Education Department 1895-6. p.29

1. Evening Continuation School - for carrying on education "in the Standards" but also to give training in general culture, as for example classes in the "Life and Duties of the Citizen".<sup>1</sup>
2. Evening Commercial Schools.
3. Science and Art Classes - these were not duplicating the work of the Municipal Technical School, since they were intended by the Board for head and assistant teachers in the School district. The intending pupils were also carefully selected by the School Board so as to avoid the risk of the fine imposed by the Science and Art Department for examinees who got less than 25% marks. Subjects offered were numerous but many of the teachers were mainly concerned with obtaining a first or second-class pass in the Elementary Drawing Certificate so as to fulfil the requirement in the Code (Article 60) as to Certification. Other subjects available were Inorganic Chemistry (Theoretical and Practical), Advanced Physiography, Human Physiology, Sound, Light and Heat, Practical Geometry, Geometrical Drawing and other branches of Drawing.
4. Evening Institutes for Women and Girls over 17 years of age, at which Cookery, Domestic Economy, Hygiene, Dressmaking and Millinery could be studied. Valuable work was done by the Board in establishing these classes - held in four schools. Many of the women were full-time mill hands who had left school for work at such an early age that they had had little or no training which would be useful in the care of a home and family. Their own parents had been quite as ignorant - one has only to read the first

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1. Vocal Music was taught by Charles A. Walton; father of the composer Sir William Walton (born Oldham, 1902)

report of the Medical Officer of Health for Oldham (1873) to learn how unwisely poor people fed and how surprising it was that any infants at all survived into maturity. Dr. Maule Sutton ascribed the appallingly high infant death-rate to the widespread use of pacifying nostrums which contained lethal doses of opium - much in demand for quietening hungry babies whose mothers had returned to the mill a couple of weeks after giving birth to them. This was the kind of ignorance which the School Board was slowly overcoming, thanks to its financial resources and its superior premises.

5. Manual Instruction<sup>1</sup> School - these classes were intended for teachers who wished to take the examinations for Teaching Certificates of the City and Guilds of London Institute.
6. Special Certificate Classes at Wellington Street School for all public elementary school teachers in the district.

The School Board continued to encourage school-leavers to attend its evening schools by co-operation with the Technical Instruction Committee of the council in the Prize Scheme controlled by that body. £25 was set aside each year for the purpose of encouraging technical education in the public elementary schools. The candidates (in 1893 13 boys and 1 girl<sup>2</sup>) were examined by Assistant H.M.I's and received money prizes from £3 to £1 together with "free tuition in some selected evening school". Later the number of successful candidates increased to 20, but most of them came from Waterloo Board School and the Bluecoat School.

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1. Not recognised for grant in Code till 1899.

2. 2nd Annual Report of Municipal Technical School 1894.

At first, the expansion of the Board's Evening Schools took away some commercial pupils from the Municipal Technical School (evenings only) in which a commercial side had been begun in 1893, but the Committee were correct in surmising that ultimately these schools would become feeders to the municipal classes. As time went on, other classes were established in the Board's evening schools for deaf mutes and blind persons. Statistically, this rapid growth can be shown as follows:-

Oldham: Students Enrolled in School Board Evening Schools  
1886 - 1900

Session ending:

1886	1891	1895	1896	1897	1898	1899	1900
96	564	2,474	3,781	4,056	4,243	4,823	4,848

By 1898 the Board was spending  $6\frac{1}{2}\%$  of its total expenditure on its Evening schools and employing 190 teachers in them. After the famous Cockerton case, however, the Board of Education issued an Evening Schools Minute on 3rd July 1901, imposing limitations on the curriculum of Evening classes. The effect of the Minute has been described in detail elsewhere;<sup>1</sup> though it became associated in the public mind with the Cockerton judgment, the Evening Schools Minute was a matter of the policy which Sir John Gorst, advised by R. L. Morant, had adopted at Whitehall and in fact was not directly an outcome of the Cockerton judgments.

This policy hit hard in Oldham, as elsewhere. The Clerk to Manchester School Board, Wyatt, informed Morant that the scheme would

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1. see Eaglesham, E. From School Board to Local Authority. pp.159-161.

destroy the Board's Evening Schools. One of the conditions of the Minute was that pupils under 12 and pupils still attending day schools were not to be admitted (with a few exceptions). Another laid down that not more than two subjects taken could be in the scientific manual and technical groups. It was stated<sup>1</sup> that there were more day pupils who were also at evening schools in Oldham, than in any other county borough:-

Oldham	19.4%	of evening pupils		
Manchester	19.3%	"	"	"
Blackburn	15.4%	"	"	"
Hull	2.5%	"	"	"

What was the financial result to the Board? At the height of the Evening Schools system, grant earned (after deduction of £230 under the "17s.6d. Limit") on the enrolment of the session 1898-9 amounted to £2,257.<sup>2</sup> After the Minute, the Science classes ceased, as also the classes in physical education (for which grant was withdrawn). The numbers enrolled declined rapidly:-

1902 : 3,163            1903 : 2,946            1904 : 1,700<sup>3</sup>

School Fees also went down, (these, of course, largely came from Evening Classes; but the Oldham School Board was compensated under the Necessitous School Boards Act), so that at the presentation of the last annual estimates on 21st April 1903 the enrolment was described as "trifling" and as "not representing by a long way the education which ought to be given to the youth of the town"<sup>4</sup>.

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1. p.49, School Board Triennial Report, 1898-1900.
  2. Evening School Prospectus 1899.
  3. Final Triennial Report of School Board.
  4. Oldham Standard. 21st April 1903.



Fees from Evening Classes.

Session ending:	1899	1900	1901	1902	1903
	£979	£1,113	£1,067	£812	£773

The School Board's excursion into the field of education other than elementary was highly successful; the attitude of Goost and Morant, however, was that it was no part of a Board's duty to be responsible for this kind of work. Nor, in fact, did the School Board possess legal rights to do so. The Conservatives had little to say on the decline of the evening classes. The Radicals not unnaturally took the view that once again education was being treated as a pawn in a political game; yet technical education had already experienced a decade of growth under the bodies set up by the Technical Instruction Acts; in some quarters it was thought that the work of the School Board was merely duplicating that of the Technical Instruction Committees. This may have been true of some towns, but there is little evidence of its having seriously affected the growth of secondary or technical education in Oldham, which was already firmly established before the Technical Instruction Committees came into being.

## 9. Technical Education.

It has often been said that the early support given to the Mechanics' Institutes by the working class gradually fell away and that by and large the subscribers from about 1850 onwards were "mainly clerical workers and tradesmen".<sup>1</sup> Though the aim of the first Mechanics' Institute at Glasgow was to "further the instruction of workers in the branches of science useful to them in their trade", the practical difficulties which obstructed this plan were soon obvious. Among these were the lack of financial aid from Government, and unsound teaching methods; the working classes were too ignorant to profit by scientific instruction and the lectures on science became popular lectures rather than a carefully graded course based on first principles. In the absence of an efficient elementary school system, it was only the very gifted few who could somehow or other explore the terra incognita of science.

The value of the Mechanics Institute movement, however, lay in the fact that very soon after its beginning in 1823, it had spread to all parts of the British Isles, providing in fact the foundation on which the State, by means of the Science and Art Department of South Kensington, was later to subsidise organised technical education. Thus in 1824 the Manchester Mechanics' Institution was established, out of which has grown the College of Science and Technology of to-day. From Manchester, the movement spread into the cotton-manufacturing district of South Lancashire, actively supported by Radicals like Cobbett and Place, and opposed by the Church and the aristocracy.

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1. See C. T. Millis. Technical Education 1925.

It is hardly surprising therefore that in Oldham, where the Radicals and Nonconformists were strongly represented and where the Church was relatively weak, the idea of establishing a Lyceum was enthusiastically received. In 1839 - several years before the first National School was opened - the Lyceum began. Soon after, the Mechanics Institutes of Lancashire and Cheshire banded together to form the Union, and so provided the means of organising examinations in science from South Kensington. Numerous examinations were instituted in the period 1850-9 e.g. College of Preceptors, and it is interesting to note that the idea was strongly supported by a Liberal statesman who was later to be strongly criticised for his work in elementary education - Robert Lowe.<sup>1</sup> On the local scale, the Union was promoted strongly by Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth of Burnley, and in Oldham by the Platt family. Several subsequent members of the School Board supported the Lyceum: a new building was opened by James Platt on 22nd September 1856,<sup>2</sup> and the Rev. Richard M. Davies attended the ceremony as a Vice-president (a position he held for over fifty years). Among the twelve Trustees were Thomas Emmott and Dr. Henry Halkyard, Joseph Travis was a Director and also taught voluntarily in the evening classes. From time to time Davies gave popular lectures, but there were organised classes in algebra, mensuration, geometry and mechanical drawing. These men received their initial training in educational administration as Lyceum members and governors.

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1. See D. S. L. Cordwell. Organisation of Science in England.

2. Arthur Tait. History of Oldham Lyceum 1839-1897. (1897).

The establishment in 1853 of the Science and Art Department and the payment of grants for its examinations from 1859 ensured the survival of the Mechanics Institutes where these still existed. In towns like Oldham, which depended almost wholly on industry, there was always a demand for technical knowledge; the Science and Art Examinations were in fact the chief means of acquiring a technical education at this time, though the subjects in the Science and Art Directory were largely pure science rather than technological.

Under the stimulus of South Kensington a Science and Art School was opened in 1865,<sup>1</sup> it cost £2,000 and was financed by John Platt. In this school, there were evening classes in physics, chemistry, mathematics, art and building construction, whilst classes in the three R's, languages and literature were held in the Lyceum adjoining. Two years later a Mechanics' Institute was opened at Werneth by W. E. Gladstone.

The brief history of the Science and Art School of the Lyceum is one of steady growth through the earlier School Board period; by the foundation of scholarships it became possible for a few able boys to proceed from elementary school to evening classes. Thus the first Whitworth Scholarship was awarded to James Taylor in 1870, and the holder of the second, awarded in 1871, later became head of the municipal technical school.<sup>2</sup> On Platt's death in 1872 his widow gave £1,000 to produce with the Science and Art grants two exhibitions value £50 per annum which were tenable at Owens College. The value of the Whitworth Scholarship awarded to Taylor was £100 per annum for

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1. By Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth.

2. John Armitage.

three years; in comparison with the average salary paid to a schoolmaster in 1870, this was a glittering prize indeed.

When one considers the vast army of schoolchildren who annually became full or part-time workpeople in the town, one perceives how small, in fact, was the number of students who were able to profit by the classes of the Science and Art School.<sup>1</sup> From 162 students in 1873, the number grew to 442 in 1879. Again the premises were extended in 1881 with financial help from Samuel Radcliffe Platt (son of John Platt) and his brothers. This extension, providing accommodation for 650 students, cost £10,000.

The School expanded greatly as a result, and its value was fully appreciated by local employers as shown by the evidence of the Committee to the Royal Commission on Technical Education, 1884. Broadly speaking, the school's evening classes provided the bulk of scientific education in the town, and a little later the School Board's evening classes provided the best commercial education. There was, indeed, little overlapping their work. In the 29 years between the establishment of the Science and Art School and its transfer to the town council in 1893, 9,521 students had enrolled. Numerous awards (including 12 Whitworth Scholarships) had been gained. The Lyceum classes in elementary subjects gradually became less important as the School Board carried out its work in this field. At the height of the enrolment in the evening continuation schools, the secretary of the Lyceum could write

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1. In 1864, 48 Science students enrolled.

" ..... the Evening Continuation School, which is filled with young men who have been well grounded in the day schools, has taken the place of the pathetic sight of adults learning the alphabet of their mother tongue".<sup>1</sup>

School Board members who were also members of the Science and Art Committee of the Lyceum were the Rev. R. M. Davies, Edward Ingham and Joshua Walmsley Radcliffe, all of whom served until the Committee was superseded by the implementation of the Technical Instruction Acts. Joseph Travis served for twenty years (1869-1889). The town council also contained members of the Lyceum and it was therefore not long before Oldham council decided to use its powers to establish a municipal technical school financed out of the rates and qualifying for a share in the "Whiskey Money" provided by the Local Taxation (Customs and Excise) Act 1890. The School of Science and Art was transferred (without the Lyceum) in 1893 to the corporation.

The curriculum was broadened to include commercial subjects (also taught in School Board evening schools), but the work was mainly in science, as shown by the amounts of grant earned for the year ending May 1893:<sup>2</sup>

Students enrolled.

Science:	452	Grant earned:	£440
Art:	90	" "	£18
Education Dept.		Drawing grant:	£71

Science subjects studied included Cotton-spinning, Machine-Drawing and Building Construction, and in 1894 the sanction of the Science

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1. A. Tait op. cit. p. 93

2. 1st Annual Report of Municipal Technical School 1893.

and Art Department was given to include technological subjects not then in the Science and Art Directory, as, for example, Cotton-weaving, Carpentry, Plumbing and Shorthand. The Art classes were recognised as a School of Art, open on two days and three evenings a week.

Other educational institutions which held Science and Art classes received grants from the Technical Instruction funds, but the work which they encouraged was hardly on the scale of that of the municipal school. For example, Oldham Equitable Co-operative Society received £65 in 1894 and £75 in 1895<sup>1</sup>, and smaller sums were allocated to the Oldham Industrial Co-operative Society. Their work was mostly recreational and is described later.

Soon the municipal technical school was providing a secondary education for over 1,000 students<sup>2</sup>; their average age was 18.3 years; two-thirds were in the age-range 14-20, and about half were employed in cotton-mills and engineering: the third group in size was composed of elementary school teachers<sup>3</sup> who had been admitted to day art classes under an arrangement with the School Board in order to obtain the elementary drawing certificate.

On the whole, the School Board and the Technical Instruction Committee of the Council co-operated for the furtherance of technical education, since the potential enrolment in evening classes was enormous, far more than the existing accommodation could satisfy. Thus there was little rivalry between the two bodies.<sup>4</sup> Only in the matter of

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1. See Annual Reports of Municipal Technical School.

2. 1208 in 1896.

3. Including pupil-teachers.

4. In Rochdale however the School Board left the classes in science and commercial subjects to be dealt with solely by the Technical Instruction Committee. See Report of E.D. 1897-8. p.175

higher-grade day classes did the Board maintain an independent attitude. The achievement of the municipal school was considerable - classes expanded from an enrolment of 542 in 1892 to 2,010 students in 1902, when the Technical Instruction Acts were superseded by the 1902 Education Act. Students achieved high honours - including 12 Whitworth Scholarships and 24 University degrees.<sup>1</sup> Since 1863, nearly 25,000 students had been admitted. Moreover, for many years the municipal technical school bore the major share of the burden of providing secondary classes in a town where the development of secondary day schools was very slow; only near the end of the School Board period did these begin:-

Comparison of Grant earned in Science and Art Classes,  
1900-01 in Oldham.<sup>2</sup>

<u>1. Municipal Technical School</u>	<u>Grants (S.&amp; A.)</u>
(a) Science: 894 evening scholars	£935
(b) Art: 188 day, 149 evening scholars	<u>£1,249</u>
	<u>£2,184<sup>3</sup></u>
<u>2. School of Science, Waterloo Street B.S.</u>	
Science: 179 day scholars	<u>£813</u>
<u>3. Hulme Grammar School School of Science.</u>	
Science: 92 day scholars	<u>£388</u>
<u>4. School Board Offices, Pupil-teachers.</u>	
Science Classes: 150 day scholars	<u>£274</u>
<u>5. Waterloo Street B.S.</u>	
Evening Science scholars: 52	<u>£66</u>
<u>TOTAL GRANT EARNED : £3,725.</u>	

1. e.g. C. H. Lees. D.Sc.Hons.Maths.1895 of Victoria University, Manchester.  
 2. See Vol.II of Report of Board of Education for 1900-01.  
 3. i.e. almost 60% of total for Oldham.



The Board School prize scheme promoted by Travis and supported by his fellow Radicals was undoubtedly of great value in the expansion of technical education in Oldham. Prize-winners were entitled to attend evening classes in the municipal Technical School; the competition was open to all public elementary scholars in the town. Nevertheless, the majority of those successful came from Board Schools, especially Waterloo Street Higher-grade School. This is sufficient testimony to the quality of instruction given as compared with that of the Voluntary Schools; there were no half-timers at Waterloo. The Blue Coat School also carried off some of these prizes, and this was, as we have seen, a school for selected entrants only. In short, the Technical School succeeded where the earlier Mechanics Institutes had failed simply because its students had, thanks to the efforts of the School Board Schools, a thorough grounding in first principles. The relationship of the Board Schools to the Technical School was thus far closer than their respective governing bodies publicly acknowledged.

An account of technical education in Oldham would not be complete without mention of the educational work of the Co-operative Societies. The movement began in Rochdale in the early nineteenth century, soon spreading to Oldham, where two societies - the Equitable and the Industrial - were established. Each set aside a proportion of its annual profits (3% and 2½% respectively) for educational purposes.

When large numbers of mill-hands became unemployed during the Cotton Famine, some profited from idleness by patronising newsrooms established by the two societies. The first opened in 1863, and in the

same year educational committees were formed. Other newsrooms followed: by 1900 there were 36 in various districts of Oldham.<sup>1</sup> Many of these were equipped with a small reference library. Before the 1870 Education Act, classes were held here on Sunday mornings. Although part of the educational funds was used for recreational purposes - excursions and entertainments - valuable work of a specifically vocational nature was undertaken also. This increased as the Societies grew, but grants were also earned from the Science and Art Department. The Equitable Society spent £24,720 on educational work between 1870 and 1900. Towards the end of this period the annual expenditure exceeded £1,000. The bigger Industrial Society devoted £41,000 to education in the period 1863-1900.

The Equitable Society founded a Science School (which met in the evenings and on Saturday morning) in 1878. The most popular subjects were Geometry, Machine Drawing, Art, Applied Mechanics and Cotton Manufacture. Like the Field Naturalists' Club, begun in 1879, these classes were most active in the period just prior to the adoption by the council of the 1890 Technical Instruction Act. The management committee included two School Board members, Dr. Yates and the Rev. J. G. French. From 1878 to 1885 the science classes occupied rented rooms in Smith Street Board School and later at Bottom o' th' Moor. One of the pupils, William Kershaw, started work as a pupil-teacher under the School Board on April 5th 1886 at 13 years of age. After a time, Kershaw left the Board's service. In May 1898 at the age of

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1. The last of these newsrooms, established in Foundry Street by the Industrial Co-operative Society, closed down on October 17th 1951.

25 he was appointed as a science teacher at Waterloo, having begun his scientific education at 20 in the Equitable Society's classes.<sup>1</sup> After teaching some years, he became an under - secretary to James Rennie in 1905, succeeding him as Secretary of the Education Committee in 1919. William Kershaw was Director of Education for Oldham almost 20 years. Retiring in 1938, he died at Oldham, aged 82, on April 29th, 1955.

In 1892 there were 377 Science and Art students, of whom 219 earned grant on examinations. A programme of popular scientific lectures was arranged. On October 28th 1891 Sir Robert Ball F.R.S. lectured on "The Sun"; for one penny admission fee, one heard the lecture on "Spiders" by the Rev. W. H. Dallinger F.R.S. on 25th November 1891.

In July 1886 the Industrial Society began classes in Spinning, Botany, Physiology, Bookkeeping and Shorthand on the understanding that these would not compete with the Lyceum. All the science classes were discontinued after 1894, when the Municipal Technical School and School Board evening schools developed.

The Co-operative Societies encouraged and supported the University Extension Movement.<sup>2</sup> Some of its travelling lecturers were well known at Oldham. The historian G. W. Hudson Shaw was enlisted by M. E. Sadler in 1886 and spent the next 26 years of his life giving lectures in about 150 different centres. His Oldham lectures were given for nine successive years, with an average weekly attendance of 650 and a final attendance in 1895 of over 1,000.<sup>3</sup>

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1. P. Lord. History of Education in Oldham. p.220.

2. See History of Adult Education in Great Britain. p.209. Thomas Kelly.

3. T. Kelly. pp.230-2.

In the brief period between the passing of the "Whiskey Money" Act and the opening of the Municipal Technical School, the town council made grants in aid of science classes to the Co-operative Societies.<sup>1</sup> Though these amounts were never big, the career of Kershaw is enough to show the value of their contribution; the Co-operative Societies' work<sup>2</sup> foreshadowed that of the Evening Continuation Schools under the School Board, but after 1893 was mainly of a non-vocational character.

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1. e.g. 20th March 1893. To Equitable Co-operative Society: £65.

2. See Jubilee of Co-operation in Oldham 1850-1900.  
(combined history of the Societies. Chas.Walters & J.C.Taylor, 1900)

10. Conservatives v. Whitehall.

From 1889, the Board was controlled by the Conservatives, who had promised to cut down rate-expenditure and protect the Voluntary Schools. Already there was a slight decline in the number of places available in them, but this was not so marked as to create a great deficiency in accommodation. The Board's Conservative majority were confident that should Whitehall put any pressure on them to build more Board Schools, they would be able to show that no great demand for them existed. Taking the school district as a whole, there was, in fact, an excess of places over the number of children of school-age.

It is possible that the Conservatives did not realise that their own powers were limited, and that in all decisions, Whitehall had the last word. None of them was a School Board member in February 1881; but two Radical members - Davies and Wainwright - were in office at that date, and could clearly remember how the Education Department had curtly told the School Board that it was its duty to build a Board School at Waterhead without delay. The Conservatives were of the opinion that the Education Department had been wrong in this decision. The Waterhead school had never been completely full subsequently. Davies was not elected Chairman for the first time since 1871. Instead, a Conservative, Radcliffe, took the chair. On previous School Boards, the office of vice-chairman had customarily been filled by a member of the opposite party to that of the chairman. By the use of his casting vote, the Conservatives contrived to put one of their own party, Rountree, in the vice-chair. This annoyed the Radicals. Hitherto

the vice-chairman was usually a Catholic priest who played a passive rather than an active role. But Rountree was an enthusiastic supporter of Church school education; he was also a Tractarian who openly stated his dislike of (as he thought) the inadequate amount of religious instruction given in the Oldham Board Schools.

Naturally, the Board was bound to complete work put in hand by their predecessors, but the Conservatives decided to resist new proposals for expansion. On the other side, the Radicals, led by Travis and Middleton, were equally determined that their project for the completion of the higher-grade school should go on unhindered. The school had filled quickly; now, the infants department was being used in part by older pupils. The school was not fulfilling its proper purpose. In any case, the building of a separate infants department had already been sanctioned by the Education Department. Radcliffe and Rountree proposed that the present organisation of the school be continued until the next Government examination, and that the head teachers be instructed to refuse admission to pupils when the average attendance exceeded the approved accommodation, for 300 children in each department.

Travis urged on the Board the great importance of the higher grade school extensions, but his motion was defeated by the Chairman's casting vote. The strongest argument in favour of higher-grade schools was the large Science & Art grants which they could secure when worked under the correct conditions. Travis gave as examples the school at Rochdale, which earned £2.6s.0d. per pupil<sup>1</sup> and the higher-grade school

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1. With a high proportion of pupils out of the standards vide infra p.

at Birmingham, earning £6 per pupil in a year. The Waterloo Street School was itself a sound financial proposition:

"During the sixteen months ended 31st October 1888, the school paid its way to within £14, and that with an average attendance of only 147 in the infants school. This year the school will not only pay its way, there will be a balance in hand. Boards with a denominational majority - such as Manchester, Salford and Bolton - felt it their duty to encourage higher education by building schools specially adapted for this purpose, and why should we in Oldham not do so? Why should not the children of the Oldham ratepayers earn grants of £3 a head, like the children in Rochdale, Bolton and Manchester?"<sup>1</sup>

Determined that no child should be turned away from the school, Travis moved that the Buildings and Offices Committee be requested to submit proposals for relieving the existing pressure and that, to safeguard the grant,

"application be made to the Education Department for permission to receive scholars on the 8 foot scale until the promised extension can be carried into effect."<sup>2</sup>

The reply of the Conservatives was, that if they filled the higher-grade school, it would be at the expense of the others; the Secularists countered by pointing out that the other schools admitted half-timers, to which the Rev. J. P. Rountree answered that the Education Act made no distinction between different classes of children and

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1. Oldham Standard 14th March 1889.

2. Minutes 13th March 1889.

different classes of schools. Here was the weakness - higher-grade schools had simply developed without reference to the original purpose of the Statute; by keeping strictly to the letter of the law, the Churchmen hoped to stop further growth of the higher-grade school. After moving repeated amendments, the Radicals were silenced by the Chairman's casting vote.

Clearly, the battle had only begun. The previous Board had decided to use its powers permitted under sections 15 and 16 of Sandon's Act<sup>1</sup> to provide a day industrial school. There were now over 80 Oldham children detained in truant schools and training ships, costing well over £300 a year from rates. Ultimately money would be saved, but the Board would have a heavy capital charge of over £9,000. Could they afford to build any more day schools?

The second Radical salvo was Travis's continuation of the Werneth ratepayers' agitation for a Board School, which matter the previous Board had left in abeyance. Armed with a new petition came another deputation. But the vice-chairman was now the Rev. J. P. Rountree, rector of St. Thomas's Werneth, who feared that his own school would be adversely affected. Using all his persuasive powers, Travis insisted on the provision of the Board School; again, the Conservatives led by Rountree obtained a postponement of six months.

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1. sec.15: "The consent of one of Her Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State, and not of the Education Department, shall be required for the establishing, building and maintaining of a certified industrial school or certified day industrial school by a School Board."

sec.16: "In the case of a certified day industrial school, a prison authority within the meaning of the Industrial Schools Act 1866, and a School Board shall respectively have the same powers in relation to a certified day industrial school as they have in relation to a certified industrial school".

(Elementary Education Act 1876).



The Conservative press complained that the School Board was "fast descending to the level of a London vestry meeting" and labelled Travis and Middleton as "Liberals, Home Rulers, sure they could do no wrong".<sup>1</sup> The "Standard" editor, whom Travis had described as unscrupulous some months before, expressed the hope that the Secularists would "put political considerations aside, when the business of the School Board will proceed without that frivolous waste of time and personal recrimination which must inevitably bring discredit on what is supposed to be the most intelligent representative body in the borough."<sup>2</sup>

The question of a new school for Werneth would certainly be raised again; the huge Hartford textile engineering works of Platt Bros. now employed more than 10,000 men, many of whom lived (as was usual in those days) close by their employment. The schools were badly placed to cater for the children of this rapidly expanding quarter, even though on paper there were sufficient school places still available. Soon after the Board's decision to reconsider the question after six months had elapsed, a letter from Whitehall asked the Board to comment on the proposal of the promoters of St. Thomas's School, Crossbank Street, to extend their accommodation.

As may be expected (since Rountree was a manager of St. Thomas's School) the Board replied that although they did not themselves feel called upon to provide additional accommodation, they had no objection to voluntary efforts. But the Secularists felt that Whitehall should know that although within a short distance of the Crossbank Street

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1. Oldham Standard 9th May 1889.

2. *ibid.*

School there were four schools with 1,344 unoccupied places, attention should be drawn to another area in Werneth which contained no convenient school and 500 children of school age. The Secularist motion was again defeated by the Chairman's casting vote. But Davies and Wainwright had the advantage of nearly twenty years experience on the Board, and must have known that, provided they could make out their case to Her Majesty's Inspector, Mr. J. H. Wylie, they could force a decision at Whitehall. A meeting was arranged on July 8th 1889 by the Inspector, attended by the representatives of all the interested parties, namely the Oldham School Board, the Werneth memorialists, the managers of the Church School in Crossbank Street, the managers of St. Domingo Street Wesleyan School, and the minority members of the Board.

The Inspector found that Werneth ward contained five elementary schools, but that these were on its fringes, either just in or just outside it. He had criticisms to make of their suitability, however. The first, St. John's National School, was a school with no proper classrooms, full for practical teaching purposes, and lying on the other side of Manchester Road, where trams and traffic would form a serious objection to infants and young children from Werneth ward. The second, Werneth British School, was restricted to teaching boys only from Standards 3 to 6, most of whom were half-timers employed at the Hartford works. The third, St. Patrick's, was open only to Roman Catholics. The fourth, Wellington Street Board School, was full, and had not admitted any pupils except infants for the past sixteen months. It was, moreover, separated, like the last school Scottfield Board School, from Werneth ward by a tram-route.

The only school inside the area was St. Thomas's. But, found Mr. Wylie, this had long been overcrowded, half-timers having been refused admission for some years hitherto. In his opinion, there was a deficiency of accommodation for 756 children, and the Crossbank Street School could not answer the case. There was no doubt, he thought, that the demands of the memorialists had been reasonable. The Secularists had made their point, and they pressed home the advantage by carrying a resolution in favour of establishing a new school in Werneth; this they did when the Chairman was on holiday away from the town, and the Education Department was duly informed. Within a few days the reply which Davies, Wainwright and Travis wanted, came back from the Secretary:

30th August 1889.

"I am directed to state that My Lords are glad to learn that your Board have decided to build a school in the Coppice district.<sup>1</sup> Her Majesty's Inspector is of the opinion that it should provide accommodation for 200 boys, 200 girls and 400 infants, unless the promoters of the Crossbank Street school determine to proceed with the erection of that school, in which case the amount of accommodation required in the Board School might be reduced by that required for 217 scholars, the reduction being in either boys, girls, or infants, according to the extent to which the Crossbank Street School would relieve those departments respectively."

As soon as the baffled Conservatives could counter-attack in full strength, another letter was sent to the Education Department

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1. i.e. lying in Werneth ward.

stating that no additional accommodation was needed and that the majority could not understand why the Department should think so. Naturally, Whitehall soon demanded an explanation for this volte-face. After a long and acrimonious debate, a comprehensive reply was sent off on 31st October 1889 giving the history of the whole question, from the presenting of the Werneth memorial in March down to decision of the Board to select a suitable site, made on the resolution carried by six Radical members over five Conservatives on 14th August. The reply concluded

"Such is a statement of the facts of the case from the commencement of the controversy. It will be seen that no explanation can be given of the change in the decision of the Board, other than that the two parties are so evenly balanced that the absence of members from the meetings gives the majority first to one side, and then to the other. As the question stands, the Board, as represented by the majority, are of opinion that there is ample school accommodation within reasonable distance of the inhabitants of the Coppice district, hence the decision at the meeting of 11th September 1889 to request certain explanations of H.M.I. Report from the Department.

On the other hand, the minority of the Board are of opinion that additional school accommodation is required."<sup>1</sup>

The Education Department could not possibly agree with the majority in view of the recommendations embodied in the Inspector's report, and forthwith required a census of all children between ages 3 and 14 in Werneth ward to be taken as soon as possible. This was completed by the end of the year, and produced the following result:

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1. Minutes. 31st October 1889

District 1. - Coppice.

(a) Of school-age	<u>1,446</u>
(b) On roll of public elementary school	965
(c) Attending higher-class schools, private schools or receiving instruction at home	<u>151</u>
	1,116

District 2. - Between Lee Street and King Street.

(a)	<u>925</u>
(b)	663
(c)	<u>77</u>
	740

District 3. - Between Frederick Street and Heron Street.

(a)	<u>129</u>
(b)	87
(c)	<u>24</u>
	111

The reply of the Education Department of 4th January 1890 finally resolved the question:

"I am directed to state that it appears from the census furnished by your Board that there are in Werneth ward 593 children of school age and not exempt from school attendance, who are not on the books of any public elementary school. In consideration of all the circumstances, which have already been discussed, my Lords must regard the district to be deficient in accommodation for these children.

The new school in Crossbank Street will, when ready, only provide 217 places. It is therefore a matter of urgent necessity that additional accommodation should be provided by your Board for the remaining children, and my Lords think it will be in the interests of economy that this accommodation should be sufficient to meet the growth of population in the district for some time to come. I am to request your Board to take steps accordingly towards supplying such additional accommodation, and to inform the Department of the steps they have taken to do so."<sup>1</sup>

The Conservative press accused the Education Department of "bureaucracy", but the duty of the Board was now clear, despite the complaint of the "Standard"<sup>2</sup> that

"we will not be told who egged on the Department with such arguments as the tramway lines and other frivolous pretexts for squandering the ratepayers' money".

The new school at Werneth would be the biggest yet undertaken, and the Board sent out a deputation of five members to visit schools built by the Boards of Bradford, Leeds and Birmingham. From these visits came the idea that the new school should be constructed on the Central Hall plan, a new design for Oldham Schools.

After some further delays occasioned by a disagreement between the Inspector, the Board and the ratepayers, as to which was the most suitable site, the Board decided on a plot behind Wellington Road and with the approval of Whitehall offered prizes in competition to

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1. Minutes. 8th January 1890.

2. 20th December 1891.

architects for the best design. The first prize was to be included in the commission; even so, the Board offered £50, a considerable sum in 1890. The school was to hold 1,000 children, and cost £14,000 - four times as much as each of the first two Board Schools built in Oldham (Smith Street and Westwood). The Board had had cause to regret their parsimony in the building of these, since they had subsequently spent much more on extending and repairs. But the procedure was no quicker in 1890 than it had been in 1873. Because of it and the delaying tactics of the Conservatives, the foundation stone of Werneth Board School was not laid until 26th September 1891, nearly three years after the question had first been mooted by Clegg and Travis; nor was it opened until January 1894.

In much the same way, the question of when to build the proposed separate infants department at the higher-grade school was resolved by the Education Department bringing pressure to bear on the Board. The school was earning about £700 a year in grants from Whitehall and the Science and Art Department, but before the H.M.I. would recommend the grant for 1889 to be paid out the Board were informed it would be withheld until the arrangement temporarily sanctioned was changed<sup>1</sup> and that plans for the extension would have to be submitted to the Education Department. This was in January 1890; the Board decided on the erection of two classrooms for 60 children in each, a separate infants school for 300, a chemical laboratory, cookery room and teachers' rooms at a cost of over £6,000. The sanction of the Education Department for proceeding with this work was granted in

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1. i.e. older pupils using the infants' rooms.

September 1890, nearly two years after Travis had first begun the agitation to discontinue the conducting of the higher-grade school as a mixed school. The majority of the Board was not favourable towards it - but the Board could not afford to lose the largest grant in the borough.

Thus, having embarked on what they had hoped would be a policy of stringent economy the majority of the Board slowly came to realise that their powers were limited, and that plainly, Whitehall would have the last word in any decisions they made. One decision was, however, entirely theirs - that to build new Board Offices in view of the overcrowding at Wellington Street School, where the Board had the use of rooms. The volume of business had so increased that it was decidedly inconvenient to transact it side by side with schoolchildren. So the Board decided to offer premiums for the design, as in the case of Werneth School. The Board at first thought to limit the cost of the building to £5,500, but later an estimate of £11,350 for the site and structure was submitted. Even so, an attempt was made by some of the Conservatives to postpone the building of the new offices for two years.<sup>1</sup> Time has proved that the money<sup>2</sup> was well spent - the same building in Union Street West is still the headquarters of the local education authority, seventy years after.

One of the recommendations of the Cross Commission had been the creation of scholarships for higher education; it was mainly due to the efforts of Joseph Travis that such scholarships at the higher-grade

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1. Minutes, 12th February 1890

2. Over £13,000, when completed.



school were created. Soon after the seventh Board took office, the fees were raised to the maximum permitted, i.e. 9d. per week, in the upper standards at Waterloo. By this means, the Conservatives hoped to discourage the demand for places. The Radical members saw this as a penalty on poor children which would deny them the advantage of a higher-grade education. Hence the work of Travis in pressing for scholarships; his original scheme embodied the creation of forty for all pupils attending the borough public elementary schools, tenable for three years. The Conservative press scoffed:

"Hurrah for Waterloo! Mr. Travis is anxious to create twenty scholarships for boys and twenty for girls - out of the rates, of course - at Waterloo Street School. He'll be applying for a charter to grant degrees next".<sup>1</sup>

Travis persisted with his demands, despite right-wing claims that he was in fact asking for the remission of fees of those children whose parents could well afford to pay them. Fortunately, two events assisted him. First, the trustees of the Cowhill School Charity, following up a letter they had sent in 1883<sup>2</sup>, sent a cheque for £20 to be devoted to the education of poor children in the borough. Secondly, the new Education Bill of 1891 came under consideration by the Board, concerning the abolition of fees in most schools.

The more progressive members felt that no child should be debarred from opportunities to develop his capabilities through inability to pay fees; the Rev. R. M. Davies reproached the Board<sup>3</sup> with the

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1. Oldham Standard 11th July 1889

2. i.e. without any further communication for 7 years!

3. Minutes 12th December 1890.

highness of its fees, and quoted statistics to show that they were among the highest in the country, higher than in 90% of the other Boards. Other towns had schools charging only 1d. per week fees. In Birmingham, Board Scholars paid only 5s.6d. a year; in Oldham they paid 14s.0d.; at Bradford the fees up to Standard 7 were only 3d. per week, in Oldham, a child could pay 9d. The average fee for all Board Schools in England and Wales was only 8s.11<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>d. per annum. The Board was convinced. Early in 1891 the lowest standard at Scottfield and Smith Street Board Schools was reduced to 1d. per week fees, with proportionate reductions up to Standard 6.

After considering the provisions of the 1891 "Free Schooling" Bill, the Board resolved that after it became operative, all fees in the Board Schools should be abolished, except in Waterloo, at which the following reduced fees would be paid; excepting those children not living in Oldham.

Infants	:	nil
Standard I	:	2d.
Standards II, III	:	3d.
Standard <u>IV</u>	:	5d.
Standard <u>V</u> - Ex.7	:	6d.

The Bill was passed with few dissentients, and gave parents the right to demand free education. A grant of 10s.0d. on average attendance was made for each child between 3 and 15 years of age on condition that no fee was charged except where the average payment had exceeded 10s.0d. a year, in which case the reduced fee and the aid grant together were not to exceed the amount formerly paid by the pupils.<sup>1</sup>

The Act had dire implications for the impecunious Voluntary Schools<sup>1</sup> but the abolition of fees removed any objections lodged against Travis's scholarship scheme: in its final form, a further ten free places were added to the original forty - five called Cowhill School Charity Trustees Scholarships and five called Oldham School Board Scholarships. They provided for free tuition for one year, renewable for a second and third on condition of satisfactory work and attendance. Candidates had to be under eleven years old.

About 10% of the children at the Board Schools lived outside the borough boundary. The decision to abolish fees caused 169 ratepayers of Hollinwood ward to petition for the establishment of a Board School in September 1891. They lived nearly a mile from the nearest one; why, it was argued, should they have to pay fees which all the Voluntary Schools near them still charged, when other ratepayers sent their children free? A year earlier the managers of the United Methodist Free Church School had approached the Board with a view to having their school transferred. But the Board had declined - the rooms were small, the playground very small, and there was no room for expansion.

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2. "If at any time after the expiration of one year from the commencement of this Act it is represented to the Education Department that there is in any school district or any part of a school district an insufficient amount of public school accommodation without payment of fees for children over three and under fifteen years of age, for whom such accommodation is desired, and the Education Department are satisfied after inquiry that such is the case, the Department shall direct the deficiency to be supplied in the manner provided by sections 9 and 10 of the Elementary Education Act 1870".

Elementary Education Act, 1891. Section 5.<sup>2</sup>

The two main classrooms at Hollinwood U.M.F.C. School were 13 feet high, 15 feet wide and 12 feet long. Their area was therefore 180 square feet. The main classrooms in Smith Street Board School, planned in 1872, measured 18 feet by  $14\frac{1}{2}$  feet, giving a superficial measurement of 261 square feet. The Managers of the Voluntary Schools would be faced with the ever-growing obsolescence of their buildings. The press would only comment that

"Churchmen must be prepared to dig deeper into their pockets to keep their Schools up to the mark, or surrender them to the School Board".<sup>1</sup> One is tempted to add; "if they could".

One result of the abolition of fees was the great increase in pupils, especially infants, in the Board Schools. The numbers stood as follows in 1891.<sup>2</sup>

Board Schools (11)	6,398
Church " (18)	10,069
Wesleyan " (5)	2,985
British " (14)	4,958
R.C. " (4)	2,198
(52)	<u>26,608</u>

Brief mention should be made of other steps taken by the Board (with less hesitation than in other matters) during this period. These were the establishment of a class for deaf and dumb children, the institution of prizes for evening school pupils, the establishment of evening classes in Commercial<sup>3</sup> and Scientific subjects, the

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1. Oldham Standard, 9th July 1891.

2. Triennial Report.

3. begun in Wellington Street School 23rd September 1890.

establishment of day classes in cookery and Manual Instruction<sup>1</sup>, and the first steps towards acting with the Town Council in the application of the "Whiskey Money" to be received by the Corporation under the Local Taxation (Customs and Excise Act) of 1890. The Town Clerk informed the Board in March 1891 that the sum would be in round figures, about £2,200. The Trustees of the Science and Art School in the Lyceum were to be approached as their willingness to transfer their premises to the Corporation for the establishment of a technical school under the Technical Instruction Act of 1889. (see Technical Education.)

A loan was negotiated from the Corporation at  $3\frac{1}{2}\%$  interest, to repay the outstanding balances of loans obtained over the years from the Public Works Loan Board at rates up to 4%. The Board estimated that in doing so they would effect a saving over the next fifty years of £6,100 in interest charges. So much for the future. But what of the present? Could the Conservatives claim that they had kept down the rates? On new buildings, only £56 was spent in 1889. The next year, only £1,741. But in its final year of office, the Board spent £11,717.<sup>2</sup> The rate for 1892 was 4.69d. in the £: it did not matter to the Conservative press that the average School Board rate for the English boroughs was 6.5d., and that in some towns it was much more.<sup>3</sup> The Board had let them down badly;

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1. recognised for grant in new Code of 1890.
  2. Triennial Report.
  3. e.g. Huddersfield 16.75d., Halifax 12.5d.

"In its collective wisdom, its contempt for economy and reckless extravagance, no elective body could possibly have gone more in the teeth of the mandate of the ratepayers, who chose the majority of them in good faith.."<sup>1</sup>

Reviewing the progress of the Conservative School Boards, it appears that initially the majority of members were under the impression that it would not be difficult to protect the Voluntary Schools by calling a halt to Board School expansion, or at least to delaying it by raising fees and outvoting Radical proposals.

But the Voluntary Schools were by 1890 so clearly the inferior of the Board Schools that the Radicals proved easily to Whitehall that more Board Schools (including higher-grade education) were nothing short of an urgent necessity. If the Education Department was convinced, it issued a decree which any School Board had to obey on pain of being judged "in default". So the majority swallowed their pride and to their credit, acted fairly. The Werneth Board School was costly and no makeshift structure. Almost as soon as the 1891 Bill became law, the Board abolished fees in all its own schools (except Waterloo). Other Conservative-controlled Boards<sup>2</sup> made no move to avail themselves of this power. Perhaps their Radicals were much weaker minorities than that of the almost evenly balanced Oldham School Board, where the majority was constantly harried by the proposals of the Radicals.

The hard core of Tory resistance was in the Church, whose clerical members saw themselves as the last protectors of young persons against the rising tide of infidelity. They had lost the battle of the fees in Board Schools, though they continued with the policy of delay in expansion. This question became a kind of running battle which both sides took up whenever they had nothing else to discuss. But this was a question of secular education. How could the Churchmen improve the religious instruction given in the Board Schools? At the end of 1891 an opportunity presented itself. The Conservatives secured a clear majority (excluding the R.C. member) on the Board, in spite of the fact that two went over to the Radicals (including the ex-chairman J.W. Radcliffe).

1. Oldham Standard. 10th December 1891.

2. e.g. Salford.

## 11. Religious Instruction - The Church's Last Stand.

The Church was divided within itself on the issue of religious education:-

" ..... on one side stood the Evangelicals and Broad Churchmen; on the other, the Tractarians ..... The great difference between the parties was on the issue of State intervention. While the Evangelicals wanted co-operation with the State, the Tractarians, led by Archdeacons Denison and Manning, stood for exclusive clerical control over the schools. They were the "mediaeval party" of the Church, denying to the State any role in education save that of paymaster, and as the dominant group in the National Society, they were prepared to resist any attempt by the State to restrict their independence."<sup>1</sup>

Such was the background to the controversy which developed in the School Board in 1892. The control of the Board then became an Anglican affair under the Chairman, Canon J. P. Rountree. Another clergyman gained a place on the Board - the Rev. J. G. French, rector of Waterhead. Rountree was a Tractarian. For long he had considered the amount of religious instruction given in the Oldham Board Schools to be inadequate. The Oldham School Board in 1875 was one of the 140 out of 500 which confined religious instruction to the barest minimum. In the previous year Manchester School Board had replaced a very general scheme of religious instruction by an elaborate syllabus prepared by its new chairman, the Rev. J. Nunn. It was warmly praised by Anglican clergymen; it had almost certainly impressed Rountree, who in 1874 was a curate in a Manchester parish.

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1. Cruickshank, Marjorie: Church and State in English Education 1870 to the present day. p.5.

Almost twenty years had elapsed since then. One by one the religious bodies had bowed to the supremacy of the School Boards - except the Anglicans. The British and Foreign School Society had advised local committees in 1881 not to prolong the existence of schools in financial straits unless in areas without a Board or with a denominational bias. In 1891 the Methodist Education Committee declared as its objective the establishment of School Boards everywhere. Even the Anglicans had surrendered about a thousand schools by 1890. Between 1880 and 1885 the proportion of children attending Board Schools increased from one quarter to one third.<sup>1</sup> Speaking on the 1891 (Free Schooling) Bill, Sir R. Temple (member for Evesham) maintained that

"once established, the School Board will never stop until it has absorbed all the elementary education. The School Board is an ogre that eats up everything within reach".<sup>2</sup>

The Conservative M.P. for Oldham, Elliott Lees, was far less pessimistic. He stated that he represented a town where the School Board system had by no means destroyed the Voluntary Schools, and he did not think even if the Bill passed it was likely to do so: "We can still find plenty of money to support our Voluntary School system".<sup>3</sup>

The 1891 Act introduced a uniform grant of 10 shillings per annum (i.e. 3d. a week) to all schools instead of fees. Roman Catholic Schools with low fees benefited, but Anglican Schools - almost a third charging fees of 4d. a week and above - had to meet the deficit from

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1. Cruickshank. p.54

2. Hansard. 1891. Vol.355.

3. ibid.



other sources. It would seem that the member for Oldham had been rather out of touch with local conditions. Not so Rountree, whose own school was in a serious financial condition. Almost as soon as the new Board began its work, Rountree instructed French to draft a new scheme of religious instruction to be adopted by the Oldham Board Schools. (See Appendix II).

Although not obviously "denominational", the scheme, so it seemed to the Radical Nonconformists, borrowed heavily on the forms of prayer and responses of the Anglican Church. What was more to the point, if approved the scheme would make great demands on the time-table.

This aroused opposition among Nonconformists and head teachers, but Rountree was determined to resist all opposition. When the head teachers asked permission to send up a deputation to the Board, it was refused. Several Liberal clubs tried to secure an interview with the Board. They were ignored. On the Board itself, Radcliffe and Travis moved that the implementation of the scheme be postponed for a year. The motion was lost.

Behind the controversy, which was ostensibly a matter of religious curriculum, lay the growing enmity between the Board School enthusiasts and the Church party. The new scheme was debated for months; each detail was singled out for Radical attack.<sup>1</sup> For example, under section 7(d), it was laid down that pupil-teachers were to receive from their principal teachers "instruction in the Holy Scriptures during one hour weekly before morning school". The Churchmen had originally demanded an hour and a half, and would not allow this class

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1. see article in School Board Chronicle: 27th August 1892. p.212, entitled "The Great Religious Instruction Question at Oldham".

to be optional. In other words, there was no conscience clause for the pupil-teachers; but this went right against the regulations of the Code, under which there could be no compulsion.

Attendance at the class could however be prescribed in the pupil-teacher's agreement, in which case if he refused the Board could cancel it.

The Conservatives were accused of setting up this elaborate scheme in order to handicap the Board Schools in their too successful competition with the Voluntary Schools in secular subjects, hence the dissatisfaction of the Board School headmasters. It was even maintained that religious knowledge itself would suffer because of "these vast theological exercises, ceremonies and acquirements".<sup>1</sup>

The Report of the Bryce Commission later described the effect of this internecine feud on the pupils themselves:

"The religious instruction is not satisfactory under this Board. It used to consist of reading a portion of the Bible daily, without note or comment. The present Board has introduced explanation and instruction of an undogmatic character, with the result that about one third of the children<sup>\*</sup> are withdrawn by the parents and spend the time in some other secular subject, usually Arithmetic".<sup>2</sup>

When we consider the Scheme of Religious Instruction to-day, it is difficult to find any doctrinal bias in Schedules 1 and 2. None of the specifically Anglican doctrines from which the Nonconformists

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\* 2,625 out, 6,479 having Religious Instruction in March 1896.  
See O.S. 27th March 1896.

1. S. B. C. *ibid.*

2. Bryce Commission Report VI. 355.

dissented is mentioned. It would have been possible for an Anglican teacher to present the material in the Schedules in such a way as to draw out specifically Anglican interpretations, but it would have been equally possible for a Dissenting teacher to do the same. And in either case, the syllabus itself, which expressly forbids such a use of its material, can hardly be blamed for that.

It is true that the Prayers, being liturgical, tend to conform to an Anglican pattern. Yet the Prayers themselves seem to have been put in by the Rev. French with an eye to their suitability for a school assembly rather than with any desire to teach the contents of Common Prayer. How could the objections of the Nonconformists to Schedule IV have any validity?

Under section 7(e), however, a real complaint would arise, because the ministers of religion were always Anglicans. The first draft of the Scheme stated that the annual examination should be conducted by "a clergyman and a minister of religion" - to which the clergy took exception as implying that a Church of England cleric was not acting in accordance with Christian principles! This was the kind of pusillanimity which clouded the record on both sides of the controversy. So the wording was altered - and for six years, two paid examiners who were Anglican ministers examined the Candidates.

Teachers would therefore tend to prepare candidates in such a way that their answers would please the visiting examiners. The syllabus is not biased, but it could be used, as any syllabus can, in a biased way, and there is a strong possibility that the Churchmen

majority on the Board intended it to be so used, and ensured that it was so used, by the choice of examiners.

By any standards, the time allotted was excessive - pupils aged 8 to 14 would spend a total of 3 hours 20 minutes weekly on religious instruction. The massive withdrawal of Nonconformist children noted in the Bryce Report might well have been occasioned not by what the Anglicans were doing, but by the Nonconformists' fear of what the Anglicans were seeking to do. To realise this mutual distrust to-day is to understand the Victorian attitude to religion. But the whole question was used as a stalking-horse by both sides.

Finally, the question was the cause of a bitter argument at a Board meeting which began at five and ended at midnight. Travis and Radcliffe left the meeting; because of French's intransigence, Radcliffe resigned from the Board. It is evident that his resignation was to some extent prompted by the Conservatives' determination to defy the Radicals as a matter of principle. The Church Schools must be protected at all costs; it was seen that the abolition of fees in the Board Schools was bleeding the Voluntary Schools of their pupils. Some of these had to follow the Board's example, abolishing fees in order to compete for pupils.<sup>1</sup> But even if the fees were abolished in a Voluntary School, the fee grant brought in by the 1891 Act in substitution thereof was not in itself enough to put many of the Oldham Voluntary Schools on a sound financial basis. Most of them were not able to derive much income from voluntary subscriptions, possibly because of the absence of a large middle-class element in

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1. e.g. Waterhead Methodist School.

the population. As a result, these schools ran the risk of forfeiting part of their grant because of the operation of the "seventeen-and-sixpenny limit".

This measure was brought in by Lord Sandon's Act of 1876. In the original draft of Forster's Bill, provision was made that School Boards should subsidise Voluntary Schools out of the rates. Had the clause been allowed to stand, the subsequent history of the Voluntary Schools would have been altogether different; but the Government abandoned it as a concession to the Undenominational party in the House of Commons, and instead it was laid down that the grant might run up to an amount equal to the local income.

In the 1876 Bill, Sandon secured a relaxation to the extent that if the grant earned in the Government examination amounted to 17s.6d. per child, there should not be any deduction reducing that grant by reason of the local income falling below 17s.6d.

At first, therefore, the Voluntary Schools in the town did not suffer. Few, if any, of them were capable of earning 17s.6d. per head in 1876, though their incomes from sources other than grants and school fees were small - in some cases, non-existent. Before the 1891 Act was introduced, A. J. Mundella's return of 1890 was made for the purpose of ascertaining the precise financial basis of support for these schools. In 1889, the following nine schools had no income from Voluntary subscriptions in Oldham:-

1. Littlemoor Lane Church School
2. St. Stephen & All Martyrs Church School

3. St. John's National School
4. St. Ann's Roman Catholic School
5. Rock Street British School
6. Honeywell Lane " "
7. Henshaw Street " "
8. Albert Street " "
9. Greenacres Road Wesleyan School.

A further three were listed as having a "very small" income from subscriptions - less than £10 per annum.

1. Dunbar Street Roman Catholic School
2. St. Paul's National School
3. Townfield Congregational (British) School.

In many cases, the Voluntary Schools had actually suffered a decline in their income since 1876, possibly because, as a result of the growth of the town, their supporters had moved to another district. Thus, Greenacres Road Wesleyan School received £67 in subscriptions in 1876. St. Domingo Street Wesleyan School, once one of the most efficient in the town, received only £15 in 1889 but in 1876 had received as much as £207.<sup>1</sup>

Sandon's provision, that there should be no deduction of grant if local income was low, was only kept in the Act by conceding that, on the other hand, if any grant earned in the examination was in excess of 17s.6d., the excess had to be complemented by an equal amount of local income in excess of 17s.6d., otherwise a like deduction would be made from the grant under article 114.

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1. see School Board Chronicle. 31st October 1891. p.499

The Schools which were hardest hit were the British and Roman Catholics, whose pupils came from the poorest classes. By 1890, they could earn more than 17s.6d. per head in the examinations. They were penalised by the Department because the original provision was out of date. Thus St. Ann's Roman Catholic School had £19.7s.2d. deducted in 1889 under the "seventeen-and-sixpenny limit".<sup>1</sup> The feeling that the Education Department was discriminating against the Voluntary Schools was bound to grow in such circumstances: ironically, the original intention had been to protect the Voluntary Schools against the School Boards.

The Manager and Correspondent of St. Ann's School was the Rev. T. O'Callaghan, of whom it was later said:

"Year after year he had the gratification of knowing that they (the pupils) by their general efficiency had gained the coveted "Excellent Merit" grant, and year after year he had the mortification of seeing those intelligent young brains taxed (as it were) and his school fined by the Board<sup>2</sup> on the "Seventeen-and-sixpenny limit", through not being able to raise by private subscription the sum required equal to that of the Government grant".<sup>3</sup>

Radcliffe blamed the apathy of the Liberals in Oldham for the existence of a Conservative majority on the School Board; in a letter to a Liberal Leader of August 6th 1892<sup>4</sup> he expressed his regret at having to resign from the Board and to sever himself from work which

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1. S.B.C. *ibid.*

2. the Education Department is meant.

3. T. Curley: Catholic History of Oldham. 1911.

4. Oldham Chronicle 20th August 1892.

he had "learned to love". He affirmed his strenuous opposition to the policy of the Conservatives, in or out of the School Board.

The policy of the Churchmen remained unchanged - to delay the construction of new Board Schools for as long as possible, to discourage the growth of the existing higher-grade school and to help the Voluntary Schools as far as they could. Both parties had learned from the episode of the Werneth Board School that provided they could enlist public opinion, the permanent officials at the Education Department seemed to be only too ready to "instruct the School Board as to its duty". Hence, two rival deputations were organised to wait on the Board, one for and one against the abolition of fees in the lower standards at Waterloo. The deputation of abolitionists claimed that they did not represent any particular party or creed; but when pressed on the point by Canon Rountree, their leader admitted that himself and his seven colleagues were all Liberals. The other deputation, acting perhaps on previous instructions from a certain quarter, refused to state what their party was. The debate was adjourned; the decision was delayed; the Churchmen had won the point.

Eventually, after months of fruitless argument, the Liberal case was strengthened when the Education Department informed the Board that in all probability, the school fees received at the higher grade school for the current year would be in excess of the amount allowed by the 1891 Act, which might lead to the whole of the fee grant being endangered under subsection 2 of section 2. Though there had been a reduction of fees when the Bill became law, the Education Department,



in view of the extension of the building, had decided in the previous year that there was a reasonable excuse for failure to reduce them further and had therefore remitted the amount in excess. But no such concession could be expected again.

Travis and Middleton immediately pressed for complete abolition of fees at the school; very reluctantly, the Board decided to abolish the payment of fees by the children of ratepayers in Standards I to VI. Children who were "outsiders"<sup>1</sup> would still have to pay in the seventh and ex-seventh Standard the maximum permissible, 9d. per week, and in Standards V and VI, 6d. per week.

The Conservatives on the Board sought to delay Board School expansion and also to assist impecunious Voluntary schools by inviting their managers to transfer the schools to the Board. But how would this solve the accommodation problem? Once the Voluntary Schools had been transferred, fees would be abolished and, it was hoped, the empty desks would soon be refilled; at the same time undue pressure on existing Board Schools would be removed. The Radicals, led by Middleton and Travis, perceived that more precise information as to the number of free-places available would have to be assembled in order to strengthen their hand, though some of the "Progressives", as they were now being labelled, felt that new buildings were to be avoided for the sake of the rates, if possible.

Being in the minority, the Progressives adopted their now familiar plan, the same tactics having proved successful in the case

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1. i.e. whose parents did not live in the borough.

of the new school at Werneth: to enlist public opinion and, if necessary, communicate directly with Whitehall, without reference to the Board. The Conservative press commented:

"The advocates of Board Schools in Oldham and other parts of the country could not be making a greater mistake than to try and force the hand of the Education Department in the matter of free school accommodation. It is now a generally accepted fact that such accommodation must be provided where and when required, but it is obvious at the same time that the Education Department cannot proceed on the ipse dixit of people with a grievance, to impose burdens which are neither just nor equitable on the ratepayers of a district. They are very wisely insisting that any alleged deficiency shall first be satisfactorily proved, and unless this attitude is intended as a mere blindfold, there need be no fear that the Department will lend itself to the reckless increase of Board Schools".<sup>1</sup>

It will be remembered that the abolition of fees in the Board Schools had caused some Hollinwood ratepayers to petition for the establishment of a Board School in 1891.<sup>2</sup> A year later the Board received a memorial from 183 ratepayers opposing it.<sup>3</sup> Next the Education Department received a petition from 330 ratepayers urging the first request. The reply of Whitehall was to send out queries to the Voluntary Schools in the ward, as follows:

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1. Oldham Standard, 24th November 1892.

2. vide sup. p.203

3. Minutes. 26th October 1892.

1. What is the number of free places in the School as on 25th October 1892?
2. How many of these are available for children of the Freehold\* district?
3. How many of these were vacant?
4. Would you have admitted children free, had they applied, up to 25th October 1892? If so, how many?
5. How many children living in Oldham Borough are on your books?

Three schools replied: Cowhill Wesleyan, Christ Church, Chadderton<sup>2</sup> and St. John's Church, as follows:

<u>Question</u>	<u>Cowhill</u>	<u>Christ Church</u>	<u>St. John's</u>
1.	12	30	285
2.	unlimited no.	no reply	157
3.	see 2	"	40
4.	a few needy cases	"	40
5.	312	520	598

By means of this and other enquiries, the Education Department soon reached the conclusion that there was a deficiency of free school places in the Freehold district and informed the School Board that they would have to provide a school there for at least 650 children. A sub-committee had found that out of 766 children, only 203 did not pay school pence. The plot of land (in Derby Street) had been acquired years before. The Board estimated the cost of the Freehold School at about £14,000.

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\* i.e. in the part of Hollinwood where the petitioners desired a Board School to be built.

The protests of the Conservatives were silenced: perhaps they were reassured by the statistics produced by the National Society as evidence of continued growth in its schools - in England and Wales the number of pupils on the registers had increased over the past year by 68,561: since 1870, no less than 5,831 Church Schools had been established in the country. Besides, the Archbishop of Canterbury had commented that the pace at which Board Schools were gaining on the Church Schools was "rapidly decreasing". It was comforting to learn that the whole question would be settled in "ten or twelve years", and before that time the National Society would have established a "complete system of Church of England Schools". The Bishop of London had, moreover, protested against the "extremely summary action" of the Education Department in insisting upon expensive improvements and alterations at very short notice under pain of the establishment of a School Board. If the National Society were supported in promoting legislation to prevent such attacks, the Education Department would soon be "brought to book".

The building of the Freehold School only partially solved the deficiency of free places in Hollinwood ward - at the lowest computation of the Department it was 1,000 places - but the Board solved the problem by accepting the transfer of the National School attached to St. Margaret's Church, Hollinwood; the decision to do so was not made till February 1894. The Higginshaw Methodist Free Church School was also transferred, but permission to do so was given by the Department only on condition that, as soon as possible, the old building was to be replaced by a Board School costing about £7,000.

Extensions to Northmoor, Watersheddings and Beever Street Schools were also sanctioned. Any hopes the Board may once have entertained concerning rigid economies were finally dashed when it was decided that the old factory schools attached to Greaves' mill at Derker were unsuitable for further use, and the Board were informed by the Department that a new school in replacement would have to be built in this populous and congested area, to accommodate no less than 1,400 children! The bill for this was an estimated £18,000.<sup>1</sup>

The Progressives were indeed a minority on the Board, but were getting every possible encouragement from Whitehall. Travis and Middleton continued therefore to further the cause of higher education. They tried, for example, to have Werneth School<sup>2</sup> opened as a higher-grade school. The motion was lost. Then they tried to secure the separate instruction of the half-timers, but were again defeated. Travis's arguments in favour of another higher-grade school were that a number of children attending Waterloo came from the opposite end of the town. His opponents were horrified at the prospect of what was called "higher education for 7,000 children in the west side of the town". But the visitors at Waterloo could also report that there was grave overcrowding - in February 1894 there were some 900 on the books; the average attendance from the previous June had been 776, for whom only 720 places were provided. There were 354 infants on the books, and only 300 places to meet the demand. The Board promised to investigate

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1. actually £23,700 when built.

2. Still under construction: opened 29th January 1894.

the question and instruct the head teachers in each department to cease admission of new pupils for the time being.

Not all the energies of the Board were dissipated in rancorous arguments. Under the changes made in 1893 by the Evening Continuation School Code, as for example, the recognition of the attendance of persons up to 21 years of age for grant purposes, the Board had developed evening schools in its own and rented Voluntary School premises, and the Chairman of the Evening Schools Committee, Joseph Travis, stated in November 1894 that he had visited nearly all of them and found them to be "very satisfactory". There were over 40 departments, separate classes being conducted for males and females, and as well as the 3 R's, an ever-growing range of subjects was taught, as, for example, Cookery, Shorthand, Typewriting, Dressmaking, French, German, Music, Manual Work, Art and Science subjects.<sup>1</sup>

The Board also increased the efficiency of the teaching of its pupil-teachers by re-organising the classes with a growing emphasis on more studies for the pupil-teachers, and less teaching. The new regulations may be summarised as follows:

- (1) All pupil teachers to attend the Central Classes
    - (a) 1st and 2nd year pupil-teachers to attend there one half of each school day.
    - (b) 3rd and 4th year students to attend there on half day a week, 1½ hours on Monday, on Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings.
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1. See chapter on Evening Schools.

- (2) Head teachers to give to their pupil-teachers instruction on three mornings a week from 7.45 to 8.45, at their respective schools, in Religious Knowledge, Blackboard-writing, Domestic Economy, Euclid (boys), Needlework, and Latin if required.
- (3) Pupil teachers resigning will give six months notice, or in lieu of notice will pay 3, 4, 5 or £6 according to the year of engagement.
- (4) A bonus of £2.10s.0d. will be paid to pupil-teachers obtaining a First Class in the Queen's Scholarship Examination and a further £2.10s.0d. if they go to a Training College.

(5) Salaries:-	per annum:	BOYS	GIRLS
Candidates or Monitors		£12	£10
1st Year Pupil-teachers		£15	£13
2nd Year " "		£18	£15
3rd Year " "		£21	£18
4th Year " "		£25	£22

(The whole of the grant earned under Article 102 to be paid to pupil-teachers passing a "Good" or "Fair" examination).

Needless to say, the Conservatives had failed to curb expenditure; they were, in fact, completely powerless to prevent the rapidly widening field of the Board's activities. Towards the end of their term of office, the Board could only resolve to keep the cost of new schools below £12 per head; they passed a resolution, moved by a Conservative,<sup>1</sup> which is in itself no more than a tacit admission that they could not alone help the struggling Voluntary Schools - however optimistic the Archbishop of Canterbury might be on the same topic.

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1. S. Smethurst.

It was moved that in the opinion of the Board, the time had arrived "when the State ought, in the interests of public economy and justice to denominational schools, to provide some form of rate-aid which would enable them more efficiently to carry on the work of public elementary education, whilst giving public representation on boards of managers and public audit of accounts".<sup>1</sup> Copies of the resolution were despatched to Lord Rosebery, Sir W. V. Harcourt, A. D. Acland, Lord Salisbury, Sir J. T. Hibbert and J. M. Cheetham, M.P.

It may be that the resolution was a face-saving gesture by the Conservatives in front of the ratepayers; certainly, they must have received a shock when the estimate for the next year's precept was stated as £26,500, i.e. an increase over that of the previous year by £8,000, and more than double the precept for 1892 - £12,400. The press complained that "the one important fact for the ratepayers with regard to the budget of the Oldham School Board is that the School Board rate now stands at 11.37d."<sup>2</sup>

The Chairman, Canon J. P. Rountree, hastened to explain why the expenditure had increased so alarmingly; he implied that most of the blame attached to decisions which had been made either by the previous Board - the building of the new Board offices, Werneth<sup>3</sup> School, and the opening of the Day Industrial School<sup>4</sup> - or as a result of what he described as the "forward policy of Board School establishment of the Department under A. H. D. Acland, Vice-president of the Council".

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1. Minutes. 25th July 1894
  2. Oldham Standard 22nd March 1894
  3. The first new Board School in over six years.
  4. on 18th January 1892.



Even the expansion in the evening schools because of the new Evening School Code had caused the Board to overspend its estimate in this field by £1,500.

This explanation was possibly intended for the enlightenment of the voters in the impending election,<sup>1</sup> which was to be held, for the first time, at the beginning of December. Because of the efforts of Rountree, permission had been granted by the Department to increase the number of places on the Board to 15 in view of the rapid growth of the population of Oldham. But it is plain that by this time the electors were becoming resigned to the prospect of increasing expenditure, and that, *faute de mieux*, their best plan would be to re-elect the majority of Conservatives, who at least were not afflicted like the Secularists with "board school mania". The Conservative press could only deplore such apathy:

"The Oldham public do not appear to share the enthusiasm the school board elections have excited in London, Manchester and other towns, even to Royton, where an emphatic verdict has been given in favour of the maintenance of voluntary schools on the same terms of public support as Board Schools<sup>2</sup> ..... They possibly think force of circumstances will compel stricter economy ..... Messrs. Travis and Middleton, as the representatives of a minority, and a small one, have been sedulously occupied during the past six years in running the majority, with the help of the Education Department, into a heavy debt .....<sup>3</sup>

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1: at the end of 1894

2. in the recent School Board election, 6 Voluntaryists had gained seats out of a total of 9.

3. Oldham Standard. 17<sup>th</sup> November 1894.

The total electorate was 24,182, but the number who voted was only 13,919, i.e. 57% of the total. If more had voted, it is possible that the "Progressives" (or Board School advocates) would have been able to regain more seats on the Board.

It is true that the Churchmen had not been able to stop rising expenditure, but they had retarded Board School construction. They won a resounding victory over the Radicals, outnumbering them on the next Board by two to one.<sup>1</sup> Some of the "Progressives" polled well, however, especially Travis and Middleton. Whether their own party was in control or not no longer mattered, provided the Education Department was skilfully handled.

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1. There were now two women members on the Board. Rountree left the Board. Radcliffe did not seek re-election, and died suddenly in November 1895. He left a personal fortune of nearly £200,000.

12. Organised Science School: The Voluntary Schools eclipsed:

Pupil-teachers and the School Board's Social Work.

It would not be true to say that after the control of the School Board passed to the Conservative party, elementary education ceased to develop. The concept of elementary education was itself widening and changing as the years went on. The School Board Schools of 1895 had been in existence long enough to produce young people whose general level of education was far higher than that of 1870. These young people had a sound basic education in the elementary subjects but their appetite for learning had been stimulated and could not be satisfied with the public education which was thought to be adequate for poor people a generation previously. Higher-grade schools like Waterloo had grown up in many large industrial towns. In Oldham, however, the Conservatives thought it to be unnecessary and had called it a "fancy institution". Meanwhile other educational agencies had arisen which also gave an education beyond the Standards. The time was ripe for a re-appraisal of the system; the Radicals no doubt hoped that the findings of the Royal Commission on Secondary Education (Bryce Commission) would lead to a great expansion of higher-grade schooling. The Tories mistrusted the idea, thinking that these new schools were encroaching on the preserves of the endowed grammar schools and the technical instruction committees. The year 1895 witnessed the publication of the Bryce report. In the same year the Conservatives were greatly encouraged by the overthrow of the Liberals at Westminster. They now considered it very likely that Church demands for rate-aid to their own schools would be satisfied by the Conservatives.

The new administration formed by Lord Rosebery brought James Bryce in as President of the Board of Trade (in which capacity he led the Commission). Though a native of Belfast, he had formed strong connections with the Lancashire cotton district.<sup>1</sup> It was familiar ground; in 1864-5 he had been mainly employed as Assistant Commissioner to the Schools Inquiry (Taunton) Commission, reporting on the endowed schools of Shropshire, Worcestershire, nine Welsh counties and Lancashire. Bryce's 1867 report to the Taunton Commission stressed the urgent need for the co-ordination of education. It urged that any scheme to that end should be comprehensive; all categories of school and the Universities should be part of it. The standard of commercial education should also be raised.

His 1867 recommendations went unheeded. In fact, the Bryce Commission examined the results of different kinds of educational agency having grown up side by side. The fields of operation of School Boards and of technical instruction committees overlapped. The Bryce Commissioners soon discovered in the course of their enquiries as to the provision of secondary education that elementary education had so developed since 1870 that it was impossible to say where "elementary" education left off and where "secondary" took over.

The defeat of the Liberal party in 1895 was also a local reverse. The two Liberal M.P's. lost their seats in the general election; one of them was wealthy and influential - Sir J. T. Hibbert - a native

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1. 1868-74 Lectured on Law at Owen's College, Manchester. Later became Professor. Drafted constitution for enlarged college on which 1871 Act of Incorporation was based.

of Oldham and a member of the Bryce Commission. Local Radicals viewed his departure with dismay. The other member, J. M. Cheetham, was also deprived of his seat, and both fell to Conservatives - J. F. Oswald and Robert Ascroft. The Conservative majority on the School Board had been in office only six months when the Liberals were defeated - which must have given them the greatest satisfaction, for their demands for rate-aided Voluntary Schools were reiterated by the memorial of the Church party to Lord Salisbury, the Prime Minister, in 1895, which asked for the abolition of the "17s.6d. limit", the raising of grants and the preservation of the religious basis of education by special religious instruction in both Voluntary and Board Schools.

The Archbishop of Canterbury's ally was the new vice-president of the Council, Sir John E. Gorst, who brought in the Education Bill, 1896. Gorst's bill was expressly designed to meet the demands of the Churchmen, with promised rate-aid and increased grants; at the same time, however, it was designed to deprive the School Boards of their growing power by permitting them to hand over their powers to the County and County Borough Councils as chief local education authorities, supervising elementary, technical and secondary schools. In fact, the Bill aimed at carrying out the task of co-ordination recommended by James Bryce thirty years before: but Gorst no doubt hoped that the School Boards would yield to the more Conservative county councils. In the face of strong Liberal opposition the Bill was withdrawn, but in 1897 relief was afforded to the Voluntary Schools by a Bill which

abolished the 17s.6d. limit, freed them from payment of rates and provided an "aid grant" of 5s. The Bill was a temporary expedient until such time as a more comprehensive scheme for co-ordinating education could be formulated.

The lack of co-ordination was not very apparent in Oldham, but by 1895 the development of secondary education was threefold - the municipal technical school, the Hulme Grammar School, and the higher-grade school - though many denied that this could be legally considered as a "secondary" school. Great confusion existed as to the meaning of the term "secondary"; sometimes the Waterloo Street school was described as an Organised Science school. The Bryce Commission report set out to clear away any doubts as to the character of such a school and as to its future control:

"The term (Organised Science School) does not describe any distinct class of school, but is a purely artificial one, employed to denote such schools, to whatever other class they may belong, as the Science and Art Department has recognised for Grants. All such schools fall in respect of their instruction within the term of Secondary Schools, and therefore should be placed under the control of the local authority for secondary education".<sup>1</sup>

The same authority was also recommended for the control of the technical schools and the Evening Continuation schools. All this seems to have been ignored by the School Board; for there is no direct reference to the Report. It is possible that the Conservatives were more than satisfied at the prospect of losing control over the

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1. Bryce Commission Report I. 290.

higher-grade school, since they had always opposed it and had certainly slowed down its development when they could.

The Bryce Report could say little of Oldham's secondary education - the Chairman of the Governors of the Hulme Grammar School, Joseph Travis, conducted the visitors over the unfinished fabric. Its predecessor the old endowed school, founded by James Assheton in 1606, and visited by Bryce in 1864, had long since disappeared, and the money - only £57 a year - had been absorbed into the new Grammar-School scheme.

The Blue-coat School, financed with a gross income of £2,282 from Henshaw's Charity, applied it mainly to the clothing, feeding and education of about 90 boys and girls, an education largely elementary in type, with a few extra subjects. The Report<sup>1</sup> considered Secondary education to be in "the same deplorable state" as when described by Bryce in the Schools Inquiry Report. Only the municipal technical school and "the excellent higher-grade school" were effectively giving a secondary education, though about 40 boys travelled by train to Manchester Grammar School daily. There was "a considerable dearth" of private schools. The Bryce Commission considered that in a town where secondary education was reasonably well provided, about 12 children per thousand would be receiving it. In Oldham, taking boys and girls into account, and including in the estimate the children in the ex-seventh Standard at Waterloo, it was calculated that no more than 2 per thousand were so provided for.

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1. VI. 148

The proprietors of the private schools complained bitterly that their establishments were being emptied by Waterloo and Werneth Board Schools,<sup>1</sup> and the Assistant Commissioner expressed (at Waterloo) surprise at the prosperous appearance of many boys,

" and I found on inquiry that there were present children of professional men, of ministers of different denominations, as well as of tradesmen of the town".

But the school was still being run mainly as a mixed elementary school with nearly 900 pupils, and separate infants department attached. On 31st May 1894 out of 873 pupils present, 513 were under twelve, 291 were between twelve and fourteen, 45 were between fourteen and sixteen, and only 3 were over sixteen years of age. 100 pupils were in Standard VII but only 32 were out of the standards.<sup>2</sup> By contrast, the Central higher-grade school at Rochdale was more truly "secondary" in character. Founded in 1885 it contained in 1894 only 280 pupils, but 25% of them (72) were out of the standards.

At Waterloo the 32 pupils who were doing work above Standard VII earned grants solely from the Science and Art Department, but other pupils in the standards were also examined in these because of the higher grants which could be earned. By clever management a fair income could be amassed, but it was a rule of the Department that a minimum of 13 hours a week had to be spent on Science and Art subjects (out of a total of 25½).

The result was that the literary subjects, which earned no grant and were not examined, were compressed into 4½ hours a week,

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1. see VI . 151

2. Appendix to Bryce Report. p.388



including music and drill, and the curriculum was unbalanced in favour of science to the extent that in the second year of the organised science course, 70% of the time was thus occupied by both the boys and the girls; all were to be examined in Elementary Mathematics, Theoretical and Practical Chemistry, Heat Light and Sound, Mechanics and Geometrical Drawing. But only 14% of the time was devoted to Literary subjects, and less still to technical subjects (including manual work, bookkeeping, shorthand and needlework) and Art subjects (for example, music and drawing).<sup>1</sup>

For the girls especially, this curriculum was unsuitable, though there were far more boys working on it. About half the girls were going to be pupil-teachers, and the headmaster thought that these "would derive some benefit from the intellectual effort"<sup>2</sup> but for the rest he considered the course to be almost useless; most of the girls left before the end of the two-year course anyway. As long as the Board could make the school pay its way, however, the system would doubtless continue: even the Board members who were most enthusiastic in promoting higher-grade education for its own sake rather than for the grant which could be earned never questioned for a moment whether the curriculum was "balanced" or not. The opponents of higher-grade schools stopped categorising them as costly and extravagant when they saw the rates were not endangered. Travis and Middleton therefore continued to press for an extension of the system in the Board Schools, and a permanent sub-committee was set

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1. VI. p.207.

2. VI. p.352.

up to prepare a scheme which would effectively "co-ordinate" the Waterloo Street Higher Grade School, the new Grammar School and the Municipal Technical School.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile the control of the Board was now firmly in Conservative hands; no new schools were contemplated; instead, Voluntary Schools were taken over on rental with the understanding that new accommodation would only be provided if the Education Department ordered it. Some of the impecunious Voluntary Schools were able to rent their premises to the Board for evening classes. The Churchmen were now well aware that there were almost as many pupils in the Board Schools as in the Voluntary Schools,<sup>2</sup> and were determined to restrict the Board's activities in order to protect the struggling denominations. Thus when the Board appointed a doctor to attend at the Day Industrial School in order to treat pupils for eye affections, the Rev. F. Wareham<sup>3</sup> complained that the Board was betraying a "tendency to become grandmotherly" and that as an educational body they ought to keep out "all extraneous matter, especially as it could not extend the benefit to the scholars of the Voluntary Schools."<sup>4</sup>

The Board School enthusiasts now faced opposition not only on the local level but also from the Education Department, and by a cruel twist of fate lost the services of one of the most energetic men the Board had ever contained, Joseph Travis, on 7th January 1896.

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1. There is no further reference to this sub-committee.

2. Oldham Standard 26th September 1895. Board: 8,612. Voluntary: 9,116 pupils.

3. Voluntaryist member of the School Board.

4. O.S. 22nd August 1895.

Returning home from Manchester late at night, Travis set out to walk along the canal bank in a thick fog; some hours later his body was dragged from the water. His tragic death was a great blow to Liberal hopes on the Board, but his place was filled by another energetic and forthright Secularist, Dr. James Yates J.P. The Conservatives continued to block proposals for an extension of higher-grade education until the 1897 Voluntary Schools Bill had become law, yielding only to Middleton's proposal, the establishment of a Central Higher-Grade school on the lines of the Rochdale school, when they were sure that the Voluntary Schools would be in a better financial position.

But the decline in attendance was now a serious financial loss to the Voluntary School managers, many of whom, as we have seen, had no endowments to help them. The decline was most serious in the Church Schools - four National Schools and a British School had been transferred to the Board,<sup>1</sup> and it was alleged that the opening of the Werneth Board School had "nearly destroyed" St. Thomas's Werneth and Christ Church Schools, whose erstwhile head teachers had had to take posts as ordinary assistants under the Board. A few more years, and the decline would be complete.

1896: Pupils in average attendance in Oldham:<sup>2</sup>

	<u>1892</u>	<u>1896</u>
(a) Voluntary Schools	12,658	10,402
(b) Board Schools	5,490	9,825

The case of St. James's Church School, Lowermoor, was typical. By the end of 1896, a debt of about £500 had accumulated at the rate of

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1. St. Margaret's, St. John's, Derker and Littlemoor Lane.
2. Oldham Standard. 1st May 1896.

about £90 a year, so a bazaar was organised to clear it off. It was alleged that after 67 years' successful work the school had been driven into debt by the Education Department's growing demands, not only as a result of higher maintenance costs, but also because the abolition of school-pence was not sufficiently compensated by the 10 shilling fee-grant per head in lieu thereof. The boy's department was consequently already closed, and the managers were only keeping the girls' department on in the hope that the Government would increase their financial aid in 1897. Although a new Board School was being built nearby, St. James's had accommodation for 816 pupils but the average attendance had dwindled to 394.<sup>1</sup>

The Chief spokesman for the Oldham Conservatives was Samuel Smethurst, when the Lancashire M.P's. were interviewed at the House of Commons by a deputation from the Northern Counties Voluntary Schools Protection Association in early 1897; one of his points was the harmful effect of the 1891 Act:

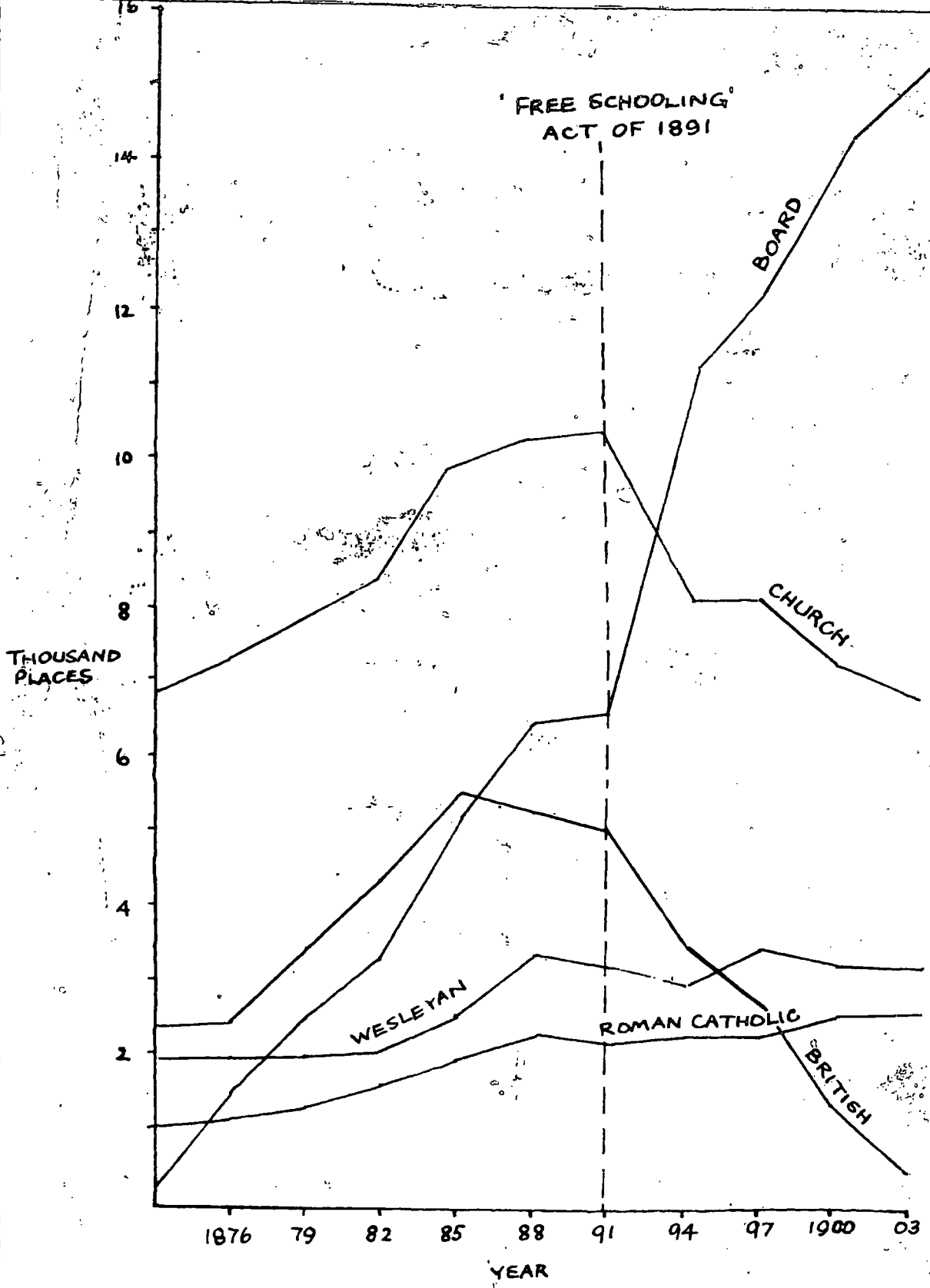
"In Oldham the Board scholars have doubled in the last five years, and this at the expense of the Church Schools, which have collapsed".<sup>2</sup>

The position of the Voluntary Schools was worse than ever before because they were now competing with the Board Schools for fewer pupils. The population of Oldham was gradually becoming on the average older as housing standards and public health improved; the

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1. Oldham Standard. 1st January 1897.

2. " " 25th February 1897.



The decline of British Schools began before 1891. They lacked financial support and they became outdated by Whitehall's rising standards of accommodation. The 1891 "Free Schooling"

Act dealt them (as well as the Church Schools) a mortal blow. Only one was still open in 1903. The Conservative-controlled Board did check Board School expansion briefly after 1888; but after 1891 the Church Schools declined quickly. They were "bled" of pupils whose parents refused to continue paying fees for what was often an inferior education to that provided by the Board, whose own schools never stopped growing after fees were abolished. The Wesleyans and Roman Catholics grew little after 1891, and the Church Schools were obviously in difficulties after 1885. Endowments in Lancashire were only 5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>d. a head in Church Schools in 1895.



death-rate went down, so did the birth-rate,<sup>1</sup> to a lesser extent. The number of children below 15 years actually declined after 1891, although the number of inhabitants increased. With many places vacant in the Voluntary Schools, parents of pupils were now faced with a choice in those districts where the Board Schools were not refusing admission on account of over-crowding - should they send their children to these, or to the Voluntary Schools? Those parents who had sufficient interest only to look at the large, up-to-date Board Schools and then compare them with the crumbling brick barns which housed the Voluntary Schools had no hesitation in choosing to have their children "educated on the rates", if pressure from the clergy did not prevent them.

Estimated number of Oldham children in age-group

3 - 13 years. ( 2/3 of 0 - 15 years age-group.

		Population of Borough
1871	: 18,000	83,000
1881	: 27,000	111,000
1891	: 30,000	131,000
1901 <sup>2</sup>	: 26,000	137,000

As the pressure on the School Board to provide places disappeared after 1891, the wrangling between the Churchmen and the Secularists ceased to be a feature of the monthly Board meetings;

1. Noted on p.23 of the Triennial report for 1898-1900.

Oldham birth-rate in 1891 was 30.8 per 1000  
 in 1899 " 24.8 " "  
 (c.f. in 1873 " 41.7 " " )

2. in 1900, actually 26,692.

the business was transacted with a corresponding increase in efficiency. The scheme for religious instruction was still followed in the Board Schools, much to the disgust of the Liberals and many of the parents, but nothing could be done about it. What a contrast this was with the action of the Education Department in disallowing Bye-law 4 in 1871<sup>1</sup> - which had begun:

"In Board Schools, no religious observances will be practiced: and no religious instruction will be given in school hours". In fact the work of the Board as regards day-schools consisted largely in discussing minor problems; both parties prevaricated and kept an eye on decisions in London. The Conservatives' proudest boast was that the School Board rate, which had formerly risen to 1s.0d. in the £, had been skilfully kept down to a mere 9d. for three successive years. But the Board persisted in being what the Rev. F. Wareham had called "grandmotherly" - St. Michael's School was rented for deaf mute classes, and in September 1897 the Board set up a fund to finance the distribution by the teachers in the public elementary schools of food and tea to hungry children. This was occasioned by an engineers' lock-out; the teachers were requested to send in a return, and by the end of a week 39 schools had submitted the names of 2,300 children.<sup>2</sup>

Joseph Travis's work for higher-grade education was continued by James Middleton; Waterloo Street was full, and had a waiting list. The scheme for a Central higher-grade school was opposed on expense grounds; it was even suggested that a better plan

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1. vid. sup. p. 56

2. Oldham Standard 1st October 1897.



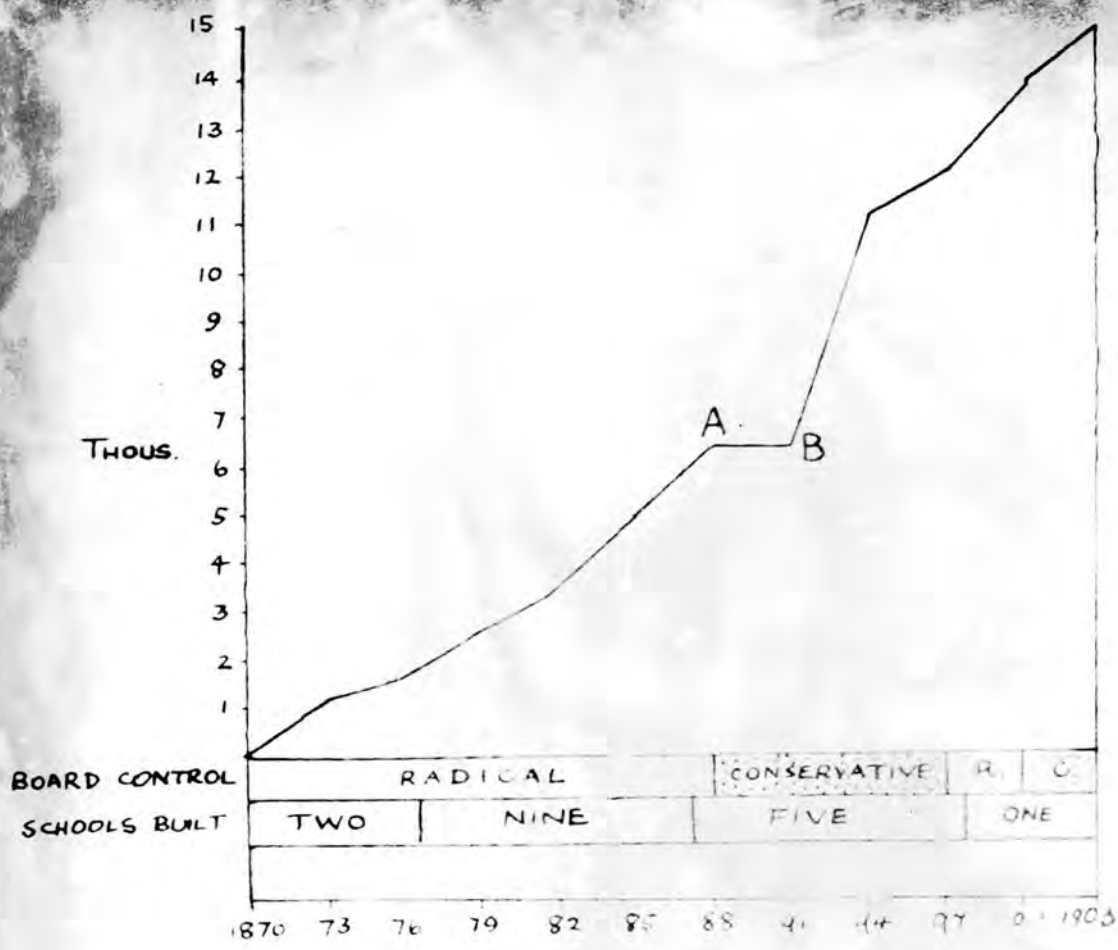
would be either to dispense with the lower standards at Waterloo, running it purely as a higher-grade school, or else to create scholarships for Board School pupils to pass on to the new Hulme Grammar School. The approach of a School Board election was usually made an excuse to postpone discussions on the future of the higher-grade school! By this time the ratepayers were decidedly suspicious of both parties - though the Conservatives loudly proclaimed that as a contrast to the Radicals they had saved £12,000 of the ratepayer's money by keeping the School Board rate down to 9d. in the pound! The 1897 election aroused little interest (only 58% of the electors polled). The growing dissatisfaction of the ratepayers was reflected in the great support afforded to a "Teachers' Candidate", W. T. Mitton, and two Socialists. The Conservatives were sent to the bottom of the poll. Like its schools, the Church party was in eclipse. (See diagram). Once more the Radicals were in control; but the popularity of the School Board itself was declining. The years of construction were virtually at an end.

The Bryce Commission found that the curriculum of the Organised Science School was heavily biased in favour of pure science subjects because of the conditions laid down by South Kensington.<sup>1</sup> It was therefore revised: the school was renamed "School of Science" and the Science and Art Directory laid down that at least ten hours a week should be devoted to literary studies:

"A School of Science must provide a thorough and progressive course of education in science combined with literary or commercial

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1. vide supra p.240

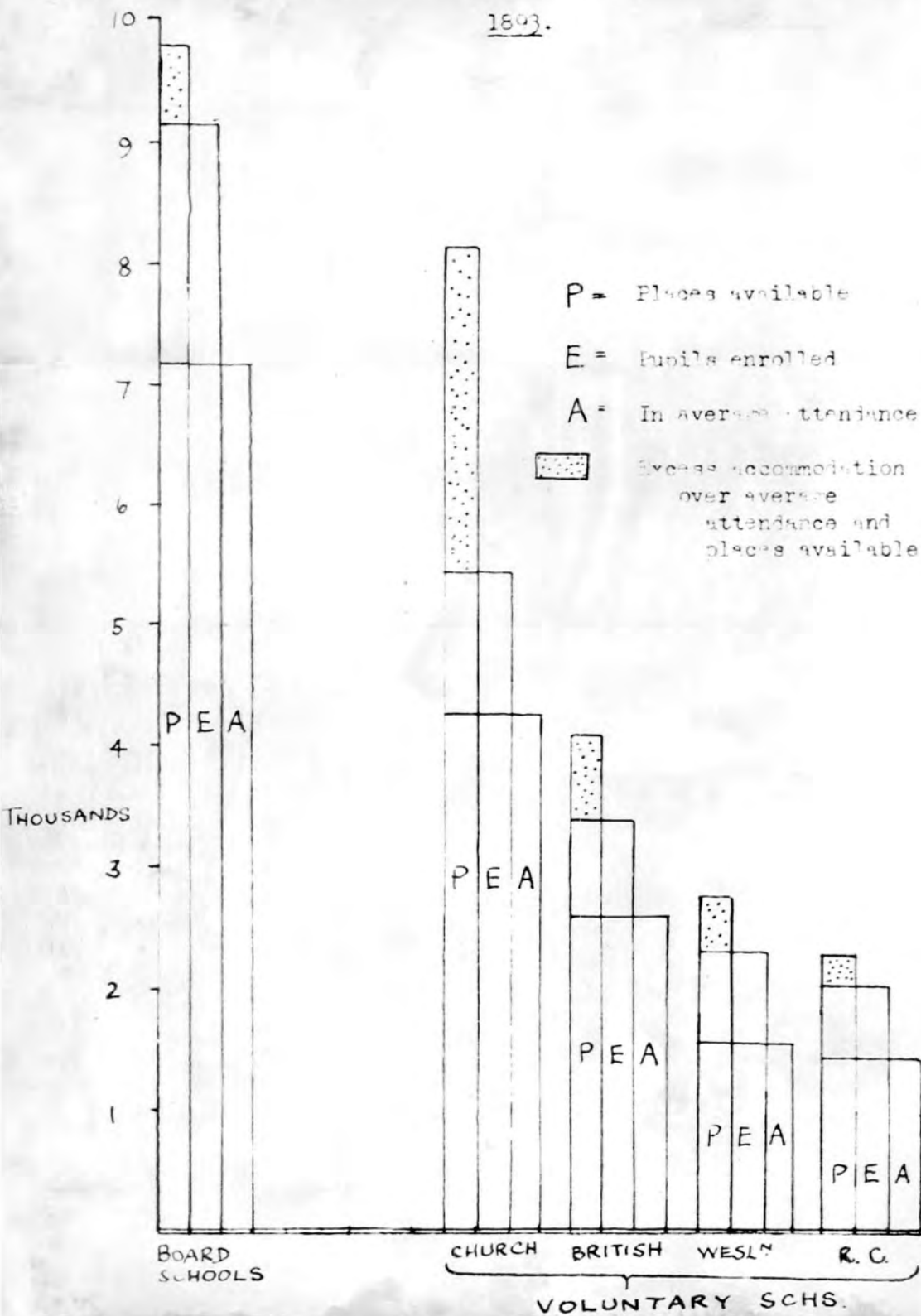


A = End of the "18-year Rule"  
 B = Board School freed.

The first eighteen years of School Board activity witnessed the erection of eleven board Schools to hold over 5,000 pupils. Although the radicals controlled the board during this period, the pressure of all bodies to provide School places was so great that there was little opposition to the board's work. Although the demand for education grew, the Voluntary Schools lacked the necessary financial resources to meet it in their own schools. As these began to suffer from board School rivalry, the Churchmen raised control of the School Board and succeeded briefly in halting the expansion initiated by the Radicals. Soon after this, however, the 1876 "Free Schooling" Act permitted the board to free all its schools giving an elementary education. An active radical minority continued successfully for a resumption of the expansion of board School places as the demand for these in preference to Voluntary School places grew. Towards the end of the School Board period, the number of children requiring places in the town's schools declined somewhat: as however the Voluntary Schools were being closed down their pupils continued to sustain the demand for board School places. The later Board Schools, though fewer in number than the radical-built ones, were bigger and more ambitiously designed. At the close of the period they provided accommodation for over 15,000 pupils, or about 56% of the school-children of Oldham.

Public Elementary Schools in 20thm.

1893.



This diagram shows the varying pressure on school places in the year 1893. At this date, the number of children of school-age reached a maximum of about 29,000 in Oldham. The corresponding age-group of to-day numbers no more than 16,000. The average attendance by 1893 had risen to approximately 80% of those on roll, thanks largely to the efforts of the School Board's officials. About 30% of these children were in Board Schools, but these were nearly full and the demand for places was growing.

The Roman Catholic and the Wesleyan Schools were also near to being overcrowded because these denominations found it difficult to raise funds for school-building. Their prospects were poor.

The Church and British Schools were declining in popularity. Some still charged fees; in many, the number of empty desks was greater than those occupied. As the pupils disappeared these schools were beginning to close down, to the growing alarm of their supporters.

instruction adapted to students whose education is such as would fit them to enter Standard VII of the English Code for a Public Elementary School."<sup>1</sup>

But having relaxed the curriculum so far in favour of liberal subjects, South Kensington added a condition which was clearly aimed at keeping up the scientific standard. Students whom the Inspector reported to be unfitted to benefit by the course would be excluded. The Waterloo Street higher-grade school had as we have seen only 32 out of 900 pupils out of the standards when inspected by the Bryce Commission and the head admitted that in any case most of the girls left before the end of the science course. Despite the efforts of Travis and Middleton to promote this type of school, it was evident that a precarious future awaited the School of Science.

The new grammar school and the municipal technical school were now competing against it. To add to its troubles, the Board received a circular from the Secretary of the Science and Art Department<sup>2</sup> late in 1897 stating that, in view of the small numbers of pupils at some Schools of Science who stayed for the second and third years of the course and who thereby got special grants, the Inspectors had been informed that any school from which 25% of the first year pupils left or more than 25% at the end of the second year, must be reported to him. Then it would be up to South Kensington to decide to continue or not to recognise it as a School of Science.

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1. Science and Art Directory. 1897. Reg. LVII. p.42.

2. Major-General Sir John F. D. Donnelly, R.E.

This edict from South Kensington rudely shattered the Progressives' dream of higher-grade schools for all. They could not hope to comply with the terms, in view of the numbers leaving prematurely. The Radicals resented what they thought was an unfair attack - for, said they, had not the Education Department hitherto sanctioned and actively encouraged expenditure on special accommodation and equipment in the higher-grade school? And now this sudden shift of policy came in the midst of new proposals to extend it. But was it a shift? The trouble surely stemmed from the fact that here the Board was trying to serve two masters - Whitehall and South Kensington - and it was at the mercy of both.

The Board told teachers at Waterloo Street to do all they possibly could to encourage pupils to stay on; but it was uneasy about the future.

The new Chairman, Dr. James Yates J.P., was determined to carry on the "Progressive's" policy of making elementary education as efficient and as accessible as possible. The first step was to abolish fees at the Board Schools which were paid by "outsiders", living mainly in Chadderton and Royton. Next, the teaching of certain specific subjects was extended in the schools. It was resolved that domestic economy be taught in all the Board Schools, that Algebra be taught in four, Mechanics in three, and that French, German and Latin be likewise expanded.

To introduce such innovations almost with the same stroke of the pen as the abolition of the outsiders' school-pence was to provoke

1. HIGGINSHAW
2. WATERSHEDDINGS
3. WATERHEAD
4. LITTLEMORE LANE
5. DERKER
6. SMITH - ST.
7. DAY INDUST. SCHOOL
8. BEEVER - ST.
9. WATERLOO
10. ROUNDTORN
11. NORTHMOOR
12. WELLINGTON - ST.
13. SCOTTFIELD
14. ST. JOHN'S
15. WESTWOOD
16. WERNETH
17. HATHERSHAW
18. ST. MARGARET'S



1893

- BOARD SCHOOLS
- ⊗ BOARD'S OFFICES
- △ VOLUNTARY SCHOOLS
- BUILT-UP AREA

a broadside of Conservative opposition. It was unfortunate that the spinning trade was just then experiencing chronic depression, with the result that Oldham stood at the head of the list of rate-defaulting towns in England. The press brought up the usual arguments:

"In less than half an hour last night the School Board plunged into the Borough treasury on the "help-yourself" principle. It is well known that at each extremity of the borough, parents are fleeing beyond the reach of the municipal rate-collectors without at the same time losing the privilege of sending their children to the nearest Oldham Board School ..... At this rate we may soon expect another crop of borough-rate summonses ..... we shall not want any secondary education scheme in Oldham: we have a School Board that will anticipate the teaching of "subjects", while ignoring the three R's, and propagating ignorance among the overwhelming majority of the children attending the Board Schools."<sup>1</sup>

But the editorial voiced unconsciously a real truth - it was indeed a privilege for any parent to be able to send his children to a Board School, and for those who looked beyond the 3 R's for their families, the Board School pointed the way. There is no more striking proof of this than the fierce competition for the scholarships in the higher-grade school. In June 1898 there were 123 candidates, drawn from all the public elementary schools. But 76 of them were already pupils in the standards at Waterloo Street. Only 28 candidates were awarded scholarships - most of whom were Board School pupils.

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1. Oldham Standard 30th March 1898.



The Board Schools were also the best training-grounds for potential teachers, as the Cross Commission had shown. In May 1898 out of 135 pupil-teachers who attended the central classes, 104 were in Board Schools and only 31 came from the Voluntary Schools. With numerical superiority came a corresponding academic superiority.

Queen's Scholarship Examination List, 28th March, 1898.

Oldham Candidates: 28 girls, 4 boys.

Pass Standards.

Girls:	1st Class	:	5	(at Board Schools)
	2nd "	:	13	(9 at Board Schools)
	3rd "	:	10	(8 at Voluntary Schools)
Boys:	1st "	:	1	(at Board School)
	2nd "	:	3	( " " " )
	3rd "	:	none	

The decline of the Voluntary Schools, not so much in the number of schools, though some more of these<sup>1</sup> were taken over by the Board as temporary accommodation, as in their standards, continued. By May 1898 the Board was just ahead in accommodation - but well ahead in the quality of instruction.

May 1898

Average grant per head in 30 Voluntary Schools:	18s. 11½d.
" " " " " 17 Board "	20s. 4½d.

Accommodation in use:

In Voluntary Schools	12,185 on roll
" Board "	12,390 " "

1. Honeywell Lane British School: Greenacres British School:  
St. John's U.M.F. Church School, Hollinwood.  
By 1900 the Voluntary Schools accommodation had decreased by  
1,931 since 1897. (Triennial Report).

At the same date there were only 585 children on the rolls of private and secondary schools in the town - as compared with 24,626 children enrolled in the public elementary schools.

The Conservatives, having lost control of the Board, could do little to prevent the extension of many existing schools by the building of infants departments. The greatest expenditure was, however, the projected expansion of higher-grade schooling, and this was resisted strongly by the Conservatives, who found members of the town council only too ready to fall in with their wishes: even though some were Radicals.<sup>1</sup> Since the creation of the Technical Instruction Committee and the opening of two technical schools by the municipality, the School Board and the Council had become increasingly suspicious of each other's activities in education "beyond the standards". The Board passed a resolution<sup>2</sup> deploring the action of the Science and Art Department in appointing technical education committees in various districts to act as authorities for the administration of the Science and Art grants.

The School Board felt that its powers were being by-passed. The Radicals, therefore, were grimly determined to maintain their independence; the Technical Instruction Committee, finding that during the day-time their schools were virtually unoccupied, decided to suggest to the Board that they be used for the proposed growth in organised science classes. The Conservatives naturally supported them - on grounds of economy.

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1. e.g. Jackson Brierley (Chairman of the Technical Institution Committee).

2. Minutes. 26th July 1898.

After some hesitation, the Board and the Technical Instruction Committee inspected the premises available, but the Board dismissed the proposal, in their opinion, the splitting-off of the Organised Science Section of the higher-grade school would interfere with efficient working by "disrupting its organisation". Furthermore the Corporation was informed that though the Board thought that an expansion of higher-grade teaching was urgently required, it considered the accommodation offered unsuitable.

Having rejected the Council's overtures, and only after a long and bitter debate, the Radical Board was committed to building a central higher-grade school. It was suggested that, instead, the Day Industrial School should be closed as such and adapted for the purpose. The Industrial School was admitting fewer children each year and was a heavy charge on the rates - £11 per child for 1899 - it was dismissed by some members of the Board as "a half-time work-house" but, surely, another member<sup>1</sup> was nearer the truth when he suggested that it had failed because it did not remove children from a bad home environment. The School eventually closed down in 1900 and the building was used as the pupil-teachers' centre afterwards.

The Radicals rejected this proposal because the premises were unsuitable; they decided to build on a site adjoining Waterloo Street School new premises to hold the infants and lower standards of the mixed school. Until this was complete the higher-grade school would not be fulfilling its purpose completely. The Voluntaryists had effectively delayed this extension for years; owing to further

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1. The Rev. A. J. Viner.

delay in securing the plot of land, it was not opened for pupils until 28th February 1903.

The Board continued what the Radicals regarded as valuable social work, or what the opposition called "being grandmotherly". The Savings banks established on 25th March 1889 (see appendix 16) flourished: they played an important part in financing higher-grade scholarships. On 30th June 1900 they showed a credit balance of £3,238, which is a useful sum in modern values. At this time only vocal (as distinct from instrumental) music was considered for grant. Dr. Yates gave 25 brass instruments to Derker Board School and a band was formed there.<sup>1</sup> The Standard for total exemption was raised from VI to VII. Classes in gymnastics, swimming and drill continued. Lending libraries were established in six Board Schools. Special classes established at Yates's instance in 1898<sup>2</sup> were approved under the 1899 Elementary Education (Defective and Epileptic Children) Act. Under this the Boards were given permissive power to enforce the school attendance of educationally sub-normal children up to sixteen years of age.

In short, the concept of a School Board's field of operation had changed fundamentally during the thirty years which had elapsed since the 1870 Act. In School Board matters, as in political thought, the idea of laissez-faire was no longer generally approved. Few would honestly maintain, as Robert Lowe had done when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer,

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1. Oldham Blue Coat School had a brass band also.
  2. for twenty children.

"I hold it as our duty, not to spend public money to do that which people can do themselves."

Some of the Conservatives had not, however, departed from Lowe's opinion. Anxious to regain control of the Board, their 1900 election campaign opened with the customary attack on the spending of public money. By the end of 1900 the School rate was 1s.6d. in the pound. This was rather high compared with the rate in some Lancashire towns, as

Liverpool	1s. 2d.	in the pound
Rochdale	1s. 1½d.	" " "
Widnes	1s. 1d.	" " "

Of course, the rate varied widely, and from causes not universally in operation. Some towns (like Preston, where the rate was only three farthings) had grown more slowly than Oldham; here, the Voluntary Schools had been able to keep pace with demand. School Boards were never established in Preston, Wigan, Warrington and Bury for that reason. In Ashton-under-Lyne the rate in 1900 was still only 2d. in the pound.

Needless to say, the Conservatives did not explain the disparity. They succeeded in alarming the Council, which passed a resolution<sup>1</sup> urging the School Board "seriously to consider the effect the growing rate might have on trade and industries within the borough". The School Board precept increased by 11% per annum. Municipal expenditure increased by 3%. The natural increase in the rateable value of the borough was only 1.25%.

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1. see Oldham Standard, 8th December 1900.

The chief organiser of the campaign to discredit the Radicals was an ex-member of the Board, the builder Samuel Smethurst, of Coldhurst House. He used the blue-books of the Education Department to great effect: whereas the average cost per pupil in the Oldham Board Schools was £2. 8s. 5d. per annum, the figures for Gateshead, Sunderland and South Shields were only £1. 4s. 4d., £1. 5s. 10d. and £1. 6s. 4d. respectively. Smethurst omitted to state that the Oldham School Board was repaying loans and interest at twice the amount paid out by South Shields. A few well-chosen statistics, however, won the day for the Tories. Few of the ratepayers were seriously concerned. They knew that the days of the School Board were numbered.

13. The School Board's Last Days: its Schools and Teachers.

The last Oldham School Board began work in 1901. For most of its term of office, its activities were restricted after the Cockerton judgment of 1900. The work of Whitehall and South Kensington had already been co-ordinated by the 1899 Board of Education Act. A special act of 1901 enabled School Boards to continue to spend the rates on pupils over 15 in higher-grade and evening schools: this act authorised town councils (with powers of the Technical Instruction Acts) to allow Boards to spend the rates. The 1901 Act curtailed the power of the Boards - the County and County Borough Councils were to be the local education authorities. The 1902 Education Act abolished the Boards.

The general feeling of the members of Oldham School Board towards the Cockerton judgment was of disapproval. They blamed it, in fact, for what was really the deliberate policy of Sir John Gorst and his aide Morant. However, until the appeal decision in Cockerton was known, the Board made arrangements for evening classes to be continued as usual, though these were restricted by the provisions of the Evening Schools Minute of 1901. (See Chapter 8).

The Radicals were anxious to preserve the nature of the Board in the new education authority. The Board supported Leeds School Board's petition of June 1901 urging that the "ad hoc" principle should be ashered to. The Churchmen thought that the sooner the Board was abolished, the better. The Rev. F. Wareham said that as a body responsible only for elementary education, they had proceeded ultra vires

with the higher-grade school. Another Conservative, Wild, maintained that when young people reached 16 they ought not to be a charge for education on the rates.

Having restricted the Board's evening work and the higher-grade schools, the Board of Education altered the Code. The age at which pupils could earn grant for manual instruction and cookery was raised from Standard 5 to 12 years. This meant a further loss of funds for Oldham. The Board protested strongly to one of the M.P.'s - Winston Churchill - who took up the complaint with Gorst. Gorst's reply was that the raising of the age would leave quite as many children eligible for grant as before - taking the country as a whole. This reply was of no satisfaction to Oldham, in view of the additional loss in evening fees. The Board lost over £200 in grants and had they not been empowered to use the rates on older pupils, they would have lost many pupils also.

In July 1901 there were 24 pupils over 15 years in the Science School and 5 in the mixed school at Waterloo Street. During the previous evening-school session, 2,848 out of 4,420 scholars were over 15. Actually, the loss of revenue was made up by the Board of Education under the Necessitous School Boards Act. Oldham Board got £1,400 for 1900 and £2,500 for 1901, but the members were concerned at the great fall in evening school enrolments in October 1901 - over 1,000 less than the previous session - and the decrease was described as "ominous".<sup>1</sup>

The Voluntary Schools were even worse off. They struggled on as their accommodation declined - schools closed, or the H.M.I. reduced

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1. see Minutes 1st October 1901.



the number of places because the premises were unsuitable for the standards of 1901. For example, the 527 places in St. Andrew's Church School were reduced to 340 by the Board of Education, despite the improvements carried out by the Managers at the end of 1901.<sup>1</sup> Greenacres Road Wesleyan School had a debt of £800, as did many other Nonconformist Schools. The hardest hit were the British (Congregational) Schools. In 1888, they had 5,074 places. In 1903 they had only one school left, with only 432 places open. The Roman Catholics actually increased their accommodation by about 10% between 1888 and 1903. They were the poorest section of the community and thus their efforts are most praiseworthy. The richer Wesleyans maintained their accommodation during the same period at around 3,000 places.

The Church Schools declined rapidly. In 1888 they had over 10,000 places; the Board Schools had 6,400. By 1903 the pendulum had swung - there were 6,800 places in Church Schools but 15,400 in the Board Schools.

The most telling figures relate to attendance. Was it true that Board Schools enticed away Church School pupils? If in 1903 all the enrolled Board Scholars had presented themselves at school, 94% of all space would have been filled. If all the Church Scholars had done so, only 73% of the seats would have been filled. Average attendance was about 80% of enrolment. So the average Church School in Oldham in 1903 was only 60% filled. The record shows that many were far emptier than that:- St. Mark's Glodwick held 577. Only

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1. Oldham Standard 18th February 1902.

286 were in average attendance; Oldham Parish Church Schools had an average attendance of 490 but there was accommodation for 997. St. Peter's National School had only 290 but space for 915 children, and so on.<sup>1</sup>

There is little doubt that the freeing of the Board Schools in 1891 had contributed to the drain of pupils from Voluntary Schools. Nine (out of 22) still charged school-fees, bringing in a total sum of £328, during the year ending 31st August 1903.<sup>2</sup> The closing of some Voluntary Schools created a deficiency in Clarksfield district and the Board of Education approved the erection of a new Board School to supply it, at a cost of about £25,000. This was the last Board School in Oldham.

The School Board lost money because of Code changes but earned more in the School of Science, as its income for the last six years of its existence showed<sup>3</sup>:-

Year	1898	1899	1900	1901	1902	1903
Education Dept. Grant	13,006	14,409	14,522	15,208	13,043	13,119
Science & Art Grant	1,321	771	1,015	1,203	2,406	2,369
School Fees (day and evening)	953	979	1,113	1,067	812	773
Totals:	15,280	16,159	16,650	17,478	16,261	16,261

The Education Act of 1902 made special provision (under section 17) that a scheme for the constitution of the new local education authority

1. See Report of Board of Education 1900. Cd. 332. IXIV. List of Schools for Inspection. Year ended 31st August 1899.

2. Oldham Standard 26th May 1903.

3. Triennial Reports of School Board.

should "provide for the appointment, if desirable, of members of the School Boards existing at the time of the passing of this Act as members of the first committee". The Technical Instruction Committee in Oldham drafted a scheme without sending the details to the Board. The Chairman said that they had thus been "gratuitously insulted". The Radicals pointed out that the only reason the Board had not been specially mentioned was that there were three members who were also members of the Technical Instruction Committee. So they, if placed on the new body, would be a fair representation.

The Conservatives complained to the Board of Education and eventually won the point. The Board refused to sanction the first draft and insisted that provision be made for the proper representation of the Voluntary Schools.<sup>1</sup> The Conservatives clung to the "ad hoc" principle to the bitter end, perhaps from force of habit. The new scheme ensured that the local education authority would not be an ad hoc body like its predecessor. In this way, it would not be weakened by internecine political feuds. The first Lancashire County Education Authority meeting at County Hall, Preston, on 18th May 1903 had 72 members present. 22 had previously served on the Technical Instruction Committee but 50 had no prior connection with public education.

The School Boards of Oldham had wasted a great deal of time and energy on tedious debates which were nothing more than the expression of political animosities between Radicals and Conservatives. Some of the results of these arguments brought little renown to the Board in

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1. (for final scheme, see Appendix 8.)

its later years - the Conservatives' 1892 Scheme of Religious Instruction, the manoeuvring sub rosa of the minority Radicals to secure the Education Department's mandate, the disagreements and delays over higher-grade schooling, and so on.

The passing of the Board was fixed for 31st December 1903. Few of the Churchmen regretted it. The 1902 Education Act had secured to their schools the same financial support as that enjoyed by Board Schools for 30 years, despite Liberal protests of the "clerical yoke" being forced on to the school system. One Conservative said that, in his opinion, the great weakness of the School Boards were that they were in office for triennial periods only. As a result, members found it difficult to conduct affairs impartially, especially in their final year of office. They were forced to keep an eye on the voters, and they made extravagant promises of economy which they had no power to honour subsequently. This contributed to the apathy of the ratepayers.<sup>1</sup>

The last important matter to be debated by the Board was teachers' salaries. The teachers claimed that they were underpaid. They asked the Board to make what they called a "deathbed repentance".

The salaries paid under the School Board were higher than those paid by the managers of Voluntary Schools; nevertheless, there was a growing feeling among the Board's teaching force that they had been the principal victims in the Board's perennial economy measures. Did they get a reasonable salary? In November 1903, the average salary of an Assistant teacher under the Board was only £79 a year.

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1. See Minutes 18th June 1901.

The agitation had begun with a meeting on 30th March 1903 organised by the Oldham and district Teachers' Association. The meeting was addressed by the N.U.T. President, Allen-Croft. The salaries paid by Oldham School Board, he said, were paltry. Trained men assistants began at £80 a year and ended at £130. Trained women started at £70 and finished at £100 a year. Oldham lagged behind Manchester, Salford, Bolton and Burnley. Even at Bury, less than half the size of Oldham and with a School Attendance Committee, men received a maximum of £150 and women £120. Salaries generally were so low that only 15% of the pupil-teachers were boys; some towns, for example Birmingham, had stopped trying to recruit them. Oldham was near to towns which would attract the better teachers. The Oldham teachers were told to aim at the scales adopted by the N.U.T.: £80-150 and £70-120.

They followed up the meeting with a memorial and deputation to the Board. The deputation claimed that the head teachers' maximum paid by the Salford and Manchester Boards was £20 a year more than Oldham's. Though a head teacher's average salary was comparable with other towns - £175 a year - promotion prospects to a headship were poor. Less than 1% of the class teachers annually got promoted to headships; in the last 32 years only four such promotions had taken place. A woman's chance of achieving a headship was even less because of the prevalence of mixed schools in Oldham.

The teachers' case seemed justified. Unfortunately for them, it came to light that some months previously a body of Oldham teachers, including Board employees, had presented a memorial to the town council asking them to take over the duties of the School Board as soon as

possible. The purpose of the memorial had been to secure financial help for the teachers in the Voluntary Schools - many of whom were desperately ill-paid. This was a fatal blunder, as far as the Board was concerned. The Board simply told the teachers that they would have to wait until the new Education Committee took over.

The indignant teachers accused the Board of employing poorly qualified teachers in order to save money in salaries. At this time the salary scales differentiated between teachers qualifying with 1st, 2nd or 3rd class passes in the Scholarship Examination. Were the accusations justified? The Board replied by issuing statistics. During the last ten years they had effected a great improvement in the quality of staff. The published figures showed it:<sup>1</sup>

YEAR	1901	1902
CERTIFICATED	166	164
NOT CERTIFICATED	77	75

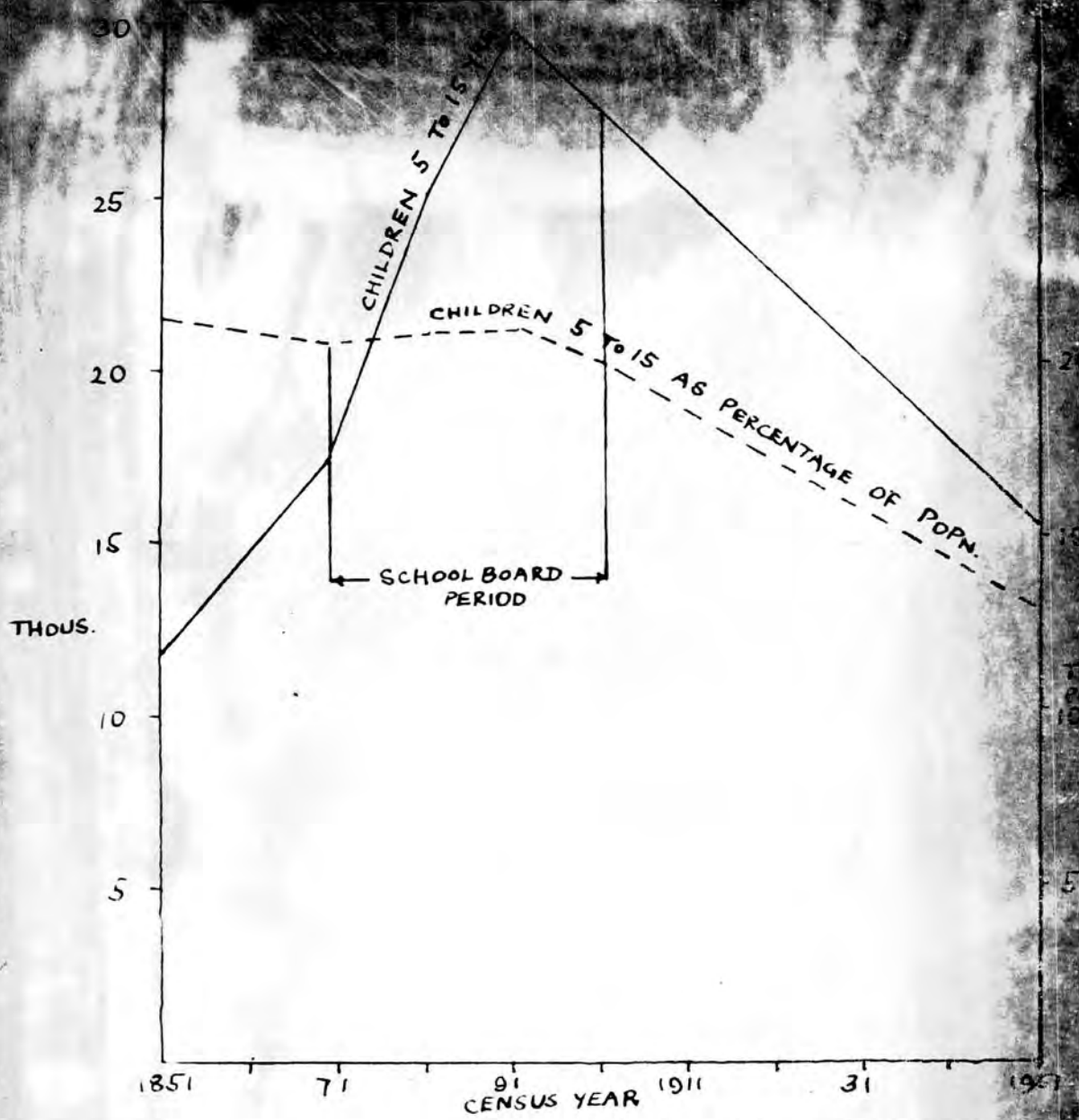
Percentage of Certificated Assistant Teachers in Oldham Board Schools.

1892	38.3
1893	38.8
1894	34.4
1895	47.1
1896	53.2
1897	52.6
1898	60.2
1899	62.0

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1. see Oldham Standard, 18th August 1903.

If the quality of the teaching staff had improved, the salaries paid had not. Fortunately, the teachers did not have long to wait. The first session of the new Education Committee was on 22nd September 1903. The Radical Dr. Yates was elected Chairman and an ex-School Board man, Schofield, became vice-Chairman. The question of teachers' salaries was debated at a meeting held by the Committee in the School Board Offices in the evening of 31st December 1903. After a brief discussion the Committee resolved to raise all salaries paid in the Voluntary Schools to those paid in the Board Schools. They could hardly do otherwise, since on 1st January 1904 all the schools came under the local education authority. But with their usual caution, they went no further. An assistant man teacher was still obliged to make ends meet on £130 a year, at the maximum.



Year:	<u>Children 5-15 years</u>	<u>% of Population</u>
1851	12,085	22.8
1871	17,984	21.6
1881	24,590	22.1
1891	29,281	22.5
1901	26,739	19.5
1951	15,484	12.9

The graph shows (a) the enormous increase in the total number of school-places required as the population went up 1851-1891.  
 (b) the financial burden imposed on the rate payers by the earlier boards, when the age-group 5-15 was over 20% of all the people.  
 (c) the decline in demand for schools after 1891 as the birth-rate fell.  
 (d) the relative and absolute numbers of school-children during the century 1851-



14. Legacy of the School Boards.

As the Board went out, the Committee literally came in. The Board's last meeting was in the afternoon of 31st December 1903.<sup>1</sup> Members made valedictory speeches - the speeches of men who had grown up in an age of rising prosperity, of optimism and of local pride. The Conservative press described them as "floods of oratory"; the Conservative member the Rev. F. Wareham reiterated at length his view that religious and party differences had hampered the Board's operations. On the whole, the Radicals viewed the dissolution of the School Board system with regret, and the newly-created "dual" system apprehensively. Dr. Yates supposed that the old system would have worked well with some modifications - abolition of cumulative voting at triennial elections and the creation of a direct link of responsibility between Board and Town Council. One Radical observed rather sadly, that the Board "had been decapitated in the day of its power". To take the metaphor further, however, one could say that though the head was cut off, the body - the work of the Boards - lived on.

The Oldham School Boards existed for 32 years. In that period they transformed education in the town. When they came on the scene, every third child did not go to school at all. Many of the schools of 1870 were inefficient. Progress in education was retarded by disease, ignorance and prejudice. The task facing the early Radical Boards was immense; they applied themselves to it vigorously and quickly. Sometimes the Board failed by attempting to placate all

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1. The Education Committee sat in the same room in the evening.

the opposition - the Government, the Church, the employers of child-workers, the Guardians, the parents, and most of all, the ratepayers.

The golden age of the Boards was the period of the "eighteen-year rule", 1870 - 1888; the Radicals who controlled them through this period took credit for the great progress made. In fact, however, the deficiency in school places during this time was so urgent a problem<sup>1</sup> that all the members of the Boards were obliged to put aside political and Sectarian squabbles and get on with the work which the Education Department ordered them to do. Eleven out of the fifteen Board Schools built<sup>2</sup> were established during the Radical rule. Most of them (some with new names) are in use to-day. Each one was an improvement on its predecessor, as each generation of pupils was which occupied them.

The latter Boards were drawn into the great struggle between Board and Voluntary Schools after 1890. This culminated in the 1902 Education Act which extinguished the Boards. During this period secondary and technical education expanded in the town, but the Board's excursion into higher grade education was not very successful, nor was its truant school.

On the whole, the Board were at their best when working along the rather restricted lines laid down by the 1870 Elementary Education Act. They borrowed £270,000 to build schools, and still owed £212,000 when the Board was dissolved. To maintain these schools,

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1. See diagram

2. For full list, see Appendix 12.

the ratepayers paid out (reluctantly) almost £410,000. In their day, these Board Schools were well run.

The School Board was in the wider sense a great force for social improvement. It went beyond the teaching of the three R's to poor children; it taught secondary classes, pupil-teachers, the deaf, dumb, blind and mentally handicapped, men and women. It pointed the way to a better life and as an investment cost less than £700,000. Who can calculate the dividends it earned?

It is true that after the reports of the Royal Commissions, the School Board system was increasingly attacked. Histories of education dwell on the harmful effects of payment-by-results.

Some authorities think that the Board Schools inculcated basic skills but did not foster in their pupils a sense of responsibility or of loyalty to the school. The best answer to this is seen in a contemporary report on the typical elementary school child, who had

"the habit, more or less firmly implanted, of regularity, of obedience, the sense of discipline, the knowledge that he was under control".<sup>1</sup>

Lastly, we consider the men who composed the School Boards. A few, like Davies, Yates, Travis, Middleton, Rountree and French stand out from the rest because of their energy; nearly all the School Board members, however, devoted some years of their crowded lives to work which they clearly loved and for which they received not a penny

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1. Report on "School Training and Early Employment of Lancashire Children" (in "Special Reports on Educational Subjects") by E. T. Campagnac and C. E. B. Russell.

remuneration. One member of the 10th Board attended no less than 593 Board and Committee meetings in three years. These men began a great tradition in elementary education. Even now, Oldham's primary schools are the scene of new developments in education. The tradition of progress continues.

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APPENDICES.

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APPENDIX 1.

Oldham School Board Enquiry 1871.

Population of Municipal Borough: 82,619

Children of School Age (3-13) : 18,095 (Census)

1. Calculation of Accommodation required.

- (a) Deduct 1000, the School Board's estimate of the number of children being educated at an individual cost exceeding 9d. weekly: 17,095.
- (b) Deduct a further 10% to allow for absence through illness or other unavoidable causes, leaving 15,386 places to be provided in the schools. (Ratio to total population of borough 1 in 5.37).

2. Calculation (on 8 sq.ft. basis) of Accommodation available.

(a) In inspected schools	:	10,633
(b) Uninspected schools	:	4,157
(c) Cottage schools	:	324
(d) Contemplated schools	:	2,067
		17,181
	TOTAL	

In categories (b) and (c) were many inefficient schools, and these in the opinion of the School Board made the apparent excess of accommodation over number of children a false estimate: there was rather a deficit of 2,000 places in efficient schools.

3. Population in Wards of the Town.

	<u>Population</u>	<u>Aged 3 to 13</u>	<u>Ratio of b to a.</u>
(a) St. James's	6,424	1,508	4.26
(b) Waterhead Mill	10,381	2,261	4.58
(c) Clarksfield	5,860	1,327	4.42
(d) Mumps	11,279	2,347	4.80

	<u>Population</u>	<u>Aged 3 to 13</u>	<u>Ratio of b to a.</u>
(e) St. Peter's	8,436	1,803	4.67
(f) St. Mary's	13,217	2,852	
(g) Westwood	14,734	3,250	
(h) Werneth	12,288	2,747	

4. Accommodation and Scholars in Attendance.

(a) St. James's

(i) <u>Inspected public elementary schools.</u>	<u>Accommodation</u>	<u>Average Attendance</u>
Moorside National	276	187
Higginshaw Free Church	252	74
St. James's	594	275
Derker Mills	213	268

(ii) Private Adventure School.

Analytic	56	38
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(b) Waterhead Mill

(i) Inspected public elementary schools.

Waterhead National	322	211
Greenacres Road Wesleyan	636	115

(ii) Private Adventure Schools.

Townfield	204	155
Ragged School, Mount Pleasant	286	75
Davies's Cottage, Bleasby Street	34	30
Tattersall's " , Back Sidebottom Street	13	24
Nutter's " , Plane Street	16	20

	<u>Accommodation</u>	<u>Average Attendance</u>
(c) <u>Clarksfield</u>		
(i) <u>Inspected public elementary school</u>		
Greenacres British	337	173
(ii) <u>Private Adventure Schools.</u>		
Salem Moravian	283	144
Roundthorn New Connexion	168	48
Glodwick Baptist	242	124
Booth's Cottage, Cranberry Street	22	25
Whittaker's " , Roundthorn Road	17	20
(d) <u>Mumps.</u>		
(i) <u>Inspected public elementary schools</u>		
Christ Church	428	437
St. Stephen's Church	170	125
St. Mary's R.C.	621	355
(ii) <u>Private Adventure Schools</u>		
Ebenezer Baptist	106	34
Hope Street, Mrs. Smith's	272	114
(Laughton's, Spencer Street	21	18
(Mellor's, Whitehead Street	19	25
Cottage (Booth's, Regent Street	17	25
(Brierley's, Regent Street	16	20
(Ogden's, Beechy Street	16	21
(iii) <u>Contemplated Public Elementary Schools</u>		
St. Stephen's, Lower Moor	546	-
Glodwick Wesleyan	266	-
Glodwick Mutual Improvement	155	-

(e) <u>St. Peter's</u>	<u>Accommodation</u>	<u>Average Attendance</u>
(i) <u>Inspected public elementary schools.</u>		
St. Peter's National	1,011	443
St. Peter's (Branch) Ashton Road	203	206
(ii) <u>Private Adventure Schools.</u>		
Baptist, George Street	211	102
Methodist New Connexion, Union Street	149	80
Richardson's Cottage, Brick Street	19	40
Butler's Cottage, Charlotte Street	19	16
(f) <u>St. Mary's</u>		
(i) <u>Inspected public elementary schools.</u>		
Oldham Church	889	412
St. Domingo Street Wesleyan	672	370
Coldhurst Church	234	190
(ii) <u>Private Adventure Schools.</u>		
Evangelist, Lord Street	265	59
Temperance Seminary	168	68
Ragged School, Grosvenor Street	378	76
Primitive Methodist, Campbell Street	318	90
Free Church, St. Mary's Street	96	46
Jackson's Cottage, Campbell Street	21	18
Marshall's " " , Coldhurst Street	13	30
(iii) <u>Contemplated public elementary schools and Extensions.</u>		
Oldham Church Infant School, extension for	120	
Coldhurst Church, Class-room for	40	
Primitive Methodist, Henshaw Street.	532	

(g) Westwood

Accommodation      Average  
Attendance

(i) Inspected public elementary schools.

New Jerusalem	152	168
North Moor Church	193	127
St. Andrew's Church	318	117
St. John's Church	681	348
North Moor Wesleyan	226	87

(ii) Private Adventure Schools.

Primitive Methodist North Moor	122	40
Busk Wesleyan	129	69
Barratt's Cottage, Burns Street	23	30
Gledhill's " , Lr. West Street	16	18

(h) Werneth

(i) Inspected public elementary schools.

St. Patrick's R.C.	368	201
King Street British	249	116
Werneth British	296	187
St. James Free Church, Hollinwood	238	99
Hollinwood National	479	242
Hollinwood British	228	214
Hollins Wesleyan	347	176

(ii) Private Adventure Schools.

Copster Hill	177	40
Hollinwood Congregational	288	48
Hollinwood Baptist	50	90
St. Thomas's, Lee Street	89	66
Hilton's Cottage, Worthington Street	22	30

- Werneth, cont.

(iii) Contemplated public elementary school.

St. Thomas's Church, to accommodate 450

Summary

Total accommodation available:	17,181
Total "efficient" places	12,703
Total <u>average attendance</u>	7,948 pupils
In "efficient" schools	6,765 "
On role of any school	<u>12,150</u> "
Total of schools of all kinds listed by enumerators, including contemplated premises:	72 schools
Total public elementary schools under inspection	27 "
Total private adventure schools and cottage premises	45 "

APPENDIX 2

Extracts from Minutes of Board hearing exemption applications.

1st October 1875.

(Chairman: Rev. F. Whittaker, assisted by Messrs. Mellor and Ingham).

- Case 1. Abram Mills.  
Adjourned for 3 months.
2. John Lindley.  
Daughter: Emma Jane, aged  $12\frac{3}{4}$ .  
Granted half-time exemption for 3 months.
3. Samuel Andrew.  
Daughter: Mary Alice, aged 12-11.  
Granted half-time exemption, 3 months.
4. Frank Row.  
Daughter: Amy, aged 10.  
Granted 3 half-days for 3 months.
5. Benjamin Hilton  
Daughter: Sally, aged  $11\frac{1}{2}$ .  
Refused.
28. Kelly.  
Mr. Kelly appeared - said he sent him four times.  
Officer said he was absent 7 times a week. Mr. Kelly  
promised he would send him 5 times a week without fail.

Visiting Officers' Work.

(December 4th, 1871)

Report of Sub-Committee who visited Stockport on 24th November 1871.

(Major Lees, Rev. Walters and J. Mellor)

The Board meets every Friday evening to receive applications from parents for the payment of school fees and to decide on the reasonableness of excuses for non-attendance. There are two methods of dealing with absenteeism, the one by the officer finding the children in the street during School hours and the other by report from the teachers of schools. In the latter case the teachers are requested to send in a weekly return of average attendance and numbers present, and a fortnightly report of all children who have left school or who attend irregularly, a third return is also requested from the teachers by which the number of half-timers is reported either under the Factory or other acts. By these means the names of absentees from school can be obtained and the state of school attendance ascertained week by week.

With regard to children found in the street or reported by Teachers the officer warns the parent that they must be sent to school; if they are not sent a notice is given a counterpart of which is retained by the Clerk, and a form attached to the notice has to be signed by the Teacher of the school to which the child may be sent, and returned to the Clerk. If the children are not sent after the fourteen days stated in the notice the parents are summoned before the Magistrates. All the forms of application for payment of fees are obtained solely from the Clerk - the applicants fill them up and bring them to the Board on Friday evenings. If the application is allowed



a form is filled up, part of which is retained by the Clerk, another part is sent to the teacher of the school which the applicant selects and a third part has to be filled up by the Teacher stating the Standard in which the child is placed and returned to the Clerk. Two books are kept; in the one all particulars are entered as to the payment of fees, which are paid quarterly to the Managers on every ten attendances actually made, and in the other the names of all noticed and summoned parents of children are enrolled with an index by which the history of every child which comes under the operation of the Board is kept. The system seems to work well and efficiently but undoubtedly its success is mainly due to the ability of the Clerk of the Stockport School Board.

It was recommended that the Board meet on alternate Friday evenings at 7 for carrying out the bye-laws, and that an attendance report be considered at each monthly Board meeting.

#### Examples of Attendance Reports.

##### Report of Board in Committee, 4th August 1873.

Summary: There have been two meetings during the month and exemption from attending school has been granted to 3 children for a short period and partial exemption to 30, 8 cases being refused. Assistance in paying fees has been ordered in the case of 26 children, 7 being new cases and 19 renewals. 750 children have been reported by the Teachers as having left school or to have been attending irregularly and the cases have been enquired into. 15 parents have been summoned for breaches of the Bye-laws, 12 of whom were fined 5s.0d. each and 3 sixpence each.

Report of the same, 3rd November, 1873

There have been two meetings during the month and exemption from attending school has been granted for a short period to 5 children and partial exemption to 26.. Assistance in paying school fees has been ordered for 53 children, 24 being new cases and 29 renewals. 1,649 children have been reported by the Teachers as having left school or to have been irregular in their attendance and the cases have been investigated and the results reported to the Teachers. 47 Summonses have been ordered for breaches of the bye-laws; 40 cases were ordered to pay the fine of 5s.0d., 2 cases were withdrawn, 2 were adjourned for a fortnight, 1 parent had left the town and in 2 cases the magistrates ordered the children to be sent to school regularly and produce a certificate to that effect or the fine would accrue.

APPENDIX 3

Notice to Parents and Employers

1. A child under 10 years of age may not be employed either half-time or full-time.
2. A child between 10 and 13 years of age must produce an exemption order from the School Board, or a 6th Standard certificate, before it can be employed either half or full-time.
3. Children between 13 and 14 years of age can work half-time under the Factory and Workshop Act irrespective of any Standard, and full-time if they have passed the 4th Standard; but if not so employed, they must attend school full-time until they pass the 4th Standard.
4. Applications for half-time exemption orders may be made at these offices or to an Officer of the Board, but the existing bye-laws forbid the Board to grant such exemptions in the case of any child who has not passed the 3rd or a higher standard of education.  
  
Copies of the bye-laws may be had free of cost at the various schools, and at the Offices of the Board.

By order of the Board, JAS. MELLOR, Clerk.

School Board Offices, Wellington Street, Oldham. 22nd March, 1882.

Memorial No. CLXXVII.

(Appendices to Final Report of Cross Commission, 1888. p.485)

To the Right Honourable Viscount Cross, G.C.B., Chairman of the Royal Commission on the Elementary Education Acts.

The Memorial of the School Boards and School Attendance Committees within the Parliamentary Borough of Oldham in the County of Lancaster.

Respectfully sheweth:-

That your Memorialists desire to represent their views in favour of transferring from the Poor Law Guardians to Local Education Authorities the statutory duty of paying the school fees of necessitous but non-pauper children.

That as the law at present stands the duty of enforcing attendance at Public Elementary Schools is placed upon School Boards and School Attendance Committees, whilst that of paying the fees of indigent parents is laid upon the local Guardians of the Poor which causes a conflict of jurisdiction.

That the system in vogue in this district, by which parents have to make personal application for school fees to the Relieving Officer at the Union Workhouse, often at very inconvenient hours, and further are required to attend a second time to receive the orders for fees, or otherwise, is repugnant to the feelings of the poor but respectable portion of the people, and tends to the spread of pauperism by familiarising both parents and children with the mode of obtaining parochial relief.

That in consequence of these difficulties some parents delay, and others refuse to apply to the Guardians, and in the meantime their children do not attend school, thereby causing undesirable prosecutions before the Magistrates, which tends to bring odium on the Education Acts and those who administer them.

Your Memorialists respectfully submit for your serious consideration these hindrances to Public Elementary Education, and ask that you will be pleased to recommend such an alteration in the law as shall place absolutely in the hands of Education Authorities the power and duty of paying school fees for the children of non-pauper parents.

And your Memorialists will ever pray, etc. etc.

(signed)

James P. Rountree, M.A.

Chairman of a Conference of Representatives of School Boards for Oldham and Royton, and the School Attendance Committees for Chadderton, Crompton and the Guardians of Ashton-under-Lyne Union, held at Oldham this 1st day of December, 1887.

APPENDIX 5.

Public Elementary Schools in Oldham in 1893.

A. Board Schools

1. Beaver Street
2. Derker (transferred Factory School)
3. Hathershaw
4. Higginshaw (transferred Voluntary School)
5. Littlemoor Lane ( " " " )
6. Northmoor
7. Roundthorn
8. St. Margaret's (transferred Voluntary School)
9. St. John's ( " " " )
10. Scottfield
11. Smith Street
12. Waterhead
13. Waterloo
14. Watersheddings
15. Wellington Street (including Deaf Mutes' Class)
16. Westwood.

16 schools: Accommodation	10,320 (at 10 sq.ft.)
average attendance	7,347
grant earned	£7,463

B. British Schools

1. Albert
2. Glodwick
3. Glodwick M.I.S.
4. Greenacres

- British School cont.

5. Henshaw Street
6. Honeywell Lane
7. New Jerusalem
8. Rock Street
9. Salem Moravian
10. St. James's Free Church
11. Townfield
12. Hollinwood U.M.F.C.
13. Werneth.

13 Schools: accommodation	4,321 (at 8 sq.ft.)
average attendance	2,643
grant earned	£2,497

C. Church Schools (including National).

1. Christ Church
2. Coldhurst
3. Evangelist
4. Moorside
5. Northmoor
6. St. Mary's
7. St. Andrew's
8. St. James's
9. St. Mark's
10. St. Paul's
11. St. Peter's
12. St. Stephen's

- Church Schools cont.

13. St. Thomas's

14. Waterhead

14 Schools:	accommodation	8,285
	average attendance	4,444
	grant earned	£4,191

D. Roman Catholic Schools.

1. Dunbar Street

2. St. Anne's

3. St. Marie's

4. St. Patrick's

4 Schools:	accommodation	2,224
	average attendance	1,544
	grant earned	£1,408

E. Wesleyan Schools

1. Glodwick

2. Greenacres Road

3. Hollins

4. Northmoor

5. St. Domingo Street

5 Schools:	accommodation	2,849
	average attendance	1,648
	grant earned	£1,526

Summary

		<u>Accommodation</u>	<u>Average attendance</u>
Board	16 Schools	9,929	7,347
British	13 Schools	4,321	2,643



- Summary cont.

		<u>accommodation</u>	<u>average attendance</u>
Church	14 Schools	8,285	4,444
R.C.	4 Schools	2,224	1,544
Wesleyan	5 Schools	2,849	1,648
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
TOTAL	52	27,608	17,626

APPENDIX 6

Statistics 1888 - 1903

Table 1. Accommodation in public elementary schools.

	1888	1891	1894	1897	1900	1903
(a) Church	10,041	10,068	8,078	8,012	7,273	6,811
(b) British	5,074	4,958	3,335	2,449	1,212	432
(c) Wesleyan	3,088	2,985	2,810	3,131	2,986	2,986
(d) Board	6,375	6,398	10,939	12,060	14,155	15,399
(e) R.C.	2,248	2,198	2,214	2,236	2,426	2,472

Table 2. Percentage decrease in accommodation 1888-1903  
(Voluntary Schools only) 1888 = 100

(a) Church	100	100	80	79	72	68
(b) British	100	99.9	67	50	24	8
(c) Wesleyan	100	99.9	93	93	93	93
(d) R.C.	100	100	100	100	110	110

Table 3. Numbers on Books of Public Elementary Schools.

		Average attendance	%
1888	22,980	17,085	74
1891	1.	-	-
1894	24,982	20,250	80
1897	25,311	20,147	80
1900	25,058	20,372	81
1903	24,857	21,001	84

1. Not available.

Half-timers.% of those on books.

1888	3,524	15
1891	3,894	15 (estimated)
1894	2,308	9
1897	1,361	5
1900	1,229	5
1903	1,153	5

Government Grant per Child

	1888	1891	1894
Church	incomplete	18s. 2½d.	18s. 7d.
Wesleyan	18s. 3d.	18s. 6d.	18s. 8d.
Board	19s. 10½d.	20s. 7d.	20s. 5d.
British	18s. 3d.	17s. 9d.	18s. 7d.
R.C.	17s. 11d.	18s. 2d.	18s. 5d.

Numbers on books as % of accommodation available 1903.

		<u>accommodation</u>	
Church	4,974	6,811	73%
British	411	432	95
Wesleyan	2,452	2,986	83
Board	14,590	15,399	94
R.C.	2,430	2,472	98

APPENDIX 7

Accommodation provided in new Board Schools  
(at end of each Board's term of office)

1873	1,073	places
1876	1,073	"
1879	1,073	"
1882	2,808	"
1885	5,093	"
1888	6,293	"
1891	6,323	"
1894	7,689	"
1897	10,456	"
1900	11,980	"
1903	14,766	"

## APPENDIX 8

Scheme for the Establishment of an Education Committee for Oldham under  
and for the Purposes of the Education Act, 1902.

1. The Education Committee, hereinafter called the Committee, shall be established by the Council for the carrying out of the provisions of the Education Act, 1902, within the area of the County Borough of Oldham, including Higher, Elementary and Technical Education, and when complete shall consist of 25 members, selected and appointed by the Borough Council. The Committee shall consist of the Mayor (ex-officio) and 24 other persons, of whom not less than 16 shall be appointed by the Council from amongst their own number. The remaining members (of whom one, at least, shall be a woman) shall be chosen from among persons of experience in Education, and persons acquainted with the needs of the various kinds of Schools in the Borough. Providing that the following grades or kinds of education shall always be represented among either the members appointed from the Council, or among those who may be appointed from outside the Council:-

- I. University Education
- II. Secondary Education of Boys and Girls in its higher and lower grades.
- III. Technical Instruction and Commercial and Industrial Education, having special regard to the industries of the Borough.
- IV. Elementary Education.

2. Three of the appointed members of the Committee for the first year shall be members of the School Board for the Borough existing at the time of the passing of the Said Act. The first members of the Committee shall continue in office until the 9th Day of November, 1904, and thereafter the Committee shall be appointed for a term of one year from the 9th November in each year.

3. If a member of the Committee continuously absents himself or herself from the meetings of the Committee for a period of six calendar months except through illness or such other sufficient cause, such member shall thereupon immediately become disqualified, and shall cease to be a member of the Committee, and a casual vacancy shall be thereby occasioned.

4. Any person appointed to the Committee as a member of the Council who ceases to be a member of the Council shall vacate his seat on the Committee, and the Council shall proceed to fill the vacancy from amongst its own members at the next meeting of the Council after such vacancy occurs.

5. On a vacancy arising amongst the other eight members of the Committee, such vacancy shall be filled by the Council in the same manner as prescribed for selection of members in the first instance. A member may resign office any time on giving a written notice to the Town Clerk.

6. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Education Committee shall be members of the Council.

Dated the 17th day of September, 1903.

Given under the Common Seal of the Mayor, Aldermen  
and Burgesses of the Borough of Oldham in the presence of

Geo. Hanson, Mayor.

A. Nicholson, Town Clerk.

Approved on behalf of the Board of Education.

John R. Dasant,

An Assistant Secretary.

23rd September, 1903.

APPENDIX 9

School Board Precepts - Amounts received from

Oldham Corporation 1872 - 1904.

<u>Year ended 25th March.</u>	<u>Precept</u>	<u>*Rate per £</u>
1872	£500	0.36 pence
73	750	0.50
74	1,800	1.19
75	1,800	1.19
76	2,500	1.54
77	2,000	1.23
78	3,000	1.74
79	3,000	1.67
80	3,650	1.95
81	3,700	1.85
82	4,000	2.00
83	4,500	2.10
84	5,000	2.39
85	8,000	3.65
86	7,350	3.00
87	7,500	3.24
88	10,000	4.10
89	10,500	4.75
90	9,500	4.29
91	9,500	4.28
92	10,500	4.69

<u>Year ended 25th March</u>	<u>Precept</u>	<u>*Rate per £</u>
1893	£12,000	5.30 pence
94	18,600	8.00
95	26,500	11.31
96	21,800	8.94
97	22,000	8.91
98	23,600	9.65
99	27,000	10.80
1900	27,000	9.90
01	30,000	11.40
02	37,000*	14.10
03	34,000	13.00*
04	38,067	14.00*

\* Calculated on Gross Rateable Value, less leakage.

\* less £1,500 collected, but not paid, to School Board.

\* estimated



APPENDIX 10

Penny Banks - Savings in Board Schools.  
(established 25th March 1889)

Interest allowed at  $2\frac{1}{2}\%$  on sums of 10s.od. and upwards deposited for six months. Some of this was devoted to the promotion of Scholarships in Waterloo Street Higher Grade School.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Balance on 30th June.</u>
1890*	£495
91	702
92	1,034
93	1,465
94	2,124
95	2,667
96	3,428
97	3,274
98	2,850
99	3,413
1900	3,238
01	3,409
02	3,667
03	3,695
04	3,640

\* 15 months.

APPENDIX 11

Religious Instruction.

(Scheme adopted by the Board 27th July 1892, and formulated  
by the Rev. J. G. French M.A.)

1. At the opening of the School in the morning, the Head Teacher in each department shall lead the singing of a hymn selected from the Book provided by the Board after which he shall say with the children the morning prayers appointed in Schedule 4.

2. In the afternoon the classes shall receive religious instruction, and the Head Teacher shall lead the singing of a hymn, and say with the scholars the evening prayers appointed in Schedule 4.

3. The times for Religious Instruction shall be as follows:-

Mixed departments ..... Morning 9.5 to 9.35  
..... Afternoon 4.20 to 4.30

Infants departments ..... Morning 9.5 to 9.35

(5 minutes 9.20 to 9.25 marking of Registers)

..... Afternoon 4.20 to 4.30

4. The books to be used for the purpose of Religious Instruction shall be the authorised version of the Holy Bible, and the Board's book of hymns and moral songs.

5. No other books shall be used, unless sanctioned by the Board.

6. In imparting Religious Instruction, the Teachers must strictly observe the requirements of the Elementary Education Act, and no attempt must be made in any case to attach children to any particular denomination.

7. Scheme of Religious Instruction.

(a) It shall consist of a graduated course of teaching to be carried on

by means of oral instruction, passages of Scripture committed to memory, and by suitable exercises in reading and writing.

- (b) It shall be given not only by the Principal Teacher, but by all Assistant Teachers.
- (c) It shall be given daily to the children in accordance with Schedule 2.
- (d) The Pupil Teachers shall receive from the Principal Teacher, instruction in the Holy Scriptures during one hour weekly, before morning school, in accordance with Schedule 1, provided that all pupil teachers in the service of the Board at the time of the passing of the scheme be exempt if they desire from attendance at such instruction.
- (e) In order to ensure and encourage the giving of Religious Instruction, there shall be an Annual Examination of Scholars and Pupil Teachers in every Board School, such examination to be conducted by two Ministers of religion to be selected by the Board.

Such examination shall be held in each school about the middle of the school year, and shall be conducted on a day specially appointed for the purpose.

SCHEDULE 1. Plan of Religious Instruction for Pupil Teachers.

1st Year: Old Testament History, from the Creation to the death of Moses, with the Types and Prophecies of Christ in the books of Moses.  
New Testament - Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark.

2nd Year: Old Testament History, to the death of King David, with the Types of and Prophecies of Christ bearing upon the same. New Testament - The Gospel of St. Luke.

3rd Year: Old Testament History, to the death of Hezekiah, with the Types and Prophecies of Christ bearing upon the same. New Testament - The Gospel of St. John.

4th Year: Old Testament History, to the end of the Book of Nehemiah, with the Types and Prophecies of Christ. Book of Daniel. New Testament - The Acts of the Apostles, Hebrews XI.

SCHEDULE 2. Plan of Religious Instruction During each Year for Scholars.

Infants. To Learn by Heart: The Alphabet of Texts (Schedule 3), Lord's Prayer, 5th Commandment.

Scripture: Group I. - Creation, Fall, Flood, Life of Joseph, David Slaying Goliath, Call of Samuel, Birth of Christ, Visit of Shepherds and Wise Men, Christ's Death.

Group II - same as Group I, and Cain and Abel, Abraham offering up Isaac, Early Life of Moses, Life of Daniel, Christ's Resurrection, three Miracles, three Parables.

Standard I. To Learn by Heart: Lord's Prayer, Ten Commandments, at least 40 verses from the following:

St. Matthew V, 1-12; VI, 24-34; VII, 7-14; XI, 28-30; XIX, 13 & 14; XXII, 37-40; XXVIII, 8-20.

St. Luke I, 46-55 and 68-79; II, 29-32.

St. John III, 16; IV, 24; XI, 25-26; XIV, 1-3.

Scripture Instruction: Outline of Genesis; with more exact knowledge of life of (a) Abraham (b) Jacob or (c) Joseph. Outline of St. Matthew's Gospel with a special knowledge of Christ's Birth, Death and Resurrection, and six Miracles and six Parables.

Schedule 2. (cont.)

Scripture Exercises: Examples from Holy Scripture of the Observance or breach of the Ten Commandments.

Standards II & III. By Heart: Lord's Prayer and Ten Commandments.

Four of these Psalms: 1, 4, 8, 15, 19, 23, 25, 32, 34, 51, 84, 91, 103, 104, 107, 119 (any section, at the Teacher's discretion), 121, 130, 139, 147, and four Parables from St. Luke.

Scripture Instruction: Outline of Exodus, with exact knowledge of Life of Moses. Outline of St. Mark and St. Luke in alternate years, with accurate knowledge of the Miracles and Parables recorded therein.

Scripture Exercises: Proof of Ten Commandments by New Testament Texts.

Standards IV, V, VI, VII and Ex VIII: By Heart: Lord's Prayer and Ten Commandments, six of the above Psalms, and St. John XV or, 1 Corinthians XIII or Ephesians VI.

Scripture Instruction: Outline of Old Testament History, and each year two of: Joshua and Judges, Samuel I and II, Kings I and II, with special reference to the Biographies contained in them. Outline of New Testament History, and each year one of the following pieces of Holy Scripture: St. John, Acts I, XIII and XIV - XXVIII.

Scripture Exercises: The Petitions of the Lord's Prayer, exemplified by other Passages of Holy Scripture.

SCHEDULE 3.

("Alphabet of Texts" i.e. - 25 from Old and New Testaments).

SCHEDULE 4. Prayers.

1. Morning Prayer.

(All standing, the Teacher shall say)

T: O Lord, the day is Thine, the night also is Thine, Thou has prepared

Schedule 4 cont.

the light and the sun. Ps.74.16.

S: I lay me down and slept; I awaked for the Lord sustained me. PS.3.5.

T: Oh God; Thou art my God, early will I seek Thee. PS.63,1.

S: My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee and will look up. Ps. 5, 3.

T: Cause me to hear thy loving kindness in the morning; for in Thee do I trust.

S: Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift my soul unto Thee. Ps. 143, 8.

Let us Pray.

(All kneeling, the Teacher shall say:)

Almighty and most merciful Father, who hast safely brought us to the beginning of this day, keep us in the same by Thy mighty power, watch over us for good, preserve us in our going out and coming in, and may all our ways be pleasing in Thy sight.

S: Hear us, good Lord.

T: O most merciful Father, forgive we pray Thee our past sins and negligence, and grant us the grace of the Holy Spirit to renew our hearts that we may amend our lives according to Thy Holy Word, through Jesus Christ Our Lord.

S: Hear us, good Lord.

T: O God, the Fountain of all wisdom, teach us to know Thee in the days of our youth, and may we be made wise unto salvation.

S: Hear us, good Lord.

T: Bless, O Lord, in mercy, all our dear parents, relations, teachers,

Schedule 4 cont.

schoolfellows, and friends: may we be kind one to another, and so live Together in this life that in the world to come we may have life everlasting. We ask all in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, who hath taught us when we pray to say -

"Our Father ..." etc.

The grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore. Amen.

II. Evening Prayer.

(All Standing)

T: O magnify the Lord Our God, and fall down before His footstool, for He is holy.

S: O Thou that hearest prayer, unto Thee shall all Flesh come.

Let us Pray.

(All kneeling, the Teacher shall say)

T: Lord, hear our prayer.

S: And let our cry come unto Thee.

T: Remember, O Lord, Thy tender mercies.

S: For they have been ever of old.

T: Remember not the sins of our youth.

S: But pardon our iniquity, for it is great.

T: Create in us a clean heart, O God.

S: And renew a right spirit within us.

T: O Heavenly Father, we thank Thee for all Thy mercies during this day, and all our lives hitherto; we bless Thee for our food and clothing, our health and strength, our kind friends and teachers,

Schedule 4 cont.

and all the benefits of Thy hand, but above all for Thy Holy Word, and the knowledge of Thy Grace and mercy in our Saviour, Jesus Christ. May we praise Thee both with our lips and in our lives, and serve Thee better day by day.

S: Hear us, Good Lord.

T: Preserve us, O Lord, during the coming night from all harm to our bodies, and from all evil thoughts which may hurt our souls. Be Thou ever our Shield and Defender.

S: Hear us, Good Lord.

T: We commend to Thy kind care all whom we love, and pray Thee to take us all into Thy Holy and safe keeping, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who hath taught us to pray, saying -

"Our Father ..." etc.

The Lord bless us and keep us; the Lord lift up the light of His countenance upon us, and give us peace, now and for evermore. Amen.

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8. The prayers shall be said with or without the Responses. In Infants' Schools, the Teacher may use the whole or any portion of the above Prayers.

Nothing in these Regulations shall prevent the withdrawal of any child from any religious observance or instruction in religious subjects, but such child shall, during the time of such observance and instruction, be taught some lesson in a separate room, where such room is available.



APPENDIX 12

Cost of Erection and Furnishing Board Schools.

(Last Triennial Report, 31st December 1903).

<u>Board School</u>	<u>Opened</u>	<u>Cost<sup>⌘</sup></u>
1. Westwood	21. 7. 1873	£8,958
2. Smith Street	"	£7,774
3. Hathershaw	11. 3. 1878	£16,387
4. Wellington Street	6. 1. 1879	£7,586
5. Roundthorn	27. 6. 1881	£11,005
6. Waterhead	24. 9. 1883	£8,428
7. Watersheddings	30. 6. 1884	£9,287
8. Beever Street	13. 6. 1885	£14,063
9. Scottfield	6. 6. 1885	£9,046
10. Waterloo	2. 7. 1887	£30,232 *
11. Northmoor	22.10. 1887	£11,473
12. Werneth	29. 1. 1894	£16,521
13. Freehold	6. 1. 1896	£20,014
14. Higginshaw	13. 9. 1897	£15,887
15. Derker	2. 4. 1898	£23,690
<u>Other Buildings.</u>		

1. Pupil Teachers School (formerly Day Industrial School)

	11. 1. 1892	£11,016
2. School Board Offices	18. 5. 1893	£13,333
3. Hollinwood School	7. 2. 1903	£12,521

\* Buildings, Equipment, including all subsequent extensions and modifications.

\* Cost, when first built, £7,000

Accommodation, including later extensions.

(1) Westwood	566	(10) Waterloo	600
1st. Extn.1882	233	1st. Extn.1903	906 Total: 1,566
2nd. " 1892	165 Total: 964		
(2) Smith Street	507	(11) Northmoor	600
1st Extn.1882	209	1st. Extn.1894	311 Total: 911
2nd " 1891	30		
3rd " 1894	45 Total: 791		
(3) Hathershaw	437	(12) Werneth	1,010 Total: 1,010
1st Extn.1895	35		
2nd Extn.1901	476 Total: 948		
(4) Wellington St.	565 Total: 565	(13) St.Margaret's Ext.1895	95
(5) Roundthorn	291	(14) Freehold	1,210
1st Extn.1901	544 Total: 835	1st Extn.1896	150 Total: 1,360
(6) Waterhead	421	(15) Higginshaw	850 Total: 850
1st Extn.1896	64 Total:485		
(7) Watersheddings	478	(16) Derker	1,524 Total:1,524
1st Ext.1895	212 Total: 690		
(8) Beever Street	685	((17) D.I.S.	200)
1st Extn.1895	180		
2nd Extn.1897	66 Total: 931		
(9) Scottfield	701 Total: 701	(18) Hollinwood	860 Total: 860

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(for further information see also diagrams)